



'GOVT DOES NOT SEEM
TO CARE': RAHUL'S DIG
AT CENTRE ON VACCINES

P5



NEPAL OPP MOVES TOP
COURT AGAINST
HOUSE DISSOLUTION

P9



PEOPLE'S PARLIAMENT, ALWAYS IN SESSION

GAZA TRUCE: BLINKEN
IN MIDDLE EAST TO
PUSH PEACE TALKS

P10



GO WHERE YOU
WILL, HE'S THE
TOP SCORER

P12

WEATHER

Mainly clear sky. Strong surface winds during the day. The maximum and minimum temperatures would be around 37 and 27 degrees Celsius respectively.

RAINFALL: Nil

RELATIVE HUMIDITY

Max: 76% Min: 27%

TEMPERATURE

Max: 36.0°C (-4) Min: 21.2°C (-5)

SUN RISES

05:26 hrs SUN SETS

MOON RISES

18:02 hrs MOON SETS

05:08 hrs

THUMBNAILS



People stand in a queue to receive a doses of Covid vaccine at GMCH Hospital in Guwahati on Monday. AGENCIES

PIL on Covid treatment protocol: A PIL has been filed in Delhi High Court against Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), Niti Ayog, and the Government of India, seeking a reconsideration of the prevalent treatment protocol and change of "wrong treatment protocol" for mild cases of Covid-19. The PIL sought to convince the court to direct ICMR to investigate, hold clinical trials and change the Covid-19 treatment protocols, if necessary. (P2)

Delhi Police raid Twitter offices: Delhi Police teams arrived at offices of Twitter near Delhi on Monday evening after serving notice in connection with a row over the social media site marking BJP leader Sambit Patra's tweet on a "Congress toolkit" as "manipulated media". Police teams went to Twitter's offices at Gurgaon and Lado Sarai, seeking a response to their notice.

Pfizer, Moderna's 'no' to Delhi govt on vaccines: Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal on Monday said US pharmaceutical giants Pfizer and Moderna have declined to sell coronavirus vaccines to the city government as they want to directly deal with the Centre. "We have had talks with Pfizer and Moderna. They said they won't give us vaccine and will directly talk to the Centre. I appeal to the Central government with folded hands to talk to these firms," Kejriwal said. (P2)

Steady dip in new cases, but fatalities increase

SNS & PTI

NEW DELHI, 24 MAY

A steady decline in daily new Covid-19 cases has been observed since the last 17 days in India, the Union health ministry said on Monday.

India crossed the grim mark of 4k Covid-19 deaths with 4,454 new fatalities due to Corona infection in last 24 hours on Monday even as total fatalities due to the coronavirus infections crossed three-lakh mark, Union Health Ministry data revealed.

In the last 12 days India has recorded over 50,000 deaths.

On Monday, with 2,22,315 fresh cases in 24 hours, India witnessed the lowest rise in infection since April 21, according to the Union Health and Family Welfare Ministry.

According to the Health Ministry, a total of 3,02,544 people have been discharged in the last 24 hours, with 2,37,28,011 being cured from Covid till date.

Delhi logs 1,550 cases, 207 deaths: Delhi today recorded 1,550 fresh coronavirus cases and 207 Covid-linked fatalities while the positivity rate stood at 2.52 per cent, according to the Delhi government's latest health bulletin. (See P2)



21.80 crore vax doses provided to States, UTs

NEW DELHI, 24 MAY

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare on Monday said that more than 21.80 crore vaccine doses have been provided to States and 1.80 crore doses are still available with States/UTs to be administered.

The Government of India has so far provided, both through the free of cost and direct state procurement, more than 21.80 crore vaccine doses to States/UTs. More than 48 lakh doses will be given to the States/UTs within the next 3 days. SNS

To minimise vax wastage, on-site registration enabled for 18-44 years

SNS & AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, 24 MAY

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare on Monday initiated on-site Registration in addition to online appointment for 18-44 years age group now on CoWIN, the service is only enabled only for Government Covid Vaccination Centres (CVCs) to minimise vaccine wastage and to facilitate those without internet reach.

The ministry said the reason behind it to provide maximum vaccination as in case of sessions exclusively

organised with online slots towards the end of the day, some doses may still be left unutilised in case the online appointee beneficiaries do not turn up on day of vaccination due to any reason. In such cases, on-site registration of few beneficiaries may be necessary to minimise the vaccine wastage.

Although CoWIN provides features such as registration of up to 4 beneficiaries with a mobile number, facilitates registration and appointments through applications, such as ArogyaSeva and Umang and through

the Common Service Centres, people requiring facilitated cohorts facility and those without access to internet or smart phones or mobile phones may still have limited access for vaccination.

Therefore, the feature for on-site registration and appointment is now being enabled for 18-44 years age group on CoWIN.

This feature will not be available for Private CVCs, presently and the Private CVCs will have to publish their vaccination schedules exclusively with slots for online appointments.

Mid-air wedding:
DGCA off-rosters
SpiceJet crew



Amid-air wedding took place on board a SpiceJet chartered flight on the morning of 23 May with guests violating Covid-19 social distancing norms, sources said on Monday, adding that the crew has been taken off the roster and an inquiry ordered.

The chartered flight, with 160 people on board, left the Madurai airport and remained airborne for approximately two hours on Sunday morning before returning there, they added.

A senior official of aviation regulator Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) said that the flight crew has been off-rostered for not enforcing the social distancing norms onboard.

SpiceJet has been directed to lodge a complaint with relevant authorities against those people who did not follow the Covid-19 norms inside the flight, the official said. He also said that the DGCA "will take strict action" after it completes its probe into this matter.

Images and videos of the mid-air wedding were circulated on social media on Monday. The images and videos purportedly show people standing extremely close to each other as the couple tied the knot. PII

Narada: Larger HC bench hear bail recall plea; 4 still under house arrest

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, 24 MAY

The four heavyweight leaders Subrata Mukherjee, Firhad Hakim, Madan Mitra and Sovan Chatterjee will continue to be under house arrest till Wednesday as a larger Bench of Calcutta High Court continued to hear the petition of recalling the bail order of the four leaders today.

With acting Chief Justice, Rajesh Bindal presiding over the larger Bench going for leave tomorrow, the matter will be heard on Wednesday.

Earlier, the CBI moved Supreme Court stating that it challenges the order of a Calcutta High Court Division Bench which put the four

leaders under house arrest. It stated that it does not accept the jurisdiction of the five judge Bench to hear the case.

Niladri Bhattacharya, counsel for Madan Mitra said that the Supreme Court registry has refused Special Leave Petition by CBI as there were several faults in it. The CBI was asked to rectify it and file afresh.

After the larger Bench of acting CJ Bindal, Justices I P Mukerji, Harish Tandon, Soumitra Sen and Arjit Banerjee of this court refused CBI's plea of adjourning the matter, petitioners counsel, Avishek Manu Singhvi submitted that the CBI was acting wilfully. The state government's role is unpre-

dented with the chief minister sitting on a dharma in the CBI office, several MLAs being present there, the law minister present at the court and a crowd pelting stones at the CBI office, solicitor general, Tushar Mehta appearing for the CBI, submitted.

How is your client affected if this court hears the matter since the Supreme Court has not heard it yet, Justice Mukerji asked Mehta. We moved Supreme Court as it is a very serious matter but will go by whatever the high court holds, Mehta said.

Why should hearing be adjourned since a cyclone may lash the state on Wednesday and can hamper virtual hearing, Justice Mukerji asked.

Cured ones struggle to shake off hospital memories

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, 24 MAY

Crowded wards with scarcely a doctor or an attendant in sight, patients holding on to each other to go to washrooms so filthy they gagged and, most agonising, people around them dying. For Covid patients now back home, harrowing images from their hospital stay are the hurdles on their road to recovery.

Over a year after the pandemic began and deeper into the second, deadlier wave, many of those who have been to Covid hell and back are unable to shake off the memories of their days in hospitals, leading to worries about PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) and other anxiety related problems, including insomnia.

It's a "numbing experience" for many Covid-19 survivors who come out from hospital, observed Dr Samir Parikh, director, Department of Mental Health and Behavioural Sciences, Fortis Healthcare, Gurgaon.

Their days in hospital are seared into the memories of Covid patients who seem to be healing but maybe only

from the outside.

"Hardly any doctor attended to us for the first two days.

There were six of us - women and men - in the same Covid-19 ward. We had to throw empty plastic bottles out of the door to catch the staff's attention. I watched at least three people die on the bed right across from mine," a Delhi homemaker said,

requesting anonymity.

The 57-year-old, who is slowly regaining her strength, spent five days at a government hospital in the city.

Cases were spiking in the national capital and hospital beds were hard to come by when she was taken ill last month.

With oxygen saturation levels falling, high fever and deteriorating HRCT chest images, she needed urgent hospitalisation and the family managed that with some difficulty.

She recalled her hospital stay with a shudder.

There was no one to take us to the washroom and we, the patients, would hold each other's hands and go to that very unhygienic toilet, which was down the hall and unisex.



Health workers attend to a patient at Shehnai Banquet Hall Covid-19 isolation centre, in New Delhi on Monday. IANS





We cannot ignore the devastation high rain events can cause

RAJA BISTA, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT, DARJEELING

ON CYCLONE YAAS AND THE NEED FOR PEOPLE IN THE REGION TO REMAIN CAUTIOUS

Pfizer, Moderna say 'no' to Delhi as they want to deal with Centre: CM

Modi govt has squandered great opportunity to promptly vaccinate people of the country: Sisodia

SNS & PTI
NEW DELHI, 24 MAY

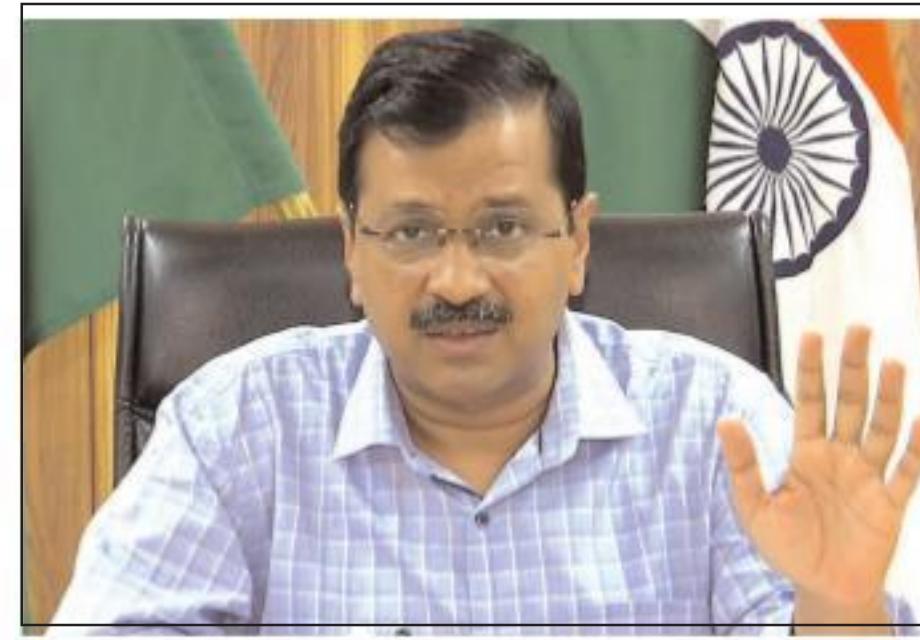
Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal today said US pharmaceutical giants Pfizer and Moderna have declined to sell coronavirus vaccines to the Delhi government as they want to directly deal with the Centre.

"We have had talks with Pfizer and Moderna. They said they won't give us vaccine and will directly talk to the Centre," Kejriwal told reporters.

"I appeal to the central government with folded hands to talk to these firms, import vaccines and distribute them among states," the CM said.

Kejriwal's statement came a day after a senior Punjab official said Moderna had refused to send vaccines directly to the state government stating that it only deals with the Centre. Meanwhile, Delhi deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia today asked the Narendra Modi-led central government of "mismanaging" the coronavirus vaccination programme in the country, saying it has asked states to float global tenders for jabs without giving approval to vaccines of foreign companies.

The entire country has



apparently been facing an acute shortage of Covid vaccines even as it continues to reel under a ferocious second wave of coronavirus that has killed tens of thousands of people so far. The jabs crisis has disrupted vaccination for 18-44 age group as well as those in the category of people aged 45 plus.

Sisodia in a letter to Union health minister Harsh Vardhan charged that the vaccination for the youths in the country has been "messy up" due to the Cente's policy "missteps".

"In spite of early advantages given by our scientific community and Indian manufacturers, we have squandered away the great oppor-

tunity of timely vaccination of our people," he stated adding that "The missed opportunity by the Government of India has resulted in extraordinary loss of lives during the current wave of Covid pandemic".

At his online press briefing, Sisodia also said Pfizer and Moderna have refused to sell coronavirus vaccines directly to the Delhi government and said that they will only talk to the Centre.

"Is this a joke? On one hand states are asked to float global tenders for buying vaccines but the Government of India has not given approval to those vaccines," Sisodia said.

The countries all over the

world kept a watch on vaccine production and many placed order in advance as trials progressed, but the Modi government was "sleeping", he charged.

The US and the European Union bought 70 crore vaccine doses by November 2020. The US started procurement at trial stage and currently has vaccine stocks to cover its entire population, Sisodia said. Many countries have given approval to vaccines of Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson but the Government of India is yet to do so, he pointed out.

"Nearly 85 countries have approved vaccine by Pfizer, 46 countries have approved Moderna vaccine and 41 have approved Johnson & Johnson vaccine. They have also started procurement while we are still playing just a game of approval," Sisodia said.

What is the "compulsion" that India is depending on two local manufacturers that even exported doses to other countries. Sputnik has been given approval in April although it was permitted by Russia for emergency use in August last year, the Delhi deputy CM said.

"I request the central government with folded hands not to make a mockery of the vaccination programme and

understand its seriousness," he said, expressing his concern that "by the time vaccines are arranged those already vaccinated may lose antibodies and require to be vaccinated again".

The US started investing in vaccine production while it was facing first wave of coronavirus in March 2020. Prime Minister Modi visited Serum Institute in November 2020 and investment in manufacturing started in April this year, Sisodia said.

He said all the 400 Covid vaccination sites in Delhi for the 18-44 age group have been closed after running out of vaccine stocks, while the centres administering Covaxin to the 45+ age group, healthcare workers and frontline workers also have been shut due to unavailability of jabs. "Due to mismanagement by the central government there is shortage of vaccines and vaccination of youth has not started in several districts in the states," he charged.

Stressing that vaccination is the most effective weapon against the coronavirus, Sisodia appealed to the central government to rise above party politics and procure vaccines of Johnson & Johnson, Moderna and Pfizer for the people of the country.

South Corporation gears up to control mosquito breeding

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, 24 MAY

In order to control vector-borne diseases ahead of monsoon season, South Delhi Municipal Corporation's (SDMC) public health department has geared up to check any possible mosquito breeding or virus spread under its jurisdiction area.

From building awareness campaigns to conducting workshop for officials and common man, and inter-department coordination, anti-larval spray, the civic body is bracing up to

contain any spread of these diseases. At last 25 dengue cases, 8 malaria cases and 4 Chikungunya cases have been reported in Delhi this year till 22 May, even though the vector-borne diseases are usually reported between July and November, according to the latest municipal report on vector-borne diseases.

"The DBC workers of the SDMC keep checking mosquito breeding by visiting every household. In present circumstances due to Covid-19 pandemic, majority of citizens are unwilling to allow entry of DBC workers inside

their house to check mosquito breeding. In such circumstances, Public Health Department is making people aware through newspapers and text messages. The Department has sent nearly 5 lakh text messages in this regard," claimed official SDMC.

The civic body has said that citizens, through these messages, has been appealed to stop mosquito breeding in and around their house by cleaning their water cooler every week and filling fresh water. If unable to change the water, they can mix little quantity of petrol & diesel in that water, ensure

covering of water tank, etc, keep their pots/clay pots clean, avoid storage of tyres, tin, tubes, abandoned utensils and solid waste.

SDMC's public health department has also issued nearly 1,800 legal notices and challans against households and commercial units for mosquito breeding at their premises.

The civic body has also warned that the department may recommend to take penal action under Section 269 of the IPC against households and commercial units after repeated reports of mosquito breeding.

Classified

PUBLIC NOTIFICATIONS

PUBLIC NOTICE
My clients Sh. Raj Kishore Bhagat, s/o Vishnu Bhagat and Smt. Shanti Devi, w/o Sh. Raj Kishore Bhagat Both, r/o C-955, Nand Gram Meerut Road, Ghaziabad, U.P., Debar their son Sanjay Kumar and Daugh-

ter-In-Law Nisha Kumari from all their movable and immovable asset due to their misbehaviour and also break-up their relationships with both of them. My client will not be responsible for their acts and deeds.

Sumit Nandvani
Advocate
Lawyers Chamber:
F-515 (A)
Karkardooma Court,
Delhi-32

The Statesman

KOLKATA

Statesman House,
4, Chowringhee Square
Kolkata-700 001
Tel: (033) 22127070-76,
(033) 4071700

Fax: (033) 2212-6181 / 7107-1780
Email: thestatesman@vsnl.com
statesmandisplay@gmail.com
thestatesmanclassified@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: (010) 4171421

Email:
delhistatesman@gmail.com
delhi@thestatesmangroup.com

HITEN RATHORE

92192123

Pawan Dogra

9811963623

BHUBANESWAR

Plot 3A, Zone B, Sector A, Mancheswar Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751 010.

Tel: (0674) 2588060/61/62/ 2586371,
Fax: 0674-2588061

Email:
bhubaneswar@thestatesmangroup.com
statesmanbsr@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

Capital adds 1,550 Covid cases, 207 deaths; positivity rate 2.52%

SNS & PTI
NEW DELHI, 24 MAY

Delhi today recorded 1,550 fresh coronavirus cases and 207 Covid-linked fatalities while the positivity rate stood at 2.52 per cent, according to the Delhi government's latest health bulletin.

This is the lowest number of daily cases recorded in the national capital since 27 March (1,558 cases), with the count going below the 2,000-mark for the second consecutive day.

The city had yesterday reported 1,649 Covid cases and 189 deaths while the positivity rate was then 2.42 per cent.

Delhi had recorded 3,846 Covid cases and 235 deaths last Wednesday, 3,231 cases and 233 deaths on Thursday, while the tally on Friday was 3,009 cases and 252 deaths.

On Saturday, the cases

tally was 2,260. Delhi's Covid positivity rate was 5.5 per cent last Thursday and 4.76 per cent on Friday, slipping gradually to less than 4 per cent on Saturday.

Today's cases were detected out of 61,506 tests, including 44,342 RT-PCR tests and 17,164 rapid antigen tests, the health bulletin said.

Delhi's Covid caseload climbed to 14,18,418 while its toll mounted to 23,409, the bulletin stated. Over 13.7 lakh patients have recovered from the infection so far.

The city's active Covid cases decreased to 24,578 from yesterday's 27,610, the bulletin stated.

The number of people under home isolation in the city came down to 13,806 from yesterday's 15,844 while the number of containment zones dropped to 45,483 from 46,570 a day before, the bulletin added.

BJP leader writes to L-G, suggests Covid compensation policy

PTI
NEW DELHI, 24 MAY

Senior BJP leader and former Union minister Vijay Goel on Monday wrote to Delhi Lieutenant Governor Anil Baijal, suggesting that a Covid compensation policy be prepared to provide relief to families of those who died due to the disease.

Through his letter to the lieutenant governor (L-G), Goel also sought to know whether there is any policy of the Delhi government to give such a compensation.

If there is no such policy, it should be made at least for those who died due to Covid. Detailed guidelines should be framed and compensation should be provided automatically to all those who are covered under these guidelines," he said.

The Delhi government had recently announced a compensation of Rs 50,000 to families of Delhi residents who died due to Covid.

It also pays Rs 1 crore to families of its employees who died due to the virus while discharging their duties as frontline workers.

LNJP Hospital logs 40 severe Covid infections among kids

PTI
NEW DELHI, 24 MAY

The Delhi government-run Lok Nayak Jai Prakash Narayan Hospital has recorded around 40 cases of "severe" coronavirus infection among children during the second wave and around 15 of them were aged below one, senior doctor said on Monday.

Dr Urmila Jhamb, the head of the hospital's paediatrics department, said data collected during the second wave does not suggest that children have been infected in large numbers, "but it doesn't mean it won't happen in the third wave".

Around 400 children suffering from COVID-19 were admitted to the facility from March to December last year, she said.

"During the second wave of coronavirus, starting April 1, the hospital has recorded around 40 cases of severe infection among children so far. Of these, around 15 were aged below one," she said.

"We admitted only severe cases, those who required oxygen or ventilator, this time. That's why

the number seems low (compared to last year)," Dr Jhamb said.

The hospital, the largest run by the Delhi government, has reported 75 cases of infection among children since January 1 this year.

Jhamb said a month-old Covid-positive baby died due to severe dehydration earlier this month.

"We couldn't do much. The child passed away two hours after he was brought to the hospital," the doctor said.

Asked about a possible third wave and its impact on children, Dr Jhamb said data collected during the second wave does not suggest that kids have been infected in large numbers.

"It doesn't mean it won't happen in the third wave. It looks less likely, but we cannot predict," she added.

For example, a large number of young adults got infected during the second wave as compared to the first time, she said.

The spread of coronavirus among children during a possible third wave will depend on several factors, including vaccination and reopening of schools, the pediatrician said.

PIL in HC seeks review of treatment protocol for mild Covid cases

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 24 MAY

A PIL filed in the Delhi High Court against the ICMR, the Niti Ayog, and the Government of India has sought a review of the prevalent treatment protocol for mild cases of Covid-19 and for change of wrong treatment protocol in such cases.

The petitioners of this PIL include Vivek Sheel Aggarwal, Chairman, Niramaya Research, Dr Sanjay Jain (MS, Orthopaedics), Dr Anu Garg (MD, Paediatrics), and Bhaswar Aggarwal, an independent researcher.

The PIL has been filed in the High Court today through advocates Praveen K Sharma and Amitesh Bakshi.

It is based on independent research by the charitable trust Niramaya Research. The research compiles various research papers from international medical jour-

nals such as PubMed, Lancet, Elsevier among others, which, it states, provide "scientific evidence indicating that the medications being prescribed in the mild Covid-19 cases are leading to complications, increase in morbidities and undue deaths".

The PIL points out that "there has been no clinical trial on the efficacy and safety of antipyretics usage in the treatment and management of viral infections, especially Covid". It also states that "all the medical literature and animal trials suggest against the use of it and appeal to hold human clinical trials". Niramaya Research's new hypothesis suggests that the "immunomodulatory effects of the medication being prescribed tamper and damage the homeostatic mechanism of the human immune system leading to complications and shows the correlation of the same complications

in Covid-related mortalities".

The petition has urged the court to "direct ICMR to investigate, hold clinical trials and change the treatment protocols,



At the meeting, I sought to know why Bengal, despite being a bigger state than Odisha and Andhra Pradesh -- both in terms of population density and number of districts -- is getting less? Why are we being deprived repeatedly?

MAMATA BANERJEE
WEST BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER

The Statesman
NEW DELHI, TUESDAY 25 MAY 2021

03

HP extends 'Corona curfew' till 31 May

Jai Ram Cabinet decides to continue restrictions to further curb Covid spread in the state

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 24 MAY

The Himachal Pradesh government on Monday decided to further extend the 'Corona curfew' in the state till 31 May with no relaxation in restrictions in a bid to further break the chain of the viral disease transmission.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the HP Cabinet that was held here today under the chairmanship of chief minister Jai Ram Thakur to review the Covid-19 situation in the state.

A state government official said the health department will encourage private hospitals in the state to increase vaccination in their institutions.

Besides, the Cabinet felt that MLAs may review along with SDM the welfare/ treatment being provided to Covid patients under home isolation.

"The Cabinet gave its approval to Excise Policy for the financial year 2021-22 which envisages collection of Rs 1,829 crore revenue during the year which is Rs 228 crore higher than the financial year 2020-21 thereby registering an increase of 14 per cent.

Considering the present situation arising out of Covid, the excise year 2020-21 has been extended by one month up to 30th June 2021 and the new excise policy will be operational for 9 months i.e. 1 July 2021 to 31 March 2022," he said.

The official stated that approval was also given for the renewal of retail excise vends in the state for the year 2021-



22 for the renewal fees of 3 per cent of the value of unit/vend

cent. New license for serving liquor in tented accommodation has been approved and new licenses for visitor centres in wine manufacturing units and wine tasting festivals have been approved.

According to the new policy, low-price brands of IMFL will be cheaper as license fees and excise duty have been reduced, besides the facility of transfer of quota within district and inter-district had been approved.

"However, this will be subject to certain terms and conditions and liquor quota of bars attached to hotels has been reduced by 50 per cent," the official said.

He further stated that license fees for CSD canteens had been reduced and facility of liquor canteen license in L-9 & L-9A had been allowed to all the Central Armed Police

Forces. In addition, the HP Cabinet has given in-principle approval to have excise police in the excise and taxation department to check the interstate and intra-state smuggling of liquor, illicit trade and bootlegging of liquor that results in losses to government exchequer.

The price of adding a sub vend has been significantly reduced and penalty on unlifted quota has been rationalised whereas breakage for wholesaler for storage and transport has been increased from 0.5 per cent to 0.6 per cent, he stated.

He added the Cabinet had also decided to extend the current year toll leases by one month upto 30 June, 2021 which subsequently would be auctioned and the leases for the year 2021-22 would be operational from 1 July, 2021 to 31 March, 2022.

He further stated that license fees for CSD canteens had been reduced and facility of liquor canteen license in L-9 & L-9A had been allowed to all the Central Armed Police

Forces.

which was as high as 28.9 per cent in the week from 10 to 16 May 2021.

In the last week, a total of 18,794 cases of Covid were recorded as against 28,187 positive cases in the previous week," he said, adding the state had also recorded 441 deaths in the last week. He stated that all the districts had registered a sharp fall in the positivity during the last week and the average daily number of cases being reported (weekly average) had also seen a sharp decline.

In the last week, 2,685 cases were detected daily on an average whereas in the week before that, this number was as high as 4,117.

"Till 23 May 2021, a total 2,752 deaths have been recorded in the state, out of which 1,684 (61.2

per cent) were male and 1,068 (38.8 per cent) female with mean age of the deceased being 61.9 years," he said.

He further stated that among the total deaths, comorbidities were present in 1,401 (50.9 per cent) and non-co-morbid were 1,351 (49.1 per cent).

Majority of the comorbidities include diabetes mellitus 668 (49.5 per cent), hypertension 608 (45 per cent), chronic kidney disease 129 (9.5 per cent) and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease 95 (7 per cent).

If age wise distribution is seen, maximum deaths had occurred in the age bracket of 60-74 years of age while the remaining deaths had occurred in the individuals more than 45 years of age, he added.

HC questions Centre's bid to deny visa to OCI card holder as mother visited Pakistan

PTI
NEW DELHI, 24 MAY

to them to visit their family here.

"How can you stop a person from coming to India just because his mother used to visit Pakistan," the court said and issued notice to the ministries of external affairs and home affairs and the Consulate General of India in New York, USA, seeking their stand on the plea by June 9.

The petitioner claimed that he, his wife and two daughters had applied for renewal of their OCI cards, and in January 2021, his wife's

card was renewed.

However, his and his daughters' OCI cards were not renewed for the reason that his mother lived in Pakistan during her childhood and visited that country even after marriage when she had become an Indian citizen, said the petition, filed through advocate Abha Roy.

Roy said that according to a circular issued by the central government, OCI need not be renewed for these three card holders.

The high court also directed the Drug Controller of Delhi government to conduct a similar inquiry into the allegations of procuring and hoarding medical oxygen made against AAP MLAs Priti Tomar and Praveen Kumar and file a status report.

A bench of Justices Vipin

Sanghi and Jasmeet Singh

said the Drug Controller shall examine how it is possible for someone to procure over 2,000 strips of a medicine, Fabiflu here, which is already in shortage and how the chemist was able to entertain such a prescription.

Mr Gautam Gambhir must have done it with best of intentions. We are not doubt

ing his intentions. He has

been a national player of our

country. Our question is

whether it is a responsible

behaviour when you the

medicine is in short supply.

We are not doubting his intentions but the way he has gone about it, he has actually done a disservice,

unintentionally maybe. This was not the way that you buy

from the market so many

strips, certainly not, the bench said.

The high court was hearing a PIL seeking lodging of an FIR on the allegations that

politicians are able to procure in huge quantity and dis

tribute COVID-19 medicines

even as patients were running from pillar to post to get

them.

An application was also

filed in the pending petition

making allegations MLAs

Tomar and Kumar.

The bench perused the

status report of Delhi Police

which said that Gambhir had

purchased 2,628 strips of Fabiflu, used for treating COVID-

19 patients, on the prescription

of Dr Manish of Sanjay

Garg Hospital and while 2,343

increase chances of mucormycosis. In addition, uncontrolled diabetes mellitus, immune-suppression by steroids, prolonged ICU stay, comorbidities like malignancy, post transplant are the major risk factors for this fungal disease," he added.

A health department official said Mucormycosis is a fungal disease which generally affects the nose, eyes and cerebral area in a human body and the reasons for surge is that Covid-19 infection worsens diabetes, precipitate new diabetes and sometimes develops deficiency of white blood cells.

"The immunosuppressive treatments such as steroids being used in Covid-19 patients result in decrease in immunity. Besides, the chronic respiratory disease, intubation, mechanical ventilation and coexistence of other infections during COVID-19 also

increase chances of mucormycosis. In addition, uncontrolled diabetes mellitus, immune-suppression by steroids, prolonged ICU stay, comorbidities like malignancy, post transplant are the major risk factors for this fungal disease," he added.

A health department official said Mucormycosis is a fungal disease which generally affects the nose, eyes and cerebral area in a human body and the reasons for surge is that Covid-19 infection worsens diabetes, precipitate new diabetes and sometimes develops deficiency of white blood cells.

"The immunosuppressive treatments such as steroids being used in Covid-19 patients result in decrease in immunity. Besides, the chronic respiratory disease, intubation, mechanical ventilation and coexistence of other infections during COVID-19 also

increase chances of mucormycosis. In addition, uncontrolled diabetes mellitus, immune-suppression by steroids, prolonged ICU stay, comorbidities like malignancy, post transplant are the major risk factors for this fungal disease," he added.

A health department official said Mucormycosis is a fungal disease which generally affects the nose, eyes and cerebral area in a human body and the reasons for surge is that Covid-19 infection worsens diabetes, precipitate new diabetes and sometimes develops deficiency of white blood cells.

"The immunosuppressive treatments such as steroids being used in Covid-19 patients result in decrease in immunity. Besides, the chronic respiratory disease, intubation, mechanical ventilation and coexistence of other infections during COVID-19 also

increase chances of mucormycosis. In addition, uncontrolled diabetes mellitus, immune-suppression by steroids, prolonged ICU stay, comorbidities like malignancy, post transplant are the major risk factors for this fungal disease," he added.

A health department official said Mucormycosis is a fungal disease which generally affects the nose, eyes and cerebral area in a human body and the reasons for surge is that Covid-19 infection worsens diabetes, precipitate new diabetes and sometimes develops deficiency of white blood cells.

"The immunosuppressive treatments such as steroids being used in Covid-19 patients result in decrease in immunity. Besides, the chronic respiratory disease, intubation, mechanical ventilation and coexistence of other infections during COVID-19 also

increase chances of mucormycosis. In addition, uncontrolled diabetes mellitus, immune-suppression by steroids, prolonged ICU stay, comorbidities like malignancy, post transplant are the major risk factors for this fungal disease," he added.

A health department official said Mucormycosis is a fungal disease which generally affects the nose, eyes and cerebral area in a human body and the reasons for surge is that Covid-19 infection worsens diabetes, precipitate new diabetes and sometimes develops deficiency of white blood cells.

"The immunosuppressive treatments such as steroids being used in Covid-19 patients result in decrease in immunity. Besides, the chronic respiratory disease, intubation, mechanical ventilation and coexistence of other infections during COVID-19 also

increase chances of mucormycosis. In addition, uncontrolled diabetes mellitus, immune-suppression by steroids, prolonged ICU stay, comorbidities like malignancy, post transplant are the major risk factors for this fungal disease," he added.

A health department official said Mucormycosis is a fungal disease which generally affects the nose, eyes and cerebral area in a human body and the reasons for surge is that Covid-19 infection worsens diabetes, precipitate new diabetes and sometimes develops deficiency of white blood cells.

"The immunosuppressive treatments such as steroids being used in Covid-19 patients result in decrease in immunity. Besides, the chronic respiratory disease, intubation, mechanical ventilation and coexistence of other infections during COVID-19 also

increase chances of mucormycosis. In addition, uncontrolled diabetes mellitus, immune-suppression by steroids, prolonged ICU stay, comorbidities like malignancy, post transplant are the major risk factors for this fungal disease," he added.

A health department official said Mucormycosis is a fungal disease which generally affects the nose, eyes and cerebral area in a human body and the reasons for surge is that Covid-19 infection worsens diabetes, precipitate new diabetes and sometimes develops deficiency of white blood cells.

"The immunosuppressive treatments such as steroids being used in Covid-19 patients result in decrease in immunity. Besides, the chronic respiratory disease, intubation, mechanical ventilation and coexistence of other infections during COVID-19 also

increase chances of mucormycosis. In addition, uncontrolled diabetes mellitus, immune-suppression by steroids, prolonged ICU stay, comorbidities like malignancy, post transplant are the major risk factors for this fungal disease," he added.

A health department official said Mucormycosis is a fungal disease which generally affects the nose, eyes and cerebral area in a human body and the reasons for surge is that Covid-19 infection worsens diabetes, precipitate new diabetes and sometimes develops deficiency of white blood cells.

"The immunosuppressive treatments such as steroids being used in Covid-19 patients result in decrease in immunity. Besides, the chronic respiratory disease, intubation, mechanical ventilation and coexistence of other infections during COVID-19 also

increase chances of mucormycosis. In addition, uncontrolled diabetes mellitus, immune-suppression by steroids, prolonged ICU stay, comorbidities like malignancy, post transplant are the major risk factors for this fungal disease," he added.

A health department official said Mucormycosis is a fungal disease which generally affects the nose, eyes and cerebral area in a human body and the reasons for surge is that Covid-19 infection worsens diabetes, precipitate new diabetes and sometimes develops deficiency of white blood cells.

"The immunosuppressive treatments such as steroids being used in Covid-19 patients result in decrease in immunity. Besides, the chronic respiratory disease, intubation, mechanical ventilation and coexistence of other infections during COVID-19 also

increase chances of mucormycosis. In addition, uncontrolled diabetes mellitus, immune-suppression by steroids, prolonged ICU stay, comorbidities like malignancy, post transplant are the major risk factors for this fungal disease," he added.

A health department official said Mucormycosis is a fungal disease which generally affects the nose, eyes and cerebral area in a human body and the reasons for surge is that Covid-19 infection worsens diabetes, precipitate new diabetes and sometimes develops deficiency of white blood cells.

"The immunosuppressive treatments such as steroids being used in Covid-19 patients result in decrease in immunity. Besides, the chronic respiratory disease, intubation, mechanical ventilation and coexistence of other infections during COVID-19 also

increase chances of mucormycosis. In addition, uncontrolled diabetes mellitus, immune-suppression by steroids, prolonged ICU stay, comorbidities like malignancy, post transplant are the major risk factors for this fungal disease," he added.

A health department official said Mucormycosis is a fungal disease which generally affects the nose, eyes and cerebral area in a human body and the reasons for surge is that Covid-19 infection worsens diabetes, precipitate new diabetes and sometimes develops deficiency of white blood cells.

"The immunosuppressive treatments such as steroids being used in Covid-19 patients result in decrease in immunity. Besides, the chronic respiratory disease, intubation, mechanical ventilation and coexistence of other infections during COVID-19 also

increase chances of mucormycosis. In addition, uncontrolled diabetes mellitus, immune-suppression by steroids, prolonged ICU stay, comorbidities like malignancy, post transplant are the major risk factors for this fungal disease," he added.

A health department official said Mucormycosis is a fungal disease which generally affects the nose, eyes and cerebral area in a human body and the reasons for surge is that Covid-19 infection worsens diabetes, precipitate new diabetes and sometimes develops deficiency of white blood cells.

"The immunosuppressive treatments such as steroids being used in Covid-19 patients result in decrease in immunity. Besides, the chronic respiratory disease, intubation, mechanical ventilation and coexistence of other infections during COVID-19 also

increase chances of mucormycosis. In addition, uncontrolled diabetes mellitus, immune-suppression by steroids, prolonged ICU stay, comorbidities like malignancy, post transplant are the major risk factors for this fungal disease," he added.

A health department official said Mucormycosis is a fungal disease which generally affects the nose, eyes and cerebral area in a human body and the reasons for surge is that Covid-19 infection worsens diabetes, precipitate new diabetes and sometimes develops deficiency of white blood cells.

"The immunosuppressive treatments such as steroids being used in Covid-19 patients result in decrease in immunity. Besides, the chronic respiratory disease, intubation, mechanical ventilation and coexistence of other infections during COVID-19 also

increase chances of mucormycosis. In addition, uncontrolled diabetes mellitus, immune-suppression by steroids, prolonged ICU stay, comorbidities like malignancy, post transplant are the major risk factors for this fungal disease," he added.

A health department official said Mucormycosis is a fungal disease which generally affects the nose, eyes and cerebral area in a human body and the reasons for surge is that Covid-19 infection worsens diabetes, precipitate new diabetes and sometimes develops deficiency of white blood cells.



Assam chief minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma wears the traditional Assamese Japi (hat) and Gamucha during his visit to Asom Gan Parishad party head office in Guwahati.

Memorandum to the President: Forum of Concerned Citizens' has submitted a memorandum requesting a relief package for people who have migrated from WB due to the alleged political violence. It requested that the affected be rehabilitated. It also requested that a special investigation team monitored by a retired SC judge appointed by the apex court, be formed for a investigation.

SNS & PTI
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, MAY 24

Newly-elected MLAs sworn in Kerala House

As many as 136 legislators of the 140-member-strong House took the oath



Wadakkanchery MLA Xavier Chittilappilly was the last one to take the oath.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, who scripted his name in the history of the House as the first chief minister in the last four decades to assume office for a second consecutive time, made a solemn affirmation, while some of his cabinet colleagues took oath in the name of the God.

Health Minister Veena George, who replaced K K Shajja in the new cabinet, took oath in the name of the almighty.

A majority of the MLAs took the oath in Malayalam, while Manjeeswaram MLA AKM Ashraf of Muslim League, who defeated BJP state president KSurendran took the pledge in Kannada language.

Barring a few legislators who took oath in English, the majority of the MLAs used Malayalam, the mother tongue. RMP leader K K Rema,

who represents Vadakara constituency in the House, arrived wearing a badge with the picture of her slain husband T P Chandrasekharan, who was murdered by political goons allegedly with the knowledge of the Marxist party leadership.

Vijayan and his son-in-law PA Mohammed Riyas, who is also the PWD and Tourism Minister, sharing the floor of the House together was an interesting scene.

The opposition Congress-led UDF side witnessed a major change as vibrant leader VD Satheesan replaced his senior Ramesh Chennithala as the opposition leader following the drubbing of the front in the polls.

Chennithala, who had led the UDF for the last five years, shifted to the second row of the opposition benches.

Unlike the previous five years, there was no MLA for the BJP-NDA as they lost the lone Nenmam seat in the recent

polls. Meanwhile, Indian National League (INL) got its first minister in the House through Ahmed Devar Kovil.

Besides the Chief Minister and ministers K Krishnan Kutty (JD-S) and A K Saseendran (NCP), all the other 18 ministers of the 21-member cabinet are fresh faces this time.

Former Chief Minister Oommen Chandy, who has been elected to the House for the 12th consecutive time from his home constituency Puthuppally, is the senior-most member in the Assembly in terms of experience, followed by Kerala Congress leader P J Joseph who has been elected 10 times.

Strict guidelines were in place to ensure compliance to COVID protocols in the Assembly and its premises.

Visitors' passes were not issued this time considering the pandemic spread.

Arrangements have also been made for the legislators, journalists and other office staff to undergo antigen tests on the Assembly campus.

The House would witness the election of the new Speaker on Tuesday.

LDF is fielding Thirthala MLA M B Rajesh as its speaker candidate while UDF's nominee is young Congress legislator P C Vishwanath.

Sena targets guv over delay in Legislative Council nominations

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 24 MAY



The Shiv Sena on Monday expressed hope that Maharashtra Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari would take serious cognisance of the Bombay High Court's observations on the delay in the nomination of 12 members to the Legislative Council under the governor's quota.

Sena MP Sanjay Raut wondered what research was being done on the file that was sent by the state government to the governor in November last year recommending 12 names for nomination.

"Is anybody doing a PhD on it?" he asked while talking to reporters here. The Bombay High Court on Friday directed the Maharashtra government to file a reply explaining why the governor was taking such a long time to decide on the nomination of members to the Legislative Council, despite the 12 names having been submitted on November 6 last year.

An editorial in the Sena mouthpiece 'Saamana' on Monday said six months have passed since the Mahavikas Aghadi government in the state cleared the 12 names.

"It is better if the governor takes the court's observations seriously. Nobody should test Maharashtra's patience. The state has the culture of respecting its

elders. If you are progressive and have patience, doesn't mean you are a coward," it said. The editorial said the governor has a lot of work to do, if he wishes so.

PM Narendra Modi has announced Rs 1,000 crore as relief for Gujarat following cyclone Tauktae. The governor can ask "why injustice to Maharashtra", the Marathi daily said.

The governor can seek Rs 1,500 crore (as cyclone relief) and win the hearts of Marathi people, it said. The editorial alleged that there was "politics" behind the delay in nomination of the 12 members to the Legislative Council.

The delay in making the appointments "at the behest of higher-ups is an insult of the state, the Legislature and violation of the Constitution", it claimed.

The editorial said the opposition is living in "false

confidence" that it can topple in MVA government in the state, it said.

"This confidence is not oxygen but carbon dioxide. You will get suffocated yourself in this process," it said.

Meanwhile, reacting to BJP leader Ashish Shelar's comments that there was no time frame for the governor to nominate members of the Upper House, Raut said, "This doesn't mean you can keep the appointments pending forever."

"Such illegal conduct is against the Constitution and does not suit a person holding high office," Raut said.

He also said there were reports that the Raj Bhavan had replied to an RTI query that it did not have the file containing names of the 12 persons recommended by the MVA government.

"If this is true, it is a very serious matter," the Rajya Sabha member said.

Andhra Pradesh worried over oxygen supply

HYDERABAD, 24 MAY

Although the impact of Cyclone Yaas is likely to be minimal in Andhra Pradesh the state government is more worried that the very severe cyclonic storm might disrupt its oxygen supply from neighbouring Odisha where it is likely to make a landfall on 26 May.

CM YS Jagan Mohan Reddy today participated in a video conference chaired by Union home minister Amit Shah along with his counterparts of Odisha, West Bengal and the Lieutenant governor of Andaman and Nicobar Islands. He assured that the state administration was already vigilant and has alerted particularly the three North Andhra districts of Visakhapatnam, Vizianagaram and Srikakulam, particularly in view of the pandemic.

The CM later held a review meeting with his officials and instructed that if required Covid-19 patients should be evacuated. He also cautioned officials to take special care to ensure there is no disruption in oxygen supply due to the cyclone in these three districts or the coastal districts. There should be no disruption in power supply in oxygen plants or while refilling of oxygen cylinders.

He instructed officials to arrange diesel generators for the hospitals and staff of power department should be attached to each hospital to deal with emergencies.

In addition officials were asked to make alternate arrangements in case the cyclone affects supply of liquid medical oxygen from the plants of Odisha where it is expected to make a landfall. AP is dependent on the steel plants of Odisha for its oxygen supply.

This includes Angul, Kaliganj, Rourkela and the state government has been trying to build up buffer stocks in view of the approaching cyclone.

Darjeeling dist doctors alerted on black fungus

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SILIGURI, 24 MAY

The Darjeeling district health department has alerted doctors on mucormycosis or black fungus and said they have been keeping surveillance on the symptoms.

Mucormycosis has been confirmed in a 50-year-old woman from Siliguri yesterday.

The woman today underwent surgery at the North Bengal Medical College and Hospital (NBMCH), where she is undergoing treatment for the past few days with sinuses, and problems in the skin on the face and forehead, palates, and eyes. The woman has also been diagnosed with uncontrolled diabetes.

She was previously found to be positive for Covid-19, and later she developed swelling on the right side of her face, had fever, blindness and facial pain.

This is perhaps the first 'notified' mucormycosis case associated with Covid-19 during the second wave of the pandemic in north Bengal.

An advisory issued by the health department of West Bengal has underlined the warning signs of the disease, such as pain and redness around the eyes or nose, fever, headache, coughing and shortness of breath, along with vomiting blood, altered mental status-general changes in brain function like confusion, amnesia, loss of alertness and disorientation.

An advisory issued by the health department of West Bengal has underlined the warning signs of the disease, such as pain and redness around the eyes or nose, fever, headache, coughing and shortness of breath, along with vomiting blood, altered mental status-general changes in brain function like confusion, amnesia, loss of alertness and disorientation.

prolonged stay in ICU, comorbidities involving post-transplant and malignancy are prone to the fungal disease, it said. "We have received the guidelines on mucormycosis and sensitised doctors today," said the Darjeeling district chief medical officer of health Dr Pralay Acharya.

Sources said the doctors received an online orientation on the disease, and that anti-fungal Amphotericin-B injection will be used to treat the disease.

The deputy chief medical officer of health-II, Dr Tulsi Pramanik, said doctors had been asked to keep close watch on the symptoms, and that positive and suspected cases will be treated at the NBMCH.

"All the doctors of primary health centres, block primary health centres, and peripheral hospitals have been sensitised," Dr Pramanik said.

Meanwhile, a multidisciplinary team of ophthalmology, anaesthesia and ENT surgeons performed the surgery on the woman with black fungus today. Further efforts are being made to save her life, sources said.

"The surgery was performed at the ENT department with doctors of the anaesthesia and ophthalmology departments. Debridement along with the removal of upper jaw, eyeball, skin over the face, forehead and other sinuses on the right side was done. The patient is doing well post-operation and has been shifted to the Critical Care Unit for better management," said the head of the ENT department, NBMCH, Dr Radheshyam Mahato.

On the other hand, state health department officials said there were 12 confirmed cases of mucormycosis in the state so far. Of them, four persons are from Bihar, and one from Jharkhand.

"Out of the 12 confirmed cases, six are Covid-19 or post-Covid-19 related, and three out of five suspects. Others are not associated with Covid-19. It has been observed that almost all have uncontrolled diabetes," said the director of health services of the health and family welfare department, Dr Ajoy Chakraborty.

Dip in Siliguri daily Covid cases

Meanwhile, the Siliguri Municipal Corporation areas, including those under Jalpaiguri district, reported a drop in daily Covid-19 cases today. It logged 194 new cases.

Darjeeling district, on the other hand, registered 375 cases, sources said. Eighty-nine cases were found in Naxalbari, 71 in Matigara, 18 in Mirik, 13 each in Kursoong Municipality, Sukna and Takdah, 11 in Darjeeling Municipality, nine in Phansidewa, six each in Bijanbari and Sukhia Pokhri and three cases in Kharbari.

A total of 332 people also recovered in the last 24 hours, the sources said.

Nine Covid patients die

Eight persons, who had tested positive for Covid-19, died at the North Bengal Medical College and Hospital today, and one died in a private hospital, sources said.

Vaccine protest

Many people, including senior citizens, who had queued up since the wee hours today to get the second dose of the Covid-19 vaccine-Covaxin-at an Urban Primary Health Centre at Champasari in Siliguri lost their cool after they were allegedly turned away.

"Had taken the first dose of Covaxin on 12 April. I have been turned down daily for the past few days, as the vaccine is not available, and I had been waiting in the queues for several hours. If this continues to happen, then why were we administered the first dose? Will there be any efficacy if the gap between the two doses is too long?" said a 58-year-old woman.

Unlike Covishield, two doses of Covaxin are administered within a gap of 28 days. Police later brought the situation under control, it is learnt.

Railways delivered more than 16,023 tonnes of medical O2

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 24 MAY

The Indian Railways delivered more than 16,023 tonnes of liquid medical oxygen in over 977 tankers to 14 states/UTs over the last month amid a high demand for the life-saving gas due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, the national transporter said on Monday.

So far, 247 Oxygen Express trains have brought relief to various states and Union territories, while 12 loaded Oxygen Express trains are currently running with more than 920 tonnes of liquid medical oxygen (LMO) in 50 tankers.

Maharashtra, which has 3,649 tonnes in UP, 633 tonnes in MP, 4,600 tonnes in Delhi, 1,759 tonnes in Haryana, 98 tonnes in Rajasthan, 1,063 tonnes in Karnataka, 320 tonnes in Uttarakhand, 1,024 tonnes in Tamil Nadu, 730 tonnes in Andhra Pradesh, 225 tonnes in Punjab, 246 tonnes in Kerala, 976 tonnes in Telangana and 80 tonnes in Assam, it said.

The national transporter maps different routes with oxygen supply locations and keeps itself ready with any emerging need of the states and Union territories.

The states/UTs provide tankers to the railways for bringing LMO. Criss-crossing the country, the Indian Railways is picking up oxygen from different complex operational route planning scenarios.

The railways is also creating new standards and unprecedented benchmarks in the running of Oxygen Express Freight Trains.

AIMIM chief Owaisi lashes out at PM

HYDERABAD, 24 MAY

AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi took a dig at Prime Minister Narendra Modi over Chinese aggression in Ladakh questioning why the country was not being told about the

Owaisi took on the PM saying that the situation in Ladakh was worrisome as the PM had neither briefed the media or answered questions in the Parliament.

ground realities and accused the latter of "hiding behind excuses of legacy issues."

Owaisi took on the PM saying that the situation in Ladakh was worrisome as the PM had neither briefed the media or answered questions in the Parliament.

He cited media reports of another minor face off between Indian and Chinese armies though the army has denied such reports. Mr Owaisi took to Twitter and wrote: "Does the PM still maintain the fiction that no one has entered India? What's the plan for reversing ingress in Ladakh? Is the PM going to continue just sitting, hiding behind the excuse of 'legacy issues' to accept the new status quo?" He also wondered

"Does the government even have a strategy to deal with China? Or is PR and propaganda going to be the only response."

SNS

TENDER

NORTHERN RAILWAY

TENDER NOTICE

For and on behalf of the President of India, the Director, Supervisor Training Center, Northern Railway Charbagh, Lucknow invites tenders at the website www.ireps.gov.in from reputed firms for works as given below:

Tender No.	121-M-STC-TENDER-5-2020
Name of work	Renovation of CI/WT, CI/STC and two Smart classrooms with miscellaneous work at STC/CB/LKO.
Estimated Cost of Work	₹ 22,28,114.69 (Inclusive of GST@18%)
Earliest Money	₹ 0/-
Cost of Tender Form	₹ 3,000/- only (accepted through net banking or payment gateway only)
Period of Contract	120 days from issue of acceptance.
Date & Time for Submission of Tender	from 07.06.2021 to 21.06.2021 up to 15:00 Hrs.
Date of opening	21.06.2021

* The tender form may be submitted at the website www.ireps.gov.in from 07



We had received 550 vials two days back and previously we had arranged 600 vials. Hopefully soon, enough injections will be available.

HARYANA HOME MINISTER ANIL VIJ
COMMENTING ON THE COVID SITUATION IN THE STATE

THUMBNAILS



Brahma Army organises Janpadodhvan Raksha Abhishek to suppress the Covid spread at Dashashwamedh Ghat in Varanasi on Monday. AFP

Feeding hungry monkeys:
In an act of kindness, police in Telangana's Yadgirigutta fed bananas to monkeys going hungry due to closure of the Yadadri temple. Inspector S Janaki Reddy and other personnel brought bananas in a police vehicle and fed them to the animals.

IANS

PM Modi condoles death:
Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday expressed sadness over the demise of scientist and former Atomic Energy Commission chairman Dr Srikumar Banerjee. Modi recalled his works in the field of metallurgy.

SNS

Covid: Rahul Gandhi takes a dig at Centre

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 24 MAY

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Monday said that even though vaccination is the key to controlling the pandemic the government does not seem to care as he claimed reduction in daily inoculation in the country.

He shared a graph showing the decline in the number of vaccine doses administered during April and May (till 20th) and pointed out that the average number of vaccination per day

has fallen below the daily production. "Vaccination is the key to controlling the pandemic but GOI doesn't seem to care," he said on Twitter sharing a graph. The graph showed

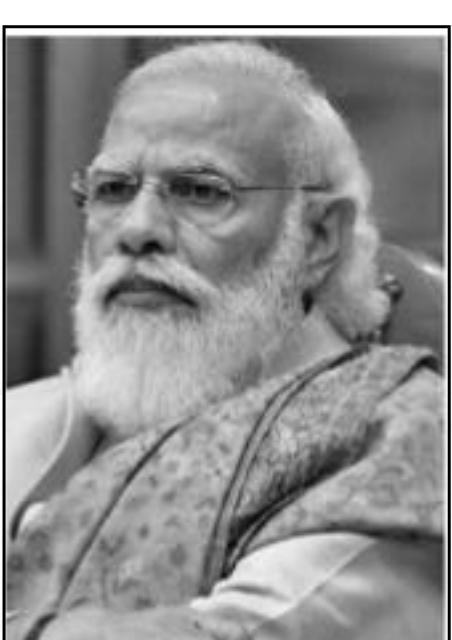
Bihar extends Covid lockdown

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
PATNA, 24 MAY

The Nitish Kumar government in Bihar on Monday extended till June the Covid-induced lockdown that has been in force for nearly a month and was to be effective till on Tuesday.

An announcement to this effect was made by the Chief Minister on his official Twitter handle.

"The lockdown has had a good impact and there has been a decline in the corona contagion. Hence, a decision has been taken to continue with the lockdown till June 01", he tweeted.



ues towards the Prime Minister for his handling of Covid-19 which has killed more than three lakh people in the country and infected millions.

Manjhi is of the opinion that the vaccination certificates, as such, should have carried the photograph of the President of India for being the Constitutional head of Indian Republic.

"But if the picture is to be attached to it, then in addition to the President, it should have the photographs of the PM and the chief minister," Manjhi suggested through another tweet.

The development has come as a surprise to many since till yesterday Manjhi had been attacking Lalu Prasad family for his proverbial "jungle raj" and their indulgence in corruption. Only then this will be fair," Manjhi tweeted today, triggering protests from alliance partners.

He hastily deleted his tweet after it created controversy.

Despite the deletion of the tweet, his annoyance contin-

SC seeks Centre's reply on ex-gratia to Covid victim kin

The apex court was hearing two separate pleas seeking directions to the Centre and states

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 24 MAY

The Supreme Court on Monday sought the Centre's reply on pleas seeking ex-gratia compensation of Rs 4 lakh to the families of those who have died from Covid-19 and said that there should be a uniform policy for issuing death certificates to those succumbing to the deadly virus.

A vacation bench of Justices Ashok Bhushan and MR Shah also asked the Centre to place before it the ICMR guidelines on death certificates for Covid-19 victims, saying there should be a uniform policy for issuing such documents.

The apex court was hearing two separate pleas seeking directions to the Centre and states to provide Rs 4 lakh compensation to the families of coronavirus victims as provisioned under the Disaster Management Act of 2005, and a uniform policy for issuing death certificates.

The bench said unless there was a uniform policy for issuance of any official document or death certificate stating that the cause of death was Covid, the kin of the victims would not be able to



claim benefits of any compensation scheme, if given.

Justice Shah asked Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati, appearing for the Centre in the matter, whether there is any uniform policy on death certificates as there are many situations of death, where reason is not given as Covid.

The bench stated State government authorities are saying that they are following ICMR guidelines.

"So you (Centre) place the ICMR guidelines before us and tell us about any uniform policy on issuance of death certificates to the Covid-19 victims," the bench added.

Justice Shah pointed out that in many cases deaths are due to lung infection or heart problem but it may have happened due to Covid-19 and it is not mentioned in the death certificates.

People will have to run from pillar to post, if any compensation is to be given to kin of Covid-19 victims.

It is not fair for the family as the reason for death is often a different one when the death has actually occurred due to Covid, the bench said.

The bench posted the matter on 11 June and asked the Centre to file its reply by then.

At the outset, advocate

Gaurav Kumar Bansal, who appeared in person, said that under section 12(iii) of the Disaster Management Act, 2005, every family whose member died due to disaster is entitled for ex-gratia compensation of Rs 4 lakh. He said that the Ministry of Home Affairs, keeping in mind section 12(iii) of the Act has issued an order April 8, 2015, by which a revised list of norms and assistance from the State Disaster Response Fund and National Disaster Response Fund was given.

Bansal said that since Covid-19 has been declared as a disaster and as per the order dated 8 April, 2015,

every family whose member dies due to disaster is entitled for ex-gratia compensation of Rs 4 lakh.

He said that hundreds of persons (like personnel providing services in healthcare departments, police department, municipal department) who were involved in relief operations or were associated to combat Covid-19 virus have also lost their lives and in many cases, these persons were the sole bread earner for the entire family. He further argued that after the demise of a person due to Covid-19, their family members are running from pillar to post for all kinds of help. Senior advocate SB Upadhyay, appearing for petitioner Reepak Kansal, who have also filed a similar petition said that large number of deaths are taking place due to Covid-19 and death certificates needs to be issued.

'Sputnik V' production starts in India by RDIF, Panacea Biotec

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 24 MAY

India in partnership with Panacea Biotec marks an important step in helping the country fight the pandemic," RDIF chief executive officer Kirill Dmitriev said.

The production of Sputnik V supports efforts of India's authorities to leave behind the acute phase of coronavirus as soon as possible, while the vaccine will also be exported at a later stage to help prevent the spread of the virus in other countries around the world, he added.

On the development, Panacea Biotec MD Rajesh Jain said, "This marks a significant step as we initiate production of Sputnik V."

Together with RDIF, we hope to help bring a sense of normalcy back to people across the country and around the world."

Sputnik V was registered in India under the emergency use authorisation procedure on 12 April, 2021, and vaccination against coronavirus with the Russian vaccine started on 14 May.

UNIDENTIFIED DEAD BODY



General Public is hereby informed that an one male person was in unconscious condition at HC Sen Marg, Chandni Chowk, Delhi dated 18.05.2021. He was admitted in Aruna Asaf Ali Govt. Hospital for treatment after treatment declared dead by doctor on 18.05.2021. In this regard a DD No. 71A, dated 18.05.2021 has been registered at P.S. Kotwali, Delhi. The description of the person is given as under: Name: Unknown, S/o: Unknown, R/o: Unknown, Age: About 30 years, Height: 5'6", Complexion: Sallow, Built: Thin, Face: Long, Hair: Black, Wearing: Green & Black Stripe Shirt and Blue Jeans. Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the dead person but no clue has come to light so far. If any one having any information about this dead person please inform undersigned.

SHO
PS Kotwali, Delhi
Ph.: 011-23977100, 23953442, 8750870121

IMPORTANT NOTICE

It is notified for the information of rail passengers that Railways have decided to cancel the following Special Trains services due to operational reasons as per following detail:-

CANCELLATION OF SPECIAL TRAINS

Train No. & Name	Date of Cancellation
03257 Danapur Jn. - Anand Vihar (T) Express Special	From 27.05.2021 to till further advice
03258 Anand Vihar (T) - Danapur Jn. Express Special	From 28.05.2021 to till further advice
03391 Rajbir - New Delhi Clone Express Special	From 27.05.2021 to till further advice
03392 New Delhi - Rajbir Clone Express Special	From 28.05.2021 to till further advice

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

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

RailMadad Helpline No. 139	Visit RailMadad website: www.railmadad.indianrailways.gov.in Download RailMadad App	Follow us on:	NORTHERN RAILWAY Your Convenience - Our Concern Visit us at: www.nr.indianrailways.gov.in
----------------------------	--	---------------	---

IMPORTANT NOTICE

It is notified for the information of rail passengers that the Railways have decided to cancel the following Special Trains keeping in view the impending cyclone YAAS, as per the following details:-

CANCELLATION OF SPECIAL TRAINS

Train No. & Name	Dates of Cancellation
02382 New Delhi-Howrah Jn. Superfast Express Special	25.05.2021
02381 Howrah Jn.-New Delhi Superfast Express Special	27.05.2021
02318 Amritsar Jn.-Kolkata Express Special	25.05.2021
02301/02302 Howrah Jn.-New Delhi-Howrah Jn. Express Special	26.05.2021
02369 Howrah Jn.-Dehradun Express Special	26.05.2021 & 27.05.2021
02370 Dehradun-Howrah Jn. Express Special	25.05.2021 & 28.05.2021
03005 Howrah Jn.-Amritsar Jn. Express Special	26.05.2021
03006 Amritsar Jn.-Howrah Jn. Express Special	25.05.2021
02311 Howrah Jn.-Kalka Netaji Express Special	26.05.2021
02312 Kalka-Howrah Jn. Netaji Express Special	25.05.2021
02333/02334 Howrah Jn.-Prayagraj Rambag-Howrah Jn. Exp. Spl.	26.05.2021
03009 Howrah Jn.-Yog Nagri Rishikesh Express Special	26.05.2021
03010 Yog Nagri Rishikesh-Howrah Jn. Express Special	25.05.2021
03019 Howrah Jn.-Kathgodam Express Special	26.05.2021
03020 Kathgodam-Howrah Jn. Express Special	25.05.2021
02313/02314 Sealdah-New Delhi-Sealdah Express Special	26.05.2021
03167 Kolkata-Agra Cantt. Express Special	27.05.2021
03168 Agra Cantt.-Kolkata Express Special	29.05.2021
02325 Kolkata-Nangal Dam Express Special	27.05.2021
02326 Nangal Dam-Kolkata Express Special	29.05.2021

Note: For any kind of information passengers are requested to contact RailMadad Helpline No. 139 or visit Indian Railways website: www.enquiry.indianrail.gov.in

Visit RailMadad website: www.railmadad.indianrailways.gov.in Download RailMadad app. RailMadad Helpline No: 139 Please join us on	NORTHERN RAILWAY Your Convenience - Our Concern Visit us at: www.nr.indianrailways.gov.in
--	---

"SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE"

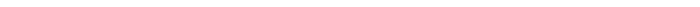
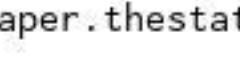
Earlier, Manjhi had attacked chief minister Nitish Kumar after he enforced total lockdown in Bihar last month, citing increase in Covid cases. He had sought for making arrangements for free ration and food to the poor class people before enforcing the lockdown. He also had slammed the chief minister after the police arrested former MP Pappu Yadav who had been exposing the loopholes in the government in tackling the Covid. Yadav had also exposed how more than two dozen ambulances purchased from the MUF fund of politician Rajiv Pratap Rudy were kept covered at a village in Chapra when they should have been used for carrying Covid patients.

He hastily deleted his tweet after it created controversy.

Despite the deletion of the tweet, his annoyance contin-



By Order of this Tribunal,
For Registrar



Overwhelming crisis

Nepal lunges from crisis to crisis and both the Prime Minister, KP Sharma Oli, and the Opposition leader have drawn a blank after staking their claims to form a government. The competitive urge to be in the saddle in Kathmandu has led the Himalayan country nowhere. The President, Bidya Devi Bhandari's decision to dissolve Parliament was made on the recommendation of the cabinet headed by Oli. It bears recall that a not dissimilar recommendation had led to the dissolution of the House on December 20. In the net, the President has denied the claims of both the ruling and Opposition parties to form the government, arguably an indirect expression of no-confidence. In effect, it is again back to the people, who have been called upon to vote after having been deprived of governance for close to six months, during which time the Communist Party of Nepal virtually cracked up. The President has announced new dates for the mid-term elections in November amidst a worsening of the deadly Covid-19 resurgence. "The President has dissolved the House of Representatives and ordered the first phase of general elections on 12 November and the second phase on 19 November," said a presidential statement issued after midnight on Friday. The move came after both caretaker Prime Minister Oli and the Opposition leader, Sher Bahadur Deuba, failed to demonstrate a majority to form the new government by Friday, the deadline set by President Bhandari. According to the President, Oli cannot be appointed as Prime Minister as 26 lawmakers of CPN-UML and 12 of Janata Samajwadi Party (JSP) that he (Oli) included in his claim to contend support of 153 House of Representatives members have signed in support of Deuba. The President also argued that Deuba cannot be appointed as UML Chairman and the parliamentary party leader has written not to recognise the signatures of 26 UML lawmakers. On Friday afternoon, Oli staked claim first stating that he had the support of 153 members of the House of Representatives, including 121 CPN-UML lawmakers and 32 of Janata Samajwadi Party (JSP), just a day after telling President Bhandari to initiate the formation of a new government in accordance with Article 76(5) of the Constitution. He even admitted that he did not have numbers to countenance the floor test. Likewise, the Opposition leader, Deuba, then reached Shital Niwas with a list of 149 lawmakers including 26 from the Khanal-Nepal faction of UML, 12 of the Yadav-Bhattarai faction of JSP and one from Rashtriya Janamorcha. He too has drawn a blank.

The decision to dissolve Parliament was made on the recommendation of the cabinet headed by Oli, whose December 2020 dissolution of the legislature had sparked weeks of protests and was reversed by the Supreme Court as unconstitutional in February. The political kerfuffle escalates as Nepal is battling a deadly second wave of the pandemic and is reporting 8,207 new infections on an average each day. The political class is disoriented and the crisis is overwhelming.

Challenge & Response

Rural India will eventually get the attention and care it deserves, if the blueprint unveiled on Sunday by the Union health ministry is any indication. Long overdue and now released almost a year after the first wave, implementation will doubtless pose a challenge primarily because the second wave has been deadlier. The plan of action is riveted to what they call "peri-urban, rural and tribal areas" where the people have for generations been strangers to medical science. There is an inherent risk, therefore, in prescribing a stiff dose of medicines. The blueprint dwells on surveillance, detection and treatment at home for "mild cases" and in a "three-tiered structure for "moderate or severe cases". Such a fine distinction may not be valid given health conditions in contemporary India where the cases are by and large severe, when not mortal. If it was a predominantly urban affliction last year, the Centre has mentioned that a "gradual ingress in now being seen in peri-urban, rural and tribal areas" in a country that is predominantly rural. An estimated 490 districts in the country had a test positivity rate of ten per cent or higher on Sunday, implying that these backward areas are on the verge of an epidemic. The guidelines have underlined the basics in medical science, specifically the need for "active surveillance for influenza-like illness or acute respiratory infections". There is scant emphasis on the medical fraternity and an overdose in terms of involvement of social health activists and village health, sanitation and nutrition committees. Lack of sanitation has been the bane of rural India, and nutrition has been accorded a minor rating in the Food Security Act. The blueprint envisages that every Covid-19 household will receive what they call a "home isolation kit" to measure the oxygen level and fever. It is all very well to distribute paracetamol and vitamins; no less urgent is the need for regular monitoring and transport arrangements for patients who need to be admitted to hospital.

Medical care in this country is only for those who can afford it; the nub of the problem must be that human resources and the skills to implement the guidelines are woefully lacking in rural India. As in cities, the focus ought to be on saving lives in a country that registered 274,390 deaths till May 17, according to a fact file published in this newspaper on the basis of the Union health ministry's data. "We should have had this document earlier," was the lament of a community medicine specialist. The challenge is exemplified by the fact that more than 63 per cent of the posts of specialist doctors were vacant on March 31, 2020, going by the health ministry's rural health statistics. It would be a tragedy if the blueprint hits the reefs on account of the dearth of health warriors.

A better future

A recent concept paper circulated by the Central Vigilance Commission noted that over 80 per cent of public projects were running behind schedule. The paper further noted that the quality of various public projects was a 'major area of concern.' Needless to add, project delays result in massive cost overruns



The unprecedented pandemic-induced tragedy in our country has taken a grievous toll of our leaders' credibility; statements designed to gloss over failures, like the persistent denial of Covid-19 equipment shortages and the fabricated tally of daily Covid deaths or the assertion that there had been no Chinese intrusion into Indian territory, all reduced trust in statements of Government spokesmen to near zero. Instances of high functionaries caught on the wrong foot abound. A newspaper report pointed out that while 58,000 deaths had been recorded in Gujarat from 1 March 2020 to 10 May 2020, 1,23,000 deaths were recorded in the same period in 2021, but according to Government statistics, Covid-19 mortality was only 4,218 during this period. The minister concerned struggled to explain this glaring discrepancy. Then, the number of dead bodies found floating in the Ganga are many times of the official Covid-19 death toll in UP. We can, however, console ourselves that a similar charge was made against the US Administration – probably bureaucrats are the same the world over.

While presenting Budget 2021 as the Budget of the century, the Finance Minister grandly announced that expenditure on 'Health and Wellbeing' was being hiked by 137 per cent, from the earlier year's expenditure of Rs 94,452 crore, to Rs 2,23,846 crore in 2021-22. What the FM did not mention was that out of the incremental sum, Rs 38,512 crore was the increased allocation to the Water and Sanitation Department (WSD) and Rs 36,022 crore was the Finance Commission grant to the WSD. The FM also included another grant of Rs 13,192 crore to States by the Finance Commission in the Health Budget. Reading the fine print in the Budget reveals a particularly unkind cut – the Rs 35,000 crore allocated for vaccination against Covid-19, are not budgeted as Central Government expenditure but merely as part of the resources allocated to States! Perhaps, Government claims are so far removed from reality that it takes little to shatter the make-believe statistics, so assiduously peddled by bureaucrats.

Be that as it may, outcome of Government schemes is seldom proportionate to expenditure; the size of the Union Budget has tripled every ten years, with Budget Expenditure increasing from Rs 3.38 lakh crore in 2000 to Rs 11.08 lakh crore in 2010, and to Rs 34.83 lakh crore in 2020, but

the moot question is whether this increased expenditure has resulted in commensurate benefits to the public?

The time is definitely ripe to infuse a touch of reality to Government functioning. The present rout of the healthcare system, when thousands died without proper treatment is difficult to countenance, given the fact that lakhs of crores of rupees had been spent over the years on public health services. Mismanagement and outright corruption are the culprits that have prevented the Government from obtaining 'bang for the buck' spent by it.

To recapitulate, there have been myriad recorded instances where funds meant for augmenting health and other infrastructure simply disappeared, without any trace. For example, huge allocations were made to various states under the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM); after a series of murders of top health officials in UP in 2010, it was noticed that a sum of around Rs 10,000 crore had been defalcated from NRHM funds.

Even after a decade, none of the misappropriated funds had been recovered and none of the murderers had been brought to book. Neither has there been any significant improvement in healthcare services.

Similarly, according to the Economic Survey 2012, Maharashtra's irrigation potential increased by only 0.1 per cent during the years 1999 to 2009, even after Rs 70,000 crore had been spent on various irrigation projects. It is not difficult to guess where such money goes; according to the latest report of Transparency International, India has the highest bribery rate in Asia.

The large number of such instances should be an adequate warning to planners not to allocate funds till the exact use of the funds had been decided upon and guidelines for execution and monitoring have been drawn up. However, such pedestrian advice is anathema to our planners who believe both in the Soviet concept of centralisation and the American concept of 'bigger the better.'

Given the great diversities in our economy and country, planning from 'bottom up' may prove better, that is each constituent unit is functionally autonomous and plans its own performance and expenditure, which is aggre-

gated to arrive at the total requirement of the entire department. This approach would fix responsibility for non-performance and would reduce delays, and probably expenditure also. Projects executed with this approach would have a greater chance of success because both the authorship and the responsibility of implementation would be with the same set of people. As a first step, the Government could improve the quality of healthcare and education by handing over Government hospitals and Government schools to able administrators, with sufficient funds and powers, with a mandate to bring them up to a predetermined standard.

Presently, each Government Department and Ministry has scores of projects running simultaneously. Budget allocations are made in a way that some projects hibernate while others are speeded-up. For example, while we wait for regular train services to start, eight trains were flagged off from Kevadia in Gujarat to various destinations on a single day – one with a Vista-dome coach, a novelty for Indian Railways. Due to such irrational practices, projects are seldom completed on time.

A recent concept paper circulated by the Central Vigilance Commission noted that over 80 per cent of public projects were running behind schedule. The paper further noted that the

quality of various public projects was a "major area of concern." Needless to add, project delays result in massive cost overruns. Contrast it with the way the Chinese execute projects. Recently, a 1,500-bed hospital for Covid patients came up in five days in Nangong. To control time and cost overruns we can emulate Chinese efficiency, condensing the timeline of all Government projects to one year, which would also ensure better monitoring. For projects that really require more than a year's time, definite yearly targets could be set.

The Government needs to curb its wasteful expenditure to fund the much-needed revamp of the social sector, particularly the education and healthcare sectors. A small example of wasteful expenditure would suffice. According to Budget Estimates for the current year, an expenditure of Rs 12.28 lakh crore is earmarked for more than 160

Schemes of the Central Government. The cryptic and incomplete, "Output Outcome Framework 2020-21 for Major Central Sector and Centrally Sponsored Schemes," is the only publicly available review of the Central Schemes.

The bureaucratise of this document is unable to hide the fact that many flagship government schemes are floundering. For example, the review of Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY), shows that in addition to farmers' contribution, the Government paid Rs 15,695 crore to insure the crops of 5.64 crore farmers for Rs 2,35,277 crore but only 28 per cent farmers received the sum claimed under the Yojana. Probably, insurance companies profited more than farmers from PMFBY.

Significantly, the outcome of government schemes is evaluated by the same persons who implement those schemes. As things stand, old schemes are renamed, sometimes disparate schemes are merged in one another, schemes are introduced/discontinued, with no proper study on the outcome or the reason for the success or failure of the scheme. Considering the huge sums involved, as a first step, all government schemes should be independently audited with unproductive schemes being axed and others being suitably modified. The Finance Commission has also suggested a review of government schemes.

To sum up, the huge gap between planning and implementation, has ensured the failure of most Governmental initiatives. Additionally, government schemes are premised on the assumption that Government employees would do their part diligently and honestly. But Government employees believe that their role is restricted to writing notes on files and making some moolah on the side. It is time to introduce modern management practices in working and to disabuse Government employees of the notion that their employment is a sinecure.

Finally, humongous but unmonitored Government spending will not provide a panacea for our economic problems. Martin Feldstein, the renowned American economist, had succinctly observed: "Increased government spending can provide a temporary stimulus to demand and output but in the longer run higher levels of government spending crowd out private investment or require higher taxes that weaken growth by reducing incentives to save, invest, innovate, and work."

A MEMBER OF THE **ANN**
ASIAN VOICES

New trends in luxury markets

Encouraged by the need for social distancing and the rise of remote working, an increasing number of people living and working in major cities now split their time between home and 'away' – a long stay in a holiday destination or a second home. The trend towards purchasing second homes reflects this shift. According to Knight Frank's Global Buyer Survey – undertaken in June 2020 across 44 countries – over 26 per cent of respondents said they were more likely to buy a second home as a result of the pandemic. The pandemic has also underscored the importance of nature and space, wellness and well-being, and quality time spent with family.

Within the luxury segment in Asia, we are seeing a trend towards multi-generational real estate purchases – with pooled investment being made in residences that can be used by grandparents, parents and children, as well as preference for landed and single-family homes – where outdoor space abounds, privacy is a given and living spaces are customisable to fit the needs of a large or growing family. What we are most excited about, however, are some of the shifts that are happening within the travel and hospitality sector. With border restrictions confining the majority of travellers to domestic destinations, many have taken the opportunity to discover lesser-known, off-the-beaten-path destinations. We are also seeing a move away from "big box" travel and towards a "boutique" holiday experience, with an increasing number of travellers seeking a more bespoke or personalised exper-

ience during their stay. The post-pandemic era offers an opportunity for branded residences – those that are managed by a hospitality brand through an adjoining hotel or resort – to position themselves as the investment property of choice. The branded residence sector is growing around the world, especially in this region. According to a March 2020 report by C9 Hotelworks on the sector, Asia now has a third of the world's branded residences, with most developments located in Thailand, Vietnam and the Philippines.

The promise of a global hospitality brand is at the core of the branded residence offering. Leveraging the developer's and operator's combined expertise, they offer assurance in terms of quality and service standards, including those governing the safety and well-being of residents, for additional peace of mind amidst the current global pandemic.

From a real estate standpoint, the branded residence model presents an opportunity for investors to generate both short- and long-term returns. With a full complement of hotel or resort amenities, buyers benefit from hassle-free home-ownership, and the opportunity to earn returns through a resort-managed rental programme. In the long run, buyers stand to benefit from an increase in resale value. Savills, in its 2019 Branded Residences Report, estimates that the average premium for branded residences over a non-branded product starts at 35 per cent, rising to as much as 70 per cent in emerging destinations, where buyers also stand to benefit from first-mover advantage. The trend and demand for luxury branded residences will only continue to gain traction in the future, driven largely by the rise of the upper-and-middle-class market segment in Asia. Its growth trajectory will be closely linked to the travel and hospitality sector: we foresee branded residences growing in importance as drivers of tourism development in emerging destinations.

Finally, humongous but unmonitored Government spending will not provide a panacea for our economic problems. Martin Feldstein, the renowned American economist, had succinctly observed: "Increased government spending can provide a temporary stimulus to demand and output but in the longer run higher levels of government spending crowd out private investment or require higher taxes that weaken growth by reducing incentives to save, invest, innovate, and work."

not be forgotten. His path of ecological truth and social justice should be a guiding force for future generations.

Yours, etc., Vijay Singh
Adhikari,
Nainital, 24 May.

FORGOTTEN ICONS

SIR, The birth centenaries of two internationally acclaimed and eminent sons of India, both Bharat Ratna, came and went unsung – that of Pandit Ravi Shankar last year and of Satyajit Ray on May 2 this year. Not even a tweet from the Government, much less a simple official celebration. And we hear that the government is a great upholder of the country's cultural values. The blame will obviously be apportioned to the ongoing pandemic but that could not have prevented the issue of at least a commemorative

postage stamp in honour of these two outstanding personages who did India proud with their immortal creations.

The birth centenaries of two of our greatest musicians ever, legendary vocalists and Bharat Ratna Pt. Bhimsen Joshi and sarod maestro Padma Vibhushan Ustad Ali Akbar Khan are due next year, on February 4 and April 14 respectively. Can we not expect the Government to plan in advance and arrange to issue postage stamps in their honour apart from other suitable celebrations befitting their status and popularity? Or will the pandemic be cited once again as a lame excuse to cover up the government's apathy and inaction on the cultural front?

Yours etc, Bhaskar Roy,
New Delhi, May 24.

A true son of the soil

SIR, With the passing of well known environmentalist and Gandhian, Sunder Lal Bahuguna, also known as Vrikshmitra, the country has

lost a true son of the soil. In fact, his unrelenting, never-say-die attitude, and his extraordinary ability to communicate as a journal-

ist and social activist raised his stature to that of an iconic figure. He was against construction of big dams like the Tehri dam and sat on two long hunger strikes.

His entire life was devoted to protection and con-

servation of forests in the foothills of the Garhwal Himalayas. The recent upheavals ~ from the Kedarnath floods of 2013 to the recent Chamoli tragedy ~ are a grim reminder that Bahuguna's lessons and legacy must

not be forgotten. His path of ecological truth and social justice should be a guiding force for future generations.

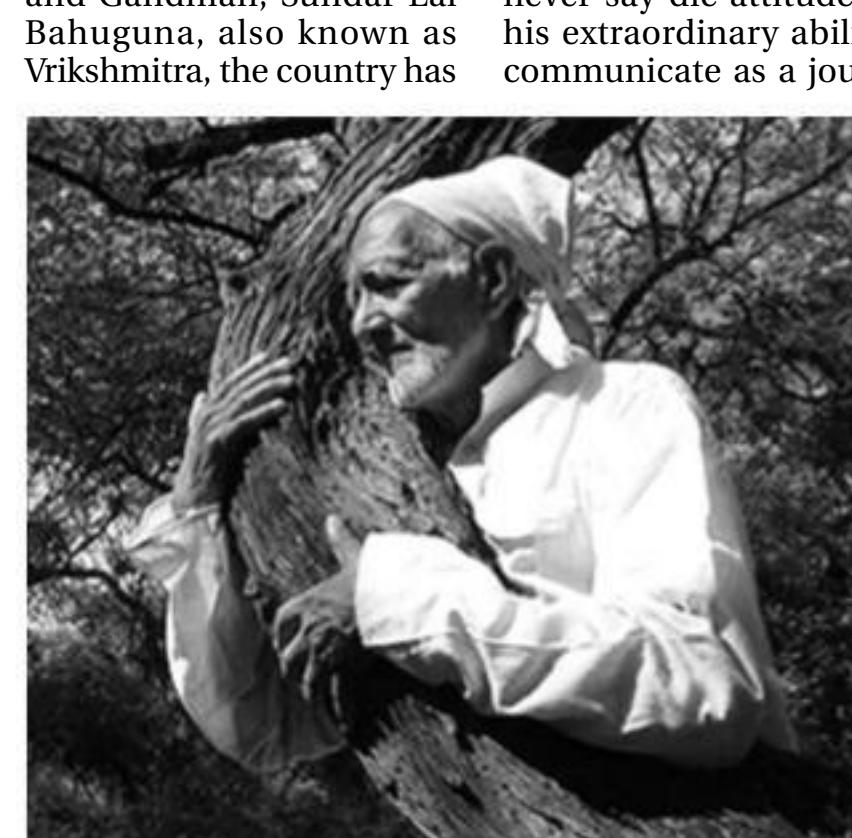
Yours, etc., Vijay Singh
Adhikari,
Nainital, 24 May.

UNSAVOURY

SIR, This refers to the report 'IMA docs in Siliguri hit out at Ramdev claims' (23 May). The yoga guru turned businessman Ramdev has levelled a serious allegation by saying lakhs of Covid patients have died due to allopathic medicines. This is a sordid and frontal attack not only on modern medical science but also on the medical fraternity who are really working as frontline warriors to save millions of lives.

IMA has already demanded stern action against Ramdev for making such malicious and irresponsible statements against medical science and medics. The throwing of mud at allopathic treatment must be aimed at boosting his business fortunes in a most unprincipled and unsavoury manner. The IMA has rightly demanded the withdrawal of his statement and an unconditional public apology.

Yours, etc., Dilip Kumar Sengupta, Kolkata, 23 May.



HARSHA KAKAR

The recently concluded conflict in Gaza cannot be termed as a Palestinian-Israeli conflict, as neither the Palestinian authority nor the West Bank was involved. It was Hamas, controlling Gaza, which unleashed a barrage of rockets in retaliation to Israeli police confronting Palestinian teens at the Al-Aqsa mosque and rumours of Israel evicting Arab settlers from Sheikh Jarrah, an Arab neighbourhood in East Jerusalem. Tensions were simmering for a prolonged duration between Hamas and Israel and the current incidents were just a trigger.

Hamas does not recognize the Palestinian authority, which controls the West Bank and is officially designated as the global representatives of Palestine. Hamas, which took over Gaza in a coup in 2007, has been declared a terrorist organization by Israel, US and the EU. Its power flows from local support, voluntary or enforced. It is funded by Qatar, Iran and Turkey. Most of their rockets are locally manufactured, based on Iranian designs.

Hamas employs terrorist tactics, including use of suicide bombers, hit and run attacks, launching rockets from densely populated regions thereby using locals as human shields and targeting civilian population. Gaza human casualties mean nothing for Hamas. Simultaneously, Israel retaliates on what it terms as Hamas targets, ignoring collateral damage. Thus, on both sides, majority of casualties are non-combatants, including children. Gaza suffers more on account of the greater firepower of Israel and its high population density.

The unleashing of rockets by Hamas, most of which were intercepted by Israel's Iron Dome anti-missile system, while some crashed within Gaza, led to strong Israeli counter strikes. For both sides, this was an opportunity to push their own agendas. Hamas's intentions in the conflict appeared to be to project its military capability while utilizing the global stage for pressure on Israel to relent and lift its blockade. Israel viewed it as an opportunity to degrade the fighting capability of Hamas, thereby gaining a few years of peace, till the organisation rebuilds. A unilateral ceasefire by Israel would have been termed as a victory by Hamas.

Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli Prime Minister, stated after his conversation with President Biden, that he is, 'determined to continue with the operation until its aims were met.' He did not specify Israel's aims though it implied sufficient degradation of Hamas' fighting capability including its hideouts, tunnels, cadres, weapon production and stor-

India, Pakistan and the Palestine issue



age facilities. Finally, the ceasefire proposed by Egypt was accepted, after which both sides declared victory. The UNSC only issued a resolution after the ceasefire was declared, mainly due to US backing of Israel.

Within the subcontinent, India and Pakistan view the crisis differently. India has ties with both Palestine and Israel. However, India recognizes the Palestinian authority as the legitimate authority and not Hamas. Prime Minister Modi visited Ramallah in the West Bank in February 2018, late President Pranab Mukherjee in October 2015 and the late Sushma Swaraj as External Affairs Minister in January 2016. None of them entered Gaza. India is funding developmental and educational projects in Palestine.

In December 2018, India abstained from voting on a US resolution in the UNGA, condemning rocket attacks by Hamas and declaring it as a terrorist organization, a resolution the US failed to push. The presence of the Palestine ambassador to Pakistan on a stage with known terrorist Hafiz Saeed in December 2017

led him being recalled on Indian objections. India has balanced its relations with Palestine and Israel and hence has goodwill on both sides.

The Indian statement at the recent UNSC meeting was carefully drafted. Indian permanent representative to the UN, TS Tirumurti, stated, "The indiscriminate rocket firings from Gaza targeting the civilian population in Israel, which we condemn, and the retaliatory strikes into Gaza, have caused immense suffering and resulted in deaths, including women and children." He added, "I reiterate India's strong support to the just Palestinian cause and its unwavering commitment to the two-state solution." India did not support either openly.

Pakistan, on the other hand has had a hate-love relationship with Palestine. Its erstwhile dictator, Zia Ul Haq, as a Brigadier posted in Jordan, commanded a Jordanian division in an attack on Palestinian camps in September 1970, termed as Black September, leading to the massacre of over 10,000 PLO fighters. It resulted in the exodus of the PLO to Lebanon.

Subsequently, Pakistan commenced supporting Palestine, while suppressing its role in their massacre.

Pakistan's support for Palestine is not on account of religious affinity but selfish reasons. It has exploited the Palestine cause to further its claims on Kashmir, stating both are occupied lands, and that governments are suppressing legitimate demands of the local populace. Most of its leaders have been known to say that Pakistan views the unresolved Palestine issue at par with the Kashmir issue. So confused has Pakistan been between Kashmir and Palestine that its UN representative, Maleeha Lodhi, addressing the UNGA in 2017 on Kashmir, displayed a picture of Gaza, claiming it to be Kashmir.

Comparing Palestine to Kashmir has been the methodology adopted by Pakistan in global forums, including OIC and UN. Comments of Foreign Minister S M Qureshi, in his recent address to the OIC, relate to what he says on Kashmir. His words, 'blatant and illegal use of force, flagrant violations of human rights,

demanding UN intervention, implementing UN resolutions and committing atrocities,' are normally used for Kashmir. No Pakistani leader has ever visited Palestine. Summarily, Pakistan exploits Palestine, rather than possessing genuine concern.

Pakistan has no diplomatic ties with Israel. For Pakistan, Israel is an enemy due to its proximity with India. Pakistani media reports even claimed Israeli pilots led the strike on Balakot and that Indian policies in Kashmir are a textbook copy of Israel's actions in Gaza. Within Pakistan, there is deep hatred for Israel.

Pakistan is aware that its Kashmir policy is in tatters. In the past few decades, despite Chinese pushing, there has been no UN resolution on Kashmir, while 47 have been adopted on the Israel-Palestine issue. Pakistan's current support to Palestine is based on the failure of its Kashmir policy, rather than a display of genuine concern. It is plain selfish interest.

The writer is a retired Major-General of the Indian Army.

this phenomenon.

Thinkers believe two elements - melancholia and spectrality - dominate the political psyche today. A melancholic psyche appears to be a strong factor, the source of which is the mindset of the rulers or the governing elites. The minds of those in the upper echelons of power govern politics, no matter what system is in place. Big or small countries present such examples.

The second factor is one of spectrality, which is the spectres of history continue to haunt the rulers and their followers. As a result, even a communist becomes an orthodox worshipper; a powerful leader of a great democratic country becomes the exponent of the apparitions, ghosts or spectres of conspiracies and lies. Both of those who are melancholic and haunted by the spectres resort to the promotion of their agents to do things like amassing wealth at the cost of the people's health, as we see now, and indulge in the violation of fundamental rights.

The element of agency has become the dominant factor now. It is not the spirit of the constitution, but the attitude and approach of the agencies who function with that have become dominant now. I personally had not imagined that the democratic or the socialist ideals would show signs of erosion so fast. Different perspectives may come into play if sincere discussions are opened about

The Kathmandu Post/ANN.

Melancholia and spectrality in Nepal

ABHI SUBHEDI

I want to take a very worldly approach to discuss the two basic components of politics - system and agency. This is a subject for political scientists, philosophers or academicians who have spent the best part of their lives teaching them. I belong to none of these categories. As a teacher and writer of literature, arts, performance studies or theatre, my focus is always on what is simpler than the other approach.

We work with one mantra - theatre is the simplest subject or theme; it has no paraphernalia and is unassuming and simple. We work with the belief that the world goes dotty at different cycles of history threatening to demolish human achievements, and it is the duty of the theatre people - the playwright, director, artists and those who create the mise-en-scène to restore some degree of sanity. Our mantra is, always go towards the basic, the simple and thereby to the profound. It's like a Zen Satori, or realisation, acquired in a flash.

I do not pretend to judge the jugs-nuts of politics and the systems of government, which is beyond my ability. But I would like to interpret or question some of the prevailing norms about politics and the systems of government that govern our lives

today.

The parliamentary system of government has been the greatest focus of democratic politics in this region. I want to cite BP Koirala's experiences, which reflect his great adherence to the democratic functional power of this system. In his memoir, Atmabrittanta, Koirala recalls how he had expressed his confidence about winning the elections in Nepal in his interactions with his Asian Socialist comrades. That was just after he returned from his European tour of 1956. BP recalls his meetings with the Asians. Following is my translation of one:

"Elections were going to take place in six countries of this region—and that was just before our own election was going to happen - when our Asian Socialist Conference was underway in Bombay. Elections were going to take place in Sri Lanka, Burma and Nepal. That was towards the end of the fifties. India too was going to the polls soon. ... Prominent Socialists of Israel, Europe and Asia were participating in that. I said to them, 'my analysis says that we have a great possibility of winning; our chance of winning the election is the highest.' It is interesting to recall here that BP's prediction turned out to be correct. Nepali Congress made a landslide victory in the parliamentary election of 1958.

The political drama of this system took various turns after King Mahendra dissolved Parliament, imprisoned BP and introduced Panchayat rule in Nepal. My inquiry focuses on where we stand in republican Nepal, in terms of the parliamentary system functioning. The history from BP's experience to the present shows a shift of power from the monarchy to the people.

It seems that we are now trying to find the causes of the difficulties of the parliamentary political system on a day-to-day basis. Parliament becomes a centre of algorithmic exercise when a party fails to win a sufficient number of seats to form a government. But aberrations in the algorithm appear when even a party that has won a two-thirds majority fails to live up to that achievement and becomes the largest minority, as is the present case of the elected communist parliament of Nepal.

Discussions about alternate systems are going strong in Nepal now. There are two variants of this line of argument. One is that a directly elected presidential system alone will solve the problem. The other line of argument is that the capitalist parliamentary system is the cause of instability and incessant negotiations for power. This system should be abandoned. Those who take this line of arguments are the erstwhile Maoists,

or khatti communists, or those who do not want, as they claim, to see the people fall into the quagmire of the parliamentary system of government.

The communist parties of Nepal who have opted for a parliamentary system of government fought in tandem with the other parliamentary parties to establish a democratic republican system of government. The constitution is in place. Ironically, the same political parties are making it difficult for the constitution to operate.

In essence, the dynamics of this political system does not appear to be propelled by democratic passion and commitment. It seems the constitution and the parliamentary system are devoid of creative political dynamics. It has become just a form of algorithm, pure and simple. To use the language of theatre again, the mantra of politics, it is increasingly being realised, does not appear to be the spirit of freedom, equality, rights of the people and economic amelioration.

The element of agency has become the dominant factor now. It is not the spirit of the constitution, but the attitude and approach of the agencies who function with that have become dominant now. I personally had not imagined that the democratic or the socialist ideals would show signs of erosion so fast. Different perspectives may come into play if sincere discussions are opened about

The unanimous report of the Committee officially appointed to inquire into the Nagpur riot in March last affords an excellent opportunity of placing the facts of this incident before the public, and it is to be hoped that effective steps will be taken to do so, especially in the Central Provinces. This report proves that the magistrate, Mr. Armitage and the police, displayed extreme and almost excessive caution in using force towards a mob which had got totally out of hand; that Sub-Inspector Attullah Khan "could not have brought off his men without recourse to firing," and that "there is no evidence that the firing was continued longer than was necessary." As regards Mr. Armitage, the Committee finds that his order to fire was "delayed till the very last moment possible," while H.E. the Governor-in-Council adds the appropriate comment that Mr. Armitage delayed the order "almost beyond the limits necessary to secure the withdrawal of the police force without a serious loss of life to that force." It is to be hoped that the publication of this report will tend to restore the general sense of proportion, which, with regard to the control of unruly crowds, has suffered considerably during the past two years.

DISTURBANCE AT SEALDAH COURT

The entrance to the Sealdah Police Court was the scene of a disturbance yesterday when a number of hooligans, armed with knives and sticks and attacked a party of men, including Sanjog Ahir, who had just left the court after the hearing of a case in which he had instituted a case of wrong confinement against a party of rival carters. One of Sanjog's men was stabbed in the head and Sanjog himself escaped injury by taking refuge in the bar library. Shortly after the incident another band of hooligans appeared at the court brandishing lathes and scaring away people assembled near the court. Three were arrested and made over to the Entally police. Subsequently the Assistant Commissioner of Police, Northern Suburbs, arrived and held an inquiry.

GRAVE RIOTS IN ALEXANDRIA

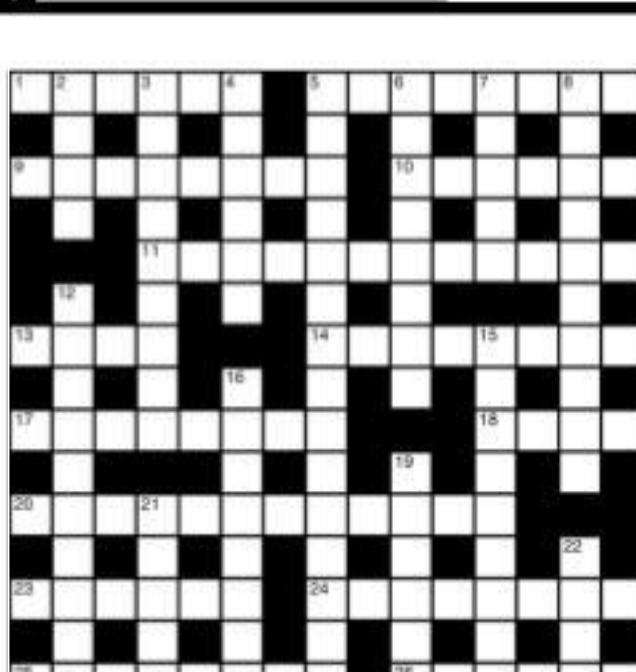
A message from Alexandria reports a very grave situation. A rumour which was spread that a Greek had killed a native led the natives to attack Greeks and other Europeans. It is reported that many have been killed. Ambulances were busy all night long taking the wounded to hospital. The mobs smashed shop-windows. All places of business are closed. Europeans assembled at the Governorate and demanded protection or permission to protect themselves. Firing is now proceeding all round, and students and natives are attacking Europeans. Many places have been burned down, and it is reported that people have been burned alive.

JOINT COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS

The Standing Joint Committee on Indian Affairs has published a resolution with regard to procedure. They will examine and report on any Bill submitted specially by Parliament, and invite the Secretary of State for India to communicate the matter and information upon which it is thought desirable that the report to Parliament should consider, and they will report on any matter relating to Indian affairs to which attention is drawn by the chairman, a member of the Secretary of State, provided that notice has appeared in advance on the agenda previously circulated and the Committee consider it of sufficient importance and not opposed to public interest. They will demand and documentary evidence as required, and inform confidentially the Secretary of State, concerned of the subject of the proposed discussion.

REPLENISHING BOMBAY'S POLICE FORCE

At a meeting of the Council today, Dr. S.S. Batliwala moved a resolution to replenish the depleted Police Force in the city of Bombay in view of the dacoits and thefts recently committed. On behalf of the Government Mr. Hayward said that he was prepared to accept the resolution. The moffusil Members opposed it on the ground that Bombay City should defray the expenses and that the burden should not be placed on the general tax-payers. The Members for the City pointed out that there was already an arrangement between the Government and the Corporation by which the latter should meet expenses in respect of medical relief and education, while the former would maintain the Police Force satisfactorily. It was urged that the Council should respect that agreement.



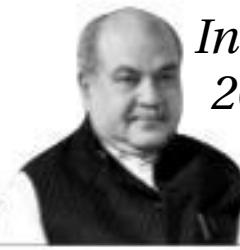
YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

ACROSS

- 1 Trim tree (6)
- 5 Check out underground laboratory item (4,4)
- 9 Shed many layers here (8)
- 10 Fish bar cut sandwiches (6)
- 11 Study classics, bar first quarter, collecting cup (12)
- 13 Like conditions in the Kalahari desert (4)
- 14 Flyer allowed to cover old Republican president (8)
- 17 Endlessly ardent enthusiast, one hugging posh birds (8)

DOWN

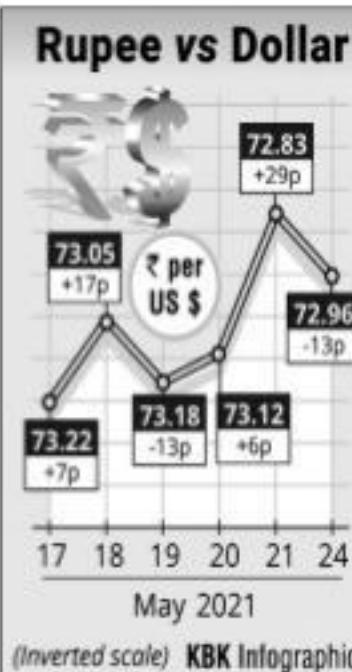
- 18 Lake of Caledonian highlands primarily (4)
- 20 Dental assistant tried noxious compound (7,5)
- 23 One wheels in books for baker's agent (6)
- 24 Basque occasionally blocks strike approval (6-2)
- 25 After, say, golf, he notices experts (8)
- 26 Malagasy primate votes in the affirmative (3-3)
- 2 Winger short of very big game (4)
- 3 Amazing party after try a French fellow secured (7-2)
- 4 European left Yankee union for the stage (6)
- 5 How obtuse adult and radical ruined TV nature series (3,5,5,2)
- 6 A representative visiting county's plant by the sea (8)
- 7 RA's equipment falls (5)
- 8 Subject: The Dance of iconic Bees (10)
- 12 Dominant priest ranting about English version of bible (10)
- 15 Aggressive colonist's like rebel when disturbed (6,3)
- 16 Top-class coach goes north, touring Polish residential area (8)
- 19 Six clubs supported by one Peruvian wool supplier (6)
- 21 Catch crawler in New York (5)
- 22 Typical of 15s beside American lodging (4)



India and Israel have signed a three-year joint work programme till 2023 with an aim to enhance cooperation in the field of agriculture

NARENDRA SINGH TOMAR
AGRICULTURE MINISTER

THUMBNAILS



Yes Bank case: The Securities Appellate Tribunal (SAT) has granted an interim stay on markets regulator Sebi order that had slapped a penalty of Rs 25 crore on Yes Bank in a case of mis-selling AT-1 bonds. Apart from penalising Yes Bank, Sebi in its order in April, imposed a fine of Rs 1 crore on Vivek Kanwar, who was the head of the private wealth management team, and Rs 50 lakh each on Ashish Nasra and Jasjit Singh Banga. PTI

SafexPay eyes expansion: SafexPay, a Mumbai-based B2B payment gateway solution provider, eyeing its expansions in Qatar markets post its entry among the top 11 fintech start-ups at Qatar Fintech Hub (QFTH), by Qatar Development Bank (QDB). The QFTH had received more than 500 applications from early-stage and mature fintechs from over 58 countries, including the USA, India, Singapore, Nigeria, Russia, Hong Kong, UK, Turkey and Qatar, said the Press release. SNS

Myprotein's new products: Myprotein, one of the leading sports nutrition brands, has unveiled a range of health products. Expanding its products' range. It introduces four delectable products; the gooey-filled cookie, sugar-free sauce, 6-layered protein bar, instant whey protein-masala chai flavour. All the newly unveiled delectable products are available on www.myprotein.co.in, said the Press release. SNS

PowerGrid project: PowerGrid has completed the project of improvement of infrastructure of Dwarigeria Rural Hospital, Garbheta-II block, in Paschim Midnapur district, West Bengal, as part of its CSR initiative. As part of the project, one male and one female isolation wards along with toilets have been constructed in the said rural hospital. Besides, one 40 KW green generator, one X-ray machine and two high-mast lights have also been installed in the hospital, the company said in a Press release. SNS

India Cements profit: India Cements on Monday reported a standalone net profit of Rs 71.63 crore for the fourth quarter ended March 2021 on the back of strong sales. The company posted a standalone net loss of Rs 111.07 during the same quarter last fiscal, it said. PTI

Biz resumption falls further as lockdowns continue

Economic activity has now dipped to levels seen in June last year, says Japanese brokerage Nomura

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 24 MAY

Continuing lockdowns in several states have led to a further decline in business resumption, and economic activity has now dipped to levels seen in June last year, a Japanese brokerage said today.

Using a proprietary index of gauging activity deployed since the national lockdown last year, Nomura said the worst hit to the activity will occur in May, followed by a sequential improvement in June.

"Lockdowns look to spill into June, but a few states are announcing a slow rollback of restrictions as their virus case loads fall, which suggests a sequential improvement in activity in June," the brokerage said.

The business resumption index slipped to 60 for the week ended 23 May, down from 63 in the previous reporting week, Nomura said, adding that these levels were last seen in June 2020.

Both mobility and non-

The business resumption index slipped to 60 for the week ended 23 May, down from 63 in the previous reporting week, Nomura said, adding that these levels were last seen in June 2020.

mobility sectors have been hit, it said, pointing out that Google's workplace and retail and recreation mobility indices fell by 5-6 percentage points, while the Apple driving index bottomed and rose by 3.4 percentage points. Power demand continued to contract, down by 5 per cent, while the labour participation rate moderated to 39.4 per cent from 40.5 per cent, with the unemployment rate up to 14.7 per cent from 14.4 per cent last week, near its one-year high.

For a sustained recovery, the pace of vaccination needs to pick up, which is expected to happen only after June, it said. Meanwhile, analysts at

Kotak Institutional Equities said they see "first sights of green shoots" in the economy impacted by the second round of coronavirus infections.

"Most metrics show a significant decline, but we could be at the trough of economic activity," the analysts said.

Mobility metrics, trending downwards across India, have started to improve in Mumbai and Pune. Mumbai and Pune were two of the first cities to peak in the second wave, it pointed out.

Stating that most of the states have "peaked" in terms of infections, they also flagged the slow pace of vaccinations as an area of concern.



FDI equity inflow jumps by 19% to \$59.64 billion

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 24 MAY



In terms of top investor countries, Singapore is at the top with 29 per cent share. It was followed by the US (23 per cent) and Mauritius (9 per cent) during the last fiscal.

Measures taken by the government on the fronts of FDI policy reforms, investment facilitation and ease of doing business have resulted in increased FDI inflows into the country," it said.

It added that the inflows are an endorsement of India's status as a preferred investment destination among global

investors.

The computer software and hardware sector attracted the highest inflows with around 44 per cent share of the total FDI equity inflows. It was followed by construction (infrastructure) activities (13 per cent) and services sector (8 per cent), respectively.

"Gujarat is the top recipient state during 2020-21 with 37 per cent share of the total FDI equity inflows, followed by Maharashtra (27 per cent) and Karnataka (13 per cent)," it added.

When asked whether voting on Suraksha bid has been deferred, Jaypee Infratech's (JIL) interim resolution professional (IRP) Anuj Jain said: "Yes".

Equity indices rise on positive domestic cues

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 24 MAY

Equity benchmark the Sensex advanced 111 points today, tracking gains in HDFC twins, SBI and Larsen & Toubro amid mixed cues from global markets. The 30-share BSE index climbed 111.42 points or 0.22 per cent to finish at 50,651.90 points. The broader NSE Nifty rose 22.40 points or 0.15 per cent to 15,197.70 points.

SBI was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, advancing over 2 per cent, followed by L&T, ITC, Dr Reddy's, Axis Bank and PowerGrid.

On the other hand, IndusInd Bank, UltraTech Cement, Titan and Bajaj FinServ were among the losers.

Domestic equities remained positive despite mixed global cues as persistent decline in daily case-

load and improvement in recovery rate in second wave of Covid-19 continued to lift investors' sentiments, said Binod Modi, head - strategy at Reliance Securities.

Elsewhere in Asia, bourses in Shanghai and Tokyo ended on a positive note, while Hong Kong and Seoul were in the red. Equities in Europe were largely trading with gains in mid-session deals.

Meanwhile, international oil benchmark Brent crude was trading 1.81 per cent higher at \$67.55 per barrel.

The rupee declined by 13 paise to close at 72.96 (provisional) against the US currency today as rising crude oil prices weighed on investor sentiment.

However, gains in domestic equities and weaker US dollar overseas helped restrict rupee loss to some extent.

RBI norms for merger of co-operative banks

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 24 MAY

The Reserve Bank of India today said it will consider amalgamation of district central co-operative banks (DCCBs) with state co-operative banks (SCBs) subject to various conditions, including that a proposal should be made by the state government concerned.

The Banking Regulation (Amendment) Act, 2020 has been notified for the SCBs and DCCBs with effect from 1 April 2021. Amalgamation of such banks need to be sanctioned by the Reserve Bank of India.

The Reserve Bank of India has come out with the guidelines after a few state governments approached it for amalgamation of DCCBs with SCBs as a two-tier short-term co-operative credit structure (STCCS).

As per the guidelines, if that is as a result of share swap ratio based on net-worth, shareholders of some DCCBs cannot be allotted any shares, then the state government should infuse sufficient capital in such lenders to ensure that the shareholders are allotted at least one share each.

An additional capital infusion strategy, assurance regarding financial support if required, projected business model with clear profitability and proposed governance model for the amalgamated bank.

The scheme of amalgamation has to be approved by the requisite majority of shareholders. Also, Nabard has to examine and recommend the proposal of the state government.

In the first stage, an "in-principle" approval will be accorded subject to fulfilment of certain conditions, following which the processes for amalgamation may be initiated by all concerned.

After completion of the first stage, Nabard and RBI may be approached for final approval along with compliance report, as per the guidelines.

The guidelines also said that if as a result of share swap ratio based on net-worth, shareholders of some DCCBs cannot be allotted any shares, then the state government should infuse sufficient capital in such lenders to ensure that the shareholders are allotted at least one share each.

Creditors' panel defers voting on Suraksha offer for Jaypee Infra

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 24 MAY

Jaypee Infratech's financial creditors have decided to defer the voting process on Suraksha Group's bid, that was scheduled to start from Monday noon, to acquire the troubled realty firm through insolvency.

In its last meeting held on 20 May, the CoC decided to put to vote the offer made by Suraksha group, starting from 24 May, 12 pm and closing on 27 May, 5 pm.

The panel had rejected the NBCC's plan as the offer was found non-compliant to certain provisions of laws.

After the decision of the CoC, NBCC on Saturday suo moto sent 14-page addendum to its final bid, which was submitted on 18 May.

The IRP took the decision to call the CoC meeting on

Sources said homebuyers' representative in the panel will this week conduct a voting process for flat owners to decide whether extra time should be given to both the bidders ~ NBCC and Suraksha.

Reacting to these developments, Suraksha Group on Sunday strongly objected to the creditor panel's meet on 24 May to discuss the NBCC's addendum to its final bid.

The Mumbai-based firm threatened to take legal recourse against lenders as well as the IRP if there are any delays and change in the voting process already approved on its bid. This is the fourth round of the bidding process in the matter of JIL bankruptcy case.

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

The apex court had also

directed that resolution process be completed in 45 days, which lapsed on 8 May and an application has been filed to extend the timeline for finding a buyer for JIL.

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

In the first round of insolvency proceeding, the Rs 7,350-crore bid of Lakshadweep, part of Suraksha Group, was rejected by lenders. The CoC had rejected the bids of Suraksha Realty and NBCC in the second round held in May-June 2019.

The matter reached the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) and then the apex court.

Grasim Industries Q4 profit rises by 13.3%

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 24 MAY

Founded by three IIT graduates Amit Mahensaria, Alok Choudhary and Manish Kumar, the Bengaluru-based Impartus develops technology solutions for virtual classrooms that allow for deep learner-teacher engagement.

Impartus, which had raised \$160 million from Temasek (\$120 million) and IFC last months for 25 per cent of its equity, expects Impartus to contribute Rs 85 crore to its targeted Rs 2,400-crore revenue run rate in FY'22, up from Rs 1,200 crore in FY'21.

The city-based company had only Rs 230 crore of revenue run rate in FY'20 but got a major boost from the pandemic that spawned demand for upskilling and reskilling and more than doubled its student count to over 1 million.

UpGrad Campus will target students from higher education institutions and colleges with its learning tools and content as an integrated solution. He said the founders of Impartus will continue to run and grow the business independently.

However, it also added: "While the signs of economic recovery picking up momentum was visible during the fourth quarter of 2020-21, the impact of the second wave of Covid-19 on the economic activity needs to be assessed."

Grasim Industries' total expenses in the March 2021 quarter stood at Rs 20,887.16 crore, up 15.7 per cent as against Rs 18,053.40 crore a year ago.

Revenue of Grasim Industries from the viscose-pulp, viscose staple fibre and filament yarn segment jumped by 22.91 per cent to Rs 2,583.40 crore in the fourth quarter of 2020-21 as against Rs 2,101.82 crore a year ago.

Revenue from operations during January-March 2021 jumped by 26.1 per cent to Rs 24,398.92 crore, compared with Rs 19,349.54 crore in the year-ago period.

There was a "strong operational and financial performance by all the businesses in Q4FY'21", said Grasim Industries in a post-earning statement.

Hoteliers opting for digital innovations to stay afloat

RAJA MURTHY
MUMBAI, 24 MAY

The JLL Hotel Momentum India report of 22 May estimated the hospitality industry suffering a 38.7 per cent decline in RevPAR (revenue per available room) during the first quarter of 2021, as compared to 2020. But the situation is worse, say leading hoteliers.

"This (JLL report number) is incorrect if you look at the listed hotels' results for Jan-Mar 21," chairman and managing director of the Lemon Tree hotel chain, Patu Keswani, said in an email to The Statesman. "It is more like negative 43 per cent to 44 per cent and would be far higher for all hotels, including unbranded standalone hotels." He esti-

mated the RevPar declining by about 50 percent across India.

India though enjoys rank as the "fastest recovering" market in the region, being the most favourite destination for domestic leisure travellers amid international travel restrictions.

To manage unprecedented restrictions and pandemic challenges, leading hoteliers are using digital innovations and custom-made technology platforms. As has Lemon Tree, global hotel industry leaders are using specialised expertise like the South Carolina (US) based Diversey to increase hygiene standards. Other digital innovations include the holistic guest management platform from

the Tel Aviv (Israel) based Duve, formerly "Wishbox".

As the largest mid-priced hotel chain and third largest in India, Lemon Tree is employing a "high level of digitalisation" to expand customer reach, contactless services including check-in and check-out, electronic menus and more. Such digital-delivered benefits appear as the long-term positive legacy of the hospitality and travel industry capping pandemic.

"We have seen significant improvements in cost metrics including a specific focus on converting fixed costs to variable costs, and improvements in employee care, safety and hygiene standards," Lemon Tree chairman Patu Keswani said. "This has led to productivity improvement by about 20 per cent."

Benefits the past year include Covid-care for infected guests, employees and dependants, large line item-wise permanent reduction in costs of about 12 per cent and more focus on environmental standards (renewable energy sources, water recycling, waste management).

Hotels crucially served in Covid-19 relief the past year, with leading hotel chains such as the Oberoi and Taj Group offering rooms and free food.

Lemon Tree donated more than 800 rooms to hospitals and health care providers.

Goodwill and digital innovations will help in a chal-

lenging year ahead, with Keswani anticipating Q1 FY'22 revenues being even lower than in the lockdown quarter of Q1 FY'21.

"This is primarily because this year the demand segments of quarantine, retail, staycations and healthcare workers are much less and closer to non-existent in most cities," he said. "Anecdotally you will also see this with the general public fear of stepping out due to unavailability of oxygen/hospital beds."

The Federation of Hotel and Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI) on 16 May declared submitting a representation to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Cabinet ministers for immediate financial support and tax relief.



Every year, we're spending about 5 billion US dollars from our own resources for adaptation and climate resilience

BANGLADESH PRIME MINISTER SHEIKH HASINA
COMMENTING ON COUNTRY'S CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS THE ENVIRONMENT

The Statesman
NEW DELHI TUESDAY 25 MAY 2021

09

Iran agrees to extend deal on cameras at its nuclear sites

Mikhail Ulyanov, Russia's ambassador to the IAEA, called Monday's agreement commendable.

ASSOCIATED PRESS
VIENNA, 24 MAY

Iran and the UN's nuclear watchdog agreed on Monday to a one-month extension to a deal on surveillance cameras at Tehran's atomic sites, buying more time for ongoing negotiations seeking to save the country's tattered nuclear deal with world powers.

The last-minute discussions further underscored the narrowing window for the US and others to reach terms with Iran as it presses a tough stance with the international community over its atomic programme. The Islamic Republic is already enriching

and stockpiling uranium levels far beyond those allowed by its 2015 nuclear deal.

Speaking at a news conference Monday in Vienna, IAEA Director-General Rafael Mariano Grossi told journalists that came after a discussion with Ali Akbar Salehi, the head of Iran's civilian nuclear programme.

Kazem Gharibabadi, Iran's representative to the IAEA, acknowledged the deal at the same time on Twitter.

Under a confidential agreement called an Additional Protocol with Iran, the IAEA collects and analyzes images from a series of surveillance cameras installed at Iranian nuclear sites.



Those cameras helped it monitor Tehran's program to see if it is complying with the 2015 nuclear deal.

Iran's hard-line parliament in December approved a bill that would suspend part

of U.N. inspections of its nuclear facilities if European signatories did not provide relief from oil and banking sanctions by February.

The IAEA then struck a three-month deal with Iran in

February to have it hold the surveillance images, with Tehran threatening to delete them afterward if no deal had been reached.

Iran has since broken all the deal's limits after then-Pres-

ident Donald Trump in 2018 unilaterally withdrew America from the accord.

Negotiations continue in Vienna to see if both the U.S. and Iran can re-enter the deal, which limits Tehran's enrichment of uranium in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions.

Mikhail Ulyanov, Russia's ambassador to the IAEA, called Monday's agreement commendable.

It will help maintain a businesslike atmosphere at the Vienna talks on #CPOA and facilitate a successful outcome of the diplomatic efforts to restore the nuclear deal, he wrote on Twitter, using an acronym for the deal.

Nepal's Oppn files writ petition against Prez's House dissolution

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KATHMANDU, 24 MAY

Nepal's Opposition alliance on Monday filed a writ petition in the Supreme Court against the "unconstitutional" dissolution of the House of Representatives by the President.

Leaders of the alliance moved the apex court two days after President Bidya Devi Bhandari dissolved the House on the recommendations of Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli, who headed a minority government after losing a trust vote in the House.

In the writ, petitioners have demanded that Nepali Congress president Sher Bahadur Deuba should be lawfully appointed the Prime Minister of Nepal in accor-

dance with Article 76 (5), The Himalayan Times reported.

Their other demands include the scrapping of the announcement of elections in November, to stop election-related programmes amid the pandemic, and to issue an order to summon House meeting to facilitate presentation of the budget within the time provisioned by the Constitution, it said. The petitioners noted that the dissolution was unconstitutional as there was legal room for the appointment of a new government as per Article 76 (5) of the Constitution of Nepal. Former lawmakers from the Opposition parties had assembled in Singha Durbar on Sunday and on Monday to submit their signatures endorsing Deuba's claim to the prime minister-

ship. At least 26 leaders from Prime Minister Oli's rival faction have reportedly submitted their signatures.

Deuba had staked his claim to the government on Friday claiming that he has the support of 149 lawmakers.

President Bhandari dissolved the 275-member House of Representatives on Saturday for the second time in five months and announced snap elections on November 12 and November 19 on the advice of Prime Minister Oli, heading a minority government.

She rejected the bids of both embattled Prime Minister Oli and the Opposition alliance's claims to form a government. Oli and Opposition leader Deuba had staked separate claims to the premiership.

PRICE OF WAR



A man walks over rubble to enter a severely damaged apartment block, after a neighboring building was destroyed by an air-strike prior to a cease-fire reached after an 11-day war between Gaza's Hamas rulers and Israel on Monday in Magazzi, the Gaza Strip. ■ AGENCIES

Researchers at China's Wuhan bio lab sought hospital care before Covid-19 outbreak: Report

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON, 24 MAY

Three researchers from the Wuhan Institute of Virology sought hospital care in November 2019, weeks before Beijing disclosed the Covid-19 pandemic, a US media report said, citing a previously undisclosed American intelligence document that could add weight to growing calls for a full-scale probe of whether the coronavirus may have escaped from China's top bio lab.

The details of the reporting go beyond a State Department fact sheet, issued during the final days of the Trump administration, which said that several researchers at the Wuhan lab, a center for the study of coronaviruses and

other pathogens, became sick in autumn 2019 "with symptoms consistent with both Covid-19 and common seasonal illness," the Wall Street Journal reported.

The origins of the Covid-19 remain a widely debated topic, with some scientists and politicians maintaining that the possibility of a leak of the deadly virus exists. The Wuhan Institute of Virology is near the outbreak's known epicentre of Huanan Seafood Market in central China's Wuhan city, where the virus first emerged in late 2019 and became a pandemic.

Former US president Donald Trump was among those who supported the theory that the virus might have escaped from a bio lab in

China.

"Three researchers from China's Wuhan Institute of Virology became sick enough in November 2019 that they sought hospital care, the newspaper said.

The disclosure of the number of Chinese researchers, the timing of their illnesses and their hospital visits come on the eve of a meeting of the

World Health Organization's decision-making body, which is expected to discuss the next phase of an investigation into Covid-19's origins.

The paper said that current and former officials familiar with the intelligence about the lab researchers expressed differing views about the strength of the supporting evidence, with one person saying it was provided by an international partner and was potentially significant but still in need of further investigation and additional corroboration.

Another person described intelligence as stronger. The information that we had coming from the various sources was of exquisite quality. It was very precise. What it didn't tell you was exactly why they

got sick, he said, referring to the researchers.

In a detailed article titled The origin of Covid: Did people or nature open Pandora's box at Wuhan published in the prestigious Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists early this month, noted British science writer, editor and author Nicholas Wade raised several questions on the origin of the novel coronavirus that has disrupted lives the world over for more than a year and caused over three million deaths and wrecked global economies.

The evidence adds up to a serious case that the SARS2 virus could have been created in a lab, from which it then escaped, wrote Wade, who refers to SARS-CoV-2 virus as

SARS2 in short. Earlier this month, a group of leading UK and US scientists called for more investigation to determine the origin of the Covid-19 pandemic, including the theory of an accidental release from a lab in the central Chinese city of Wuhan. In a letter published in the journal Science, the experts from world-leading universities such as Harvard, Stanford and MIT said knowing how Covid-19 emerged is critical for informing global strategies to mitigate the risk of future outbreaks. They caution that hypotheses about both natural and laboratory spillovers must be taken seriously until there is sufficient data. In May 2020, the World Health Assembly requested that the World

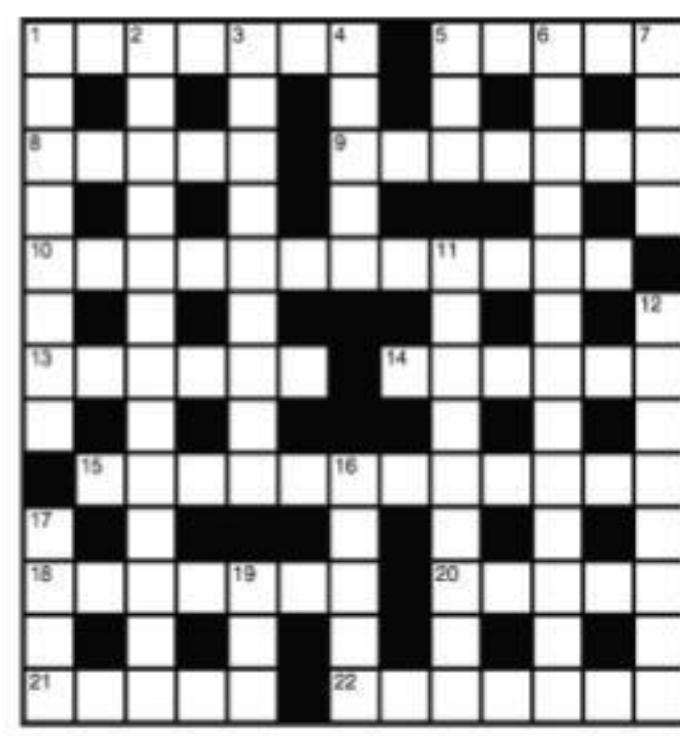
Health Organisation (WHO) director-general work with partners to determine the origins of SARS-CoV-2.

A team of WHO experts, which probed the origin of the coronavirus, concluded in March that all hypotheses included the allegation that COVID-19 could have emanated from a lab "remained open". World Health Organisation (WHO) Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, while receiving the report of the international experts' team which visited Wuhan, said on March 30 that as far as the WHO is concerned, all hypotheses remain on the table. "This report is a very important beginning, but it is not the end. We have not yet found the source of the

virus, and we must continue to follow the science and leave no stone unturned as we do, he said. Significantly, Tedros said the team has concluded that leak from the WIV as alleged by former US president Donald Trump is the least likely hypothesis but it requires further probe. China has called for expanding the search for the origins of the coronavirus in other countries, mainly America, sidestepping the WHO chief's assertion that further probe is required on allegations that the deadly virus may have leaked from the bio-lab in Wuhan. China has emphasised that the study of origins is a matter of science, which should be jointly conducted by scientists all over the world.

LEISURE

10 MINUTE CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- Painting medium (7)
- Signified (5)
- Inspection of accounts (5)
- Zealot (7)
- Type of art exhibit (12)
- Subjects (6)
- Whole (6)
- Position of prominence (5,2)
- Rugby restart (4-3)
- Artiles (5)
- Sweetcorn (5)
- Right (7)

DOWN

- Way of working (5,8)
- Captivated (9)
- Terrible (5)
- Adult male (3)
- Fold (4)
- Kitchen tool (3,6)
- Emphatic (8)
- Spirit-dispensing device (5)
- Sullen (4)
- Be in debt (3)

SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD

ACROSS

- Extreme, 12 Horseradish, 13 Opening, 14 Dynamic, 15 Impair, 16 Oyster, 18 Whelp, 19 Way, 20 Yester, 21 Ricin, 22 Tempet, 23 Regal, 24 Caper.
- 1 Screw, 2 Tiny (Scruti-ny), 3 Aye, 4 Tighten, 5 Nucleus, 6 Yonder, 7 Interrogate,

DOWN

- 11 Sitcom, 12 Rottet, 13 Whelp, 14 Tightrope walker, 15 Swallow, 16 Tropic, 17 Sullen, 18 Ricin, 19 Be in debt (3)

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

BEETLE BAILEY/Mort Walker



RED EYE/Bill Yates & Mel Casson



DADDY DAZE/John Kovaleski



NEED TO KNOW

HOSPITALS

22586262, 22585007

RAILWAY INQUIRY

General Inquiry 139

Toll Free Nos. 1800125151

MSI Inquiry Nos. 57886, 54959, 5676747

ROADWAYS INQUIRY

ISBT (General Inquiry): 23868836, 23865181

■ AIR INDIA Flight Inquiry and Reservation 18001801407

■ INDIGO AIRLINES New Delhi City Office 43513185, Call Centre 09910383338, 18001803838, Reservation 43513186; Indigo Airlines Air

port 011-25671580; Terminal I 23860626

■ RAJASTHAN Roadways 25671576, 18001803838

■ JET AIRWAYS Flight Inquiry and Reservation 3984111

■ EMIRATES Flight Inquiry and Reservation 3373377

■ U.P. Roads 23868709

FLIGHT INQUIRY

AIR INDIA Flight Inquiry and Reservation 18001801407

INDIGO AIRLINES New Delhi City Office 43513185, Call Centre 09910383338, 18001803838, Reservation 43513186; Indigo Airlines Air

port 011-25671580; Terminal I 23860626

RAJASTHAN Roadways 25671576, 18001803838

JET AIRWAYS Flight Inquiry and Reservation 3984111

EMIRATES Flight Inquiry and Reservation 3373377

U.P. Roads 23868709

SCRABBLE BRAND

23868836, 23865181

■ AIR CANADA Flight Inquiry and Reservation 41528181

■ AIR FRANCE Flight Inquiry and Reservation 23466262 (City)

25652294 (Airport)

■ KUWAIT AIRWAYS Flight Inquiry and Reservation 23354373

■ SUDOKU Conceptis Sudoku By Dave Green

SUDOKU Conceptis Sudoku

Difficulty Level ★★★★

Answer to previous puzzle

1/24 Conceptis Puzzles, Dot, by Kita Features Syndicate, Inc.

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with 3x3 boxes. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that no row, column and no 3x3 box contains the same number. The difficulty level increases through the week.

paper.thestatesman.com



We have to have institutions that are up to the task, that meet our ambitions must be robust and flexible in times of emergency and crisis

FRENCH PRESIDENT EMANUEL MACRON

ON STRENGTHENING WHO'S READINESS AND RESPONSE TO HEALTH EMERGENCIES

WEATHER

CITY	MAX	MIN
SINGAPORE	29°C	25°C H
HONG KONG	26°C	20°C H
TOKYO	18°C	12°C CL
LONDON	17°C	9°C S
DUBAI	30°C	25°C S
SAN FRANCISCO	13°C	04°C C H
NEW YORK	10°C	07°C C S
MOSCOW	16°C	09°C H

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

THUMBNAILS



Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro, center, takes a motorcycle tour with supporters in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. AP

Italy cable car crash: Italy's transport minister was heading on Monday to the scene of a cable car disaster that killed 14 people when the lead cable apparently snapped and the cabin careened back down the mountain until it pulled off the line and crashed to the ground. The lone survivor, a 5-year-old boy living in Italy, remained hospitalised with multiple broken bones. AP

UK Black activist wounded in shooting: An activist, Sasha Johnson (27) who has played a leading role in anti-racism demonstrations in Britain is in critical condition after being shot on the head in London, her political party Taking the Initiative Party says. AP

EU calls for probe after plane diverted to arrest journalist

BRUSSELS, 24 MAY

Western leaders decried the diversion of a plane to Belarus in order to arrest an Opposition journalist as an act of piracy and terrorism. The European Union and others on Monday demanded an investigation into the dramatic forced landing of the Ryanair jet, which was traveling between two of the bloc's two member nations.

The airline said Belarusian flight controllers told the crew there was a bomb threat against the plane as it was crossing through the country's airspace and ordered it to land in the capital of Minsk. A Belarusian MiG-29 fighter jet was scrambled to escort the plane.

Raman Pratasevich, who ran a popular messaging app that played a key role in helping organize massive protests against Belarus' authoritarian President, was on board and he and his Russian girlfriend were led off the plane shortly after landing. The plane, which began its journey in Athens, Greece, was eventually allowed to continue on to Vilnius, Lithuania. Western leaders forcefully condemned the move.

A group of the chairs of the foreign affairs committees of several Western countries' legislative bodies called it an act of piracy. "This reckless act put the passengers and crew in grave danger. It is a reminder of the illegitimacy of the regime claiming authority in Minsk," signed by representatives from several EU countries. AP

Courtroom showdown: EU takes on AstraZeneca in vaccine row

At loggerheads for months with AstraZeneca, EU accuses it of failing to deliver the promised doses



ASSOCIATED PRESS
BRUSSELS, 24 MAY

It's crunch time for the European Commission in its legal battle with drugmaker AstraZeneca.

At loggerheads for months with the Anglo-Swedish pharmaceutical company it accuses of failing to deliver the promised number of Covid-19 vaccine doses, the European Union's executive branch will try to persuade a Brussels court Wednesday that the case is urgent enough to justify ordering the company to make an immediate delivery of the missing shots.

AstraZeneca's contract signed with the Commission on behalf of EU member states foresaw an initial 300 million doses for distribution among all 27 countries, with an option for a further 100 million. The doses were expected to be delivered throughout 2021. But only 30 million were sent during the first quarter.

Deliveries have increased slightly since then but, according to the Commission, the company is set to provide only 70 million doses in the second quarter. It had promised 180 million.

While the EU insists AstraZeneca has breached its contractual obligations, the company says it has fully com-

pied with the agreement, arguing that vaccines are difficult to manufacture.

"We want the court to order the company to deliver 90 million additional doses, in addition to the 30 million already delivered in the first quarter," European Commission spokesman Stefan De Keersmaecker said.

As part of an advanced purchase agreement with vaccine companies, the EU said it invested 2.7 billion euros (\$3.8 billion), including 336 million (\$408 million) to finance the production of AstraZeneca's.

During a procedural hearing last month, EU lawyer Rafael Jafferai told the court the company should use all four plants listed in their contract for deliveries to the EU.

"The contract listed a series of plants that had to be used by AstraZeneca and that still today, in breach of the contract, AstraZeneca is not using," he said. The longstanding dispute drew media attention for weeks earlier this year amid a deadly surge of coronavirus infections in Europe, when delays in vaccine production and deliveries hampered the EU's vaccination campaign.

Cheaper and easier to use than rival shots from Pfizer-BioNTech, the AstraZeneca vaccine developed with Oxford University was a pillar of the

EU's vaccination campaign.

In total, the Commission has secured more than 2.5 billion doses of vaccine doses with various manufacturers. It recently sealed another massive order with Pfizer and BioNTech.

European Union's vaccine rollout. But the EU's partnership with the firm quickly deteriorated amid accusations it favored its relationship with the British authorities.

While the UK made quick progress in its vaccination campaign thanks to the AstraZeneca shots, the EU faced embarrassing complaints and criticism for its slow start. Concerns over the pace of the rollout across the EU grew after AstraZeneca said it could not supply EU members with as many doses as originally anticipated because of production capacity limits.

In an interview with the *Financial Times* newspaper last weekend, AstraZeneca chief executive Pascal Soriot said the UK government had been guaranteed priority in vaccine supplies as part of the deal it sealed with Oxford university in return for investment. That was before AstraZeneca joined as a development partner to produce and distribute the serum.

The health situation has dramatically improved in Europe in recent weeks, with the number of Covid-19 hospitalizations and deaths on a sharp downward trend as vaccination has picked up.

About 260 million doses of vaccine have been delivered in Europe - a region with around 450 million inhabitants - and the bloc's chief executive Ursula von der Leyen is now branding the EU's Covid-19 vaccination drive a success.

In total, the Commission has secured more than 2.5 billion doses of vaccine doses with various manufacturers. It recently sealed another massive order with Pfizer and BioNTech.

Merkel, Macron back efforts to improve WHO

ASSOCIATED PRESS
GENEVA, 24 MAY

French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Angela Merkel on Monday were among leaders rallying around efforts to strengthen the World Health Organization and the world's ability to prepare for and defend against pandemics.

It came as the UN health agency opened its annual assembly, with a draft resolution in the works that acknowledges mistakes in the response to Covid-19. The sweeping proposal would seek to boost pandemic response, stabilize WHO's funding and ensure greater access to health care - including to vaccines, tests and treatments linked to Covid-19. The EU and Vanuatu were behind the resolution, which was to be considered during the eight-day assembly. It would create a working group on strengthening WHO's readiness and response to health emergencies.

"We have to have institutions that are up to the task, that meet our ambitions," Macron said by video during the mostly virtual meeting. WHO, he said, must be "robust" and "flexible" in times of emergency and crisis. "And it must be completely transparent to make

sure that people trust the organization." "There must not be any political pressure and there must not be any suspicion of pressure that has been exerted," he added.

Merkel threw her backing behind the idea of a "global health threat council" and said leaders should provide WHO with "lasting financial and personal support."

"We have been talking about this for years, but now it is all the more important to act," she said.

The resolution - a copy of which was obtained by *The Associated Press* - cites Covid-19 two dozen times. It breaks little new ground and aims mostly to garner consensus and commonality of purpose in the aftermath of the economic and human devastation wreaked by the pandemic. The resolution, which would set up a six-person working group to report to the assembly next year, acknowledged "serious shortcomings" in the world's ability to prepare, prevent, detect health emergencies.

The text, if approved, would ask WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus to make "concrete suggestions" for levels of alert in times of health emergencies, "with clear criteria and practical implications for countries."



Blinken off to Mideast to push peace talks after Gaza truce

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON, 24 MAY

Secretary of State Antony Blinken is heading to the Middle East to press the Israelis, Palestinians and regional players to build on last week's Gaza cease-fire by laying the groundwork for an eventual resumption in long-stalled peace talks.

President Joe Biden announced Blinken would depart on Monday for a short visit to Israel, the West Bank, Jordan and Egypt for what will be the Biden administration's highest-level in-person meetings on the crisis that erupted earlier this month.

In a statement, Biden said Blinken will also work with regional partners to ensure "the coordinated international effort to ensure immediate assistance reaches Gaza."

The administration had been roundly criticized for its perceived hands-off initial response to the deadly violence, including from Democratic allies in Congress who were demanding it take a tougher line on Israel and its response to rocket attacks from Palestinian militant groups in Gaza.

The administration has defended its response by saying it engaged in intense, but quiet, high-level diplomacy to support a cease-fire, which was ultimately arranged last week after Egyptian mediation. Blinken said on Sunday that the behind-the-scenes effort led by Biden paid off, securing a truce after 11 days.

"President Biden leading this effort made the judgment that we could be most effective in doing that. And

ultimately, after this intensive effort across the government, we got to where everyone wanted to be, which was to end the violence," he said in an interview with CNN.

"But now, as the President said, I think it's incumbent upon all of us to try to make the turn to start to build something more positive and what that means at heart is that Palestinians and Israelis alike have to know in their day-in and day-out lives equal measures of opportunity, of security, of dignity," Blinken said.

He said the time is not right for an immediate resumption in negotiations between the two sides but that steps could be taken - mainly humanitarian initiatives - to repair damage from Israeli air strikes in Gaza, which caused significant damage to civilian infrastructure and deaths.

"I don't think we're in a place where getting to some kind of a negotiation for what ultimately, I think, has to be the result, which is a two-state solution, is the first order of business," he said. "We have to start building back in concrete ways and offering some genuine hope, prospects, opportunity in the lives of people."

ANTIQUE SALE



A Bonhams employee holds a massive Indian Processional Headsman's sword of the 19th century, beside body armour during a photo call for Bonhams' Antique Arms and Armour sale in London on Monday.

Biden's solar ambitions collide with China labour complaints

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BEIJING, 24 MAY

The Biden administration's solar power ambitions are colliding with complaints the global industry depends on Chinese raw materials that might be produced by forced labour. A big hurdle is polysilicon, used to make photovoltaic cells for solar panels.

The global industry gets 45 per cent of its supply from Xinjiang, the northwestern region where the ruling Communist Party is accused of mass incarceration of minorities and other abuses. Other parts of China supply 35 per cent. Only 20 per cent comes from

US and other producers.

Biden's climate envoy, John Kerry, says Washington is deciding whether to keep solar products from Xinjiang out of US markets. That sets up a conflict with President Joe Biden's plans to cut climate-changing carbon emissions by promoting solar and other renewable energy while also reducing costs.

In Xinjiang, more than 1 million Uyghurs and other members of predominantly Muslim ethnic groups have been forced into detention camps, according to foreign researchers and governments.

Authorities are accused of forced sterilisations of minori-

ties of forced labor is a problem, Kerry told U.S. legislators last week. He cited solar panels that we believe in some cases are being produced by forced labour.

Western governments have imposed travel and financial restrictions on Chinese officials blamed for abuses.

The US has banned imports of cotton and tomatoes from Xinjiang, citing concerns over forced labour.

The administration was assessing whether to extend that ban to solar panels and raw materials from Xinjiang, Kerry said. He said he didn't know the status of that review.

New UK study indicates trained dogs could sniff out Covid-19 infections

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LONDON, 24 MAY

to 92 per cent specificity. The dogs were able to detect odour from individuals who were asymptomatic, as well as those with two different strains of Covid-19, and with both high and low viral loads, the study said.

With the threat of new variants entering the country, the need for testing means we face potential continued disruption for some time to come. That's where these amazing dogs could play a role, said Professor James Logan, Head of the Department of Disease Control at LSHTM, who led the project. Further research is needed to see if the dogs can replicate these results in a real-world setting, but these findings are hugely encouraging. The advantage

of using this method is being able to detect Covid-19 with incredible speed and good accuracy among large groups of people," he said.

The dogs were trained by the team at Medical Detection Dogs to identify Covid-19 using body odour samples which were sent to the research team by members of the public and National Health Service (NHS) staff, consisting of masks, socks and t-shirts.

These fantastic results are further evidence that dogs are one of the most reliable biosensors for detecting the odour of human disease. Our robust study shows the huge potential for dogs to help in the fight against Covid-19, said Dr Claire Guest, Chief Sci-

entific Officer at Medical Detection Dogs.

Knowing that we can harness the amazing power of a dog's nose to detect Covid-19 quickly and non-invasively gives us hope for a return to a more normal way of life through safer travel and access to public places, so that we can again socialise with family and friends, she said.

Accompanying mathematical modelling highlights the potential for dogs to be used at ports-of-entry or other sites, with preparatory work suggesting that two dogs could screen 300 plane passengers in around 30 minutes as part of a "Rapid Screen and Test" strategy. Only individuals who are identified by the dogs would require a PCR test.

US restricting visas, taking other action over Tigray crisis

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON, 24 MAY

The United States has begun restricting visas for people undermining efforts to resolve the deadly fighting in Ethiopia's Tigray region, saying it is time for the international community to take action in a conflict that has sparked allegations of ethnic cleansing and forces of famine.

Thousands of people are estimated to have died in the six months the conflict between Ethiopian troops and the Tigray People's Liberation Front has raged in the northern regional state. Atrocities including rape, extrajudicial

killings and forced evictions have been part of the violence, local authorities and aid groups have alleged. "Despite significant diplomatic engagement, the parties to the conflict in Tigray have taken no meaningful steps to end hostilities or pursue a peaceful resolution of the political crisis," US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a statement Sunday night. "Without an immediate cessation of hostilities and a rapid expansion of humanitarian access, current and significant food insecurity could lead to famine," Blinken said. The crisis began in Novem-

ber after Ethiopia accused former leaders of the Tigray People's Liberation Front, of ordering an attack on an Ethiopian army base in the region. Troops sent by Ethiopia's leader, Prime Min-

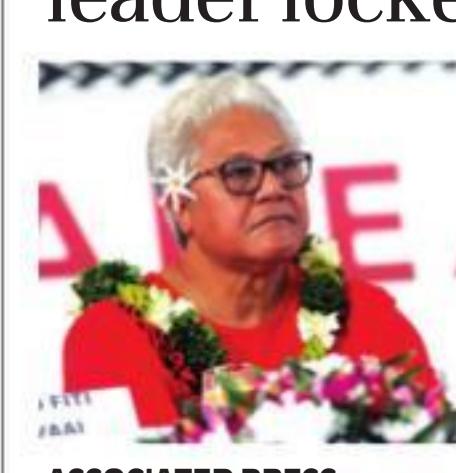
ister Abiy Ahmed, quickly ousted the TPLF from major cities and towns, but guerrilla fighting was still reported across the Tigray region. Troops from neighboring Eritrea joined in support of Ethiopia

an forces. In the US, the Senate last week passed a resolution condemning "all violence against civilians" in Tigray and calling for the withdrawal of troops from Eritrea. Blinken has alleged that ethnic cleansing was taking place in the western Tigray area.

Besides the visa restrictions, Blinken said on Sunday night the US was imposing wide-ranging restrictions on economic and security assistance to Ethiopia and would bring US defense trade control policy in line with the restrictions.

The US will continue humanitarian assistance and certain other critical aid to

Samoa in crisis as elected leader locked out of Parl



ASSOCIATED PRESS
WELLINGTON, 24 MAY

Samoa was plunged into a constitutional crisis Monday when the woman who won an election last month was locked out of Parliament for reasons that will make known in due course." On Sunday, the Parliament's speaker claimed he remained in charge.

The fast-moving events marked the latest twist in a bitter power struggle that has been playing out in the small Pacific nation since it elected its first female leader.

Campus & Career

Learning to grow



Education technology platforms are promoting holistic development and making knowledge accessible to all

DEV ROY

Technology has strengthened its roots across the world in the last year, emerging as a necessity to connect, communicate, learn and explore in the new normal. Mobile phones have become ubiquitous in India, irrespective of one's purchasing power or

knowledge of technology. While many called it a bane till recently, it has emerged as a bridge between students and their educators. The pandemic has further emphasised on the importance of imparting knowledge via digital mediums, redefining the concept of digital education.

As a nation with attractive demographic factors, India is crippled with many challenges such as illiteracy, a high number of dropouts and lack of quality education. One can gauge the state of education in the country with recent developments of aged women in various states completing education milestones at the age of 90, 100 and even 105 years. While education continues to be a dream for many, fact remains that there is still an enormous untapped potential in the sector.

Mobile phones and education technology platforms are enabling easier knowledge access to all learners, whether or not they wish to aid

their formal learning or scout for a substitute for the same. If one is a student looking for formal education, ed-tech presents an opportunity to consume knowledge in a personalised manner for holistic development. With the medium, the target for education also expands from school and college-going students (or of the same age) to a much larger section.

India's government is focused on building a robust academic foundation for the country. This assumes even more significance as India is the second-most populated nation in the world with the highest number of young people. Out of many factors that allow different nations to consider us a potential superpower, the demographic density is an important aspect.

Aligned with the government's sentiments, ed-tech platforms are developing a dynamic e-learning infrastructure and promoting quality education with the following aspects as constant:

Learner is king
Ed-tech platforms focus on meeting the demands of varied types of learners, from basic to advanced. Being dynamic and flexible, it is easy to embrace for anyone. They allow learners to take the lead in the process and provide flexibility in the pace of learning.

Able leaders
There is an immediate and continuous need for forward-looking leaders in the education system. Quality of education comes from the teacher and lack of good teachers is a significant challenge. On the other hand, talented teachers can find themselves limited to place and time.

Here, technology can play a pivotal role in expanding the capability and reach of a good teacher. By collaborating with ed-tech platforms, proficient teachers can democratise their unique teaching methods and

find a way to connect with students in far-flung regions. Ed-tech, as a medium, can connect high-potential students with able teachers who can guide and nurture them aptly.

Flexible learning

Ed-tech platforms not only replicate existing learning systems, but also aim to introduce a new and more flexible education infrastructure. This empowers the platforms with dynamism as they combine the power of data analytics and other advanced technology prowess with the exclusive needs of a learner, making education interactive and easy to grasp.

Social exchange

Thanks to the new-age, social-learning ed-tech apps, peer-to-peer learning has emerged as yet another effective tool for study purposes, in a different avatar though. Via social networking, such apps form a convergence point for students and other subject matter experts. The community thus formed, thrives on the fundamentals of knowledge sharing under the supervision of experts.

Another advantage of this form of learning is that students get access to a massive bank of user-generated content. It provides information outside the course book and also acquaints learners with different tricks and formulae to solve their problems. It further acts as a ready reference for learners, which they can access even while on the go. Through quizzes and challenges, students can share crucial information with each other, benefitting all those involved in the ed-tech community.

Assessment and evaluation

The fact that ed-teds can host large amounts of data makes it feasible for them to be instrumental in the assessment and evaluation of each learner. These platforms leverage Artificial Intelligence to enable teachers to conduct different kinds of assessments like mid-term, chapter-wise or end-term. The reports generated by such platforms provide a better insight, for the strength and weaknesses of all learners are ascertained in a more personalised manner.

Ed-tech platforms organically promote the idea of a "growth mindset". They gamify the learning process making it a rewarding experience for students. Resultantly, the user inculcates a curiosity to know, learn and discover the right set of knowledge required to be upskilled. By offering what a learner truly desires and needs to hone his/her skills, these platforms allow them to harness their true potential.

The writer is founder, Digital Aristotle, Bangalore

PLUS POINTS

Data & healthcare



Fore School of Management is starting a three-month free training programme for healthcare professionals on data analytics from 12 June. It is a hands-on interactive live online programme on machine learning and Artificial Intelligence. The last date of registration is 10 June and can be done by sending a message at 9166085159.

The training duration will be of three months on Saturdays and Sundays. It will have sessions for both PhD holders and medical doctors having hands-on experience. The programme will be organising workshops besides regular classes.

University feel



Flame University will start its online Flame University-Summer Immersion Programme 2021 for high school students in June. Through the programme, the university intends to broaden horizons for students by making them experience university life, interdisciplinary academics and learn from world-class faculty.

The FU-SIP 2021 is scheduled to run from 21-26 June. The programme will cover a plethora of interesting modules such as the energy powering smartphones, fast and fun way to learn German, biology and conservation of sea turtles in India, digital footprints and many more. Candidates must be in Class IX, X or XI with a minimum age of 14 years, as on 15 March 2021. The last date for application is 14 June. For details visit: <https://www.flame.edu.in/academics/summer-immersion-program>

For employees



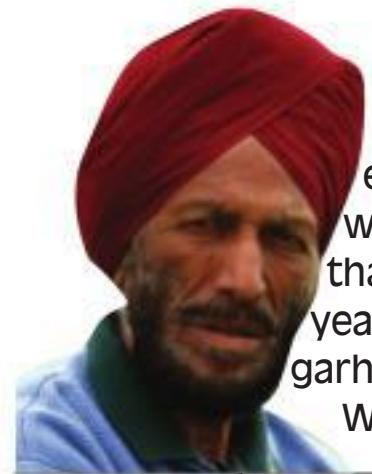
[24]7.ai has been extending its help to support their employees as well as the public during these challenging times. To ensure that work processes are not affected, and the experience is seamless, the company is providing employees with fully loaded and compatible computers, corporate broadband and mobile phone reimbursements. The company has set up an email and phone helplines for its employees and their families to reach out for any Covid-19 related support and guidance. It is also providing all its employees with insurance to financially help them in case they or their family members test positive for any strains of the Covid-19 virus.

Study abroad scholarship



Leverage Edu announced the launch of its study abroad scholarship for Indian students who are planning to study overseas for the upcoming academic intakes. As part of the initiative, students should submit an application that explains why they deserve the scholarship. This democratises access to students in any corner of India, to get waivers on their tuition fees, living expenses, win laptops, waiver on costs to cover excursions, and a lot more at-campus stuff, which would get them closer to their dream of being a global citizen in a borderless world.

The scholarship of Rs 5,00,00,000 is expected to benefit hundreds of students. It has a rolling application timeline and winners will be announced every fortnight. For details, check out <https://leverageedu.com/scholarships>



MILKHA SINGH HOSPITALISED

Legendary Indian sprinter Milkha Singh, who has tested positive for COVID-19, was on Monday hospitalised, with his son and ace golfer Jeev Milkha Singh saying that the move was a precautionary measure. The 91-year-old Milkha had been in home isolation at his Chandigarh residence after he tested positive for the virus on Wednesday.

For more updates

www.thestatesman.com

THUMBNAILS

Ramos dropped: Sergio Ramos was left off Spain's squad for the European Championship on Monday following a season plagued by injuries. Spain coach Luis Enrique said Ramos' lack of play recently made it difficult for him to be included in the Euro 2020 squad.



Verstappen wins: Max Verstappen won the Monaco Grand Prix for the first time to take the Formula One championship lead from Lewis Hamilton on Sunday, while pole-sitter Charles Leclerc pulled out just before the race started.

S Sport

Postal Reg. No. DL (ND)-II/6088/2018-19-20

Mickelson becomes oldest major champion

ASSOCIATED PRESS

KIAWAH ISLAND (USA), 24 MAY



Phil Mickelson (in photo) has delivered so many thrills and spills over 30 years of pure theater that no one ever knows what he will do next.

His latest act was a real stunner: A major champion at age 50. Mickelson captured his sixth major and by far the most surprising on Sunday at the Professional Golfers Association Championship. He made two early birdies with that magical wedge game and let a cast of contenders fall too far behind to catch him in the shifting wind of Kiawah Island.

He closed with a 1-over 73, building a five-shot lead on the back nine and not making any critical mistakes that kept him from his place in history.

Julius Boros for 53 years held the distinction of golf's oldest major champion. He was 48 when he won the 1968 PGA Championship in San Antonio.

Pure chaos broke out along

the 18th hole after Mickelson had hit 9-iron safely to just outside 15 feet that all but secured a most improbable victory. Thousands of fans engulfed him down the fairway - a scene typically seen

only at the British Open - until Mickelson emerged into view with a thumbs-up.

Chants of "Lefty! Lefty!

Lefty!" chased him onto the green and into the scoring tent, his final duty of a week he won't soon forget. Three months after 43-year-old Tom Brady had won a seventh Super Bowl, Mickelson added to this year of ageless wonders. Mickelson became the first player in PGA Tour history to win tournaments 30 years apart.

The first of his 45 titles was in 1991 when he was still a junior at Arizona State. Mickelson had accepted a special exemption into the US Open because, at No 115 in the world and winless the last two years, he no longer was exempt from qualifying.

He had not finished in

the top 20 in his last 17 tournaments over nearly nine months. He worried that he was no longer able to keep his focus over 18 holes.

And then he beat the strongest field of the year - 99 of the top 100 players - and made it look easy.

Amul
The Taste of India
maSti
DAHI
₹ 60*
1kg
Helps in improving immunity,
gut health and bone strength

Amul Masti Dahi is a product of Amul. It is a probiotic yogurt that is rich in calcium and protein. It is a good source of probiotics which help in improving immunity, gut health and bone strength. It is available in 1kg cartons.

Ronaldo makes history as Juve qualify for Champions League

AGENCIES

MILAN, 24 MAY

Cristiano Ronaldo (in photo) made more history on Sunday becoming the first player to finish the season as top scorer in three major leagues -- England, Spain, and Italy -- as Juventus qualified for the Champions League on the final day of the season with a 4-1 win at Bologna and were joined by AC Milan who beat Atalanta 2-0.

There has been speculation about Ronaldo's future with the club if they failed to reach the Champions League for the first time since 2012, after their nine-year league reign ended this campaign.

The 36-year-old scored 29 goals this campaign, five more than second-placed Belgian Romelu Lukaku for champions Inter Milan. The Portuguese striker was top scorer in England with Manchester United in 2008, and three times in Spain with Real Madrid, 2011, 2014 and 2015.

But it is the first time in three seasons the former five-time Ballon d'Or winner has scored



the most goals. Ronaldo scored 21 goals in his first season after joining in 2018 and 31 last campaign when he finished behind Lazio's Ciro Immobile's 36.

In all competitions, he has now scored 101 goals for Juventus. On Sunday, he stayed on the bench in Juve's final league game a 4-1 win over Bologna

which secured a top-four finish and Champions League football next season.

"It was a shared choice, Ronaldo was tired after (playing in the Coppa Italia final) Wednesday," said coach Andrea Pirlo. "He made himself available to the team but I chose to have another player named Morata play, who is not the lat-

est arrival.

I have a quality team, with many choices available," Pirlo added.

A Morata brace along with goals from Chiesa and Adrien Rabiot prevented Juventus missing out on the elite European competition for the first time.

Napoli had to settle for a Europa League spot, finishing one point behind Juventus, after a 1-1 draw at home against Hellas Verona. A pair of Franck Kessie penalties at the end of either half ensured AC Milan finished the season second - 12 points behind city rivals Inter Milan -- and return to the Champions League for the first time since the 2013-2014 season.

"We deserved the Champions League as well as second place," said Milan coach Stefano Pioli, whose side had missed the chance to seal their birth last weekend against Cagliari. We went through the whole championship at the top, unfortunately we had thrown away the match point last Sunday. I'm really excited, happy, I have to thank the club

because they made us work in a spectacular way."

Atalanta had already ensured a third consecutive season of Champions League football but missed out on a first-second-place Serie A finish days after losing out in the Coppa Italia final to Juventus. In Naples, Amir Rrahmani scored for Napoli after an hour against his former club, which would have been enough to secure a berth at the top table but Davide Faraoni pulled one back for the visitors nine minutes. Gennaro Gattuso's side were denied a return to elite European action after also missing out last season.

French league

Lille clinched their first Ligue 1 title since 2011 as they beat Angers 2-1 away on Sunday, becoming only the second club since 2013 to break Paris St Germain's dominance. A goal by Jonathan David and a Burak Yilmaz penalty put Christophe Galtier's side on 83 points, one ahead of defending champions PSG, who had won seven of the eight previous titles and snatched a 2-0 win at Stade Brest.

French league

"We deserved the Champions League as well as second place," said Milan coach Stefano Pioli, whose side had missed the chance to seal their birth last weekend against Cagliari. We went through the whole championship at the top, unfortunately we had thrown away the match point last Sunday. I'm really excited, happy, I have to thank the club

Liverpool, Chelsea clinch CL spots

AGENCIES

LIVERPOOL, 24 MAY



Even though the Premier League finale produced oscillating fortunes in the chase for the Champions League, a chaotic season ended fairly predictably.

Liverpool and Chelsea on Sunday squeezed out Leicester to secure top-four finishes that seemed out of reach at times in a pandemic-compressed season that stretched squads to the limit.

Chelsea could even afford to lose 2-1 at Aston Villa and still take fourth after Leicester was beaten 4-2 by Tottenham.

"There are no celebrations now around the dressing room," Chelsea manager Thomas Tuchel (in photo) said. "It's a big relief."

Of the two other English rebels who tried to kill off the Champions League, Arsenal missed out on qualifying for Europe completely with a second successive eighth-place finish despite beating Brighton 2-0 and Tottenham will have to settle with contesting the new third-tier Europa Conference League after taking seventh.

It was just the type of wild climax to a domestic season that would have ended with a Super League locking in permanent places for 15 clubs, including the six from England.

without the need for annual qualification.

Leicester, which wasn't invited to join the breakaway, spent more days in the top four than any other team before dropping out after losing to Chelsea in the penultimate round. Ultimately those 242 days counted for nothing after surrendering the lead to Tottenham when a victory would have dislodged Chelsea.

"We are lucky Tottenham did the job for us," Tuchel said.

It was an agonizing conclusion for Leicester, which also missed out on breaking up the established elite last season on the final day. At least Europa League-bound Leicester got to parade a trophy on the pitch after winning its first FA Cup last weekend.

The day's biggest celebrations were in Manchester where City received the Premier League trophy for the fifth time in 10 seasons after signing off in style with a 5-0 win over Everton. The title was won by a 12-point margin that seemed unthinkable in December when Pep Guardiola's side fell five points from the top. A treble will be completed on Saturday if City beats Chelsea in the Champions League final.

India quite ready for Test championship final'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, 24 MAY

India opener Shubman Gill says the team could not have been prepared better for the World Test Championship final against New Zealand but underlines the importance of playing session by session in English conditions.

Gill is undergoing a 14-day quarantine in Mumbai along with the rest of the squad. It will be his first tour of England with the senior team, having made his debut in Australia in December last year. He did not have the best of times in the home series against England and was looking to make amends,

starting with the WTC final against New Zealand from 18 June.

"We did well in Australia. We have been playing well overseas and I feel we can't be better prepared for this final. As an opener, I feel you should be able to play session by session in general," Gill told a television network. "It is very important to play session by session. In England, whenever there is a cloud around, the ball swings more and when the sun is out, it gets easier to bat. It is important to assess those conditions as an opener," he said.

Asked about quarantine protocols, he said: "It is very hard, you are in a room for 14 days, there is not much to do. We are given our workout schedules, we follow that. We try to keep ourselves busy watching movies and spending some time on the i-pad but it is very hard," said Gill, who has played seven Tests so far. Gill has been with the Test squad since 2019 but got his big break with the Boxing Day Test at the Melbourne Cricket Ground in December.

Asked about his time spent in the team and interactions with skipper Virat Kohli and opener partner Rohit Sharma, he added: "Virat bhai tells me to play fearlessly whenever we speak about the game."

However, the episode resur-

Resurfacing of ball-tampering case doesn't help Smith's case: Taylor

AGENCIES

MELBOURNE, 24 MAY

Former Australia skipper Mark Taylor believes the 2018 ball-tampering scandal "won't go away" even and its recent resurfacing will affect Steve Smith's chances of regaining the Test captaincy.

Taylor, who was sacked as skipper and suspended for a year for his role in the plot, has recently expressed his desire to lead Australia again. His captaincy push was also supported by current Test skipper Tim Paine.

However, the episode resur-

faced recently when Cameron Bancroft, who was banned for nine months for his role, stated that whether the Australian bowlers knew of the plan to use a sandpaper on the ball during the Cape Town Test against South Africa was "self-explanatory."

"It doesn't help. No doubt about it, it doesn't help his case, because he like I'm sure most people involved in the game would like this just to go away, when it won't go away," Taylor told Sports Sunday.

"There's no doubt there's a growing momentum around Steve Smith being a potential captain, no doubt about that."

Pat Cummins, Josh Hazlewood, Mitchell Starc and spinner Nathan Lyon, who were all part of the team during the ill-fated series, recently issued a joint statement, calling for an end to "rumour-mongering and innuendo" regarding that episode.

Taylor, too, threw his weight behind the Australian bowling quartet.

"The bleeding obvious to me is they didn't know that it had been doctored. You only have to read what they said during the week," Taylor said.

'Rahul likely to be on England tour'

NEW DELHI, 24 MAY

New Zealand and another one-and-a-half months before the start of the five-Test series against England. The Indian team have done this before too, taking an injured Wridhiman Saha to Australia last year and making him do his rehab with the team," added the source.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India, however, has yet to declare officially whether Rahul or Saha (whose availability for England too was subject to a fitness clearance) is fit to travel. Saha was expected to reach Mumbai but wicketkeeper-batsman KS Bharat had already been put in as a standby.

IANS



The question is, does public opinion really matter?

Japan has an extremely low voter turnout. Combined with the peculiarities of the electoral system, this means that the LDP does not have to win anything close to a majority of eligible voters in order to retain power. At the last general election, while only 25 per cent of eligible voters chose the LDP,

this gave them 60 per cent of the seats in the parliament. Simply put, while public opinion matters, it is not decisive. Some Opposition leaders have come out against the Games, but overall the opposition is weak and divided. The LDP has been in power for 61 of the last 65 years and has a long history of defining public opinion on major domestic issues and still winning re-elections. From Suga's perspective, domestic public opinion is just one factor in a complex equation, which includes contractual obligations to the IOC and, perhaps most importantly, international prestige.

After all, given that the Olympics are almost always a net loss why else would anyone want to host them even in easier times? The 1964 Tokyo Olympics marked the end of Japan's post-War pariah status and its return to the international

fold. The 2008 Beijing Olympics marked the rise of China to a great power status. South Korea's 2018 winter Olympics were a symbolic success when both North and South marched together for the first time under a unified flag.

In the same vein, the 2020 summer Olympics - now the 2021 Games - were supposed to showcase a new, revitalised Japan. Beijing hosts the 2022 Winter Games, which is touted as the first green Olympics and will make Beijing the only city to have hosted both Winter and Summer Games (an event which itself is now embroiled in controversy following the speaker of the US House of Representatives, Nancy Pelosi's, call for a boycott).

In the region fraught with geopolitical tension and rivalry, this kind of international prestige matters, at least to the leadership. Also, legally, the Olympics are not Tokyo's to cancel. The IOC owns the Games and Japan is contractually obliged to host them.

The IOC, not Tokyo, is the sole actor that can end the contract. The IOC depends on the event for its income, and its president, Thomas Bach, has been very clear that the Games will go ahead regardless of the fourth wave. It was the IOC, not Tokyo, who signed a recent memorandum of understanding with Pfizer on a donation of vaccines for athletes.

While Japan could break the contract and unilaterally cancel the Games, the costs would be enormous. Even if cancelled with IOC support, Japan has invested enormous sums of its own money in the Games, much of which are sunk costs. So, what will the Games look like? Assuming they do go ahead, most of the competitors will be vaccinated, but the officials who accompany them may

not be. Spectators, if there are any, will be entirely domestic and likely to face strict social distancing rules. Athletes have been instructed that they will face a variety of restrictions preventing them from interacting with Japanese society more broadly. Still, with thousands of athletes arriving from all over the world, potentially carrying new and unknown variants of the virus, even with everyone on their best behaviour, the Games carry a major risk.

Suga has bet his leadership on a successful Summer Games. Pulling them off without a major outbreak of infection will not only help the LDP over the line in October, but will help ensure he stays at the helm. If the Games fail, it won't be a bronze medal Suga will receive on his way out the door.

Maybe a wooden spoon instead.

From a Western perspective, Japan has enjoyed great success in containing the spread of Covid-19. Like its neighbours South Korea and Taiwan, Japan recognised the airborne nature of the virus early. Immediately and widespread mask-use, aggressive contact-tracing, and an early lockdown of elderly care have all been credited with Japan's success in keeping the death toll relatively low, at

least sums of money. The latest opinion polls are