



Pages 12 | ₹ 5 | LC

KOLKATA | NEW DELHI | SILIGURI | BHUBANESWAR

The Statesman

PEOPLE'S PARLIAMENT, ALWAYS IN SESSION



CALL ALL-PARTY
MEETING ON COVID,
KHARGE URGES PM



SHADOW GOVT
A TERRORIST
GROUP: JUNTA



JOHNSON CALLS
COVID SUMMIT
AFTER SNP VICTORY



'T20 WC COULD
BE SHIFTED OR
POSTPONED'

P4

P9

P10

P12

WEATHER

Partly cloudy sky. The maximum and minimum temperatures would be around 40 and 23 degrees Celsius respectively.

RAINFALL: Trace

RELATIVE HUMIDITY

Max: 72% Min: 31%

TEMPERATURE

Max: 39.4°C (+1) Min: 23.2°C (-2)

SUN RISES SUN SETS

05:33 hrs 19:02 hrs

MOON RISES MOON SETS

05:18 hrs 17:50 hrs

THUMBNAILS



An overcast sky before a heavy downpour in the afternoon. In Kolkata on Sunday. IANS

Bengal council of ministers: Forty-three MLAs would be inducted into the West Bengal Council of Ministers with 34 in Cabinet rank and remaining nine as junior ministers at a swearing in ceremony scheduled to be held at the Raj Bhawan on Monday. The Cabinet ministers list includes a host of TMC heavyweights, as well as several new faces. Mr Amit Mitra, former finance minister, who did not contest the Assembly election, is also on the list.

P5

CBI prosecution against top TMC leaders: Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar, on a request by the CBI, sanctioned the prosecution of Firhad Hakim, Subrata Mukherjee, Madan Mitra and Sovan Chatterjee, all of them ministers during the time of the alleged commission of a crime that came to light in the purported Narada sting tapes, a Raj Bhawan official said on Sunday. All four were ministers in the Mamata Banerjee cabinet when the tapes were allegedly made in 2014.

China's rocket debris falls into Indian Ocean: The remnants of an out of control and China's biggest rocket re-entered the Earth's atmosphere with most of its parts burning up and disintegrating over the Indian Ocean near the Maldives, the country's space agency said on Sunday, ending days of fevered speculation over where the debris would hit.

P9

Waive taxes on Covid drugs: Mamata to PM

Bengal CM urges Modi to eliminate supply constraints amidst rapid surge

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, 9 MAY

KEY DEMANDS

Chief minister Mamata Banerjee today wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi urging him to exempt Covid-related life saving drugs and equipment from GST and customs duty to eliminate supply constraints amidst the rapid surge in fresh Covid cases in the second wave of the pandemic.

Miss Banerjee also urged Mr Modi to strengthen health infrastructure and augment supplies of equipment, medicines and oxygen for treatment of Covid patients.

Urging Mr Modi to consider exempting organisations, agencies and individuals who are supplying equipment and drugs related to management of Covid pandemic from customs duty and other Central taxes.

"As the rate structure falls under the preview of the

To exempt organisations, agencies and individuals who are supplying equipment and drugs related to management of Covid pandemic from customs duty and other Central taxes

To strengthen health infrastructure and augment supplies

donate oxygen concentrators, cylinders, cryogenic storage tank, tankers and tank containers and Covid related drugs. Donations from these organizations will greatly supplement the efforts of the state government in meeting the huge gap in demand and supply." She added in the communication that "many of the donors and agencies have approached the State government to consider exemptions of these items from customs duty/ SGST/CGST/IGST".

"As the rate structure falls under the preview of the

Many of the donors and agencies, who are supplying equipment and drugs related to management of Covid pandemic, have approached the State government to consider exemptions of these items from customs duty/ SGST/CGST/IGST

WEST BENGAL CM MAMATA BANERJEE

Central government, I would request these items may be exempted from GST/Customs' duty and other such duty and taxes to help remove supply constraints of above mentioned drugs and equipment and contribute to effective management of Covid pandemic," the letter added.

Miss Banerjee also pointed out that the everyone including her state government is "trying its best to face new challenges and making all efforts to channel resources from different sources, including ensuring availability of life saving drugs and oxygen for Covid treatment" in the event of sudden spike of

Covid cases in general and also in West Bengal. Miss Banerjee has been attacking the Centre for "failing" to control the spread of the disease in the country.

Over the past few days she has written three letters to the Prime Minister requesting him to allow free-of-cost vaccination against Covid to all, to ensure adequate supply of essential drugs and hike allocation of medical oxygen for West Bengal.

Slamming the Centre over Covid management, Miss Banerjee had said, "Why are they not allotting Rs 30,000 crores for vaccines when they are making new Parliament and statutes, spending Rs 20,000 crores?"

She further said that if Integrated GST (IGST) Rs 100 is collected on an item, Rs 50 accrues to the Centre and the States each as Central GST and State GST respectively. Further 41 per cent of the CGST revenue is devolved to States. So out of a collection of Rs 100, as much as Rs 70.50 is the share of the states.

If full exemption from GST is given, vaccine manufacturers would not be able to offset their input taxes and would pass them on to the end consumer/citizen by increasing the price.

NIRMALA SITHARAMAN FINANCE MINISTER

GST exemption counter productive, replies FM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 9 MAY



If full exemption from GST is given, vaccine manufacturers would not be able to offset their input taxes and would pass them on to the end consumer/citizen by increasing the price

NIRMALA SITHARAMAN FINANCE MINISTER

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday said GST exemption to domestic supplies and commercial import of Covid drugs, vaccines and oxygen concentrators would make these items costlier for consumers as manufacturers would not be able to offset the taxes paid on inputs.

Currently, domestic supplies and commercial imports of vaccines attract a 5 per cent Goods and Services Tax, while it is 12 per cent in case of Covid drugs and oxygen concentrators.

From the GST collected on vaccine, half is earned by the Centre and the other half by the States. Further, 41 per cent of Centre's collections also get devolved to the States. So states end up receiving almost 70 per cent of the total revenue collected from vaccines.

"In fact, a nominal 5 per cent GST is in the interest of the domestic manufacturer of vaccine and in the interest of the citizens," Sitharaman said.

The Finance Minister

tweeted her response to Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee's letter urging for a waiver of GST and other duties on Covid drugs and equipment, saying these items are already exempted from customs duty and health cess.

Besides, Integrated GST is exempted on all Covid relief material imported by the Indian Red Cross for free distribution in India.

IGST exemption has been given in case of goods when imported free of cost for free distribution in the country by any entity.

The government has already exempted from customs duty import of a host of Covid-related relief materials, like Remdesivir injection and its APIs, Inflammatory diagnostic (markers) kits, medical grade oxygen, oxygen therapy equipment such as oxygen concentrators and Covid vaccines.

End of suspense: Sarma to take oath as Assam CM



STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
GUWAHATI, 9 MAY

Senior Bharatiya Janata Party leader Himanta Biswa Sarma is set to become next chief minister of Assam, with the party breaking conventional wisdom by replacing a sitting chief minister even though the party has won the Assembly elections.

Sarma, a Cabinet colleague of outgoing chief minister and saffron leader Sarbananda Sonowal, is scheduled to take oath tomorrow as the 15th chief minister of the state. Sarma, who is also the convenor of

the North East Democratic Alliance (NEDA), was unanimously elected as the leader of the state BJP legislative party in a meeting held at Dispur today.

Earlier, incumbent chief minister Sonowal tendered his resignation to State Governor professor Jagdish Mukhi at Raj Bhawan.

Sonowal not only accompanied Sarma to the legislative party meeting in Dispur, but also proposed his name for the responsibility. It was seconded by state BJP president Ranjeet Kr Dass along with representatives from BJP allies Asom Gana Parishad (AGP)

and United People's Party Liberal (UPPL) in the presence of Union minister Narendra Singh Tomar and party leaders Arun Singh, BL Santosh & Vijayanta Jay Panda, who were there as central observers.

A meeting of NDA partners BJP, AGP and UPPL was also subsequently held and Sarma was unanimously elected as the leader of the NDA Legislative Party, paving the way for him to become the next chief minister of the state.

The swearing-in ceremony will take place at Shrimanta Shankardev Kalakshetra where the saf-

front party's national president JP Nadda will be present along some other senior leaders.

Both Sonowal and Sarma

were in New Delhi on Saturday as they were summoned by party national president JP Nadda for finalising the name of next chief minister because of continued suspense about who would get the post since the Assembly election vote count took place on 2 May, a week ago.

The ruling BJP alliance

is the first non-Congress

government in the state to

win the elections for the sec-

ond consecutive term.

Grieving families buried their dead on Sunday following a horrific bombing at a girls' school in the Afghan capital that killed 50 people, many of them pupils between 11 and 15 years old.

The number of wounded in Saturday's attack climbed to more than 100, said Interior Ministry spokesman Tariq Arian.

In the western neighbourhood of Dasht-e-Barchi, families buried their dead amid angry recriminations at a government they said has failed to protect them from repeated attacks in the mostly Shiite Muslim neighbourhood.

Three explosions outside the school entrance struck as students were leaving for the day, said Arian.

The blasts targeted Afghanistan's ethnic Hazaras who dominate the Dasht-e-Barchi neighbourhood, where the bombings occurred.

AP DETAILS ON PAGE 9

Delhi, UP extend lockdown; India adds 4 lakh new cases

SNS & PTI
NEW DELHI, 9 MAY

Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana on Sunday extended their ongoing lockdowns by a week, while Tamil Nadu and Rajasthan enter a two-week shutdown starting Monday, even as the country recorded over 4 lakh new Covid-19 cases in a day yet again, with 4,092 fresh fatalities.

According to Union Health Ministry data released on Sunday morning, India recorded 4,03,738 fresh Covid-19 cases in the last 24 hours, pushing the country's cumulative tally to 2,22,96,414, while the death toll climbed to 2,42,362 with 4,092 daily deaths.

Announcing the lockdown

extension, Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal said although Covid-19 cases and positivity rate have come down in the last few days, any leniency would squander the gains achieved so far. In further tightening of the curbs, an order issued by the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) said there will be a complete prohibition on marriage ceremonies at public places, banquet halls,

hotels and similar places. Delhi Metro services will also be suspended during the lockdown, said the order. The Metro trains were so far operating with 50 per cent seating capacity and ban on standing commuters.

The Delhi government had been forced to impose lockdown amidst a steep rise in Covid-19 cases on 19 April.

Although the cases have come down and positivity rate has reduced from the high of 35 per cent on 26 April to around 23 per cent now, strictness is needed, Kejriwal said.

The "corona curfew" in

Uttar Pradesh, which was earlier scheduled to end at 7 am on Monday, has also been extended by a week. Maharashtra, Karnataka and Delhi

are among 10 states that account for 71.75 percent of the 4,03,738 new Covid-19 cases registered in a day, the Union Health Ministry said on Sunday.

The other states are Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Rajasthan, and Haryana.

Delhi's positivity rate dips to 21.67 pc: Delhi today recorded 273 more coronavirus deaths, the lowest since 21 April, and 13,336 new infections, with the positivity rate dipping to 21.67 per cent, according to the Delhi government's latest health bulletin.

However, the city's relative lesser number of new Covid cases, the lowest since 12 April, could be attributed to a lesser number of tests — 61,552 tests.

(SEE PAGE 2)

FACT FILE
TOTAL CASES
2,22,96,414
ACTIVE CASES
37,36,648
NEW CASES
4,03,738
NEW RECOVERIES
3,86,444
TOTAL DEATHS
2,42,362
UNION HEALTH MINISTRY FIGURES AS OF 8.00 A.M.
SUNDAY 09 MAY 2021

IN MOTHER'S ARMS



A medic takes a swab sample from a child as the mother looks on. In Trichy region of Tamil Nadu on Sunday. ■ IANS

Health Ministry should wake up to Covid challenges: IMA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, 9 MAY

The Indian Medical Association (IMA) on Saturday said that the Union health ministry should "wake up" and respond to mitigate the growing challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The doctors' body in a statement also alleged that the ministry has not taken appropriate action to deal with second Covid-19 wave.

"The collective consciousness, proactive cognisance, and requests made by the IMA and other professional learned colleagues are put into the dustbin, and often without realising the ground realities the decisions are taken," IMA president J A Jayalal said.

"IMA demands the health ministry to wake up from its slumber and respond to mitigate the growing challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic. IMA is astonished to see the extreme lethargy and inappropriate actions from the

STINGING LETTER

► The Indian Medical Association (IMA) in a statement alleged that the ministry has not taken appropriate action to deal with second Covid wave

► The statement said that for the last 20 days,

Delhi lockdown extended till 17 May, will be stricter: CM

Metro services to remain suspended; there'll be curbs on marriage functions at public places

SNS & PTI
NEW DELHI, 9 MAY

The ongoing Covid wave-induced lockdown in Delhi was today extended for yet another week — up to 17 May morning — with chief minister Arvind Kejriwal announcing stricter measures like suspension of the Metro train services and prohibition of marriage ceremonies at public places now in a bid to control the spiralling spread of Covid in the city.

This is the first time since the lockdown came into force in the national capital on 19 April that the Delhi government has suspended the Metro services.

Announcing the lockdown extension, Kejriwal said although Covid cases and positivity rate have come down in Delhi in the last few days, any leniency would squander the gains achieved so far in the current coronavirus wave.

The CM said he got feedback from many stakeholders and the opinion was in favour of extending lockdown for another week.

"We must remember 'Jaan Hai Toh, Jahan Hai'... this



time the lockdown will be stricter and the Delhi Metro will not ply from tomorrow," Kejriwal said during his online press briefing.

Weddings will be held at home or in courts with not more than 20 people, according to an order issued by the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA).

"There will be a complete prohibition on marriage ceremonies at public places, banquet halls, hotels and similar places during the period," it said.

Service providers or owners of hotels, banquets, marriage halls, sound system, DJ, catering will have to return the advance payments for marriages during the lockdown or will have to mutually agree on a later date for the ceremonies, the order said.

The authorities including

local administration, police, civic bodies and "mandis" will be responsible for ensuring Covid-appropriate behaviour at inter-state bus terminals, railway stations, wholesale vegetable and fruit markets and shops providing essential goods, the DDMA's order stated.

The services of the Delhi Metro will also be suspended during the lockdown, the order said.

The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) was so far running trains with 50 per cent seating capacity and a ban on standing commuters.

In a statement, the DMRC said, "In the wake of the extension of curfew in Delhi for the containment of COVID-19, the Delhi Metro services on all its lines shall also remain suspended for passenger or essential services from Monday till 5 May 17."

Kejriwal said the Delhi government had been forced to impose lockdown on 19 April amid a steep rise in Covid cases. Although the infection figures have come down and the positivity rate has reduced from the high of 35 per cent on 26 April to around 23 per cent now, strictness is needed, he said.

"The restrictions need to be upheld for some more time. Otherwise, we will lose whatever we have achieved till now. As I have mentioned earlier, this is an extremely difficult period, the second wave is quite deadly, with many losing their lives. First and foremost, we have to save lives," the CM said.

The lockdown, which was scheduled to end at 5 am on Monday, has now been extended up to 5 am on 17 May. The movement on roads will also be closely monitored during the lockdown.

Police authorities will ensure checking of persons and vehicles on roads by putting an adequate number of pickets with the objective of preventing unnecessary movement of people during the curfew period, the DDMA said.

"Delhi Police will also ensure that movement of individuals and vehicles should be allowed strictly as per the guidelines/protocols prescribed in the curfew order," it said.

Kejriwal said, "After April 26, the chain of the coronavirus somewhat started to break as lockdown was imposed. The cases began to decrease. Now, in the past two-three days, the

positivity ratio has come down to 23 per cent from the earlier 35 per cent."

He credited Delhiites for the improvement in the Covid situation, saying they extended their full support to the lockdown.

"Everyone adhered to the norms of the lockdown. We have not done this as a favour to anyone else, this is a matter of our own lives and health," he said.

The Delhi government utilised the lockdown period to strengthen health resources and infrastructure, Kejriwal said.

On the acute shortage of oxygen, the CM said the situation has improved now. "With the central government's help and following the directions by the Supreme Court and the high court, the oxygen situation has appreciably improved. The emergency calls for oxygen are no longer heard," he claimed.

Kejriwal also said that the Covid vaccination has been continuing at a fast pace although there is a lack of adequate stock of vaccines. He hoped that the Centre will help the Delhi government with the supply of the required vaccine doses.

Delhi logs 273 Covid deaths, over 13K cases; positivity rate 21.67pc

SNS & PTI
NEW DELHI, 9 MAY

Delhi today recorded 273 more coronavirus deaths, the lowest since 21 April, and 13,336 new infections, with the positivity rate dipping to 21.67 per cent, according to the Delhi government's latest health bulletin.

However, the city's relative lesser number of new Covid cases, the lowest since 12

April, could be attributed to a lesser number of tests — 61,552 tests, which included 49787 RTPCR/CBNAAT/True Nat tests.

There were 86,232 active cases, including 52,263 patients under home isolation. More than 14,700 Covid patients recovered over the last 24 hours, which took the cumulative tally of such recoveries to over 12.17 lakh,

the health bulletin stated. The national capital's Covid caseload mounted to 13,23,567 and the death toll rose to

19,344, the bulletin said. At 21.67 per cent, Delhi's today positivity rate is the lowest since 16 April when it stood at 19.7 per cent, according to government data.

Of the 22,545 hospital beds for coronavirus patients in the city, only 2,633 were

vacant, the bulletin said. Delhi had yesterday reported 17,364 coronavirus cases and 332 fatalities, with the positivity rate standing at 23.34 per cent. On 22 April, it had logged 36.2 per cent positivity rate, the highest so far.

At 21.67 per cent, Delhi's today positivity rate is the lowest since 16 April when it stood at 19.7 per cent, according to government data.

Delhi had reported 19,832 cases last Friday, 19,133 on Thursday, 20,960 on Wednesday, and 19,953 cases on Tuesday, according to official

data. It had logged a positivity rate of 24.92 per cent on Friday, 24.29 per cent on Thursday, 26.37 per cent on Wednesday, and 26.73 per cent on Tuesday, according to government figures.

The national capital had registered 341 Covid deaths on Friday, 335 on Thursday, 311 on Wednesday, and 338 on Tuesday, according to official data.

Classified

CHANGE OF NAME

LOST & FOUND

ALL CLASSIFIED ARE CARRIED FREE OF COST ON OUR WEBSITE

GIFT Deed No. 3065/2018, D.S.R. Mursihabad (Donee: Ila Dey Pramanik) has lost and also lodged complaint vide No. Ms. P.S. G.D. Entry No. 279/21, dt. 06.05.21. If any person got the original deed please informed with me. Biswajit Dey: 9609022850.

Chopra seeks Covid patients' free treatment in Delhi's pvt hospitals

SNS
NEW DELHI, 9 MAY

Senior Delhi Congress leader Subhash Chopra has demanded free treatment of Covid-19 patients in Delhi's private hospitals. He tweeted, "Middle class and poor families are under heavy economic burden due to Corona and lockdown. Like Rajasthan government has announced free corona treatment in private hospitals, the Kejriwal government should also declare free treatment in private hospitals for the people of Delhi."

Citing a newspaper report, Sisodia said the Centre sold coronavirus vaccines to 93 countries of which 60 percent had COVID-19 under control, and also where there was no threat of loss of life due to the virus.

Large number of youths in the country perished to the coronavirus in the second wave of the pandemic, he said, adding their lives could have been saved if the vaccines were given to them instead of exporting the doses. He said

Heinous crime by Centre to export vaccines when people dying in our own country: Sisodia

PTI
NEW DELHI, 9 MAY

Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia Sunday attacked the Centre over the export of coronavirus vaccines, saying a large number of lives could have been saved in India if the doses were given to people in the country first.

"It's a heinous crime committed by the Central government to sell vaccines to other countries only for its image management at a time when people are dying in our own country," he told an online briefing.

Citing a newspaper report, Sisodia said the Centre sold coronavirus vaccines to 93 countries of which 60 percent had COVID-19 under control, and also where there was no threat of loss of life due to the virus.

Sisodia has asked the health department to conduct an inquiry into the matter and submit a report by Monday evening, they said. The corporation's mayor, Jai Prakash, had on Saturday said that at least 23 COVID-19

patients left the hospital between April 19 and May 6 without informing the medical facility. Sisodia said it is very shocking that a large number of COVID-19 patients have gone "missing" from the hospital, a source said.

The deputy chief minister also said that this is not only dangerous to the lives of these patients but is also a set back to the efforts of the government which has imposed a lockdown to check the spread of the disease, the source said.

Hindu Rao, run by the North Delhi Municipal Corporation, is the largest civic hospital in the national capital.

He reiterated the Delhi government can vaccinate everyone in the city within three months if adequate doses are made available to it.

Delhi Dy CM orders inquiry after 23 Covid patients go 'missing' from Hindu Rao hospital

PTI
NEW DELHI, 9 MAY

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia has ordered an inquiry into the incident of 23 COVID-19 patients going "missing" from the North Delhi Municipal Corporation-run Hindu Rao Hospital, official sources said on Sunday.

The Centre should now ensure that the vaccines manufactured in the country are provided to the states that are facing a shortage.

patients left the hospital between April 19 and May 6 without informing the medical facility. Sisodia said it is very shocking that a large number of COVID-19 patients have gone "missing" from the hospital, a source said.

The deputy chief minister also said that this is not only dangerous to the lives of these patients but is also a set back to the efforts of the government which has imposed a lockdown to check the spread of the disease, the source said.

Hindu Rao, run by the North Delhi Municipal Corporation, is the largest civic hospital in the national capital.

He reiterated the Delhi government can vaccinate everyone in the city within three months if adequate doses are made available to it.

Delhi received 499 MT oxygen on May 8 against 700 MT ordered by SC: Chadha

PTI
NEW DELHI, 9 MAY

Delhi received just 499 metric tonnes of oxygen on May 8 against the average supply of 700 MT ordered by the Supreme Court, AAP MLA Raghav Chadha said on Sunday.

Over the last week, the city got an average of 533 MT oxygen daily, which is 76 percent of the quantity directed by the SC. On Saturday, only four healthcare facilities in the national capital, with 1,271 oxygen beds, sent out oxygen shortage SOS calls, the city government said.

The Delhi government supplied 15.50 MT of oxygen to these hospitals, according to official data.

North MCD to manufacture fuel blocks from stubble, cow dung for use in crematoriums

PTI
NEW DELHI, 9 MAY

North Delhi Mayor Jai Prakash on Sunday launched a project for manufacturing fuel blocks from cultivation refuse and cow dung for use in crematoriums.

Prakash said the corporation will use these fuel blocks in place of firewood, according to an official statement.

"He said that approximately 300-400 kg goparali (cow dung) per day will be manufactured here," the corporation's statement noted.

Prakash said the North Delhi Municipal Corporation has set up the fuel block manufacturing plant in collaboration with an NGO -- The Family of Shirdi Sai Baba.

"He said that we will ask other NGOs running our crematoriums to reduce reliability on wood and help in keeping the environment clean," the corporation's statement said.

The move came at a time when NGOs running the crematoriums in the nation-



North Delhi Mayor Jai Prakash launches the project for manufacturing fuel blocks from cultivation refuse and cow dung on Sunday.

with a positivity rate of 21.67 percent, the Health Department said.

The number of new cases, the lowest since April 12, can be attributed to a smaller number of tests -- 61,552 -- conducted on Saturday.

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
statesmansdisplay@gmail.com
thestatesmansclassified@gmail.com

DELHI
Statesman House,
148, Barakhambha Road,
New Delhi-110 001
Tel: (011) 2331 5911
Ishan House (2nd floor)
A-90, Sector II, NOIDA,
UP 201 301
Tel: (0120) 4171421
Email:
delhi@thestatesmangroup.com
delhi@thestatesmangroup.com
BHUBANESWAR
Plot 3A, Zone B, Sector A, Mancheswar Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751 010.
Tel: (0674) 2588060/61/62/ 2586371,
Telex: 0674-2588061
Email:
bhubaneswar@thestatesmangroup.com
statesmanbbsr@gmail.com

SILIGURI
13A, Dabgram Industrial Growth Centre,
P.O. Satellite Township,
Siliguri-734015
Tel: 2568615, 2568063 and 2568787. Fax:
(0353) 2568296,
Email:
siliguri@thestatesmangroup.com
City Office: 3rd Floor, Rina Bhawan,
Opp. HDFC Bank, Panitaniki More,
Sevoke Rd., Siliguri-734015.
Ph: 0353-2524077

HYDERABAD
The Statesman Limited, 2nd Floor, UNI Building,
A.C. Guards, Hyderabad-500004,
Ph: 040-2339 1739
Email:
delhi@thestatesmangroup.com

**AIR-SURCHARGE: Kathmandu - Rs. 2, Eastern Region - Re. 1
All other stations in India - Re. 1**

With our unity, we will be able to save the Hills

ANIT THAPA, LEADER, GORKHA JAN MUKTI MORCHA (BINOVY TAMANG CAMP)

ON THE PRESENT COVID SITUATION AND THE VACCINATION DRIVE IN THE HILLS

Capital

Netizens laud Delhi govt for smooth execution of Covid vaccination drive

PTI
NEW DELHI, 9 MAY

Many took to Twitter to share their experiences of getting vaccinated in the mega drive, which they said was done by "calm professionals" in a seamless manner while maintaining all coronavirus protocols

vaccination drive and paying attention to minutes details.

The centre, which has five sites and is vaccinating almost 750 people every day since May 3, is fully-ventilated and sanitised twice a day, he said.

"People are very happy. My visitors' register is filled with good remarks. We have a medical room and wheelchairs are available on gates for the disabled, and follow all guidelines to a tee. For each site, we have allotted three rooms. While the first room is waiting area, the second and third are for vaccination and observation," Dubey told PTI.

The sentiments are echoed by other heads of vaccination centres as well, like Renu and Jayanti Gupta from Government Girls Senior Secondary School (Chhattarpur) and Shaheed Captain Sanjeev Dahiya Sarvodaya Vidyalaya Sector 9 Rohini, respectively.

"My teachers tell me that many people come to them and give thumbs-up for the facilities provided in the vaccination centre. They were pleasant, professional and calm even as they worked through this unbearable heat. They've done a tremendous job ensuring safe distancing + ventilation. Well done," @ArvindKejriwal & team."

Laxmi Kant Dubey, who heads the vaccination centre RSBV at West Vinod Nagar, said what has impressed most people is that they are not made to wait much and due process is followed in the

city. "Had a lovely vaccination experience at North Delhi's Dhakka area Govt Boys school. Was stunned to see the infrastructure and facilities in a Govt school. I must say @ArvindKejriwal & Dy CM @msisodia not leaving any stone unturned for education reform. @AamAadmiParty," tweeted Himanshu Jain.

</div

SHATTERED DREAM



The construction activity has come to a halt again in the National Capital Region (NCR) with unorganised workers engaged in this sector going back to their native places since the outbreak of the fresh wave of Covid-19. The construction industry, which passed through an unprecedented crisis in the wake of the pandemic last year, was gradually picking up. The workers had also started returning to the NCR to restart their lives. The prices of construction materials had also gone up considerably over the past few months. Real estate developers and builders were completing their pending projects, particularly in Noida and Gurugram. But a large number of prospective buyers are no longer in position to purchase properties since Corona has rendered many of them jobless or forced them to accept huge salary cuts. Many of those, who had paid big instalments, to own a 'dream home' in the NCR, are finding it difficult to pay the remaining instalments. They want their money to be refunded but the real estate developers are unwilling to return their money. A friend, who had invested in a housing project in Noida, said he was planning to approach the court along with a few others to get his money back from the builder. He hopes the court will take a sympathetic view of their plea keeping in view their economic plight as a result of the pandemic. The situation is equally bad for those running small and medium enterprises out of the NCR. Those who had hired office spaces in major commercial centres in Delhi or Gurugram are unable to pay rents. As a result, many are shifting to Noida or Greater Noida, where the rents are relatively less, to run their businesses. Real estate agents are apprehensive whether they will see an increase in property prices in the coming months and years, given the financial problems of the people as a result of repeated lockdowns.

Will Delhi ever return to the pre-Covid days? This is the talk of the town. As Covid-19 continues to batter the Capital, Delhiites wonder if ever lockdowns and containment zones will disappear from their lives, and the city will return to normal times. The city has gone through huge losses since the pandemic struck. A large section of its residents, enjoying good health and living, died within days of getting infected with the virus. This has shaken everyone's faith in the Capital's health system, and in its capacity to fight a common enemy. People know that wearing of masks and hand-hygiene will now define basic features of safe living. But there must be other ways to ensure a healthy environment for people. Going by the manner the viral infections spread, there are suggestions that some changes in town planning concepts can help a lot. The deadly virus spread because of a lack of "social distance" in the city's congested living conditions. The close proximity of people in hospitals, shopping centres, weekly markets, as also in housing apartments, eating places, offices, and schools and colleges contributed to the quick spread of the disease. If somebody had to visit a patient in a hospital, there was little possibility he could avoid getting infect-

ed and taking the infection back home. This was due to breathing in the same air as the sick patients, which was unavoidable due to poor ventilation and narrow corridors of the hospitals. The same was true of shopping malls, educational institutions or office complexes. A visit to a market for an essential work proved dangerous also

because even one Corona positive patient in the same area could easily infect many others. Most construction in the Capital in recent decades has been done with little regard for aesthetics or good ventilation. A preference for seamless connectivity has done much harm. In place of open markets, close-door malls have been built. Such

constructions bring commercial benefit but allow little ventilation or open spaces. The provision of ventilation was once a permanent feature of all construction, and was given up over time. The most common example of this was Government housing for its employees. The changes allow no escape for the foul air, and no possibility for the living rooms or hos-

pital corridors to have a feeling of fresh air. Most of the housing in the city is now too congested. Even the properly built independent houses are being rapidly converted into apartment blocks. This will further increase the density of the population. An infected person in one part of the block is enough to pass on the disease to many others in the

same block. A change in town planning rules, providing for compulsory ventilation can help much in such conditions. Doctors are now increasingly talking about good ventilation to keep oneself safe at home or elsewhere. The pride of the city, the Metro, has many of its stations overground with free flow of air from all directions. This looked odd during times of heat waves and heavy rains, but allowed free flow of air from all directions. The underground stations can be provided greater ventilation for similar benefits. Rajiv Chowk or Kashmere Gate stations can continue to host thousands of passengers at one time with enhanced ventilation. Other public places like Chandni Chowk, with its renovated thoroughfare, or the pedestrianized Karol Bagh, would continue to flourish with good ventilation for their visitors. Even customers might prefer such stores where there is a feeling of openness and no suffocation from bad air. Sarojini Nagar and Lajpat Nagar markets too would have to follow suit, if they have to avoid going back to their Seventies look. In fact, people might pick up their shopping from pavement stalls, for foul air disperses quickly in open spaces. While masks and vaccinations would play their role, a return to the old days of good ventilation could help the city regain confidence by minimising the danger of infections from foul, stagnant air.

GOODBYE 'SPEEDY'

Satyendra Prakash Dutt—Air India's dynamic public relations executive in New Delhi since its glory years with founder JRD Tata and legendary Commercial Director Bobby Cooka then at the helm—died tragically some days ago with his lungs ruthlessly choked by Coronavirus. His popularity among staff writers of leading newspapers enabled him to know early who was going to travel abroad on assignment, so

that he could ensure they travelled by Air India. Even formidable editors like S. Mulaonkar of the Hindustan Times, Frank Mores of The Times of India and the Indian Express, phoned him directly, to ensure convenient scheduling and reliable travel bookings. "Speedy" Dutt acquired his sobriquet from his initials SPD among his contemporaries during their undergraduate course in Physics and Chemistry in Hindu College in the mid-1950s. He is best

remembered as a genial, enterprising experimenter who put together rockets fired occasionally during the lunch break amidst much excitement. Once his rockets took off and disappeared from sight, he made tall claims about the height they must have reached. The spectators had no means of verifying it. The larger rockets could have exploded on take-off, but such was his wide popularity that even his Physics Professor Vishay Mitre Misra,

looked on indulgently from the doorway of his laboratory. When the 3rd Non-aligned Summit was held in Lusaka in Zambia in 1970, "Speedy" Dutt went all out to project around the venue Bobby Kooka's brilliant creation, Air India's brand ambassador—the feisty Maharajah—declaring it as "The most non-aligned airline from Osaka to Lusaka". When Chester Bowles took over as US Ambassador to India from Patrick Moynihan, "Speedy" Dutt went to

town with Air India's Maharaaja averring "Chester Bowles Moynihan Out". "Speedy" Dutt's proximity to journalists led to his marrying the Hindustan Times' star reporter of the 1970s and early 1980s, Prabha Dutt (nee Bahl). Following her untimely demise from a stroke in 1984, he single-handedly raised two illustrious daughters, Barkha and Bahar—media celebrities. An exemplary father, "Speedy"—may his noble soul rest in peace!

TAILPIECE

"Our hospitals are without beds, ventilators and oxygen, chemist shops are without medicines and we claim to be the pharmacy of the world," averred a critic of the Modi government.

Contributed by: Deepak Razdan, Ashok Tuteja and Samir Pal

India

New curbs imposed in HP amid Covid surge

Fresh restrictions including suspension of transport services will come into effect in the hill state from today

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 9 MAY

After Himachal Pradesh recorded 29,043 Covid cases and 333 deaths between 1 May and 8 May, the state government has now imposed fresh restrictions including suspension of transport services under Corona curfew to break the chain of Coronavirus transmission, which will come into effect from tomorrow.

An HP government official said the decision to impose the new restrictions, which will come into effect from 6 am on Monday, was taken at a high level meeting chaired by chief minister Jai Ram Thakur in view of sharp surge in Covid-19 cases and deaths in the state.

"All the shops in the state, except those dealing with daily needs and essential commodities, will remain closed. The daily needs and essential commodities shops will, however,



remain open only for three hours in a day and timing of the same would be fixed by the concerned Deputy Commissioners.

Besides, all the public transport would remain suspended till further orders and private vehicles would only be allowed in case of emergency services," he said.

Thakur had urged the people of the state to give their wholehearted support in effec-

tive implementation of Corona curfew to check the spread of Covid-19.

He urged them to remain indoors and go out only under unavoidable circumstances and said these decisions have been taken by the government to break the chain of virus transmission and in the larger interest of the life and safety of the people of the state.

The essential commodities and daily needs shops will

remain open from 8 am to 11 am in Sirmaur, Solan, Kangra, Hamirpur, Bilaspur, Una districts, from 10 am to 1 pm in Chamba, Shimla, Kullu, Mandi districts, from 9 am to 12 pm in Kinnaur district, and from 11 am to 2 pm in Lahaul Spiti district. The worst affected districts in the second wave of Coronavirus is Kangra with 8,750 active cases, followed by Solan (4,128), Mandi (3,627), Shimla (2,983), Sirmaur (2,978),

Hamirpur (2,350) and Bilaspur (2,342) with total cases increasing to 1,28,330 in the state.

The second Covid wave is proving more fatal in the state with Himachal recording 333 deaths till 8 May and the total death toll has increased to 1,817 as compared to 1,484 on 30 April.

Earlier on 5 May, the state government had imposed Corona curfew in the state and had ordered closure of all government, private offices, establishments till 16 May with exception to essential services as health, electricity, telecommunication, water supply, sanitation etc.

All work at civil worksites, horticultural, agricultural, other project sites, all industrial establishments were allowed to continue work in accordance with SOPs issued by the state government and these sectors will continue to function as per guidelines issued earlier.

2 HP medical colleges get PSA oxygen plants

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 9 MAY

The two medical colleges of Hamirpur and Chamba on Sunday got Pressure Swing Adsorption (PSA) oxygen plants, with a capacity of 300 litre oxygen per minute (LPM) and 400 LPM to cater to the needs of patients in these two districts.

The PSA oxygen plants were inaugurated by chief minister Jai Ram Thakur virtually from Shimla today and he said both these oxygen plants would ensure uninterrupted oxygen supply to Covid patients admitted in both these medical colleges.

Thakur said the Centre government had already sanctioned 13 oxygen plants for the state.

Of the seven plants sanctioned earlier, six plants had been established at Dharamshala, Mandi, Shimla, Chamba, Nahan, Hamirpur and the one at Tanda would be completed soon.

Six oxygen plants sanc-

tioned recently by the Union government for Himachal will be set up at civil hospital Palampur in Kangra district, zonal hospital Mandi, civil hospitals of Rohru and Khaneri in Shimla district, Dr YS Parmar government medical college, Nahan in Sirmaur district and regional hospital Solan, he stated.

He urged the Centre government to increase the oxygen quota for the state from the existing 15 MT to 30 MT and said the enhanced capacity will be required to meet the demand of the state.

Besides, the state government had also taken up the matter of providing 5000 D-Type and 3000 B-Type oxygen cylinders to the state so as to meet the ever increasing demand of oxygen in the State and to maintain a smooth supply chain of the oxygen, the CM said.

He further stated that the PSA plant at Hamirpur will ensure uninterrupted oxygen supply to the 30-bed fully dedicated Covid ward estab-

lished in Hamirpur medical college at a cost of about Rs 1 crore.

The facility had been set up in a record time of three months and was supported by 300 LPM PSA plant to provide uninterrupted oxygen supply to the patient care area.

He said that an oxygen facility has been provided to all the thirty Covid beds and twenty ventilators have been set up for the sick patients.

The ward will have six ICUs, four HDUs, one OT (operation theatre), labour room and twenty oxygen supported beds to provide intensive care services to Covid sick patients round the clock, he added.

Thakur added that the oxygen plant at Chamba will go a long way in facilitating the people of the district as it takes 2 days to bring oxygen cylinders from Mandi to the medical emergency and these plants would provide 24X7 oxygen to the patients.

Hospital HoD, Director should know about patient's medical records: HC

PTI
NEW DELHI, 9 MAY

In the medical field, the Head of Department (HoD) and the Director of an institution or hospital should know about the sickness of a patient and nature of treatment being provided, the Delhi High Court has held.

A bench of Chief Justice D N Patel and Justice Jasmeet Singh said that sharing a patient's ailment and treatment

details by the treating doctor with the HoD or the Director of the institution does not constitute a breach of confidential information, rather it is meant for the welfare of the patient.

"On the contrary, such consultation may prove helpful in giving treatment to the patient....," the court said.

The observation by the bench came on a woman's plea seeking directions that details

of the mental illness of her son, who is being treated at the Institute of Human Behaviour and Allied Sciences (IHBAS), and his treatment be not shared with third parties.

The woman had initially moved a plea before a single judge seeking directions to IHBAS to maintain the confidentiality and privacy of the medical records of her son.

IHBAS, represented by advocate Tushar Sannu, had assured



Healthcare Act of 2017 an exception has been carved out with regard to sharing of medical information with other health professionals so that

proper care and treatment can be provided to the patient. The bench further said, "In our view also, it ought to be kept in mind that the Head of the

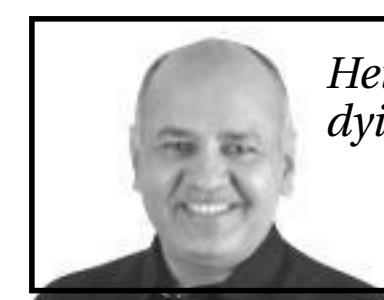
Department and the Director of IHBAS ought to know the nature of sickness and the treatment of the patient. This is for the welfare of the patient. It ought to be kept in mind that to ensure whether the treatment is going in the correct direction or not, it has to be monitored by the Head of the Department and the Director of the IHBAS."

The court said that such consultation was akin to arguments in a case where when

ever the main lawyer is arguing, "he or she is always taking assistance from the other junior lawyers associated with him or her and vice versa".

It declined to entertain the woman's appeal, saying that there was no error in the single judge's order.

The bench also directed IHBAS that as assured by it, the patient's medical information should not be shared with any other third party.



Heinous crime by Centre to export vaccines when people dying in our own country

DELHI DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER MANISH SISODIA
ATTACKING THE CENTRE OVER THE EXPORT OF CORONAVIRUS VACCINES

India

THUMBNAILS



Migrants prepare to leave the city due to surge in coronavirus cases, in New Delhi on Sunday. ■ AGENCIES

Leopard beaten to death: A case was registered against five people for beating a leopard to death in Sohelia wildlife sanctuary here, officials said on Sunday. DFO Prakhar Gupta said a leopard was found dead with injury marks on the body at the Bankatwa range of the forest. In post-mortem examination, it was revealed that the animal was beaten to death with sticks, he said. ■ PTI

Tiger found dead in MP: A tiger was found dead at a forest in the Kanha Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh's Balaghat district, an official said on Sunday. The carcass of the feline, aged around 12 to 13 years, was spotted on Saturday by a patrolling team in the Bhaishanghat range, located over 400 km from the state capital Bhopal, KTR field director S K Singh said. ■ PTI

Maratha quota: Maratha quota activists on Sunday staged a protest at Diva in Maharashtra's Thane against the Supreme Court's decision to strike down law granting them reservation in admissions and jobs. At least a dozen office-bearers and activists of the Bharatiya Maratha Sangh tonsured their heads and displayed banners opposing the verdict. ■ PTI

Guj Dy CM recovers: Gujarat deputy CM Nitin Patel on Sunday said that he has recovered from Covid-19 infection and got discharged from a hospital in Ahmedabad, where he was admitted. ■ PTI

States, UTs to get 46 lakh more vaccine doses in three days

NEW DELHI, 9 MAY

The government today informed that it has so far provided more than 17.56 crore vaccine doses to states and Union Territories free of cost and planned to provide 46 lakh in the next three days.

In a Press note the Health Ministry also said more than 72 lakh doses are still available with the States/UTs to be administered. "The Government of India has so far provided more than 17.56 crore vaccine doses (17,56,20,810) to States/UTs Free of Cost. Of this, the total consumption including wastages is 16,83,78,796 doses (as per data)," reads the Press release.

The government also mentioned that states with negative balance are showing more consumption (including wastage) than vaccine supplied as they have not reconciled the vaccine they have supplied. To Armed Forces. More than 46 lakh (46,61,960) vaccine doses will be received by the States/UTs within the next three days.

Of the doses available with the States include Bihar (3,12,713), Maharashtra (3,25,180), Delhi (3,41,202), Karnataka (4,50,787), Madhya Pradesh (4,57,114), Jharkhand (4,61,934), Haryana (4,78,795), Gujarat (5,01,396), Tamil Nadu (6,71,301) and Uttar Pradesh (8,78,330).

A total of 74,03,950 doses have been received by Tamil Nadu followed by Kerala (78,97,790), Bihar (84,00,970), Madhya Pradesh (92,79,720), Karnataka (1,06,26,900), West Bengal (1,20,83,340), Gujarat (1,39,71,790), Rajasthan (1,42,87,360), Uttar Pradesh (1,47,31,270), and Maharashtra (1,77,62,470). ■ SNS

PM dials CMs of Bihar, K'taka, Punjab, U'khand on Covid-19

Takes details of availability of ICU beds in hospitals, oxygen supply and distribution of vaccines

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, 9 MAY

Prime Minister Narendra Modi today held telephonic discussions with the chief ministers of Bihar, Karnataka, Punjab and Uttarakhand to know the Covid-19 situation in their respective states.

He spoke with Bihar CM Nitish Kumar, Karnataka CM BS Yediyurappa, Punjab CM Amarinder Singh and Uttarakhand CM Tirath Singh Rawat separately to know the situation of pandemic as well as the steps being taken to curtail the spread of the virus.

The PM also took the details of availability of ICU beds in hospitals, oxygen supply as well as distribution of vaccines in these four states.

India in the past 24 hours have registered 4,03,738 fresh Covid-19 cases, pushing the tally to 2,22,96,414 as per the Union Health Ministry. The death toll mounted to 2,42,362 with 4,092 people succumbing to the disease in the last 24 hours, the data updated at 8 a.m. showed.

The CMs briefed the PM about the recovery rate, corona curfew, temporary Covid hospitals, public awareness



A Covid-19 patient inside an isolation centre, in New Delhi on Sunday. ■ AGENCIES

Now villages also left to the mercy of God: Rahul

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, 9 MAY

Amid surge of Covid cases in the rural areas, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday hit out at the Narendra Modi-led Central government for not tackling the situation.

"Shehron ke baad ab gaon bhi parmatma-nirhar (After cities, villages also left to the mercy of God," he said in a tweet, attaching an image of an Hindi caption reading "Covid-19: Mahamari ki

Mucormycosis: Gujarat sets up special wards

The rise in cases of mucormycosis or 'black fungus' infection among Covid-19 survivors, the Gujarat government has started setting up separate wards in hospitals for such patients and has procured 5,000 vials of a medicine used in its treatment.

Gujarat has so far report-

dusri lahar ab gaon mein barpa rahi hai kehr (Covid-19: The second wave of the pandemic now overwhelming villages)".

Gandhi had earlier tweeted the country doesn't need a new house for the PM but oxygen, attaching photos of people in line for the life-saving gas, and work on the Central Vista.

In another tweet which displayed a graph on the Covid surge and falling vaccinations, he had termed the situation "The Movid pandemic."

ed over 100 cases of mucormycosis, a serious but rare fungal infection which has left many patients blind and is also causing other serious issues.

Currently, 19 patients are undergoing treatment for it at the Ahmedabad Civil Hospital, as per the state government.

Two separate dedicated wards having 60 beds each have been set up at the Ahmedabad Civil Hospital.

Kharge urges PM to convene all-party meeting on Covid-19

NEW DELHI, 9 MAY

Senior Congress leader Mallikarjun Kharge on Sunday urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to immediately convene an all-party meeting to collectively tackle the pandemic.

In a letter to the PM, he alleged that the Union government seems to have abandoned its duties towards the people and the situation requires a collective effort.

He also sent his set of six suggestions to tackle the pandemic and said the Prime Minister's Office alone cannot handle it. "I request you to convene an all-party meeting to collectively forge a holistic blueprint to tackle the pandemic. This would be a good opportunity for us to meaningfully reflect on, and implement the recommendations of experts and activists, whose advice has unfortunately been ignored so far," he told the PM. ■ PTI



A Covid-19 patient receives free oxygen provided by Sikh organisation, in Indirapuram, Ghaziabad, on Sunday. ■ IANS

HP achieves target of zero vaccine wastage: Himachal Pradesh government has achieved the target of zero vaccine shortage, a tough task in a hilly state with a difficult topography. HP National Health Mission director Nipun Jindal stated that 19,86,812 doses were administered with total stock received was 21,19,710 and stock available at cold chain points after utilisation was 160,750. Meanwhile, after recording 29,043 Covid cases and 333 deaths till 8 May, the state government imposed new restrictions, including suspension of transport services under Corona curfew and these will come into effect from tomorrow.

SNS

Kerala to convert fever clinics into Covid clinics: As part of expanding Covid-related treatment facilities, in view of surge in the number of cases, Kerala government has decided to convert fever clinics in all hospitals into Covid clinics. These clinics should follow treatment protocol and referral protocol, says per a Health Department guideline. They must establish Covid OP for consultation, lab services and medicines for positive patients. The department directed that arrangement for oxygen beds and 5 ventilators be made immediately at taluk hospitals. Kerala recorded 35,801 new cases on Sunday. The test positivity rate was registered at 28.88 per cent.

SNS

Makeshifts hospitals to come up across HP: Himachal Pradesh CM Jai Ram Thakur on Sunday said the government, apart from increasing bed capacity in various health facilities and Covid centres, is constructing makeshift hospitals in different parts of the state to tackle Covid patients' rush. One such hospital was coming up at Bhangrotu in Mandi district which was almost ready and the testing process regarding oxygen supply was in the final stage.

SNS

Lockdown extended for 7 days in J&K: Amid a surge in Covid-19 cases, the Jammu and Kashmir administration on Sunday extended the lockdown in all 20 districts by 7 days till 17 May. According to the new Covid-19 guidelines, only essential services will be allowed to operate in Jammu and Kashmir. Normal life remained affected as the lockdown entered the 11th day on Sunday. Markets remained shut and public transport was off the roads. Police has arrested 106 persons in Kashmir for violating curfew restrictions and 29 vehicles have been seized. ■ SNS

4,200 MT of liquid medical oxygen delivered across India: The Railways has delivered nearly 4,200 tonnes of liquid medical oxygen in more than 268 tankers to various states since 19 April, the national transporter said on Sunday. So far, 68 'Oxygen Express' trains have completed their journeys. Till now, 293 tonnes of LMO has been unloaded in Maharashtra, 1,230 tonnes in UP, 271 tonnes to MP, 555 tonnes in Haryana, 123 tonnes in Telangana, 40 tonnes in Rajasthan and 1,679 tonnes in Delhi. ■ PTI

LOST SOULS



Relatives mourn after the death of a family member due to Covid-19, as coronavirus cases surge in the national capital, at LNJP Hospital, in New Delhi on Sunday. ■ AGENCIES

Our Red Cross society has sent medical supplies to India: China

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, 9 MAY

fight the pandemic. India has accepted emergency medical supplies from nearly 40 countries to grapple with the surge in Coronavirus cases in the country. However, it has not acknowledged having taken any official assistance from China.

India received from South Korea today the first consignment of medical supplies.

"A valued partner in our extended neighbourhood. First consignment of 100 oxygen concentrators, 40 ventilators & other anti-epidemic supplies donated by the Red Cross Society of China (RCS) arrived in India today by Chinese cargo flight from Chengdu, China," Chinese Ambassador Sun Weidong tweeted.

He said the RCS has also decided to provide \$1 million in cash assistance to the Indian Red Cross Society through the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to help India

fight the pandemic. Fresh consignments of medical supplies have also arrived from UK, Japan, Singapore, Mauritius and some European Union (EU) countries.

Emirates to transport Covid-19 relief items

Emirates said on Sunday it will not charge NGOs anything for transporting their Covid relief material on its flights from Dubai to India.

India has been badly hit by the second wave of coronavirus and hospitals in several states are reeling under shortage of health workers, vaccines, oxygen, drugs and beds.

"Emirates will offer cargo capacity free of charge on an as available" basis on all of its flights to nine cities in India, to help international NGOs rapidly deliver relief supplies, where it is needed," the airline said in a statement.

Haryana CM concerned over Covid surge in villages

CHANDIGARH, 9 MAY

Former two-time Haryana chief minister and Congress leader Bhupinder Hooda on Sunday advised the state government to formulate a special policy for the rural areas with the sudden surge in Covid-19 cases.

"A large population in villages has been hit by Covid and they are fighting for their lives due to lack of treatment. While the villages have been hit, there is no system of testing or to treat them, forcing the people to use home remedies to save their lives," said Hooda, currently the Leader of Opposition in the Haryana Assembly.

"There have been reports of deaths in village after village and many families have lost their loved ones, but the figure of deaths in rural areas is not being shown in the government records," he said. ■ IANS

Covid-19 report shows CM Chauhan hiding actual data from PM Modi

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

BHOJPAL, 9 MAY

Madhya Pradesh seems to be a state that has two different positivity rates of Covid-19. One that is told in the state's corona control core group meeting chaired by CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan, and the other, which the CM tells PM Narendra Modi over the phone apparently to please the PM about the state government's efforts for controlling corona.

The different positivity rates were mentioned in two official statements that were released by the state government in a gap of about two hours on 8 May.

As per the first government statement released at around 6 p.m., it was mentioned that Chouhan spoke to Modi over phone. It was also stated that the CM told the PM that the corona situation was continuously improving in the

state and the infection positivity rate had come down to 17.43 per cent.

Two hours later, another state government Press release at around 8 p.m. mentioned that the CM chaired the virtual meeting of the state's corona control core group. The committee comprises ministers and senior officials.

According to the state government, it was informed in the meeting that the corona infection positivity rate in MP was 19 per cent.

The Opposition Congress took strong exception to the discrepancy in the officially mentioned positivity rate of corona in the state.

"CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan has always been lying to the people of MP about the real and grave situation of Covid-19. He has now gone a step ahead and lied to the Prime Minister too," Madhya Pradesh Congress Spokesperson K K Mishra said.

The curfew was supposed to be lifted at 6 a.m. on 10 May.

Enforced on 12 April given the rise in coronavirus positive cases, the curfew was later extended subsequently after every one week till 10 May.

told The Statesman today. "When the state government is itself providing two different figures of Covid-19 positivity rate and that too in just a gap of a couple of hours, one can easily understand how the otherwise grim figures of corona are being jiggled in MP," Mishra charged.

In terms of Covid-19, the positivity rate is the percentage of people who test positive out of all the tests done.

Covid curfew extended in Bhopal till 17 May

The district administration on Sunday extended the Covid-19 induced curfew in the Madhya Pradesh capital till 17 May, an official said.

The curfew was supposed to be lifted at 6 a.m. on 10 May.

According to a Rajasthan Cabinet decision on Thursday, a strict lockdown was imposed from 10 to 24 May. Under it, weddings would be permitted only in courts or at home.

Marriage only at home or court, strict rules in Delhi from today

PTI & IANS

NEW DELHI, 9 MAY

services - Delhi metro rail will remain shut till the DDMA assesses the outcome of the lockdown in the city and number of cases till next order.

Marriage functions will not be permitted at gardens, halls, hotels or any other public places, except at homes with only 20 people.

"There will be complete prohibition on organising any marriage ceremony at public places/ marriage hall/banquet hall/hotels and similar places. Marriages may however be organised in Court or at home, in which not more than 20 people will be allowed to participate," an order issued

on Sunday by Delhi Chief Secretary Vijay Dev read.

Individuals moving in the city will have to produce a soft copy of e-pass issued by the Delhi government. DJ sound, catering facilities will not be allowed at any marriage function across the city till 17 May.

The DDMA has directed Delhi police to ensure effective checking of movement of persons and vehicles by putting adequate

number of checking points with objective to prevent unnecessary movement of people on roads during curfew," DDMA order stated.

During a field visit of DIG Ravindra Gaur, two beat constables of Kota Rural Police, Asharam of Digod police station and Navneet of Kaithun police station, informed him that they had persuaded three families to call off weddings scheduled for this month, DSP and CO (Itawa) Vijayshankar Sharma told.

The beat constables were given a reward of Rs 1,100 each, he said. The DIG then directed officials to conduct meetings at gram panchayat level in presence of influential locals and public representatives to persuade families to cancel upcoming weddings, Sharma said.

Under the supervision of Kota Rural SP Sharad Choudhary, the campaign was launched at gram panchayat level on Saturday morning with beat constables and SHOs interacting with families, resulting in postponement of more than 75 weddings in a single day, the DSP said.



In the midst of #COVID19, we must specially celebrate the untiring efforts of all those brave mothers who are managing family obligations...

PUNJAB CHIEF MINISTER AMARINDER SINGH
IN HIS MOTHER'S DAY MESSAGE

The Statesman
NEW DELHI, MONDAY 10 MAY 2021

05

THUMBNAILS



Beneficiaries wait in a queue to get vaccinated as Surat Municipal Corporation organises a Covid-19 vaccination drive at SMC Hall in Katargam, Surat, on Sunday.

IANS

Limestone quarry tragedy: The Andhra Pradesh government has instituted a high-level enquiry into Saturday's explosion that rocked a limestone quarry in Kadapa district, leaving 10 people dead, and several critically injured.

IANS

13 Covid +ve prisoners escape: Thirteen prisoners escaped from a jail in Haryana's Rewari, a dedicated facility for Covid-19 positive inmates in the state.

PTI

CRPF DIG: An enquiry has been ordered against a CRPF DIG Surinder Prasad posted in Bihar after a woman doctor complained that he allegedly 'misbehaved' with her.

PTI

NIA takes over Mumbai uranium recovery case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 9 MAY

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has taken over probe into the seizure of natural uranium worth over Rs 21 crore in Mumbai, its spokesperson said on Sunday.

The Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) had arrested two persons - Jigar Jayesh Pandya and Abu Tahir Afzal Choudhary - on the night of 5 May and seized 7.1-kg uranium worth about Rs 21.30 crore from them.

According to the NIA spokesperson, the agency re-regis-

MK Stalin bats for strict lockdown in Tamil Nadu

Chennai runs out of ICU beds, state govt opens war room to combat Covid crisis

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHENNAI, 9 MAY

In his first Cabinet meeting on Sunday, Tamil Nadu chief minister M.K. Stalin called upon ministers and officials to implement a strict lockdown in the state to prevent the spread of the Covid-19 virus.

Stalin said in a statement the lockdown is being enforced because of 'unavoidable reasons'. The decision was taken after a review meeting with district Collectors and medical experts.

The state government has set up a Covid-19 war room that will monitor the available beds, connecting ambulance services, and oxygen supply availability. Stalin on 5 May had informed the officials to set up a Covid-19 war room. The already existing Unified Command Centre (UCC) in Chennai, will now function as a war room and act as a single nodal point for all Covid-related control activities in the state.

The state is going for complete lockdown (with few relaxations) for two weeks across the state between 4 am from 10 May and 4 am on 24 May to combat the spread of Covid-19.

Tamil Nadu today registered an all-time high of 28,897



new cases, and the total number of infections has touched 13,80,259.

The capital city of Chennai today registered 7,130 cases. With this, the total number of persons affected by the pandemic in the metropolis has touched 3,90,589.

Chennai is running out of ICU beds for Covid-19 patients as demand spikes. According to a government bulletin released on 7 May, the Chennai district had 12 vacant ICU beds for Covid-19 and 258 oxygenated beds in its hospitals.

To combat the issue related with the pandemic the state government started a war room in Chennai.

Medical and family welfare minister Ma Subramanian, who inspected the war room at the Directorate of Public Health headquarters, said the war room will act as a nodal

point and command centre for managing bed availability for both government and private hospitals, especially for critically ill patients requiring oxygen.

According to health secretary J Radhakrishnan, anybody who contacts 104 or 108 and gets no solution, the issue gets escalated to the war room as it monitors, both 104 and 108. It will cut down the waiting period for oxygen and ambulances.

Radhakrishnan also said the war room, which has about 30 staff headed by two IAS officers (Dr Nandakumar and Dr Uma), will also be monitoring the requirement of oxygen in the future and by how much it expected to go up.

Subramanian said the war room rose to the challenge of helping a private hospital with oxygen cylinders and saved the lives of at least 20

people.

Meanwhile, the minister said that the state has already paid for 15 lakh doses of the Covid-19 vaccine and is waiting for its arrival.

Meanwhile, Stalin has said that his government will be an inclusive one and a people's government. In a letter to the party cadres, he called upon them to work alongside the cadres of other political parties for the total development of the state, adds IANS.

He called upon the party cadres to forget on the bitter election campaign and asked them to be in unison with workers of other parties for the welfare of the people.

Stalin in his letter said: "This government will focus on the development of the state of Tamil Nadu on all fronts to fulfil the aspirations of the people who felt let down in the past ten years. Instead of cursing the darkness it will be better to light a lamp and instead of complaining about the summer let us prepare to welcome the spring."

The statement of Stalin also seems to be a message to the leaders of other political parties, including the Opposition AIADMK and the BJP and he seems to be reaching out to other parties for the development of the state.

FRIEND IN NEED



Kerala Fire and Rescue Services and Civil Defence workers provide food to people during Covid-induced lockdown to contain the pandemic, in Kochi, on Sunday.

IANS

Govt issues orders to recruit ex-Army doctors to deal with Covid

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 9 MAY

imum period of 11 months, the Defence Ministry today said.

A fixed monthly lump sum amount will be admissible by deducting the basic pension from salary drawn at the time of retirement plus specialist pay wherever applicable.

The amount would remain unchanged for the term of the contract and no other allowances would be paid. The medical officers to be recruited are required to be medically fit for any civilian standards.

Under the 'Tour of Duty' scheme, 400 ex-AMC/SSC medical officers, released between 2017 and 2021, are expected to be recruited on contract basis for a maxi-

out of the pandemic.

The AFMS has already deployed additional doctors, including specialists, super specialists and paramedics, while Short Service Commissioned doctors of AFMS have been granted extension till 31 December which has augmented the strength by 238 more doctors.

In addition, ex-Defence doctors have been roped in to provide online free consultation on e-Sanjeevani OPD to all citizens of the country. The service can be availed on the website <https://esanjeevaniopd.in/>.

Andhra govt opens war rooms for smooth O2 supply

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
AMARAVATI(AP), 9 MAY

The Andhra Pradesh government has opened a State Oxygen War Room (SOWR) to ensure seamless management of oxygen supply to all districts and thereafter to hospitals for treatment of critical Covid-19 patients.

A District Oxygen War Room has also been established in each of the 13 districts for the purpose. The Centre has allotted 590 tonnes of oxygen supplies to AP.

While the current consumption is about 500 tonnes, the demand is expected to go up further and, accordingly, the state requested the Centre to increase the allocation to 1,000 tonnes.

Covid-19 second wave has been wide spread and it is identified that oxygen is one of the most valuable resources which needs to be procured, transported and consumed with utmost care.

It is extremely important to ensure seamless management

of oxygen supply to the state, from state to the districts and from districts to hospitals and refills and from refills to the hospitals, which are the consuming points without any chain break on day to day and hourly basis," principal secretary (Health) Anil Kumar Singh said in an order.

The war rooms would have nodal officers from industries, revenue, disaster management, police, transport, health and Information Technology departments.

The State Oxygen War Room would be responsible for monitoring the production, storage, transport, distribution, consumption and supply chain of medical oxygen at the state level, he noted.

The industries department would coordinate the overall production and supply of Liquid Medical Oxygen from the source points.

Besides, the industries department would also be responsible for ensuring oxygen



production capacity augmentation in the state by bringing all the related industries into the supply chain and making the sick units operational.

The transport department has been entrusted with the responsibility to include as many cryogenic vehicles as possible in the fleet operating in AP's oxygen supply chain.

Singhal asked the police department to ensure unre-

stricted movement of vehicles carrying LMO within and outside the state, by creating a green channel.

The principal secretary directed the police to be "very cautious" and not intimidate the drivers of oxygen vehicles.

On oxygen management at the hospital level, Singhal said the number of beds should be increased only upon assessing the oxygen supplies, after informing the SOWR about any increase.

"Every hospital would be required to maintain the consumption below 20 litres per minute."

Any hospital exceeding this average is to be understood as mismanaged," the Principal Secretary cautioned.

Meanwhile, the state government on Sunday appointed Industries Department special chief secretary R Karikal Valavenn as the officer in-charge for coordinating the movement and supply of liquid medical oxygen from Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.

WB: Cabinet to take oath today

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, 9 MAY

However Mr Mitra, who held finance and industry portfolios in the last two terms, will be sworn-in as Cabinet minister for the third time. The Cabinet ministers' list include a host of veterans including Mr Partha Chatterjee, who held the education portfolio last time, Mr Subrata Mukherjee, who had panchayat raj, Mr Firad Hakim (urban development), Mr Javed Khan (disaster management), Shobhondeb Chattopadhyay (power), Sadhan Pande (who held consumer affairs), Jyoti Priya Mallick (food), Saumen Mahapatra (environment), Chandrima Bhattacharya (health, as minister of state), Aroop Biswas (youth affairs), Arup Roy (cooperation), Moloy Ghatak (labour), Chandranath Sinha (fisheries), Bratya Basu (IT), Dr Sashi Panja (women and child development), Swapan Debnath (animal resources development), Siddiquillah Choudhury (mass education and library), Sujit Bose (fire services) and Ujjal Biswas (correctional administration).

KCR: Relax vaccination rules

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD, 9 MAY

Telangana chief minister K Chandrasekhar Rao today urged Union health minister Harsh Vardhan to relax vaccination rules and give priority to street vendors, autorickshaws and cab drivers, vaccinating them first to tackle the spread of virus.

Andhra Pradesh government today sanctioned a whopping sum of Rs 310 crore for setting up of oxygen plants and procuring cryogenic oxygen cylinders for transportation of the most crucial resource for treating Covid patients.

This includes buying 50 cryogenic oxygen tankers vehicles and setting up oxygen generation plants in 49 hospitals within next 3

months along with 10,000 additional oxygen pipelines. NHAI will help with 42 oxygen plants.

Work has begun at four sites at Amaravaram, East Godavari district, Madanapalli in Chittoor, Tadepalle geddem in West Godavari and at Hindupur in Anantapur. For remaining 38 sites vendors and work sites have been finalised but will start after nod from NHAI headquarters.

The state government has set up a state oxygen monitoring cell within the State Covid-19 Command centre. The cell will assess oxygen requirements and projections for future needs and liaison with oxygen manufacturers and over see transportation and supply to Covid hospitals in the state.

Headed by IAS offi-

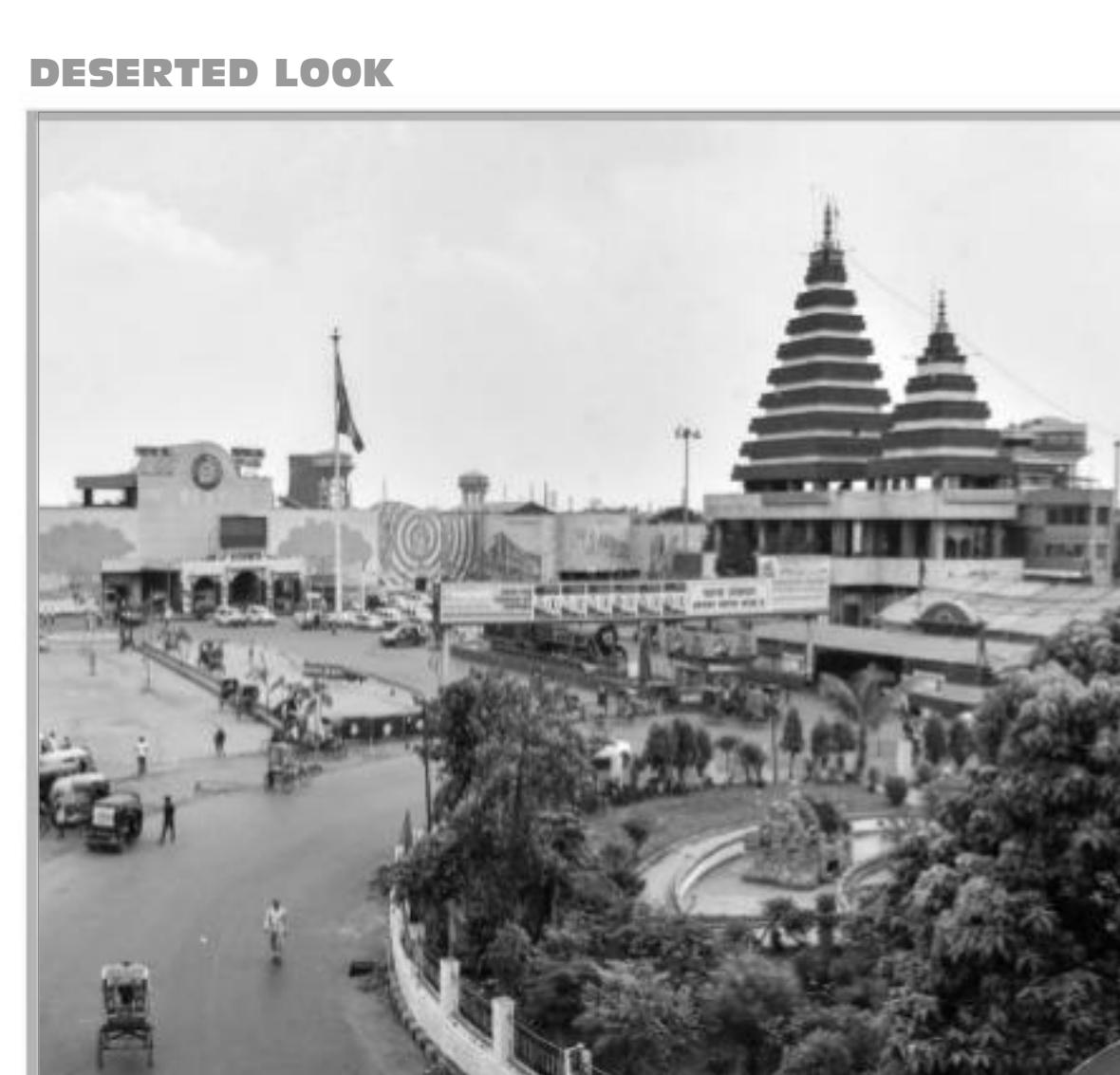
cer the cell also includes officials from industries, transport and medical departments. Navy and Vizag Steel Plant has already been roped in to augment its oxygen supply and help with operations and maintenance of its oxygen plants.

Andhra Pradesh today reported 22,164 new positive cases along with 92 deaths.

Covid-hit Maoists

Telangana police have urged Covid-hit Maoists to surrender and avail better medical treatment in hospitals. Superintendent of police, Bhadravati-Kothagudem, Sunil Dutta advised Maoist leaders and cadres after learning that several of them have contracted the virus but were prevented from seeking treatment by the leaders.

A deserted view of the station road near Mahavir Temple amid a total lockdown, in Patna, on Sunday.



IANS

EPS, OPS tussle continues in AIADMK over Opp leader

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE
CHENNAI, 9 MAY

The fight for the top slot as Opposition leader in Tamil Nadu continues unabated between former chief minister Edappadi K Palaniswami (EPS) and his deputy, O Panneerselvam (OPS), in the AIADMK.

While the supporters of EPS are pitching to make him the Opposition leader as they argue that the party won maximum seats from his home turf of

Salem where the party won 10 out of the 11 seats at stake. In western Tamil Nadu and northern Tamil Nadu also the writ of EPS ran across the constituencies. Moreover, EPS won his Edappadi seat with a margin of 93,802 votes over his DMK rival Sampath Kumar, the highest vote margin of an incumbent CM in the history of Tamil Nadu elections. While the AIADMK could win 32 of the 54 seats in western Tamil Nadu, which is the bastion of EPS, in South Tamil

Nadu which is considered the stronghold of OPS, the party could muster only 16 of the 60 seats. The AIADMK was strong in this area where the 'Thevar' community of OPS was ruling the roost especially in Theni district - the home turf of OPS.

However, in the 2021 Assembly polls, the only AIADMK leader elected from Theni district was OPS from his traditional constituency of Bodinayakanur with a victory margin of 11,021 votes over his nearest DMK

Kerala TV journalist Vipin Chand dies of Covid

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, 9 MAY

Kerala Television journalist Vipin Chand passed away on Sunday while undergoing treatment for Covid-19.

The 42-year-old journalist who had contracted Covid-19, was under treatment in a private hospital in Kochi after developing pneumonia. He suffered a heart attack early on Sunday, leading to his sudden demise, doctors said.

A senior chief reporter at

Malayalam news channel, *Mathrubhumi News*, Vipin began his career with the *India Vision* TV channel in 2005. He is survived by his wife Sreedevi and son Maheshwar.

Vipin was actively involved in election coverage for the news channel during the recently held Kerala Assembly polls. Chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan expressed his condolences on Vipin's death.

Following the death, the Indian Newspapers Society, Kerala wing, has urged the state government to declare journalists as 'frontline warriors', and to ensure vaccine on a priority basis.

Union minister of state for external affairs V Muraleedharan said: "Media persons are among the groups who are working in the war front against Covid-19, even sacrificing their lives. They should be given the defensive shield".

States like Karnataka, MP and Punjab have already declared journalists as frontline workers in the fight against Covid.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

It is notified for the information of passengers that the cancellation period of following earlier announced cancelled trains due to operation reason, has been extended upto 17.05.2021 as under:-

EXTENSION OF CANCELLATION OF UNRESERVED MEMU/EMU EXPRESS TRAINS

Train No. & Name

04184/04183 Delhi Jn - Tundla Jn - Delhi Jn MEMU Special Express
04417/04418 Hathras Qila - Delhi Jn - Hathras Qila MEMU Special Express
04

Mamata's template

Mamata Banerjee has effected an impressive start to her renewed innings with a blueprint to contain the spread of Covid-19. Chief among the initiatives must be Thursday's announcement to ensure a 40 per cent increase in the number of beds in all hospitals and nursing homes, the latter by and large private enterprises. The initiative will increase the existing capacity from 20,000 to 30,000 beds. A substantial addition to the number of beds has been direly imperative after the exponential rise in Covid afflictions in West Bengal. It was indeed a painful sight to see patients waiting for beds, either sitting on benches or lying on the floor. Plans to draft medical and nursing students into the battle against the pandemic are on the anvil, and ought to help supplement the crippling shortage of medical professionals. Closely intertwined with the dearth of accommodation in hospitals is the crippling shortage of vaccines. And it shall be a matter of regret for a while that the Chief Minister "has not received any reply from the Prime Minister to my letters". The problem gets worse confounded as "our oxygen supplies are being diverted to other states". Given the magnitude of the crisis, the allegation cannot readily be dismissed. It devolves on the Centre to investigate and send supplies to the state, however belatedly. She has bared her angst with two sharp queries - "Why is the Centre allowing people to suffer and the younger generation to die for lack of oxygen? Why can't the Centre spend Rs 30,000 crore for universalisation of vaccination when Rs 20,000 crore can be spent to reconstruct Parliament House?"

Among the restrictions that the Chief Minister has announced, quite the most critical - and terribly overdue - is the suspension of local train services, verily the major source of infection over the past several months. It was well-established that there would be a spike in infections; regrettably though the Railway ministry gave the green signal, so to speak, of course in consultation with the state government. Admittedly, it was an additional mode of transport for daily commuters from the suburbs of Kolkata; but the benefits have been outweighed by the risks, often mortal. The 50 per cent cut in Metro services ought also to check the frightful spread. But the reduction in public transport will hit people hard as will the imposition of a total lockdown, not the least in a state that has a torpid economy. The other major decision taken by the State government - of seeking negative RT-PCR test results from those entering the state - runs counter to the advisory of the Indian Council of Medical Research which has cited the crippling shortage of kits to justify suspension of tests on those who are healthy. In any event, while such a decision can be implemented at airports, thousands of passengers continue to enter the state on trains and buses with scarcely any checks.

Kerala bucks trend

Although Kerala has bucked the trend of scrupulously alternating between the Left Democratic Front led by the CPI(M) and the United Democratic Front led by the Congress by voting the LDF for a second consecutive term, it continues to remain a two-front State notwithstanding the BJP trying to muscle in by promoting a third front with Bharat Dharma Jana Sena, political party of the populous Ezhava community, as a junior partner. The vertically split Kerala unit of the Congress could not name its Chief Minister candidate which cost the UDF dearly. The BJP tried to utilise Central agencies like the Enforcement Directorate, CBI and the NIA to tarnish the image of Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan in the Swapna Suresh gold smuggling case. Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his very first campaign rally in the State, which took place during the period of Lent, compared Vijayan to Judas who betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver, saying the LDF sold Kerala for a few pieces of gold. But the voters of Kerala were not swayed. Even the solitary Nemom seat the BJP held in the outgoing Assembly could not be retained. Compared to its 2016 performance, the number of votes polled by the BJP has come down by 428,531. However, the gold smuggling scam provided campaign fodder for the opposition UDF, notably the Congress, which had not much going for it otherwise.

Notwithstanding the two-pronged attack by the UDF and the BJP, the LDF won an impressive mandate by bagging 99 seats in the 140-member House. All the high-voltage investigations by the ED, NIA and the CBI designed to embarrass the government of Vijayan proved futile. Weighed down by two successive floods and the Covid-19 pandemic, it was a testing period for the LDF. Vijayan proved his mettle by his calm, calculated administration. The Scheduled castes, once a vote bank of the Congress, have shifted their loyalty to the LDF, as 13 of the 14 reserved seats went to Vijayan's party. The new LDF government will have one more constituent, the Kerala Congress (M), a party of Christians. The UDF, which held 47 seats in the last Assembly, could retain only 41 seats.

There has been a steady decline in the number of seats the Congress won and increase in the number of seats the Muslim League, senior partner in the UDF, clinched. If this trend continues, in the not-too-distant future the ML would replace the Congress as leader of the UDF. For the BJP-led front, the BDJS, its lone ally, could not bring much to the table. Its Chief Minister candidate, E Sreedharan, belonging to the majority community, was defeated in Palakkad, his home constituency where Hindus preponderate, by a Muslim candidate fielded by the Congress. Kerala, a multi-faith state, will continue to remain a distant dream for the BJP unless the party accepts a major makeover in its outlook and policies.

Health for Poor

A health event is a bigger risk to farmers than an unsuccessful crop. Care at India's public hospitals is technically free. But in reality, the poor quality of care and a lack of human resources and equipment have impeded them from properly coping with overwhelming patient loads

Healthy families are the foundation for healthy communities. There is nothing more important than good health and reliable healthcare for the family. Universal health coverage aims to ensure that all people receive quality and adequate healthcare without suffering financial hardship. The biggest challenge is to combat the multiple scourges ravaging the world's poor and sick. We are facing more pressing health challenges than ever before and health-related expenditure has now become a primary route to impoverishment and bankruptcy.

India took a great leap in public health insurance when it launched its national healthcare insurance programme, the Prime Minister Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY) and the Ayushman Bharat - meaning "Long Life India" - insurance scheme formulated alongside are the country's flagship structures created to help universalise health care. They are intended to ensure that economically vulnerable families get the medical care they need without being pushed deep into debt. The cost to the government is around Rs 1,052 per family, with 60 per cent borne by the Central government and the rest by participating states. Although the scheme has several laudable objectives and novel features, it has its own limitations. Despite having an apparently formidable beneficiary base, AB-PMJAY still has a small share in the overall in-patient care provision. This is due to low empanelment of hospitals, a general reluctance of private providers towards dispensing AB-PMJAY benefits, and limited contribution of AB-PMJAY to the overall business of hospitals. The government pays public and private hospitals fixed rates for treating people covered under the programme and this doesn't fit in with the viability of the private sector. New ways will need to be explored to see how the private sector can be co-opted in the delivery of public health. At the same time, the public health system - particularly in rural India - will have to be regenerated.

For the poor, health is often the dividing line between the path to prosperity or a slide into destitution. To make matters worse, the combination of typically volatile and precarious incomes and the absence of good quality healthcare means low-income communities not only need access to health care, but also the ability to pay for it. Private healthcare has catastrophic costs that shave off hard-earned savings of patients and their families. The repercussions go far beyond the ailing patient. They have spillover consequences, resulting in less money being available to households for food, education, housing and other necessities.

A health event is a bigger risk to farmers than an unsuccessful crop. Once they sell their land or livestock, they become indentured labourers and that takes a generation or more to fix. Care at India's public hospitals is technically free. But in reality, the poor quality of care and a lack of human resources and equipments have impeded them from properly coping with overwhelming patient loads. As a result, many poor Indians have been forced between seeking treatment in costly private hospitals, often



pushing families back into poverty, or simply going without care.

Not only are there steep medical costs involved in a health episode, but there are also incidental expenses. This is further compounded by the loss of income during the period an individual is ill/injured or caring for an ailing loved one. Without insurance, people often turn to informal means to manage these risks - but such strategies provide inadequate protection. So when misfortune strikes, many get drawn into debt traps as they borrow beyond their means. This can lead them to sell productive assets, take children out of school or put them to work, compromise on food, or leave other illnesses untreated. Due to this dynamic, a health issue can easily become a financial sinkhole. Health insurance serves two primary functions for individuals. First, insurance secures financial access to health care for individuals both for preventive services and treatment. Second, it evens the costs of those services, protecting against potentially devastating economic shocks that can occur as a result of care-seeking. Health insurance policies in India typically don't cover outpatient or domiciliary treatment, where the major expenses involve pharmacy bills, diagnostic and pathological tests, etc. Several health insurance programmes cover wage loss on account of illness or other health-related issues, but many don't. Due to these coverage gaps, even insured beneficiaries can incur high indirect costs - especially in cases that require hospitalization.

For instance, India's flagship public health insurance scheme, Ayushman Bharat, fails to recognize and compensate the indirect costs associated with hospitalisation - and these are quite significant for the poor. These include expenses on travelling to the hospital and back. Additionally, stay-

den on health and finance at the secondary and tertiary levels down the line. Nurses and practitioners of traditional Indian medicine will have to take "bridge courses" to keep abreast of the bewildering forms of new diseases. Diseases are not static things. Pathogens change, hosts change, and environments change. Our immune systems change as well, as a result of fending off infections. And, of course, our lifestyles change, as also social standards, medical systems, and public-health programmes. Thus, it is necessary to enlarge the benefits to include loss of wages and incidental expenses during hospitalisation. This is already the prevailing practice of specific comparable schemes. Such plans provide a "hospital cash" benefit or "wage loss" benefit, which is a fixed amount for transportation and wage loss for each day of hospitalisation. Some plans in developing countries provide a fixed amount to the beneficiary for each night of hospitalisation, irrespective of the actual expenses incurred. This top-up coverage can be used with any other social security scheme that members may enroll in. The enhancement of the coverage could make the scheme truly pro-poor. And, considering that this added benefit would be conditional on prior hospitalisation, there is no risk of moral hazard or unwarranted claims. Private health insurance has been popular among the middle class. Once it percolates to the general masses, there will be competition to Aysuhman Bharat which will necessitate improvements in order to cope with the competition. Star Health - the first and the largest standalone health insurer, founded in 2006 - proved that health insurance was a big market - but the general thinking was that health is more difficult than motor, fire, etc. to underwrite and to sell. Everyone expected health insurance to grow faster than motor insurance as health is a basic need, not a car or a two-wheeler. The prediction has come true despite motor insurance being mandatory in India. And about half a dozen standalone health insurers (such as Max Bupa, Manipal Cigna and Star Health) have made all the difference by expanding health insurance coverage faster than about a dozen general insurers that sell motor, fire and other forms of insurance in addition to health. Universal health coverage will become a reality only if individuals, families, and communities are empowered to identify their own health needs and take action to address the diseases that increase cost of care and contribute to the burden on our health systems. It is the government's primary job to invest in a dependable state-run system and also devise regulation that keeps players, public and private, committed to serving the national interest. Several laudable policies are already in place. Yet, for reforms to be successful, we need hardened reforms and higher and more productive investments. A lot of money is wasted on excessive administrative expenses, inefficiencies, the duplication of services, and fraud and abuse in insurance claims. It is now for the policy doctors to collaborate with the real doctors to come up with radical solutions that can build a healthier world for everyone.

ing in a hospital or at home, after hospitalisation, implies a loss of wages. Often, attending caregivers from the family also have to forgo wages for several days. They also have to arrange for their lodging and boarding in case the treatment is being undertaken away from their native town. Poor households may take on debt, selling productive assets - or even their own homes. This risks a negative feedback loop: Poverty leads to bad health, which generates further poverty. They may be forced to avoid or delay treatment, as they cannot afford to lose their wages. Similarly, those who need longer-term hospitalisation may go back to work even if they have not fully recovered. Lost income due to missed work, often one of the largest components of a financial shock, is far lower among the insured, because insurance allows them to seek care sooner. Since many of the concerns of women are not easily insurable, e.g., maternity costs, a more relevant product would be

one that combines insurance and savings. In this way, for example, a woman could use her savings to cover the cost of normal delivery, and insurance to cover the cost of unexpected complications. In evaluating the success of Ayushman Bharat, what matters, even more than the beneficiaries' count, is whether it removes the need in the target population to prioritise livelihood over their daily needs. This is normally the case for most poor families who lack income support during the treatment. It can also consider including primary day-to-day healthcare instead of just secondary and tertiary care.

The former is the bedrock of a robust health-care system but is tragically the weakest link in the provision of public health in India. An important reasoning is that poorly delivered primary care inevitably increases the burden on the health system. The Left is the bedrock of a robust health-care system but is tragically the weakest link in the provision of public health in India. An important reasoning is that poorly delivered primary care inevitably increases the burden on the health system. The Left is the bedrock of a robust health-care system but is tragically the weakest link in the provision of public health in India. An important reasoning is that poorly delivered primary care inevitably increases the burden on the health system.

A MEMBER OF THE **ANN**
ASIAN VOICES

India, S Africa strains in Indonesia stir fear

Indonesia has detected coronavirus variants linked to more transmissible variants first detected in India and South Africa, ahead of the Idul Fitri mudik (exodus) season when mobility is expected to rise, prompting concerns of a possible case resurgence as seen in other countries. Data from Germany-based GISAID database, which was created to track genetic data on influenza viruses, showed Indonesia had detected a case each of B16172 and B16173, which are related to the B1617 variant first detected in India containing slightly different mutations. Indonesia recently also reported a case of the B1351 variant first detected in South Africa and three new cases of B117, another concerning variant first detected in the UK, making a total of 13 UK variant cases so far.

The Indian variant cases were detected in Jakarta with samples collected in early and late April, before Indonesia banned travellers from the virus-stricken country on April 25. Meanwhile, the South African variant case was sampled back in January. Health minister Budi Gunadi Sadikin has confirmed these findings but he did not specify whether they were imported cases. He previously revealed that some of the UK variant cases were locally transmitted. "These mutations are categorised as variants of concern by the (WHO) because they have relatively higher transmission rates," Budi told a virtual press briefing on May 3. "We have to guard it now when there are still a few cases, because they will certainly spread soon as their transmission rate is relatively higher." Among these variants, only the UK and South Africa variants have been deemed variants of concern.

The Jakarta Post

while the transmissibility of India's B1617 variant is still under investigation - although it has been linked to the dramatic spike of Covid-19 cases in India. The WHO has deemed B1617 a variant of interest. Its latest epidemiology update cited several early studies revealing that other variants of interest containing the same mutations as the India variant had been associated with increased transmissibility, a reduction in naturalisation by some manmade antibody treatments and a moderate reduction in neutralisation in post-vaccination sera. Serum is the part of blood that contains antibodies against the virus.

Molecular biologist Ahmad Utomo said that while there was no need for panic now, both authorities and people could no longer act like it was business as usual. Whether these variants could actually grow dominant and take a toll on the country's health-care system would depend on the mobility and compliance with health protocols of the people as their hosts, he said. The issue was that Indonesia was still lacking the capacity to detect variants, both by using the "luxurious" whole genome sequencing, as shown in the late reporting of the emerging variants, as well as in the fundamental containment efforts of testing, contact tracing and isolating, he said. Let alone concerning variants from other countries, Indonesia would have a hard time detecting mutations emerging domestically if such insufficient efforts were to continue, Ahmad said.

Indonesia's testing and quarantine policies have been the talk of the country lately with a state-owned clinical laboratory company using recycled testing kits at an airport in North Sumatra, as well as breached mandatory quarantine of people arriving from foreign countries, including India. "The example is already right in front of us - India. The question is whether we want to be like India or not?" Ahmad said.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

editor@thestatesman.com

Left decimated

SIR, If we analyse the recent assembly election result in West Bengal, it is crystal clear that the battle was a polarised one between the TMC and the BJP. But I was surprised to see that the Left and Congress failed to open their account. This is particularly humiliating for the Left as it was the ruling party of West Bengal for 34 years at a stretch from 1977 to 2011.

The Left really needs to introspect how its vote share and seat share could go down so drastically in these 10 years.

The Left inflicted incalculable, irreparable loss to our state. It won election after election by virtue of its well-oiled

election machinery activated to terrorise voters, create panic amongst them, manipulation of voter list,

booth jamming and scientific rigging. After retaining power with these maneuvers, the Left abolished English from

the primary level, blocked entry of computers in the state, legalised illegal madrasas, encouraged infiltration from our eastern neighbour,

issued ration card and voter card and thereby granted citizenship to these infiltrators. This resulted in slow but sure

change in demography of border areas of this state. The Left first introduced politics in educational institutions which led to fall in their standards. For every failure in the state due to its wrong policies, the Left started blaming the Central government, which was ironically ruled by the Congress.

Now we find the Left allying with the Congress here in West Bengal though they are fighting each other in Kerala. Further they made a tie-up with a blatantly communal ISF led by Abbas Siddiqui of Furfura Sharif which also did not go down well with the electorate.

Yours, etc., Purushottam Chatterjee, Kolkata, 6 May.

WELCOME VERDICT

SIR, The apex court has struck down the Maharashtra law granting quotas to Marathas in admissions and government jobs, terming it as 'unconstitutional'. The verdict also held there were no exceptional circumstances to breach the 50 per cent reservation cap set by the 1992 Mandal verdict ('Maha law for Maratha quota struck down as unconstitutional', May 6). Further, the court refused to refer the Mandal judgment to a larger bench for reconsideration; the court stated that this judgment has been upheld time and again by its various verdicts. The basis for the Maratha quota happened to be the MC Gaikwad commission report. The top court opined that the report did not highlight any exceptional circumstances for grant of reservation to the community. The five-judge constitutional bench directed the Centre to notify a fresh list of Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (SEBC). Till the time the notification is issued, the existing list will hold its place.

Maharashtra is an economically upward moving state. Lots of industries are there in the state. To run these industries, the right kind of people from all over the country are recruited. Bollywood gives further impetus to the economic welfare of the state. The state also enjoys a natural geographical advantage. Being located on the western seashore of the country, it serves as a focal point for travel to and from the Middle-east, Europe, USA and Africa. The people of the country have a constitutional right to move and work freely anywhere and in any part of the country. Thus a further quota would hurt the existing balance. The SC verdict is bound to bring cheer to the people of the country.

Yours, etc., Ashok Kumar Ghosh, Kolkata, 6 May.



ARIF AZAD

It is evident that the worldwide roll-out of Covid vaccines is increasingly unequal in its distribution. Five months since the inoculations began, many parts of the developing world still remain unvaccinated.

In the developed world, one in four people are said to be vaccinated. In poorer countries, the ratio of vaccination is only one in 500. At this pace, developed countries will reach the goal of full vaccination by 2024 amid new waves of Covid-19. Richer countries have been able to buy vaccines in bulk to vaccinate their own population, diminishing supplies for poorer countries. The growing vaccine inequity can be also attributed to vaccine nationalism, low bargaining power of poor countries and the failure of the WHO-steered Covax scheme to deliver on its pledged doses which were already inadequate to meet the goal of mass vaccination in the developing world.

Yet one of the major obstacles in the way of faster and equal access to Covid-19 vaccines is the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) agreement.

The pharma industry has intellectual property (IP) protections provided in the TRIPS agreement to protect monopoly patents that run for 20 years, enabling pharma companies to make exorbitant profits on the original investment. These protections restrict wider availability of new life-saving drugs at affordable prices. The mandatory licensing provisions in the TRIPS agreement, which allow for overriding patents in times of a pandemic, have not been used by weak governments of the developing world for fear of inviting legal challenges from powerful multinationals.

Similarly, voluntary licensing provisions enshrined in the TRIPS have been used by Big Pharma selectively and bilaterally with binding conditions attached to the distribution of cheap licensed versions of vaccines and drugs and their export to other developing countries. Not surprisingly, with Covid-19 infections rising amid profoundly unequal and unjust vaccination access, the focus has returned to suspending TRIPS' IP protections as a way of ensuring equitable, faster and affordable access.

In October 2020, India and South Africa led the call for lifting patents on Covid technologies, especially vaccines, which would allow vaccine manufacturers in the developing world to produce generic cheap versions of the

Public health concerns trump vaccine patents



Covid vaccine. The call is being backed up by most of the developing world, including Pakistan. The richer bloc, however, including the UK, EU, Canada and Japan, are blocking the move along with Big Pharma and the 'philanthropist' Bill Gates on grounds of preserving innovation and recovering original investment poured into vaccine research and development.

Médecins Sans Frontières, Peoples Vaccines Alliance, a group of INGOs, prominent world leaders and the WHO are also putting their weight behind the waiver initiative. On the other hand, the WHO-supported Covid-19 Technology Access Pool (C-TAP) initiative aimed at voluntarily sharing Covid

technologies has been cold-shouldered by Big Pharma.

In another significant move, on April 14, more than 100 former world leaders and Nobel laureates, including Malala Yousafzai and former Pakistani prime minister Shaukat Aziz, wrote to US President Joe Biden urging him to lend his support to the patent waiver call. Now with Joe Biden putting his weight behind the patent waiver call, the naysaying Western countries might drop their opposition too, thus paving the way for the world's quick exit from the pandemic.

Advocates for IP waiver assert that vaccine research and production has been funded by governments which

makes these vaccines global public health goods. Under growing pressure and pushback, the patent-holding companies have pledged to ramp up production.

This will take time, as big vaccine manufacturers have failed to deliver on their supply commitments to the developed world at a time when the needs of the latter are enormous. The EU is already planning on suing AstraZeneca for not fulfilling its vaccine supply agreement.

More crucially, there is no guarantee that, even if the current production by patent-holding vaccine producers is ramped up, the developing world will get the required number of doses

at affordable prices and in time to achieve mass vaccination. Also, vaccine producers have in some instances charged poorer countries more than the richer countries.

The only realistic and life-saving way forward lies in suspending patents on the Covid vaccine and sharing technology so that producers in the developing world can make cheaper versions to expand faster and cheaper access to Covid vaccines. The urgent concern right now should be to save and protect all lives, not the astronomical profits made from publicly funded vaccine research.

DAWN/ANN.



IT CAME TO MIND | MANISH NANDY

Visiting a Dreamland

When it snows, suddenly the place where I live becomes a wonderland. Reston is an ordinary place. With houses and gardens, small parks and large trees. It is a pretty little town that has retained some of its little-town charm though close to a very large town. I bought my home here forty years ago, but I have lived here only half that time – the other half being in the sands of the Middle East and the groves of Asia or Central America. When I came back here after my far-flung trips, I thought of my stay as temporary, until I decide on my next adventure.

That adventure was to be here, in this small town. I worked on some projects here, then – thanks to the emerging idea of a virtual worker – I worked on projects elsewhere, rooted to my home here. My life took another turn, and I started writing. Glued to a desk and a laptop, I am now a loyal resident. I live in utter fidelity to Reston, though I stray periodically like a faithless lover to Mexico or Russia, Colombia or India.

But Reston is my true love. And it takes on a royal air when it snows.

It has snowed twice in the last four days. Before the first layer could melt, a brighter, whiter layer has been spread out in full glory, like a shiny new carpet. And shine it does now in the dazzling light of the morning sun. Since the temperature is ten degrees below zero and is not going to rise in the next couple of days, this carpet is going to be in place for a while. If it inhibits restless drivers, including me, I will thank the stars for cleaner air. I have to walk carefully, even with a monstrous pair of boots, for the snow

has hardened in places like a brick of slippery ice. Still, I love to walk, to hear the crunch of powdery snow under my feet and breathe the brisk and bracing morning air.

I pass through the woods nearby and I am transfixed by the beauty of the trees. I used to think Joyce Kilmer's line, "I think that I shall never see/ a poem lovely as a tree," a bit of an exaggeration. No longer. The trees stand majestic, with tiny slivers of snow glinting in their bark. Every branch has a thick dollop of the whitest snow. Every leaf looks splendid with its green dappled with white dusting. Every bit of snow brilliantly reflecting the splendor of bright day. As I walk, a few flakes slip off the trees and land on my shoulders. I will take that moist touch like a benediction and move on.

Further ahead, the lake is frozen solid. A few geese are on the shore, looking somewhat crestfallen at the loss of their playground. The avid anglers I see usually are notable by their absence. I love to watch the ripples in the water, touched by the mildest breeze. They are replaced today by the vast mirror the lake has become, sending keen beams every which way.

I walk on to the small café, which is mercifully open. I ask for a double espresso, and the tall thin woman produces it in a jiffy. I sip slowly, enjoying its heat and strength in equal measure, watching the empty plaza. Other days I like the jostling crowd that is always there, buying ice cream or sipping beer. Today I enjoy the silence and the quiet landscape.

As I step out of the café the silence



ILLUSTRATION: Debabrata Chakrabarty

vian. Artis, whom I always kid for not being an artist, is a design engineer who claims to be the furthest from all art. He tells me, "Artis is the same as Arthur, and, like King Arthur, I am heroic and trying to save Reston from invaders like you." He jokes that former bureaucrats like me are the scourge of the land and engineers like him are the salt of the earth. I often respond that a design engineer's mission is to create designs that no manufacturer can produce and, if produced,

nobody can use.

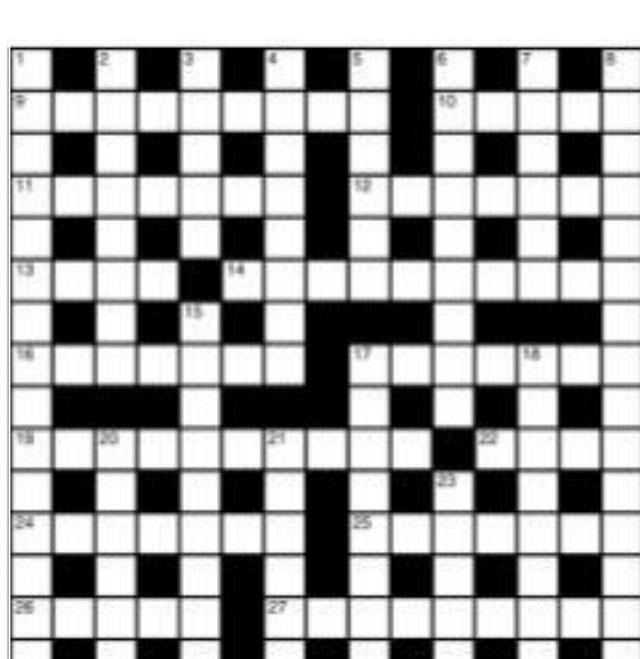
I walk back, the sole rambler on the road. The cold air seems to have kept the strollers at home. That, I believe, is a mistake. My friend Tom Pereira tells me that his cousin, a top cardiologist, has advised him to walk in the open air when he has a cold. You will cure a cold in a week if you take a tablet and in seven days if you don't, but you will do better in three days if you take in some fresh air, runs his counsel. I have some healthy skepti-

cism of most medicines, including cold tablets, and find the advice quite plausible.

I pass by the trees again. They stand guard in their remarkable white uniform. I feel honored to be in their midst. I look around and watch the incredible glittering white scene and feel lucky to be in this dreamland.

The writer is a Washington-based international development advisor and had worked with the World Bank. He can be reached at mnandy@gmail.com

CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 9 Aunt crosses a river, lake and plain (2,7)
- 10 Make pompous speech no-one admires? (5)
- 11 No vintage wine in Welsh city (7)
- 12 Groom and lovely female going to marry (7)
- 13 City covered in Virginia creepers (4)
- 14 Game hack defending saucy newspaper strip (6,4)
- 16 Mary Wilson perhaps unsurpassed (7)
- 17 Baltic citizen taking son out of posh school? (7)
- 19 Cemetery corpse in edgeless hole reanimates (10)
- 22 Bolt to run smoothly making comeback (4)

DOWN

- 2 Very bottom drops back in lowest lake (4,3)
- 25 Fundamentalist spoke about clubs (7)
- 26 Snarl from Left after good argument (5)
- 27 Recipe author dodging every second problem (3,6)
- 1 Chuck down at least sixteen feet of water? (4,4,3,4)
- 2 Plant as present found in small delivery (8)
- 3 King brought inside to finish tantrum (5)
- 4 Bulge in pants Mrs Grundy conceals (8)

- 5 Old saw having lost its edge? (6)
- 6 Facts not in Genesis (9)
- 7 Le Pen for instance found in sea (6)
- 8 Jerks on rifle-range shot blue bird (9,6)
- 15 Menu item needs no Moselle in cooking (5,4)
- 17 Russian fighter, traitor in central Greece, to settle abroad (8)
- 18 Boy underneath smooth Conservative in ship (8)
- 20 Writer for children allows light into study (6)
- 21 This could replace spinach or pine (6)
- 23 Also have wine, as discussed, when needed (2,3)

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

100 YEARS AGO

OCCASIONAL NOTE

People of the absolute necessity for the wage reductions which have been accepted by the Federation of Engineering and Shipbuilding Trades is afforded by Lloyds' statistical returns for the quarter ended on March 31. These, as summarised in our Mail telegram, show that the shipbuilding industry is passing through a very lean season. The decreases reported in the number of vessels launched, and in the amount of work in hand at the shipbuilding yards, are quite enough to convince anyone concerned that the industry is not producing enough to keep either profits or wages up to their former level. The fact that in such cases attention is usually limited to the reduction of wages, while the fall in profits passes unnoticed, produces the distorted impression that the whole question is one of wages, whereas the truth is that wages are only one element in the cost of production and probably the last that would be touched willingly. It is to the credit of the Federation of Engineering and Shipbuilding Trades that the majority have taken the businesslike course of agreeing to share losses as well as profits, thus helping to tide over the depression. This kind of common-sense is not so rare amongst British works as might be imagined by those who hear only of the strikes which supply the chief material for the cabled news regarding Labour affairs.

NEWS ITEMS

DISTURBANCE AT MATIGARA

News has arrived here of the looting of a hat at Matigara, in the Siliguri subdivision, one of the biggest hats in the district. It is said that the enhancement of tolls has been the subject of complaint by the shopkeepers for some time past. On Tuesday when the hat was at its height, it is reported, a mob numbering several hundred looted cloth and other shops, destroyed and damaged goods, and carried off cash. The mob assaulted a sub-inspector of excise who was roughly handled. Quiet was restored in the evening. Arrests have since been made. The following day was hat day at Siliguri and there was apprehension of hat looting there, but everything passed off quietly. The arrested men are awaiting trial at Siliguri.

HINDUS AND CIVIL MARRIAGE BILL

A meeting of Hindus of Calcutta was held on Sunday, under the presidency of the Maharaja of Durbhangha, when matters affecting the community were discussed. The meeting protested against the Civil Marriage Bill recently introduced by Dr. Gour, regarding it as a violation of the purity of the Hindu religion and social customs. The Sastras alone were the greatest authorities in these matters, but they were sadly ignored and polluted by the Bill. The Maharaja of Durbhangha said Dr. Gour's Bill was more detrimental to orthodox Hindus than Mr. Patel's Bill as it proposed to legalise marriages between castes of various faiths. The evil from Dr. Gour's Bill ran to the vitals of Hindu society and devastated the Hindu Sastras.

ASSYRIAN REFUGEES IN BOMBAY

Since the arrival of 160 Assyrian refugees who came direct from Mosul on their way to America, another batch numbering over three hundred have arrived. They Salvation Army is looking after their comforts and making what arrangements they can for their accommodation, which is a very difficult problem. Various churches are represented among the refugees. Some are Presbyterians, others Methodists, and some belong to the Greek Church. Some of these are remnants of the brave Assyrian army of 15,000 which fought valiantly for the preservation of their little State and the Christians therein. Their conflicts with the Russians, Kurds and Turks have deprived them of all their worldly possessions and subjected them to great hardships, but they are still unconquered in spirit.

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN INDIA

The Hon. Mr. Ruza Ali has given notice of the following resolution, which he proposes to move during the next session of the Council of State:- This Council recommends to the Governor-General in Council that an informal conference, to be attended by members of the Government of India and representatives of all schools of political thought, including the leaders of the non-cooperation movement, should be convened at an early date under the presidency of His Excellency the Viceroy, with a view to have free and unfettered discussion on the political questions in which the people of India are interested. This Council further recommends that no resolution should be adopted by the conference and that no minutes need be kept.

NO 28908



Vaccination will help safe return to normal life resulting in faster economic recovery

PRADIP KUMAR DAS

CHAIRMAN AND MANAGING DIRECTOR, IREDA

THUMBNAILS

Godrej expects to beat last year's record: Godrej Properties expects its sales booking this fiscal to surpass the last year's record Rs 6,725 crore despite the outbreak of second wave of COVID-19 and hopes to cross Rs 10,000 crore mark in the next financial year. PTI

Koo has a plan: Home-grown microblogging platform Koo is planning to double its headcount in the next one year as it significantly scales up its user base on the platform, especially vernacular subscribers, its co-founder said. Koo co-founder Aprameya Radhakrishna said the platform with its current user base of 6 million has a lot of headroom for growth. PTI

Covid derailed plans of Rasna: The surge in COVID-19 cases across the country has derailed fruit drink concentrate maker Rasna's marketing investment and expansion plans for the current financial year. "Investment plans related to marketing have been postponed. We also had very ambitious plans for retail expansion with our mocktail bars...that plan is also slightly derailed due to surge in cases," Rasna Chairman & Managing Director Piruz Khambatta said. PTI

AIMTC seeks financial help: Transporters' body AIMTC has sought financial help for the oxygen tanker transporters to meet the treatment cost of the drivers affected by coronavirus, either by the government or oxygen manufacturers, according to a statement. At a virtual conference, convened by the commerce ministry on Saturday, the All India Motors Transport Congress (AIMTC) also urged the government to allow free mobility along with provision of food and water for oxygen tanker drivers on RO-RO (Tankers on Rail and Air), AIMTC Core Committee Chairman Bal Malkit Singh said in a statement issued in the late Saturday evening. PTI

M&As rise 8%: A massive 133 per cent jump in the proceeds from initial public offerings (IPOs) has seen the deal street on a near roll in spite of the raging second wave of the pandemic, with the value of mergers and acquisitions increasing by 8 per cent to \$32.3 billion across 437 deals till end-April this year, says a report. PTI

FPIs withdraw Rs 5,936 cr from equities: Foreign investors have pulled out Rs 5,936 crore from the Indian equities in the first week of May amid worries over the intense second wave of coronavirus infection and its fallout on the economy. Foreign investors had pulled out Rs 9,659 cr in April after infusing money in the preceding six months, according to the depositories' data. FPIs withdrew a net sum of Rs 5,936 cr from equity markets during 3-7 May. PTI

Mutual funds infuse ₹5,526 crore in equities in April

Mutual funds put in nearly ₹21,600 crore in debt markets in the month under review

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 9 MAY



returns, he added.

According to Sebi data, MFs put in a net amount of Rs 5,526 crore in equities in the month of April, much higher than the net sum of Rs 4,773 crore invested in March.

This was the first such fund infusion by MFs in 10 months.

Prior to the inflows, mutual funds had been withdrawing money from equities since June 2020, data available with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) showed.

"We have witnessed 15.8 per cent monthly investment growth by mutual funds into equities last month as volatile

stock market pushed investors to invest via equity mutual funds to reduce risk," Sengar said.

Alok Aggarwala, Chief Research Officer, Bajaj Capital, said mutual fund flows are generally a reflection of investor flows in the respective mutual fund schemes.

Domestic investors had been taking out money from equity mutual fund schemes since July 2020 and March 2021 was the first month when the trend changed.

In addition, spike in SIP flows was witnessed in March rising to Rs 9,182 crore from

Rs 7,528 crore in the preceding month. Hence, the positive flow by mutual funds in equities was witnessed in March, he said.

Though the data is not yet out, but this trend of net inflow in equity mutual fund schemes seems to have continued in April 2021 too, leading to positive flows by mutual fund, he added.

The month of April witnessed a surge in the number of Covid-19 cases that lead to some minor corrections in the markets, however this was followed by quick recoveries as well. Mutual funds used this fall in the market to buy new stocks resulting in increased inflow in the equities even in the month of April-2021," Gautam Kalia, Head - Investment Solutions, Sharekhan by BNP Paribas, said.

Furthermore, there have been positive flows in mutual funds schemes in March and April that provided fund managers with additional liquidity to manage, he added.

Month-wise, MFs withdrew Rs 16,306 crore from equities in February, 13,032

crore in January, Rs 26,428 crore in December, Rs 30,760 crore in November, Rs 14,492 crore in October, Rs 4,134 crore in September, Rs 9,213 crore in August, Rs 9,195 crore in July and Rs 612 crore in June.

These outflows were mainly due to profit-booking by investors amid rally in stock markets.

However, MFs had invested over Rs 40,200 crore in the first five months (January-May) of 2020. Of this, Rs 30,285 crore was invested in March 2020.

The latest investment by mutual funds could be attributed to positive flows in previous month and some consolidation in markets continues to give opportunities to fund managers to invest, Harshad Chetanwala, co-founder of MyWealthgrowth.com, said.

"If the fears of Covid increases among global investors, one could see more outflows on FPIs side, this can result in some more volatility. Investors may like to use this volatility or consolidation as an opportunity to invest in future as well," he added.

"Thus, going ahead, mar-

Earnings, macro data to guide market sentiment: Analysts

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 9 MAY

kets are likely to remain range-bound with bouts of volatility. Going ahead, the interplay of resurgence in covid cases and the pace of vaccination would decide the trajectory of economic recovery going forward," Siddhartha Khemka, Head-Retail Research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd said.

Analysts said that Brent crude movement, trend in the rupee and investment pattern of foreign institutional investors would also be influencing market sentiments.

Foreign investors have been net sellers in the equity markets since April this year amid the raging second wave of coronavirus infection and its impact on the economy.

According to depositories data, FPIs pulled out ₹9,659 cr on net basis from the equity markets in April while they withdrew ₹5,936 crore in the first week of May.

Various states have imposed lockdowns to control the cases which could impact economy. During the last week, the 30-share BSE benchmark gained 424.11 points or 0.86 per cent.

Power consumption in the country grows nearly 25 per cent in first week of May

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 9 MAY

met or the highest supply in a day touched the highest level of 168.78 GW (on May 6, 2021) and recorded a growth of nearly 22 per cent over 138.6 GW (peak met) recorded in the same period in 2020 (on May 7, 2020).

The power consumption in April grew 41 per cent to 119.27 BU..

Power consumption in April 2020 had dropped to 84.55 BU from 110.11 BU in the same month in 2019, mainly because of fewer economic activities following the imposition of lockdown by the government in the last week of March 2020 to contain the spread of deadly COVID-19.

The power consumption also fell in May 2020 to 102.08 BU from 120.02 BU in May 2019.

Similarly, peak power demand met or the highest

power supply in a day also slumped to 132.73 GW in April last year from 176.81 GW in the same month in 2019, showing the impact of lockdown on economic activities.

The fewer economic activities also resulted in a fall of peak power demand met in May 2020 to 166.22 GW from 182.53 GW in May 2019.

Experts are of the view that high growth in power consumption as well as demand in May this year is mainly due to base effect but the data shows recovery so far even as the second strong wave forced authorities to impose local lockdowns to contain deadly virus across the country.

They have cautioned that local lockdowns may derail recovery in commercial and industrial power consumption and demand.

Robust regulatory framework needed to deal with 'open banking' challenges: Experts

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 9 MAY



India needs a robust regulatory framework to deal with multiple challenges emanating from increasing number of players sitting in different geographical locations getting involved in open banking operations, feel experts.

Open banking refers to sharing and leveraging of customer-permissioned data by banks with third-party developers and firms to build applications and services, including those that provide real-time payments, greater financial transparency options for account holders, marketing and cross-selling opportunities.

Sivaram Krishnan, Partner & Leader, Cybersecurity, PwC India, pitched for a three-

level governance model to deal with the security issues concerning open banking, stressing that with open API (application programming interface) and disruptive innovations regulated entities will integrate even deeper with the external world.

"We need governance at three levels broad country level privacy framework (minimum principles to be met by

all entities of certain size and above), individual regulatory framework for specific industry-related use cases around privacy requirements and organisational to evolve data protection techniques which help protect the data which can be shared for processing purposes with third parties," he said.

Regulated entities then can mandate the data pro-

tection techniques to be followed by critical ecosystem partners who process sensitive data security for them, he added.

At a webinar on 'open banking' organised by TCS in association with the Embassy of India in Brazil recently, Reserve Bank Deputy Governor M Rajeshwar Rao had said that technological innovation in banking is of paramount importance but cannot be pursued at the cost of customer privacy and data protection which are non-negotiable.

India kickstarted its approach to open banking by enabling an intermediary which will be responsible for the customers' consent management. These intermediaries are licensed as Non-Banking Financial Companies.

Govt extends antidumping duty on seamless tubes, pipes

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 9 MAY

The commerce ministry's investigation arm Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR) had recommended for extension of the duty, after concluding a probe.

While DGTR recommends the duty to be levied, the finance ministry imposes it.

Countries initiate anti-dumping probes to determine if the domestic industry has been hurt by a surge in below-cost imports. As a counter-measure, they impose duties under the multilateral WTO regime.

Anti-dumping measures are taken to ensure fair trade and provide a level-playing field to the domestic industry. They are not a measure to restrict imports or cause an unjustified increase in cost of products. India has initiated maximum anti-dumping cases against dumped imports from China.

NARCL to be operational next month: IBA CEO

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 9 MAY



rently have different compulsions when it comes to resolving a bad loan," he said.

NARCL will take over identified bad loans of lenders, Mehta said. He added that the lead bank with offer in hand of NARCL will go for a 'Swiss Challenge', where other asset reconstruction players will be invited to better the offer made by a chosen bidder for finding higher valuation of an NPA on sale.

The company will pick up those assets that are 100 per cent provided for by the lenders, he added.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in Budget 2021-22 announced that the high level of provisioning by public sector banks of their stressed assets calls for measures to clean up the bank books.

"An Asset Reconstruction Company Limited and Asset Management Company would

be set up to consolidate and take over the existing stressed debt," she had said in the Budget speech. It will then manage and dispose of the assets to alternate investment funds and other potential investors for eventual value realisation, she added.

Last year, IBA had made a proposal for creation of a bad bank for swift resolution of non-performing assets (NPAs). The government accepted the proposal and decided to go for asset reconstruction company (ARC) and asset management company (AMC) model for this.

Mehta further said NARCL will pay up to 15 per cent of the agreed value for the loans in cash and the remaining 85 per cent would be government-guaranteed security receipts.

The government guarantee would be invoked if there is loss against the threshold value, he added.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has said that loans classified as fraud cannot be sold to NARCL. As per the annual report of the RBI, about 1.9 lakh crore of loans have been classified as fraud as on March 2020.

To facilitate smooth functioning of asset reconstruction companies, the RBI last month decided to set up a panel to undertake a comprehensive review of the working of such institutions.

After enactment of the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest (SARFAESI) Act in 2002, regulatory guidelines for ARCs were issued in 2003 to enable development of this sector and to facilitate smooth functioning of these companies. Since then, while ARCs have grown in number and size, their potential for resolving stressed assets is yet to be realised fully.

India Inc steps up to shoulder Covid-induced challenges

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 9 MAY

As India suffers the world's worst outbreak of Covid-19 cases, global and domestic corporate giants are pitching in resources from airlifting of medical equipment, making medical oxygen and setting up hospitals to supplement a public health system buckling under the weight of surging infections and deaths.

Amazon and Google as well as Indian firms Tata Sons, Reliance Industries Ltd and Adani Group have set up Covid hospitals, airlifted cryogenic tankers from abroad for transporting medical oxygen and contributed funds to aid the Covid battle, according to company announcements and industry sources.



India has reported more than 3,00,000 new daily Covid-19 cases for two weeks, and reached more than 4 lakh new daily cases over the weekend. More than 2.42 lakh people in India have died from the virus infection.

While Google CEO Sundar Pichai last month announced \$18 million donation, Amazon said 1,000 Medtronic ventilators will be delivered to India. Microsoft said it would work to provide India with 1,000 ventilators and 25,000 oxygen concentration devices.

Billionaire Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Industries tweaked manufacturing at its oil refineries to produce over 1,000 tonnes of medical grade liquid oxygen per day - or over 11 per cent of India's total production - meeting the needs

they can be serviced via a pipeline.

While Wipro and Azim Premji Foundation converted one IT facility in Pune into a 430-bed intermediary care Covid hospital, Infosys has set up a 100 room Covid hospital in Bangalore in association with Narayana Health, providing free care to the poor.

Cipla supported Mahara-

stra government in setting up Covid isolation ward, Vedanta is setting up a field hospital in Delhi NCR and Adani Foundation setup hospitals in Gujarat and even converted the Adani Vidya Mandir school in Ahmedabad into an emergency COVID Care Centre with oxygen support and catered food.

Tata Group made about 5,000 beds available to Covid patients through its group companies and ITC set up a 200-bed makeshift hospital in Kishore Bharati Stadium, given by West Bengal government, for Covid patients in a record 72 hours.

State-owned State Bank of India set up 1,000-bed makeshift hospitals, 250-bed ICU facilities and 1,000-bed isolation facilities across the

country, while Coal India Ltd set up the largest number of Covid beds totalling 2,000, including 750 oxygen and 70 ICU beds.

Tata Group also imported 1,000 cryogenic containers to transport liquid oxygen, supplying 900 tonnes of oxygen everyday to state government hospitals.

While Adani Group procured 48 cryogenic tanks from leading manufacturers.

Tech Mahindra supplied medical equipment, including ventilators, both to produce life-saving oxygen as well as reduce the immense logistical problems. It was found that these plants are being made by small-scale units with limited resources or ability to scale up production, MSI said in a statement.

Maruti to boost production of oxygen generator plants

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 9 MAY

nies in the NCR area, Airox Nigen Equipments and SAM Gas Projects. They were flooded with orders but had a capacity to manufacture only 5-8 plants a month. We decided to use our resources to help scale up their production," he added.

The automaker noted that it started talking to the two entities from May 1 and quickly reached an understanding with them. "While technology, quality and performance, as well as all commercial matters, would remain the responsibility of the two companies, MSIL and its vendors would use their capabilities to rapidly scale up production. MSIL's involvement would be on

WEATHER

CITY	MAX	MIN
SINGAPORE	32°C	27°C R
HONG KONG	31°C	27°C H
TOKYO	24°C	14°C CL
LONDON	16°C	8°C S
DUBAI	34°C	25°C S
SAN FRANCISCO	22°C	9°C S
NEW YORK	18°C	9°C H
MOSCOW	16°C	5°C S

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

THUMBNAILS



Scotland's First Minister and Scottish National Party leader Nicola Sturgeon poses for photographers at Bute House in Edinburgh. Sunday. ■ AP

Three people shot in New York's Times Square: Three people including a four-year-old girl were shot in New York City's Times Square after gunfire broke out in a dispute that they were apparently not involved in, the city's top police official said Saturday. ■ AP

Obama's family dog dies: Former United States President Barack Obama's family dog Bo, a male Portuguese Water Dog with a mop of black and white fur who became a familiar playful sight around the White House, has died. ■ AP

German churches to bless same-sex couples: Churches across Germany are planning services to bless same-sex couples this week, in defiance of a Vatican decree clarifying that such blessings are banned in the Catholic Church. Roughly 2,600 signatories declared their willingness to continue blessing same-sex couple. ■ AP

I would say we are turning the corner

WHITE HOUSE COVID-19 RESPONSE COORDINATOR JEFF ZIENTS

SAID THE US HEALTH OFFICIALS ARE NOW FOCUSED ON GETTING MORE AMERICANS VACCINATED

Boris calls Covid recovery summit after SNP victory

Nicola Sturgeon has termed her party's win a clear mandate for a 2nd independence referendum



Boris Johnson visits Jackson's Wharf, Hartlepool following Conservative by-election victory. ■ AP

The UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson has called a Covid recovery summit to bring together leaders of the devolved Scottish and Welsh governments, following election results that have renewed calls for another independence referendum in Scotland.

First Minister Nicola Sturgeon led pro-independence Scottish National Party (SNP) won a strong victory, falling short of a clear majority in the Scottish Parliament Holyrood by just one seat as the results from Thursday's elections became clear on Sunday.

It led to Sturgeon declaring the vote as a mandate for a second independence referendum, the first held in 2014 which went against independence.

Given the outcome of this election, there is simply no democratic justification whatsoever for Boris Johnson or anyone else seeking to block the right of the people of

Scotland to choose our future, Sturgeon said in her victory speech from Glasgow.

It is the will of the country people in Scotland vote for a pro-independence majority in the Scottish Parliament, no politician has got the right to stand in the way of that, she said.

Johnson has consistently dismissed the notion of another referendum and is instead attempting to drive

focus towards his "build back better" agenda for the entire United Kingdom in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.

"I believe passionately that the interests of people across the UK and in particular the people of Scotland are best served when we work together. We have shown that through the vaccine roll-out, Johnson wrote in a letter addressed to Sturgeon on Saturday, in a

pre-emptive move as the results were becoming clear."

"I recommend the UK government to working with the Scottish government in this cooperative spirit," he said, inviting the leader to a summit in the coming weeks to discuss shared challenges.

A similar letter has been issued to First Minister Mark Drakeford, whose Labour Party was re-elected in Wales

with an impressive 30-seat win in the Welsh Senedd which is one short of an absolute majority but enough to form a minority government.

Drakeford's cautious and measured approach in dealing with the coronavirus lockdown decisions at a devolved level are seen as the key factor behind his re-election.

This really is a moment that the Prime Minister should seize to reset relationships across the United Kingdom, for a serious examination of the way in which we can create the machinery that will allow us to work together in the future, said Drakeford, who welcomed the extraordinary set of results.

No approach that thinks flying more union jacks at the tops of buildings, but proper, respectful relationships that recognise that sovereignty is now dispersed across four parliaments in which we choose to pool it for common purposes. It will be a UK where people want to be here, rather than are instructed to be, he said.

Sadiq Khan wins second term as Mayor of London



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LONDON, 9 MAY

ed in 2016. The mayoral poll was due last year but was postponed by a year at the peak of the coronavirus pandemic in 2020.

"I am deeply humbled by the trust Londoners have placed in me to continue leading the greatest city on earth," said Khan.

"I promise to strain every sinew, help build a better and brighter future for London, after the dark days of the pandemic and to create a greener, fairer and safer city for all Londoners, to get the opportunities they need to fulfil their potential. I am proud to have won an overwhelming mandate today," he said, speaking at his City Hall office.

Khan reiterated his previous pledge to be a mayor for all Londoners and work to improve the lives of every single person in this city.

"The results of the elections around the UK shows our country, and even our city, remains deeply divided. The scars of Brexit have yet to heal. A crude culture war is pushing us further apart," he said.

His victory is one of the few positives for the Labour Party as the party held on to its dominance in the London Assembly as well.

'US wants Covid vaccine patent waiver to benefit world, not boost China biotech'

AGENCIES

WASHINGTON, 9 MAY

The Biden administration is examining ways to ensure that a waiver of Covid-19 vaccine patents to aid poor countries will not hand sensitive US biopharmaceutical technology to China and Russia, responding to a chorus of concerns US and industry officials said.

President Joe Biden on Wednesday backed the US entering negotiations at the World Trade Organization for the waiver of intellectual property rights as a means to boost vaccine supplies by allowing poorer countries to make their own.

So far, vaccines have gone overwhelmingly to richer

nations, which scooped up contracts for them earlier this year. Covid-19 infection rates in wealthy countries have dropped as vaccination rates increased this year, but infections are still rising in 36 countries, with India's daily cases skyrocketing to nearly 400,000 a day.

Western pharmaceutical companies, many of which have received government support to develop vaccines, strongly oppose the transfer of intellectual property to make them. They say poorer countries will be slow to set up manufacturing capacity and compete for scarce supplies, hitting production.

Albert Bourla, CEO of Pfizer, said on Friday that the proposed waiver would disrupt progress made so far in boosting vaccine supplies.

"It will unleash a scramble for the critical inputs we require in order to make a safe and effective vaccine."

Entities with little or no experience in manufacturing vaccines are likely to chase the very raw materials we require to scale our production, putting the safety and security of all at risk."

Many companies and now some US officials fear the move would allow China to leapfrog years of research and erode the US advantage in biopharmaceuticals.

Spokespersons at the White House and US Trade Representative's office had no immediate comment on the matter.

CELEBRATION TIME



Shoppers wear masks as they shop at a nursery & garden shop on Mother's Day weekend during pandemic in Wilmette. ■ AP

Why are people across Colombia protesting?



ASSOCIATED PRESS
BUARAMANGA, 9 MAY

Thousands of Colombians have protested across the country against a government they feel has long ignored their needs, allowed corruption to run rampant and is so out of touch that it proposed tax increases during the coronavirus pandemic.

Despite virus lockdown orders, protesters have turned out in more than half of Colombia's municipalities since last week for mostly peaceful protest against the administration of President Ivan Duque.

But violence during some demonstrations has resulted in 26 people dead, including a police officer, and more than 800 people injured, according to government figures.

Human rights organizations have denounced numerous police abuses and give a higher death toll, while the international community is calling for dialogue.

The protests started on April 28 over proposed tax increases on public services, fuel, wages and pensions, but has morphed into a general demand for the government to pay longstanding debts to the most vulnerable in society, such as Indigenous and Afro Latino people. Even though the administration withdrew the tax reform, protests have continued and grown as reports emerged of police violence, deaths and disappearances.

Activists see a link between the current protests and demonstrations in November 2019 over a host of issues: earlier tax increases, the murder

Ransomware attack shuts down major US pipeline

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON, 9 MAY

The federal government is working with the Georgia-based company that shut down a major pipeline transporting fuel across the East Coast after a ransomware attack, the White House says.

The government is planning for various scenarios and working with state and local authorities on measures to mitigate any potential supply issues, officials said Saturday.

The attack is unlikely to affect gasoline supply and prices unless it leads to a prolonged shutdown, experts said.

Colonial Pipeline did not say what was demanded or who made the demand. Ransomware attacks are typically carried out by criminal hackers who scramble data, paralyzing victim networks, and demand a large payment to decrypt it.

Colonial Pipeline did not say what was demanded or

who made the demand. Ransomware attacks are typically carried out by criminal hackers who scramble data, paralyzing victim networks, and demand a large payment to decrypt it.

In this case, Colonial Pipeline said the ransomware attack Friday affected some of its information technology systems and that the company moved proactively to take certain systems offline, halting pipeline operations. In an earlier statement, it said it was taking steps to understand and resolve this issue with an eye toward returning to normal operations.

major hacks from months ago, including a massive breach of government agencies and corporations for which the US sanctioned Russia last month.

In this case, Colonial Pipeline said the ransomware attack Friday affected some of its information technology systems and that the company moved proactively to take certain systems offline, halting pipeline operations. In an earlier statement, it said it was taking steps to understand and resolve this issue with an eye toward returning to normal operations.

Vaccine deserts: Some countries have no Covid-19 jabs at all

ASSOCIATED PRESS

N'DJAMENA, 9 MAY

At the small hospital where Dr. Oumaima Djarma works in Chad's capital, there are no debates over which coronavirus vaccine is the best.

There are simply no vaccines at all.

Not even for the doctors and nurses like her who care for Covid-19 patients in Chad, one of the least-developed nations in the world where about one third of the country is engulfed by the Sahara desert.

"I find it unfair and unjust, and it is something that saddens me, the 33-year-old infectious diseases doctor says. I don't even have that choice. The first vaccine that comes along that has authorization, I will take it."

While wealthier nations have stockpiled vaccines for

their citizens, many poorer countries are still scrambling to secure doses. A few, like Chad, have yet to receive any.

The World Health Organization says nearly a dozen countries many of them in Africa are still waiting to get vaccines. Those last in line on the continent along with Chad are Burkina Faso, Burundi, Eritrea and Tanzania.

Delays and shortages of vaccine supplies are driving African countries to slip further behind the rest of the world in the Covid-19 vaccine rollout and the continent now accounts for only 1% of the vaccines administered worldwide, WHO warned Thursday.

And in places where there are no vaccines, there's also the chance that new and concerning variants could emerge, said Gian Gandhi, UNICEF's COVAX coordinator for Sup-

ply Division.

So we should all be concerned about any lack of coverage anywhere in the world, Gandhi said, urging higher-income countries to donate doses to the nations that are still waiting.

While the total of confirmed Covid-19 cases among them is relatively low compared with the world's hot spots, health officials say that figure is likely a vast undercount: The countries in Africa still waiting for vaccines are among those least equipped to track infections because of their fragile health care systems.

Chad has confirmed only 170 deaths since the pandemic began, but efforts to stop

and Charlotte, North Carolina.

A leading expert in industrial control systems, Dragos CEO Robert Lee, said systems such as those that directly manage the pipeline's operation have been increasingly connected to computer networks in the past decade.

"But critical infrastructure companies in the energy and electricity industries also tend to have invested more in cybersecurity than other sectors. If Colonial's shutdown was mostly precautionary and it detected the ransomware attack early and was well-prepared the impact may not be great," Lee said.

While there have long been fears about US adversaries disrupting American energy suppliers, ransomware attacks by criminal syndicates are much more common and have been soaring lately.

The Justice Department has a new task force dedicated to countering ransomware attacks.

Nazi ideas persist: Putin

MOSCOW, 9 MAY

Russian President Vladimir Putin marked the anniversary of the end of World War II in Europe with a speech warning that Nazi beliefs remain strong.

Speaking to the annual military parade on Moscow's Red Square, Putin on Sunday decried attempts to rewrite history to justify traitors and criminals, on whose hands lies the blood of hundreds of thousands of peaceful people.

Unfortunately, many of the ideologies of the Nazis, those who were obsessed with the delusional theory of their exclusiveness, are again trying to be put into service, he said. The parade, whose format varies little from year to year, included more than 190 military vehicles traversing the square, ranging from the renowned WWII-era T-34 tank to the hulking eight-axle Yars mobile ICBM launchers.

none has been told when that might be possible.

That was easier to accept at the beginning of the pandemic, Djarma said, because doctors all around the world lacked vaccines. That has changed dramatically after the development of shots in the West and by China and Russia that have gone to other poor African countries.

When I hear, for example, in some countries that they've finished with medical staff and the elderly and are now moving on to other categories, honestly, it saddens me, Djarma said. I ask them if they can provide us with these vaccines to at least protect the health workers. Everyone dies from this disease, rich or poor, she says. Everyone must have the opportunity, the chance to be vaccinated, especially those who are most exposed."

Saffron surge continues in Assam

NAV THAKURIA

As pollsters had predicted, the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party-led alliance won a decisive majority in the recently concluded Assam Legislative Assembly elections, held on 27 March, 1 and 6

in the daily wages of tea plantation workers to Rs 365, waiving off agricultural loans for farmers, and full protection of the language, culture and identity of indigenous people in the state.

Not only did it win in a sizable number of seats, the BJP also

everyone for extending cooperation in the state successfully. He commented that dedicated efforts by polling officers and staff, enthusiastic response by voters with an impressive turnout of more than 82 per cent, and support from all other stakeholders



April, thereby extinguishing expectations of the Opposition Congress Party to return to power in Dispur. The saffron party thus created a distinction by becoming the only party, apart from the Congress Party, to get a second consecutive in Assam – a feat that even the Asom Gana Parishad (now a BJP ally) could not achieve.

The BJP-led alliance comprising the AGP, United People's Party Liberal, Gana Suraksha Party and others succeeded in getting 75 representatives elected to the 126 member-Assembly. The nationalist party alone won 60 Assembly constituencies while AGP nominees emerged successful in nine and UPPL in six seats. The GSP, where incumbent Parliamentarian Naba Hira Sarania was also a candidate, drew a blank.

On the other hand, the Opposition alliance, named "Mahajot", garnered less than 50 seats as the Congress Party succeeded in 29 constituencies, followed by the All India United Democratic Front in 16, Bodoland People's Front in four, and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) in one seat. Other grand alliance partners like the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist), Anchalik Gana Morcha, Rashtriya Janata Dal etc failed to have a representative.

Significantly, peasant leader and Right To Information activist Akhil Gogoi, who fought the elections from jail where he is lodged under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, won the electoral battle from Shivsagar constituency in eastern Assam without even campaigning. As his party Rajbari Dol was yet to be recognised by the Election Commission of India, his name was shown as an independent candidate. In contrast, another newly launched political party, the Asom Jatiya Parishad, could score no wins, and its president Lurinjyoti Gogoi lost from both the Naharkatia and Daulijan seats.

The saffron party prioritised mitigation of the perennial Assam flood problem under the Mission Brahmaputra to safeguard lives, livelihoods and properties through its "Sankalpa Patra" along with a few other commitments. It pledged to bring three million deserving families under the coverage of the Orunodoi scheme and increased the monthly sanction of the same from Rs 830 to Rs 3,000. It also assured Rs 2.5 lakh to each Naamghar (traditional prayer hall) for infrastructure improvements.

Other promises included fast recovery of lands belonging to Vaishnavi monasteries (*Satra*) across the state from the clutches of encroachers, free education to students in government schools, bicycles to all girls from Class VIII onwards, creation of 200,000 government jobs and 800,000 in the private sector in the next five years, generation of 200,000 entrepreneurs every year, land papers to all landless families, and macro and micro initiatives to make Assam self-reliant in food production.

The Congress Party in its manifesto promised to forgo implementation of the Citizenship Amendment Act in Assam, creation of 500,000 government jobs and 2.5 million opportunities in the private sector, free electricity to households, monthly support of Rs 2,000 for housewives, hike

in Jagiroad), Bhabesh Kalita (Rongiya), Ranjan Dutta (Bihali), Naba Kr Doley (Dhokuakhana) and Parimal Suklabaidya (Dholai).

Other notable BJP winners were Mrinal Saikia (Khumta), Padma Hazarika (Sootia), Prasanta Phukan (Dibrugarh), Atul Bora (Dispur), Suman Haripriya (Hajo), Ranaj Pego (Dhemaji), Ramakanta Deori (Morigaon), Rupak Sarma (Nagaon) and Jayanta Malla Barua (Nalbari).

AGP president Atul Bora emerged successful in Bakokhat and its working president Keshab Mahnata won from Kaliabar constituency. Party leaders Phanibhusan Choudhury (Bongaigaon), Ramendra Narayan Kalita (Guwahati West), Bhaben Bharali (Deragao), Renupama Rajkhowa (Teok), Prithviraj Rabha (Tezur), Pradip Hazarika (Amguri) and Ponakan Baruah (Chabua) emerged winners.

Prominent losers included Assam Congress Party president Ripun Bora, its leaders Sum Ronhang and Bhupen Bora alongside the BJP's Angurla Deka, Narayan Deka, Gurujyoti Das, Kushal Duari, Ashok Singh and Aminul Haque Laskar. AJP working president Pabindra Deka, its leaders Jagdish Bhuyan, Dulal Ahmed and Adip Phukan; three BPF leaders, who were ministers in Sonowal's cabinet, namely Chandan Brahma, Pramila Rani Brahma and Rihan Daimary, didn't manage to win.

Defying all speculation that the massive anti-CAA movement in the state (along with various other parts of India) would ruin the future of BJP leaders, incumbent chief minister Sarbananda Sonowal easily won his Majuli Assembly constituency for the second consecutive time. The state Assembly speaker Hintendra Nath Goswami also regained the Jorhat constituency. Other victors among saffron party incumbents included powerful minister Himanta Biswa Sarma (Jalukbari), state BJP president Ranjeet Kr Dass (Patacharkuchi), Chandra Mohan Patowary (Dharmapur), Siddhartha Bhattacharya (Guwahati East), Piyush Hazarika

Putting aside anti-incumbency and state-wide citizenship protests, the Bharatiya Janata Party-led alliance secured a second consecutive term

including state police, the excise department, income tax department, narcotics control bureau, flying squads, etc resulted in a free, fair and safe election.

In the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic, the election authority had to take all possible precautionary measures for the safety of election officials and the electorate. Every polling station, where the Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trails along with Electronic Voting Machines were used, was sanitised properly and the facility of thermal scanning, hand sanitisers and face masks were made available. Assured minimum facilities like drinking water, waiting sheds, toilets, necessary lighting and wheelchairs were also made available for the benefit of voters.

During the month-long hectic election campaign, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union home minister Amit Shah, BJP national president J P Nadda, Union defence minister Rajnath Singh, Union agriculture minister N S Tomar, Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath and Madhya Pradesh CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan campaigned for the BJP and its ally-candidates. Congress Party leaders Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, Chhattisgarh CM Bhupesh Baghel, former Maharashtra CM Ashok Chavan and former Madhya Pradesh CM Kamal Nath also campaigned for Opposition nominees.

The saffron party's victory in Assam, which is the region's largest state, is significant as four states, namely Manipur, Nagaland, Meghalaya and Tripura, where the BJP is in power, are going for Assembly elections in the two years. It was in Assam where the nationalist party established an impressive victory in the 2016 Assembly polls (defeating the Congress Party) to expand its influence in all other North-eastern states, including Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Sikkim. Party ideologues claim that its burgeoning footprint in the region is due to increased focus on comprehensive development agendas.

The writer is the Guwahati-based Special Representative of *The Statesman*

A few highlights

- **BJP IS THE ONLY PARTY, APART FROM THE CONGRESS PARTY, TO GET A SECOND CONSECUTIVE TERM IN THE ASSAM ASSEMBLY.**
- **EVEN IN THE BACKDROP OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, THE STATE RECORDED A VOTER TURNOUT OF 82 PER CENT.**
- **THE BJP RECORDED A VOTE SHARE OF 33.21 PER CENT TO WIN 60 SEATS AGAINST THE CONGRESS PARTY'S 29.67 PER CENT AND 29 SEATS.**
- **THE ASOM GANA PARISHAD WON NINE SEATS WHILE THE ALL INDIA UNITED DEMOCRATIC FRONT AND THE BODOLAND PEOPLE'S FRONT WON 16 AND FOUR SEATS RESPECTIVELY.**
- **PEASANT LEADER AND RTI ACTIVIST AKHIL GOGOI (SHIVSAGAR CONSTITUENCY) WON FROM JAIL WITHOUT CAMPAIGNING.**
- **BJP IDEOLOGUES ARE CALLING ITS VICTORY IN ASSAM SIGNIFICANT, ESPECIALLY SINCE MANIPUR, NAGALAND, MEGHALAYA AND TRIPURA – FOUR STATES IN THE NORTH-EAST WHERE THE BJP IS IN POWER – ARE GOING FOR ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS IN TWO YEARS.**



Sarbananda Sonowal



Atul Bora



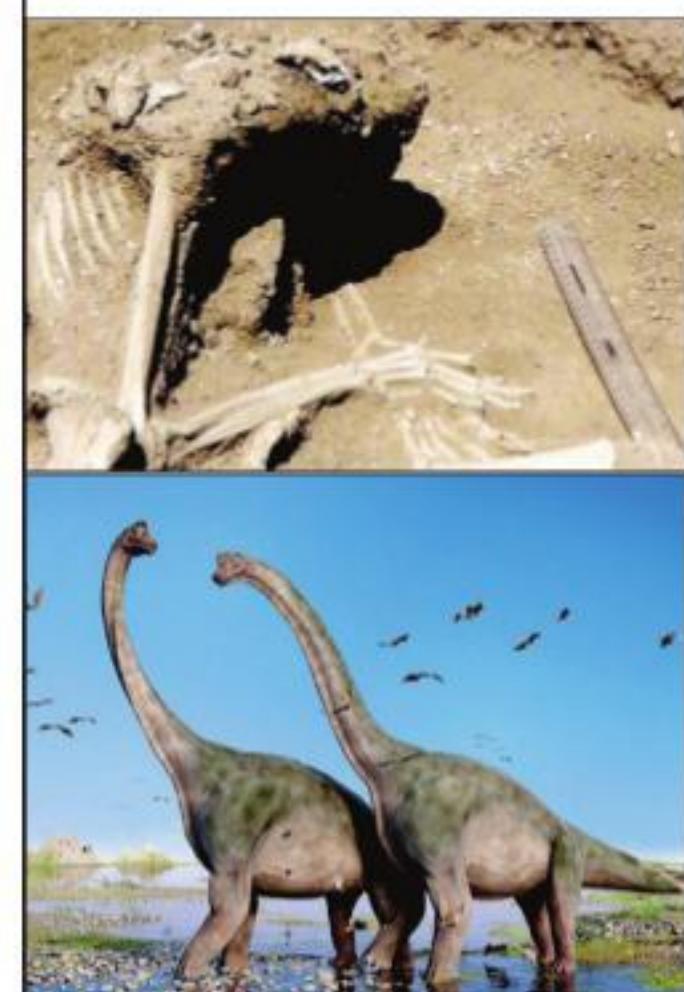
Himanta Biswa Sarma



Akhil Gogoi

PLUS POINTS

Dinosaur fossils



Researchers have identified fossil bone fragments of sauropod dinosaurs dating back about 100 million years from an area around West Khasi Hills district in Meghalaya. The yet-to-be-published findings were made during a recent field trip by researchers from the Geological Survey of India's palaeontology division in the North-east. The GSI researchers noted that this is the first record of sauropods of probable Titanosaurian origin discovered in the region.

Sauropods had very long necks, long tails, small heads relative to the rest of their body, and four thick, pillar-like legs. They are notable for the enormous sizes attained by some species, and the group includes the largest animals to have ever lived on land. The finding makes Meghalaya the fifth state in India after Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu and the only state in the North-east to report Sauropod bones having titanosaurian affinity, they said.

Titanosaurs were a diverse group of sauropod dinosaurs, including genera from Africa, Asia, South America, North America, Europe, Australia and Antarctica. "Dinosaur bones from Meghalaya were reported by GSI in 2001 but they were too fragmentary and ill-preserved to understand its taxonomic identification," said Arindam Roy, senior geologist, palaeontology division, GSI. "The present find of bones is during fieldwork in 2019-2020 and 2020-21. The last visit of the team was in February 2021. The fossils are presumably of Late Cretaceous, about 100 million years ago," Roy told PTI.

Roy noted that the best-preserved fossils are limb bones, adding the type of curvature, development of lateral and proximal margins of the partially preserved bone are indicative of it being a humerus bone. He, however, noted that the conclusions are drawn from preliminary studies and detailed work is going on. The bone fragments were collected from poorly sorted, purplish to greenish very coarse-grained arkosic sandstone interlaid with pebbly beds. More than 25 disarticulated, mostly fragmentary bone specimens were recovered, which are of different sizes and occur as isolated specimens but some of them were found in close proximity to each other, the researchers said.

"The record of the sauropod assemblage of probable titanosaurian affinity from Meghalaya extends the distribution and diversity of vertebrates in the Late Cretaceous of India," he said.

Accident claims one



A young man identified as Gangngun Gangsa (19) has died while eight others suffered grievous injuries last week when the pickup truck they were traveling in fell into a gorge in Arunachal Pradesh's Longding.

According to Longding deputy superintendent of police, B Tangjang, the pickup truck was proceeding to Wakkha from Longding. On the way, around 15 passengers coming from a paddy field got into the vehicle near Kala Pahar. About eight kilometres before reaching Wakkha, the vehicle met with an accident and fell into a gorge around 100 meters away from the main road, says a report in the Itanagar-based *Arunachal Times*. "Gangngun Gangsa died at the spot and eight others comprising four men and four women sustained grievous injuries. Accordingly, they have been evacuated to Dibrugarh, Assam for further treatment," the DSP said.

The body was handed over to relatives after completing the inquest and post-mortem. The driver was arrested and is currently remanded into judicial custody.



'SO DIFFERENT'

West Indies fast bowling great Curtly Ambrose says Indian pacer Jasprit Bumrah (photo, left) is 'so different' from all other bowlers he has seen and has the potential to reach the 400 wicket milestone in Tests if he manages to stay fit. "India's got a few good fast bowlers. I'm a big fan of Jasprit Bumrah. He's so different than any bowler I have seen. He's so effective and I'm looking forward to him doing really well," Ambrose said.

For more updates

www.thestatesman.com

THUMBNAILS

Liverpool wins: Liverpool kept its faint top four hopes alive in the English Premier League after beating Southampton by an unconvincing 2-0 at Anfield. Liverpool won thanks to Sadio Mane's first-half header and Thiago Alcantara's first goal for the club in the 90th minute.



Madrid Open: Aryna Sabalenka after nearly withdrawing from the tournament because of a muscle injury, Sabalenka won the title on Saturday. Sabalenka defeated top-ranked Ash Barty 6-0 3-6 6-4 for her 10th WTA title and first on clay.

Brawl denied: Star opener David Warner and cricketer-turned-commentator Michael Slater have denied reports of their involvement in a drunken bar brawl in Male, where Australian cricketers competing in the now-suspended IPL are waiting to board a flight home in a few days' time.

Man City title celebrations on hold after losing to Chelsea

AGENCIES

MANCHESTER, 9 MAY

In a haze of blue smoke produced by fans, Manchester City's team buses were serenaded into their stadium with chants of "Champions." They proved premature. There was still a game closed to crowds due to the pandemic to be won.

And Chelsea came from behind to win 2-1 on Saturday and prevent City from clinching a third English title in four seasons and dethroning Liverpool.

City's time will surely come, with three games still to get over the line in the Premier League. The celebrations could even come on Sunday if Manchester United, 13 points adrift of its neighbor, loses at Aston Villa.

Losing to Chelsea has become annoyingly familiar for City manager Pep Guardiola after seeing the quadruple bid ended by an FA Cup semifinal loss three weeks ago. Now it's only three weeks until they meet again on club football's biggest stage the Champions League final.

"We can learn from this and move on," Guardiola said.

"We have another three chances to be champions." How different it could have been had Sergio Aguero not chipped a "Panenka" penalty softly down the center that Chelsea goalkeeper Edouard Mendy saved in first-half stoppage time after Gabriel Jesus was brought down by Gilmour.

It was a chance to double the lead after Raheem Ster-

ling swept in the opener in the 44th minute.

Andreas Christensen failed to close down a long ball and fell, and Gabriel Jesus nipped in to seize possession. The pass was squared across the penalty area, that Aguero couldn't control to shoot before Sterling applied the finishing touch.

Then it was a mistake by Rodri, playing as the only midfielder, in giving the ball away around the halfway line that led to Chelsea equalizing in the 63rd.

Cesar Azpilicueta broke down the left before passing to Hakim Ziyech and knocking the ball to Christian Pulisic, who held off defender Nathan Ake. Azpilicueta found the space to receive the ball back before squaring it to Ziyech to strike low into the net.

Chelsea looked like it had given away another penalty with two minutes left of regular time when Sterling appeared to be clipped by Kurt Zouma and they fell in a tangle. Despite howls of protests and appeals for the referee to watch the incident himself, no spot kick was awarded.

How costly it proved for

Tottenham faced another season out of the Champions League after losing at Leeds two years to the day after reaching the final of Europe's elite competition.

Losing to Leeds 3-1 on Saturday left Tottenham five points from fourth place with three games to go, and having played one more than Chelsea.

Tottenham canceled out Stuart Dallas' early opener through Son Heung-min, but Patrick Bamford and Rodriguez sealed the win. Leeds has gone unbeaten against the "Big Six" at home in its first season back in the Premier League after 16 years, and sits in ninth place.

Tottenham faced another season out of the Champions League after losing at Leeds two years to the day after reaching the final of Europe's elite competition.

Losing to Leeds 3-1 on Saturday left Tottenham five points from fourth place with three games to go, and having played one more than Chelsea.

Tottenham canceled out

Stuart Dallas' early opener

through Son Heung-min,

but Patrick Bamford and

Rodriguez sealed the win.

Leeds has gone unbeaten

against the "Big Six" at

home in its first season

back in the Premier

League after 16 years,

and sits in ninth place.

Tottenham canceled out

Stuart Dallas' early opener

through Son Heung-min,

but Patrick Bamford and

Rodriguez sealed the win.

Leeds has gone unbeaten

against the "Big Six" at

home in its first season

back in the Premier

League after 16 years,

and sits in ninth place.

Tottenham canceled out

Stuart Dallas' early opener

through Son Heung-min,

but Patrick Bamford and

Rodriguez sealed the win.

Leeds has gone unbeaten

against the "Big Six" at

home in its first season

back in the Premier

League after 16 years,

and sits in ninth place.

Tottenham canceled out

Stuart Dallas' early opener

through Son Heung-min,

but Patrick Bamford and

Rodriguez sealed the win.

Leeds has gone unbeaten

against the "Big Six" at

home in its first season

back in the Premier

League after 16 years,

and sits in ninth place.

Tottenham canceled out

Stuart Dallas' early opener

through Son Heung-min,

but Patrick Bamford and

Rodriguez sealed the win.

Leeds has gone unbeaten

against the "Big Six" at

home in its first season

back in the Premier

League after 16 years,

and sits in ninth place.

Tottenham canceled out

Stuart Dallas' early opener

through Son Heung-min,

but Patrick Bamford and

Rodriguez sealed the win.

Leeds has gone unbeaten

against the "Big Six" at

home in its first season

back in the Premier

League after 16 years,

and sits in ninth place.

Tottenham canceled out

Stuart Dallas' early opener

through Son Heung-min,

but Patrick Bamford and

Rodriguez sealed the win.

Leeds has gone unbeaten

against the "Big Six" at

home in its first season

back in the Premier

League after 16 years,

and sits in ninth place.

Tottenham canceled out

Stuart Dallas' early opener

through Son Heung-min,

but Patrick Bamford and

Rodriguez sealed the win.

Leeds has gone unbeaten

against the "Big Six" at

home in its first season

back in the Premier

League after 16 years,

and sits in ninth place.

Tottenham canceled out

Stuart Dallas' early opener

through Son Heung-min,

but Patrick Bamford and

Rodriguez sealed the win.

Leeds has gone unbeaten

against the "Big Six" at

home in its first season

back in the Premier

League after 16 years,

and sits in ninth place.

Tottenham canceled out

Stuart Dallas' early opener

through Son Heung-min,

but Patrick Bamford and

Rodriguez sealed the win.

Leeds has gone unbeaten

against the "Big Six" at

home in its first season

back in the Premier

League after 16 years,

and sits in ninth place.

Tottenham canceled out

Stuart Dallas' early opener

through Son Heung-min,

but Patrick Bamford and

Rodriguez sealed the win.

Leeds has gone unbeaten

against the "Big Six" at

home in its first season

back in the Premier

League after 16 years,

and sits in ninth place.

Tottenham canceled out

Stuart Dallas' early opener

through Son Heung-min,

but Patrick Bamford and

Rodriguez sealed the win.

Leeds has gone unbeaten

against the "Big Six" at

home in its first season

back in the Premier

League after 16 years,

and sits in ninth place.

Tottenham canceled out

Stuart Dallas' early opener

through Son Heung-min,

but Patrick Bamford and

Rodriguez sealed the win.

Leeds has gone unbeaten