



The Sunday Statesman



TANDEN APPOINTED
WHITE HOUSE
SENIOR ADVISER

P10



TAMIL NADU GOVT
INVITES GLOBAL
TENDERS FOR VACCINE

P4



TUTOR EXTRAORDINAIRE

INDIA, 'THE BIG
BULLY IN THE
GLOBAL GAME'

P6



P12

PEOPLE'S PARLIAMENT, ALWAYS IN SESSION

WEATHER

Mainly clear sky. The maximum and minimum temperatures would be around 41 and 24 degrees Celsius respectively.

RAINFALL: Nil

RELATIVE HUMIDITY

Max: 74%	Min: 24%
SUN RISES	SUN SETS
05:30 hrs	19:06 hrs
MOON RISES	MOON SETS
09:37 hrs	23:11 hrs

THUMBNAILS



A ball of fire erupts from a building in Gaza City housing various international media, including The Associated Press, after an Israeli airstrike on Saturday

AGENCIES

(P11)

China successfully lands its rover on Mars: China on Saturday successfully landed a spacecraft on Mars after surviving "nine minutes of terror", becoming the second country in history to have a rover on the red planet.

The rover, Zhurong, successfully landed at the pre-selected area in Utopia Planitia on Mars, in China's latest achievement in space goals. (P11)

Mamata's brother succumbs to Covid: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's younger brother Ashim Banerjee died on Saturday morning while undergoing treatment for Covid-19 at a hospital in Kolkata, his family said. He was 62. He had tested positive for coronavirus nearly a month ago and was admitted since then. He was one of the six brothers of the chief minister.

Cairn looks to seize Air India assets: UK's Cairn Energy Plc has brought a lawsuit in a US court that potentially can lead to seizing of Air India's overseas assets such as airplanes to recover \$1.72 billion from the Indian government which an international arbitration tribunal had awarded after overturning levy of retrospective taxes. (P8)

15-day near-total lockdown in Bengal

Offices, industries, transport services to be shut, including Metro; Madhyamik and Higher Secondary examinations postponed

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, 15 MAY

The West Bengal government today announced a near-complete lockdown in the state from Sunday till 30 May to contain the spread of Covid in Bengal, with all offices, industries and the transport sector, including Metro services, to be shut.

Only emergency services and home delivery will be allowed, while retail shops selling essential items can stay open from 7 a.m. to 10 a.m.

The measures were imposed even as the state registered 19,511 fresh Covid cases and 144 deaths today, bringing the total case count to 11,14,313 and death toll to 13,137. There are 1,31,948 active cases.

Kolkata recorded 3,951 cases and 30 deaths while North 24 Parganas recorded 4,279 fresh cases and 35 deaths in the last 24 hours.

On Friday, the state reg-

istered 20,846 fresh Covid cases, its highest daily count since the pandemic began, along with 136 fatalities.

"We are taking some strict measures to contain the pandemic and to ensure the health of the people, starting 6 a.m. tomorrow till 6 p.m. on 30 May. We are forced to impose these restrictions. There is now an unprecedented situation in the state where the scarcity of oxygen and other medicines is increasing. To control the patient load in hospitals, we are imposing strict conditions on the movement of transport and other sectors for two weeks," said state chief secretary Alapan Bandyopadhyay at a Press meet in Nabanna.

The state government did not officially call the restrictions a lockdown, but nearly all services, including the education sector, and private and public offices, will be closed. Movement of people and vehicles will be strictly prohibited between 9 p.m. to

RELOCK 2.0
► Retail shops selling essential items can stay open from 7 a.m. to 10 a.m.

► All government and private offices, shopping complexes, malls, bars, sports complexes, pubs

and wine shops and beauty parlours will remain closed

► Sweetshops will remain open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. while jewellery and saree shops can stay open from 12 p.m. to 3 p.m.

► E-commerce and home delivery services will be allowed

Workers atop long distance buses on their way home in Howrah on Saturday. BISWAJIT GHOSHAL

We are forced to impose these restrictions. There is now an unprecedented situation in the state where the scarcity of oxygen and other medicines is increasing

ALAPAN BANDYOPADHYAY
WEST BENGAL CHIEF SECRETARY

5 a.m. except emergency services. The Madhyamik and Higher Secondary examinations that are scheduled to be held in June have been postponed and the new dates would be notified soon.

All government and private offices, shopping complexes, malls, bars, sports

complexes, pubs and wine shops and beauty parlours will remain closed, Mr Bandyopadhyay said.

Retail shops and bazaars relating to vegetables, fruits, groceries, milk, bread, meat and eggs will be allowed to remain open between 7 a.m. to 10 a.m. Interestingly, sweetmeat vendors will

be allowed to function from 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. while jewellery and saree shops can stay open from 12 to 3 p.m.

Retailers and pharmaceutical stores can remain open as per their regular working hours. Similarly, petrol pumps will stay open and

banks will function between 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. though ATMs will remain operational. Movement of private vehicles, taxis, buses, metro rail, suburban trains will also be disallowed during the 15-day period.

However, vehicles going to and from hospitals, nursing homes, diagnostic centres, clinics, vaccination centres, airports, terminal points, media houses and movement relating to essential or exempted goods and services will be allowed.

"Essential services like milk, water, medicine, electricity, fire, law and order and media will not come under the purview of the restrictions," Mr Bandyopadhyay added.

E-commerce and home delivery services will be allowed, he added.

While industries will be closed, tea gardens will

be allowed to function from 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. while jewellery and saree shops can stay open from 12 to 3 p.m.

Pharmacies and optical stores can remain open as per their regular working hours. Similarly, petrol pumps will stay open and

States extend lockdowns

As West Bengal joined the states that have imposed a complete lockdown to contain the Covid pandemic, many of them have extended the restrictions as the national tally of active cases sees a marginal decline.

The Chhattisgarh government has extended the lockdown till 31 May. Bihar too has extended the lockdown, which was to end on 15 May, till 25 May, while Maharashtra has already announced the continuation of lockdown-like restrictions till June.

"Essential services like milk, water, medicine, electricity, fire, law and order and media will not come under the purview of the restrictions," Mr Bandyopadhyay added.

E-commerce and home delivery services will be allowed, he added.

While industries will be closed, tea gardens will

be allowed to function from 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. while jewellery and saree shops can stay open from 12 to 3 p.m.

Pharmacies and optical stores can remain open as per their regular working hours. Similarly, petrol pumps will stay open and

Covid protective supplies, health and hygiene, oxygen and oxygen cylinders have been exempted.

"All types of gatherings - religious, political and cultural - will be strictly prohibited," said Mr Bandopadhyay.

"No more than 50 people will be allowed at wedding functions and a gathering of a maximum of 20 people at funerals," he said. Parks, zoos, sanctuaries shall remain closed except for maintenance services.

"Wearing of masks, maintenance of physical distancing and hygiene protocols must be followed at all times. District administration, police commissioners and local authorities shall ensure strict compliance of the directives. Any violation of the restriction measures will be liable to be proceeded against as per the provisions of Disaster Management Act, 2005 and under IPC," Mr Bandopadhyay said.

out, including through provision of Oxygen Concentrators. Necessary training should be provided to health workers

P.M NARENDRA MODI

A distribution plan for ensuring oxygen supply in rural areas should be worked out. Necessary training should be provided to health workers

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resources in rural areas to focus on door to door testing and surveillance.

Mr Modi called for empowering ASHA and Anganwadi workers with all necessary tools and circulation guidelines in easy language along with illustrations for home isolation and treatment in rural areas.

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Overall Covid situation stabilising: Govt

SNS & PTI
NEW DELHI, 15 MAY

The overall Covid-19 situation in the country is stabilising though it is a mixed picture across the country in terms of the trend of daily new cases in various states, according to NITI Aayog member V K Paul.

Top health officials said 10 states account for 85 per cent of the total coronavirus cases in the country. While 11 states have over one lakh active Covid-19 cases, 17 have less than 50,000 cases while eight have active cases between 50,000 and one lakh. The health ministry said Maharashtra, Uttar

Pradesh, Gujarat and Chhattisgarh, which are still recording a high number of novel coronavirus cases, are also reporting a decline in active cases.

Twenty-four states have a Covid-19 positivity rate of more than 15 per cent while Delhi, Chhattisgarh, Daman and Diu, Haryana and Madhya Pradesh have reported a major dip in case positivity, it said.

The national capital, which is under lockdown, recorded 6,430 new Covid-19 cases and 102 new fatalities pushed the death toll to 2,66,207, according to Union Health Ministry data updated on Saturday.

"It is evident that we can see a certain amount of stabilisation of the second wave of the pandemic. Some states have shown a clear pattern, in some states there are concerns and in some others, there is a trend towards an increase. It is a mixed picture. But overall, the situation is stabilising and we hope will work towards ensuring rapid decline of this pandemic," Paul said. (See P5)



Focus on local containment: PM

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 15 MAY

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday chaired a high-level meeting to review the Covid and vaccination situation in the country.

Mr Modi stressed on the need for localised containment strategies in states where positivity rate in districts is high. He called for further scaling up of RT-PCR and Rapid Tests, especially in areas with high test positivity rates.

He said states should be encouraged to report their numbers transparently without any pressure of high numbers showing adverse effect on their efforts. He sought augmentation of healthcare

resources in rural areas to focus on door to door testing and surveillance.

Mr Modi called for empowering ASHA and Anganwadi workers with all necessary tools and circulation guidelines in easy language along with illustrations for home isolation and treatment in rural areas.

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I have requested the Superintendent to reach out to me for any emergency needs in the hospital that I can help with

RAJU BISTA, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT, DARJEELING
AFTER VISITING THE KALIMPONG DISTRICT HOSPITAL TO TAKE STOCK OF THE COVID SITUATION

Kejriwal announces 02 concentrator bank

The bank will have 200 oxygen concentrators in each of Delhi's 11 districts for Covid patients under home isolation and for those recuperating after discharge from hospitals, says CM

SNS & PTI
NEW DELHI, 15 MAY

Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal today announced the launch of an oxygen concentrator bank (OCB) in the city for Covid patients requiring oxygen support under home isolation or those patients recuperating after discharge from hospitals.

The CM said that despite declining coronavirus cases and positivity rate in the national capital, there would be no laxity in the fight against the virus.

Each district in Delhi will have a stock of 200 concentrators that will be rushed to the doorsteps of the patients requiring oxygen within two hours, Kejriwal said at an online briefing.

Those requiring oxygen concentrators can call on the helpline number ~ 1031 ~ and it will be provided free of cost after it is recommended by the doctors, he said.



"The oxygen bank will have 200 oxygen concentrators in each of the 11 districts for Covid patients under home isolation and for patients who have returned home after recovery from hospital but require oxygen support as recommended by the doctors," said the CM.

The Covid patients who are not enrolled under home isolation protocol of the Delhi gov-

ernment may call 1031 and avail of the oxygen concentrator facility, he said.

Health minister Satyendar Jain said the Covid patients under home isolation or those discharged from the hospital can avail the facility of the first oxygen concentrator bank in Delhi, after it is prescribed by the doctors. Oxygen concentrators are portable devices that enrich

oxygen content in the air that is breathed by a person.

Kejriwal said the oxygen level often drops in Covid patients and they can be saved from further deterioration if oxygen is given to them immediately.

"If patients under home isolation require oxygen, our team will ensure the oxygen concentrator reaches them within two hours. A technician will also accompany the team to explain to the family members how to use the device," the CM said.

The Delhi government's doctors will stay in touch with all those who are given oxygen concentrators. If the need arises to send them to a hospital, it will be taken care of, he said.

The oxygen concentrators will be returned after the patients do not need it. The devices will be sanitised, and given to other patients in need, he added.

A team of Delhi government doctors will first ensure whether a person needs an oxygen concentrator or not. It will be pro-

vided after they give their recommendation, Kejriwal said.

The oxygen concentrators will be delivered at the doorstep of patients in Delhi

in collaboration with OLA Foundation and Give India, the CM said, thanking the two organisations. The CM hoped that the Covid cases and positivity rate will gradually decline in Delhi.

The number of Covid cases in the past 24 hours has further declined to around 6,500 with the positivity rate slipping to 11 per cent. The number of fresh cases were around 8,500 and the positivity rate was 12 per cent on Friday, he said. "However, there is no laxity in our work. Yesterday, we prepared 500 additional ICU beds, and 500 similar beds were prepared four days ago," he added.

Kejriwal lauded the doctors and engineers for making 1,000 ICU beds ready in Delhi in the last 15 days, saying they have set an example before the world.

Delhi has written to Dr Reddy's for 67L Sputnik V doses: CM

PTI
NEW DELHI, 15 MAY

Amid vaccine shortage faced by Delhi, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday said his government has written to Dr Reddy's Laboratories for supply of around 67 lakh doses of Russian COVID-19 vaccine Sputnik V.

Dr Reddy's Laboratories launched Sputnik V -- the first foreign-made vaccine being used in the country -- on Friday. Kejriwal's announcement came after Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia had claimed earlier this week that Covaxin manufacturer Bharat Biotech had refused to provide additional doses to the national capital. "We have asked for 67 lakh doses each of Covishield and Covaxin and have written to Dr Reddy's who are dealers of Sputnik in India for nearly the same quantity," Kejriwal told reporters.

The response from Dr Reddy's is awaited, the chief minister said.

"We have asked them (Dr Reddy's) how many doses and by what time they can provide. No response has come from their side as yet," Kejriwal said.

The company had on Friday said the imported doses of

Lockdown key factor behind dip in Delhi's Covid cases: Experts

PTI
NEW DELHI, 15 MAY

Delhi on Friday recorded 8,506 COVID-19 cases, the daily count dipping to below the 10,000-mark again after a month, with medical experts believing the lockdown to be the main factor behind the dip amid the second wave of the pandemic.

The national capital had registered 7,897 coronavirus cases on April 10 with 39 deaths, as per official data.

The fatality count stood at 289 on Friday, with experts cautioning that even over 8,500 daily cases was "still a huge figure" and "severity of cases were still the same as before".

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had said the city's COVID-19 cases count in the last 24 hours, just over 8,500, was much lower than the figures reported on April 20, when it had crossed the 28,000-mark.

Doctors at leading government and private hospitals in Delhi said there is a relative fall in the number of cases and "still a long way to go" before the daily count falls below the 2,000-mark, as it was a few months earlier.

"Lockdown, I would say is the biggest factor in arriving at a sit-

uation where we are now, when daily cases from 28,000 have come down to about 8,500. However, it is still a huge figure, and there should be no room for complacency, on any front," Medical Director of Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital (RGSSH), B L Sherwal, told PTI.

RGSSH is a Delhi government-run 650-bed facility, and about 500 beds are earmarked for treating COVID patients, and 350 are currently occupied, most of them being ICU patients, he said.

Asked about the number of daily fatalities at the facility located in east Delhi, Sherwal said, about 10-12 patients per day, out of the 350 beds occupied as of now, which would soon be expanded to full capacity.

"While daily cases have come down, the severity of infection is still the same, and new patients are being brought to our hospital in the same condition as before. Many of them are brought dead or die shortly after being brought to emergency. So, we must understand the gravity of the situation," he added.

Doctors at leading government and private hospitals in Delhi said there is a relative fall in the number of cases and "still a long way to go" before the daily count falls below the 2,000-mark, as it was a few months earlier.

Delhi had been reeling under a brutal second wave of the pandemic that is sweeping the country, claiming a massive number of lives daily, with the

recent oxygen supply shortage issue at various hospitals adding to the woes.

On Thursday, the city had recorded 10,489 cases and 308 deaths. Last year, the highest daily cases was 8,593 reported on November 11. This year, the lockdown here was first imposed on April 19, amid a steep rise in COVID-19 cases, and has been extended thrice so far. On May 9, it was extended by another week by Chief Minister Kejriwal, till May 17 morning.

In his briefing on Friday, Kejriwal said, "In these times of despair, I wish to bring some good news for everyone. About 8,500 new corona cases have been registered in Delhi in the last 24 hours. The infection rate has come down to 12 per cent today... It was 36 per cent on April 22".

Dr Richa Sareen, consultant, pulmonology at Fortis hospital here, echoed Sherwal and said the prime factor behind a relatively improved situation, is that a lockdown was imposed.

She argued that had the lockdown been imposed a week earlier in April, the situation wouldn't have become this worse, but then it's a difficult decision by any government.

"Besides lockdown, another factor is that a large number of

Delhi Police files 25 FIRs over posters questioning PM Modi on Covid vaccination, arrests 25

SNS & PTI
NEW DELHI, 15 MAY

Delhi Police has filed 25 FIRs and arrested as many people for allegedly pasting posters critical of Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the Centre's vaccination drive against Covid-19, police officials said today.

The posters ~ reading "Modiji humare bacbon ki vaccine videsh kyu bhej diya (PM, why did you send vaccines of our children to foreign countries?)" ~ were pasted at various places across the national capital.

Three FIRs were registered in West Delhi and five people were arrested, while another three FIRs were registered in Outer Delhi and three more people were nabbed from there. In Northwest Delhi, four FIRs were registered after which two were arrested, police said. They said two FIRs were registered in Central Delhi and four people were arrested, while two FIRs were registered in Rohini and another two FIRs in South Delhi were also registered. The police said one FIR was filed in East Delhi's Kalyanpur and four people were nabbed, while another FIR was registered in New Friends Colony police station of the Southeast district, police said. Police officials said one FIR was lodged in Dwarka from where two people were arrested while another FIR was registered in North Delhi and one person was arrested from there.

The person claimed that he had been given Rs 500 to paste these posters, police said. One more FIR was registered in Southwest Delhi and two people were held. Another case was registered in Shahdara, police added.

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Haryana Government's Commendable Steps to Help People During Covid-19

Ch. Devi Lal Sanjeevani Hospital, Hisar

Inauguration by

Sh. Manohar Lal

Chief Minister, Haryana

Presided over by

Sh. Dushyant Chautala

Deputy Chief Minister, Haryana

August presence

Sh. Anil Vij

Health Minister, Haryana

Sh. Ranbir Gangwa

Vidhan Sabha Deputy Speaker, Haryana

Sh. Brijendra Singh

M.P., Hisar

Sh. Kamal Gupta

M.L.A., Hisar

Sunday, 16th May, 2021

Oxygen Supply by

Guru Teg Bahadur Sanjeevani Hospital, Bal Jattan, Panipat

Inauguration by

Sh. Manohar Lal

Chief Minister, Haryana

Presided over by

Sh. Dharmendra Pradhan

Union Minister for Petroleum, Natural Gas and Steel

August presence

Sh. Anil Vij

Health Minister, Haryana

Sh. Sanjay Bhatia

M.P., Karnal

Sunday, 16th May, 2021

Oxygen Supply by

COVID Hospitals & Centres setting up in Gurugram

- Hospital with facility of 100 oxygen-equipped beds in collaboration with Hero Group and Doctors For You, NGO in Govt. Women College, Sector-14, Gurugram.
- COVID Field Hospital of 100 bed capacity in collaboration with Vedanta Group in Tau Devi Lal Stadium Medicity, Sector-38 with 20 I.C.U beds and 80 oxygen-equipped beds at one place.
- COVID Care Centre with 300 bed capacity in Sector-67, Gurugram with joint collaboration with CII, M3M, Indian Air Force and Doctors For You, NGO.

Inauguration by
Sh. Manohar Lal
Chief Minister, Haryana

August presence
Rao Inderjit Singh
Union Minister of State (Independent Charge)

16th & 17th May, 2021

Other New Hospitals in the State for COVID Patients

- In Faridabad, 100-bed hospital started at Medical College, army doctors and paramedical staff have been given its responsibility.
- In Karnal, A new Field Hospital with 100 oxygen-equipped beds started.
- In Assandh, arrangement of 20 oxygen-equipped beds at Community Health Centre and 10 oxygen-equipped beds at COVID Care Centre.
- In Sirsa, 150-bed COVID Care Centre started at Baba Tara Charitable Hospital and Research Center.
- In Rohtak, 400 oxygen-equipped beds installed in P.G.I., Rohtak, 600 other oxygen-equipped beds to be installed soon.
- 70-bed hospital set up at Mankind Pharma in Civil Line, Gurugram also having facility of oxygen.

Stay Alert, Stay Safe

Delhi district courts' vacation advanced: In view of the "alarming rise" in COVID-19 infections and the toll it has taken on the health and lives of judicial officers and staff of subordinate judiciary, the Delhi High Court has preponed the vacation of district courts. The high court has decided that the district courts, except that of metropolitan magistrates, in Delhi will remain closed for summer vacation from May 17 to June 3, both days included, according to an office order issued by Registrar General Manoj Jain. PTI

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The Sunday Statesman

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All types of gatherings ~ religious, political and cultural ~ will be strictly prohibited. We have seen that these gatherings increase the spread of Covid

CHIEF SECRETARY ALAPAN BANDYOPADHYAY

ANNOUNCING THE IMPOSITION OF A 14-DAY LOCKDOWN IN BENGAL

The Sunday Statesman

NEW DELHI, SUNDAY 16 MAY 2021

Capt tears into Yogi over his 'inflammatory' Malerkotla bid

Hitting back at his UP counterpart for attacking his govt's move to declare Malerkotla a new district, Punjab CM condemns it as 'an attempt to incite communal hatred in the peaceful state'

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 15 MAY

A day after Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath hit out at the Punjab government over the creation of the new district of Malerkotla in the state, Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh on Saturday slammed his UP counterpart for making "an attempt to incite communal hatred in the peaceful state as part of the Bharatiya Janata Party's divisive policies".

In a tweet on Friday, Adityanath had termed Capt Amarinder's announcement to declare Malerkotla, a Punjab township and Assembly constituency with predominant Muslim population, a new district "reflection of the divisive policy of the Congress".

Responding to this, Capt Amarinder asked Adityanath to stay out of his state's affairs, which, he said, were in "much



better shape than those in UP under the divisive and destructive BJP government, which has been actively promoting communal discord in the state for the past four years".

Ridiculing his UP counterpart's comment, the Punjab CM said that given the Adityanath government and the BJP's "track-record of spreading communal hate, such a remark was utterly ridiculous, apart from being totally unwarranted and uncalled for".

The whole world knows of the communally divisive policies of the BJP, and particularly the Yogi Adityanath government in UP, the Punjab CM alleged. Pointing to the spate of changes in names of various UP cities, including Mughal Sarai's name changed to Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyay Nagar, Allahabad to Prayagraj, and Faizabad to Ayodhya, Capt Amarinder described it as "an attempt by the Yogi government to rewrite history, which the peace-loving people of India will never condone".

Citing media reports, he recalled that UP was the first state in the country to approve "love jihad" laws, and Yogi Adityanath's "open hatred for Taj Mahal (which he sees as a legacy of the Mughals) has been the subject matter of criticism in international press".

"In fact, the UP CM is reportedly the founder of Hindu Yuva Vahini, an organ-

isation that was responsible for starting cow vigilanism, which led to lynching of Muslims in its own state," the Punjab CM further pointed out.

It was obvious that the tweet of the UP government head on Malerkotla was nothing but a provocative gesture aimed at creating conflict among the communities living in perfect harmony in Punjab, Capt Amarinder charged.

He termed it a "conspiracy" on the part of the BJP to "spread disharmony" in Punjab ahead of the Assembly elections, which are just months away.

Yogi Adityanath should focus his energies on saving his own state, where the Covid situation is spiralling out of control, with bodies of the victims of the pandemic being found dumped in rivers, thus depriving them of even the dignity of a decent cremation or burial, Amarinder said.

Farmers to observe 26 May as 'black day' marking 6 mths of protest at Delhi borders

PTI
NEW DELHI, 15 MAY

Ghaziupur borders around the national capital.

Rajewal appealed to people to support the call for observing black day" on May 26."We appeal to people of the country and also Punjab to hang black flags at their house, shops, trucks and other vehicles. We will also burn effigies of (PM) Narendra Modi as a form of protest," he added.

He said that the government has not heard the farmers' demand to repeal the three agri laws and "with increasing prices of fertilisers, diesel and petrol, the farming business is not possible".

SKM appealed to mass organisations, trade unions, traders' and transporters' organisations to hold black flag demonstrations in support of the farmers' demands.

The farmers' outfit has also decided to launch "Mission UP and Uttarakhand" as part of its demand to "repeal three black laws, enact legal guarantee for MSP and punish the BJP".

This shall include rallying of all farmers' forces from across the country joined the protest at Tikri, Singhu and

ing farmer organisations from all over India and it shall be observed throughout these states," the SKM said in a statement. Days after the alleged sexual assault of a woman activist at Tikri border protest site, who later died due to COVID-19 at a private hospital in Haryana, the SKM said that it will soon announce names of its "Mahila Suraksha Samitis".

"Within two days, SKM will announce names of its Mahila Suraksha Samitis at all border protest sites which will look into measures to ensure safety and security of women participating in the movement," it said.

Hundreds of farmers have been camping at Delhi's borders since November 2020 demanding that the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020, Farmers' (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020 and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020 be rolled back and a new law made to guarantee minimum support price for crops.

Pb's first O2 Express on way to Bokaro

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 15 MAY

With the rolling out of Punjab's first Oxygen Express towards Bokaro earlier this morning, the state will soon be in a position to lift its full 80 metric tonne (MT) O2 quota, which is much needed to boost its stock of life-saving medical ingredient.

Disclosing this on Saturday, senior IAS officer supervising the Oxygen Control Room, Rahul Tiwari, said the department has overcome the difficulty of tanker heights and of agencies to carry the O2 supplies vital in state's fight against the deadly virus.

"We have been able to procure and put in use two ISO containers that fit in the

requirements of the railways and we have roped in the services of MARKFED, our time tested organisation of punjab to fasten up and streamline the O2 procurement process to ensure there is no shortage of oxygen anywhere in the state," he said.

Khattar appeals to farmers to end agitation in view of Covid wave

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 15 MAY

Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar on Saturday appealed to farmers agitating against the Centre's controversial farm laws to return back to their homes in view of the Covid-19 pandemic wave and to strengthen the efforts being made by the government in containing the spread of this deadly virus.

Addressing a virtual programme organised on the occasion of the birth anniversary of the

CM said that the government, social institutions, scientists, doctors and people associated with yoga and spirituality are engaged at their levels to combat the corona pandemic. Efforts to get rid of it through various systems of medicine are continuing. But this pandemic has also affected healthy people. Khattar said in the first wave of Covid, where maximum 3,000 cases came up daily but this time around 16,000 cases were being reported on a daily basis in Haryana.

'Ambulance couple' helps Covid victims in life and death

PTI
NEW DELHI, 15 MAY

Profiles of humaneness in the time of Covid, Himanshu and Twinkle Kalia spend their days between helping the ill get a fighting chance at life and ensuring dignity in death for those who don't make it.

As the second COVID-19 wave ravages large parts of India -- including the national capital that has seen thousands scramble for oxygen, hospital beds and crematorium spots -- the Kalias, Delhi's 'ambulance couple', ferry the ill to hospital, fetch medicines, arrange funerals and sometimes step in to perform last rites too.

Cloaked in PPE suits, face shields and masks, the Kalias go where even close relatives fear to tread, spending their days tending to people suffering from Covid or those who have died of it and making sure their fleet of 12 ambulances are road ready to tackle any emergency.

"We don't put it in records but in the second wave of coronavirus we have been helping almost 20-25 patients daily reach hospitals. We have performed cremations of 80 people who have died of COVID-19 and helped over 1,000 people in arranging for cremations," Himanshu told PTI.

It's all free of course, the 42-year-old hastened to add. A few days ago, they got a

Haryana declares black fungus a notified disease

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 15 MAY

call from Mayur Vihar in east Delhi about a patient who had died in an autorickshaw on the way to hospital, said Twinkle.

The Kalias, who live in Pratap Nagar in north Delhi, reached there quickly, got the body verified by a doctor and helped in the last rites.

"We got a call from Sandeep Mitra whose wife Madhura had collapsed in an autorickshaw while he was taking her to a hospital. He was not getting any help from his society or elsewhere. We reached there, got a doctor on the spot and performed her cremation at the Sarai Kale Khan crematorium," Twinkle said.

The 39-year-old is a cancer survivor and the couple has two daughters, Japji (13) and Riddhi (7). But personal commitments don't come in the way of their zeal to help others in these days of India's most serious health crisis.

At a time ambulances are in short supply and stories of ambulance drivers and owners fleecing those in need make the rounds, the Kalias have publicised the free services of their fleet. Himanshu's mobile number has been pasted at various places across the city.

As a result, he said, distress calls come in from all over Delhi and also from Ghaziabad and Noida. The word has spread and some hospitals have also started reaching out.

H.P.P.W.D.

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Sealed item rate tender on Form No. 6&8 are invited by the Executive Engineer, Electrical Division, HPPWD, Mandi (H.P) for the works at Sr. No. 1 to 7 from the approved and eligible electrical contractors enlisted in appropriate class in HPPWD (Electrical) department, and for the work at Sr. No. 9 from the OEM of HVAC System/ Authorized agency of OEM / approved Firm for executing specialized job

by HPPWD Department (Electrical) and for the work at Sr. No. 9 from the OEM of Lift / Authorized agency of OEM, so as to reach in his office on or before 07.06.2021 up-to 10.30 A.M. and will be opened on the same day at 11:00 A.M. in the presence of intending contractors or their authorized representatives. The application for issuing of tender form will be received in his office against cash payment Rs. 350/- (Non-refundable) for each work on or before 05.06.2021 up to 01:00 P.M. and the tender forms can be had from his office on same day. The application for purchase of the tender documents should be accompanied with earnest money of each work separately in the shape of National Saving Certificate/FDR/ Call Deposit / Bank draft of any Scheduled Bank / Post Office duly pledged in favour of the Executive Engineer, Electrical Division, HPPWD, Mandi (H.P.). Conditional tenders and the tenders received without earnest money will be rejected. The receipt of application for issue of tender forms by post shall not be entertained if the application for purchase of the tender document. The ambiguous / telegraphic / conditional / fax / E-mail or by post tenders shall also not be entertained / considered in any case. The tender shall be issued to those Contractors / Firms who are found eligible, suitable and competent. The decision of the Executive Engineer regarding suitability / eligibility / competency of Contractors/ Firms shall be final binding on the Contractors / Firms applying for the issuing of the tender. The offer for the tenders shall be kept open for 120 days. The Executive Engineer reserves the right to reject the tender without assigning any reasons, if there happens to be any holiday the same will be opened on next working day.

Work No. 1:- C/o Four Rooms at Government High School at Sari, Tehsil - Dhampur, District - Mandi HP (SH: Providing E.I therein) Estimated Cost: Rs. 113087/-only. Earnest money: Rs. 2300/- only. Time allowed: - Along with civil work

Work No. 2:- C/o Four Rooms at Government High School at Cholangarh, Tehsil - Dhampur, District - Mandi HP (SH: Providing E.I therein) Estimated Cost: Rs. 113087/-only. Earnest money: Rs. 2300/- only. Time allowed: - Along with civil work

Work No. 3:- C/o Ayurvedic Health Centre at Syoh, Tehsil - Dhampur, District Mandi H.P (SH: Providing E.I therein) Estimated Cost: Rs. 262605/-only. Earnest money: Rs. 5300/- only. Time allowed: - Along with civil work

Work No. 4:- C/o Government High School at Hallan, Tehsil - Manali, District - Kullu HP (SH: Providing E.I and accessories therein) Estimated Cost: Rs. 139873/-only. Earnest money: Rs. 2800/- only. Time allowed: - Along with civil work

Work No. 5:- C/o 2 Nos. Type-II Quarters of Medical Department at Sajao Piplu, Tehsil - Dhampur, District - Mandi HP (SH: Providing E.I therein) Estimated Cost: Rs. 146427/-only. Earnest money: Rs. 2950/- only. Time allowed: - Along with civil work

Work No. 6:- C/o Four Rooms at Government High School at Rakhera, Tehsil - Dhampur, District - Mandi HP (SH: Providing E.I therein) Estimated Cost: Rs. 113087/-only. Earnest money: Rs. 2300/- only. Time allowed: - Along with civil work

Work No. 7:- C/o 100 Bedded Hospital at Sandhol, Tehsil - Dhampur, District - Mandi HP (SH: Laying of Conduit pipe therein) Estimated Cost: Rs. 156600/-only. Earnest money: Rs. 3150/- only. Time allowed: - Along with civil work

Work No. 8:- Repair and maintenance of HVAC System (Chiller Plant) of carrier make installed at Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri Govt. Medical College and Hospital at Nerchowk, (SH: Servicing / Descaling of HVAC Plant System and minor repair in Chilling plant Estimated Cost: Rs. 356000/-only. Earnest money: Rs. 7150/- only. Time allowed: - Two Months

Work No. 9:- Repair and maintenance of and servicing of 8 Passenger Lift Elevator installed at Judicial Court Complex Mandi District - Mandi HP w e f 01.07.2021 to 30.06.2024 Estimated Cost: Rs. 389292/-only. Earnest money: Rs. 7800/- only. Time allowed: - Three Years

Executive Engineer,
Electrical Division,
HPPWD, Mandi (H.P.)

0775/2021-2022 HIM SUCHNA AVAM JAN SAMPARK

Sealed item rate tenders are hereby invited/re- invited on form No 6 & 8 by the Executive Engineer, HPPWD Division Barsar on behalf of Governor of H.P for the following works from the approved and eligible contractors/firms enlisted in H.P.P.W.D. in the appropriate class so as to reach in this office on 05-06-2021 up to 10.30 A.M. and will be opened on the same day at 11:00 A.M. in the presence of intending contractors or their authorized representative. The tender application will be received in this office against cash payment [Non Refundable] on 04-06-2021 from 11:00 A.M.to 4:00P.M. The offer of the tender shall be kept open for 120 days.

Name of work No. 01:- Restoration of rain damage on Jalari Galore Salouni Bijhari Deotsidh road km. 0/0 to 30/0 (Sh:- C/O wire crate R/wall at Rd. 16/435 to 16/455) Estimated Cost: 2,34,386/- Earnest Money :- 4700/- Time :-Two Month Cost of form:-350/-

Name of work No. 02:- Restoration of rain damage on Naduan Bangana road km. 0/0 to 17/0 (Sh:- C/O U-Shape drain with wingwall at Rd. 11/765 to 11/865)) Estimated Cost: 1,95,106/- Earnest Money :- 4000/- Time :-One Month Cost of form:-350/-

Name of work No. 03:- C/O link road from Magnoti to Hariana Basti Sohrai & Pandiri (Sh:- ROFD in km. 0/0 to 0/500,C/O R/wall at Rd. 0/230 to 0/250,P/L 900mm dia RCC hume pipe culvert at Rd. 0/350 & P/L soling in km. 0/0 to 0/500) Under SCSP Head Estimated Cost:- 4,08,907/- Earnest Money :- 8200/- Time :-One Month Cost of form:-350/-

Name of work No. 04:- C/O link road H.B. Samanta Khurd to Nahalar Janehan km. 0/0 to 2/0 (Sh:- ROFD in km. 1/0 to 1/250, P/L 900mm dia RCC hume pipe culvert at Rd. 1/180 & P/L soling in km. 1/0 to 1/250 in km. 1/0 to 1/250) Under SCSP Head Estimated Cost:- 2,29,791/- Earnest Money :- 4600 Time :-One Month Cost of form:-350/-

Name of work No. 05:- C/O link road to village Kardoh km. 0/0 to 2/0 (Sh:- C/O R/wall at Rd. 1/415 to 1/426.70) Estimated Cost:- 4,97,996/- Earnest Money :- 10000/- Time :-Two Month Cost of form:-350/-

Name of work No. 06:- C/O bridge on Kunah Khad to village Kasiri (Sh:- Preparation of Hydraulic data for bridge work,soil investigation for bearing capacity for the C/O bridge only)Estimated Cost:- 51,000/- Earnest Money :- 1100/- Time :-Two Month Cost of form:-350/-

Name of work No. 07:- C/O link road from RCC to Balh Uttag km. 0/0 to 0/800 (Sh:- C/O hume pipe culvert alongwith wing wall at Km. 0/195 & P/L P/L soling in km. 0/0 to 0/250) Under OTMNP HeadEstimated Cost:- 2,08,951/- Earnest Money :- 4200/- Time :-Two Month Cost of form:-350/-

Name of work No. 08:- M/T on link road to village Lasmain km. 0/0 to 2/0 (Sh:- P/L M/T in km. 1/0 to 1/500) Under OTMNP Head Estimated Cost:- 4,59,015/- Earnest Money :- 9200/- Time :-Two Month Cost of form:-350/-

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

No.1:- The Earnest Money in the shape of National saving certificates /Time deposit Accounts/ Saving Account/ FDRs in any of the post office/ Nationalized Bank in duly pledged in favour of the Executive Engineer Barsar must be accompanied with the application.



Coolies sitting idle due to scarcity of train passengers during the lockdown at Nizamuddin railway station, in the Capital on Saturday. PTI

Tiger found dead in MP: A tiger was found dead in the buffer zone of the Bandhavgarh reserve in Madhya Pradesh, which took the number of tiger fatalities reported in the state to three within a week, an official said on Saturday. The decomposed carcass of the tiger was found near a drain in the buffer area on Friday. PTI

Ambulance attendant held: An ambulance attendant has been arrested for alleged sexual harassment of a 38-year-old Covid woman patient, police said on Saturday. The patient was harassed while she was being taken in the ambulance to a scanning centre at nearby Perinthalmanna on 27 April, senior police official said. PTI

ULFA (I) declares ceasefire: The banned United Liberation Front of Assam (Independent) on Saturday announced a unilateral ceasefire for three months due to the prevailing situation in the state. "We have taken a decision to suspend all operations for the next three months as the people are suffering due to the pandemic", ULFA(I) Commander-in-Chief Pares Barua said. PTI

Lightning strike may have killed 18 wild jumbos in Assam

GUWAHATI, 15 MAY

Assam witnessed a shocking incident where 18 wild Asiatic elephants faced unusual death, which is now stated that they died due to electrocution by lightning. Though initial findings by a government-appointed committee indicates thunderbolt as their cause of sudden deaths, the final report comprising microbiological and toxicological tests is still awaited.

The unfortunate incident took place on a hillock in Nagaon-Karbi Anglong border locality on the night of 12 May spread sensations among the people as most of them maintain adoration to elephants as a symbol of Lord Ganesh. The state government earlier ordered a high level probe into the incident to find the reason behind the entire herd's shocking death.

Following the direction of state chief minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma, the environment & forest minister Parimal Suklabaidya visited the site on Friday. Since day one, Suklabaidya maintains that the pachyderms were killed due to thunderbolts.

A team of senior forest officials, wildlife specialists and veterinarians also arrived at the location on Bamuni hills inside Kundali proposed reserve forest under Kothialai forest range, and started investigating the matter. The enquiry committee led by deputy conservator of forest, KK Deor is supposed to complete the detailed investigation by two weeks.

Assam's well-known nature conservationist Soumyadeep Datta commented that he was waiting for the post mortem reports but instantly termed the thunderbolt as the killer very unlikely. Rather Datta, while talking to this correspondent, apprehended that it might be a case of poisoning, which is usual developments in different parts of the region. Director of conservation group Nature's Beckon also added that Assam gives shelter to over 6,000 Asiatic elephants. PTI

TN govt invites global tenders for 5 cr doses of Covid vaccine

The tenders submitted will be opened at noon on June 5 at the Tamil Nadu Medical Services Corporation



Goondas Act for hoarding Remdesivir: CM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
CHENNAI, 15 MAY

Hoarding of Remdesivir, a drug used in the treatment of Covid patients, and selling oxygen cylinders at exorbitant rates will attract police action under the stringent Goondas Act in Tamil Nadu, chief minister M K Stalin said on Saturday.

The CM's direction to the police comes in the wake of arrest of a number of persons for allegedly selling Remdesivir vials in the black market at inflated prices amid a surge in demand for the life-saving oxygen.

Stalin said that while the public have accepted the "bitter pill" of lockdown despite the curbs affecting their livelihood and have extended cooperation to save lives, at the same time, some "anti-social elements" were hoarding the drug and selling it in the black market, he said in a statement.

The last date for submission of tenders is June 5 at 11 am. The tenders submitted will be opened at noon on June 5 at the Tamil Nadu Medical Services Corporation Limited in Chennai. They will be governed by the provisions of Tamil Nadu Transparency in Tenders Act 1998 and the rules there under.

At the same time the DMK Rajya Sabha MP and senior advocate P Wilson wrote to the Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan to take all the steps necessary to make use of the three vaccine manufac-



People wait to purchase Remdesivir outside Nehru Stadium in Chennai on Saturday.

"Similarly, complaints are being received that at some places oxygen cylinders are being sold at high rates.

Indulging in such acts during a pandemic is a severe crime," Stalin added. "I have directed to the police department to take stringent action under the Goondas Act against those who hoard Remdesivir and sell oxygen cylinders at inflated price," the CM said. AIADMK Joint Coordinator

and Leader of Opposition K Palaniswami on Saturday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeking increased allocation of oxygen and Remdesivir drug.

In his letter, the former CM said that the second wave of coronavirus has affected a large number of people all over the state, which was showing an "increasing trend" day by day with nearly 32,000 single-day cases.

Stalin said that while the public have accepted the "bitter pill" of lockdown despite the curbs affecting their livelihood and have extended cooperation to save lives, at the same time, some "anti-social elements" were hoarding the drug and selling it in the black market, he said in a statement.

The call comes at a time when many states have not been able to start the vaccination drive for those aged between 18 and 44 years due to the non-availability of stock. This is the reason why the state government decided to float global tender.

The vaccine doses should be delivered at state vaccine

stores.

The tender norms said the vaccine to be supplied should be produced under the control of a recognised, well-functioning National Control Authority for biologicals, which performs all six critical functions as defined by the World Health Organisation (WHO).

Tamil Nadu government on May 12 has decided to float short-term global tenders for importing vaccines to vaccinate all those in the age group of 18-45 at a high-level meeting chaired by chief minister

MK Stalin. This is in line with many other states trying to procure from the international market directly after the central government's advice.

The state government has said the 13 lakh vaccine vials allocated to Tamil Nadu are insufficient for vaccinating all those between the age group of 18 and 45. As such, global tenders would be invited for importing vaccines.

Meanwhile, DMK Rajya Sabha MP and senior advocate P Wilson pointed out in the letter to central health minister that Tamil Nadu has

three manufacturing facilities capable of producing vaccines in King's Institute in Chennai, Integrated Vaccine Complex by Biotech in Chengalpattu and Pasteur Institute at Coonoor.

Wilson, in his letter, pointed out that all these centres have all the facilities like the machinery and the infrastructure required to manufacture vaccines at large scale. His letter comes at a time when the country is facing a massive shortage of COVID-19 vaccines and after the Additional Solicitor General submitted to the Madras High Court that the facilities lack the technical inputs on how to produce these vaccines.

Slamming the Additional Solicitor General's stand on the matter, Wilson pointed out that there are two ways to make this happen.

He said that one way would be to permit Serum Institute of India (SII), which has the Intellectual Property rights for Covishield and Bharat Biotech (BB), which has the Intellectual Property rights over Covaxin to manufacture their vaccines in these facilities on payment of appropriate charges to use the facilities.

Another way, according to Wilson's letter, would be to waive off the patent restrictions and issue compulsory licenses to the three organisations owning the facilities to help them manufacture the vaccines themselves.

He pointed out that Section 92 of the Patents Act permits the Union government to issue compulsory licenses to produce a drug in times of a 'national emergency' and added that the pandemic qualifies to be called a national emergency.

Plea in SC: Set up O2 plants in all 738 dists using PM-CARES Fund

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 15 MAY

Govt: 10,953 O2 concentrators, 13,169 O2 cylinders delivered to states

NEW DELHI, 15 MAY

A PIL has been filed in the Supreme Court seeking various relief measures for the pandemic-ravaged country, including immediate procurement of Covid vaccines and installation of a liquid medical oxygen (LMO) plant in each of the 738 districts using donations received under the PM-CARES Fund.

The petitioner has made the Centre, the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), the Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situation (PM-CARES) Fund and all states as parties in the plea.

"Direct (PM-CARES FUND) to first fund...for immediate procurement (by importing and/or otherwise) of (a) Covid Vaccine; (b) oxygen plants/generators...and forthwith installation thereof in 738

district government hospitals throughout the country," the plea filed by lawyer Vilavava Sharma said, adding that poor citizens should get oxygen free of cost.

The major consignments received on May 13/14 from the US, Italy, Canada, South Korea, Oman, the UK and Japan include 157 oxygen concentrators, 900 oxygen cylinders and 338 ventilators/BiPAP/CPAP.

According to the ministry, 68,810 vials of remdesivir and 1,000 units of tocilizumab were also received from these countries on May 13/14. Cumulatively, 10,953 oxygen concentrators, 13,169 oxygen cylinders, 19 oxygen-generation plants, 6,835 ventilators or BiPAP and about 4.9 lakh remdesivir vials have been delivered or dispatched through road and air from April 27 to May 13, it said.

"Effective immediate allocation, and streamlined delivery to the recipient states and union territories and institutions is an ongoing exercise," it said. PTI

fication issued by the central government to the extent it capped the exemption from import duty granted to medical equipment for a period of three months only.

FOR THE SAKE OF LIFE



People waiting for Covid vaccination at Urban Primary Health Centre, Jungpura, in the Capital on Saturday.

Body of Kerala woman killed in Hamas attack brought home

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, 15 MAY

The mortal remains of Soumya Santhosh, who was killed in a Palestinian rocket attack in Israel on May 11, was brought to the Cochin international airport on Saturday evening by an Air India flight. Soumya's relatives had arrived at the airport to receive her body. Political leaders including Idukki MP Dean Kuriakose, PT Thomas MLA and senior BJP leader A N Radhakrishnan were present at the airport.

The body was then taken to her native place Keerithod in Idukki district.

Her funeral will be held at the cemetery of Nithya Sahaya Matha Church, Keerithod on Sunday afternoon, church sources said.

Earlier, Union Minister V Muraleedharan received the body at New Delhi airport.

"With a heavy heart, received the mortal remains of Ms Soumya Santhosh as her mortal remains arrived in India on her final journey home, after she was tragically killed by #Hamas



Mortal remains of Soumya Santhosh in Delhi on Saturday.

rockets. My heart is with her family, including a 9-yr old boy, who will be supported by #Israel," the Israeli diplomat tweeted.

Soumya, 30, hailing from Idukki district, had been working as a housemaid in Israel for the last seven years.

She was killed on Tuesday when the rocket fell on her residence in the city of Ashkelon while she was talking to her husband Santhosh, who is in Kerala, over video call, her family has said.

Heavy rain continues to batter Kerala, leaves trail of destruction

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, 15 MAY

Torrential rains accompanied by fierce winds and high tidal waves wreaked havoc and claimed two lives in Kerala, as it lashed the state since last night forcing the government to shift hundreds of families to relief camps, sources said on Saturday.

The southernmost district, Thiruvananthapuram to Kasaragod in the northern tip, witnessed widespread uprooting of trees, water-logging and disruption of power supply since last night.

The Central Water Commission (CWC) issued flood warning to the state in the wake of rising water level in rivers like Manimala and Achankovil.

As India Meteorological Department (IMD) sounded 'red alert', indicating the possibility of extremely heavy rainfall above 200 mm in the last 24 hours, he said. Two deaths have been reported in the state in the last two days. "Two persons drowned in Ernakulam and Kozhikode

severe deep depression over Arabian sea, was issued in Ernakulam, Idukki, Thrissur, Palakkad, Malappuram, Kozhikode, Wayanad, Kannur and Kasaragod district, according to the IMD.

High range and coastal belts in the central and northern districts, where houses and roads were rampantly destroyed and trees got uprooted widely, were the worst affected in the rain fury.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said the impact of cyclone Tauktae was expected to last the next 24 hours in the state. "Two days of torrential rains and strong winds have caused widespread destruction across the state. As per the IMD figures, Kerala received an average rainfall of 145.5 mm in the last two days alone," he told reporters here.

Kochi and Peerumedu stations registered rainfall above 200 mm in the last 24 hours, he said. Two deaths have been reported in the state in the last two days. "Two persons drowned in Ernakulam and Kozhikode

districts. Stepping into water bodies and crossing rivers should be avoided during the times of heavy rains and winds," he said.

The CM also cautioned people to be vigilant against fierce winds in northern districts tonight under the impact of the cyclone.

On the CWC's flood warning, he said it was not the rainy season in the state, there was no danger of floods, as of now. However, directions have been issued to evacuate people from the flood-prone areas when necessary, he said, adding that as the big dams presently do not have large amounts of water, there was no need to panic over that.

Meanwhile, to ensure the safety of people, night travel in high range Idukki district was completely banned from 7.00 pm today by the district administration. As the water level in major rivers like Meenachil, Achankovil and Manimala was rising steadily, authorities cautioned people living on its banks to be vigilant. The shut-

ters of the Kallarkutty and Malankara dams in Idukki and Boothathankettu dam in Ernakulam were opened and that of the Maniyar in Pathanamthitta and Aruvikkara here were raised as a precautionary measure following high inflow in the catchment area. Heavy rains and gusty winds, accompanied by extensive sea incursion, continued to cause widespread destruction in the coastal hamlets of Thiruvananthapuram, Ernakulam, Thrissur and Malappuram districts. Valiyathura pier, one of the oldest sea bridges in the state located here, developed a crack in the strong winds which hit the shores since last night.

A portion of the over 200 metre-long structure, which offers a breathtaking view of the sea, seemed tilted to a side in the morning, locals said.

Hundreds of houses were damaged in coastal belts across the state as sea water seeped in following high waves. The CM said at least 9 districts have been severely affected by the sea incursion.

TENDER

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER MECHANICAL HOSPITAL AND CENTRAL HEATING DIVISION SRINAGAR Telefax :- 0194-2496089, Email Id:- xenmhchdk@yahoo.in

(Short-term)

GIST of E-NIT NO: MHCHD/TS/2021-22/20/e-tendering Dated:-12-05-2021
For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor, J&K UT e-tenders are invited from registered/reputed/experienced firms with J&K Govt., CPWD, Railways and other State/Central Governments for the below mentioned work:-

Name of Work:- SITC of Open-well Submersible Pumping Units along with allied Mechanical Works for water supply at Govt. Chest Disease Hospital, Srinagar.
Est. Cost (Rs. in Lacs) :- 1.45
Cost of T/Doc. (In rupees) :- 200

Time of completion (in Days) :- 05

AA Accorded Vida No :- 08-MCS of 2021, Dt: 27-04-2021

TS.NO :- MHCHD/TS15 of 05/2021

1. The Tender document Consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, Bill of quantities (B.O.Q). Set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen/downloaded from the departmental website www.jktenders.gov.in from 12-05-2021 (18.00 hrs).

2. The bidders shall deposit their bids in electronic format on the above web site from 13-05-2021 (10.00 hrs). to 19-05-2021 (14:00 hrs) in two (02) cover.

3. The bids uploaded on the website up to due date and time will be opened on 19-05-2021 (16.00 hrs) or any date convenient to the department in the office of Executive Engineer, MHCHD, Srinagar.

No. DIPK-1587/21 Dated:- 15.05.2021

Sd/- Executive Engineer,
MHCHD, Srinagar



GOI's disastrous vaccine strategy will ensure a devastating third wave. It can't be repeated enough ~ India needs a proper vaccine strategy

CONGRESS LEADER RAHUL GANDHI

TAGGING MEDIA REPORTS CLAIMING THAT OVER 2,000 BODIES HAVE BEEN FOUND IN 1140 KM AREA ALONG THE GANGA

The Sunday Statesman
NEW DELHI, 16 MAY 2021

05

THUMBNAILS



People wait in their cars during drive-through vaccination, in Gurugram, on Saturday.

IANS

J&K Sacreligious act case: Four persons were arrested on Saturday in connection with a case related to a sacreligious act in Rajouri district of Jammu and Kashmir, police said. Several police parties were deputed to conduct raids on suspected locations and finally all the four main accused were arrested, police said, adding further legal formalities in the matter are underway. PTI

18+ jab begins in Ladakh: The third phase of the vaccination drive, which covers people in the age group of 18 to 44 years, started in the UT of Ladakh on Saturday, officials said. The inoculation drive started at six vaccine session sites, of which there are two fixed sites each in Leh and Kargil townships. PTI

J&K extends curfew: Keeping in view the Covid-19 spike, the Jammu and Kashmir administration on Saturday extended the curfew by another 7 days till 24 May. The decision was taken in a meeting that was held by the Lt. Governor Manoj Sinha. SNS

70-year-old raped in UP: A 70-year-old woman was allegedly raped by a 21-year-old man in Uttar Pradesh's Lalitpur district, police said on Saturday. The accused has been arrested, they said. The woman was allegedly raped when she was sleeping. She was alone at home at the time of the incident. PTI

NDRF doubles teams to 100 with 4,700 rescuers

Cyclone Tauktae:NDRF teams to be deployed in Kerala, K'taka, TN, Guj, Goa, Maha

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 15 MAY

The National Disaster Response Force has increased the number of teams from 53 to 100 to undertake relief and rescue measures in view of the impending Cyclone Tauktae, an official said on Saturday.

Each NDRF team has a strength of a total 47 personnel and hence, the total manpower identified for the task is 4,700 rescuers.

NDRF Director General S N Pradhan tweeted that these teams were being mobilised for deployment in the coastal regions of Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Goa and Maharashtra.

On Friday, he had said 53 teams were being committed for the cyclonic storm that was developing in the Arabian sea. The deployment of the NDRF teams has been increased following new inputs by the India Meteorological Department (IMD), Pradhan said.

Out of the 100 teams, an NDRF spokesperson said, 48 are being pre-deployed or stationed on the ground in the six states, while 20 are on stand-by and kept on alert.

Thirty-two teams are being kept as backup or reserve and can be airlifted upon requirement from various bases of the central force in the country, the spokesperson said. Each NDRF team is



In the wake of cyclone Tauktae alert, two C-130 J aircraft of IAF airlifted three NDRF teams comprising of 126 personnel and equipment from Bhubaneswar to Jamnagar.

equipped with satellite phones, other communication gadgets, tree and pole cutters, inflatable boats, basic medical aid and other relief and rescue tools. The spokesperson gave a breakup for the deployment of the pre-positioned 30 out of 48 teams.

In Gujarat, they are being stationed at Gir Somnath, Amreli, Porbandar, Dwarka, Jamnagar, Rajkot, Kutch, Morbi, Surat, Gandhinagar, Vadodara, Bhavnagar, Navsari, Bharuch and Junagadh districts.

A total of nine teams are being deployed in Kerala, five in Tamil Nadu, four in Maharashtra, three in Karnataka and one in Goa, he said.

The members of these teams have been vaccinated against coronavirus, have personal protection suits and are equipped with the required

tools, Pradhan said.

The spokesperson said they were "keeping a close watch over the developing situation and it is being monitored round-the-clock from the control room located at its headquarter in Delhi".

As per the IMD, he said in an update marked as issued at 6 pm, the depression over east-central and adjoining southeast Arabian sea has moved north-northwest and is very much likely to intensify into a severe cyclonic storm -- 'Tauktae' -- during the next three hours and very severe cyclonic storm during the subsequent 12 hours.

"It is very likely to cross Gujarat coast between Porbandar and Naliya around afternoon/evening of May 18," he said. The spokesperson added that all efforts are being made "in close collaboration with state authorities to ensure zero casualty and minimum damage to life and property".

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TN braces for cyclone: The Tamil Nadu government on Saturday braced for the impact of cyclone Tauktae, with chief minister M K Stalin directing officials to monitor level of water in dams and also ensure people's safety.

"Tauktae", currently over east-central and adjoining SE Arabian Sea, is likely to intensify into a severe cyclonic storm in the next 12 hours, according to the Met office.

Kanyakumari district having its border with Kerala, Tirunelveli and some of the districts in the Western Ghats region received rains today.

There was inundation at several places in Kanyakumari and Tirunelveli districts.

Goa authorities gear up to tackle situation: The government machinery in Goa has put in place necessary measures to tackle the situation in view of the warning about cyclone Tauktae, officials said on Saturday.

As per the India Meteorological Department's (IMD) prediction, Konkan and Goa are expected to receive heavy to very heavy rainfall on May 15 and 16 as the weather condition is very likely to intensify into cyclonic storm Tauktae.

Sacrilege cases: Sukhbir Badal asks Cong to share evidence

CHANDIGARH, 15 MAY

Shiromani Akali Dal chief Sukhbir Singh Badal on Saturday asked Congress leaders to share the proof, if they have any, on the "planning and execution" of the alleged acts of the desecration of a religious text in the state's Faridkot in 2015.

West Bengal chief secretary Alapan Bandyopadhyay said a revised schedule for the state board examinations will be announced later.

"No secondary and higher secondary examinations will be held in June," he told reporters at the state secretariat, 'Nabanna'.

Making arrangements for holding the Madhyamik examinations for Class 10 students

and the Higher Secondary tests for Class 12 will be difficult during the lockdown period, he said. The Madhyamik exams 2021 were set to begin on June 1 and Higher Secondary exams on 15 June.

The education department will hold meetings with the authorities of the state Madhyamik and Higher Secondary boards to decide on a revised schedule for both the exams, Bandyopadhyay added.

Quoting Government records, the vernacular daily reported that 1.23 lakh death certificates were issued in the state during 71 days from 1 March to 10 May while only 4,218 deaths have been attributed to Covid-19 during the corresponding period.

The report has also pointed out that only 58,000 death certificates were issued in Gujarat during the same 71 days last year.

Refuting the charges of under-reporting of Covid-19 casualties, Minister of State for Home Pradeep Singh

Jadeja said that such reports are "misleading" and "baseless"

as number of death certificates issued is not the only indicator of deaths during a time frame.

Additional Chief Secre-

STICKING TO RULES



A nearly deserted heritage street near the golden Temple during Covid-induced weekend lockdown, in Amritsar on Saturday.

Gujarat govt denies hiding Covid deaths

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
GANDHINAGAR, 15 MAY

Cong leaders said the sum of the number of the death certificates collected nearly tallies with the numbers published and that comes to 1,23,873 in 2021 against 58,068 last year.

tary (Home) Pankaj Kumar explained that death, its registration in government records and issue of death certificate are three different events with time lags between them. Thus, there would always be a time gap between death and issue of death certificates, he said.

Due to the Covid-related lockdown last year, the Government had relaxed the rule to register deaths within 21 days, he said, adding that the extension is valid till 31 July this year.

The delay in death registrations due to the relaxation granted for lockdown could also contribute to backlog of death certificates, said Pankaj Kumar about the apparent high number quoted in the news report.

Moreover, annual increase in population would also be reflected in number of deaths and issue of death certificates, the Additional Chief Secretary argued to prove that the government is not under-reporting the Covid-19 deaths.

Delhi logs 6,430 cases, 337 deaths

The number of people under home isolation in the city dipped to 42,484 from yesterday's 45,099 while the number of containment zones rose to 57,179 from 56,470 a day before.

SNS
NEW DELHI, 15 MAY

Delhi today recorded 6,430 new Covid cases and 337 fatalities while the positivity rate dipped to 11.32 percent, according to the Delhi government's latest health bulletin.

The number of tests that detected these cases was however relatively lesser - only 56,811 tests.

The number of active cases reportedly decreased to 66,295 from yesterday's 71,794.

The number of people under home isolation in the city dipped to 42,484 from yesterday's 45,099 while the number of containment zones rose to 57,179 from 56,470 a day before.

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The number of people under home isolation in the city dipped to 42,484 from yesterday's 45,099 while the number of containment zones rose to 57,179 from 56,470 a day before.

Delhi's Covid caseload rose to 13,87,411 while its toll mounted to 21,244, the health bulletin said. Nearly 13 lakh patients have recovered from the infection so far.

Of Hill tea gardens and their names

MANAS R BANNERJEE
SILIGURI, 15 MAY

As the state government planned to implement the Teesta Barrage Project for better production of the Kharip crop and for the development of economy from the agriculture sector in this region as well as southern north Bengal, a section of the local people in this region, especially in areas in Jalpaiguri, Siliguri and even North Dinajpur, were forced to convert their agricultural fields into small tea gardens and also start pineapple cultivation as per the demand in the market as well as the climate and soil conditions.

Work on the Teesta Barrage Project is still going on slowly, as the project has lost importance in many areas after locals changed their cultivation pattern in the region for better earnings. However, the economic condition of the farmers is not so good, though small tea growers here contribute over 50 percent of the total tea production in the region, due to some technical reasons, including some issues related to the administration.

Similarly, organised as well as registered tea gardens (RTG) are in the same boat, while planters in both Darjeeling Hills and the Dooars have along list of ways to develop the present industry, which was introduced by the Britishers by converting agriculture, forest and other categories of land to tea farming in Darjeeling Hills since 1840.

Jeewan Prakash Gurung, in his book titled 'All in a cup of tea,' showcases 87 tea gardens, which were set up during the British rule, and talks about the different types of land that were converted into tea plantations in Darjeeling Hills, which is now famous the world over for producing good quality tea.

Mr Gurung also tries hard to provide an elaborate background of those land and such gardens.

The Alubari Tea Garden was established as the first tea plantation in Darjeeling in 1840 under the Kurseong and Darjeeling Tea Company. Alubari means 'potato field,' indicating that potato fields must have been converted into a tea garden. Significantly, the Britishers did not face problems converting the land like the Left government had to face problems setting up Tata Motors at Singur, the so-called potato and paddy producing area, in Hooghly in West Bengal.

Rangmook and Cedres, Singbuli, Turzam and many others, which are popular among tea drinkers. In Lepcha language, Singbuli means the place where tigers roar. This tea garden comprises 473.95 hectares under tea between tea elevations of 2100 and 4600 feet. Peshok is a Lepcha word, which means dense forest. Mr Gurung says in the book.

Very interesting information that the author gives his readers is about a place in Darjeeling Hills that used to produce mangoes. But in the 1850s, the area was converted into a tea plantation, which was named Ambootia, which comes from the local word 'Aam Batay,' which means 'mango tree,' he says. The Britishers also converted bamboo bushes into tea plantations, according to the author. He cites records that show that Badamtam meant 'bank of bamboos,' and the tea plantation was set up after removing the bamboo bushes there. Like Badamtam, the Malootar tea plantation was set up after

removing bamboos. Malootar means 'land of bamboos.' However, Oaks garden was set up after removing oak trees in Sonada Valley." Mr Gurung says. In 1859, an area of medicinal plantation was converted into Dooteriah, the tea garden of 444.92 hectares. According to Mr Gurung, the name comes from a medicinal plant called 'Dhaturah.'

He adds that at a time when the government is trying to keep vultures alive by running captive breeding centres in North Bengal, a tea plantation was set up at Giddhapahar, locally known as the 'hill of the vultures.' Similarly, the hub of white crested pheasant, locally known as 'Kalej,' a now endangered species, was converted into the Kallej Valley tea plantation.

On the other hand, Gyabewa is set up in the millet fields. 'Gya' means millet and 'Baree' is field. Similarly, maize fields were converted into the Makaibari Tea Estate in 1859, Mr Gurung says.

Also, keeping tourism devel-

opment in mind, a tea plantation was developed in the name of Happy Valley in 1852, comprising 145.16 hectares, between elevations of 3500 and 6500 feet.

On the other hand, another tea plantation, Salimbong, derived from the Lepcha word Sulgung, which means land of orange trees, was also set up.

Some gardens were named after natural places like the Teesta Valley, named after the river that originates from Sikkim. In Lepcha language, Tukhda means mist/fog. Similarly, Poobong is a valley behind clouds in the Lepcha language, while Rohini tea plantation, on the way to Darjeeling from Siliguri, was named after a local word 'Rahanu,' which means to stay as a stopping point for travelers, Mr Gurung says.

Yet another popular tea plantation, Jungpana, also has a story behind it. The book 'All in a cup of tea' says: "The story goes that there was a British planter who had a Chowkidar called Junga Bahadur. The planter was extremely fond of hunting and Junga Bahadur was his constant companion. One day, while hunting in the area, they were attacked by a tiger. Junga Bahadur immediately jumped to the forefront and saved his master, but in doing so, was grievously injured. In his dying moments he asked for water (pani) before succumbing to his injuries, and thus the name Jungpana (the place where Junga Bahadur was given pani) came into being."

Floating body fear: Panic in Manikchak



STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
MALDA, 15 MAY

Hiranandapur GP, however, refused he had started making such public announcements. "Some people may have done so in the name of the GP, but I am not aware of it. The matter will be looked into," he said.

According to the sources, a local club and the Hiranandapur panchayat have started making public announcements in loudspeakers, discouraging people from using the Ganga waters in any household work like cooking, drinking or even bathing, given the assumption that the waters there might be infected due to the floating bodies in the upper catchment areas.

A campaign in this regard has also gone viral on social media, drawing the public's attention. "We are afraid to use river water as infection might have spread in the waters from those bodies spotted floating in the Ganga in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. We are also not willing to eat fish caught in the river for that can also bring contamination," Uday Mandal, a local in Manikchak, said. Kajal Mandal, the pradhan of the

block administration and the police, on the other hand, have appealed to all to not spread any rumour. They have also warned of legal action against anyone doing so.

"The directives we have received from Nabanna do not talk of the need to make such public announcements," Block Development Officer of Manikchak, Joy Ahmed, said.

Daybreak in TN

After gap of three years when Tamil Nadu was remote-controlled by the BJP government at the Centre, Dravidian rule returned to the State on 7 May when MK Stalin, president of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, was sworn in as Chief Minister. He and his 33-member ministerial team, in keeping with the Dravidian secular tradition, took their oath of office and secrecy under their "conscience." Within five hours of occupying Fort St George, Stalin signed five files to implement five of the important promises made in the DMK's election manifesto, bringing much relief to the groaning masses. Apart from offering Rs 4,000 each as Covid-19 relief to family cardholders and providing free travel for women in city government buses, retail price of milk was reduced by Rs 3 a litre while rise in price is the order of the day. The ruling AIADMK and its allies were entirely out of Chennai. The Tamil Nadu electorate has expressed in clear terms its unwillingness to give any room for non-Dravidian forces. The AIADMK believed, mistakenly perhaps, that the popularity of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the spread of Hindutva politics across the nation will overcome Dravidian hegemony and enable it to score a hat-trick. However, the BJP managed to re-enter the Tamil Nadu Assembly after an absence of two decades, but it was by hitching a piggy-back ride on the AIADMK, its senior alliance partner.

Instead of blaming the previous government for the horrendous problems left behind, Stalin adopted a statesman-like approach by advising his cadre to get on with the work ahead with confidence. He had vowed to make Tamil Nadu the best place to live in India. "I do not treat myself as the Chief Minister, but as a frontline worker. Governance is not a bed of roses, but full of thorns," he wrote in 'Murasoli', official organ of the DMK. Promising a clean and transparent administration, he said the DMK assumed office at a time Covid-19 had opened its fangs. He said Covid treatment expenses in private hospitals would be paid by the government under the State's health insurance scheme. Steps are being taken on a war footing to operationalise all defunct oxygen plants across Tamil Nadu to treat Covid-19 patients and to supply to other States. This is in sharp contrast to the attitude of the outgoing Chief Minister Edappadi Palaniswami who was reluctant to reopen closed oxygen plants. Corona Relief Kits containing 13 grocery items will be distributed free of cost to 2.11 crore family cardholders from 3 June for which the Tamil Nadu Civil Supplies Corporation has already floated tenders. International tenders have been floated to procure Covid-19 vaccines to hasten vaccination of people in the 18 to 45 age group. The sleepy Chennai Corporation was given a new commissioner, Gagandeep Singh Bedi, whose dynamism and expertise in disaster management is well known. The only fly in the ointment is the State's finances. For the first time in the history of Tamil Nadu, the AIADMK government was borrowing money to meet compulsory expenses like payment of interest and salaries. Reviving and restructuring the State's economy is a challenging task for the new government.

Tutor extraordinaire

Rahul Dravid, quite rightly, came to be widely spoken of in very effusive terms when India won their second successive Test series in Australia earlier this year. For one reason or another, they had begun looking short on front-rank talent as the serialised contest unfolded when their subsidiary options, very heart-warmingly, started making a splash. And it might not be exaggerating things if it is said that, eventually, when it was time for the triumph to be savoured, you would have been hard put to it to explain whom they owed it more to, the marquee names or the improbable neophytes who had compelled adulation by making themselves eminently useful when the going got rather too hot. It didn't take India too long to acknowledge Dravid's contribution to the unprecedented overall achievement, given that he it was who had groomed quite a few of the new kids to their dramatically found stellar status by tutoring India's U-19 boys and, of course, their A team. It also helps that Dravid happens to be the headmaster at the National Cricket Academy in Bengaluru. Few of us know indigenous talent better than the former national captain who has, since calling it quits as a player, been concentrating on nurturing young talent. So the country can feel justifiably, even pleasurable expectant when he is mentioned as the coach of a second-string limited-overs contingent required to visit Sri Lanka while our first-choice boys are to be away in England. It's a step up in Dravid's coaching career even if it isn't with India's la creme de la creme that he will be on a mission which does not really lend itself to being described as impossible. Truth to tell, it's just as well that this is so because success, should it come about, in the venture will surely be attributed as much to his cerebral powers as the performers' skills. Many cricket coaches carry on simply by being, euphemistically speaking, self-effacing. The senior Indian team have their captain at the top, with the coach too obliged to be loyal to him. Or, so it is said. Dravid might not be inclined to follow in the footsteps of these predecessors of his. He has always known what he is doing. And any team that he coaches will reflect his thinking and beliefs, thereby acquiring a distinctly different identity of its own. Will he be cricket's closest approximation to a football coach who actually leads his team? There's a point here, though. Anil Kumble was not really very far from it and he stepped away when, as he said, his relationship with captain Virat Kohli had become untenable. The cricket board looked the other way. Dravid cannot have forgotten it. Well might he be wary when they, going forward, hand him the ladder to the top, for he knows taking it away could with them be the work of an instant.

Stunted children

Malnutrition has an irreversible effect on health and human development. The first 'Golden 1000 Days' of a child's life are a unique period of opportunity when the foundations of optimum health, growth, and neurodevelopment across the lifespan is established

Nutritional well-being is central for the achievement of several national and international development goals (WHO 2016; NITI Aayog 2017). Improved nutrition is instrumental in improvements in other social objectives as well as improved cognitive ability. While India has achieved some success in income poverty reduction, the massive and unrelenting burden of malnutrition is a challenging reality. The overall reduction in malnutrition has been very slow. The country ranked 94 among 107 nations in the Global Hunger Index 2020. According to the report, 14 per cent of Indian's population is malnourished. However, in the words of Amartya Sen: "In the avoidance of endemic undernourishment and hunger, India has done worse than nearly every country in the world."

Among the nutritional outcome measures, anthropometric measures (WHO's method) are considered to have an advantage over others since body measurements are sensitive to even minor levels of malnutrition. Anthropometric measures, weight-for-age (underweight), height-for-age (stunted) and weight-for-height (wasted) are used to measure nutritional deprivation among children. 'Wasting' is an indicator of acute stage of malnutrition as well as a predictor of child mortality and morbidity. 'Stunting' in childhood indicates chronic malnutrition. It has been a concern and is associated with poorer educational and economic outcomes. Stunted children suffer reduction in IQ by as many as 15 points, significantly affecting schooling and education, and increasing risks of drop-out. It is well known that stunting promotes an intergenerational propagation of malnutrition. Moreover, it contributes to higher chances of maternal and neonatal mortality by creating difficulties during labour and delivery. A child is 'underweight' if s/he is in the bottom 5th percentile for weight compared to their height. It is not only classified compared to other children of that age, but to their height as we clinically look for a child to be proportionate. It is a composite measure of both chronic (stunting) and acute (wasting) malnutrition. Usually, children born prematurely are often underweight.

Malnutrition occurs at all stages. Malnutrition among women or adolescent girls and children is a cause of grave concern. Malnourished women or adolescent girls give birth to babies that are born stunted and thin. In this way, undernutrition is handed down from one generation to another as a terrifying inheritance. These children fail to experience much catch-up growth in subsequent years. They are likely to get sick, they enter school late, they do not learn well, and they are less productive as adults.

Moreover, stunting, along with low birth weight (LBW), is a risk factor for adult chronic disease. Increasing evidence points to the fetal and early childhood origins of adult chronic diseases. The famous Barker Hypothesis posits that maternal dietary imbalances at critical periods of development of the womb can trigger an adaptive redistribution of fetal resources (including



growth retardation). Such adaptations affect fetal structure and metabolism in ways that predispose the individual to later cardiovascular and endocrine diseases. The correlation between LBW or early childhood stunting and cardiovascular and diabetes may arise from the fact that nutritional deprivation in utero or in early childhood programmes a newborn for a life of scarcity. The problems arise when the child's system is later confronted by a world of plenty. Persons suffering from childhood malnutrition are more likely to be afflicted by diet-related diseases (that were formerly thought to be associated with increasing affluence) such as diabetes, CVD and hypertension.

Malnutrition has an irreversible effect on health and human development. The first 'Golden 1000 Days' of a child's life - the time between conception and a child's second birthday - are a unique period of opportunity when the foundations of optimum health, growth, and neurodevelopment across the lifespan is established. During the period, under proper nutrition, children's brains can form 1000 neural connections every second. A three-year-old's brain is twice as active as that of an adult and the connections the brain makes are the building blocks of the future. The first 2000 days (from conception to age 5) are also a critical time for physical, cognitive, social and emotional health. What happens in the first 2000 days of life has been shown to have an impact throughout life.

Given its intrinsic and instrumental relevance, the Union and state governments in India have launched important nutrition-specific programmes starting from the Balwadi Nutrition Programme (BNP) in 1970, the massive ICDS in the late 1970s and the Mid-day Meal Scheme (MDMS) in 1995. Beneficiaries of the ICDS programme are children in the age group of 0-6, pregnant women and lactating mothers.

It is the largest outreach programme operational through Anganwadi Centres (AWC) that serve as first outpost for health,

growth and early learning services at the village level. In 2018, the Government of India launched a flagship scheme, POSHAN (Prime Minister's Overarching Scheme for Holistic Nutrition) Abhiyaan, with an aim to direct the country's attention towards malnutrition of children, pregnant women and lactating mothers and to address it in a mission-mode.

Despite several programmes and schemes, India's performance towards reducing child malnutrition has failed in the last half decade. One of the startling revelations of the recent National Family Health Survey (NFHS) 5 for the year 2019-20 released by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare shows that several states in the country have either witnessed meagre improvements or sustained reversals on child (under 5 years) malnutrition parameters such as stunting, wasting, underweight and mortality rate. Sixteen states recorded an increase in underweight and severely wasted under-5 children among 22 states that were surveyed during the first phase of the NFHS report. Similarly, 13 states and UTs of the 22 surveyed registered a surge in the percentage of stunted children under five in comparison to NFHS-4 (2015-16). Instead of getting the wasting parameter down, states such

as Telangana, Kerala, Bihar and Assam as well as the UT of J&K have witnessed an increase. States like Maharashtra and West Bengal have remained stagnant. When it comes to the proportion of underweight children, big states like Gujarat, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Telangana, Assam and Kerala have seen an increase.

What's worse is the fact that the reversal in the downward trend has happened in child stunting. As mentioned above, stunting reflects chronic under-nutrition. More than any other factor, it is likely to have long-lasting adverse effects on the cognitive and physical development of a child. States like Telangana, Gujarat, Kerala, Maharashtra, and West Bengal saw increased levels of child stunting.

Stunting is when a child has

a low height for its age. It is different from wasting. If stunting is low height for a child's weight, wasting is low weight for a child's height. Indeed, the average height of a population's children is increasingly recognised as an important measure of human development. This is because the distribution of height in a population is shaped by the health and well-being that children experience at young ages. Early life is an important time; what happens to babies and children matters for their achievement, health, and survival throughout their lives.

A stunted child may have a poorer immune system, brain functions and organ development. Performing below average in these areas may also limit future productivity and threaten the health of their children. Stunted children may never reach their full cognitive potential, which can lead to a lower IQ and impaired brain development. This also affects socio-emotional skills and overall health. A study conducted by Dean Spears has also shown that taller children perform better on average on tests of cognitive achievement, in part because of difference in early-life health and net nutrition. Indian children are unhealthy, on average. The average child in India is shorter than children raised by upper-middle class families; shorter than in other developing countries and is much shorter than would be achievable with better health, nutrition, sanitation and maternal well-being.

It is a challenging reality in India. At the national level, a third of stunted children come from the richest families. Despite rapid economic growth, it is India's shame that Indian children are on an average shorter not only than children of the poorer and mortality stricken sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries, they are among the shortest in the world. This astonishing reality is the 'Asian enigma', one that can hardly be explained in terms of genetic differences. In the words of Amartya Sen: "This is India's defective development." Poor sanitation has a direct impact on the high rate of stunted children in India. Experts have ascribed this puzzle to the consequences of widespread open defecation (OD). An analysis of as many as 140 demographic and health surveys, conducted by Dean Spears, revealed that the height of Indian children correlates with their and their neighbors' access to toilets, and that OD accounts for much of the stunting in India. It is much less common in sub-Saharan Africa, China and Bangladesh.

There is no simple solution for preventing stunting. However, focusing on what is commonly referred to as the first 1000 days is a key opportunity to ensure the healthy development of children.

Improving education among women, encouraging a diversified diet and providing easier access to health care are some of the ways in which India can achieve nutrition security by 2030. As Sen says: "It is not easy to think of any social problems in the contemporary world that deserves greater attention than the foggy adversity of chronic and widespread undernutrition."

A MEMBER OF THE ANN ASIA NEWS NETWORK

ASIAN VOICES

Go back to your country!

Recently, a few racially biased Americans reportedly yelled at people of Asian origin, "Go back to your country!" and "You don't belong here," while violently attacking them. Some of the assailants were homeless and others lived in their cars. Presumably, some of them were angry because they had lost their jobs due to the pandemic. Nonetheless, their ignorant and hateful acts cannot be excused. Beyond the physical violence, phrases like "Go back to your country!" or "You do not belong here!" cause lasting damage. Both are an unbearable affront either to Asian Americans who became citizens by working hard through the immigration process, or to those born in the United States, which is their homeland by birthright.

The irony is that, strictly speaking, no one belongs in America originally, except for Native Americans. All other Americans are immigrants or descendants of immigrants. Hence, only Native Americans are entitled to say, "Go back to your country!" or "You don't belong here." Still, however, Americans of European or African origin would feel insulted if someone told them to go back to Europe or Africa. Asian Americans are no different. Those thoughtless Americans who utter, "Go back to your country!" should know that in many other countries, people who subscribe to anti-Americanism, too, shout, "Americans, go home!" They should know that in some countries Americans are refused and unwelcomed. Whether tourists or temporary residents in a foreign coun-

H The Korea Herald

try, Americans often find themselves a symbol of what the White House stands for. They may think that they have nothing to do with Washington or do not support American foreign policies. In the eyes of foreigners, however, the difference does not exist. Likewise, the frivolous Americans who roar, "Go back to your country!" do not differentiate Chinese people from other Asians, even though they are upset because of COVID-19 which they believe originated from China. Suppose you do not like a particular European country, you do not attack indiscriminately all Europeans unless you are incredibly stupid. Of course, that does not mean you can attack people of Chinese origin either. When anti-American sentiment was rising in South Korea some time ago, a few non-American Westerners wore a T-shirt saying, "I'm not an American." Obviously, it was a mockery of the situation and perhaps a precaution, as well. Yet, the phrase did not imply that people should attack Americans. Today in the US, Asian Americans are frustrated, denied any identity or nationality, except for the one that is implicit in the much-abused epithet, "Asian."

While browsing articles in the Los Angeles Times about the LA Riots in 1992 lately, my daughter Min came across an intriguing interview with a Chinese American who was living in LA at that time, and passed it onto me. The Chinese American said that it was a hard time for Asian Americans and that he was afraid that the rioters might mistake him as a Korean American and do harm to him. Obviously, he did not know that other Asians would say the same thing regarding Chinese Americans three decades later.

Perhaps he did not mean it, and yet, his remarks seemed to imply that the attacks on Korean Americans during the riots were all right, but those on other Asian Americans were not. Instead of expressing his fear of mistaken identity, therefore, the Chinese American should have condemned the rioters' attack on "any" Asian Americans.

SHAMEFUL

SIR, I refer to the editorial 'Attack on Learning' published today on the attack on a school in Afghanistan. It is clear that Muslim fundamentalism thinks its main enemy is neither USA nor the western world but education, especially for girls. It

is surprising that our so-called liberal intellectuals did not come out to condemn the attack strongly. Perhaps they think any condemnation of Muslim fundamentalism will make them look communal.

I think all sane people including Muslims should come forward and condemn this heinous act. Unfortunately there are still some Muslims, who are not fundamentalist in any sense, who think education for women need not be a priority.

Yours, etc., Rajkumar Roychoudhury, Kolkata, 12 May.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR editor@thestatesman.com

A century of Ray's light and sound

SIR, A French national residing in Paris would instantly recall every film made by Satyajit Ray, Ritwick Ghatak, and Mrinal Sen. Political leaders, religious revivalists and philosophers from the Indian subcontinent would remain just passing curiosities. Ray never had a didactic approach. In his discourses and writings, he never explained that cinema was the spectacle of perpetual motion, and the methods of cinema comprised mainly camera movements, where the camera was always moving. The objective of the cinema, or the moving camera, or both moving, were the means of cinema. Ray recognised the genius of Ghatak and admired Ghatak's sharp cuts, as a

tool reinforcing the depths of camera movements. Honesty and an imperishable support for people's causes governed his consciousness. He was never a greedy man. When during the national Emergency (1975-77) the then Indian Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, offered him

the appointment of President of India, he declined.

Towards the end of the 1960s, a young scholar, David McCutcheon, from Cambridge University, came to Calcutta for a doctoral thesis on Ray.

There was instant admiration and affection between Ray and McCutcheon. The English transla-

tion of the film title "Seemabaddho" as "Company Limited" was given by McCutcheon. Suddenly one day, McCutcheon passed away. Ray wrote a full-page tribute to his young friend as to editorial page special in *The Statesman*. He concluded the

article thus: "There is nothing logical as to who will live and who will die. And what could be more irrational in the scheme of things than the death of David McCutcheon itself?"

Ray had a habit of watching an important film on widescreen every day. Getting back home, Ray would write down from memory the shooting script of the film, never missing a single camera movement and cut. Barring the presence of Subrata Mitra (camera), Banshi Chandra Gupta (set designer), Mriganka Sekhar Ray (illustrious film critic and a reputed short film-maker), Ray's Bishop Lefroy Road apartment would be cluttered with cinema ignoramus and cinema illiterates.

Yours, etc., Abhijit Ghosh-Dastidar, (Media and film critic, *Frontier*), Kolkata, 14 May.



PARTHA P. MAJUMDER

After I got my first dose of Covishield, I called Reena, a friend for over 45 years. Reena retired from service some years ago and now lives by herself. I asked Reena whether she has taken a vaccine. "No, I haven't and I won't," she said. "But why?" I asked. Reena said that she knew of persons who received a vaccine and still came down with Covid-19. Also, Reena said that she has no one to look after her if she suffered from the side effects of the vaccine. Therefore, she wouldn't take a vaccine and she refused to listen to my arguments to convince her.

Reena is not the only one who is refusing to take a vaccine. Vaccine hesitancy is now considered as a major impediment to the control of the pandemic. The vaccines against the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus train our immune systems how to recognize the virus and fight back before it can cause Covid-19. That's how the vaccines protect us. However, during this process of preparing our body to protect itself, the vaccines sometimes cause reactions lasting for a few days, such as fever or flu-like symptoms. This is normal, even if annoying. We also need to recognise that in order for our bodies to build immunity to protect ourselves against the coronavirus infection, several weeks must elapse after we have vaccinated. During this period we are vulnerable to being infected. Further, no vaccine provides 100 per cent protection. Therefore, even after vaccination some persons fall ill with Covid-19. This is also normal. Therefore to Reena and others who buy her argument, I appeal that these normal consequences of vaccination must not deter you from being fully vaccinated.

A virus cannot replicate, that is produce more copies of itself, unless it enters the cell of another organism. The SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus needs to enter cells of a human body to replicate. The more it is able to replicate, the greater is the chance that it will be able to infect another person. A vaccine disables, to a large but variable extent, the ability of a virus to enter the body of a recipient. The protection afforded by a vaccine therefore not only protects the recipient, but also protects others from infection. A sure way of lowering the spread of a virus is to shrink the pool of persons to infect. A vaccine does this effectively.

A friend, who had recovered from Covid-19 last year, called to ask whether he should take a vaccine. He felt that since many are struggling to get a vaccine, perhaps he should save a complete dose of the vaccine for others. I explained to him that the natural infection indeed confers some protection against infection by the same virus, but the immune response to natural infection is known to vary among infected individuals. The variability is both in

Why vaccination is vital

respect of the strength of response and how long it lasts. The vaccines against the coronavirus produce more robust and more stable immunity than the natural infection. Therefore, even if a person has suffered from Covid-19, (s)he must still take a vaccine. And, must take the complete dose of the vaccine to enjoy the most stable protection. As a matter of fact, a person who receives a vaccine after recovering from natural infection produces a much sturdier immune response than one who only receives vaccination. However, a small number of vaccinated persons still contract infection. These are called "breakthrough infections," implying that the infection has broken through the wall of protection provided by the vaccine. The causes of breakthrough infections remain unclear; scientists are engaged in identifying the causes.

Presently many millions are infected with the coronavirus. In the face of this huge load of infection, a vaccine against the coronavirus may not protect us as reliably as it should. In other words, many vaccine recipients may get infected and transmit. But the available vaccines are known to protect us from severe Covid-19 and death, if we are infected. As more and more of us get ourselves vaccinated, the number of infected persons will reduce in the population. The vaccine will then more strongly protect us from acquiring the infection.

We are also hearing about many variants of the coronavirus – "double mutant," U.K. variant, South African variant, Indian variant, etc. Variants arise as a consequence of the natural evolutionary process. Questions have been raised about the ability of the currently available vaccines to protect us from these variant coronaviruses. Opinions differ. During this pandemic, it is hardly possible to conduct scientifically-designed studies to answer such questions. Adhoc answers to these questions are being obtained by observing individuals who are reinfected after vaccination. The differing opinions cannot justify our hesitation to take the currently available vaccines. Some level of protection will be provided by the current vaccines against the variant, even if the level of protection is insufficient. And, at this time any level of protection is better than no protection at all. Therefore, there is no room for second thoughts on getting fully vaccinated. Even if a small fraction of our people refuses and remains unvaccinated, this pandemic will be hard to control. I hope that Reena is listening.

Reena and other vaccine-hesitant persons have also raised the issue of blood clots after vaccination. It is true a very small number of persons suffer one or more adverse outcomes of vaccination. Sometimes the adverse out-



comes cannot even be traced back to the vaccination. In any case, agencies such as the World Health Organisation sit up and call for a temporary halt to using the putatively dangerous vaccine while they evaluate evidence. This had happened for Covishield. The evidence exonerated the vaccine which has been put back into use. We have to be careful, but respect scientific evidence.

While I am emphasizing that no one should be hesitant to get fully vaccinated, there are millions who are wanting to get a vaccine and are unable. My neighbours had lined up at 4 AM to get a vaccine dose, only to return home around mid-day without being able to get a jab because of inadequate availability. The sudden rise in demand in vaccine doses is proportional to the huge surge in infections. The volume of this surge may not have been anticipated. Warning bells were, however, sounded from many corners but remained unheeded. Election rallies, Kumbh Mela, large wedding gatherings and, in spite of a notification from the Election Commission to exercise restraint, even election victory jubilations were held. Participants of these large congregations who came from far and wide to participate got infected and carried the infections home. Politicians were more interested in getting their votes than in the lives.

The aggressive, but sensible, vaccination strategy that was announced at the beginning of the year was welcomed by everyone. High-risk groups in the population, such as frontline and healthcare workers, elderly citizens, etc. were identified and 300 mil-

lion of them were to be rapidly vaccinated. But the strategy was not followed. We became complacent as the number of new infections fell. On March 7, when less than 1 per cent of our population was vaccinated, our Union Health Minister, Dr. Harsh Vardhan, announced that "we are in the endgame" of the pandemic in India. We relaxed on providing vaccinations. Today, only about 3 per cent of our population is vaccinated. We hear wails from people wanting to be vaccinated, but doses are unavailable. How sad! How unprepared we have been!

This coronavirus spreads rapidly. Some of the variants that are arising are spreading even faster. We are concerned about the B.1.617 variant that was first found in India in December 2020. The rapidity of spread of this variant, coupled with its ability to replicate more efficiently and cause more lung lesions prompted the World Health Organisation to declare B.1.617 as a "variant of concern." This variant lineage has now evolved into three sub-lineages, of which one – B.1.617.2 – is causing greater concern. It is a super-rapid spreader. It has also traveled to many other parts of the world, notably the U.K., and has infected many in those regions.

In addition to vaccines, what must we do to control the pandemic in our country? We must identify variants soon after they arise. This can only be done by sequencing the genome of the virus and analyzing the sequence data rapidly. Not enough sequencing is being done. And the data are not being shared publicly,

even though public funds are being used to generate these data. We must not only identify new variants soon after these arise, but also rapidly assess their local spread. Such evidence can be used to clamp local lockdowns to prevent the spread of the variant to a wider area. Local public health measures can also be enhanced. This will require the State, scientists and public health officials to work in tandem. This is not being done.

Country-wide lockdown is again being recommended by many, which will adversely impact the economy and inflict tremendous pain on our poor citizens. About 900 scientists, including myself, had appealed to the Prime Minister on April 30 to make relevant data accessible to all scientists, safeguarding confidentiality of data donors, and to scale up collection of relevant data pertaining to infected and vaccinated persons. The intent was to analyze these data variously and to provide scientific feedback to public health policymakers. The Principal Scientific Advisor to the Prime Minister issued a statement on May 4 – the tenor of which appeared positive – and provided directions on how to ultimately access data collected with public funds. Some of us have followed his directions. We are still waiting for a useful response. Time is of the essence. Intent to help generate dynamic evidence-based strategies must not remain intentions for long. We must not remain mute spectators to the horrors of death and suffering.

The writer is a National Science Chair, Government of India.

Racists must not be tolerated

KIM SEONG-KON

Recently, a few racially biased Americans reportedly yelled at people of Asian origin, "Go back to your country" and "You don't belong here," while violently attacking them. Some of the assailants were homeless and others lived in their cars. Presumably, some of them were angry because they had lost their jobs due to the pandemic. Nonetheless, their ignorant and hateful acts cannot be excused.

Beyond the physical violence, phrases like "Go back to your country!" or "You do not belong here!" cause lasting damage. Both are an unbearable affront either to Asian Americans who became citizens by working hard through the immigration process, or to those born in the United States, which is their homeland by birthright.

The irony is that, strictly speaking, no one belongs in America originally, except for Native Americans. All other Americans are immigrants or descendants of immigrants. Hence, only Native Americans are entitled to say, "Go back to your country!" or "You don't belong here." Still, however, Americans of European or African origin would feel insulted if someone



told them to go back to Europe or Africa. Asian Americans are no different.

Those thoughtless Americans who utter, "Go back to your country!" should know that in many other countries, people who subscribe to anti-Americanism, too, shout, "Americans, go home!" They should know that in some countries Americans are refused and unwelcome. Whether tourists or temporary residents in a foreign country, Americans often find themselves a symbol of what the

White House stands for. They may think that they have nothing to do with Washington or do not support American foreign policies. In the eyes of foreigners, however, the difference does not exist.

Likewise, the frivolous Americans who roar, "Go back to your country!" do not differentiate Chinese people from other Asians, even though they are upset because of Covid-19 which they believe originated from China. Suppose you do not like a particular European country,

you do not attack indiscriminately all Europeans unless you are incredibly stupid.

Of course, that does not mean you can attack people of Chinese origin either.

When anti-American sentiment was rising in South Korea some time ago, a few non-American Westerners wore a T-shirt saying, "I'm not an American." Obviously, it was a mockery of the situation and perhaps a precaution, as well. Yet, the phrase did not imply that people should attack Americans. Today in the US, Asian Americans are frustrated, denied any identity or nationality, except for the one that is implicit in the much-maligned epithet, "Asian."

While browsing articles in the Los Angeles Times about the LA Riots in 1992 lately, my daughter Min came across an intriguing interview with a Chinese American who was living in LA at that time, and passed it onto me. The Chinese American said that it was a hard time for Asian Americans and he was afraid that the rioters might mistake him as a Korean American and do harm to him. Obviously, he did not know that other Asians would say the same thing regarding Chinese Americans three decades later. Perhaps he did not mean it, and yet, his remarks seemed to imply that the attacks on Korean Americans during the riots were all right, but those

on other Asian Americans were not. Instead of expressing his fear of mistaken identity, therefore, the Chinese American should have condemned the rioters' attack on "any" Asian Americans.

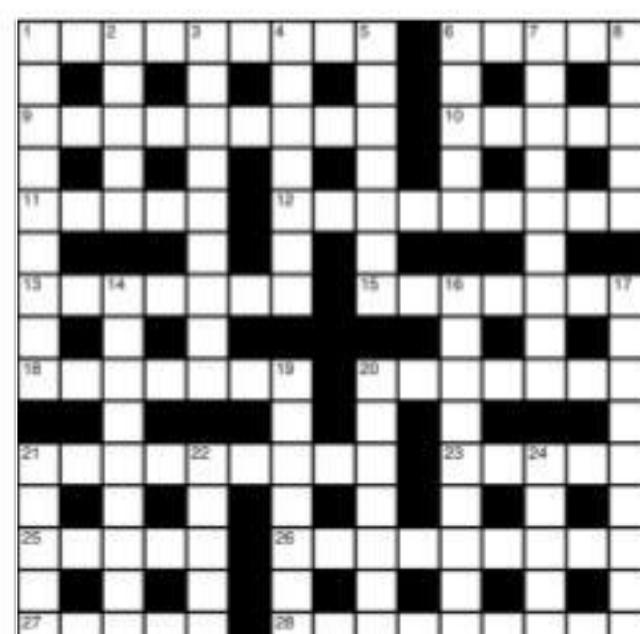
In America, only a handful of psychologically insecure people have attacked Asian Americans. On the contrary, ordinary Americans, who are ashamed of those disgraceful people, become even nicer and kinder to Asian Americans these days. Recently, moreover, the US Senate has passed, with overwhelming support, the Anti-Asian American Hate Crime Bill. When the House passes the bill and President Biden signs it, Asian Americans will be much safer from violence because the US federal government will immediately investigate hate crimes and severely punish the racially biased criminals.

In the past, perpetrators could easily evade the hate crime charge by denying it or asserting that they did not utter any racial slurs while committing the crime. From now on, however, it will not be so easy to avoid a hate crime conviction. If convicted, those who attack Asian Americans will have to do time in the State penitentiary and then, after that, in the Federal prison again because they have violated the Federal law.

The Korea Herald/ANN

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CROSSWORD



SOLUTION FOR 09 MAY

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ACROSS

- Beers smug drunk sinks (9)
- Singer right to break wind by saxophonist's head (5)
- Fantastic carolling can be arresting (9)
- Beat United with balls going round the outside (5)
- Is Hoskins close to blotto after downing drop of gin and Bud in Spain? (5)
- Very hot man in boater mad to go out (9)
- I make love outside Congress to reproduce, perhaps (7)
- This evening firm will restrict working! (7)
- On Shrove Tuesday, cooks

might be these sorts of idiots (7)

- Soldiers in base recalled Missouri as "state of no interest" (7)
- A fortifying drink is what might make Hoskins get up! (9)
- Actor in Bond? (5)
- Tolerate a president pinching bottom (5)
- Two soldiers carrying medical officer in a US city (9)
- Dodging Nakamura's opening, Carlsen is a wise man (5)
- Puts right ginger locks without any tinting essentially (9)

DOWN

- One in party with foremost of Soviet Trotskyites? (9)
- Time to tuck into Indonesian Island dish (5)
- Fancy a beer a lot, having gone off the rails (9)
- What plays a part in making one drop scones? Good and puzzling question! (7)
- A part cut off German blokes during first of surgeries on film (7)
- Man starting on perilous journey in space after end of training! (5)
- Good facts about natural disasters, perhaps (4,2,3)
- Fire very old Tory leader (5)

The Sunday Statesman

NEW DELHI, 16 MAY 2021

07

NOW AND AGAIN

A tryst at Woodstock

SWAPAN K BANERJEE

The maiden Mussoorie Writers' Festival was held in Woodstock, Mussoorie in April 2007. It lasted five days, from 24 to 28 April. Writers from different parts of the world came to attend, not to mention a sizeable number of Indian writers. I had by then met most of the writers hailing from that region and interviewed them. So, I was not exactly unknown. One of the main reasons for attending was to watch Ruskin Bond getting the Poet Laureate of Landour Award.

That day in the afternoon there was a poets' meet at Woodstock where Ruskin Bond was to recite his poems. I got there half an hour before the recitation was to start and was sitting on a bench by the hillside when I saw to my great surprise Ruskin Bond turning a bend and coming towards me. At that point of time, there was no one else around. He was dressed in an informal sky-coloured t-shirt, and carrying a few books. I got up from my seat. He immediately motioned me to sit down and gently sat by my side.

"How are you Mr. Banerjee?", he asked in his baritone.

"Sir, thank you very much," I said. "I've with me copies of a few articles on you I did in the last few months. Could I possibly hand them over to you?"

"That's very kind of you. Will you be attending the party tonight?"

"Yes Sir, I'm doing a report on the festival, and I'll be there with some other free-lancers."

"Would you mind if I take these copies from you then?"

"Not at all, Sir. It'd be an honour to see you receiving the Poet Laureate Award."

The banquet that evening thrown in honour of Ruskin was a huge affair. Apart from the presence of a galaxy of writers and publishers, there were a great many admirers from nearby towns as well as people like me from far-flung areas. There also abounded delicacies, piping hot, catering to myriad taste buds both at the starter stage and later the sumptuous main course. I was frankly awed by the grandeur and magnitude of the celebration that revolved round the beloved writer.

The party was well under way, when Ruskin's achievements were read out. The hall instantly quieted down. Ruskin was sitting a few rows ahead of me. He was grace personified. Ruskin is always the centre of attention wherever he goes. But, you have to actually see to believe how, with great dignity, he maintains a certain detachment, and he's so much at ease with the outside world.

Just after he was awarded the Laureateship, a regional TV host took me to him for a formal introduction: "Hello Ruskin, here's Swapna from Serampore wanting to talk to you. You know him?" "Oh", Ruskin said, "Banerjee is an old friend of mine!"

I gave him the articles and requested for an appointment the very next day which he kindly granted. The party continued till late into the night...

Ruskin Bond turns 87 on May 19.

100 YEARS AGO

THE ANGLO-INDIAN ASSOCIATION

To The Editor Of The Statesman

SIR - Mr. Barton's furious railings against the Anglo-Indian and Domiciled European Association would be more effective if they possessed a greater substratum of fact, and betrayed less of the personal. I am both to enter into any discussion, but, having waited in vain for those whose duty it is to defend the Association from the attacks made against it by Mr. Barton, may I as a humble life member who was present at the general meeting, be permitted to say that nothing was said at that meeting to justify Mr. Barton's attitude of hostility. No speaker cast any doubt upon the inherent, and traditional loyalty of the Anglo-Indian community. All that was said, was by way of warning lest any action taken by any considerable class might be construed by their enemies as help to non-cooperators, and be considered to justify the aspersions which are so often cast at the community with even less justification than such action would supply.

W.J. TRAISE.
Calcutta.

LILLOOAH STRIKE & THE TRAVELLING PUBLIC

To The Editor Of The Statesman

SIR - For some weeks the workshop people of Lillooah, East Indian Railway, have gone on strike over their economic difficulties. The strike has not yet come to an end, and what is the result? How has it affected the travelling public? Amongst other consequences the most serious has been the absence of lighting of several carriages in several trains running after nightfall, with all the attendant dangers and risks to passengers' lives and property. The travelling public have thus a right to call for explanations from the East Indian Railway authorities. The public is not at all interested in the amount of profit the company might forego in order to satisfy the strikes, but the public stands on its own rights when it demands the immediate restoration of the full and satisfactory lighting arrangement of trains without a moment's delay in order to restore security to the travelling public.

JAHARLAL MUKERJI.
Uttarpara.

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





August 15 is a significant milestone for the nation, Simple Energy aims at creating history with a world-class product made by an Indian company.

SUHAS RAJKUMAR, FOUNDER AND CEO, SIMPLE ENERGY
ON LAUNCH OF ITS FIRST FLAGSHIP E-SCOOTER

THUMBNAILS

Penna Cement IPO: Penna Cement has filed preliminary papers with capital markets regulator Sebi to raise Rs 1,550 crore through an initial share-sale. The initial public offer (IPO) comprises fresh issue of equity shares worth Rs 1,300 crore and an offer for sale of up to Rs 250 crore by the promoter, according to draft red herring prospectus. Proceeds from fresh issue will be used to pay debts of Rs 550 crore. Besides, Rs 105 crore will be utilised for funding capital expenditure requirements for its KP Line II Project and Rs 80 crore towards upgrading its raw grinding and cement mill in Talaricheruvu. PTI

Trident profit: Trident Ltd on Saturday reported a 90.51 per cent jump in its consolidated net profit to Rs 76.45 crore for the first quarter ended March 2021. The company had posted a net profit of Rs 40.13 crore in the January-March period a year ago. Trident said in a BSE filing. Its revenue from operations was up by 35.69 per cent to Rs 1,344.95 crore as against Rs 991.22 crore of the corresponding quarter last fiscal. PTI

Airtel's Covid support: Bharti Airtel has rolled out a range of Covid support initiatives for customers by leveraging its digital platform. With this, the telco joins a growing list of companies that have introduced digital tools to help people amid the deadly second wave of the pandemic. Airtel has integrated easily accessible bouquet of Covid support resources and related information in the Airtel Thanks app's Explore section, the company said. PTI

Forex reserves up: The country's foreign exchange reserves increased by \$1,444 billion to \$589.465 billion in the week ended 7 May 2021, RBI data showed. In the previous week ended 30 April 2021, the reserves had risen by \$9.13 billion to \$588.02 billion. The reserves had touched a lifetime high of \$590.185 billion in the week ended 29 January 2021. PTI

NEWSFEED

AAI's Ranchi Airport unites to fight Corona



Air Force have been transported. The Indian Air Force aircraft like C17, C130J, AN 32, IL 76 and other small aircraft have been helping in the transportation of essential material at regular intervals.

Implementation of e-Governance with 49 Online Services in NDMC

In the present difficult times of COVID-19 Pandemic, NDMC is facilitating its citizens to avail the Civic Services through Online. It is the endeavor of NDMC to facilitate people through the use of technology. The pace and growth of urbanization in India pose enormous challenges to urban governance. NDMC has taken several IT-based initiatives through technology intervention for strengthening of e-Governance and m-Governance during to improve efficiency and effectiveness in providing Civic Services to citizens in an equitable, non-discretionary and transparent manner. Accordingly, NDMC has introduced 49 Online Services on the NDMC website to facilitate the citizens. NDMC has also implemented the Single Sign On (SSO)/Identity Access Management to improve the user experience and enhance security to citizens/employees/pensioners and others (as and when required) accessing applications through the internet and intranet.

PFC organises Covid-19 vaccination camp, 556 people vaccinated



State-owned non-banking financial firm, Power Finance Corporation (PFC) organised Covid-19 vaccination camps for employees and dependent family members of PFC and PFCL (between 18 to 44 years), employees of Ministry of Power (MoP) and other CPSUs working under the administrative control of the Ministry of Power. A total of 556 individuals were inoculated during the vaccination drive with objective to cover all eligible employees and their dependents for protection against Covid-19. The vaccination drive was organised on 6th and 10th May, 2021 in association with Apollo Hospital for the eligible individuals between the age group of 18-44 years at PFC Office, New Delhi. The first dose of vaccination (Covishield) was administered to the recipients.

Large scale covid vaccination drive by NHPC and IREDA



In line with 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 is undertaking large scale covid vaccination drives for employees of Ministry of Power and various CPSUs/ organizations under Ministry of Power in Delhi / NCR region. A two-day vaccination drive was jointly organized by NHPC and IREDA at IREDA from 7th to 8th May 2021 in association with Apollo Hospitals, New Delhi. A total of 318 employees (between the age of 18 to 44) from MOP, MNRE, CEA, NHPC, IREDA, PFC, NSPL, NTPC, and NEEPCO received their first dosage of Covishield vaccine during the 2-day drive.

ESIC extends date for filing of ESI contribution for the month of April, 2021

The country is dealing with a very challenging situation due to second wave of COVID-19 Pandemic. Many establishments are temporarily closed and workers are unable to work. In line with the relief measures being extended by Government to business entities and workers, Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) has relaxed the provision as entered in Regulation 31 of ESI (General) Regula-

tions, 1950 and allowed filing of ESI contribution for the month of April, 2021 upto 15th June, 2021 instead of 15th May, 2021. The employers covered under ESI Scheme can now file and pay ESI Contribution for the month of April, 2021 upto 15th June, 2021 instead of 15th May, 2021. This will provide an extended window to 12.36 lakh Employers to pay the contribution under ESI scheme.

NDMC organises a Webinar on Mental and Physical Health for its teachers

In view of the ongoing pandemic 2nd wave phase, New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) organized a webinar on emotional and physical wellbeing of its teaching community. Key speakers of Dr. Sunit Dubey, Dy. Commandant (Medical) ITBP, elaborated the various issues of COVID -19 symptoms, treatment, home isolation, home remedies and vaccination etc. Dr. Geetanjali Kumar, Eminent Psychologist explained the chronological effects of COVID-19

pandemic which altered the way we all look at life. The webinar was chaired by Shri D.P. Singh, Director (Education). NDMC emphasized on how spirituality is important to come out from this depressing phase of our life. On the occasion, besides as many as 500 teachers from NDMC/Navyug Schools, Mrs. Anjum Siddiqui, Joint Director (Education) and Dr. Dinesh Madan, HOS, Navyug School Lodhi Road as coordinator attended the webinar.

IndianOil Leverages its Expertise and Assets to help Combat Second Wave

As a responsible corporate citizen, IndianOil continues to go beyond its business priorities to leverage its expertise and assets to help in the humanitarian efforts to combat the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic sweeping the nation. In the face of a massive surge in demand for medical oxygen, IndianOil has diverted the high-purity oxygen used in its Mono Ethylene Glycol (MEG) Unit to produce medical-grade liquid oxygen at the Panipat Refinery and Petrochemical Complex. The throughput of the Unit has also been scaled down to serve the

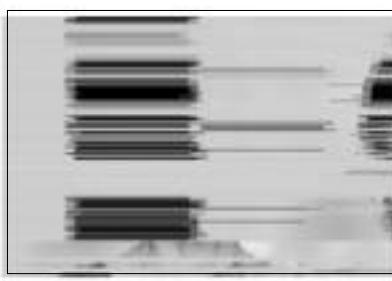
more critical cause. Presently, it is supplying 270 Metric Tonnes of LMO per day to the Hospitals in Delhi, Haryana and Punjab. IndianOil is also converting 14 LNG tankers of 17 MT each into medical grade oxygen carriers to strengthen the medical oxygen logistics in the country. By mid-May, over 20 Road Tankers and 25 ISO Containers of about 820 MT combined capacity will be pressed into action by IndianOil. Moreover, over the next six months, IndianOil will be manufacturing ten Cryogenic road tankers at its Cryogenic Plant at Nasik.

AAI Airports facilitate the rapid and safe delivery of vaccines, oxygen and essentials across the country



serving life and livelihood. Similarly, Special Long term Repo Operations for SFBs (SLTRO) of Rs 10,000 Crore will facilitate last-mile credit delivery to MFIs adversely impacted by the current wave of the pandemic. The announcement of the second purchase of Government Securities of Rs 35000 Crore under GSAP assures further liquidity supply.

Mrs Harsharan Kaur Trehan is first woman Engineer-In-Chief of PSPCL



Punjab State Power Corporation limited has set another inspirational precedent by promoting Mrs Harsharan Kaur Trehan as Engineer-In-Chief / Material Manager recently. She becomes the first woman technocrat to attain the position of Engineer-In-Chief in PSPCL. An alumnus of Delhi College of Engineering, Mrs Harsharan Kaur Trehan joined PSPCL (earlier PSEB) in 1987 as AE and rose to the level of Engineer-In-Chief. During 34 years ongoing service, she served on various important assignments including Transmission design, Substation design, Hydel design, Thermal design, GGSSTP, Ropar, IPC, Commercial org., MM Org. etc.

SAIL stands strong with the nation, supplying more than 1100 tonnes Liquid Medical Oxygen per day



Steel Authority of India, one of the largest domestic steel producers, has been enhancing its capabilities to supply Liquid Medical Oxygen (LMO) in the country. The daily delivery of LMO from its integrated steel plants situated at Bhilai (Chhattisgarh), Rourkela (Odisha), Bokaro (Jharkhand), Durgapur and Burnpur (West Bengal) has been increased from a level of about 500 Metric Tonnes (MT) in the 2nd week of April to more than 1100 MT per day currently. The company, standing strong with the nation, has so far supplied around 50,000 MT of LMO. In the month of April, 2021, SAIL has delivered more than 17500 MT LMO to 15 states across the country including the states in which the plants are located. Till date, 14 nos. of "Oxygen Express" carrying more than 950 MT LMO have been loaded for various parts of the country from SAIL plants at Bokaro, Rourkela and Durgapur.

Cairn looks to seize AI's assets to recover \$1.72 billion from govt

It has brought a lawsuit in US court that potentially can lead to seizing of Air India's overseas assets such as airplanes

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 15 MAY

award.

The Bancec guidelines deal with determining when a judgment against a foreign state is enforceable against its agencies.

Sources said the 14 May lawsuit seeks to make Air India liable for discharge of the arbitration award against the Indian government.

While Cairn said it is "taking necessary legal steps to protect shareholders' interest in the absence of a resolution to the arbitral award", sources in the government said India will take all necessary steps to defend against any such "illegal enforcement action".

India, they said, will contest the move on grounds that the government has challenged the arbitration award in the appropriate court in The Hague and it is confident that the award will be set aside.

Sources said the government has also engaged a counsel team which is ready to defend against any enforcement action.

While they maintained

GOVT TO CONTEST THE MOVE

» Sources in the government said India will take all necessary steps to defend against any such "illegal enforcement action".

» It will contest the move on grounds that the government has also engaged a counsel team which is ready to defend against any enforcement action.



that neither the government nor any PSU has received any such notice, sources aware of the Cairn lawsuit said the case has been brought only on Friday and notices in due course will come to the concerned authorities.

The government sources said as and when any such

has challenged the arbitration award in the appropriate court in The Hague and it is confident that the award will be set aside.

» Sources said the government has also engaged a counsel team which is ready to defend against any enforcement action.

countries to register the December 2020 arbitration tribunal ruling that overturned the Indian government's Rs 10,247-crore demand in back taxes and ordered New Delhi to return the value of shares it had sold, dividends seized and tax refunds withheld to receive the tax demand.

Subsequent to the courts in the US and other places giving recognition to the arbitration award, the firm has now begun bringing lawsuits to pierce the corporate veil between the Indian government and its owned companies such as oil and gas, shipping, airline and banking sectors, to seize their overseas assets to recover the money awarded.

The lawsuit is similar to the one brought by Crystalex International Corp to attach property of Petroleos de Venezuela, S.A (PDVSA), the state-owned oil company of Venezuela, in Delaware couple of years back after the Latin American country failed to pay the firm \$1.2 billion that an arbitration tribunal had

ordered to pay in lieu of the 2011 seizing gold deposits held and developed by the firm.

Indian assets across several jurisdictions have been identified that Cairn will be seeking to seize to enforce the award, sources said.

"Cairn is taking the necessary legal steps to protect shareholders' interest in the absence of a resolution of the arbitral award," a company spokesperson said commenting on the issue. "Cairn remains open to continuing constructive dialogue with the Government of India to arrive at a satisfactory outcome to this long-running issue."

The Scottish firm invested in the oil and gas sector in India in 1994 and a decade later it made a huge oil discovery in Rajasthan. In 2006, it listed its Indian assets on the BSE. Five years after that, the government passed a retrospective tax law and billeted Cairn Rs 10,247 crore plus interest and penalty for the reorganisation tied to the flotation.

Rules relaxed for import of oxygen cylinders

NEW DELHI, 15 MAY

The government today eases certain norms under Gas Cylinders Rules, 2016 to fast-track approvals for imported cylinders and pressure vessels for storage and transportation of medical oxygen amid rising Covid cases.

The relaxations would be valid for six months or till further orders of the department for promotion of industry and internal trade (DPIIT), an official statement said.

The department said that the certification of Petroleum and Explosive Safety Organization (PESO) will not be mandatory before importing consignment of oxygen cylinders, and containers.

The certification of PESO will be required before use of the oxygen cylinders, which entails weight and hydro testing, it added. "The Indian missions should, however, ensure that the oxygen cylinders should comply with India or international standards before shipment," it said.

In case of filled cylinders, the agency exporting to India would have to certify that the oxygen filled in the cylinder is of such purity and concentration that is fit for medical use.

GST Council to meet on 28 May after 7 months

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 15 MAY

Amidst a growing chorus over the GST Council meeting not being convened for over seven months, the Union finance ministry today announced that the next meeting of the panel that decides on taxes on goods and services will be held on 28 May.

In particular, M3bi strongly augments Zensar's thrust in the data engineering, analytics and AI/ML and advanced engineering services, it added. The acquisition will also add marquee clients to Zensar's portfolio in banking, financial services and insurance, and other verticals, allowing Zensar and M3bi to jointly drive an expanded set of offerings to these global firms.

"We are reinforcing our strategic growth charter with the acquisition of M3bi. Our acquisitions in recent years have enhanced our competitiveness, bringing value to our customers. The team steered by Anir and Suresh

Revenue from operations of M3bi, LLC was about \$26.75 million for the calendar year ended 31 December 2020. M3bi was founded in April 2010 and is headquartered in Scottsdale, Arizona in the US. M3bi has 445 professionals across the US and India.

The addition of M3bi reinforces Zensar's new strategy

which focuses on areas of market opportunities that allow Zensar to concentrate organisation resources, invest-

ments and alliances to deliver maximum business impact, Zensar said in its statement.

In particular, M3bi

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Daily Covid count hovers around 11,000 in Odisha

Graph shows signs of flattening in western parts of state

BHUBANESWAR, 15 MAY

Odisha today registered 11,805 fresh Covid cases and 21 deaths even as officials saw signs of flattening or even drop in the test positivity rate in some of the western Odisha districts.

Chief Secretary Suresh Mahapatra spoke about the situation in western Odisha districts which were first affected by the spurt in neighbouring Chhattisgarh. The TPR has stagnated and come down in some of the western districts reflecting a flattening of the curve, he said.

Noting that the second

wave has been more aggressive than the first, Mahapatra said the peak during the first wave last year in the state was 8000 cases per day while now it ranges between 10,000 to 12,000 cases per day.

He said the government was doing its best to procure vaccines at the earliest and Odisha has already floated a global tender for 3.80 crore doses. The online bid will be opened on 28 May and orders will be placed, he added.

The state reported 10,000-plus positive cases for the fourth day in a row.

With 21 more COVID patients dying, the overall death toll has jumped to 2,294

while the active cases rose to 10,6471 with the latest spike of virus infection.

Khordha district accounted for a maximum of four deaths followed by Angul which saw three fatalities in the last 24 hours. Similarly, two deaths have been reported each from Kalahandi, Kendrapara, Puri, Rayagada and Sundergarh districts.

Khordha district logged the highest 1,414 new cases with the bulk of them reported from Bhubaneswar.

State capital recorded 1118 new cases in the last 24 hours taking the number of active cases to 11,683. Of the new cases, as many as 944 were

detected by way of local contact and 174 were from quarantine.

Sundargarh and Cuttack continue to be the second and third worst-hit districts with 1,209 and 1,197 fresh cases detected in the last 24 hours.

Malkangiri and Kandhamal were the least affected districts reporting 94 and 83 new infections respectively in the past 24 hours.

The state recorded 585 fewer positive cases at a drop of 4.72 percent in the last 24 hours at 20.70 percent the test positivity rate.

As many as 1,10,851 cases have been reported in the state since 5 May, when the

lockdown was enforced in the State.

Since the past eleven days, 10,077 cases are being reported in the State at a daily average. Currently, the Khordha district has 16,133 active cases, the highest in the State followed by Sundargarh at 11,789.

Of the infected people in Odisha, 65 percent are men while 35 percent are women.

The state's recovery rate currently stands at 81.87% with 4,91,674 cured of the disease so far.

Odisha currently has 10,6471 active cases, which account for 17.73% of total positive cases registered in the state.

Dr Srinath Reddy to head Odisha advisory panel

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, 15 MAY



gesting a possible third wave

which is likely to affect the children, observed Mahapatra

while informing of the constitution of the expert committee.

The government will act

according to the advice of the committee. It will also initiate measures to strengthen the infrastructure required for infected children, the necessary manpower to deal with any such eventuality.

The chief secretary went on to iterate the importance of

vaccination and said all-out efforts are being made to buy vaccines both from Indian manufacturers as well as outside the country. The global tender has been floated.

He also said there are around 15,000 Covid patients are admitted in the government Covid hospitals in the State. Of them, 3,000 are in ICU and ventilator.

To keep a tab on ICU beds, four teams have been formed. The teams will visit hospitals and ascertain the use of ICU beds and vacancies. There are allegations of ICU beds being occupied by patients who do not require it and can be treated in general beds, said officials. At least 75 per cent of the ICU beds are occupied now.



Odisha DIGP Mr Abhay visits naxal prone Malkangiri district to interact with BSF and others. He appealed to Maoists infected with Covid to surrender and assured them free medical treatment. SNS

COVID-19 virus sneaks into endangered PVTG tribal villages

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, 15 MAY

The deadly coronavirus has sneaked its way into the habitation of tribal settlers infecting at least 21 people from the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in different parts of Odisha.

At least two persons from the Bonda tribes, one of the country's most primitive tribal groups, living in Malkangiri district have contracted the virus infection while 19 more from other PVTGs have contracted the disease.

The PVTGs getting infected is definitely a cause of

Pradhan pleads for 19 more PSA plants in Odisha

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, 15 MAY

Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan has sought the establishment of 19 more Pressure Swing Absorption (PSA) medical oxygen plants in 15 districts of Odisha.

In a letter to his ministerial colleague Dr Harsh Vardhan, Pradhan said 21 PSA plants, seven each by DRDO, Petroleum ministry and the central government is to come up in Odisha.

In addition to this 19 more

is needed to cover the districts in the state, he said while providing a list of the districts proposed by the Odisha government where these can be established.

The 13 PVTG settlers in Odisha are Birhor, Bonda, Chukia, Bhunia, Diday, Juang, Kharia, Dongria Khond, Kutia Khond, Lanja Saora, Lodha, Mankodia, 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.

Studies conducted during the pandemic last year had shown that the tribals were least infected due to less exposure and certain traditional habits.

Doorstep Covid test & vaccination for elderly

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, 15 MAY

The Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation will launch doorstep Covid testing and vaccination for the old and infirm who are unable to travel to health care facilities to avail such facilities.

Senior citizens interested in availing of such facilities need to call 1929 and the BMC will send a team informed newly appointed BMC Commissioner Sanjay Singh. He said the 1929 call centre has been strengthened. The number of hospital beds and increase in the

availability of oxygen is also being beefed up, he added.

The BMC is also ready to ferry the old and challenged people to the vaccination centre, he said.

Incidentally, the Berhampur civic body has also decided to introduce doorstep testing and vaccination for senior citizens.

Paddy procurement begins in Kalahandi district

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHAWANIPATNA, 15 MAY

The Rabi paddy procurement started yesterday in Kalahandi district amidst the uncertainty of pandemic related difficulties and weather conditions with intermittent rains.

In the current season 30 lakh quintals of paddy is to be procured and in the first phase the district targets to purchase 16,23525 quintals of paddy.

Sixty one millers have been tagged to lift the procured paddy from the purchasing centers. On day one yesterday, only 691 quintals of paddy of 15 farmers were procured in

the district.

The forecast of monsoon showers by the second week of June and the pre-monsoon showers has made the procurement a race against time. While procurement needs to be expedited, Covid protocol like social distancing at procurement centres is another difficulty faced by the administration.

The other problem faced by farmers in areas irrigated by the right canal of Indravati dam project is that the fields are not dry as yet.

The water release continued till 14 May and the fields are not yet dry, though the crop is ready for harvest.

Children of seasonal migrant labourers bear the brunt of pandemic

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, 15 MAY

The second wave of COVID-19 pandemic has witnessed a disturbing trend of the vulnerability of children of migrant workers with reports of school going kids accompanying their parents to different worksites.

In the process, they lend helping hands to parents to augment the family's income during pandemic times and have turned child labourers.

The coronavirus wave has a debilitating impact on children of seasonal labourers, both in education and health spheres as there has been 67% increase in migration of school-going children this year due to pandemic. The percentage of girls

is 2% higher than boys", according to a study.

The education of children of seasonal migrant labourers was affected in both the first and second wave of COVID-19, stated a study by Bhubaneswar-based civil society group, Aide et Action.

The voluntary agency had interacted with 109 parents, who had 213 children with them at different worksites (mostly brick kilns) of Bihar, Odisha, Tamil Nadu and Telangana. Sixty of 109 parents were from Odisha.

"The assessment found that 82% of migrant children attending schools during the first wave of COVID-19 are out of school in the second wave," says the assessment.

they were left with was to take children along with them," said Daniel.

At worksites, children were initiated into work to support family income and they became child labourers. Children of migrant labourers could not afford online classes and they had a locational disadvantage to continue studies.

There is every possibility that migrant children particularly girls may fall into exploitative labour practice and physical abuse.

According to the study, 79% of the parents were forced to bring their children with them to the worksites as schools were closed due to COVID-19.

Chrome ore units seek reduction in floor price of ore

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
JAJPUR, 15 MAY

The downstream chrome ore processors of the state have asked for a reduction in the floor price of chrome ore at auctions held by the Odisha Mining Corporation (OMC) in view of the falling price of ferrochrome.

The Kalinga Nagar Industries Association (KNIA), a representative body of mineral processors and ferrochrome producers have written to Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik requesting him to dispense with the 'arbitrary formula' by the OMC for calculating the floor price of chrome ore.

"Due to extremely high and arbitrary floor price of chrome ore fixed by the OMC,

the e-auctions of the state-owned company have had a very poor response and Ferrochrome industries in Odisha are suffering," said the president of KNIA, P. L. Kandoi.

He said during e-auction held on 23 April, only 14,800 MT of Chrome Ore out of 35,100 MT was sold due to very high floor price. Similarly, the earlier e-auctions in January, February and March has had very poor response, he stated.

KNIA had earlier requested OMC to reduce the Chrome Ore floor price as per suggestions of PWC.

The current floor price makes it unviable for industries to operate, said Kandoi.

He said the floor price ought to have been Rs.13,457/-

Three killed, two injured in a road accident

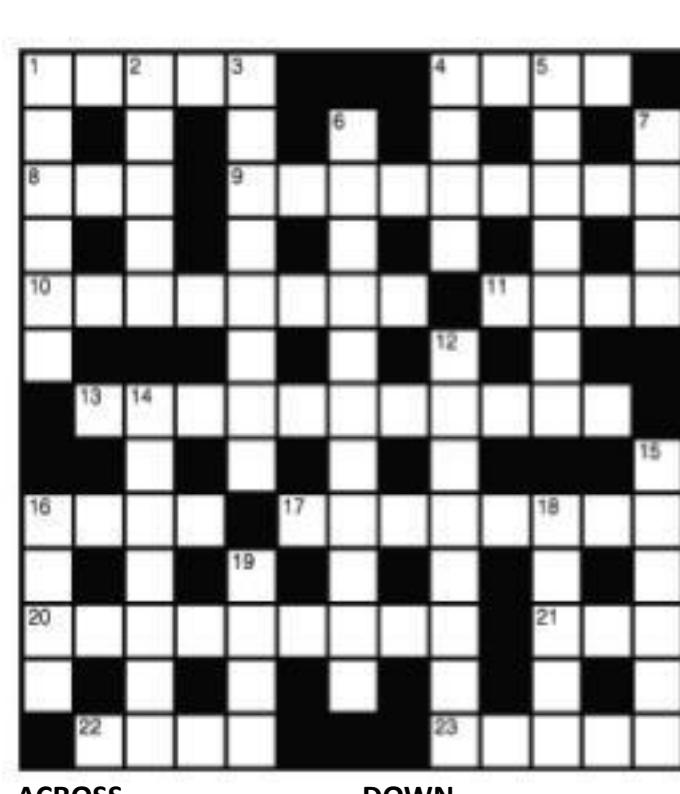
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BARIPADA, 15 MAY

Three persons succumbed and two others were critically injured in a road accident on Friday on National Highway-16 near Birla Tyres Ltd under Balasore Industrial Police Station limits.

The car in which they were traveling to Bhubaneswar hit a truck. One of them died on the spot while two others succumbed on way to the hospital. The deceased were identified as Pintu Acharya, Rabindra Sahoo, Santosh Panda while the injured were Abhishek Das and Bapun Mohanty.

LEISURE

10 MINUTE CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1 Irish writer (5)
4 Diminutive of Richard (4)
8 Mythical bird (3)
9 Disseminate (9)
10 Plea (8)
11 Conversation (4)
13 Come into conflict (5,6)
16 Animal hide (4)
17 Spine (8)
20 Science (9)
21 Strike (3)
22 Badger's burrow (4)
23 Grimy (5)

DOWN

1 Channel Island (6)
2 Sailing vessel (5)
3 Strong black coffee (8)
4 Deceased (4)
5 Taught (7)
6 Competitors (17)
7 Warm up (4)
12 Askew (8)
14 Take over from (7)
15 Church room (6)
16 Select (4)
18 Alternative (5)
19 Thin mud (4)

SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD

CROSS

1 Bob, 13 Rescue, 16 Sycamore, 18 Inch, 20 Neverthe less, 21 Yodeller, 22 Tin.

DOWN

8 Lederhosen, 11 Première, 14 Convent, 15 Brutal, 17 Credo, 19 Bear.

6 Outline, 9 Reflex, 5 Sentinel, 6 Emend,

BEETLE BAILEY/Mort Walker



RED EYE/Bill Yates & Mel Casson



DADDY DAZE/John Kovaleski



NEED TO KNOW

HOSPITALS

2258622, 22585007

RAILWAY INQUIRY

General Inquiry 139

Toll Free Nos. 1800112511

& SMS Inquiry Nos. 57886, 54959, 5676747

ROADWAYS INQUIRY

ISBT (General Inquiry):

23868836, 23865181

Haryana Roadways

23861262, Call Centre 09918038388,

Himachal Roadways



China produces more emissions than all the rest of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries put together.

US SPECIAL ENVOY ON CLIMATE CHANGE JOHN KERRY
ON REDUCTION IN CARBON EMISSIONS

World

WEATHER

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

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

THUMBNAILS



A Real Portuguese Circus performer dressed as Spider-Man performs for the first time after closing for one year due to the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown in Brasilia in Brazil. AP

University of California drops SAT scores: The University of California won't consider SAT and ACT scores that are submitted with admission and scholarship applications under a settlement of a student lawsuit that was announced Friday. AP

Japan, US, France hold military drill: Dozens of Japanese, American and French troops landed amid pouring rain from a CH-47 transport helicopter onto a grassy field at a training area in southern Japan, part of Saturday's joint scenario of defending a remote island from an enemy invasion. AP

Let's face it: Washington adjusts to new mask norms

CDC had said that fully vaccinated people can doff masks outdoors, in most indoor settings



ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON, 15 MAY

Jill Biden says finally going mask-free feels like "we're moving forward." A Republican senator says going unmasked "certainly helps the flow of conversation."

But the conversation on the House floor on Friday approached sniping as lawmakers objected to being required to keep masking up until all 435 of them get their Covid-19 shots.

Across Washington, the government is adjusting to new federal guidance easing up on when masks should be worn.

"So much for following the science," Rep. Greg Murphy, R-N.C., a urologist, said after complaining that he'd have to put his mask back on after his House floor speech despite being fully vaccinated.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said Thursday that fully vaccinated people - those who are two weeks past their last required dose of a Covid-19 vaccine - can stop wearing masks outdoors in crowds and in most indoor settings. Partially vaccinated or unvaccinated people should keep wearing masks, the guidance says.

But on Capitol Hill, lawmakers have to keep wearing masks on the House floor, according to a memo from the

Office of the Attending Physician, Dr. Brian Monahan.

"The present mask requirement and other guidelines remain unchanged until all Members and Floor staff are fully vaccinated," House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said in a memo to her Democratic colleagues. "Returning the Capitol to the welcoming and safe venue that it has been requires us to not only secure it physically but to make it safe from the virus."

Recent surveys suggest that about 1 in 4 House lawmakers are not fully vaccinated. Lawmakers can remove their masks while on the House floor to make speeches, but must mask up after they finish. They are, however, free to resume "pre-pandemic activities" elsewhere in the House complex of office buildings and public spaces.

In the Senate, Republicans Susan Collins of Maine and Joni Ernst of Iowa were among senators who didn't hesitate to remove their masks as soon as they heard the news. They were seen entering the Senate chamber Thursday marveling at being mask-free and calling out, "Freedom!"

Senate leadership has not commented on the updated mask guidance, which came down as Biden and a group of Republican senators discussed infrastructure in the Oval Office.

Masks off, people cheer reopening of bars and restaurants in Poland

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WARSAW, 15 MAY

Poles pulled off their masks, hugged their friends and made toasts to their regained freedom as restaurants, bars and pubs reopened for the first time in seven months and the government dropped a requirement for people to cover their faces outdoors.

The reopening, for now limited now to the outdoor consumption of food and drinks, officially took place on Saturday. Yet many could not wait for midnight to strike and were out on the streets of Warsaw and other cities hours earlier.

DJs were finally back at work and waiters and wait-

resses were rushing to fill orders once again. Meanwhile, the end of a requirement to wear masks outdoors added to the sense of liberation. Masks will still be required in settings like public transport and stores.

Bar owners were also happy, thanks to the prospect of being able to finally start earning money, and many said they had been bombarded with reservation requests leading up to the opening.

Today we feel as if it was New Year's Eve because we are counting down to midnight," said Kasia Szczepanska of a popular bar, CAVA.

using it out.

The Pentagon announced Friday that fully vaccinated Defense Department personnel no longer need to wear masks indoors or outdoors at DOD facilities.

Updated guidance from the Department of Health and Human Services said "fully vaccinated federal employees, fully vaccinated onsite contractors and fully vaccinated visitors to federal buildings are no longer required to wear masks."

Mask-wearing remained in force at the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture as it reopened. Jill Biden stopped in to greet the staff and said the relaxed mask guidance feels as though "inch by inch we're moving forward" against pandemic.

UK races to test, vaccinate as virus variant threatens plans



ASSOCIATED PRESS
LONDON, 15 MAY

would help carry out "surge testing" in Bolton and Blackburn in northwest England, where pop-up vaccination sites were also being set up to speed the inoculation drive.

The government's scientific advisory committee says there is no evidence so far that the variant causes more severe disease or that existing vaccines won't work against it.

Cases of a strain first identified in India have more than doubled in a week, defying a sharp nationwide downward trend in infections won by months of restrictions and a rapid vaccination campaign.

Government scientific advisers say the variant is likely more transmissible than the UK's dominant strain, though it's unclear by how much.

"If the virus is significantly more transmissible, we are likely to face some hard choices," Prime Minister Boris Johnson said. "I have to level with you that this could be a serious disruption to our progress."

He said the next stage of lockdown-easing measures would take place as planned on Monday, but warned the variant might delay plans to lift all restrictions, including social distancing and face-covering rules, on 21 June.

Johnson said soldiers

US govt calls reports of migrant children in buses 'unacceptable'



ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON, 15 MAY

Dr. Amy Cohen, a psychiatrist and executive director of the advocacy group Every Last One, said a 15-year-old Honduran boy she is working with was held on a bus from Saturday to Wednesday, using the bus bathroom during that time and unable to move about freely or communicate with family. The boy encountered at least three other children who were held as long in the parking lot of the Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center, said Cohen, who also has been in contact with another child who was confined earlier to a bus for an extended period.

It is unclear how many children were kept on buses overnight.

"This is completely unacceptable," Becerra said. "We're quickly investigating this to get to the bottom of what happened, and we'll work to make sure this never happens again. The safety and

well-being of the children is our priority."

White House press secretary Jen Psaki said "there's no excuse for this kind of treatment."

The reports are "outrageous, they're unacceptable and they do not meet our standard for child care," Psaki said. The Honduran boy's experience, first reported by NBC News, comes as Health and Human Services massively expands its capacity to house migrant children until they can be placed with a sponsor in the United States, usually parents or close relatives, while their cases wind through immigration court. It comes in response to the largest influx of unaccompanied children on record.

The department, whose lodgings is more suited to longer-term stays than Border Patrol holding facilities, has grown its capacity to about 20,000 beds from less than 1,000 in mid-February. It's opened 14 emergency intake centers, including at the

Dallas convention center and other large venues. The Dallas facility opened in February with plans to house up to 3,000 children.

Health and Human Services had 20,397 unaccompanied children in its custody as of Wednesday.

The government flew the Honduran boy to Seattle to reunite with his mother and uncle after NBC News inquired about his status.

MVM Inc., a transportation contractor for the government, said it has "safely and professionally" transported migrant children and families for more than six years.

Over the last seven weeks, the number of children needing escorts in this pandemic environment has increased to more than 7,100, creating challenging travel logistics and resulting in some extended wait times on their way to reunification sites, the company said in a statement.

MVM said it experienced some delays at a 24-hour regional hub where buses meet to get children on their way to join family, which resulted in a "child staying at that site longer than our target wait time of four hours. This is a violation of our policy and we are conducting an internal review of this incident."

The company said the child had access to an air-conditioned bus, food and snacks, bottled water and personal protective equipment.

Indian-American Neera Tanden appointed White House senior adviser

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
WASHINGTON, 15 MAY

Indian-American policy expert Neera Tanden has been appointed as a senior adviser to US President Joe Biden, two months after she withdrew her nomination as Director of the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) over her past social media outbursts against several lawmakers, including those from her own Democratic Party. She became the Biden administration's only Cabinet nominee rebuffed by the Senate.

Tanden has been entrusted with two tasks: launch a review of the US Digital Service, and plan contingencies that could result from the Supreme Court's consideration of Republican lawsuits seeking to strike down the Affordable Care Act.

Tanden, 50, is currently the president and CEO of a progressive think-tank, Center for American Progress (CAP). She expected to join the White House team on Monday.

"Neera's intellect, tenacity, and political savvy will be an asset to the Biden administration," CAP founder and director John Podesta said.

He said the White House has made remarkable progress combating numerous once-in-a-generation challenges from vaccinating millions of Americans to delivering real economic relief from the coronavirus pandemic, and from strengthening the Affordable Care Act to tackling climate change.

"Many of these bold policy solutions, which have

bipartisan support from voters across the country, were developed and led by Neera at CAP over many years. The administration's efforts will be magnified with Neera Tanden on the team," Podesta added.

In March, she faced a tough time for the confirmation of her nomination as Director of the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) over her past social media outbursts against several lawmakers, including those from her own Democratic Party. She became the Biden administration's only Cabinet nominee rebuffed by the Senate.

Tanden previously served as a senior adviser for health reforms at the US Department of Health and Human Services. She worked with Congress and stakeholders on particular provisions of former President Barack Obama's signature legislative achievement, the Affordable Care Act.

Before that, Tanden was the director of domestic policy for the Obama-Biden presidential campaign, where she managed all domestic policy proposals. Tanden also served as policy director for Hillary Clinton's first presidential campaign. Before the 2008 presidential campaign, Tanden served as legislative director in Clinton's office, and deputy campaign manager and issues director for Clinton's 2000 Senate campaign.

FAMILY REUNION



Queen Margrethe of Denmark waves, with from left, Crown Prince Frederik, Prince Christian, Princess Isabella, and Crown Princess Mary, back right, with front Prince Vincent and Princess Josephine, on arrival for Prince Christian's confirmation at Fredensborg Castle Church on Saturday.

Massive replenishment begins to ease US fuel shortages

AGENCIES
FLORIDA, 15 MAY

Motorists in southeast US states on Saturday continued to hunt for fuel as a massive replenishment effort took hold, helping ease shortages from a cyberattack that cut supplies from Florida to New Jersey.

The six-day Colonial Pipeline shutdown was the most disruptive cyberattack on record. Widespread panic buying continued days after the pipeline network restarted, leaving filling stations across the U.S. Southeast out of gas.

More than 14,000 gas stations surveyed by fuel tracking app GasBuddy were experiencing outages, down from

a peak of 16,200 early on Friday. The nationwide average for a gallon of regular unleaded was \$3.04, from \$2.95 a week ago, according to AAA.

An effort that involved ships under emergency waivers moving fuel from U.S. Gulf Coast refineries to the northeast and 18-wheel tanker trucks ferrying gasoline from Alabama to Virginia helped to stem the losses.

In Washington, D.C., Dennis Li was stuck on Friday at a Sunoco gas station that was out of fuel. He had tried to find gas at four stations during the day, with no luck. "I'm running on empty to the point where I don't want to drive anymore," said Li, who is from Annapolis, Maryland.

Nicholas Swann had driven

from his home in Washington to Bethesda to get gasoline, where the wait was 15 minutes.

"We were originally going to drive out to the beach this weekend but we don't know if we will, because I can't make it there and back on one tank of gas," Swann said.

The hacking group blamed for the attack, DarkSide, said it had hacked four other companies including a Toshiba subsidiary in Germany.

Colonial Pipeline has not determined how the initial breach occurred, a spokeswoman said this week. The 5,500-mile pipeline carries 100 million gallons of gasoline, diesel and jet fuel per day from Texas refineries to East Coast markets.

Vaccine passports: Why they are good for society

ASSOCIATED PRESS
LONDON, 15 MAY

As more and more people get vaccinated, some governments are relying on vaccine passports as a way of reopening society. These passports are essentially certificates that show the holder has been immunised against Covid-19, which restaurants, pubs, bars, sports venues and others can use to grant them entry.

Israel currently operates a green pass system, which allows vaccinated people access to theatres, concert halls, indoor restaurants and

bars.

The UK government had to roll back plans to trial vaccine passports after some of the venues involved experienced significant backlash against the proposals.

This is perhaps not surprising: vaccine passport schemes are controversial, with some arguing that they will reinforce inequalities. But there is an ethical case for using some form of certification of Covid status, as long as it is designed properly and as long as everyone has access to vaccines.

Let's look at the ethics of vaccination and certification.

The duty of easy rescue has been used to make the case for public health measures, including the use of health records and the donation of blood. As a society, we have a collective duty of easy rescue.

For example, if each person in the population who was eligible could donate a few millilitres of blood easily (say one vial was created that could be posted to each person), and collectively this would solve the blood supply shortage, then each person ought to donate a few millilitres of blood.

Doing so would literally be life-saving, at no cost and

minimal discomfort to the donors.

The duty of easy rescue is what is known as a minimal theory of moral obligation. To understand this theory, philosopher Peter Singer famously described the following thought experiment: If you are walking past a shallow pond and see a child drowning in it, you ought to wade in and pull the child out. This will mean getting your clothes muddy, but this is insignificant, while the death of the child would be a tragedy.

The thought experiment illustrates a situation in which a person can benefit another greatly at minimal cost.

This is currently the case for Covid-19 vaccinations. There is an extremely low risk of serious side effects with the Covid-19 vaccines.

So it is not just a safety for oneself and a kindness to others, but a moral obligation to be vaccinated.

Equally, vaccination passports are a minimal cost for returning to normal daily life and for reducing anxiety for those you come into contact with on aeroplanes or in theatres, restaurants or public stadiums. They are a small sacrifice for a greater good.



They attacked our capital, they fired rockets at our cities. They're paying and will continue to pay dearly for that. It's not over yet.

ISRAEL PM BENJAMIN NETANYAHU
ON THE CONFLICT WITH HAMAS IN THE GAZA STRIP

The Sunday Statesman

NEW DELHI, 16 MAY 2021

11

THUMBNAILS



Technicians applaud after a successful landing of China's Mars mission at the Beijing Aerospace Control Center in Beijing on Saturday. AP

China cancels Everest climb: China has cancelled attempts to climb Mount Everest from its side of the world's highest peak because of fears of importing Covid-19 cases from neighbouring Nepal, state media reported. The closure was confirmed in a notice Friday from China's General Administration of Sport, the official Xinhua News Agency said. AP

Taiwan battles pandemic: Imposed new restrictions in its capital city on Saturday as it battled its worst outbreak since the pandemic began. Authorities raised the alert level for Taipei, the capital, and the surrounding area of New Taipei city. The level 3 alert, which remains in effect for two weeks, requires people to wear a mask outdoors and limits indoor gatherings to five people and outdoor gatherings to 10 people. Health authorities said that 180 new locally spread cases had been confirmed, the majority in Taipei and New Taipei. AP

Iran minister cancels Vienna visit: Iran's foreign minister has called off a planned visit to his Austrian counterpart in Vienna. The decision came after Austria's chancellor and foreign ministry flew the Israeli flag as a signal of solidarity in Israel's conflict with the militant Hamas group. Austrian daily *Die Presse* reported on Saturday that Iranian minister Mohammad Javad Zarif would meet Alexander Schallenberg on Saturday. AP

Iran's hard-line judiciary chief registers for Presidential run



The hard-line cleric in charge of Iran's judiciary who also took part in a panel involved in the mass execution of thousands of prisoners in 1988 registered on Saturday to run for the country's presidency.

Ebrahim Raisi has been named as a possible successor to Iran's 82-year-old Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, leading some to suggest he wouldn't run in the race. However, his registration shows he still has interest in the office he failed to obtain in 2017.

His close ties to Khamenei and popularity in part from his televised anti-corruption campaign could make him a favourite in an election in which analysts already believe that hard-liners enjoy an edge. A crush of journalists followed Raisi through the Interior Ministry as he registered, the 60-year-old cleric waving to staffers as he passed.

In a statement just before his registration, Raisi promised to fight poverty and corruption, humiliation and discrimination if he becomes President. He added his tenure in office would seek to have a popular administration for a powerful Iran, a dig at Iran's current president, the relatively moderate Hassan Rouhani.

Activists, however, hold a far different view of Raisi over his involvement in the 1988 mass execution of prisoners at the end of Iran's long war with Iraq.

Israeli airstrike on Gaza camp kills 10

US diplomat Hady Amr arrived on Friday as part of Washington's efforts to de-escalate the conflict, UN Security Council is set to meet today

ASSOCIATED PRESS
GAZA CITY, 15 MAY

An Israeli air raid in Gaza City killed at least 10 Palestinians, mostly children, early Saturday in the deadliest single strike since the battle with Gaza's militant Hamas rulers erupted earlier this week. Both sides pressed for an advantage as cease-fire efforts gathered strength.

The latest outburst of violence began in Jerusalem and has spread across the region, with Jewish-Arab clashes and rioting in mixed cities of Israel. There were also widespread Palestinian protests on Friday in the occupied West Bank, where Israeli forces shot and killed 11 people.

The spiralling violence has raised fears of a new Palestinian intifada, or uprising at a time when there have been no peace talks in years. Palestinians were set to mark Nakba (Catastrophe) Day on Saturday, when they commemorate the estimated 70,000 people who fled or were driven from their homes in what is now Israel during the 1948 war surrounding its creation. That raised the possibility of even more unrest.

US diplomat Hady Amr arrived on Friday as part of Washington's efforts to de-escalate the conflict, and the UN Security Council was set to meet Sunday. But Israel turned down an Egyptian proposal for a one-year truce that Hamas rulers had accepted, an Egyptian official said Friday on condition of anonymity to discuss the negotiations.

Since last Monday night, Hamas has fired hundreds of rockets into Israel, which has pounded the Gaza Strip with strikes. In Gaza, at least 126 people have been killed, including 31 children and 20



(Left) A protester waves the Palestinian flag during clashes with the Israeli forces at the Hawara checkpoint, south of the West Bank city of Nablus on Friday. (Right) An Israeli artillery unit fires toward targets in the Gaza Strip, at the Israeli-Gaza border on Saturday. AP



women; in Israel, seven people have been killed, including a six-year-old boy and a soldier.

Rocket fire from Gaza and Israel's bombardment of the blockaded Palestinian territory continued into early Saturday, when an airstrike on a three-story house in a refugee camp in Gaza City killed eight children and two women from an extended family.

Mohammed Abu Hatab told reporters his wife and five children had gone to celebrate the Eid al-Fitr holiday with relatives. She and three of the children, aged 6 to 14, were killed, while an 11-year-old is missing. Only his 5-month-old son Omar is known to have survived.

Children's toys and a Monopoly board game could be seen among the rubble, as well as plates of uneaten food from the holiday gathering.

"There was no warning," said Jamal Al-Najji, a neighbour living in the same building. You fired rockets at us and then you bombed them?" he said, addressing Israel. "Why are you confronting us? Go and con-

front the strong people! Short-
ly afterward, Hamas said it fired a salvo of rockets at southern Israel in response to the airstrike.

A furious Israeli barrage early Friday killed a family of six in their house and sent thousands fleeing to UN-run shelters. The military said the operation involved 160 warplanes dropping some 80 tons of explosives over the course of 40 minutes and succeeded in destroying a vast tunnel network used by Hamas.

Lt. Col. Jonathan Conricus, a military spokesman, said the military aims to minimize collateral damage in striking military targets. But measures it takes in other strikes, such as warning shots to get civilians to leave, were not feasible this time.

Israeli media said the military believed dozens of militants were killed inside the tunnels. The Hamas and Islamic Jihad militant groups have confirmed 20 deaths in their ranks, but the military said the real number is far higher.

Gaza's infrastructure, already in widespread disrepair because of an Israeli-Egyptian blockade imposed after Hamas seized power in 2007, showed signs of breaking down further, compounding residents' misery. The territory's sole power plant is at risk of running out of fuel in the coming days.

The UN said Gazans are already enduring daily power cuts of 8 to 12 hours and at least 2,30,000 have limited access to tap water. The impoverished and densely populated territory is home to 2 million Palestinians, most of them the descendants of refugees from what is now Israel.

The conflict has reverberated widely. Israeli cities with mixed Arab and Jewish populations have seen nightly violence, with mobs from each community fighting in the streets and trashing each other's property.

In the occupied West Bank, on the outskirts of Ramallah, Nablus and other towns and cities, hundreds of Palestini-

ans protested against the Gaza campaign and Israeli actions in Jerusalem. Waving Palestinian flags, they trucked in tires that they set up in burning barricades and hurled stones at Israeli soldiers. At least 10 protesters were shot and killed by soldiers. An 11th Palestinian was killed when he tried to stab a soldier at a military position.

PM Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed that Hamas will pay a very heavy price for its rocket attacks as Israel has massed troops at the frontier. US President Joe Biden has expressed support for Israel while saying he hopes to bring the violence under control.

GAZA CITY, 15 MAY

Israeli military accused of using media to trick Hamas

ASSOCIATED PRESS
JERUSALEM, 15 MAY

ing, ground incursions have resulted in widespread destruction in Gaza and heavy casualties on both sides.

That set the stage for the late-night deception. According to Heller, Israel began scrambling forces along the border in what appeared to be final preparations for an invasion. Then came the announcement to the media, issued simultaneously in Hebrew and Arabic on Twitter. There followed alerts in major outlets that the invasion was under way.

The Israeli moves sent Hamas fighters rushing into defensive positions in an underground network of tunnels known as the Metro, according to Heller and other Israeli reports.

Israel called in 160 warplanes and bombarded the tunnels for 40 minutes, the military said. Heller said it was his understanding that scores of militants had been killed, though he said it was impossible to say.

"What we saw tonight was a very sophisticated operation that had a media aspect to it," Heller said.

Hamas has not commented on the incident, and it was impossible to confirm the Israeli reports. Heller said veteran Israeli correspondents, who have close ties to the military and in many cases have served themselves, knew that there was no way Israel was sending troops across enemy lines at this stage.

Heller and other military correspondents even put out statements on Twitter assuring the jittery public that there was no ground operation.

China completes historic Mars spacecraft landing

AGENCIES
BEIJING, 15 MAY



An uncrewed Chinese spacecraft successfully landed on the surface of Mars on Saturday, state news agency Xinhua reported, making China the second space-faring nation after the United States to land on the Red Planet.

The Tianwen-1 spacecraft landed on a site on a vast plain known as Utopia Planitia, "leaving a Chinese footprint on Mars for the first time," Xinhua said.

Chinese President Xi Jinping sent a message of congratulations to all the people involved in the mission.

"You were brave enough for the challenge, pursued excellence and placed our country in the advanced ranks of planetary exploration," he said. "Your outstanding achievement will forever be etched in the memories of the motherland and the people."

The craft left its parked orbit at about 1700 GMT Friday (0100 Beijing time Saturday). The landing module separated from the orbiter three hours later and entered the Martian atmosphere, the official China Space News said. It said the landing process con-

sisted of "nine minutes of terror" as the module decelerates and then slowly descends.

The official landing time was 2318 GMT (0718 Beijing time), Xinhua said, citing the China National Space Administration. The rover took more than 17 minutes to unfold its solar panels and antenna and send signals to ground controllers more than 320 million kilometres away.

The rover, named Zhurong, will now survey the landing site before departing from its platform to conduct inspections. Named after a mythical Chinese god of fire, Zhurong has six scientific instruments including a high-resolution topography camera.

If Zhurong is successfully deployed, China would be the first country to orbit, land and release a rover in its maiden mission to Mars.

It will study the planet's surface soil and atmosphere. Zhurong will also look for

Tianwen-1 was one of three that reached Mars in February, with US rover Perseverance successfully touching down on Feb. 18 in a huge depression called Jezero Crater, more than 2,000 km away from Utopia Planitia.

Hope - the third spacecraft that arrived at Mars in February this year - is not designed to make a landing. Launched by the United Arab Emirates, it is currently orbiting above Mars, gathering data on its weather and atmosphere.

The first successful landing ever was made by NASA's Viking 1 in July 1976 and then by Viking 2 in September that year. A Mars probe launched by the former Soviet Union landed in December 1971, but communication was lost seconds after landing.

China is pursuing an ambitious space programme. It is testing reusable spacecraft and is also planning to establish manned lunar research station. In a commentary published on Saturday, Xinhua said China was "not looking to compete for leadership in space" but was committed to "unveiling the secrets of the universe and contributing to humanity's peaceful use of space."

Back-to-back tornadoes kill 12 in China; over 300 injured

BEIJING, 15 MAY



Back-to-back tornadoes killed 12 people in central and eastern China and left more than 300 others injured, authorities said Saturday.

Eight people died in the inland city of Wuhan on Friday night and four others in the town of Shengze, about 400 kilometers (250 miles) east in Jiangsu province, local governments said. The first tornado struck Shengze about 7 p.m., damaging homes and factories and knocking out power, the official Xinhua News Agency reported.

The Suzhou city government, which oversees the town, said in a social media post that four people had died and

149 others had minor injuries. Shengze is near Shanghai on China's east coast.

Another tornado hit Wuhan at about 8:40 p.m. with winds of 86 kilometers (53 miles) per hour, destroying more than two dozen homes and triggering a power outage affecting 26,600 households, Xinhua said. Officials in Wuhan

said at a news conference Saturday that eight had died and 230 were injured.

They said that 28 homes collapsed in Wuhan, another 130 were damaged and put economic losses at 37 million yuan (\$5.7 million), the Hubei Daily newspaper said.

Construction site sheds and two cranes were also damaged, while downed power lines knocked out electricity, Xinhua said.

Photos showed a swarm of rescuers searching through building debris in Wuhan after midnight Friday and workers clearing metallic debris at a factory in Shengze in the morning. Wuhan is the city where Covid-19 was first detected in late 2019.

UN chief: Foreign fighters in Libya are violating cease-fire

ASSOCIATED PRESS
UNITED NATIONS, 15 MAY

The UN chief said foreign fighters and mercenaries remain in Libya in violation of last October's cease-fire agreement and called for their withdrawal and an end to violations of the UN arms embargo, saying these are critical elements for lasting peace in the north African country and the region.

Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said in a report to the UN Security Council obtained on Friday by The Associated Press that the smooth transfer of power to a new interim government, which took power in March, brings renewed hope for the reunification of the country and its institutions and for a lasting peace. But he said progress must continue on the political, economic and security tracks to enable elections to go ahead on 24 December.

At least 788 people have been killed by the junta's security forces in crackdowns on protests against its rule, according to an advocacy group. The military, which disputes that number, imposes tight restrictions on media, information and the Internet. Reuters cannot independently verify arrests and casualty numbers.

Junta spokesman Zaw Min Tun told a news conference that 63 people had been killed recently in what he described as various "terrorist attacks" by the administration's opponents, appealing to people to inform on the attackers.

Anti-junta protests were held in the main city of Myan-

mar and many other towns on Saturday.

A poet who had criticised military rule had been soaked in gasoline and burned to death in the central town of Monywa on Friday, residents said. Sein Win was the third poet to be killed in the town, a stronghold of opposition to the junta. The army took power alleging fraud in an election won by Suu Kyi's party in November. Its claims of irregularities were rejected by the electoral commission.

In April 2019, east-based

commander Khalifa Hifter and his forces, backed by Egypt and the United Arab Emirates, launched an offensive to try and capture Tripoli. His 14-month-long campaign collapsed after Turkey stepped up its military support of the UN-backed government with hundreds of troops and thousands of Syrian mercenaries.

An October cease-fire agreement that included a demand for all foreign fighters and mercenaries leave Libya within 90 days led to a deal on the transitional government and December elections. The UN estimated in December that there were at least 20,000 foreign fighters and mercenaries in Libya, including Syrians, Russians, Sudanese and Chadians. But at an informal council meeting in late April, speakers said there were more than 20,000, including 13,000 Syrians and 11,000 Sudanese, according to diplomats.

Guterres said in the new report that while the cease-fire continues to hold, the UN political mission in Libya has received reports of fortifications and defensive positions being set up in central Libya on the key route between the strategic city of Sirte, the gateway to the country's major oil fields and export terminals, and Jufra.

The sanctity of Al-Aqsa mosque, one of Islam's holiest sites, is a sensitive and emotive issue for Muslims around the world. The OIC was formed 51 years ago in response to a Jewish extremist arson attack on the Al-Aqsa Mosque in east Jerusalem.

The hilltop on which the mosque stands is also sacred to Jews, who revere it as the Temple Mount because it was the site of the biblical temples.



three nieces were hit by shrapnel. They are not even teens."

The junta imposed martial law in Mindat on Thursday and then stepped up attacks on what it called "armed terrorists". A spokesman did not answer calls requesting comment on the fighting on Saturday.

Fighters of the Chinland Defence Force retreated as military reinforcements advanced with artillery bombardments and helicopter attacks, a member of a local administration set up by the junta's opponents told Reuters

Myanmar already had some two dozen ethnic armed groups, who have waged war for decades against an army dominated by the Bamar majority. The Chinland Defence Force was set up in response to the junta. The agency was unable to reach the group for comment on Saturday.

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Anti-junta protests were held in the main city of Myan-</p



TO EACH HIS OWN

New Zealand batsman Devon Conway (*in photo, left*) is sprinkling kitty litter, or granulated clay, on practice wickets to simulate spin on the rough, hoping this will help him cope with bowlers like Ravichandran Ashwin during the World Test Championship final against India next month.

For more updates

www.thestatesman.com

THUMBNAILS

Lahiri misses cut: India's Anirban Lahiri holed six birdies, but it was not enough to hang around for weekend action as he missed the cut by a shot at the AT&T Byron Nelson Championship in McKinney (US).

Match postponed: The FIH Hockey Pro League matches between Belgium and Argentina, scheduled on May 22 and 23, was on Saturday postponed due to travel restrictions imposed in the wake of a fresh surge in COVID-19 cases worldwide.

Selector's job: Former India batsman Surinder Amarnath has applied for the junior selector's position in the BCCI. The application deadline for the five vacancies ended last month and the BCCI will soon get going with the selection process.

WFI cancels camp: The planned camp for eight Olympic-bound Indian wrestlers in Sonepat has been cancelled due to hard quarantine and they will instead train in multiple European cities, with the national federation allowing each of them a sparring partner of their choice.

Junior World C'ships: A two-member Indian team, including Youth Olympics gold medalist weightlifter Jeremy Lalrinnunga, will leave on Tuesday to take part in the World Junior Championship in Tashkent from May 23 to 31.

Footballers to practise in Qatar ahead of qualifying matches

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, 15 MAY

The Indian football team will leave for Qatar on 19 May after the Persian Gulf country, in a big relief, complied with the All-India Football Federation's request to allow its players to train there.

Ahead of the 2022 World Cup qualifiers next month, Qatar has also agreed to waive a mandatory 10-day hard quarantine once the team are there. The players will have a preparatory camp of nearly two weeks in a bio-secure bubble in Qatar before the first match on 3 June. "We are planning to send the team in the evening on 19 May. There will be no quarantine and the players will be in a bio bubble," AIFF general secretary Kushal Das said today. He said that the players would assemble in New Delhi.

They will be tested for Covid-19 before their departure. India are out of the reckoning for a 2022 World Cup berth but are still in contention for a 2023 Asian Cup spot in the joint qualifiers. The remaining three matches – against Qatar (3 June), Bangladesh (7 June) and Afghanistan (15 June) – are crucial for Asian Cup qualification.

Copa Libertadores

Players breathed in tear-gas during a Copa Libertadores group stage match in Colombia where they were unwittingly caught up in protests against the country's government.

While Brazilian visitors Atletico Mineiro were winning at America de Cali 3-1, the match was interrupted eight times, as sirens and explosions echoed outside Romelio Martinez Stadium in Barranquilla late into Thursday.

Torres hat trick

Ferran Torres scored a hat-trick as newly crowned champions Manchester City won a record 12th straight away game in the English Premier League, 4-3 at Newcastle. The Spain winger was part of another heavily rotated line-up named by Pep Guardiola that also included third-choice goalkeeper Scott Carson, an on-loan 35-year-old who was making his first start in the top flight in 10 years last evening.

Of pawns on chessboard in the time of pandemic

PULAKESH MUKHOPADHYAY

How will the world, or at least its best athletes, gather weeks hence in Tokyo for the Olympics if Thomas Bach, chief of the International Olympic Committee, is kept from fetching up there because of a Japanese coronavirus emergency? Any reason to think things related to the scourge will only look up and up to ease the country's ill-concealed fears of an apocalypse to the point where most of its people, now firmly opposed to being sacrificed on the altar of

commercialised sport and, of course, jingoistic pride, will turn right around with a whoop and a holler, bellowing wel-

pier trumpeting the Summer Games in Tokyo, and the discomfiture of Uefa, aiming at a European championship with

SHORT POINT

coming messages?

Bach was unambiguous when saying, very recently, that the Games would surely be held, come what might, before word came through he wouldn't roll up in Tokyo, after all, given the way things were. But if you observed how reality left him frozen when he would perhaps have been hap-

spectors but finding itself being shackled by Covid-19 protocols in nations reluctant to let their citizenry die like flies in the pandemic, would appear to be manifestations of the same problem.

With the lure of the lucre underpinning all organisational drives across the spectrum, cricket, too, has taken a

nasty toss with the Indian Premier League coming to be shelved in the wake of assorted positive Covid-19 tests in its bio-secure bubble. Considering the way its booty is divided up, it adds up to a major global setback. The Twenty20 World Cup could turn out to be another. If India wasn't up to it with the IPL, it can be counted on to get everything right with the other show?

Is the bio bubble secure enough? People doubt it and a Plan B - a shift to West Asia - is said to be ready. Which would seem to indicate that sport, irrespective of its name and area of influence, is determined to

show us how it can cock a snook at the coronavirus.

The whole of the world may be in the grip of a cold fright, infections and death tolls can be seen to be soaring here, there and virtually everywhere but the archetypal high-up is undaunted. He loves his well, his organisation's, notionally - stash in the bank. On the flip side are most of the world's pro players. Pawns on the chessboard. If the bio bubble is breached, they are the ones who cop it. That happens to yet another coronavirus reality: even the glamour girl, or boy, who wows the world is just a plaything.

Bancroft calls a spade a spade

LONDON, 15 MAY



Cameron Bancroft (*in photo*), one of the three central figures in the infamous ball-tampering scandal, says it is "self explanatory" that apart from Steven Smith, David Warner and himself, Australian bowlers were also aware of the illegal tactics during the Newlands Test.

Bancroft was caught on camera using sandpaper on the ball in the third Test against South Africa in 2018, a scandal that had rocked Australian and world cricket.

In an interview with 'The Guardian', asked if some of

to be responsible and accountable for my own actions and part.

"Yeah, obviously what I did benefits bowlers and the awareness around that, probably, is self-explanatory," he added.

Asked again if his bowling colleagues had some knowledge of what was happening, he replied: "Uh yeah, look, I think, yeah, I think it's pretty probably self-explanatory."

The Australian bowling attack in the Newlands Test had comprised pacers Mitchell Starc, Pat Cummins, Josh Hazlewood, Mitchell Marsh and spinner Nathan Lyon.

Kiwis depart for England for WTC final vs India

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

AUCKLAND, 15 MAY

The New Zealand men's cricket team departed for England on Saturday night to play a two-Test series, followed by the ICC World Test Championship (WTC) final against the Virat Kohli-captained India.

Zverev beat Nadal in straight sets at the same stage in Madrid a week ago and their latest meeting was also one-sided.

Nadal raced to 4-0 in the first set and saved all eight break points he faced in the second.

"I played more solid than Madrid. Conditions are different," Nadal said, alluding to the fact that the high-altitude of the Spanish capital allowed Zverev to dominate more with his serve. "Here are little bit more normal conditions. I was able to control a little bit more," he said. Nadal, aiming for a record-extending 10th Rome title, will next face big-serving American Reilly Opelka, who reached his first Masters semifinal by edging Argentine qualifier Federico Delbonis 7-5, 7-6 (2).

Djokovic outlasts Tsitsipas to reach Rome semis

Top-ranked Novak Djokovic regained his cool after throwing his racket off the court in a grueling, rain-delayed 4-6, 7-5, 7-5 quarterfinal victory over Stefanos Tsitsipas at the Italian Open on Saturday.

Djokovic fought back from breaks of his serve in each of the final two sets to reach his eighth

consecutive semifinal at the Foro Italico where he has lifted the trophy five times, most recently last September when the tournament was moved to later in the year because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Djokovic didn't have much time to rest before he faces home favorite Lorenzo Sonego later Saturday for a spot in the final.

Sonego was backed by a loud crowd when he rallied past seventh-ranked Andrey Rublev 3-6, 6-4, 6-3 to reach his first Masters semifinal. Their match was washed out Friday.

Fans were allowed to 25% of capacity as part of the Italian government's reopening plan.

"London on Getting set. After two Lincoln camps, our New Zealand-based players heading to England! The squad will travel to Southampton on arrival in England to prepare for the first Test against @englandcricket (Lord's) on the 2nd of June," NZC said on Instagram.

The Blackcaps had made Lincoln, on the South Island, as its final training base before the journey.

This will be the last tour for New Zealand's wicket-keeper-batsman, 35-year-old BJ Watling, who recently announced that he was retiring from competitive cricket. Watling represented New Zealand in 73 Tests, 28 ODIs and five T20Is.

The camp, which comprises 30 players, will include two 'best v best' inter-squad matches as West Indies look ahead to their final series in the ICC World Test Championship, against South Africa in June. Test captain Kraigg Brathwaite and fast bowlers Kemar Roach and Alzarri Joseph will not be attending as they are currently competing in English County Championship and will return to the West Indies for Test series if selected.

Rafael Nadal ended a run of three straight losses to Alexander Zverev with a convincing 6-3, 6-4 win over the German to reach the Italian Open semifinals.

Zverev beat Nadal in straight sets at the same stage in Madrid a week ago and their latest meeting was also one-sided.

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"I played more solid than Madrid. Conditions are different," Nadal said, alluding to the fact that the high-altitude of the Spanish capital allowed Zverev to dominate more with his serve. "Here are little bit more normal conditions. I was able to control a little bit more," he said. Nadal, aiming for a record-extending 10th Rome title, will next face big-serving American Reilly Opelka, who reached his first Masters semifinal by edging Argentine qualifier Federico Delbonis 7-5, 7-6 (2).

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risks of holding the Olympics amid the pandemic should continue to be carefully discussed. Federer, a father of four, said he had taken the Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine. "I'm glad that I could do it, with all the travelling I do," said Federer, who will play the Geneva Open next week, his second tournament since returning in March after a year out due to knee problems.

"Even if I'm staying in Switzerland, I think there are advantages. Above all, I did it for others because I don't want to give it to anyone else, even if I still remain very careful."

"We're very careful with the family and with our friends."

It was clear when Niranjan Shah (*in photo*), the BCCI vice-president said that India couldn't give a flying toss about international cricket. "Like in baseball, America is not worried whether any other country is playing or not," he told James Astill, the writer of The Great Tamasha: Cricket, Corruption and the Turbulent Rise of Modern India. It was clearer when it was announced that every major ICC event from 2015 to 2023 would be held in England, Australia and India. And it is clearest now, after the ICC F&CA Commercial Rights Working Group Position Paper has been leaked. It is a confirmation of all the fears of cricket fans from within, and especially outside, the three countries that run world cricket, and plan to do so for the foreseeable future. The hullabaloo over it seems a little odd considering how much of the control has been ceded to the BCCI, CA and ECB over the past ten years, but it's the formalization of that rambles. It's a bit like the justice system in Pakistan; everyone is aware of how crooked and power-friendly it is, but it is one thing to own it informally and another to legislate for it such a way that your owning of it is legal.

For those unaware, a draft of this paper was uncovered by Osman Samiuddin and Sharda Ugra last week. This paper underlines a possible vision for the future of international cricket administration, and it is a future that should scare even the casual

fan. The draft, a 21-page document in pure management-speak and filled with org-charts, reads like the sort of thing delusional MBAs with no love for the game would write.

The reasoning that the paper provides for its existence is that the cricket boards have to be removed from the clutches of the International Cricket Council (ICC) - it's a reasoning based on everything but the facts. It follows that up with details on how it plans to provide a better cricket world - and the fact that this is "better" (at least in the short term) for only three countries, or rather three boards, within the ICC makes it clear who is behind it. It talks about "better" redistribution of ICC revenues, by which it means that the richest countries should get the most money, as they produce the most too. The rich get richer, the poor get poorer; unfettered capitalism, always an anathema to sport, is what they are planning to institutionalise.

But it's not just the money that should be with them, the paper argues, but the power too. One proposal in the paper is for the establishment of an 'Executive Committee' within the ICC. This ExCo would consist of one nominated member for a one-year period from the remaining seven countries, and three permanent members from India, Australia and England.

Thus it would be the cricket equivalent of the UN Security Council with three members being more equal than others. The paper defines all this as "Meritocracy not just

Membership" - you can do so much when you are the one creating the definition of meritocracy. Add all this to the proposal to cancel the ICC Test Championship and the Future Tours Program, and you have the complete picture. We can finally live in the world where the big three countries only play each other, stopping only for their domestic T20 leagues, while the plebs can fight each other for what little scraps "trickle down". It's the way it's supposed to be I guess.

And it does all this while trying to maintain a level of "goodness" and ticking off all the clichés. It is said that the proposal is about "ensuring that Test Cricket remains the primary form of the game while World Cup cricket remains the key generator of finances for the ICC and a number of members." It's almost as if the drafters got the memo on what to include to make it seem like they actually care about and follow the game. The paper talks about "improved governance and effective and efficient management" but hardly about one facet the word "fans" is used once in 21 pages.

The fact that the paper has been leaked is worthy of debate and conspiracy theorizing in itself. The best case scenario is that there are people within the ICC who are concerned by the apartheidisation of cricket, and journalists who are willing to uncover such stories. The worst case scenario is that this was deliberately leaked and a modified form of this paper will be approved based on the reactions. What seems an inevitability is that we are finally going to institutionalize the divide that exists within the Full Member Nations and create a three or four-tier body. The Pakistan Cricket Board has already expressed its apprehension "over the direction world cricket is taking" following these revelations. All of this, though, is presumptuous from the drafters that is. Over the past thirty years we've seen the rise of the "Asian Bloc" (and the accompanying dread by tweed-wearing old white men), followed by India becoming too big and shedding the rest of the members off that bloc. This all seems purely logical in hindsight that the country with two-third of cricket's market and finances was going to rule the roost eventually, but maybe twenty years from now cricket is no longer the most popular sport in India. Perhaps, a plethora of T20 will saturate a market that will move towards other ventures - perhaps it'll join the rest of Asia in being a football dominated country.

'Krishnamurthy treated shabbily by cricket board'

AGENCIES
KARACHI, 15 MAY

Former Australian women's team captain Lisa Sthalekar says the Board of Control for Cricket in India neither checked on Veda Krishnamurthy (*in photo*) after the twin tragedy in her family nor communicated to the bereaved India cricketer its decision not to consider her for the forthcoming tour of England.

Earlier this month, the flamboyant middle-order India batter lost her elder sister Vatsala Shivakumar to COVID-19, two weeks after her mother succumbed to the deadly virus.

On expected lines, she was not included in the Indian Test and ODI team for next month's tour of the United Kingdom, but ICC Hall of Famer Sthalekar was not convinced with the BCCI's handling of the whole episode.

"Whilst not selecting Veda for the upcoming series may be justified from their point of view, what angers me the most is that as a contracted player she has not received any communication from BCCI, just to even check how she is coping," Sthalekar said in a note on her Twitter handle. She added, "A true association should deeply care about the players that play the game... not focus solely on just the game at any cost. So disappointed."

The all-rounder has represented India in 48 ODIs and 76 Twenty20 Internationals. Sthalekar, the first player to

achieve the double of 1000 runs and 100 wickets in women's ODIs, said the time had come for a player's association for the Indian women's team.

In another, unrelated development, sacked as the women's cricket team coach, WV Raman has alleged that a "smear campaign" against him has gained unwarranted traction and urged BCCI president Sourav Ganguly to stop it. In a mail that has also been marked to National Cricket Academy head Rahul Dravid, Raman wrote that it would be "extremely disconcerting" if his candidature was rejected owing to reasons other than "my incompetence as a coach."

Raman was not retained as head coach of the senior women's team by the Cricket Advisory Committee, which picked Ramesh Powar for the job.

For those unaware, a draft of this paper was uncovered