

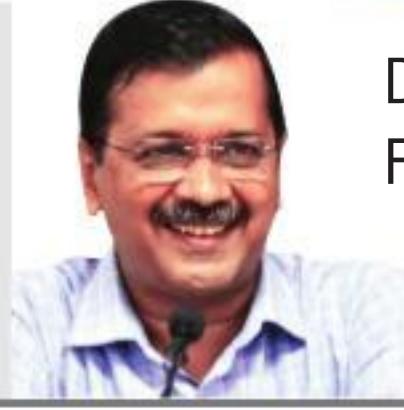
'NO SHIFT OF
COMMITMENT ON
ISRAEL'S SECURITY'

P10



NEPAL PRESIDENT
DISSOLVES PARLIAMENT

P11



DELHI'S VAX CENTRES
FOR 18+ CLOSED AS
STOCKS DRY UP

P2



PEOPLE'S PARLIAMENT, ALWAYS IN SESSION



'NO MATTER WHAT
YOU SAY AH
STILL SUITS ME'

P12

WEATHER

Partly cloudy sky with possibility of thunderstorms. Temperature to be in the range of 37-20 degrees Celsius.

RAINFALL: 18.6mm

RELATIVE HUMIDITY

Max. 100 %	Min. 41 %
TEMPERATURE	
Max: 35.1 °C(5)	Min: 18.0 °C(9)
SUN RISES	SUN SETS
05:26 hrs	19:10 hrs
MOON RISES	MOON SETS
13:54 hrs	01:43 hrs

THUMBNAILS



Health workers carry a patient inside an ambulance to shift her from one ward to another at a Covid hospital in Kolkata on Saturday. IANS

Kidnapped ONCC employee set free by ULFA: Responding to an appeal from Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, the banned ULFA (I) outfit on Saturday freed ONCC employee Ritul Saikia kidnapped by them over a month back. Saikia, abducted on 21 April, was released near the Myanmar border in Nagaland. (P5)

SpiceJet plane lands in Dubai after fuel SOS: A SpiceJet plane ferrying ace pugilist Mary Kom and 30 other members of an Indian boxing contingent from Delhi was forced to hover for around 45 minutes and declared a fuel emergency before it landed safely at the Dubai airport on Saturday. The Directorate General of Civil Aviation is investigating the incident.

MoE calls meet on class 12, entrance exams: The Ministry of Education (MoE) has called a crucial meeting on Sunday to decide on pending Class 12 board exams and subsequent entrance examinations that were postponed due to the second wave of Covid-19. Union Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' said. (P5)

WHO's vaccine passport list snubs Covaxin

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

People who have been fully vaccinated with both doses of Covaxin will not be able to travel internationally for some time as the vaccine produced by Bharat Biotech has not been included in World Health Organization's (WHO) Emergency Use Listing (EUL).

As the world is gradually coming out of the grip of the pandemic, countries are setting out regulations for vaccinated travellers. However, people who have taken both doses of Covaxin will have to wait longer.

The reason being that most countries are only recognising vaccines approved by their own regulator agencies or approved and included in

WHO's Emergency Use Listing (EUL). However, the WHO's latest guidance document shows Bharat Biotech has submitted its Expression of Interest, but that "more information is required".

WHO has said the pre-submission meeting is to be planned in May-June. Thus, it will impact many people, including tourists, visitors and students. However, it will most impact students who aspire to study abroad as their session will start mid-August. These students are desperately looking to book a slot for Covishield while avoiding Covaxin.

"For the past three days, I have been trying to book a slot for Covishield vaccination in Delhi. The only slot I got was in Firozabad, over 200 kilo-

RULED OUT
► As the world is gradually coming out of the grip of the pandemic, countries are setting out regulations for vaccinated travellers.

► However, people who have taken both jabs of Covaxin will have to wait longer.

meters from my home," said Prakruthi Prakash, who is scheduled to travel to Lithuania in August to pursue his Masters degree.

Another worry for Prakash is the increase in duration between two jabs from two months to three months. If he fails to get the jab right now, he would fail to get the second shot by August, which

means he will have to delay his departure. The scenario is no different for visitors too. Shalini Mitra, whose daughter studies in the US, has already taken the first available vaccine - Covaxin. As she visits her daughter once in a year, she is now worried.

"I didn't have any idea about this rule. But I wish I had taken Covishield instead of Covaxin," Shalini said.

Covishield, manufactured by Pune-based Serum Institute of India is on WHO's EUL along with the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine, two AstraZeneca/Oxford Covid-19 vaccines, and Ad26.COV2.S developed by Janssen. The WHO has also granted approval to Moderna's Covid vaccine and China's Sinopharm Covid-19 vaccine.

The government has asked social media companies to immediately remove any content on their platform which mentions or refers to the term 'Indian variant' of coronavirus, in a bid to curb spread of misinformation around Covid-19.

Digital platforms said they have received the latest advisory. On Friday, the IT ministry wrote to all social media platforms emphasising that the World Health Organisation (WHO) has not associated the term "Indian Variant" with the B.1.617 variant of the coronavirus in any of its reports. A notice issued

HUNT FOR LIFE



A huge crowd tries to enter a vaccination centre to receive Covid-19 vaccine dose in Jalandhar on Saturday. ■ AGENCIES

'Covishield 80pc effective against B1.617.2 variant'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

LONDON, 22 MAY

Two doses from either the Oxford/AstraZeneca or the Pfizer vaccine are over 80 per cent effective in preventing infection from the B1.617.2 variant of Covid-19, first discovered in India, a new UK government study has reportedly found.

The Oxford/AstraZeneca two-dose vaccine is also being produced by the Serum Institute of India as Covishield and being administered among the adult population in India to protect against the deadly virus.

The UK findings are said to be based on data from Public Health England (PHE) and have also revealed that the two doses provide 87 per cent protection from the B.1.617 variant, first discovered in Kent region of England and also considered highly

VACCINE EFFICACY



A beneficiary receives the first shot of a Covid vaccine in Srinagar on Saturday.

► The UK findings are said to be based on data from Public Health England (PHE) and have revealed that the two doses of the Oxford/AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine provide 87 per cent protection

B1.617.2 variant had risen by 2,111 over the past week to hit 3,424 cases across the country.

"I think it's clearly growing, which anyone can see from the numbers as they are reported week by week. Dr Jeffrey Barrett, director of Covid-19 genomics at the Sanger Institute, told the BBC this week.

The latest PHE statistics released earlier this week show that case numbers of the

Remove content about 'Indian variant': Centre to digital media

NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

The government has asked social media companies to immediately remove any content on their platform which mentions or refers to the term 'Indian variant' of coronavirus, in a bid to curb spread of misinformation around Covid-19.

Digital platforms said they have received the latest advisory. On Friday, the IT ministry wrote to all social media platforms emphasising that the World Health Organisation (WHO) has not associated the term "Indian Variant" with the B.1.617 variant of the coronavirus in any of its reports. A notice issued

by the IT ministry states that a "false statement" is being circulated online that implies that an 'Indian variant' of coronavirus is spreading across the countries.

The IT ministry said the matter has already been clarified by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare on 12 May. The social media platforms have been asked to "remove all the content that names, refers to, or implies 'Indian variant' of corona virus immediately".

Previously, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology had issued advisories regarding curbing of false news about coronavirus on social media platforms. ■ PTI

'Ramdev defamed scientific medicine': Miffed IMA urges health ministry to take action

SNS & PTI

NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

The Union health ministry should take action against yoga guru Ramdev as he has misled people by making "unlearned" statements against allopathy and defamed scientific medicine, the Indian Medical Association said on Saturday.

Ramdev should be prosecuted under the Epidemic Diseases Act as "untutored" statements are "a threat to the literate society of the country as well as to the poor people falling prey to him", the apex doctors' body said.

Citing a video circulating on social media, the Indian Medical Association (IMA) said Ramdev is seen saying that "allopathy ek aisi stupid aur diwaliya science hai (allopa-

thy is such a stupid science)".

He also says that "lakhs of people have died after taking allopathic medicines", the association said, adding that Ramdev claimed Remdesivir, Favipiravir, and all other drugs, which were approved by the Drugs Controller General of India, have failed in treatment of Covid-19 patients.

"The Union health minister (Harsh Vardhan) who himself is a practicing modern medicine allopathic post-graduate and head of this ministry, should either accept the challenge and accusation of this gentleman and dissolve the modern medical facility or boldly face and prosecute the person for his words of arson on the sovereignty of the country to save people from such unscientific utterances," the IMA said.

Barge tragedy:
26 still missing;
Navy deploys
diving teams



MUMBAI, 22 MAY

With no trace of 15 personnel from barge P305 and 11 from tugboat Varaprada six days after cyclone 'Tauktae' fury rendered the vessels adrift, the Navy on Saturday deployed specialised diving teams to boost the search and rescue operations (SAR) off Mumbai coast.

To augment the ongoing SAR ops for the missing crew of barge P305 and Tug Varaprada, specialised diving teams onboard INS Makar with side-scan sonar and INS Tarasa (photo) sailed out early morning today from Mumbai, a Navy spokesperson tweeted.

Hopes of finding more survivors of the cyclone fury have receded, an official said. Of the 261 personnel who were on barge P305, 186 have been recovered so far. Of the 13 persons on Varaprada, two have been rescued.

All the 440 persons on barges Gal Constructor and Support Station 3 (SS-3) and drillship Sagar Bhushan have been brought ashore to safety. ■ PTI

*It has become an important issue for the people of these areas*

ANIT THAPA, LEADER, GORKHA JAN MUKTI MORCHA (BINOY TAMANG FACTION)

ON THEIR DEMAND FOR ELECTRIC CREMATORIUM FOR DARJEELING AND KURSEONG IN VIEW OF THE COVID DEATHS

No supply forced us to shut vax centres for youths: CM

Kejriwal blames Centre for pause in Covid vaccine rollout for 18-44 age group in Delhi; writes to PM Modi, giving him 4 specific suggestions for boosting procurement & supplies of jabs

SNS & PTI

NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal today said the Covid-19 vaccination centres for those in the 18-44 age group in the national capital have to be closed now due to lack of jabs, even as he wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeking its immediate supply and an increase in the city's vaccine quota.

As the country continues to face an acute shortage of Covid vaccines, Kejriwal gave four specific suggestions to PM Modi, including the proposals for procurement of vaccines from foreign manufacturers and inviting them for production in India.

The CM told an online press conference that all Covid vaccination centres for youths in Delhi will be closed from tomorrow as the city's vaccine stocks have run out.

Delhi requires 80 lakh doses a month to vaccinate people in three months. But it only received 16 lakh doses in May and the Centre has further decreased Delhi's quota in June to 8 lakh doses, Kejriwal said.

So far 50 lakh people have been vaccinated in Delhi. He said 2.5 crore more vaccine doses are required to vaccinate all adults in Delhi.

"With this speed of 8 lakh doses per month, it will take 30 months to vaccinate all the adults alone. By then, no one knows how many waves will arrive and how many deaths will occur," Kejriwal said, urging Modi to raise the quota and



Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal during his online press briefing on Saturday. SNS

supply to the capital immediately.

The CM extended four suggestions to the Modi government to enhance vaccine availability in the country.

The central government should within 24 hours direct all capable vaccine companies in the country to start manufacturing Covaxin as Bharat Biotech has agreed to share its formula, Kejriwal said.

Covid vaccines manufactured abroad should be used in India and the Centre needs to procure vaccines overseas on behalf of states as it will be far more effective in doing it through bulk procurement, the CM said.

Foreign companies should be allowed to manufacture vaccines in India and the Centre should try to get vaccines

from such countries that have stocks of more doses than theirs, Kejriwal further proposed.

The vaccination of maximum number of people in the shortest time is the only way to save Delhi and the country from the third wave of coronavirus, Kejriwal asserted.

"We are arranging beds, oxygen and medicines, but vaccine is the most effective weapon of protection against the fatal virus," he said.

The shortage of vaccines is not just a matter of worry for the governments, he said, adding that common people are also scared due to this crisis.

The scarcity of vaccines has caused a very difficult situation in the country, Kejriwal said. He narrated a call he

had received from an elderly mother who requested vaccine for his son foregoing the jab herself saying he needed it more than her because he had a job to take care of the family.

"I was deeply pained hearing this. There could be nothing more painful than this 'dharma-sankat' (dilemma) before a father, mother, brother or sister - whether to have the vaccine or give it up for a younger member in the family," Kejriwal said.

He said it is a matter of relief that that the speed of coronavirus spread has significantly slowed down in Delhi but cautioned that it did not mean the threat was averted. He emphasised on maintaining all necessary precautions against Covid.

2,260 Covid cases, 182 deaths in Delhi; positivity rate 3.58 pc

SNS & PTI
NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

Delhi today reported 2,260 fresh coronavirus cases, its lowest since 31 March, and 182 Covid-linked fatalities with the positivity rate slipping to 3.58 percent, according to the Delhi government's latest health bulletin.

This is the lowest daily spike in cases recorded since 31 March (1,819 cases) and the first time that the count has gone below the 3,000-mark since 1 April, when 2,790 people tested positive for the viral disease.

Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal however cautioned that falling numbers did not mean the Covid dangers have been stalled.

The number of Covid deaths recorded in the city today dipped to less than 200 for the first time since 18 April.

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

The new fatalities pushed the national capital's Covid toll to 23,013 today.

The city's Covid positivity rate was 5.5 per cent last Thursday and 4.76 per cent on Friday.

Kejriwal told an online briefing that in the past 24 hours, only about 2,200 cases have come up in Delhi, and the infection rate has also declined and come down to about 3.5 per cent. "But this does not mean that the dangers of the coronavirus have been stalled. It persists," he said, adding that "We have to take every measure to save ourselves from the coronavirus."

As the cases registered a marked decline, Delhi health minister Satyendar Jain shared the bulletin copy on Twitter. "These are lowest numbers after 31 March. Still need to take all precautions and follow Covid appropriate behaviour," he said.

Since 19 April, both daily cases and deaths count had been spiralling, with over 28,000 cases and 277 deaths recorded on 20 April; rising to 306 fatalities on 22 April. On 2 May, the city registered a record 407 deaths, according to official data.

Today's cases were detected out of 63,155 tests, including 43,061 RT-PCR tests and 20,094 rapid antigen tests.

The number of Delhi's cumulative cases rose to 14,15,219 while over 13.6 lakh patients have recovered from the virus so far, the bulletin said.

Class 12 board exams: Sisodia interacts with principals, students

PTI
NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

Amid escalating cases of black fungus in the national capital, Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain on Saturday asked people to be watchful and not resort to self-medication, particularly steroids, and said about 15 hospitals in the city are treating mucormycosis patients.

Black fungus or mucormycosis is a fungal infection that affects the nose, eyes, sinuses among patients who are recovering or have recovered from COVID-19.

Interacting with reporters, he also said there was a scarcity of drugs needed for its treatment in Delhi and the rest of the country.

There were 197 cases of black fungus in hospitals across the city till Wednesday night, including non-residents.

"About 8-10 private hospitals are treating black fungus patients, three Delhi government hospitals are there too, and AIIMS and Safdarjung Hospital among the Centre-run facilities. So, about 15-16 hospitals are there for it," he said.

Amid rising cases of black fungus, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday had said dedicated centres were to be set up for the treatment of black fungus cases at three city government-run hospitals -- LNJP Hospital, GTB Hospital and Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital.

"About 8-10 private hospitals are treating black fungus patients, three Delhi government hospitals are there too, and AIIMS and Safdarjung Hospital among the Centre-run facilities. So, about 15-16 hospitals are there for it," he said.

"Earlier, 30-50 cases would get reported in a year but this time, the number has gone up quite big. As it is being found this time a lot in post-COVID

"If such patients are administered steroids, their immunity reduces further, allowing the fungus to thrive," Jain said, adding, steroids should be administered very judiciously after proper clinical examination by a doctor.

"I would urge people to not resort to self-medication, particularly steroids. It has been found that many people are administering steroids at home, without any prescription by doctors, including those who have been discharged from hospitals. I would advise people not to do that," he said.

Also, those who are diabetic and they put on steroids, their sugar level goes up, and that has to be monitored and brought under control through insulin injections, so people must do that too, the minister cautioned.

Mucormycosis or black fungus is more common among people whose immunity has got lowered, due to COVID, diabetes, kidney disease, liver or cardiac disorders, age-related issues, or those on medication for auto-immune diseases like rheumatoid arthritis.

Delhi recorded 3,009 fresh cases of COVID-19 on Friday, and 252 fatalities, while the positivity rate dipped to 4.76 per cent, according to data shared by the health department here.

Delhi Police files FIR against ex-AMU student leader over 'derogatory' tweets

SNS & PTI
NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

Delhi Police has filed a case against former Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) student leader Sharjeel Usmani over his alleged objectionable tweets, police officials today said.

A senior police officer said the case was filed under IPC Section 505 on a complaint by a BJP leader.

On May 20, police in Maharashtra's Jalna district had registered an FIR against the former student leader for allegedly posting some objectionable content on social

media.

Earlier this year, the Pune police had also registered a case against Usmani under IPC section 153 (A) (promoting enmity between different groups on the ground of religion, etc) over his speech made during the Elgar Parishad conclave held there on 30 January.

JOBS & CLASSIFIEDS QUEST

PUBLIC NOTIFICATIONS

GENERAL Notice — My client S.M. Associates of 34, D.H. Road, Kol-60, intends to enter into a Development Agreement with Sharmila Mitra & Sreyasi Chatterjee, for erecting a New Building into the land 4 cottahs 3 chittacks 30 sq ft. at Mouza-Mandalpara, Dag No. 424, Khatian No. 37, K.M.C. Pre. No. 30, Mondal Para Road, P.S.: Behala, Kol-34. If any other person has any claim or interest in the said property or any portion thereof in any manner whatsoever is called upon to meet me with sufficient document / evidence ascertain the rate per MT for

TENDERS

WBTBCL-202105-0001 — West Bengal Text Book Corporation invites sealed offer through e-tender to ascertain the rate for rate contract of procurement of printing and binding materials. For details / any amendment please visit website: www.wbtenders.gov.in & www.wbtextbookcorporation.com

WBTBCL-202105-0002 — West Bengal Text Book Corporation invites sealed offer through e-tender to ascertain the rate for rate contract of procurement of printing and binding materials. For details / any amendment please visit website: www.wbtenders.gov.in & www.wbtextbookcorporation.com

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15 hospitals treating black fungus cases in Delhi: Jain

PTI
NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

Asked if black fungus cases could further escalate, the minister said as a large number of people have tested positive in Delhi, and several of them put on steroids too, "we will have to be very watchful".

"I would urge people to not resort to self-medication, particularly steroids. It has been found that many people are administering steroids at home, without any prescription by doctors, including those who have been discharged from hospitals. I would advise people not to do that," he said.

Also, those who are diabetic and they put on steroids, their sugar level goes up, and that has to be monitored and brought under control through insulin injections, so people must do that too, the minister cautioned.

"So, whenever we get it, we send it to the hospitals where treatment is going on. Also, hospitals have to write to the government for injections requirements, and whatever is sent to us is proportionately divided," Jain said.

"We have spoken to a couple of pharmaceutical companies for this drug, and they had agreed on it. But, the Centre has taken the distribution process under its ambit, and states get as per their quota.

"So, whenever we get it, we send it to the hospitals where treatment is going on. Also, hospitals have to write to the government for injections requirements, and whatever is sent to us is proportionately divided," Jain said.

Earlier this year, the Pune police had also registered a case against Usmani under IPC section 153 (A) (promoting enmity between different groups



Both Sovan and Baishakhi should stop enacting this drama.
They should realise we are fighting a very serious case

ON THE ALLEGATIONS THAT SSKM HOSPITAL AUTHORITIES WERE DETAINING SOVAN CHATTERJEE

TMC SPOKESPERSON KUNAL GHOSH

The Sunday Statesman

NEW DELHI, SUNDAY 23 MAY 2021

03

Over 8L migrant workers left Capital in lockdown's first four weeks: Report

SNS & PTI

NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

Over eight lakh migrant workers left the national capital in the first four weeks of the lockdown imposed to contain the spread of the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, according to a report from the Delhi Transport Department.

Between April 19 and May 14, a total of 8,07,032 migrant workers left Delhi for their home states in buses, out of which 3,79,604 left during the first week of the lockdown itself. The number started declining from thereon, 2,12,448 left in the second week, 1,22,490 in the third week and 92,490 in the fourth week.

"The timely coordination with transport authorities of neighbouring states, especially Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand by the Government of NCT of Delhi has helped about eight lakhs migrant workers to reach their destination without any difficulty," the report stated.

There were 21,879 interstate bus trips during the four



weeks of the lockdown, it added.

Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal had first announced

the imposition of a lockdown in the city from 19 April amid spiralling coronavirus cases and fatalities, which soon

turned into a tsunami.

Although Kejriwal had at first appealed to migrant workers not to leave the national capital claiming that the lockdown will be a brief affair, it was subsequently extended multiple times with the current lockdown scheduled till 24 May morning.

The national capital has been reeling under a brutal second wave of the Covid pandemic sweeping the country, with the infectious, deadly virus killing thousands of people in the city in recent days in the face of severe shortage of hospital beds, ICUs, medical oxygen, and essential medicines. The Covid tsunami completely overwhelmed even Delhi's

crematoriums and cemeteries.

Medical experts have however cited the continuing lockdown as a key factor behind the current dip in its daily cases.

Learning from the past experience of the first surge of coronavirus in Delhi in March 2020 when the city experienced heavy movement of migrant workers to their native places, the Delhi Trans-

port Department this time had depoted an adequate number of buses to facilitate migrant workers to reach their destination.

"Transport department, Govt. of NCT of Delhi prepared a plan for deployment of 500 cluster buses on interstate routes under emergency. There was no complaint of overcharging as the interstate buses were owned and operated by state governments," the report said.

It also mentioned that "train travel" was a preferred mode by migrants in the current lockdown as trains were operational unlike the last year's coronavirus-induced lockdown in March.

During the last year's nationwide lockdown, a large number of migrants were forced to leave Delhi and head to their homes in far-flung districts of various states on foot as it was announced abruptly without giving any notice or time to these workers to prepare. Many of them reportedly died on their way to their distant villages and towns in a tragic fallout of that draconian lockdown.

The Dalai Lama in a mes-

sage on Saturday said, I offer my condolences to his family as well as his many admirers and friends, and I will offer prayers for him.

I deeply admired the way he made 'ahimsa' (non-violence) the core of his tireless campaigns to protect the environment. Having grown up in Garhwal in Uttarakhand, he was not only acutely aware of the need to preserve the rivers, forests and hills of the Himalayan region, but felt it was his mission to draw other people's attention to it, the Dalai Lama said.

The Tibetan religious leader

said on one occasion, Bahuguna had asked him to spread the word about the importance of planting trees and caring for them.

I agreed and when I visit

Ladakh, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh and other places, I urge people to go out of their way to care for the environment, which has ramifications far beyond the regions where they live, he added.

The Dalai Lama said the best tribute to the environmentalists will be to continue to support the movement he began to plant trees protect the earth.

Capital's unprepared health infra forced people to go to hospitals in neighbouring states: HC

PTI

NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

The "deadly and highly infectious" nature of the second wave of COVID-19 and "unpreparedness" of the national capital's health infrastructure forced citizens to visit hospitals in neighbouring states, the Delhi High Court said and rejected the Delhi government's argument that such patients should seek medical relief from the state where they are getting treatment.

"This submission of respondent 1 (Delhi government) has been noted only to be rejected... It is a matter of public knowledge that the deadly, highly infectious nature of the second wave of COVID-19 and the unpreparedness of the health infrastructure in the city had compelled many desperate citizens of the NCT of Delhi, like the petitioner's father, to seek admission/medical attention at hospitals in the neighbouring states," Justice Palli said.

The observation by the high court came during hearing of a Delhi citizen's plea seeking Liposomal Amphotericin B Injection /Amphorex-50, used in treatment of black fungus, for his father who is admitted in a hospital in Gurugram.

The Delhi government,



during the hearing, told the court that since the petitioner's father was not being treated in a hospital in the national capital, he should seek the medicine from the authorities concerned in Haryana.

Rejecting the contention of the Delhi government, the court said that in the instant case the petitioner's father was being treated for COVID-19 for over a month and since the medicine he was seeking would determine recovery of the patient, "there is definite urgency in the matter".

"I am, therefore, of the view that it would be in the interest of justice to direct the respondent 1 to take a compassionate view towards the petitioner's request and, if at all possible, to provide his father with the necessary medicine for his treatment, at least for the next few days," Justice Palli said.

The court also issued notice to the governments of Delhi and Haryana and the Centre, asking for their stand on the plea by May 25, the next date of hearing.

Covid pandemic nothing less than war: HP CM

PTI
SHIMLA, 22 MAY

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur on Saturday flagged off 11 vehicles containing home isolation kits for COVID-19 patients under home isolation.

Calling the pandemic outbreak nothing less than a war, he urged the people to strictly adhere to COVID-19 protocol like wearing masks and maintaining social distancing.

The home isolation kits contain 'chawan prash', 'kaada' protective masks, hand sanitizers, medicines, CM's message, among others.

Around 90 per cent of over 31,000 active cases in the state are in home isolation.

The chief minister also launched 'Himachal COVID



Care' mobile application for helping in the speedy recovery of patients in home isolation.

A 'Sanjeevani Specialist OPD' mobile application was also introduced wherein as many as 70 specialists of AIIMS Bilaspur will provide advice to state residents through tele-medicine ser-

vice.

Speaking on the occasion, Thakur expressed his gratitude to Radha Soami Satsang Beas (RSSB) management for making their complexes available for treating COVID-19 patients not only in the state but the entire country.

He said a 200-bedded dedicated COVID centre has recently been made functional in Mandi. More such centres are being set up in Kangra, Solan and other districts in the Radha Soami Satsang complexes, he said.

Another campaign will be launched on the lines of the Active Case Finding (ACF) programme for identifying COVID-19 patients among MLAs, councillors and panchayat representatives, the CM added.

Sidhu dares Amarinder to prove he wanted to switch sides

PTI
CHANDIGARH, 22 MAY

Congress leader Navjot Singh Sidhu, who has been critical of Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh over the desecration issue, on Saturday challenged him to prove that he had met any leader of other party for switching sides.

The Amritsar MLA also said he had never asked anyone for any post but was offered cabinet berths many times.

In his latest tweet, Sidhu also uploaded a video in which he showed his pictures with Congress president Sonia Gandhi, party leaders Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra.

Sidhu has been critical of CM Amarinder Singh after the Punjab and Haryana High Court last month quashed a probe into the 2015 Kotkapura firing incident, which had taken place during a protest against the desecration of a religious text in Punjab's Faridkot.

The Punjab CM too had slammed Sidhu, calling his outbursts "total indiscipline" and suggesting that he may be leaving for the Aam Aadmi Party.

Prove one meeting that I have had with another party's leader? I have never asked anyone for any post till date. All I seek is Punjab's prosperity!! Was invited & offered cabi-

net berths many times but I did not accept. Now, our esteemed high command has intervened, will wait, said Sidhu in a tweet on Saturday.

Both Amarinder and Sidhu had met over tea in March following reports that the Congress central leadership had been trying to rehabilitate the Amritsar MLA who had resigned as minister after he was divested of the Local Bodies portfolio in 2019.

After the meeting, Amarinder had then expressed confidence that Sidhu would be back in his cabinet.

Sidhu had joined the Congress after leaving the BJP before the 2017 Assembly polls.

Farmer leader blames Centre for not resuming talks over agri laws

PTI
CHANDIGARH, 22 MAY

Farmer leader Balbir Singh Rajewal on Saturday blamed the Union government for not resuming talks, claiming that farmers never denied having a dialogue over the central farm laws.

No meeting has been called by the central government after January 22. The way ahead for talks has been stopped from the government side. We never refused to hold talks, said Rajewal while

addressing the media here. He added a letter has also been written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for resumption of talks.

The Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM), an umbrella body of over 40 protesting farmer unions and which is spearheading the protests, on Friday had written to the prime minister, urging resumption of talks over the three farm laws that they have been agitating against at Delhi borders since November last year.

Several rounds of talks between farmers and the gov-

ernment have failed to break the deadlock over the three central laws.

A government panel had met farmer leaders on January 22. There have been no talks between the two sides since January 26 when the farmers' tractor rally in the national capital turned violent.

Rajewal on Saturday warned the central government that they would hold campaigns as they did during the West Bengal assembly polls against it in Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

He further said a national

convention of all farmers' bodies would be organised to further intensify their struggle.

A date in this regard, however, could not be finalised because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Rajewal, who is the president of the Bhartiya Kisan Union (Rajewal faction), said May 26 would be observed as black day to mark six months of their protest at Delhi borders.

On this day, people should raise black flags at their homes, shops, industries and trac-

tors to protest against the farm laws. In addition to it, effigies of the prime minister will also be burnt on May 26, he said.

Rajewal also accused the BJP-led government in Haryana of trying to defame the ongoing farmers' protest at Delhi borders by claiming that it could spread the COVID-19 infection.

The farmer leader said they have made necessary arrangements for protection against the infection at the protest sites Tikri and Singhu borders.

We are giving 'kadha' (a drink to boost immunity) to each protester. We also distribute Vitamin A, C, D and other medicines, he said.

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION

General public is hereby informed that one unidentified dead body of male Name: Unknown, S/o: Unknown, R/o: Unknown, Age: about 52 Years, Complexion: Shallow, Height: 5'3", Face: Long, Built: Medium, Wearing: White colour banian and cream colour pajama, who was found dead at Faridabad Stand on Ring Road, Kashmere Gate, Delhi. In this regard a case DD No. 33-A u/s 174 Cr PC Dated 14.05.2021 has been registered at P.S. Kashmere Gate, Delhi.

Any person having any information or clue about the above deceased may kindly inform to the undersigned on the following address or telephone nos.

Sd/- SHO
P.S: Kashmere Gate, Delhi
Tel.: 011-23967889
DP/1214/N/2021(UIDB)

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION

General public is hereby informed that this person Name: Unknown, S/o: Unknown, R/o: Unknown, Age: About 45-50 years, Sex: Male, Height: 5 feet 6 inch., Complexion: Shallow, Built: Normal, Face: Round, Wearing: Yellow Colour Kurta and Blue Colour Pant, was found dead at SDM Office, Main GT Road, Delhi on 14.04.2021.

In this regard a DD No. 06-A, dated 14.04.2021 U/s 174 CRPC has been lodged at P.S. Seelampur, Delhi. The Dead Body has been preserved in the Mortuary of G.T.B. Hospital, Delhi for 72 hours for identification.

Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out information about this person but no clue has come to light so far.

Any person having any information or clue about this person may kindly inform to the following.

SHO
P.S. Seelampur, Delhi
Ph.: 011-22562989, 8750870721
DP/796/NE/2021

Suggestions to Follow During Home Quarantine

Sh. Manohar Lal, chief Minister, Haryana

Get Tested for COVID-19, if you experience following symptoms for more than 5 days

- Fever or Cold
- Dry Cough or Sore Throat
- Headache, congested or runny nose
- Fatigue or Body aches
- Difficulty in breathing
- Loss of taste, smell or Appetite

While taking care of yourself

- Get tested for COVID-19
- Consult your doctor, if oxygen level is less than 93 percent
- Get a blood test done after consulting your doctor

Do's

- Stay at Home
- All Family Members to Wear Mask
- Sanitize hands
- Self isolate and Take Rest
- Stay in Well Ventilated Room
- Consume Nutritious Food
- Regularly Monitor Body Temperature and Oxygen Level
- Follow Respiratory Etiquettes
- Do Regular Exercise and Yoga
- Asymptomatic & Mild Covid-19 Patients Anulom-Vilom (Pranayama)
- Steaming
- Gargle
- Drink a Decoction of Ayush Kwath (Cinnamon, Dry Ginger, Black Pepper and Tulsi)
- Consume Turmeric Milk, Drink Warm Water and do Steam inhalation with Mint

Don'ts

- Don't Come in Contact with Anyone
- Don't Throw Used Tissue Paper Anywhere
- Don't Share Food With Anyone
- Don't Touch Eyes, Nose and Mouth
- Caregiver Not to Share items Used by Patient

Adopt Proning Process if Experiencing Difficulty in Breathing

Covid-19 Helpline Number

8558893911 (For Entire State) & 1075 (Except Gurugram & Faridabad)

Information, Public Relations & Languages Department, Haryana www.prharyana.gov.in @Cmohry @DiprHaryana



Congratulations to VD Satheesan who is taking charge as the LoP. Expecting Opp's creative cooperation for the development and social progress of the state

KERALA CHIEF MINISTER PINARAYI VIJAYAN

PRAISING THE 'EXEMPLARY' ASSEMBLY PERFORMANCE OF SATHEESAN

India

THUMBNAILS



The deserted Kalighat Kali Temple market area during a near-complete lockdown in Kolkata on Saturday. SNS

Two held for running fake Covid test centre: The Chandannagar police have arrested two cheats for running a fake Covid-19 test centre. The two are identified as Argha Chatterjee (37) a resident of Nadia Roypara in Chandannagar, working as a temporary helper worker in Howrah municipality and Prosenjit Chakraborty (33) a resident of Shubhash Palli in Chandannagar. Both the accused during police interrogation confessed that they had put up an advertisement on social media offering Covid tests at people's door steps for a payment of Rs 1700. The police from the residence of the accused recovered PPT kit, RT PCR test kits, syringes and various fake documents. SNS

Y+ security for Sisir, Dibyendu Adhikari

KOLKATA, 22 MAY

The Union Home Ministry has allotted Y+ security to Lok Sabha MPs Sisir Kumar Adhikari and Dibyendu Adhikari today in Bengal. The CRPF will provide the security to the father-son duo.

Sisir is the father of BJP leader Suvendu Adhikari while Dibyendu is the latter's brother. Suvendu joined saffron party before the Assembly poll and won from Nandigram constituency defeating TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee.

Sisir was earlier with the Trinamul Congress but he joined the BJP ahead of the Assembly elections.

Earlier this month, the MHA provided central security to all 77 newly elected BJP MLAs in West Bengal. The decision to provide central security cover was in view of potential threats to the legislators, party sources said and amid on-going political violence against BJP workers and their family members. The BJP was hoping to win the state elections but could not deliver on its expectation even though its performance was better if compared to numbers in the last assembly elections, when the party had just three seats.

Under 'Y+' security cover each will get 5 CISF personnel and 6 PSO (personal security officer). Suvendu's security was enhanced from Y+ to Z category. Suvendu is now the Leader of Opposition in the state Assembly. SNS

Bengal reports first black fungus death

Five people currently under treatment for ailment in state

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

KOLKATA, 22 MAY

A 32-year-old woman died of mucormycosis, commonly known as black fungus infection, becoming the first recorded death due to the disease in West Bengal, a state health department official said on Saturday.

Shampa Chakraborty, a resident of the southern part of the city's Haridevpur area, was admitted to the Sambhunath Pandit Hospital with Covid-19. She was later diagnosed with mucormycosis, he said.

The patient, who was highly diabetic and was on insulin, died on Friday.

At present, five patients are undergoing treatment for the disease in the state and all of them are from neighbouring Bihar and Jharkhand, the official said adding, "We are constantly monitoring their condition."

Besides constituting an expert committee to deal with black fungus cases, the state health department has formulated an advisory, titled 'Mucormycosis - if uncared for may turn fatal', for the public. The advisory mentioned warning signs of the disease such as pain and redness around eyes or nose, fever, headache, coughing and shortness of breath along with vomiting blood and 'altered mental status' - general changes in brain function like confusion, amnesia, loss of alertness and disorientation.

Those having health conditions such as uncontrolled diabetes, suppression of immune system by steroids,

prolonged stay in ICU, comorbidities post-transplant and malignancy are prone to be attacked by the fungal disease, it said.

The advisory pointed out that nasal blockade or congestion, one-sided facial pain, numbness, blackish discolouration over bridge of nose or palate, toothache, loosening of teeth, blurred vision along with chest pain and worsening of respiratory symptoms are suspected signs of being infected by mucormycosis.

As the infection is caught by coming in contact with fungal spores in the environment, people have been cautioned against having exposure to decaying bread, fruits and vegetables, besides soil, compost and excreta.

"Wear shoes, long trousers, long sleeve shirts and gloves while handling soil gardening. People must maintain personal hygiene and thorough scrubbing is recommended while bathing," the advisory said. The disease can develop after the fungus enters the skin through a cut, burn or other types of skin trauma.

The advisory said that use of masks is necessary especially

during visits to dusty construction sites.

On the management of the disease, the health department has advised adherence to strict diabetes and diabetic ketoacidosis control as well as reduce steroids. "Discontinue immunomodulating drugs and infuse normal saline before Amphotericin B (an anti-fungal medication) infusion. Patients should be monitored clinically and with radio imaging for response and to detect disease progression," the advisory read.

The blood-glucose level should be monitored post Covid-19 discharge as well as regular examinations to find any warning signs, it stated, besides mentioning judicious usage of steroid and antibiotics.

Three cases in Bankura Three cases of black fungus (mucormycosis) were detected at the Bankura Sammiloni Medical College and Hospital this evening. The patients, according to Dr Partha Pratim Pradhan, principal, BSMCH had tested Covid-19 positive and then developed mucormycosis. Their condition is not stable and one of them is in critical stage."

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Sonali Guha asks to be taken back in Trinamul Congress

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA, 22 MAY



has no such secrets."

Mrs Guha, a former deputy Speaker of the state Assembly, also said that she would also attend the Sardhi ceremony of Mamata Banerjee's brother Asim Banerjee on Tuesday.

The Trinamul Congress fielded Mohan Chandra Naskar in Santacghia, who won the seat by a handsome margin.

The Trinamul Congress' former Bashirhat (South) MLA Dipendu Biswas, who too joined the BJP after being denied a ticket by the party for the Assembly elections, has also declared that he has left his new party. Mr Biswas said: "On Monday, when the CBI arrested three Trinamul leaders including two ministers in a 2015 case, I left the BJP in protest against such arrests as it was a clear vendetta against the Trinamul Congress as the BJP Central BJP leaders have refused to accept the people's mandate."

In a post on Twitter, Mrs Guha stated that she had made a "lifetime mistake by joining BJP".

After she was denied ticket by Trinamul Congress she aired her grievances in the media and met BJP vice-president Mukul Roy, joining the saffron party just before the Assembly elections.

Today she tweeted that in BJP, she was feeling left out and her condition was that of "fish out of water". She also appealed to Mamata Banerjee to forgive her and take her back in the Trinamul Congress, contending that otherwise she would die.

She told reporters today:

"The BJP asked me to campaign during election against Mamata Banerjee and divulge all of Miss Banerjee's secrets that I'm aware of in public rallies. But Mamata Banerjee

Two killed in lightning strikes in Nadia district

KRISHNAGAR, 22 MAY

At least two persons were killed while two others were injured in three separate incidents of lightning strike at Ranaghat in Nadia this afternoon.

While a youth was killed and two others injured in an incident at Sibpur, another person died at Kayetpara under Ranaghat police station limits.

In the first incident, according to police officials, three students were taking shelter at make-shift hut beside a mango grove near Sibpur Ghat or Harabandh when a thunderstorm hit the area.

However, the house was struck by lightning.

The local residents immediately rushed to the site and rescued them.

They brought the victims to the Ranaghat hospital where one of them was declared dead.

The two other victims are struggling for their lives in the hospital.

Police said the dead youth has been identified as Ayan Muhuri (16).

In a separate incident, a youth named Rajib Pyke was killed after he was struck by lightning at Ghoragacha at Kayetpara.

SNS

After 'detention' drama, Sovan discharged from SSKM

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA, 22 MAY



in the state.

Mr Chatterjee himself told reporters at the Woodburn ward: "I'm fine but SSKM authorities are not allowing me to go home though I'm willing to sign risk bond."

Mrs Banerjee said: "Despite our repeated requests to the hospital superintendent to let him go, he was passing the buck to the jail superintendent alleging legal obligations. And the upshot is he was being detained illegally."

The SSKM authorities, however, trashed the charges levelled by Mrs Banerjee. The hospital superintendent said all necessary treatment required for Mr Chatterjee was being administered to him.

Trinamul Congress spokesperson Kunal Ghosh, meanwhile, slammed both Mr Chatterjee and Mrs Banerjee for enacting a 'drama' and asked them not to implicate state government or Trinamul Congress in this case.

Mr Ghosh said, "Sovan Chatterjee should remember that he was not an ordinary patient that he could be released with a risk bond."

Mr Ghosh added: "Both Sovan and Baishakhi should stop enacting this drama. They should realise we are fighting a very serious case and Madan Mitra and Subrata Mukherjee are seriously ill so they were shifted to SSKM hospital and were being treated there."

Port Trust gears up for Yaas

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA, 22 MAY

Taking lessons from last year's cyclone Amphan, the authorities of Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port Trust (SPMT), Kolkata, are taking a host of measures to avoid loss of lives, vessels, and property in view of impending cyclone Yaas that is expected to make landfall next week.

A spokesperson of Kolkata Port said its chairman, Mr Vinod Kumar, convened a virtual meeting with the deputy chairman, CISF commandant, and head of departments of Kolkata Dock System and Haldia Dock Complex where several measures were discussed. Separate control rooms at both Kolkata and Haldia docks manned by senior officers from departments of marine, traffic, and CISF has been made functional. These control rooms have wireless sets for seamless communication.

A statement by the port trust said that before the onset of the cyclone, all port vessels will be taken inside the docks for shelter. No ships will be kept in river anchorages or jetties. Ship masters have been advised to secure their vessels properly.

Further, all stations in charge of four vessel traffic monitoring system (VTMS) stations at

Navy, ICG ships, aircraft on standby

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA, 22 MAY

The Indian Navy today said that its Eastern Naval Command headquarters in coordination with naval officers-in-charge at West Bengal and Odisha, have carried out preparatory activities to combat the effects of cyclone Yaas and is in constant liaison with the state administrations for rendering assistance as required.

As part of the preparedness measures, eight flood relief teams and four diving teams are prepositioned at Odisha and Bengal to augment the existing resources. Four naval ships are on standby with Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) comprising diving and medical teams to render assistance in the most affected areas

along the coast.

Naval aircraft are kept ready at naval air stations INS Dega at Visakhapatnam and INS Rajali near Chennai to undertake aerial survey of the most affected areas, casualty evacuation, and airdrop of relief material as required.

The Coast Guard's Dornier aircraft and ships at sea are initiating the fishermen operating close to the coast and those at sea about likely formation of the cyclonic storm

Dock, Bascule Bridge and Swing Bridge will be secured after shipping is over while all cranes, vessels at dry docks, caissons, electrical installation are to be kept secured. Electric and mechanical MTCE teams, port's fire service and diving units will be kept on stand by.

An adequate number of generator sets will be kept at strategic locations. Hand-held walkie-talkie sets will be made available to key personnel. Additionally, front-line workers will be stationed under the control of unit heads at strategic locations. CISF & PSO patrol vans will be patrolling the port area.

Howrah civic body, dist authorities on their toes

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

HOWRAH, 22 MAY

of administrators in the Howrah Municipal Corporation and state cooperative minister Arup Roy, with officials of power utilities CESCOM and WBSEDCL, irrigation department, KMID divisional fire services officials and top officers of Howrah Police Commissionerate also present.

"The meeting was convened with a focus to strengthen coordination among the various departments," said an

official of the district administration.

The meeting, held at Sarat Sadan, had adopted resolution among others to strengthen coordination among departments and a special thrust was given on opening control rooms by the power utilities as well to attend to distress calls on an urgent basis.

The thrust of the meeting was to delegate powers among the

IMA docs in Siliguri hit out at Ramdev claims

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

SILIGURI, 22 MAY

As the Indian Medical Association demands action from health minister Dr Harsh Vardhan against yoga guru Ramdev for making "vitriolic accusations" on modern medicine, doctors at the Siliguri branch of the IMA have said that the central government must immediately book Baba Ramdev under the Epidemic Diseases Act for spreading misleading and irresponsible information in Covid-19 times.

The entire medical fraternity is giving life to and saving fellow citizens from this dreadful virus. The government must immediately take action against Ramdev for leveling such allegations," senior Physician in Siliguri and a member of the IMA, Dr PD Bhutia, said.

In a video clip that has been circulating on social media, Baba Ramdev has claimed that lakhs of Covid patients have died due to allopathic medicines than shortage of oxygen. According to him, all the modern medicines that doctors have been administering on Covid patients have failed.

"Allopathy ek aisi stupid and diwaliya science hai," Ramdev says in the video.

According to the Vice-President of the IMA, Sushratanagar Branch (Siliguri), Dr Kalyan Khan, people, includ-

ing Baba Ramdev, should stay away from such statements that are meant to gain "futile popularity" and "weaken the fight of the medical community against Covid-19, and, in turn, weaken Mother India."

"People like Ramdev and people who support him are weakening the country's fight against Covid-19... We should stay away from such things beyond science, and in the future, stay with modern medicine in our fight against the pandemic," he said.

In a statement, the IMA has said that India has been facing an unprecedented health care crisis due to the SARS-CoV-2 Pandemic and that the modern medical fraternity, along with the Government of India, is striving hard to save millions of lives from the death tentacles of the virus. "In this incessant battle more than 1200 modern medicine allopathic doctors have sacrificed their life by facing the corona bullet in the chest as they are in the frontlines of the war... In this war-like setting, it has become a passion for people with malicious opportunistic attitude to hit from the back, the medical warriors with their selfish malevolent to boost up their unscrupulous, unprincipled, deceitful, and unpatriotic business fortunes. They pretend to throw mud on Modern Allopathic Medicine, but time and again benefitted through back

door in Modern medicine hospitals when they get the disease," the statement said.

"Taking people for ransom, selling them weird ideology, and winning business by defaming scientific medicine are unpardonable offenses. Such uneducated and unlearned statements are a threat to the literate society of the country as well as to the poor people falling prey to him," it hit back.

According to doctors, it is a well-known fact Baba Ramdev and his associate Balkrishna have been taking modern medical allopathy treatment as and when they fall ill, but that they are now making false and baseless accusations to mislead the public and to sell their "illegal and unapproved drugs."

The IMA has sought suo motu action against the yoga guru and said that it will be forced to resort to democratic means of struggle to propagate the truth to the common man and knock the doors of the judiciary to get due justice."

The Indian Medical Association (Dwarka) has issued a legal notice to Baba Ramdev for "having used highly derogatory and insinuating remarks against the whole community of practicing doctors of modern medical science and the trusted stream of practice of treatment through modern medical science..."

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THUMBNAILS



Family members prepare to cremate a Covid victim at Nigambodh Ghat cremation ground, in New Delhi on Saturday. PTI

Arms recovered in J&K: A joint team of the Army and Special Operations Group of the police during a search operation on Saturday busted a terrorist hideout in the Qasba village in Poonch and recovered a cache of arms and ammunition. The recovery includes an AK-56 rifle, Chinese pistols, AK magazine, 30 bullets of AK rifle and one pistol magazine. PTI

Music director Raam laxman dies: Veteran music director Raam laxman (78), best known for his work on Rajshri Productions' block-buster movies "Maine Pyar Kiya, Hum Apke Hain Koun" died due to a cardiac arrest. He passed away at his residence in Nagpur in Saturday morning, his son Amar said. PTI

Jilani's condition better: The health condition of All India Muslim Personal Law Board Secretary Zafaryab Jilani has improved but he still remains on ventilator, according to a hospital bulletin on his health. He was admitted to a private hospital in Lucknow, on 20 May after he suffered brain haemorrhage. PTI

UP teen death: Two Uttar Pradesh Police constables and a homeguard have been charged with murder of a 17-year-old boy who died in Unnao after being beaten up for "violating" the ongoing Covid curfew in the state, officials said on Saturday. They have been booked under IPC Sec 302 (murder), they said. PTI

Kidnapped ONGC worker set free by ULFA(I) militants

GUWAHATI, 22 MAY

Responding to an appeal from Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, the banned ULFA(I) outfit on Saturday freed ONGC employee Ritu Saikia kidnapped by them over a month back. Saikia, kidnapped on April 21, was released by the United Liberation Front of Assam (Independent) militants near the Myanmar border in Longwa village of Mon district in Nagaland this morning, a top official at Assam Police headquarters said.

The new chief minister of Assam, who paid a visit to the home of the kidnapped employee on May 18 and had made an appeal to the insurgent group to set him free, welcomed the release.

Saikia was released around 7 am on the Myanmar side and he walked around 40 minutes to cross to the Indian side, the Additional DGP-ranked official said.

The liberated ONGC staffer looks hale and hearty, a medical check-up will be done before dropping him at his home in Titabar of Jorhat district in Assam, the senior police official said.

Following the release, Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said that he hopes an era of peace and development is firmly established in the state with the cooperation of one and all.

Barua praised Sarma and said Assam never had such a "dynamic" chief minister for decades.

Three employees of the ONGC were on April 21 kidnapped by ULFA(I) militants from the Lakwa oilfield in Sivasagar district along the Assam-Nagaland border. PTI

TN extends lockdown till 31 May amid crisis

On Friday, Tamil Nadu reported 36,184 new Covid cases and 467 deaths.

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHENNAI, 22 MAY

The lockdown in Tamil Nadu will be extended for one more week from 24 May until May 31 with more stringent restrictions. The announcement was made on Saturday by chief minister MK Stalin after a meeting with the state government's expert panel earlier on Saturday. Tamil Nadu has been in lockdown from May 10. "To control the spread of the pandemic, the ongoing lockdown will be implemented from 24 May for another week without any relaxations," Stalin said in a statement.

The restrictions will come into effect from Monday. Accordingly, for people's benefit shops will remain open till 9 pm on Saturday and from 6 am to 9 pm on Sunday, when otherwise a day-long total shutdown will be in place, he added. Further, inter-district bus services will be operated on Saturday and Sunday. The extension of the lockdown will see no relaxation, with only emergency services allowed to function during the period. Grocery stores will remain shut during the week starting 24 May. Stalin held meetings with



Tamil Nadu CM MK Stalin after inaugurating a 133-bedded care centre, equipped with oxygen support in Chennai on Saturday.

the government-constituted panel of doctors and public health experts and with the multi-party group of MLAs to deliberate on the Covid situation in the state.

While the expert panel recommended an extension of the lockdown with strict restrictions, the multi-party MLA group also supported the panel's recommendations.

A press release issued by the government said that both public and private transport will be operated today and tomorrow to enable those willing to reach their native places.

The release also said during the lockdown pharmacies, traditional medicine shops, veterinary clinics, milk, drinking water are newspaper distribution will be allowed.

The state horticulture department will ensure supply of vegetables and fruits through mobile outlets in the city and elsewhere in association with local bodies, Stalin said, adding only essential departments will function in the state Secretariat—the seat of power—and in districts, while private firms, banks, insurance firms, IT and IES staffs were allowed to work from home.

E-commerce services will be allowed to function from 8 am to 4 pm and takeaways alone will be allowed in restaurants and hotels from 6 to 10 am, 12 noon to 3 pm and 6 pm to 9 pm. E-commerce services like Swiggy, Zomato will also

be allowed to operate during this period. Apart from this, petrol bunks, ATM, transporting agricultural produce, goods vehicles carrying essential commodities will be allowed. People will be allowed to travel from one district to other for valid medical reasons and deaths with E-registration. However, e-registration is not mandatory within the district for medical reasons.

The press and media, continuous process industries, industries manufacturing essential commodities and medical equipment will continue to function as per the SOPs announced earlier.

Continuous process industries and those manufacturing essential commodities and medical equipment will be allowed to function as per existing guidelines.

Calling for public cooperation to the government's efforts to stem the spread of the virus, Stalin urged people to follow due protocol like social distancing and wearing of masks.

On Friday, Tamil Nadu reported 36,184 new Covid cases and 467 deaths. The state had tested 1,74,112 samples on Friday. The number of persons undergoing treatment for Covid as of Friday evening in Tamil Nadu is 2,74,629.

Assure supply of medicines for black fungus: Sonia to PM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

Congress president Sonia Gandhi on Saturday asked Prime Minister Narendra Modi to ensure the assured supply of essential medicines for the treatment of mucormycosis (black fungus) and cost-free care to those affected. In a letter to the prime minister, she also pointed out that the illness is not covered under Ayushman Bharat and most other health insurance plans and sought immediate action on the issue.

Gandhi said the government had asked states to declare mucormycosis an epidemic under the Epidemic Diseases Act.

This would mean that there must be adequate production and assured supply of essential medicines to treat it, and cost-free patient care for those in need of treatment, she added. "I understand that Liposomal Amphotericin-B is absolutely essential for the treatment of Mucormycosis. However, there are reports of its acute scarcity in the market," the Congress chief wrote in the letter. "Further, the illness is not covered in Ayushman Bharat and most other health insurance products. I would request you to kindly take immediate action on this matter to bring relief to the large number of patients being affected by Mucormycosis," she told the Prime Minister. The Con-

gress chief's request comes at a time the country is seeing a large number of cases of black fungus and even some deaths.

phone. White fungus is curable with medicines and does not need injections like Mucormycosis, better known as black fungus, not is it as deadly as the latter, she said.

Both affect people with uncontrolled sugar levels, Sachdeva said, adding that white fungus "is not rare and many people have been cured of it earlier". Meanwhile, MP Medical Education Minister Vishwas Sarang said the state had 650 confirmed cases of black fungus, a rare and dangerous fungal infection being found in people with Covid as well as those who have recovered.

The man was operated on 17 May after his headache and eye pain did not subside, and a test on Friday detected the white fungus infection in his nose, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Medical College's ENT Department head Dr Kavita Sachdeva said over

large number of cases of black fungus and even some deaths.

No consensus yet on Covid vaccine passport issue at WHO level: Govt

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

The WHO is yet to reach a consensus on the vaccine passport issue for allowing international travel to those fully vaccinated against the coronavirus infection, the government said on Saturday and noted that discussions are still on.

So far there's no consensus at the level of WHO over this, Health Ministry Joint Secretary Lav Agarwal said.

"Discussion is still being done if vaccinated people will be allowed. As of now, as per WHO guidelines and guidelines by other countries, people with negative Covid test report is being allowed," he said.

"When we will be able to reach a consensus at the world and WHO level (on vaccine passport issue), then we will take necessary steps, he said responding to a question on reports claiming that people who took Covaxin jabs may not be allowed to travel internationally as the WHO hasn't

NITI Aayog member (Health) VK Paul clarified that lactating women can get vaccinated.

included it in its list of vaccines.

The Health Ministry also dismissed similar reports on its Twitter handle as "misleading and speculative".

Talking about vaccine wastage, Agarwal said Covishield vaccine wastage reduced from 8 percent on March 1 to one percent now while Covaxin wastage decreased from 17 percent to 4 percent in the same period.

NITI Aayog member (Health) VK Paul clarified that lactating women can get vaccinated.

"There were reports that after vaccination mothers should not breastfeed their child for a couple of days but I want to clarify that breastfeeding should not be stopped and should be continued.

"In no situation, there is any reason in that context to halt or discontinue breastfeeding even for an hour," he added.

"When we will be able to reach a consensus at the world and WHO level (on vaccine passport issue), then we will take necessary steps, he said responding to a question on reports claiming that people who took Covaxin jabs may not be allowed to travel internationally as the WHO hasn't

On Covid prevalence among children, Paul said seropositivity rate between 10-17 years is roughly the same as between 30-40 and children can also spread the infection. "Whenever children contract the infection then almost always symptoms are minimal, very mild disease or they are asymptomatic and because it is mild the mortality is very very less in them," he said.

"We have a protocol of disease among children. Protecting children from infection is equally important so that they do not become part of the transmission chain," he said. On black fungus, Paul said the availability of medicines is being increased.

Conditions such as diabetes, prolonged hospital stay and co-morbidities in Covid may increase mucormycosis infection. "Steroids are life-saving. It is a wonder drug but its irrational use can lead to mucormycosis. So this outbreak does not progress and further harm is not caused, that is our responsibility," he added.

Conditions such as diabetes, prolonged hospital stay and co-morbidities in Covid may increase mucormycosis infection. "Steroids are life-saving. It is a wonder drug but its irrational use can lead to mucormycosis. So this outbreak does not progress and further harm is not caused, that is our responsibility," he added.

Opposing the Centre's decision to allow private hospitals to procure vaccines directly from manufacturers Andhra Pradesh chief minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi that it is not only disadvantageous for the poor but also leading to black marketing of vaccines.

Andhra Pradesh is among the first states to announce it will vaccinate its entire population free of cost and has floated global tenders to procure vaccines for its vaccination drive for the age group between 18 and 44.

In his letter to the Prime Minister, Reddy pointed out that since vaccination is for public good ideally it should be given free of cost or at least at affordable rates. Mr Reddy did not mince his words in what appears to be a stern criticism of the Centre's vaccine policy and wrote:

"In a situation where there is not enough supply to cater to even the 45+ age group completely, and no possibility of taking up the free vaccination of the 18-44 years for the next few months, it appears very unreasonable to allow some private sector hospitals to vaccinate people of all age groups at such exorbitant rates. Not only is it disadvantage to the poorer sections of the society but it also creates a situation of black marketing of the vaccine."

Pokhriyal also sought inputs from all the stakeholders - students, parents, teachers and others through social media on Saturday.

A high-level virtual meeting will be convened tomorrow (Sunday) with all states and union territories' education ministers, education secretaries and chairpersons of state examination boards and stakeholders to discuss the proposals for the conduct of exams for Class 12 and entrance examinations for professional courses," he said.

"I recently held a meeting with the state education secretaries in this regard. The consultative process will be further strengthened through the high-level meeting. This virtual meeting will take place at 11.30 am," he added.

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Inflection point

Is there the first glimmer of light at the end of the Covid-19 tunnel or could the light be that of an oncoming train, as it were? There is no denying the near to medium term issues for the world's middle/low-income countries, especially those with a shambolic healthcare infrastructure and poor leadership in pandemic management including India. Yet, the global number of Covid-19 cases and deaths is falling week on week marking a downward trend in the pandemic. Many developed countries including the hardest-hit last year such as the USA, UK, Italy, Spain, and China are beginning to ease restrictions and planning a return to the albeit new normal despite dangers posed by mutant strains and the very real fear of a third wave. Even India, currently worst-hit among the world's larger countries, if it can get its act together regarding vaccine procurement and mass inoculation over the next six months, may be looking at a semblance of normality by end-2021 though it would have come at an unacceptably high cost in human lives. According to GAVI, the global vaccine alliance, a realistic marker for the end of the pandemic may be when a country has no more Covid-19 deaths than it would have from influenza. The criteria the World Health Organization uses to declare pandemics can be complicated. It has to be very careful in declaring the end of a pandemic because premature articulation on this count could result in casualness seeping in which would lead to the virus rebounding.

The reasons for hope are manifold. First and foremost, the vaccine rollout has gathered decent pace globally; for example, in the UK, over 22 million people have had at least one jab, and in the USA this number is closer to 80 million. Some form of lockdown in countries reporting a vicious second wave is in place and there is clear epidemiological evidence to show that restrictions on movement and mingling of people result in sharp downturn in cases. Though the scientific community is divided on the role played by seasonality in coronavirus, as with other respiratory infections, some experts have suggested that vitamin D and sunlight may play a role in reducing Covid-19 transmission. With temperate zone countries coming out of winter and tropical and sub-tropical countries in the middle of summer, the hope is the epidemic will ease in the coming months though this isn't entirely borne out as seen by the rise in cases in Europe last year at the height of summer. Wearing of face masks, physical distancing, and following strict hand hygiene, which have proven to be the holy trinity in reducing the spread of Covid-19, has become part of everyday life in large parts of the globe although the Indian government announced on Friday that at least half the population is still not wearing masks. Last but not least, the number of people who have been infected is rising - described as the virus "running out of bodies" - so herd immunity, while still a far cry, is closer than before.

Japan's opportunity

Japan has over the past 75 years emerged as what many consider the model post-World War II nation-state with institutions not compromised beyond the usual wear-and-tear, excellent delivery systems for goods and services to its citizens, widespread prosperity, and all this without losing the essence of its civilisational ethos. There has been just one structural niggle - its male-only succession rule for the Chrysanthemum Throne - which prevents it from being considered an ideal for a gender-equitable world. As Japan grapples with the sensitive issue of royal succession amid a preponderance of women in the royal family, a panel of experts has begun discussions on addressing the shortage of heirs to the imperial throne. This comes against the backdrop of recent opinion polls which show that four in five Japanese are now comfortable with the idea of women reigning as empresses. Defusing a potential succession crisis has taken on greater urgency due to scarcity of males in the world's oldest monarchy and the abdication, for health reasons, of Emperor Akihito. Emperor Naruhito, who succeeded his father two years ago, has only one child, 19-year-old Princess Aiko. If she marries a non-royal, she would have to leave the imperial family and become an ordinary citizen. Aiko could not become empress (and her son would not become emperor) without a change in the law. That effectively leaves only an heir and a spare, as it were: Naruhito's brother, Crown Prince Fumihito, 55, and his 14-year-old nephew, Prince Hisahito. Technically, Prince Hitachi - Naruhito's 85-year-old uncle - could also become emperor but that is a highly unlikely scenario. Changing the 1947 imperial household law which stipulates that no female member of the family can become monarch, however, will not be easy. While the government-appointed expert panel has promised to discuss a range of options to ensure a stable future for the imperial family, there is pessimism among Japan-watchers on whether they will recommend rocking the boat in a country where the people may have no problem with an empress but the arch-conservatives in the establishment are certainly resistant to change. Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga has said the expert panel is dealing with an issue that "goes to the very foundation of this nation" but he is loath to confront conservatives in his party who insist on maintaining the patrilineal, male-only succession. The betting is that at best the panel could recommend opening up the throne to males born to women who may be permitted to remain in the household even after marrying "commoners". But that would in a sense be the worst possible outcome of the deliberations, even more so than a no-change recommendation, because it would give an official imprimatur to reducing women members of the royal family to the status of medieval consorts.

Support for Taiwan

If China does not care for India's objection to China's presence in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK), why should India care for China's objection to Taiwan's bid for observer status in the World Health Assembly?



Taiwan's tenacious fight for democracy and human development not only within its shores but also outside in spite of Communist China's hostile attitude is awe inspiring. The Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) under the leadership of President Ms Tsai Ing-wen has been putting up a valiant resistance to China's intimidation and threats. In January 2020, President Ms. Tsai Ing-wen secured 57 per cent of popular vote in the election, humbling its rival KMT by a convincing margin. Now it has drawn international media attention because of sabre rattling in the Taiwan Strait at the behest of China and it is lobbying to be invited to the meeting of the World Health Assembly, to be held virtually from 24th May to 1st June to which China is vehemently opposed.

In the recently concluded G-7 meeting in London, the group in a statement supported Taiwan's bid for participation in the World Health Assembly. The statement was warmly received by Taipei. President Tsai Ing-wen thanked the G-7. Last year, six of the WHO's 194 member states had proposed to invite Taiwan as an observer to the WHA meeting. They are Swaziland, Marshall Islands, Nicaragua, Palau, St. Lucia and Paraguay - all of which recognise Taiwan over China. The support for Taiwan is gaining this time. The Foreign Affairs Committee of Slovakia's National Council passed a resolution on 11 May supporting the participation of Taiwan in the World Health Assembly.

Interestingly, it may be recalled that Taiwan, with the active support of China had attended the World Health Assembly as an observer in 2009, marking its first participation in an activity of UN since its withdrawal in 1971 and continued participating in the WHA till 2016. Then why is China opposed to Taiwan's participation in WHA today? Well,

the answer is twofold. First, in 2008 Ma Ying-jeo and Vincent C. Siew of the Kuo-min-tang (KMT), which is favourably inclined towards China, were elected as President and Vice-President of Taiwan and the pro-Beijing KMT regime continued to rule till 2016. The second reason was that when Covid-19 broke out and spread, Taiwan said that it did not get timely information from China which would have helped in taking preventive and preemptive measures. If Taiwan's participation in WHA didn't violate 'one China' policy from 2009 to 2016, how can this principle be violated now if Taiwan is invited to participate in the Assembly? The answer is also very simple. China is not opposed to Taiwan per se being invited to the high table; China is rather opposed to the current regime in Taiwan led by the leader of DPP Ms Tsai Ing-wen because of their advocacy for "Taiwan Independence".

Why should India support Taiwan's bid? India is poised to play a very delicate role in the WHO affairs not only because of its stature, but also because it is an important member of the WHO's decision making process. At a time that relations between China and Taiwan are very frosty, it is a very complex choice for India to be pitted between China, its neighbour, and a democratic country like USA which has become India's strong strategic partner and Taiwan's patron and protector. However, there have been certain discernible shifts in India's overtures to Taiwan shedding inhibitions.

For example, on 3 April, the Ministry of External Affairs offered India's condolences to Taiwan over a major train accident that killed 51 people. The MEA

tweeted, "we are deeply saddened by the loss of so many lives in the railway accident in Taiwan. Our deepest condolences to the families, and our prayers for the early recovery of the injured." The Taiwan foreign ministry thanked India in very thoughtful words "for the expression of sentiment and support and said this genuinely friendly gesture will touch the people and bring Taiwan and India closer in a real and lasting manner." If the words are decoded, the message is loud and clear.

In another very smart diplomatic move India reached out to Paraguay, one of the few countries maintaining diplomatic relations with Taiwan, and not communist China, when India sent 100,000 doses of Covaxin vaccines. Taipei expressed its gratitude for the thoughtful gesture of India. Similarly, Taiwan also sent essential medical supplies to India to help mitigate the pandemic crisis in India.

The first batch of medical supplies consisting of 50 oxygen concentrators and 500 oxygen cylinders landed in New Delhi on a Boeing 747 of China Airlines, the government owned airline of Taiwan.

Taiwan Foreign Minister Joseph Yu said that his country had bought 150 oxygen concentrators and aimed to send them to India to help deal with the massive increase in Covid-19 cases and was also looking at providing further aid.

"Taiwan's deployment of medical supplies is a testament to the close collaboration and partnership across multiple agencies on both sides," said a statement from Taipei Economic and Cultural Centre, Taiwan's Representative Office in India.

India's support for Taiwan's bid to participate in the forthcoming World Health Assembly can be defended on the following grounds. Firstly, it does not violate 'one China' policy, which is not defined anywhere. Secondly, from 2009 to 2016, China itself had supported Taiwan's observer status with the WHO. Thus China's opposition to Taiwan's bid for observer status in WHA is only political, and not normative. Thirdly, Taiwan is also a member of other multilateral organisations like the WTO and APEC. China has acquiesced in Taiwan's membership in these multilateral bodies. Fourthly, as far as India is concerned if China does not care for India's objection to China's presence in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK), why should India care for China's objection to Taiwan's bid for observer status in the WHA?

It may be noted in this connection that a report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs of the sixteenth Lok Sabha under the chairmanship of Dr. Shashi Tharoor had observed in December 2018 that ". It comes as a matter of concern to the Committee that even when India is overly cautious about China's sensitivities while dealing with Taiwan and Tibet, China does not exhibit the same deference while dealing with India's sovereignty concerns, be it in the case of Arunachal Pradesh or that of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK). Given the fact of China's muscular approach of late while dealing with some of the issues pertaining to India, it is difficult for the Committee to be content with India's continuing with its conventionally differential foreign policy towards China. Dealing with China essentially requires a flexible approach. The Committee strongly feel that the Government should contemplate using all options including its relations with Taiwan, as part of such an approach."

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

ASIAN VOICES

International health fund needed to fight pandemics

While the United States and the European Union have expedited their vaccination drive to contain the Covid-19 pandemic, India and South America are struggling to control the second wave of infections due to their slow, even faltering response to the novel coronavirus, especially their failure to vaccinate their respective populations. The new virus variants have put millions of people in different countries, especially in developing nations, at increasing risk.

To prevent the pandemic from causing further harm, there is an urgent need to coordinate international resources to ensure low-to-middle-income countries have access to tests, therapies and vaccines under the framework of COVAX, a global initiative aimed at equitable access to Covid-19 vaccines directed by GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance, the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations and the World Health Organization. Unfortunately, the COVAX initiative faces many hurdles, such as shortage of vaccine supply, a handful of listed vaccine producers, sovereign legal protection against vaccine exports, complexity of patent waiver, restrictions on materials needed to make vaccines, poor logistics and delivery system in low-income countries, and financial constraints. True, with the recent inclusion of Sinopharm vaccines in the emergency use list - along with Pfizer/BioNTech, Oxford/AstraZeneca, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson vaccines - the

CHINADAILY

WHO has more producers to source the vaccines from. Yet the WHO should also urge the US and other rich countries to lift their export restrictions on the vaccines, while those running COVAX should take measures to clear the obstacles so the initiative can become a permanent platform in the post-pandemic world. For example, it could register as a not-for-profit organization and have access to an international health fund, which could be established with the signatory countries as stakeholders. There are quite a few advantages in establishing a global health fund.

First, it can buy out vaccine patents, instead of struggling to get intellectual property waiver from pharmaceutical companies, while complying with the market principle of rewarding vaccine makers to ramp up production and promote further innovations to tackle virus mutations. Second, the fund could be used to streamline vaccine production, boost manufacturing capacity, and strengthen the supply chains and logistics to ensure developing countries get efficacious vaccines. Third, the fund could make up for the de facto absence of public finance in the field of global public health. Until now, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has been the main organization promoting global vaccine distribution. Though praiseworthy, this philanthropic endeavor is far from enough. The pandemic has taught us a bitter lesson: that the world needs a permanent international institution tasked with mobilizing resources to cope with health crises in the future.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

editor@thestatesman.com

The Ray connection

SIR, The connection between a filmmaker and a newspaper is common, but holds a different magnitude when it is between Satyajit Ray and *The Statesman*. From 1948 to 1982, Ray wrote eleven articles for *The Statesman*, full of meaning and with notable seriousness.

"What is Wrong with Indian films?" - the first one - written in 1948 is enough to appreciate the intellect and powers of observation of a then voracious reader-

cum-serious movie goer who would set the standard for Indian films seven years later. These articles can be considered as a "Bible" for any budding film director of India. Like other cosmopolitan elites of Bengal, Ray had a special place for *The Statesman* in his mind. He presented this prestigious newspaper in his films in different situations.

As for example, in "Mahanagar", Arati's husband searches for a job in *The Statesman* classifieds,

where the camera directly catches "The Statesman" logo. Then in "Nayak", where the news is reported in *The Statesman*.

There is also a snobbish critic of films, who was a regular contributor to *The Statesman* and a co-passenger of Nayak Arindam. In "Aranyer Din Ratri", Shekhar set fire to *The Statesman* to delink civilization from forest life. In "Shakha Proshakha" a Statesman correspondent of Anandamohan comes to Anandamohan's house to arrange a news about him.

Truly the link amazes us.

Yours, etc., Bidrohi Roy,
Kolkata, 19 May.

DISSIPATED

SIR, Seven years down the line, the Modi magic seems to have dissipated, made worse by the mishandling of the Covid situation in general and of the vaccination policy in particular.

Even if one ignores flagrant aberrations like the ill-conceived demonetisation fiasco, mishandling of the economy, strident but vacuous nationalism with divisive machinations to destroy our pluralistic social order, emasculation of a fair sec-

tion of the national media, alienation of the custodians of our farm sector, calculated demolition of our democratic institutions and lopsided policies on national priorities, it's certain that the mishandling of the Covid

sures to contain the growing disenchantment will be counterproductive in the long run.

Yours, etc., Bhaskar Roy,
New Delhi, May 19.

UNVACCINATED

SIR, In his virtual meeting with District Magistrates today, the Prime Minister underscored the need for widespread vaccination, among other measures. The district authorities were asked to put in place a wide network ensuring jabs for all. But the ground reality is altogether different.

Being a senior citizen of failing health, I have not been able to get myself vaccinated. My only government health centre functions in an erratic manner. It opens and closes at will, without informing anybody. My health would not permit me to stand in the queue in the wee hours. The result: I am still a very senior citizen without a single dose. Weeks ago, a new rule of depositing copy of Aadhaar Card was introduced. Suddenly, the lockdown began and all activities ceased. I do not know when and how hapless vulnerable citizens will get the chance of vaccination.

Yours, etc., Asok Kumar Dutta,
Birati, Kolkata, 18 May.

GENERIC DRUGS

SIR, I refer to "Dealers want docs to prescribe generic drugs" (*The Statesman*, 18 May). By definition generic drugs should be cheaper than branded products.

It is not always so in the context of the Indian pharmaceutical market. There are thousands of generic substitutes for a popular and well-established branded original product. Drug bans and product recalls are far too common if one were to go by USFDA product recalls list.

If the FDA can list major Indian firms on its recall list for quality standards, one can only imagine the impact of not so well-known generic products.

There are many established Indian branded generics that can be prescribed by doctors with confidence and the assurance that they will benefit the patient both on affordability and quality. Let doctors decide the generic brand the patient deserves; this discretion should not be passed on to the retail pharmacist.

Yours, etc., H N Ramakrishna, Bengaluru, 19 May.



The virus isn't racist, we are

ANDREW SHENG

Is the coronavirus racist? Of course not. Covid-19 and its variants do not discriminate between race, creed or borders. They simply infect everyone indiscriminately, so the only defense is vaccines and social distancing.

But the handling of the pandemic has become intensely political along racial, class and national lines. To debate whether it should be called a China virus or an Indian variant is racist by implication. What matters urgently is how each individual, community or nation handles the pandemic. To distribute to the rich and powerful first before the poor and weak is discriminatory, but that is exactly what has happened in many countries.

The virus transmits through people. Epidemiologists suggest that minimising travel and contacts would slow the transmission. Those who care more about money object to shutting down the economy. Asians reacted more quickly by adopting masks and staying at home. The West cared more about individualism and objected to masks, allowing the pandemic to get out of control. But money and vaccines have begun to bring matters under control, except that if the coronavirus and its variants continue to spread in countries which cannot afford vaccines or can't get enough supplies, no one is safe.

Thus, a microscopic virus has opened up the Pandora's Box of almost all social divisions that were ignored and unaddressed. It is clear that science and technology, as well as competent organisation, plus mass cooperation would be the way to solve the pandemic. But these three factors require trust that everyone should be protected justly.

The record so far shows that those governments which preach democracy, equality and a rules-based order may be practicing something rather different. Why is it that in the United States, Pacific Islanders, Latinos and Black Americans have double the Covid-19 death rate than White and Asian Americans?

Israel is leading in the world vaccination rollout, and yet Palestinians have been slow to get vaccines. The UN Human Rights body has called the Israeli differential treatment of Palestinians "morally and legally unacceptable". Israel has illegally occupied Palestinian territory since the 1967 war, and even in the Holy Month, physically raided the Al Aqsa Mosque, sparking



off the current conflict that has raged on the middle of the pandemic.

This is not an equal fight. More than 200 Palestinians have been killed, including 64 children, versus 12 dead in Israel. More than 58,000 Palestinians in Gaza have been rendered homeless and Israelis have knocked out the only lab in the territory that processes Covid tests. An Arab-Israeli member of the Israeli Parliament has openly called the Israel action in Jerusalem as "ethnic cleansing".

The Israeli government can ignore world opinion because of the United States' strong backing.

The humanitarian crisis in Palestine is beyond a tragedy. But the Israel-Palestinian crises show how science and technology play a role turning a David into a Goliath, switching the roles from victims of the Holocaust to become perpetrators of occupation by might alone.

As geopolitical futurist George Friedman writes about Gaza: Morality and Reality, the moral question is extremely complex because both sides see themselves as victims. In his

geopolitical realistic view, as long as Israel holds the greater military superiority, with the backing of the strongest military power in the United States, the conflict will not be resolved by anyone else.

This point is fully understood by the Israelis, who were scattered and not particularly powerful as a wandering people until 1947. But it was their brains and deep application of science and technology that overcame the Palestinian and Arab numerical superiority.

There are 1-2-3 options for the Israel-Palestine situation. If Israel-occupied territory were to be governed as one country, the demographics would favour the Palestinians with higher birth rates, so this solution was ruled out. Logic suggests that perhaps a two-country solution of a separate Palestine and Israel state would be possible. The rest of the world supports this option, but the Palestinians are divided into the Fatah faction controlling the West Bank and the Hamas controlling Gaza. This creates a three-state possi-

bility. Indeed, the greater the division between its enemies and their supporters, the more secure Israel's position is. This is classic "divide and rule" domination exercised by imperial colonials.

The Egyptian economist Samir Amin summed up this perennial Arab dilemma, commenting on the 2011 Arab Spring. If it succeeds, then the Arab world will break out of the imperialist centre's control. If it fails, then the Arab world will remain in its current status as a submissive periphery, prohibiting its elevation to the rank of an active participant in shaping the world."

Samir's critique of Capitalism in Age of Globalization saw a capitalist centre comprising America, Europe and Japan, controlling a periphery of the rest. This is achieved through five monopolies over technology, financial control, monopoly access to natural resources, media and communications, and weapons of mass destruction. The Israelis understood these perfectly and exploited them to achieve success and survival.

Thus, Israeli devotion to science

and technology, military equipment, media and communications and their lobbying power playing up guilt on the Eurocentric countries, ensures their dominance over Palestinian and Arab opponents.

This is why faith or ideology alone will not control the pandemic, because it is through science and organisational power that domination continues over the weak and oppressed. The Arab world may have physical control over much of the fossil-fuel natural resources, but as long as they remain technologically backward and divided, they will always be participants in shaping the world."

So, the coronavirus is not racist. Guns do not kill people, people kill or dominate other people. Friedman is right. Might decides geopolitical reality. For him and his ilk, morality is for the victim to complain about and the vector to preach. Those who do not learn from history will remain its victims.

The writer, a former Central banker, comments on global affairs from an Asian perspective. The views expressed are his own. Special to ANN.

NOW AND AGAIN Deserted balcony

ADITYA MUKHERJEE

For almost a decade, the balcony had become the gateway to our emotional bonding. Mr Nayyar, our next-door neighbour, shifted to his Delhi flat with wife and three daughters from Kolkata after his retirement from government service in 2010. Avoracious and devout reader, he would spend a couple of hours daily devouring two newspapers in his balcony in the morning while sharing a gamut of thoughts on politics and sports under the sun with me. He worshipped the words he read. Our animated discussion would last for about half an hour during weekdays. On Saturdays and Sundays, the discussion would go on for more than an hour. What I liked about him was his keen insight and perceptive analysis of news and events. Despite our age difference, we were like friends.

However, something strange began to happen in Mr Nayyar's life since last month. After the second wave of the pandemic started battering human lives with ruthless ferocity, he betrayed a troubled countenance seeing that newspapers were awash with morbid details of death and devastation. He was pivoting on his axis with the disagreeable feeling that he could now no longer take life for granted. He was suddenly consumed by the thought of being precariously balanced on the precipice of old age, helpless and vulnerable.

The once effervescent Mr Nayyar sank into a pensive mood, and I could barely hear his deep and resonant voice that used to reverberate through the balcony all these years. He stopped stepping out for fear of being infected. He mostly kept to himself much to the bafflement of his wife and daughters. Mr Nayyar stopped reading the newspapers and lost the zeal to discuss events as was his wont. I also felt disturbed and upset as our daily interactions from our balconies became sporadic and, very soon, petered out. Once I tried to sweet-talk him into starting the old practice of reading and discussing news from the balcony. "I no longer find newspaper reading a healthy activity. It is full of negativity," said Mr Nayyar.

Last week, the 71-year-old Mr Nayyar succumbed to Covid. His sudden death has emotionally battered and beggared the family. One night he complained of breathlessness and was rushed to the hospital. He lost the battle after a week as his chest was completely damaged.

The balcony now wears a sepulchral look; one can feel its silence. The old newspapers, dumped on a plastic chair, flap furiously in the breeze. My mornings will never be the same without Mr Nayyar.

100 YEARS AGO

THE SORROWS OF A FLAT DWELLER

To The Editor Of The Statesman

SIR, - Troops of durwans, sweepers and their kind congregate at the water taps daybreak every morning and sometimes late at night, clattering iron buckets on the ground, shouting at the top of their voices and clearing their lungs and throats in the manner peculiar to the lower class Indian. Frequently they leave the taps open for hours, causing much wastage of water. It ought to be possible to control this kind of thing by supervision. Another source of annoyance to flat dwellers in Calcutta is often the packing godowns, carpenters, and other workshops in the buildings from which proceed at all hours a continuous din of hammering. Usually house proprietors provide in their agreements that such nuisances to residents will not be permitted. Water-pumping engines are another source of delight. They will work for an hour at a time, at intervals, with a continuous hum. Something should be done to reduce the number of these midnight brawlers. X.

DACCY UNIVERSITY

To The Editor Of The Statesman

SIR, - The Statesman, in its issue of May 17 gives currency to a long letter addressed to me by Rai Girish Chandra Nag Bahadur setting forth a number of rumours relating to the staff of the Dacca University. I think it sufficient to say that those rumours are either inaccurate and misleading, or totally without foundation. I trust that when the University is in working order it will, as the Rai Girish Chandra Nag Bahadur himself suggests, prove to the world that it has no interests at heart other than those of making the younger generation of Bengal fit to play their part in life worthily. That has been the sole aim of those connected with the University from the start. The suggested "boycott" is merely a part of an agitation which the majority of students in Bengal have already judged by the use of their own common sense.

P.J. HARTOG,

Vice-Chancellor of the University Of Dacca, Calcutta.

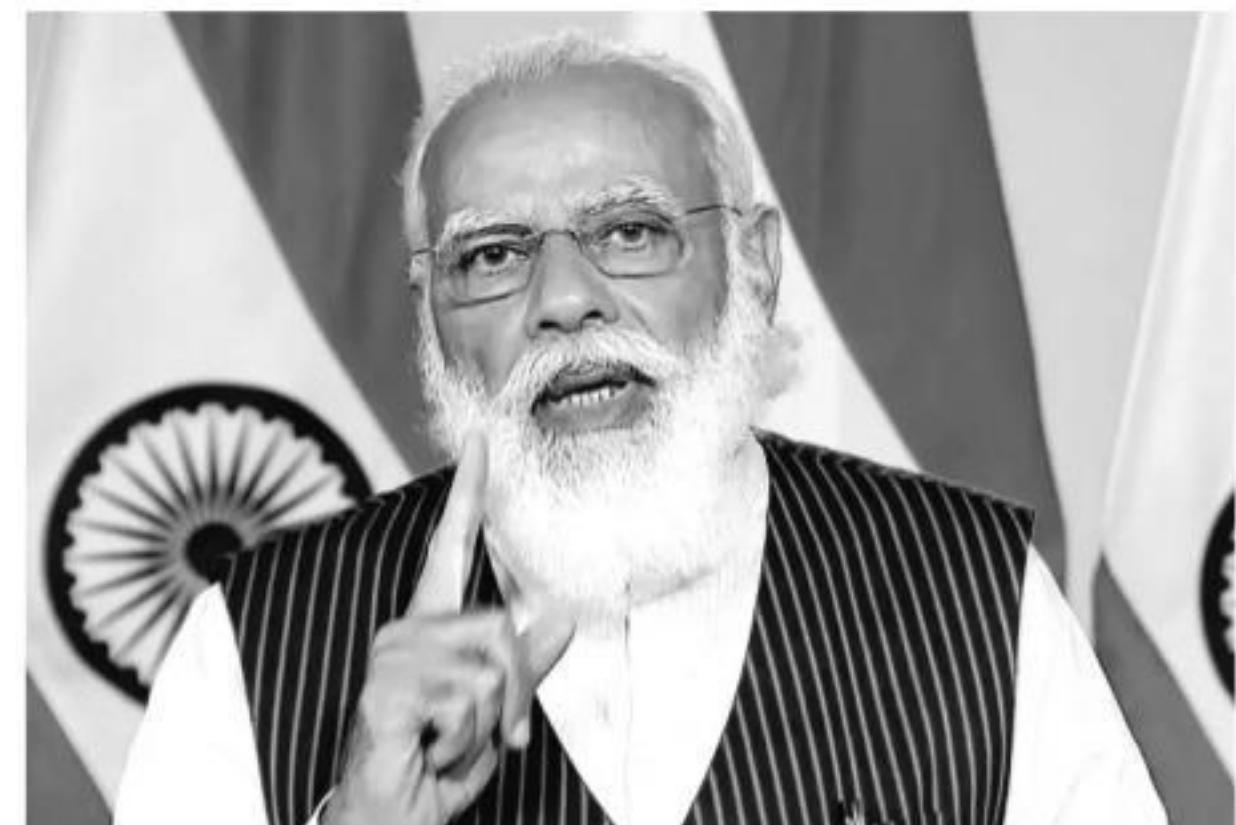
POLITICAL DIARY | KALYANI SHANKAR

Will 2021 be the year of solutions?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government will complete two years of its second term in office on May 30. He will be entering his eighth year as Prime Minister. What does his report card say? The year 2021 was a mix of hits and misses. Modi himself said that the year 2020 was a year of challenge and 2021 will be the year of solutions.

Modi's second term has so far been challenging both in the health sector and the economy. It is only right that the party and the government are preparing for a muted anniversary celebration. However, while the government would propagate the achievements of the Modi government, the BJP would focus on the "Covid seva" and success stories of how the government has fulfilled its campaign promises. They include the scrapping of article 370, the building of the Ram temple, and legislations such as the Triple Talaq in 2019, which have been on the party's core agenda.

Modi focused on the economy as the government entered the second term. New and broad-based reforms in agriculture, banking sector, and the public sector indicated his commitment to boldness. However, for the last two years the country has been going through a health sector crisis facing an unprecedented pandemic. As a consequence, there are job losses and other problems.



Modi's first term focused on articulating a global role for India. But the pandemic is his biggest challenge and economic and political challenges also are there. His critics say that Modi was too quick to declare victory over the pandemic in March. He also prioritised politics over public health by holding huge rallies for state elections as the second wave hit the country unawares. Allowing the Kumbh Mela in Hardwar was another super spreader.

All these after Modi won laurels for his leadership in handling the cri-

sis in 2020. Last year, on the first anniversary of the second term, the Modi government focused on the successful lockdown, the Rs 20 lakh crore economic package and containment of Covid. However, foreign investors are not coming forward anymore as even the global economy is hit. The country might need many lakhs of crores rupees this year also to boost the economy besides servicing the health sector. Almost every sector has been hit because of the pandemic.

Global recovery is a slow process. Hundreds of millions of jobs were lost and the poverty alleviation gains have been wiped out. Trade, tourism, entertainment, sports, and many other sectors that benefited from globalisation have suffered as countries closed borders.

Last year Modi took the people

into confidence, took the chief ministers on board, and even the opposition voices were muted given the pandemic.

There were some miscalculations like the migrant labour crisis but on the whole, the management of Covid during the first wave was competent. This resulted in complacency from both the government and the people by March.

The second wave was much harsher and the country was unprepared to meet the challenge. There was a vaccine crisis, an oxygen crisis, lack of beds, and in short, there was a health management crisis.

The Supreme Court and the High Courts entered the picture as the executive seemed to have failed. Even some state governments moved the courts.

Last year Indian diplomacy used the pandemic to revive Saarc in Covid relief. New Delhi also supplied medicine and equipment to over 150 countries and evacuated over a million Indian and foreign stranded nationals and earned global goodwill. The Modi government also successfully addressed issues like dealing with China's rise, sustaining key strategic partnerships with major powers like

the US, Russia, Japan and in Europe, and deepening the engagement with the immediate neighbours. It also dealt with a tense border stand-off.

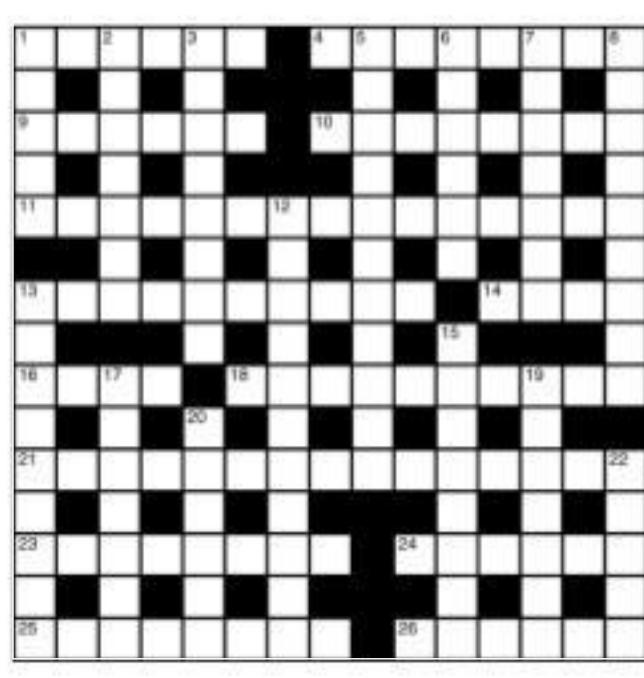
The biggest challenge for Modi personally is to get back his image of a 'doer' abroad. Since 2014, he has constantly interacted with world leaders in politics, industry, academia, and the Non-resident Indian community. The international media projected him as an important global leader. But the second wave since March has undone the achievements. The foreign media, which built him up earlier, is now critical of him on many issues.

Centre-state relations also need some fine-tuning. While the chief ministers supported the Modi government fully last year, come 2021, politics took over and there has been mutual criticism in public because of elections to five states in March-April this year. Centre-state cooperation is important at the time of pandemic as after all it is the states which implement the health schemes.

It has been reported, quoting a survey, that Modi's approval ratings have fallen since February 2021. According to this, the Prime Minister's approval rating last week stood at 63 per cent, his lowest since 2014. But these are not normal times and almost every popular leader is facing the same problem. There is still half of this year ahead and things can improve if the country fights the pandemic united. Unprecedented times require unprecedented measures.

NO 28920

CROSSWORD



SOLUTION FOR 16 MAY

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

ACROSS

- 1 Share of party vote going west? (6)
- 4 Some lass! A man thanks her (8)
- 9 Times covering row – with United missing goal (6)
- 10 Arachnid is on crop unfortunately (8)
- 11 Expert sorts nice ticket for play (6,9)
- 13 Oddly trad like country converse – seriously! (4,6)
- 14 Smear, brutal, unfair – extremely (4)
- 16 Dress is taken back over a rip primarily (4)
- 18 Both sides upset with Panorama? Hard to explain (10)
- 21 Do wrong in lowdown way? (3,4,4,2)
- 23 Was first to go around India certainly not needing to work (8)
- 24 Excellent upright character with article favouring gradual change (6)
- 25 Cross about ultimately bitter Bible parody (8)
- 26 Kinnoch maybe good Labour leader? Electorate not yet sure, for a start (6)

DOWN

- 1 Discourage careful eater, second to quit (5)
- 2 Enthusiastic rally, regularly itch to get involved (7)
- 3 Home let – tenant brings in food (8)
- 5 Islands providing a rest, calm, initially popular with the Spanish in past (11)
- 6 Out-and-out guarantee to be executed? (6)
- 7 Enter four or six in test? Of little importance (7)
- 8 Lacking cover, relative introduces a bizarre rule (2,7)
- 12 As chambermaid might for computer program (11)
- 13 He's up with what's new, distributing top titles (4,5)
- 15 Flab lost exercising in US game? (8)
- 17 Wine selection from claret in Athens (7)
- 19 House island boy, first person to be admitted (7)
- 20 Last stop – overlooking Northern River (6)
- 22 Casks I observed inside port (5)

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

THUMBNAILS

Sundaram Finance Ltd mulls: Sundaram Home Finance, a wholly owned subsidiary of non-banking finance company Sundaram Finance Ltd, is mulling to raise Rs 2,500 crore to fund its growth plans, the company said on Saturday. Sundaram Home Finance has declared its financial performance for the fourth quarter ending March 31, 2021.

Amara Raja: Amara Raja Batteries on Saturday said its consolidated net profit after tax rose by 38 per cent to Rs 189 crore for the fourth quarter ended March 2021 on the back of robust sales across business verticals.

NTPC Mouda helps in water crisis: State-owned power giant NTPC on Saturday said it has helped over 150 villages in and around Mouda tehsil in Maharashtra to overcome water crisis through ground water rejuvenation.

M&M extends warranty: Mahindra & Mahindra on Saturday said it has extended the warranty and service period on its entire range of vehicles till 31 July due to lockdown in several states in the wake of the pandemic. This will be applicable for those customers whose warranty is due to expire between 1 April and 31 May, it said.

Elgi Equipments expects well: Air compressors manufacturer Elgi Equipments Ltd expects to perform "reasonably well" during the current financial year in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, the company said on Saturday. The compressor business performance during the fourth quarter was "commendable" while on a year-on-year basis it saw a "marginally growth" over last year.

Koo Complied new norms: Homegrown microblogging platform Koo on Saturday said it has met the compliance requirements of the new guidelines for digital platforms ahead of the stipulated deadline later this month.

NBCC questions IRP's 'jurisdiction' in Jaypee case

NBCC expressly reserve its right to take recourse if necessary

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

Days after rejection of its bid to buy Jaypee Infratech Ltd (JIL), state-owned NBCC has questioned the jurisdiction of the interim resolution professional in submitting that the offer was non-compliant with the insolvency law and demanded that it should be put to vote.

Asserting that the offer is compliant, NBCC in a letter to JIL's IRP Anuj Jain protesting against the CoC decision and said it might approach appropriate forum of law for recourse if its bid was not considered.

NBCC's bid was rejected in the fourth round of bidding process for JIL and the successful bidder has to complete around 20,000 apartments.

The state-owned company has said the IRP exceeded its jurisdiction and also wrongfully interpreted the laws.

"...by declaring the NBCC plan as non-compliant, you have exceeded the jurisdiction beyond what is laid down by the Supreme Court," NBCC



sha group's offer is scheduled from May 24 to 27.

Against this backdrop, NBCC has written a letter to JIL's IRP Anuj Jain protesting against the CoC decision and said it might approach appropriate forum of law for recourse if its bid was not considered.

NBCC's bid was rejected in the fourth round of bidding process for JIL and the successful bidder has to complete around 20,000 apartments.

The state-owned company has said the IRP exceeded its jurisdiction and also wrongfully interpreted the laws.

"...by declaring the NBCC plan as non-compliant, you have exceeded the jurisdiction beyond what is laid down by the Supreme Court," NBCC

said in the letter to the IRP.

According to the company, the role of the IRP is merely to assist the CoC and not to decide whether the resolution plan does or does not contravene the provisions of law.

Earlier, sources had said that NBCC's offer was declared as non-compliant. The decision was based on the IRP's report, which stated that the offer was non-compliant with certain provisions of the IBC and an order of the Supreme Court, they had said.

As per the IRP's report,

NBCC's proposals to offer NCDs (non-convertible debentures) to dissenting financial creditors for payment of liquidation value and also include

'Guarantee Security Interest' as well as 'Promoter Security Interest' are non-compliant with the provisions of the IBC.

Along with the letter, NBCC has submitted further clarifications through an addendum to address all the issues raised by representatives of banks and homebuyers as members of the CoC.

Stating that it is a listed navratna company and holds high standards of corporate governance, NBCC said it is fully aware of its responsibilities to be compliant with applicable law in its deeds and actions.

"Hence, in pursuance of the clarifications, mitigations and stimulus asked for by the CoC, we have redressed our plan by adequately addressing the reservations raised at the virtual CoC meeting and hence it should be considered for voting by the CoC," the letter said.

NBCC expressly reserve its right to take recourse required, if any, before the appropriate forum of law as

and when necessary, as per the letter.

Further, the company said the creditors have been continuously holding discussions on its resolution plan and they even asked for extra stimulus.

"Towards the conclusion of the CoC meeting, you made a statement that NBCC plan is non-compliant as per applicable law and the Supreme Court judgements and no further opportunity of revision shall be given to NBCC," the company said, adding that such a statement is "not tenable" under the provisions of the IBC.

The public sector firm also said that its offer has not been considered on merit and has been declared as non-compliant, and charged that the move demonstrates the "lack of objectivity" on the IRP's professional dealing.

The public sector firm said its plan provides a specific manner and provision for dealing with dissenting financial creditors to the extent of 34 per cent of the CoC.

Punjab & Sind Bank turns profitable



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 22 MAY

State-run Punjab & Sind Bank turned profitable in the fourth quarter of FY21 after eight consecutive quarters of losses, posting a profit after tax (PAT) of Rs 161 crore on the back of improvement in recoveries and decline in bad loans.

The lender had registered a net loss of Rs 236.3 crore in the year-ago period.

However, for the full year, its loss widened to Rs 2,732.9 crore as against Rs 990.8 crore in FY20.

"The profitability is due to our focussed monitoring and also on account of recoveries. Though it has been challenging times, we were able to make a reasonable amount of recoveries."

"We were also able to arrest slippages to a great extent. This has helped in bringing down the credit costs, which enabled us to register profit," the bank's Managing Director and CEO S Krishnan told reporters.

He further said the bank has taken a number of steps in order to sustain the profitability going ahead.

"We have created a dedicated department at head office which will be monitoring the accounts that are under stress very closely."

"We have formed a task force at zonal offices which will be in touch with customers directly. That way, we will be able to ensure that we are able to arrest the slippages," he noted. The bank has also set up a separate recovery vertical and a stress asset management vertical.

Its net interest margin (NIM) declined to 1.70 per cent from 1.87 per cent. Net interest income (NII) was down 1.79 per cent to Rs 495 crore as against Rs 504 crore in the year-ago period.

The bank's asset quality showed improvement, with gross non-performing assets (GNPAs) declining to 13.76 per cent from 14.18 per cent.

Net NPA also halved to

4.04 per cent during the reporting quarter from 8.03 per cent in the corresponding period of the previous year.

As a result, the provisions and contingencies fell to Rs 4.38 crore in the reported quarter from Rs 817.83 crore in the year-ago period.

Provisions for bad loans were down at Rs 19.93 crore in Q4 FY21 as against Rs 683.80 crore in the year-ago period.

Cash recoveries in the fourth quarter stood at Rs 531.19 crore, while for the full year the figure was Rs 926.57 crore, as per the bank's investor presentation.

The lender upgraded Rs 76.94 crore of loans during the quarter. Fresh slippages during the March 2021 quarter stood at Rs 1,509.66 crore.

Provision Coverage Ratio (PCR) was 82.89 per cent as compared to 66.74 per cent as on March 31, 2020.

Capital adequacy (CAR) increased to 17.06 per cent in March 2021 from 12.76 per cent in March 2020, with Common Equity Tier 1 (CET-1) at 12.05 per cent in March 2021.

Total business of the bank increased by 7.68 per cent to Rs 11,687 crore. Advances grew by 8.39 per cent to Rs 67,811 crore as of March 31, 2021.

During the year, the lender focused on retail, agriculture and MSME advances (RAM segment), which grew by 12.25 per cent, 15.52 per cent and 7.17 per cent, respectively.

Going ahead, Krishnan said, the bank will be focusing on the retail segment.

He also said the bank is expected to post profits in all the four quarters of the current fiscal and the capital infusion done by the government last year would care for growth in FY22.

The bank would not require capital support from the government during the current fiscal. However, he expressed hope that there would be some internal accruals.

Three Axis Bank promoters to be reclassified as public shareholder



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

Private sector Axis Bank on Saturday said three promoters United India Insurance, National Insurance and New India Assurance Company will be re-classified as public category shareholders post requisite regulatory approvals.

The bank has identified the administrator of the Specified Undertaking of the Unit Trust of India (SUUTI), Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC), General Insurance Corporation, New India Assurance Company, National Insurance Company, United India Insurance Company, and Oriental Insurance Co Ltd as the pro-

moters, Axis Bank said in a regulatory filing.

Three promoter entities United India Insurance, National Insurance and New India Assurance Company will be re-classified as public category shareholders post requisite regulatory approvals.

The board at its meetings held this year on February 27, March 26, and April 28 has considered and approved the said requests, subject to the approval of the stock exchanges, statutory/regulatory authorities and the shareholders of the bank, it said.

"The reclassification will be effective post receipt of the aforesaid approvals," Axis Bank said.

In the beginning of this week, the company had resumed partial operations at its three plants at Gurugram

Hero Moto to resume production at all manufacturing plants



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

Two-wheeler market leader Hero MotoCorp on Saturday said it will resume production at all its manufacturing plants in India from coming Monday after temporarily shutting operations due to the coronavirus pandemic.

In the beginning of this week, the company had resumed partial operations at its three plants at Gurugram

and Dharuhera in Haryana and Haridwar in Uttarakhand.

It had halted operations temporarily at all of its six plants in India in a staggered manner for four days from 22 April to 2 May, which was then extended till 16 May.

Hero MotoCorp is "gearing up towards a gradual resumption of operations by starting production at all its manufacturing plants in

India from Monday, May 24", the company said in a statement.

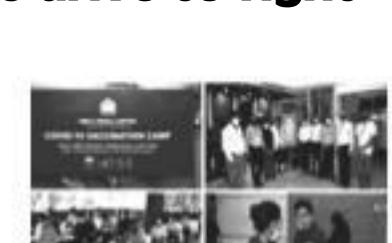
"The other plants of Hero MotoCorp in India Neemrana in Rajasthan, Halol in Gujarat and Chittor in Andhra Pradesh, will also start single shift operations from 24 May," it added.

Production in single shift had already commenced at three of its plants Gurugram and Dharuhera in Haryana and at Haridwar, Uttarakhand from 17 May.

The Global Parts Centre (GPC) at Neemrana will also be operational from May 24, Hero MotoCorp added.

"In addition to producing for the domestic market in India, these plants will also have enhanced focus on catering to the Global Business (GB) markets across the world," the statement said. The company continues to monitor the situation closely and will move to double-shift production gradually, it added.

NBCC vaccinated over 360 employees in its drive to fight against Corona



On May 15, 2021, a COVID Vaccination Drive was organised by NBCC at Corporate Office, New Delhi, for employees and their dependents falling in the age bracket of 18-45 years. Over 360 eligible persons were successfully vaccinated during the drive. In this massive drive, employees as well as their medical dependents from NBCC and subsidiary companies (HSCL and HSCL) were inoculated with "Covishield" first dose of Vaccine. The Departmental Heads, Senior

officers and staff members ensured all the necessary Covid protocols were followed at every step throughout the event. Being a Navratna CPSE, the company is working at the forefront to protect its employees from the consequences of the on-going Pandemic.

NEWSFEED

RMSI Cyclone Model estimates losses of Rs 15,000 crore caused by Cyclone Tauktae

RMSI, a leading global catastrophe risk management consultancy offering solutions for risks associated with natural and man-made hazards, analysed potential wind and flood impact due to Cyclone Tauktae based on the IMD bulletin on May 17, 2021 at 1430 hours IST for wind and 1100 hours IST for flood and storm surge. The cyclone made landfall on the Gujarat coast between Porbandar and Mahuvan, near the Union Territory of Diu on the night of May 17. RMSI applied its India Cyclone Model to generate wind speeds and flood associated with Cyclone Tauktae. Pushpendra Johari, Senior Vice President-Sustainability, RMSI said, "Cyclone Tauktae is a unique cyclone event that has impacted all the western coastal states and UT of India. Though the cyclone effect on Kerala, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Goa was not severe, Gujarat and Diu are badly impacted." Though the cyclone has made landfall, this is not the end of our distress. Recent climate change studies have highlighted the rising sea surface temperature in the Arabian Sea. This will increase the cyclone frequency in these regions. We should improve our preparedness even further to deal with more such events in future," he added.

3rd Batch of NBT's Online Book Publishing Course Concludes

"For publishers, publishing is not merely a profession, but is also a mission," said Prof. Govind Prasad Sharma, Chairman, National Book Trust, India at the valedictory function of NBT's three-month Online Training Course in Book Publishing, organized in collaboration with Atal Bihari Vajpayee Hindi University, Bhopal and was held on a virtual mode from 20 February to 16 May 2021. Prof. Sharma added that publishers play a significant role as messengers, who bring forward the opinion of writers to the society. He further said that during freedom movement publishers played a significant role in promoting revolutionary ideas among people and brought crucial changes, as a result publishing has earned a great reputation. He added that India is among 10 foremost countries in the field of publishing and NBT is a leading publisher in India. Thus, he remarked that NBT promotes publishing as a mission. He also expressed his happiness that even in the current pandemic situation, participants pursued the course with enthusiasm.

NDMC launches a program- NDMC Employees Telecommunication relief and Assistance (NETRA)

In view of current outbreak of second wave of Covid-19 pandemic, New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) Medical Services Department alongwith Information Technology Department has launched a program 'NETRA' to provide Telemedicine / Tele consultations for relief and support to its employees and their families members who get infected with COVID-19 and are under home isolation. The NDMC's telemedicine consultation team members include Dr. Sundeep Kaushik, SMO/Paediatrician/Coordinator, Dr. M. Bora Sr. Medical Officer, Dr. Virender Kumar, Medical Officer, Dr. Sarika Rawal, Anaesthetist, Dr. Seema Ahuja, Anaesthetist, Dr. Jitender Koli, MD (Medicine) / Sr. Medical Officer, Dr. Virat Kunial, Sr. Medical Officer, Dr. Chand Prakash, Paediatrician (Medical Officer), Dr. Kailash Kumar Saini, Medical Officer and Dr. Deepak Gautam, Medical Officer.

NHPC organizes massive covid vaccination camp for Central Power Sector employees & their family members

Following the call for large scale covid vaccination by Hon'ble Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi and as per directions of Shri R.K. Singh, Hon'ble Minister of State (Independent Charge) (Power and New & Renewable Energy) & Minister of State (Skill Development and Entrepreneurship), Government of India, NHPC Limited organizing a two-day vaccination camp at National Power Training Institute (NPTI), Badarpur from 18th to 19th May 2021 in association with Apollo Hospitals, New Delhi for employees (including contract employees and

IndianOil stands strong with its frontline workers Renews medical insurance for its frontline workers

security personnel) and family members (18-44 years) of Ministry of Power, Govt. of India, Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE), Govt. of India and various CPSUs/ organizations under Ministry of Power and MNRE in Delhi / NCR region. The first dose of left out employees and family members between 45 to 60 years was also given. Shri A.K. Singh, CMD, NHPC visited the vaccination venue on the first day and expressed his gratitude to the NHPC team involved in setting up the camp for their dedication during this crisis period.

CSIR-CMERI has developed 'Oxygen Enrichment unit'

Standing strong with its frontline workers, IndianOil has renewed IndianOil Karma Yogi Swasthya Bima Yojana w.e.f 1st May 2021 onwards. The medical insurance will cover more than 3.3 lakh Retail Outlet customer attendants, LPG delivery boys, Tank truck crew, Security Guards at Pipelines across the country etc. These personnel are at the forefront of IndianOil's endeavor to keep the energy supply lines uninterrupted, despite the pandemic. The medical insurance will continue to cover the personnel along with his/her spouse and two children. Claims up to

Twenty one percent Covid deaths reported in 3 weeks in Odisha

Dip in western districts, rise in coastal Odisha

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

BHUBANESWAR, 22 MAY

The increasing number of Covid deaths with 21 percent of fatalities reported in the last three weeks in Odisha and the jump in the number of new positive cases in districts like Angul, Khordha, Cuttack, Balasore along the coastal belt has become a worrying feature for Covid managers.

The shift from western Odisha districts, where the cases are on the decline, to the coastal belt is discernible.

Districts like Khordha (1451 cases), Angul (869 new cases) have witnessed a rapid rise in the number of cases as has been the case in Cuttack (944 cases), Balasore (509

cases) and Puri (473).

Odisha on Saturday registered 26 more deaths due to COVID-19, the second-highest so far in a single day, pushing the toll to 2,456 while the state reported yet another steep daily spike of 11,108 fresh infections at 18.28% Test Positivity Rate (TPR).

The virus has permeated deep in rural areas, even not sparing the far-flung inaccessible pockets inhabited by Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs).

The rise in fatality graph in the second wave has been evidently a worrisome development. As many as 513 have died of virus infections in the past 22 days, which implies that almost 21% of total COVID deaths have been reported in

the last three weeks' period.

However skeptics tend to believe that the government has dabbled in large-scale underreporting of fatalities. The home-isolated COVID deaths mostly in rural areas are evidently missing fatalities that the government has willfully tried to cover up, they alleged.

Instances are galore as people, both symptomatic and asymptomatic, were not tested mostly in rural areas. They died unnoticed and unreported.

Officially over 500 COVID infected people succumbed to the disease in the past 22 days.

Civil society groups in western parts of the state allege that more than 1,000 Covid deaths occurred in rural areas in a con-

servative estimate during the past three weeks.

Official sources however insist that fatalities were being recorded after due audit on whether it is related to Covid or not.

The official sources also stated that the increase in new cases is largely due to the increase in testing. Hopefully, the cases will come down in another week's time, they said.

As many as 1,79,132 virus infections have been reported in the State since 5 May, when the lockdown was enforced in the State.

Since the past 18 days, 10,537 cases are being reported in the State at a daily average.

The State's recovery rate currently stands at 83.49% with as many as 5,67,382 cured of

the disease so far.

Odisha currently has 1,09,639 active cases.

The state has tested 60,759 samples on Friday.

Meanwhile, the spurt in cases in jails goes unabated with 83 inmates of Padampur Sub-Jail in Bargarh district testing positive for COVID-19. Yesterday, the special jail in Bhubaneswar had accounted for 96 positive cases. Around 500 jail inmates have contracted the virus in the ongoing second wave of the pandemic.

In another development, authorities in Ganjam district intervened to stop a marriage after the RT-PCR report of the groom was found to be positive.

Odisha govt announces wage compensation for PVTGs

Covid management strategy for primitive tribes

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

BHUBANESWAR, 22 MAY

Dongria Kondh, a particularly vulnerable tribal group (PVTG), residing in Niyamgiri hill range of Odisha's Rayagada and Kalahandi district.

Besides Bonda and Juang communities, both PVTG groups in Malkangiri and Juanga in Keonjhar, as well as Kadia tribe of Mayurbhanj districts, have got infected, thus becoming a major cause of other of the local adminis-

trations.

The Dongria Kondhs in Niyamgiri hill range of Odisha's Rayagada district are the worst affected among the PVTGs with over 80 members of Dongria Kondh community contracting coronavirus in last one week.

"After much persuasion, the administration had managed to subject the Dongria Kondhs to COVID tests. Initially, they were reluctant for the test. The disturbing trend has emerged from the test reports particularly in Gandili village in Bissam Cuttack block where the test positivity rate stood at 75%. Of the 62 samples tested, as many as 46 were detected positive," said Rayagada district collector, Saroj Kumar Mishra.

The COVID situation is also equally alarming in K. Bondili village where 16 out of 58 samples were detected COVID positive, he added.

Those tested positive are asymptomatic. The local

authorities had a tough time persuading them to remain in home isolation. We could manage to isolate them from the rest of the community members, he concluded.

The district administration in respective districts has been directed to carry out door-to-door surveys in all PVTG habitations. Those who would be engaged in the survey would be provided health kits.

In next five days, we will have a clear picture about level infection among PVTGs," said P Arthanari, Project director of Odisha PVTG Empowerment and Livelihood Improvement.

While 62 tribal groups reside in Odisha, 13 of them are recognised as PVTGs. 2011 Census, Odisha's share of the country's total tribal population was 9% as per the 2011 census. Tribal settlers comprised 22.85% of the State's population.

The 13 PVTG settlers in Odisha are Birhor, Bonda, Chukia Bihuni, Didayi, Juang, Kharia, Dongria Kondh, Kutia Kondh, Lanja Saora, Lodha, Mankidia, Paudi Bhuyan and Saora. Earlier identified as Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs), they were later re-designated as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PTGs) for the purpose of receiving special attention for their all-round development.

FIH awards Kartikeyan Pandian



STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

BHUBANESWAR, 22 MAY

Odisha bureaucrat V Kartikeyan Pandian has been conferred with the Presidents Award by the International Hockey Federation (FIH) in recognition for his contribution to the promotion of hockey in Odisha.

The award was conferred to Mr Pandian during the virtual conference organised by the FIH as part of its 47th Congress.

Lauding Pandian for the award, FIH stated "it's a well-deserved acknowledgement for his outstanding contribution and services to hockey in Odisha".

"Congratulations to Mr. V. Kartikeyan Pandian, IAS, and Private Secretary to Chief Minister, Odisha, on being recognised with the FIH Presidents Award during the 47th FIH Congress today", Hockey India tweeted.

The powerful secretary to the CM is regarded as a workaholic and the driving force behind several mega initiatives in sports as well as Puri Heritage city, Ekamra Kshetra plan, SCB World class institute plan, Mo Sarkar governance model etc.

COVID test report now at a click of mouse

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

BHUBANESWAR, 22 MAY

In an attempt to do away with the inordinate delay in the receipt of COVID test reports, Odisha government launched a Covid-specific test report website to facilitate the timely report submission by the click of the mouse.

Those tested for COVID were knocking at the testing centres to ascertain the testing status of the samples. RT-PCR reports take 36 to 48 hours while RATs took 24 hours.

Delay triggered adverse consequences as positive patients unaware of the test status were mingling in the community emerging as super-spreaders, said a public health expert.

The Health and Family Welfare Department and the E&IT Department jointly launched the initiative so that people are not required to visit the testing centre to get their Covid test report.

Those subjected to sam-

ple test could not obtain his/her test result by visiting

<https://covid19regd.odisha.gov.in/SampCollectionDetails.aspx>. One has to submit the registered mobile number or SRF ID. To ensure privacy of the reports, an OTP will be sent to the registered mobile number, said officials.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik said "Technology has always been a big bulwark during the fight against the pandemic. Hassle-free provision of information regarding Covid test to people will not only smoothen the process but also give a huge relief to the people during these trying times".

He said that the capacity to conduct RT-PCR testing has been enhanced by setting up RT-PCR test centres in several districts.

Test reports can be availed at the 'Mo Seba Kendras' at gram panchayat level, said Electronics & IT Department Secretary, Manoj Kumar Mishra.

Arms smuggling racket busted, kingpin nabbed

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

BHUBANESWAR, 22 MAY

The Special Task Force (STF) of Crime Branch police on Saturday busted an arms smuggling racket with the arrest of the kingpin of the gang in Bhubaneswar.

The arms smuggler identified as Sanjay Kumar Sahoo of Cuttack district was intercepted in a joint initiative of STF and Bhubaneswar commissionerate police.

The arms recovered from the possession of Sahoo, who had a history of crime, included 9 mm automatic pistol, a revolver, two SBML brand guns and ammunition.

It is suspected that the arrested accused used to supply illegal arms to gangsters and lawbreakers in the state. His suspected nexus with notorious crime syndicates in the state is being thoroughly investigated, stated DIG Pankaj.

Focus on Covid health facilities, O2 supply as cyclone 'Yaas' stares at Odisha

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

BHUBANESWAR, 22 MAY

As the impending cyclone Yaas is likely to reach northern Odisha coast by the evening of May 26, Odisha government initiated measures on a war footing to ensure the safety of COVID-19 patients, hospitals and oxygen generation plants.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik held a meeting to review the preparedness while Special Relief Commissioner P K Jena held a series of meetings and DG Fire Services M Akshay visited districts today make advance arrangements for relief and rescue operations.

It's definitely a challenge to meet with the impending cyclone amid the upsurge of COVID-19 infections. All the preparatory measures that are currently underway are in strict conformity of pandemic protocol.

While the smooth evacuation of people residing in low-lying areas to safer places and readying shelters lies in the list of priorities, the safety of ded-

icated Covid healthcare facilities and uninterrupted supply of life-saving medical oxygen also lies on the top of government agenda, said Jena.

The strategy has been chalked out to stop possible disruption of the functioning of COVID hospitals and Covid care centres in the event cyclone strikes, he said.

All fishermen who were on a voyage have returned, he said.

The Indian Navy, Coast Guard is also on alert.

The power backup setup is being put in place to meet with the possible electricity disruption.

Seventeen teams of NDRE, 20 battalions of ODRFA, 150 teams of fire service personnel are in readiness. Drinking water, dry food and other essentials are being stocked by district authorities at cyclone shelters.

Reports from districts however said that people, particularly women were apprehensive of shifting to cyclone shelters fearing virus infection

Odia DC Fire Services, M. Akhaya, along with the SPs and senior Fire & Police officials reviewed the cyclone preparedness of the personnel and availability of required equipments at Kendrapada and Jagatsinghpur districts. **SMS**

Revive it to produce vaccines and drugs at shortest possible time

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

BHUBANESWAR, 22 MAY

Liquidation of ODCL 'shocking', says Srikanta Jena

Revive it to produce vaccines and drugs at shortest possible time

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

BHUBANESWAR, 22 MAY

Rope in a strategic partner for manufacturing drugs and vaccines at the shortest possible time as the entire infrastructure is in place.

ODCL was established by the Janata Party government in 1977 with the main objective of production of essential drugs at an affordable price for people of Odisha and other eastern states. Late Biju Patnaik and Rabindra Ray were both cabinet ministers in that government also

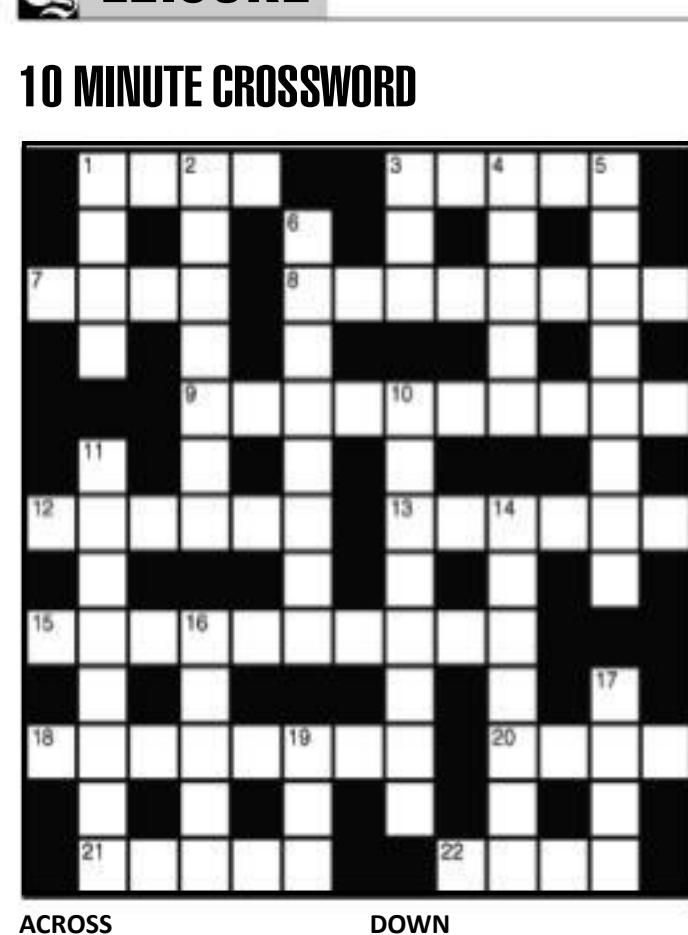
gave its consent, he said. The land value, machinery and assets will be around Rs 200 crore, stated Jena.

It was a profit-making unit till its closure in December 2020. It had become a debt-free company after the erstwhile UPA government had infused funds.

ODCL was established by the Janata Party government in 1977 with the main objective of production of essential drugs at an affordable price for people of Odisha and other eastern states. Late Biju Patnaik and Rabindra Ray were both cabinet ministers in that government also

LEISURE

10 MINUTE CROSSWORD



SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD

CROSS

1 Femur, for example (4)

3 Separate (5)

7 Ink stain (4)

8 African animal (8)

9 Gateway grating (10)

12 Arctic plain (6)

13 Flower part (6)

15 Hostile (10)

18 Spar on the front of a vessel (8)

20 Slightly open (4)

21 Secret rendezvous (5)

22 Ladies' fingers (4)

DOWN

1 Properly (7)

2 Jotter (7)

3 Simple tune (3)

4 Smithy's block (5)

5 Very great (8)

6 A legitimate target (4,4)

11 Renegade (8)

14 Soaring songbird (7)

16 Out of practice (5)

17 Festive occasion (4)

19 Rodent (3)

BEETLE BAILEY/Mort Walker



RED EYE/Bill Yates & Mel Casson



DADDY DAZE/John Kovaleski





Continuing to wear masks and observing social distancing is essential. We must take care

GERMAN CHANCELLOR ANGELA MERKEL

URGING GERMANS TO BEHAVE RESPONSIBLY AS LARGE PARTS OF THE COUNTRY RELAXED PANDEMIC RESTRICTIONS

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	9°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



Britain's Prince William meets representatives from Spartan FC who helped distribute local food parcels, during a visit to Spartans FC's Ainslie Park Stadium in Edinburgh on Saturday. AP

Amsterdam stabbing: One person was killed and four were injured in a stabbing late Friday night in Amsterdam and police said they arrested a suspect nearby. In a statement early Saturday, police said the investigating team has no direct indication of terrorist motive. AP

Minneapolis shootings: A shooting in downtown Minneapolis killed two people and wounded eight others, police said early Saturday. The one person shot included five men and five women, the police department said in a series of tweets. AP

Epstein guards to skirt jail time in deal with prosecutors

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON, 22 MAY

The two Bureau of Prisons workers tasked with guarding Jeffrey Epstein the night he killed himself in a New York jail have admitted they falsified records, but they will skirt any time behind bars under a deal with federal prosecutors, authorities said on Friday.

The prison workers, Tova Noel and Michael Thomas, were accused of sleeping instead of monitoring Epstein the night he took his own life in August 2019.

They were charged with lying on prison records to make it seem as though they had made required checks on the financier before he was found in his cell August 10. New York City's medical examiner ruled Epstein's death a suicide.

As part of the deal with prosecutors, they will enter into a deferred prosecution agreement with the Justice Department and will serve no time behind bars, according to a letter from federal prosecutors that was filed in court papers Friday. Noel and Thomas would instead be subjected to supervised release, would be required to complete 100 hours of com-

Egyptian mediators hold talks to firm up Israel-Hamas truce

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken will visit Israel and Palestinian Authority next week

ASSOCIATED PRESS
GAZA, 22 MAY

Egyptian mediators held talks Saturday to firm up an Israel-Hamas cease-fire as Palestinians in the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip began to assess the damage from 11 days of intense Israeli bombardment. A 130-truck convoy carrying urgently needed aid was headed to Gaza.

Saturday marked the first full day of a truce that ended the fourth Israel-Hamas war in just over a decade. In the fighting, Israel unleashed hundreds of airstrikes against militant targets in Gaza, while Hamas and other militants fired more than 4,000 rockets toward Israel. More than 250 people were killed, the vast majority of them Palestinians.

Gaza City's busiest commercial area, Omar al-Mukhtar Street, was covered in debris, smashed cars and twisted metal after a 13-floor building in its center was flattened in an Israeli airstrike. Merchandise was covered in soot and strewn inside smashed stores and on the pavement. Municipal workers removed broken glass and twisted metal from streets and sidewalks.

"We really didn't expect this amount of damage," said Ashour Subeih, who sells baby clothes. "We thought the strike was a bit further from us. But as you can see not an area of the shop is intact. Having been in business for one year, Subeih estimated his losses were double what he has made so far."

Both Israel and Hamas have claimed victory. There was a widespread expectation that



(Left) A family passes the rubble from a building destroyed in an air-strike in Gaza City. (Right) People salvage valuable items from inside the severely damaged Al-Jawhara building in Gaza City. AP

the cease-fire would stick for now, but that another round of fighting at some point seems inevitable. Underlying issues remain unresolved, including an Israeli-Egyptian border blockade, now in its 14th year, that is choking Gaza's more than 2 million residents and a refusal by the Islamic militant Hamas to disarm.

The war has further sidelined Hamas' main political rival, the internationally-backed Palestinian Authority, which oversees autonomous enclaves in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. It appeared that Hamas increasingly positioned itself as a defender of Jerusalem in Palestinian public opinion.

On Friday, hours after the cease-fire took effect, thousands of Palestinians in the Al-Aqsa compound chanted against Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and his fellow government. Dogs of the Palestinian Authority, out, out," they shouted, and "The people want the president to leave. It was an unpreced-

ted display of anger against Abbas. The conflict also brought to the surface deep frustration among Palestinians, whether in the occupied West Bank, Gaza or within Israel, over the status quo, with the Israeli-Palestinian peace process all but abandoned for years.

Despite his weakened status, Abbas will be the point of contact for any renewed US diplomacy, since Israel and the West, including the United States, consider Hamas a terrorist organisation.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken is to meet with Abbas and Israeli leaders when he visits in the coming week. Abbas is expected to raise demands that any Gaza reconstruction plans go through the Palestinian Authority to avoid strengthening Hamas.

Meanwhile, two teams of Egyptian mediators are in Israel and the Palestinian territories to continue talks on firming up a cease-fire deal and securing a long-term



calm, an Egyptian diplomat said Saturday.

The diplomat said discussions include implementing agreed-on measures in Gaza and Jerusalem, including ways to prevent practices that led to the latest fighting. The official did not elaborate.

He was apparently referring to violence at the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the planned eviction of Palestinian families from the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood in east Jerusalem. The diplomat spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss behind-the-scenes deliberations.

Separately, Egypt said it would send a 130-truck convoy carrying humanitarian aid and medical supplies to Gaza. The convoy is expected to enter Gaza on Saturday.

The bombardment struck a blow to the already decrepit infrastructure in the small coastal territory, home to more than 2 million Palestinians. It flattened high-rises and houses, tore up roads

and wrecked water systems. At least 30 health facilities were damaged, forcing a halt to coronavirus testing in the territory.

The Gaza Health Ministry says at least 243 Palestinians were killed, including 66 children, with 1,910 people wounded. It does not differentiate between fighters and civilians.

Twelve people were killed in Israel, all but one of them civilians, including a 5-year-old boy and 16-year-old girl.

Israel has accused Hamas and the smaller militant group of Islamic Jihad of hiding the actual number of fighters killed in the war.

Prime Minister Netanyahu said Friday that more than 200 militants were killed, including 25 senior commanders.

Islamic Jihad on Saturday gave a first account of deaths within its ranks, saying 19 of its commanders and fighters were killed, including the head of the rocket unit in northern Gaza.

No shift in commitment to security of Israel: Biden

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON, 22 MAY

US President Joe Biden has said that there is no shift in the commitment of his administration towards the security of Israel but insisted on a two-state solution that includes a state for Palestinians remains the only answer to that conflict.

Biden's comment comes a day after a ceasefire was announced between Israel and Hamas negotiated by Egypt following a 11-day war that caused a lot of casualties and infrastructure damage in Gaza.

There is no shift in my commitment to the security of Israel, period, Biden told reporters at a joint news conference along with the visiting South Korean President Moon Jae-In.

"No shift, not at all, but I tell you what there is a shift in. The shift is that we still need a two-state solution. It is the only answer, the only answer.

What I'm convinced of is that we can now move, as I did even before I was able to negotiate - well, I shouldn't -- before the ceasefire was negotiated", he said.

Biden said his administration is going to make sure that the US is going to provide for security in the West Bank. We renewed the security commitment, as well as economic commitment to the people on the West Bank, he said.

In his call with the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Biden said he indicated to the Israelis it was very important that they stop in Jerusalem this inter communal fighting that is by extremes on both sides.

It has to end. I'm pre-

pared to put together and attempt to put together a major package with other nations who share our view to rebuild the homes and without providing Hamas the opportunity to rebuild their weapons systems, rebuild the Gaza. They need to help, and I'm committed to get that done, he said.

Responding to a question on the shift in position of several of his Democratic party lawmakers, Biden asserted that his party still supports Israel. Let's get something straight here. Until the region says unequivocally, they acknowledge the right of Israel to exist as an independent Jewish state, there will be no peace, Biden said.

Biden hoped that Netanyahu would abide by his commitment of ceasefire.

"I'm praying this ceasefire will hold. I take Bibi Netanyahu when he gives me his word; I take him at his word. He's never broken his word to me", he said.

"What I've made clear is that it is essential. It's essential that the Palestinians on the West Bank be secure; that Abbas be recognised as the leader of the Palestinian people, which he is; Hamas is a terrorist organisation, we've recognised that", Biden added.

"But that doesn't mean we should not be in Gaza, rebuilding Gaza for all those innocent people who in fact have been hurt and had collateral damage, including loss of homes and a whole range of other things. As well as insisting that Israeli citizens, whether they be Arab or Jew, are treated equally, Israeli citizens. That was what was going on in Jerusalem. That has to come to an end", said US President Joe Biden.

Biden won't allow Justice Dept. to seize reporters' records

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON, 22 MAY

President Joe Biden says he won't allow the Department of Justice to seize journalists' phone records and emails, calling the practice wrong in a significant departure from his predecessor.

Absolutely, positively, it's wrong. It's simply, simply wrong, he told a reporter at the White House.

His comments come as CNN reported on Thursday that the Trump administration Justice Department secretly obtained the 2017 phone records of one of their correspondents, the latest revelation of an apparent leak investigation aimed at identifying a journalist's sources that was launched during the last administration.

The Washington Post also disclosed that the Justice Department had last year seized phone records belonging to journalists who covered Russia investigation.

When asked if Biden would prevent his Justice Department from seeking reporters' phone records, Biden responded: I won't let that happen. His comments, contradicted those made earlier by White House Press secretary Jen Psaki.

Epstein's death was a major embarrassment for the federal Bureau of Prisons and highlighted major security and staffing issues within the agency. It revealed the jail was suffering from problems including chronic staffing shortages that lead to mandatory overtime for guards day after day and other staff being pressed into service as correctional officers.

IMF proposes USD 50 bn global vaccination plan

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON, 22 MAY

The International Monetary Fund has proposed a USD 50 billion global vaccination plan that would cover at least 40 per cent of the global population by the end of 2021 and at least 60 per cent by the first half of 2022.

With strong and coordinated action now with little in terms of financing relative to the outsized benefit the world can durably exit this unprecedented health and economic crisis, IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said in her address to the G20 Health Summit.

For some time, we have been warning of dangerous divergence of economic fortunes. It will only worsen as the gap widens between wealthy countries that have access to vaccines and poor countries that do not, she said.

IMF said building on the work of the WHO, World Bank, Gavi, African Union and others, has proposed targets, estimates financing requirements, and lays out pragmatic action, which has three broad elements.

First, vaccinating at least 40 per cent of the global population by end-2021 and at least 60 per cent by the first half of 2022. To do so requires additional upfront grants to COVAX, donating surplus doses and free cross-border

flows of raw materials and finished vaccines, she said.

Second, insuring against downside risks such as new variants that may necessitate booster shots. This means investing in additional vaccine production capacity by one billion doses, scaling up genomic surveillance and supply-chain surveillance, and contingency plans to handle virus mutations or supply shocks.

Third, managing the interim period where vaccine supply is limited with widespread testing and tracing, therapeutic and public health measures, and, at the same time, ramping up preparations for vaccine deployment together with any approved dose-stretching strategies.

The proposal would cost around USD 50 billion in a combination of grants, national government resources and concessional financing, Georgieva said. We envisage grant financing of at least USD 35 billion. G20 governments have already identified as important to address the USD 22 billion grant funding gap noted by the ACT-Accelerator, she said.

Our proposal estimates this needs to be topped up by an additional USD 13 billion in grant contributions. The remainder of the overall financing plan around USD 15 billion could come from national governments, said the IMF Managing Director.

New vibe at White House: Hugs are in; masks are out

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON, 22 MAY

A smiling crowd of unmasked people filling the largest room in the White House. A visiting head of state welcomed with pomp, circumstance and handshakes. A 94-year-old Medal of Honor recipient receiving a joyous hug from Vice President Kamala Harris. The White House is springing back to life.

Thanks to growing availability of the coronavirus vaccine and a recent relaxation of federal guidance on masks and distancing, the Biden administration is embracing the look and feel of pre-pandemic days on Pennsylvania Avenue. More West Wing staffers are turning up there for work and more reporters will be doing so as well, as the White House spreads the message that a return to normal is possible with vaccinations.

There are lingering concerns about safety and mixed messaging the same contradictions and confusions that are popping up across a nation that is gingerly re-opening. But the images of reopened, relaxed White House stand in striking contrast to the days when it was the site of several Covid-19 outbreaks last year, a sign of just how far the pandemic has begun to recede in the United States.

"We're back," White House press secretary Jen Psaki declared at Friday's daily briefing. I can confirm we're a warm and fuzzy crew and we like to hug around here. The changes within the White House over the past week were swift and sweeping. Hugs were in, masks were (mostly) out. There was no need to stand six feet apart. And no one seemed to enjoy the shift more than Biden, the most back-slapping and tactile of politicians.

The President had been happy to announce the relaxed mask guidance when he appeared in the Rose Garden on May 13 without a mask, just hours after the CDC said those who are fully vaccinated don't need to wear masks in most settings. That cheerfulness carried over this past week into a

series of larger public events that would have been out of bounds earlier in Biden's presidency. For the second straight day, the White House on Friday opened the East Room - the executive mansion's largest room - to scores of outside guests. Smiling broadly, Biden awarded the Medal of Honor for the first time as commander in chief, giving it to 94-year-old retired Col. Ralph Puckett Jr. for acts of bravery during the Korean War some 70 years ago.

The White House timed Friday's ceremony to coincide with the visit of South Korea's President, Moon Jae-in, who joined Biden at the event before their policy meetings. Both world leaders repeatedly clasped Puckett's hands and crowded in for a photo with the war hero's extended family.

Food, shelter, beatings: Border city divided over migrants

ASSOCIATED PRESS

CEUTA (SPAIN), 22 MAY

Residents of Spain's multi-ethnic city of Ceuta are used to being in the news every time the fragile alliance between Spain and Morocco shakes up.

For many Ceutis, "locals are known, that comes with being a speck of a European nation in North Africa. The city is culturally closely intertwined with Morocco, with Muslims making over 40 per cent of its population, but also separated from it by high perimeter fences that set apart the two extremes of poverty and prosperity. But when relations hit a two-decade low this week over Spain's help to one of Morocco's top enemies, Ceutis confronted the sudden arrival of thousands of

African migrants with sympathy, concern and in some cases hostility.

In one neighborhood, Muslim women, moved by the plight of young Moroccan men, gathered in a traditional house to sort out and distribute donated clothes. They also cooked food and offered migrants sleeping in the streets a place to shower.

The women said the migrants could be their children and that their plight brought memories of past times when the migrant flow was in the opposite direction. I remember my mother telling me they were migrating too, people didn't have anything to eat and were going to Morocco, said 75-year-old Aisha Ali Mohammed, who was among those sorting through

garments. Now they are migrating here. Dozens of migrants gathered for respite outside of Nawal Ben Chalout's family home,



Tibet has been a part of China since ancient times. The Chinese nation must always maintain this

STATING THAT CHINA WILL UPHOLD THE LEADERSHIP OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY IN TIBET TO FURTHER ITS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

THUMBNAILS



Buddhist devotees decorate a shrine as a Sri Lankan army soldier stands guard near a check point in Colombo, Sri Lanka on Saturday AP

Sri Lanka halts trains, buses to curb virus: Sri Lanka halted passenger trains and buses for four days as authorities imposed a fresh travel ban across the country, in its latest efforts to curb the escalating number of Covid-19 infections and deaths. The ban is effective from Friday night until Tuesday morning. However, it will not apply to those engaged in essential services such as the health, food and power sectors.

ROYAL OUTING



(From left), Captain Angus Essenhigh, Britain's Queen Elizabeth II and Commodore Steve Moorhouse stand, during a visit to HMS Queen Elizabeth at HM Naval Base, ahead of the ship's maiden deployment, in Portsmouth, England on Saturday. HMS Queen Elizabeth will be leading a 28-week deployment to the Far East that Prime Minister Boris Johnson has insisted is not confrontational towards China. AP

3 killed, 27 injured in series of earthquakes in China

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BEIJING, 22 MAY

At least 3 people were killed and 27 others injured after a series of earthquakes that jolted Yangtze River Autonomous County in China's Yunnan Province on Friday, local authorities said.

The quake was felt in all 12 counties and cities of the Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture, with Yangtze being the worst hit, Yangtze, the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC) chief of the prefecture, said. Two deaths were reported.

ed in Yangtze county and one in Yongding County.

Three people were severely injured and 24 others had minor injuries, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

About 72,317 residents in 20,192 households were affected by the quakes.

Four earthquakes over 5.0-magnitude jolted Yangtze from 9 p.m. to 11 p.m. (Beijing Time), according to the China Earthquake Networks Centre. The region has recorded 166 aftershocks as of 2 a.m.

Rescue forces have been dispatched to the quake zone, and rescue efforts are underway. However, no casualties have been reported after a 7.4-magnitude earthquake jolted northwest China's Qinghai Province Saturday.

Xinhua quoted local authorities. The quake struck Maduo County of Golog Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in the province at 2:04 am. Saturday Beijing Time, according to the China Earthquake Networks Centre (CENC).

The tremor was felt strongly by residents in the provincial capital city of Xining, which is 385 km away from the

county seat of Maduo.

The epicentre was monitored at 34.59 degrees north latitude and 98.34 degrees east longitude. The quake struck at a depth of 17 km.

So far there have been no reports of casualties and house collapses with normal operation of power and communication networks, local officials reported. However, highway sections and bridges have seen collapses in the quake-hit area, making vehicles impassable. Well-equipped rescue forces have been dispatched to the quake zone.

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China's first Mars rover steps out to explore red planet

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BEIJING, 22 MAY

China's first Mars rover on Saturday drove down from its landing platform to the Martian surface to start exploring the surface of the red planet.

The six-wheeled solar-powered rover named Zhurong, resembling a blue butterfly and with a mass of 240 kg, slowly trundled off a ramp on the lander to hit the red, sandy soil of Mars, starting its journey to explore the fourth planet from the Sun, the China National Space Administration (CNSA) said.

China's Tianwen-1 mission, consisting of an orbiter, a lander and a rover, was launched on 23 July, 2020.

The lander carrying the rover touched down in the southern part of Utopia Planitia, a vast plain on the northern hemisphere of Mars, on 25 May. Chinese spacecraft landed on Mars three months after the successful landing of the US space agency NASA's Perseverance rover which is busy exploring the red planet's surface with a helicopter hovering around.

With an expected lifespan of at least 90 Martian days (about three months on the Earth), Zhurong will record the Martian landscape with high-resolution three-dimensional images, analyse the mate-



rial composition of the planet's surface, detect its subsurface structure and magnetic field, search for traces of water, ice and observe the surrounding meteorological environment, Xinhua news agency reported.

It carries various scientific instruments, including terrain camera, multi-spectral camera, subsurface exploration radar, surface-composition detector, magnetic-field detector and meteorology monitor.

The orbiter, with a design life of one Martian year (about 687 days on the Earth), will relay communications for the rover while conducting its own scientific detection operations.

Compared with China's lunar rover Yutu (Jade Rabbit), Zhurong has a similar speed of about 200 meters per hour, but the height of the obstacles it can surmount increased from 20 cm to 30 cm. It can climb slopes up to 20 degrees. Zhurong's six wheels are independently driven, according

to its designers. The active suspension system of the rover could help it to get out of trouble by moving like an inchworm on the complicated Martian surface with both loose sandy soil and densely distributed rocks, said Jia Yang, deputy chief designer of the Tianwen-1 probe from the China Academy of Space Technology.

Zhurong can also walk sideways like a crab. Each of its six wheels can turn in any direction, which could be used for avoiding obstacles and climbing slopes.

They need to be rotatable to follow the Sun, said Geng Yan, an official at the Lunar Exploration and Space Program Center of the CNSA.

Zhurong's solar panels were specially designed to adapt to the sunlight on Mars, which has a spectrum different from that on the Earth's orbit, Geng said.

Mars is notorious for its sand storms, and the dust could reduce the efficiency of power generation. The specially processed solar panels make it difficult for dust to accumulate, Geng said.

Return of Iraqis seen as easing threat from Syria camp

ASSOCIATED PRESS
SHADDADI (SYRIA), 22 MAY

The Iraqi government for the first time is expected to bring home about 100 Iraqi families from a sprawling camp in Syria next week, a move that US officials see as a hopeful sign in a long-frustrated effort to repatriate thousands from the camp, known as a breeding ground for young insurgents.

On an unannounced visit to Syria on Friday, the top US general for the Middle East, Marine Gen. Frank McKenzie, expressed optimism that the transfer from the al-Hol camp will happen. He has repeatedly warned that the youth in the camps are being radicalised and will become the next generation of dangerous militants.

"It would be the first step in many such repatriations, and I think that's going to be the key to bringing down the population in the al-Hol camp, and indeed in other camps across the region," McKenzie told reporters traveling with him to Syria, where he met with troops and commanders.

"Nations need to bring back their citizens, repatriate them, reintegrate them, deradicalise them when necessary and make them productive elements of society."

A senior US official said the transfer of people from the camp in northeast Syria is one of a number of issues the US and Iraqi governments are dis-

cussing as they work out a roadmap for future diplomatic and military relations.

It came up during meetings on Thursday, when McKenzie made an unannounced stop in Baghdad. The official spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations.

The al-Hol camp is home to as many as 70,000 people - mostly women and children - who have been displaced by the civil war in Syria and the battle against the Islamic State group. As many as half are Iraqis. About 10,000 foreigners are housed in a secure annex, and many in the camp remain die-hard IS supporters.

Many countries have refused to repatriate their citizens who were among those from around the world who came to join IS after the extremists declared their so-called caliphate in 2014. The group's physical hold on territory was ended in 2017, but many countries balk at repa-

trating their citizens, fearing their links to IS.

In late March, the main US-backed Kurdish-led force in northeast Syria conducted a five-day sweep inside al-Hol that was assisted by US forces. At least 125 suspects were arrested.

Since then, McKenzie said

Friday, security has gotten better at the camp. But, he added, security has no real impact on the radicalization of the youth there. "That's what concerns me," he said, as he stood at a base in northeast Syria, not far from the Turkish border. "The ability of ISIS to reach out, touch these young people and turn them - in a way that unless we can find a way to take it back it's going to make us pay a price down the road."

As McKenzie crisscrossed eastern Syria, stopping at four US outposts, his message was short and direct - US forces remain in Syria to fight the remnants of IS, so the militants can't regroup. Pockets of IS are still active, particularly west of the Euphrates River in vast stretches of ungoverned territory that are controlled by the Syrian government led by President Bashar Assad.

Out there and in the camps, the underlying conditions of poverty and sectarianism that gave rise to IS still exist, said British Brig. Gen. Richard Bell, the deputy commanding general for the coalition

fight against IS in Iraq and Syria, who traveled with McKenzie.

McKenzie said it was important to keep the pressure on the Islamic State group, "because ISIS still has an aspirational goal to attack the United States homeland. We want to prevent that from happening."

As he spoke, a row of M-2 Bradley fighting vehicles were lined up behind him - a reminder of clashes US forces had last year with Russian troops in the north. At the time, McKenzie requested, and got, more troops and armored vehicles to deter what the US said was Russian aggression against patrols by US and Syrian Democratic Forces.

But he said they also represented America's continued commitment to the mission in Syria, to assist the SDF in the battle against IS.

"Look at the Bradleys behind me, look at the base that we're sitting in right now," McKenzie said. "I think it's a pretty strong testament to our commitment. But when asked how long US troops will stay, he quickly says it is up to President Joe Biden.

Biden has already ordered a full withdrawal from Afghanistan, but so far has said little about the closest 1,000 US troops in Syria and the roughly 2,500 in Iraq. America's presence in Syria is part of a global posture review now being done by the Pentagon.

Nepal Prez dissolves Parl, announces mid-term polls

Bhandari's announcement came after PM Oli recommended the dissolution of the 275-member House following an emergency meet

Nepal Opp to take political, legal steps against Parl dissolution

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KATHMANDU, 22 MAY

Nepal President Bidya Devi Bhandari on Saturday dissolved the House of Representatives and announced mid-term polls on 12 and 13 November after she determined that both embattled Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli and the Opposition alliance were not in a position to form a government.

Bhandari's announcement came after PM Oli recommended the dissolution of the 275-member House following an emergency midnight Cabinet meeting.

A press statement issued by the Office of the President said the Parliament was dissolved and dates of mid-term polls were announced in line with Article 76(7) of the Constitution of Nepal.

The council of ministers has recommended conducting the first phase of the poll on 12 November and the second phase on 19 November.

The move followed a notice from the Office of the President which said that it could appoint neither KP Sharma Oli, the incumbent prime minister, nor Sher Bahadur Deuba, Nepali Congress president, to form a new government.

Oli was the first to declare that he had the support of 153 lawmakers of the House of Representatives, a day after recommending to the president

at the end of a meeting called to discuss the matter, the Opposition leaders expressed their commitment to unitarily defend the constitutional rights of Nepali citizens achieved at the end of years of political struggle.

They appealed to all political and civil forces to condemn and stand against the Oli-Bhandari duo's regressive, autocratic intentions.

The Himalayan Times reported.

They condemned their move as "unconstitutional, undemocratic and arbitrary."

The statement was signed by Nepali Congress President

Sher Bahadur Deuba, CPN-Maoist Centre Chair Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda, CPN-UML leader Madhav Kumar Nepal, Chairperson of Janata Samajbadi Party-Nepal Upendra Yadav and Vice-Chair of the Rastriya Janamorcha Durga Paudel.

The Opposition alliance is devising a strategy to approach the Supreme Court with all its lawmakers on Sunday demanding to scrap the President's decision.

The NC said that President Bhandari and Prime Minister Oli had forgotten their morale and acted unconstitutionally.

Shekhar Koirala, senior Nepali Congress leader, termed the late development as unconstitutional.

Oli's move to dissolve the House sparked protests from a large section of the NCP led by its rival Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda.

In February, the apex court reinstated the dissolved House, in a setback to Oli who was preparing for snap polls.

Biden, South Korea's Moon 'deeply concerned' about North

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON, MAY 22

President Joe Biden on Friday said he and South Korean President Moon Jae-in remain deeply concerned about the situation with North Korea, and announced he will deploy a new special envoy to the region to help refocus efforts on pressing Pyongyang to abandon its nuclear weapons program.

Moon, meanwhile, welcomed America's return to the world stage and said both leaders pledged to work closely toward denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

Biden said he was dispatching career diplomat Sung Kim, who previously served as ambassador to South Korea, to serve as the special envoy to the region.

Moon said the move by Biden reflects the firm commitment of the US for exploring diplomacy and its readiness for dialogue with North Korea. Moon came to Washington seeking renewed diplomatic urgency by the US on curbing North Korea's nuclear program, even as the White House signaled that it is taking a longer view on the issue.

High on Biden's list for the meeting as well: coordination in vaccine distribution, climate change and regional security.

Biden said, as he highlighted the two countries' long history of shared sacrifice. Moon said the world is welcoming America's return, an oblique reference to former President Donald Trump's attempts to disengage on some aspects of American diplomacy.

The White House announced last month that it had completed a review of North Korea policy and Biden would veer from the strategies of his two most recent predecessors, rejecting both Trump's deeply personal effort to win over North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and Barack Obama's more hands-off approach.

But the administration has yet to detail what its third-way effort to try to prod the North to abandon its nuclear program will look like.

Moon started his day at the White House complex by meeting with Vice President Kamala Harris and top Biden advisers.

fight against IS in Iraq and Syria, who traveled with McKenzie.

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COME WHAT MAY

The Tokyo Olympics will go ahead even if the city is in an emergency because of the coronavirus, John Coates (photo, left), vice-president of the International Olympic Committee, has said, under-scoring the challenges facing organisers of the pandemic-hit Games. There are just nine weeks until the Games get under way.

For more updates

www.thestatesman.com

THUMBNAILS

FIH elections: Incumbent Narinder Batra of India was on Saturday re-elected as the International Hockey Federation (FIH) President for a second term after beating Marc Coudron of Belgium by a slender margin of just two votes during the world body's virtual 47th Congress.



Show must go on: International Olympic Committee chief Thomas Bach on Saturday asserted that the Tokyo Olympics will go on as scheduled despite opposition from the majority of Japanese population amid the raging COVID-19 pandemic.

The goal anyone would walk miles to see

PULAKESH MUKHOPADHYAY



SHORT POINT

One report on Liverpool goalkeeper Alisson Becker's (in photo, left) dramatically headed, last-gasp match-winner off a corner kick against West Brom said that his coach, Jurgen Klopp (in photo, right), had been left speechless in the technical area.

Another had him - Klopp, not Becker - saying that it had been a world-class goal. That would have been reflective of emotions recollected in tranquility, if it was available, but the gaffer had gone palpably wide of the mark with his comment. The German might not have got it all right.

Europe, at least sometimes, does not. Its beliefs, practices, grooming and assessments are utilitarian. Which is why, after the 1966 World Cup, at least some

inside it instinctively picked Gordon Banks, football's Mr Consistent, over Russia's Lev Yashin, whose goalkeeping was an art in itself, with all its intelligence, dared devilry, flamboyance and, of course, sheer visual appeal. England had won the tournament, after all. And Becker,

mind you, is a Brazilian. Might not have stood a chance despite having wowed the world.

Even before the Big Noise, he was big enough, in terms of both playing skills and takings. But that goal was a moment destined forever to be frozen in time. If he had never managed to pull

it off earlier, news agencies said that Becker had no story of another Liverpudlian goalie to live up to. It was the incredible becoming reality. It was, in essence, an out-of-this-world goal.

Now, when the celebrations have ebbed, well might we ask ourselves how many Europeans would make it to a list - if a comprehensive one were possible - of goalkeepers who have widened the horizons of the athletic, photogenic way of self-expression on a football field with 20 players kicking the ball - when not taking throw-ins and only two, one at either end of the pitch, allowed to handle the ball within a specified area of it.

The names that spring instantly to the lips today are Jose Chilavert, Rene Higuita, Jorge Campos, Becker - and not

one of them is a European. It is not as if football's so-called first continent does not know - or has not seen - them but just as South American art football - until hyper-commercialisation brought it down to a level Brazilians will never forget - at its best is beyond Europe, the goalkeeper as a striker may be a concept unlikely to accord well with its way of doing things.

Crucially, each of the quartet just named has been brilliant in terms of their shot-stopping eligibility which, though, hardly exercised any restrictive influence on their overall performance. Some of them have, of course, been up to mind-numbingly adventurous forays upfield, at times only to fail, but never perhaps to regret being cheeky or sassy. If a footballer is not thumbing his nose at convention, who will?

SABSE MALAIDAAR
SABSE DAMDAAR

Don't need to change just because my batting is criticised, says Saha

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KOLKATA, 22 MAY

It is a circle of life that has got Wriddhiman Saha (in photo) back in the same position that he was a decade ago when he came to England in 2011 as skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni's understudy.

The story was the same in 2014 with Saha dutifully carrying the bats, towels and drinks for his team-mates. In 2021, he is only expected to watch Rishabh Pant's explosive batting from the dressing-room.

"Obviously, there will be criticism when you don't do well. I always try to deliver the way I've learnt over the years," Saha said ahead of joining India's putative bio-secure bubble in Mumbai on Monday.

His batting has not exactly inspired the highest level of confidence, though he is deemed the better wicket-keeper. "If people are saying my batting is not up there, maybe that's the case ... But, I don't think I need to change anything -- my mental approach or my technique. I just try to keep my focus and work hard," the normally taciturn Bengal stumper said.

He accepts that, after Dhoni's retirement, and his own injuries during the whole of the 2018 season, Pant made the most of the chances that he came by. "Parthiv (Patel), DK (Dinesh Karthik) and Rishabh got their chances after I got sidelined owing to an injury. But it was Rishabh who made full use of his opportunities and cemented his place in the side. Maybe I played some matches here and there."



India will play six Tests in England over the next three months and while Pant starting during the World Test Championship final is a no-brainer, Saha might also fancy his chances with five games lined up against England, starting in August.

"I think representing India is a big motivating factor, and

it will be much bigger if an opportunity comes my way," Saha, who has played 38 Tests, scoring 1,251 runs and making 103 dismissals, said, adding: "Ultimately, everyone faces this challenge in a small or big way. But being with the team and representing your nation from among 1.4 billion people is a big achievement."

A team man to the core, Saha believes that despite his 11 years of stop-and-start Test career, he has never had any bitter feelings.

"For me, the team always come first and I will always want my team to win. It has never affected my personal relations with anyone," he

'Porous bubble'

PTI
KOLKATA, 22 MAY

Wriddhiman Saha has indicated that the bio-secure bubble for the latest Indian Premier League was not as good as the one in the United Arab Emirates last year, becoming the first India player publicly to make the point. Saha was among the players who became infected.

"There was not a single individual during our training in the UAE last year, not even a member of the ground staff. Here, there would be people, kids peeping from behind nearby walls. I don't want to comment much but we saw how the IPL went off smoothly in the UAE in 2020," he said, adding: "I feel it would have been better if the IPL were held in West Asia this year as well."

Earlier, New Zealand captain Kane Williamson acknowledged that "clearly there were some breaches."

said. Anticipating the WTC final, Saha said that the onus would be on the batsmen. "Batsmen will face the maximum challenge. Pace bowlers always get an advantage there. So the batsmen will hold the key. The team that bat better will stay ahead," he said.

Asked to compare Virat Kohli with Kane Williamson, his SunRisers Hyderabad captain in the Indian Premier League, Saha said: "Kane is always cool-headed and goes about his job in a calm and composed manner. But it's about the challenges on the field rather than the off-the-field talk."

The 29-year-old Chakravarthy recovered on 11 May and was currently recuperating in his Chennai residence. "I'm now doing well and recovering at home. I still haven't been able to resume training at full tilt

Chakravarthy still not fit for hard training

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
CHENNAI, 22 MAY

Kolkata Knight Riders spinner Varun Chakravarthy (in photo) is still not fit for intense training after his recovery from Covid-19: he is still feeling "weak and dizzy."

Chakravarthy was the first player in Indian Premier League to test Covid-19-positive and, within a couple of days, the tournament was suspended because of several infected patients inside the so-called bio-secure bubble across the franchises.

The team, which arrived in Doha on Wednesday evening, had been in compulsory quarantine, waiting for the results of their RT-PCR tests before starting their preparatory camp.

The team, bolstered by the return of Sunil Chhetri (in photo), will hold a preparatory camp while living inside a bio-secure bubble here before their first match on 3 June against the hosts. The other two matches are against Bangladesh (7 June) and Afghanistan (15 June).

The Qatar Football Association did not subject them to a 10-day hard quarantine. The matches are being played in Doha because of the Covid-19 pandemic which forbade the original home-and-away

because of my post-Covid-19 symptoms. Although I don't have a cough or a fever, there is a weakness and a certain dizziness," Chakravarthy told a website. "The loss of smell and taste is still intermittent, but I'm confident of being able to train soon."

Having endured the effects of the infection, Chakravarthy's advice to all athletes is to allow themselves at least two weeks of complete rest after recovery before going back to train. "The thing I've learnt and would like to tell other athletes and individuals recovering from Covid-19 is to give your body at least two weeks fully to recover after you test negative. Also, even after people test negative, my advice is for them to continue to wear a mask so you keep others around yourself safe."

With India facing an unprecedented crisis, the cricketer said: "The toughest thing about contracting Covid-19 is keeping your mind distracted, and away from all that was happening. Because you are alone, away from your family and team-mates. To keep myself occupied, I read books by Osho to give me a sense of calm."

Chakravarthy first felt the symptoms on 1 May when he got tired quite quickly whilst training. "I felt something was slightly unusual on 1 May. I felt tired. There was no cough whatsoever, but I run a temperature, so I didn't attend our training session. I immediately informed the team management and it arranged for an RT-PCR test quickly. I was immediately quarantined and isolated, away from the rest of my KKR team-mates, in a separate wing of the hotel.

Soon, I found out that I'd tested positive," he recalled. "My first reaction was feeling worried, not only for myself, but also for what was happening around us in the country. Even a few of my family members were affected by Covid-19. It wasn't easy, but as professionals we had to find ways to go about our work in the best possible way."

Over-the-top platforms like Netflix and Amazon kept him busy during isolation as his family handled the situation "calmly."

Pak league

The Pakistan Cricket Board is planning to start PSL VI in Abu Dhabi on 5 June and all the participating players will undergo a 10-day quarantine period before they start training.

Indian boxing team reaches Dubai for Asian Championship after delayed landing of flight

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

The Indian boxing team, featuring the likes of M C Mary Kom (51kg) and Amit Panghal (52kg), reached Dubai to compete in the Asian Boxing Championships aboard an 'air-bubble' flight, which had to stay mid-air longer than scheduled as administrative paperwork delayed its landing.

The tournament starts on Monday with the drawslined up for Sunday. It is the only major competition that the boxers will get before the July-August Olympics given the COVID-19 restrictions in place around the globe.

The team reached Dubai on Saturday after being held up for over two hours in the flight, of which close to one hour was mid-air, because of a delay in the clearance of paperwork which approved the team's arrival in Dubai.

"There was some confusion regarding the approval letter for the trip which was eventually sorted thanks to the

intervention of the Indian Embassy in the UAE. The flight took a while to land but the boxers have now reached their hotel," a source close to the team said.

The approval was required as the UAE has imposed a ban on flights from India in view of the heavy COVID-19 case-load here.

The Boxing Federation of India issued a statement, thanking the Indian embassy and Ambassador Mr Pavan Kapoor for his help in ensuring the contingent's participation at the 2021 ASBC Asian Championships. We are

also thankful to the Asian Boxing Confederation and the UAE government," it added.

The 10-strong women's team is being led by the redoubtable M C Mary Kom (51kg) along with three other Olympic-bound boxers -- Simranjot Kaur (60kg), Lovlina Borgohain (69kg) and Pooja Rani (75kg).

Two Olympic-bound names missing from the men's team are Manish Kaushik (63kg) and Satish Kumar (+91kg), both of whom are currently recovering from COVID-19. A total of five men have qualified for the Tokyo Games in July-August.

Apart from India, Indonesia, Iran, Kazakhstan, South Korea, Kyrgyzstan, Philippines, and Uzbekistan are among the prominent countries which will compete at the continental showpiece.

India had delivered its best ever Asian Championship performance in the 2019 edition in Thailand, claiming 13 medals, including two gold, four silver and seven bronze.

Indian footballers test negative, begin training in Doha

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 22 MAY

Virus vaccine

As many as 148 athletes across all sporting disciplines, including those who have qualified for the Tokyo Olympics, have already received the first dose of a Covid-19 vaccine, according to the Indian Olympic Association. Of them, 17 have got both the doses and 131 have received their first shots, IOA president Narinder Batra said.

The 148 include athletes who can make it to the Tokyo Olympics, opening on 23 July.

Thirteen Tokyo Paralympic-bound athletes have also got their first vaccine shots while two have received both the doses. The Tokyo Paralympics will open on 24 August.

Jersey auction

In Kochi, I-League-winning goalkeeper Ubaid CK of Gokulam Kerala FC has raised Rs 33,000 by auctioning his jersey to boost Kerala's fight against Covid-19. The seasoned custodian is transferring the funds to the Kerala Chief Minister's Distress Relief Fund.