



SCOTTISH NATIONAL
PARTY INCHES
CLOSE TO MAJORITY

P10



KERALA'S WAY



SUSPENSE CONTINUES
OVER NEXT ASSAM CM

P4



VIRUS STINGS
A FOURTH
KNIGHT RIDER

P12

WEATHER

Mainly clear sky. The maximum and minimum temperatures would be around 40 and 23 degrees Celsius respectively.

RAINFALL: NIL

RELATIVE HUMIDITY

Max: 78% Min: 24%

TEMPERATURE

Max: 38.8°C (O) Min: 22.3°C (-3)

SUN RISES

19.01 hrs

MOON RISES

04:47 hrs

MOON SETS

16:57 hrs

SUN SETS

19.01 hrs

MOON SETS



The state government would not sit idle and will take steps

GAUTAM DEB, CHAIRMAN, SMC BOARD OF ADMINISTRATORS

ON ALLEGATIONS THAT PRIVATE HOSPITALS IN SILIGURI HAD BEEN CHARGING HIGH FEES FROM COVID PATIENTS

Need 2.6 cr doses to get all Delhi'ites jabs in 3 mths: CM

Capital records 332 fresh Covid fatalities, 17,364 infections; positivity rate dips to 23.34 pc

SNS & PTI
NEW DELHI, 8 MAY

Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal today said the number of Covid vaccination centres in the city will be significantly increased, even as he demanded that the Centre supply around 2.6 crore more vaccine doses for inoculation of all residents of the national capital over the next three months.

The CM said that Delhi currently has vaccine doses to vaccinate people for only 5-6 days and urged the Centre to provide adequate jabs.

To vaccinate all people in Delhi against Covid, over 3 crore doses will be required, out of which around 40 lakh have already been received, Kejriwal said during an online press briefing. He urged the

Centre to provide Delhi about 85 lakh Covid vaccine doses per month so that all the Delhi'ites could be vaccinated in the next three months.

Kejriwal who inspected the ongoing vaccination drive at a centre in Chirag Delhi said there is great enthusiasm among the youths to get the jab.

He said that due to "good arrangements" in Delhi, people from NCR towns like Noida, Ghaziabad were also reaching here to get their shots. So, Delhi will require a little more than three crore doses, he said.

He said Delhi was currently administering one lakh vaccine doses per day and that it will have to increase it to three lakh in order to vaccinate all Delhi'ites over the next 3 months.

The CM said Delhi's pop-

ulation is 2 crore and nearly 1 crore fall in the 18-44 age group. Fifty lakh people are below 18, and the remaining 50 lakh people are above 45 years of age.

"Roughly 1.5 crore people are above 18 years of age. We need three crore vaccine doses to vaccinate these 1.5 crore people, but we've received just 40 lakh doses. As a result, we have received 2 crore 60 lakh additional vaccines," he said. Delhi has been vaccinating more than one lakh people every day now. This includes around 50,000 people in 18-44 age group and 50,000 aged 45 years and above, he said.

"A major obstacle we're facing is that of vaccine scarcity. If we get adequate doses, then as I have said repeatedly, we will be able to vaccinate the entire Delhi in three months," the CM said. Citing warnings

of a third wave of Covid, he said that vaccination is the only safeguard against the deadly virus.

Kejriwal also urged the Centre and experts for finding alternatives to protect children below 18 years of age from Covid. "We are particularly concerned about children under 18 years of age who cannot get vaccinated right now. I appeal to all experts and the Centre to arrange a vaccine for them too so that they can also get inoculated," he said.

Delhi's Covid situation

Meanwhile, Delhi today recorded 332 more Covid fatalities and 17,364 new infections, while the positivity rate remained below 25 per cent for the third consecutive day, according to the Delhi govern-

ment's latest health bulletin. This is the fifth time in the last six days that the number of new coronavirus cases remained below 20,000.

Delhi had reported 19,832 cases on Friday, 19,133 cases on Thursday, 20,960 cases on



Wednesday, 19,953 on Tuesday, 18,043 on Monday, and 20,394 cases last Sunday, according to official data.

The city's case positivity rate was 23.34 per cent, the lowest since April 16, when it was 19.7 per cent. It was 24.6 per

cent on 17 April.

Delhi logged a positivity rate of 24.92 per cent on Friday, 24.29 per cent on Thursday, 26.37 per cent on Wednesday, 26.73 percent on Tuesday, 29.56 per cent on Monday, and 28.33 per cent last Sunday, according to official figures. On 22 April, a positivity rate of 36.26 per cent, the highest so far, was recorded.

The national capital had registered 341 Covid deaths on Friday, 335 on Thursday, 311 on Wednesday, 338 on Tuesday, 448 on Monday, the highest so far, and 407 on Sunday, according to official data. Today's fresh cases were detected out of 74,384 tests, including 62,921 RTPCR/CNAAT/True Nat tests. Over 20,900 patients recovered from the infection in the last 24 hours, the health bulletin said.

There were currently 87,907 active cases in Delhi and over 12.03 lakh patients have recovered from Covid in the city so far, the bulletin stated.

Delhi's Covid caseload rose to 13,10,231 while its death toll increased to 19,071, the bulletin said. Of the 22,289 hospital beds for coronavirus patients in the city, only 2,451 were vacant, it claimed. Of the 5,525 beds in Covid care centres, 4,792 were vacant while only 99 beds of 206 were vacant at dedicated Covid health centres.

As many as 49,865 patients were under home isolation and the number of containment zones have risen to 51,338, the bulletin stated. A total of 79,800 beneficiaries were vaccinated in the city over the last 24 hours, of which 67,753 were those who got their first dose, the bulletin added.

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PETITION FOR PROBATE
In the Goods of:
Narayan Chandra Banerjee, son of late B.C. Banerjee late of 98, Rajdanga Main Road, Thakurtala, P.S.: Kasba, Kolkata-700107, a Hindu inhabitant deceased.

All persons claiming to have any interest in the estate of the abovenamed deceased are hereby cited to come within 2 (two) weeks from the

P.L.A. NO. 187 OF 2020

IN THE HIGH COURT

AT CALCUTTA

Testamentary and Intestate Jurisdiction

President of the Union of India

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CONVENT educated B.Sc.,

knowing computer correspond-

ence, party visiting, outsta-

tion tour, seeks change.

Salary Rs. 10,500.

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PROPERTIES

5 BIGHAS commercial land (suitable for Resort & Hotel)

for sale in Dooars nearby date of the publication and Gorumara N.P. Litigation free.

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LEGAL NOTICES

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Women aligned with opposition politics have lost their right to live fearlessly....

SENIOR BJP LEADER ROOPA GANGULY
ACCUSING MAMATA BANERJEE OF IGNORING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN BJP WORKERS

Corona spreading fast in rural Haryana, we must check it: CM

Haryana govt will launch a special door-to-door Covid screening drive in villages across the state by constituting 8,000 multi-disciplinary teams, says CM Khattar

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 8 MAY

With the Covid-19 pandemic hitting rural areas hard, the Haryana government on Saturday said it will adopt proactive 'test, track and treat' strategy to curb swiftly spreading wave of coronavirus in villages.

The state government will launch a special door-to-door screening drive in villages by constituting 8,000 multidisciplinary teams, Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar said after presiding over a review meeting with top officials of health and panchayat department today.

The CM directed proactive strategies like conducting door-to-door health screening camps covering each house, constituting special dedicated multidisciplinary teams for screening and converting Dharamshalas, government schools, Ayush centres into isolation centres to contain the virus spread.

"We have to protect rural areas from this deadly infection at any cost, therefore every officer concerned



Haryana CM Manohar Lal Khattar presiding over a review meeting on the state's Covid situation, at Chandigarh on Saturday.

SNS

camps any person is found having Covid-like symptoms of fever, cold and cough, then the person should be advised to stay in home isolation immediately so as to prevent the possibility of infection spread. Approximately one team per 500 households should be deployed for conducting the health screening," said Khattar.

He further said while conducting the screening these multidisciplinary teams should ensure that the patients having mild and moderate symptoms are immediately given prescribed preventive medicines for Covid-19 infection. Besides this, it should also be ensured that those having severe symptoms are right away hospitalized to get the required treatment.

The CM said since in rural areas the virus is spreading fast, so the strategy of special screening camps focusing on 'test, track and treat' should be adopted in each village so that anyone having Covid-19 symptoms could be detected early and the possibility of infection's further spread could be prevented.

should ensure that special vigilance is kept on every village and for this a massive Covid-19 screening campaign should be conducted in all villages of the state," said Khattar.

He said a special awareness campaign cum count-selling of rural inhabitants should be done and for this officers of health department along with health workers, former and present public representatives in each village have to play key roles in encouraging people to get themselves tested in the

screening camps. Apart from this, dedicated efforts should be made to raise awareness about safety practices and the precautionary measures to control the spread of COVID-19 infection in rural areas.

"Further strengthening of medical infrastructure along with ramping up COVID-19 management preparations coupled with aggressive surveillance, stringent containment, focused clinical management should also be done in every village on priority basis," directed the CM.

He said about 8000 multidisciplinary teams led by trainee doctors including health department officials, Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) and Anganwadi workers should be constituted across the state so that door to door health screening of households can be done in every village. He said that proper screening of every family should be done along with the recording of their oxygen and temperature levels.

"If during the screening

Focus on stopping Covid deaths: Uttarakhand CM to officials

PTI
DEHRADUN, 8 MAY



Uttarakhand Chief Minister Tirath Singh Rawat on Saturday asked officials to focus on stopping deaths due to COVID-19 and speed up the process of vaccinating people in the 18-44 age group. Reviewing the coronavirus situation in the state via video conference, Rawat asked the officials to go for a decentralised system for the distribution of medical kits among all COVID-19 patients.

He asked the District Magistrates to take stern action in case of more than 25 people

gathering at one place for social functions like marriages.

The chief minister also suggested that help from retired army personnel can

also be taken in the fight against the pandemic.

He also asked the officials to speed up the process of vaccinating people aged between 18 and 45 years as soon as the

first consignment of vaccines for them arrives.

The first consignment of vaccines meant for people in that age group is likely to arrive later on Saturday.

The COVID-19 protocol must be followed at the vaccination centres which should preferably be located in open spaces, Rawat said.

The chief minister ordered stringent action against the people involved in black marketing and selling at inflated prices the medicines and equipment used in COVID-19 management.

He also said the use of oxygen by hospitals should be

constantly audited. Oxygen plants under construction should be completed speedily and they must get uninterrupted electricity supply, the CM said.

Health Secretary Amit Negi said stocks of Remdesivir injections are adequate in the state.

Efforts at present are focused on breaking the transmission chain of the virus, he said. Uttarakhand on Friday recorded its biggest single-day spike of 9,642 coronavirus cases that took the tally to 22,993, while 137 more fatalities pushed the death toll to 3,430.

Delhi minister inspects old age home

PTI
NEW DELHI, 8 MAY

Amid a surge in COVID-19 cases, Delhi Social Welfare minister Rajendra Pal Gautam inspected an old age home here on Saturday and asked officials to ensure that proper healthcare facilities are provided to senior citizens.

The minister conducted a surprise inspection of an old age home in Bindapur run by the Delhi government having a capacity of 50 residents, an official statement said.

Gautam reviewed all the facilities being provided to senior citizens there, includ-

ing food, healthcare, sanitation among others.

He interacted with the residents to know the quality of the facilities and whether they are facing any issue, it said.

"All senior citizens are being provided nutritious food as well as all kinds of medical facilities. The elderly living in the old age home informed me that they get food, milk, food, fruits on time and all their facilities are being taken care of," he said.

There are 57 senior citizens currently living at the Bindapur Old Age Home, of which 45 are female and 12 are male, the statement said.

PIL in HC seeks drive-in vaccination centres in Delhi like Mumbai

PTI
NEW DELHI, 8 MAY

A PIL was moved in the Delhi High Court on Saturday urging it to direct the Centre and the Delhi government to set up drive-in vaccination centres in open areas, including stadiums, as has been done in Mumbai.

The plea by Delhi-based trader Amandeep Aggarwal contends that the purpose of imposing a curfew or lockdown would be defeated if people are queuing or crowding at closed spaces like vaccination centres or hospitals

to get vaccinated.

The plea further contends that creating vaccination centres in open spaces would reduce the pressure on the medical staff and infrastructure at hospitals which are struggling to cater to the increasing number of COVID-19 patients in the national capital. "The drive-in vaccination centres will encourage people to get vaccinated at the earliest without compromising themselves from coming in contact with other citizens," the plea said.

No question of sabotaging farmers' stir, but can't allow violation of Covid curbs: Pb CM



the Kisan Sangharsh Morcha's (an amalgamation of 32 farmers' unions) anti-lockdown agitation on Saturday. Nobody can be allowed to play with the lives of the people, he reiterated today.

Leaders of two organisations had "misinterpreted" his statement to raise doubts

about his intentions towards the ongoing farmers' stir against the Centre's "black farm laws", said the CM.

"How can my government go against the interests of the farmers when it was the first in the country to move the amendment laws in the Assembly to annul the draconian farm laws of the Central government?" asked Capt Amarinder, asserting that as far as the Central farm laws were concerned, his government's stand against them had been clear and consistent.

Noting that the Covid situation in the state was extremely grim, the CM said that as on 6 May, the state had 24-hour caseload of 8874, 154 deaths, 265 patients admitted in isolation facility, 30 patients on high dependency unit and 16 on ventilator support. "This is

not the time to play politics but to put all our energies into protecting the life of every human being," he said.

Appealing to the farmers to extend all support and cooperation to the state government in its endeavour to combat the Covid crisis, the CM said the lives and safety of the people of Punjab were of paramount interest to his government. He reiterated that he would not allow anyone to further endanger the lives of Punjabis amid the escalating Covid crisis.

The state government, said Capt Amarinder, had stood with the farmers in their fight against the Centre's "draconian black farm laws" since the outset and continues to do so, as it strongly believes them to be a direct threat to the very existence and livelihood of the farmers.

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 8 MAY

Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh on Saturday said there was no question of sabotaging the farmers' agitation against the farm laws, which his own government was vehemently opposed to, but no violation of the weekend lockdown and other restrictions in the state could be allowed at any cost, given the current grim situation.

"There are lives at stake, saving them are our priority, and it is the responsibility of every Punjabi to save them," said the Chief Minister, urging Bhartiya Kisan Union (BKU) Ekta Ugrahan and BKU (Ekta Dakoonda) leaders not to give a twist to his yesterday's comments on the





There is a total collapse of governance and an absence of a national strategy to combat the pandemic

SENIOR CONGRESS LEADER M VEERAPPA MOILY
SLAMMING CENTRE OVER COVID PANDEMIC HANDLING

India

THUMBNAILS



LDF workers light candles to celebrate the alliance's victory in Thiruvananthapuram, on Friday. AFP

Man mauled by lion: A 35-year-old man was mauled to death by a lion at Madhupur village in Gujarat's Junagadh district in the wee hours of Saturday, a forest official said. The incident occurred in Talala range of Gir (west) forest division at 1 am, Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife), Junagadh, Dushyant Vasavada said. PTI

Tiger found dead in MP: Samples from a poultry farm in Ludhiana tested positive for bird flu, prompting the district authorities to form a committee for a culling exercise and containment operations. The National Institute of High Security Animal Diseases, Bhopal, confirmed bird flu in a poultry farm at Qila. PTI

Bird flu detected in Pb: Samples from a poultry farm in Ludhiana tested positive for bird flu, prompting the district authorities to form a committee for a culling exercise and containment operations. The National Institute of High Security Animal Diseases, Bhopal, confirmed bird flu in a poultry farm at Qila. PTI

Nine labourers killed in Andhra limestone quarry blast

HYDERABAD, 8 MAY

Nine daily wage labourers were killed and several were left critically injured in a blast that occurred when gelatin sticks were being unloaded from a truck at a limestone quarry at Mamillapalle village in Kadapa district of Andhra Pradesh.

Quite a few deaths were reported in the state allegedly due to disruption in oxygen supply though the authorities had attributed the fatalities to other reasons.

Now, the state government has roped in the ENC to fix leakages in oxygen plants, their maintenance and precautions which should be adhered to in order to prevent any disruption in supply.

The decision to hand over operations and maintenance of oxygen plants to the Visakhapatnam based ENC as the pandemic rages on, was taken during a meeting held today between nodal officer of the Covid control room of the state government, Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief (FOC-in-C) and Chief managing director of Vizag Steel Plant over supply, storage and maintenance of liquid medical oxygen in the state.

Around 20 workers mostly hailing from Pulinveludula and adjoining areas were unloading the truck laden with explosives to be used at the quarry when the incident took place. The sticks came in contact with the sides of the truck and in the resultant explosion several workers were blown to pieces. The other workers and villagers informed the police and dialled the 108 service for ambulance.

The rough terrain leading to the quarry made rescue work difficult and body parts were strewn around making identification of the dead a difficult task. Several bodies might be under the rubble and the toll may go higher since many of the injured who were rushed to hospitals in Pulinveludula were critical. The quarry had a valid license. SNS

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'Allowing religious intolerance not good for a secular country'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
CHENNAI, 8 MAY

The Madras High Court has said allowing religious intolerance is not good for a secular country and 'resistance' by one religious group, if reciprocated by another, could lead to chaos and riots.

A bench of Justices N Kirubakaran and P Velmurugan made the remarks while hearing a petition over conduct of temple processions by villagers at V Kalathur in Perambalur district in Tamil Nadu on a specified route, objected to by local Muslims.

It was evident from the affidavit of the third respondent, Deputy Superintendent of Police, "that three days festival of the aforesaid temples were peacefully conducted till the year 2011 and only from

'Oxygen war' erupts in Karnataka districts

This follows death of 24 patients in Chamarajanagar district

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU, 8 MAY

The four districts of Mysuru, Chamarajanagar, Mandya and Kodagu, are engaged in a petywar over oxygen supply. This largely involves the district in-charge ministers and officials.

The war follows the death of 24 patients in the hospitals of neighbouring Chamarajanagar earlier this week, the result of non availability of the much needed medical resource.

The deaths led to the deputy commissioners of Mysuru and Chamarajanagar trading charges.

COVID EFFECT



Buses parked at a depot during the Covid lockdown.

» The deaths led to the deputy commissioners of Mysuru and Chamarajanagar trading charges.

» The oxygen war has also prompted MLA G T Devegowda to question the delay by the state government in deciding appropriate quotas for the districts.

the district had to take care of patients in its Covid facilities.

In a related development, the minister in charge of Shivamogga is learnt to have asked his officials in his district to put up "no beds" boards, to prevent patients from neighbouring districts from using the facilities. All because of a shortage of oxygen and ventilators!

The Mysuru MP even went on to say that IP cameras, linked to a control room, would be installed at the district's refilling plants and at the distributors' end to monitor "unauthorised refilling."

The oxygen war has also prompted MLA G T Devegowda to question the delay by the state government in deciding appropriate quotas for

the districts.

According to him, the wars are taking place between neighbouring districts, following the rise in Covid cases.

It was important for the ministers concerned, therefore, to get the state government to raise their districts' oxygen quotas.

In Mysuru, 40 kilolitres of oxygen is required every day, against which it was only getting, Devegowda claims.

Besides, the number of cases in the district had shot up to 2500 a day and could even touch 10,000 by month end.

Therefore, he said the district administrator would install CCTV cameras at all its eight medical oxygen suppliers' plants, to monitor the movement of the much needed cylinders.

Mumbai, 8 MAY

Maharashtra minister Satej Patil on Saturday accused the neighbouring Karnataka government of 'interrupting' oxygen supply to Western Maharashtra from a steel plant in Bellary, and asked the Centre to intervene.

In a statement, Patil, the Minister of State for Home, said "interruption of oxygen meant for Kolhapur and other districts by Karnataka is unfortunate".

The Union government should ensure that the supply is not disrupted to avoid loss of life, he said.

"The supply of 50 MT of oxygen to Maharashtra especially to Western Maharashtra the central government was interrupted by the Karnataka government.

This will lead to shortage of oxygen in Kolhapur, Sangli, Satara, Sindhudurg and Ratnagiri districts," the Congress leader claimed.

Patil, who is also guardian minister for Kolhapur, informed that to face a possible third wave of pandemic, 14 oxygen plants will be set up in the district.

+ve man missing: After her Covid positive father went missing suspiciously from LLRM Medical college hospital of Meerut, daughter Shivangi has appealed CM Yogi Adityanath to help her know about his whereabouts.

Santosh Kumar (64), who was admitted in the LLRM Medical College on 21 April. His daughter has made an emotional appeal to CM requesting him to intervene in the matter as the hospital authorities are clueless about his whereabouts. SNS

In the second wave of Covid, we are facing serious challenge. The second wave of the infection is spreading at a much higher intensity than last year," CM said.

Earlier at a meeting of local body representatives and officials here on Saturday, Vijayan has directed to form ward-level committees in each local body for COVID-19 prevention activities. SNS

Viruses in 2nd wave more severe: Vijayan

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, 8 MAY

The navy has also agreed to ferry 25 cryogenic oxygen cylinders procured by the state from Singapore, Thailand and Malaysia due to shortage of cylinders

extremely crucial during the pandemic. The navy has also agreed to ferry 25 cryogenic oxygen cylinders procured by the state from Singapore, Thailand and Malaysia due to shortage of cylinders.

It will also provide special vehicles for transportation of liquid medical oxygen containers for regular uses and also to supply oxygen concentrators, 200 D-type oxygen cylinders and other medical equipment required for Covid treatment.

Apart from agreeing to allot 10 oxygen beds along with 60 normal beds for treatment of Covid patients in INS Kalinga hospital ENC will develop infrastructure facilities for 150 bed temporary hospital in Kancherapalem of Visakhapatnam district for those afflicted with the virus.

Meanwhile Vizag Steel Plant has also agreed to set up a 50 bedded hospital with oxygen facilities at Gurajada Kalakshetram in Vizag.

By June it will expand to 600 beds in phases while the staff will be provided by district administration.

420 new cases in Darj dist

SILIGURI, 8 MAY

Darjeeling district recorded 420 new Covid cases in the past 24 hours, sources said. The Siliguri Municipal Corporation, including areas under Jalpaiguri district, registered 238 cases. A total of 123 cases were detected in Matigara Block, 24 cases in Sukna, 16 in Mirik, 15 in Naxalbari, 11 each in Kurseong Municipal and Phansidewa, nine in Takdah, seven in Kharibari, four in Suknia Pokhri and three cases in Bijbanbari. Sixteen persons, who had tested positive for Covid-9, died in Siliguri in the past 24 hours, sources said. SNS

Kasba mishap: Liquor bottles, syringes found in BMW

KOLKATA, 8 MAY

In the Kasba hit and run case, in which one person was killed and a police personnel sustained serious injury on Friday morning, police today recovered a number of liquor bottles and disposable syringes from the killer BMW.

Raising suspicion on whether the occupants of the car were taking drugs, sources said that the forensic test of the seized car also indicated that the vehicle was running at a speed of around 100 kmph when the incident happened. On Friday morning, at around 5 a.m. at Rajdanga area at Kasba, a BMW car while trying to avoid police intervention after a brawl among a group of persons broke out, had knocked a constable, Uday Biswas, down and rammed into a pedestrian identified as Tapan De, leaving him dead before crashing into three cars. SNS

The returning officer of Joypur Assembly seat has cancelled the nomination paper filed by Trinamul Congress candidate Ujjwal Kumar allegedly for a 'minor fault'.

The TMC supported the independent candidate Dibyajyoti Singh Deo in this seat, but the BJP managed to win this seat because there was no official TMC candidate.

Ujjwal Kumar had moved Calcutta High Court, a single bench of which issued an order favouring him but it was stayed by a division bench.

There was no time to move the Supreme Court for the TMC candidate. The returning officer, Surya Kumar Jana, a WBCS officer was posted as the district youth officer in

NEW INNINGS



Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin with his sister Kanimozi Karunanidhi and other family members, in Chennai on Friday. IANS

Assam: Suspense continues over next CM, Nadda meets aspirants

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
GUWAHATI, 8 MAY

Speculation began soon after the completion of counting of votes for the State Legislative Assembly elections where the ruling BJP-led alliance emerged victorious with 75 seats in the 126-member house.

The suspense that began after the end of the vote-count in Assam regarding the new chief minister continues and it reached New Delhi today, as BJP national president JP Nadda had to summon both the incumbent chief ministers Sarbananda Sonowal and his cabinet colleague and aspirant Himanta Biswa Sarma.

The first session began at Nadda's residence with Sarma where other senior saffron leaders Amit Shah, BL Santosh, etc were also present.

It was followed by another session with Sonowal and a third with both of them.

The final outcome was understood for organising a meeting of all newly elected saffron legislators in Guwahati to take a decision about the next chief minister of Assam.

Sonowal, who belongs to Assam's indigenous Sonowal-Kachari tribals, and Sarma, an Assamese Brahmin who is the convenor of the North East Democratic Alliance, are contenders for the top post of the Assam government. It started with a number of elected BJP

members.

They openly stated in news channels that they would not mind if Sarma is sworn in as the next chief minister instead of Sonowal. The deadlock continues even after six days since the vote-counts.

The TMC supported the independent candidate Dibyajyoti Singh Deo in this seat, but the BJP managed to win this seat because there was no official TMC candidate. Ujjwal Kumar had moved Calcutta High Court, a single bench of which issued an order favouring him but it was stayed by a division bench.

The CM is reportedly very happy with his performance during his tenure as Purulia DM. The TMC party chief

is said to be very annoyed with the results of Purulia dis-

candidates pouring in to Sarma's residence on 3 May since the morning hours to congratulate him for the electoral victory.

A series of specific reports in a satellite news channel, owned by the Sarma's family, added flavour to it.

But Sonowal was not publicly congratulated by state minister Himanta Biswa Sarma after the counting of votes, where the ruling BJP alliance emerged victorious in 75 seats in the 126 assembly constituencies setting its return to power for the second consecutive time in Dis-

trict.

The TMC has managed to win only three out of the total nine seats in Purulia district.

Minister Shantiram Mahato has lost the polls from Balarampur.

However TMC has won Bandwan seat for the first time and the giant killer who has beaten veteran Congress leader Nepal Mahato is likely to become a minister of state.

The TMC has lost a few seats like Raghunathpur, Purulia, Balarampur etc due to factional feud.

However, Sandhyarani Tudu has increased her lead in Manabazar seat.

Delegates of Mohila Morcha at Raj Bhavan in Kolkata on Saturday.

SNS

are posting fake videos and video clippings of incidents from outside the state and claiming them as current videos. This is a complete

conspiracy to tarnish the image of the BJP leaders. Our party and leaders after verifying videos posted them.

Even in my name five fake face-

book accounts were created. Somebody opened a fake Instagram account by using my name. I don't have any knowledge but those were opened. This is a deep-rooted conspiracy.

Ms Ganguly also said that the West Bengal chief minister is "shameless" as she is ignoring the incidents of violence, rape and molestation of women BJP workers and saying these are fake.

"Women aligned with opposition politics have lost their right to live fearlessly. A BJP woman candidate of Jadavpur was abused and her house was looted. A particular section of trouble makers and raiders are especially targeting Hindu women while looting their household valuables," she said.

Roopa: TMC IT cell responsible for fake videos of violence

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, 8 MAY

The Sunday Statesman

With which is incorporated
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Kerala's way

As Kerala braces for yet another bout of LDF rule after Friday's swearing-in ceremony, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan's resolve to utilise the services of medical students to tackle the record surge of coronavirus will be generally welcomed. And not the least by the Centre and several state governments that had generally accorded the short shrift to the medical fraternity during last year's outbreak. Political leaders and bureaucrats were in the vanguard and not merely in West Bengal. Not wholly unrelated, therefore, is Mamata Banerjee's signal of intent on Thursday to induct MBBS passouts and interns as warriors in the daunting battle against coronavirus. Stringent measures, in Mr Vijayan's reckoning, are direly imperative to tackle the dreaded disease. Given their post-MBBS internship, if not expertise generally, the students should to an extent be able to attend to the burgeoning patients, more than what the political class had done in Kerala or any other state for that matter. In many if not most states, the governments have quite totally bumbled. It is now pretty obvious that the born-again Vijayan government is proceeding on a fairly structured agenda. It thus comes about that medical students will be included in the maritime state's Rapid Response Teams. Temporary registration will be provided to students who have completed the course. In view of the surge, the total requirement of medical oxygen in Kerala is rising almost each day. The students must of necessity be provided with the fundamental infrastructure, primarily oxygen for patients and vaccines as a preventive. Rightly has Mr Vijayan stressed the need to increase the buffer storage of oxygen in view of the fast depleting stock in parallel to the ballooning daily demand. This can be contextualised with the Chief Minister's request to the Centre to provide 1000 tonnes of imported Liquid Medical Oxygen (LMO), 50 lakh doses of Covishield and 25 lakh doses of Covaxin vaccines to Kerala.

The state's decision on Wednesday to take the help of medical students coincides with the highest single-day spike of 41,953 Covid cases, indeed raising the caseload to a frightful 17,43,932. This was in parallel to the test positivity rate of 25.69 per cent. The death toll during the day touched 5565, with as many as 58 deaths reported on Wednesday alone. The Prime Minister is reported to have appreciated the signal efforts of the healthcare staff and nursing sisters for setting an example in reducing vaccine wastage in Kerala. He now needs to ensure the supply of vaccines and oxygen throughout the country, verily the two fundamental requirements. Kerala has set the trend by inducting medical students in the battle against coronavirus. There are other such initiatives that must be taken up, and adopted by other states as well.

Flying home

Even in the dreadful season of the pandemic, Australia's initiative is reassuring. The country's Prime Minister, Mr Scott Morrison's decision to lift the ban on the arrival of its citizens from Covid-ravaged India will be generally welcomed Down Under and arguably in India as well. Though the resumption of direct flights from Canberra is unlikely quite yet, Mr Morrison has asked his government to accept additional repatriation flights. It is pretty obvious that he has stopped short of a hardline approach, fearing that such a praxis will, on the one hand, sour the country's relations with India while on the other unleash a domestic backlash. Already, there had been angry protests by Australians stranded in India, including by some cricketers. Mr Morrison has even pledged to speak to his counterpart, Narendra Modi. Australia will charter three repatriation flights between May 15 and 31. Priority will be given to 900 people deemed most vulnerable. Prospective travellers will need to return a negative Covid-19 test, and will need to undertake a test on arrival. They will of course be required to undertake the standard 14-day hotel quarantine imposed on incoming travellers. The government in Canberra has estimated that there are around 9,000 Australian citizens and permanent residents in India.

The outbreaks in scattered parts of the country appear to have been contained, though New Zealand has decided to partially suspend a travel bubble with Australia as a result of new infections in Sydney, even as this action has been binned by the Prime Minister of New South Wales as an "overreaction". The grim reality cannot be discounted, however. Australian health officials reported on Friday that more than 13,000 tests conducted over the past 24 hours had found no additional cases, easing concerns about a more critical outbreak. New social distancing restrictions have been imposed in greater Sydney, including the wearing of masks in public transport and limits on home gatherings. With many people expected to gather over the weekend for the annual Mother's Day celebrations, the restrictions are scheduled to remain in place till Monday morning.

On closer reflection, Mr Morrison has stood by his decision to impose a biosecurity order barring all travel to and from India, a policy that was severely criticised by lawmakers, expatriates and the Indian diaspora. The Prime Minister said that the travel ban, which was controversially backed by jail terms and financial penalties for anybody who attempted to circumvent it by flying via a third country, had impinged on Australia's hotel quarantine system. "The order that we have put in place has been highly effective. It's doing the job that we needed it to do, and that was to ensure that we could do everything we can to prevent a third wave of Covid-19 here in Australia," Mr Morrison said. Hopefully, the decision to relent will lead to a change in his how government is perceived, both domestically and internationally.

Virtues of Management

It was the best teacher who usually became the school principal and the best professor the head of a college. In hospitals, the best doctor was made the dean. It was as though these institutions did not need specialised management. In the bargain, the best teacher or doctor got lost in the labyrinths of administration not really knowing what to do



An airplane hijacking isn't an ideal instance to dwell on the significance of management. But nonetheless, there is one such episode that offers crucial lessons on how importance management is, not only in dealing with crises, but also in running a country. We refer to the hijacking of Indian Airlines flight IC-814 travelling from Kathmandu to Delhi in December 1999. The flight, with 178 passengers and eleven crew members on board had been hijacked by five armed men. Denied permission in Lahore, Pakistan, the plane landed in nearby Amritsar at around 7 p.m. The hijackers demanded the release of 36 Islamist terrorists then held in Indian jails and a ransom of 200 million dollars.

Prime Minister Vajpayee was mid-air, returning to Delhi from an official tour. In the Prime Minister's absence, a crisis management group or CMG had been set up with senior officials and heads of intelligence agencies. The cabinet secretary was formally in charge. The CMG scurried like a chicken whose head had been sliced off. IC-814 took off from Amritsar 45 minutes later and without it India lost any chance of regaining control of the plane inside our own territory. An official present at that particular meeting later said: 'I was present in that room, and there was nothing but indecision.' In theory, the decision is with the Home Minister. The hijacked flight flew to Lahore then Dubai and finally landed in Kandahar in Taliban-held Afghanistan. Exhausted after a week of negotiations, Vajpayee decided to release three Kashmiri terrorists in return for the passengers. The finer details are laid out in the book *Jugalbandi* by Vinay Sitapati, published by Penguin Viking (2020).

Just imagine what an incidence of colossal mismanagement this was. But it also underlines the fact that like corporations and enterprises, the administration of countries too needs management. No one seems to have attempted to write a thesis on how to manage a country. Lately, some hospitals and schools are being professionally managed. Mumbai's Jaslok Hos-

pital, which began treating patients in 1973, was to my knowledge, designed with the help of the management department of Messrs Ferguson & Co. There is a growing awareness that professional management is an indispensable pillar of any collective activity, be it business or charity. One's country needs systematic management but hardly anyone seems to have attempted such an approach. Rulers govern their countries well or badly as their abilities enable them to do.

In fact, there was no management science until World War I. The German army headquarters happened to do an exercise on the number of combatants they had and how many men were deployed to support the men who fought on the battlefield. The study revealed that the Germans had four men supporting every fighting soldier. In contrast, the British had ten men for every combatant. This meant that the British were two and a half times more expensive than the Germans in this respect. That is believed to be the beginning of the conception of management science. After the war, academicians got interested, especially in the USA; gradually, management science became a subject. During World War II, studies were conducted and business management schools began coming up after the 1950s. Peter Drucker rose to fame as a management scientist.

Yet it was the best teacher who usually became the school principal and the best professor the head of a college. In hospitals, the best doctor was made the dean. It was as though these institutions did not need specialised management. In the bargain, the best teacher or doctor got lost in the labyrinths of administration not really knowing what to do. If they showed earnestness in administration, students would be neglected to an extent.

In India, to my knowledge, Jaslok Hospital in Mumbai 1972-

73, before taking off had followed a consultant who had advised how to design, arrange and manage the hospital, leaving the medical aspect exclusively to the doctors. A chief accountant and chief administrator were appointed. In the bargain, the hospital worked efficiently. Gradually, the idea has been picked up by others. Yet if funds are short, a college or a school would rather not reduce a teacher but put off appointing a professional manager, and make do with a head clerk and call him or her manager, if the rules so require. How important management is for any group activity is yet not fully realized.

The entire country is far more important than individual institutions, whether corporates, schools or hospitals. Yet there does not seem to have been any attempt at forging a science of national management. How to manage a country? Such an attempt is overwhelmingly important also because there is no qualification required to get elected to either state assemblies or Parliament. Thus, men and women who get elected are a mixed bag. They are from various backgrounds and have different levels of education. The bureaucrats, on whom the ministers tend to depend for advice, ideas and execution, are educated. But they might come armed having studied languages, mathematics or phi-

losophy. Lately, even medical doctors and engineers are joining the IAS and other services. Thus the bureaucrats too as a group are a mixed bag and would benefit by knowing how to manage their country or parts of it. Yet they begin work on the premise that they are competent to handle any portfolio. They are supposed to be what in Urdu are called harfan maula or jack of all trades.

In the absence of the knowledge I am pleading for, odd things occur at the cost of the country. Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, on the morrow of Independence, told General Lockhart,

Within 40 years, its per capita income rose from 400 US dollars to 22,000! What a miracle? As Lee has written, public order, personal security, economic and social progress and prosperity are not the natural order of things especially without any natural resources. He calls this saga of Singapore 'From Third World to First'. After World War II ended, many such third world countries sprouted. But there was and is until today no book to guide them to rise. Lee had to dream and discuss with a few colleagues to convert the ideas into a reality.

Another prime minister, years later, was asked by a journalist as to why India was not paying sufficient attention to tourism, to which his reply was that, "We are too large a country to worry about tourism!" Yet another prime minister, much touted as an economist, even went to the extent of declaring on television that the Muslims of the country must have the first claim on 15 per cent of the country's resources! The epic conversion of an ordinary city state to a little jewel of Asia is the creation of a leader named Lee Kuan Yew. A 640 square kilometre city, Singapore was a British colonial trading post with a population of less than two million in 1959.

Moreover, ExxonMobil, the S&P 500's oldest member and a former icon of the tangible economy, was driven out of the index by Apple's decision to split its stock. Those who own and run the tech giants are making ever more money while the rest of the world continues to experience economic devastation.

With real economy assets being positioned far below digital financial assets, a K-shaped corporate recovery has emerged. Digital companies can grow apparently without limit, whereas others' growth remains circumscribed by the finite conditions under which they operate. This trend is not only challenging neoliberal assumptions about the creation of value; it is also pushing us toward a scenario in which government policies to redistribute value will no longer be plausible options.

To be sure, governments and some

within the private sector have proposed remedies, such as a tax on digital assets, while proponents of a laissez-faire approach continue to insist that any form of government intervention will merely introduce more market distortions. But neither camp has offered enough evidence for its preferred policy. We suggest three other solutions.

The writer is an author, thinker and former Member of Parliament



PRAFULL GORADIA

The writer is an author, thinker and former Member of Parliament

COVID AND GENETICS

SIR, Anjali Mehta's insightful article, 'Will a better human strain emerge after pandemic?' (*The Statesman*, 5 May) prompted me to question: Will Covid-19 really change our genetic makeup? Each human being has 20,000-25,000 genes that constantly adapt to the changing environment. When human beings migrated out of Africa, these genes changed constantly to ensure survival. Undeniably, new diseases caused by unknown pathogens helped to strengthen the immune system and the beneficial genes passed on to modern human beings with some variations depending on circumstances.

Likewise, many of these genetic variations could be behind the subtle differences observed among populations in their response to the Covid-19 virus. Just like encounters with diseases, the availability of food during migration and settlement in different parts of the world also modified our genome - for example, the retention into our adulthood of the gene-controlling intestinal lactase, normally present in childhood for digesting mother's milk. Researchers at the University of Bonn have established that the genetic reprogramming of immune cells persisted even when mice were shifted to a healthy diet.

It is a fact that human cultural evolution has occurred at an ever-increasing pace, whereas evolutionary adaption of human biology runs quite slowly. A very crucial question: if exposure to Covid-19 virus could bring about genetic changes, what would these changes be?

Yours, etc., Jaydev Jana, Kolkata, 5 May.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

editor@thestatesman.com

Proper vaccine policy needed

SIR, In the absence of a regulated vaccine policy, the government has thrown the country open to chaos in terms of unequal access to vaccines. The Centre could have created a centralised vaccine procurement management system to ensure affordable universal vaccine availability. Presently the bulk of the responsibility of vaccination has been passed on to states and private players.

Such a policy has its own set of problems. Procurement of vaccines from a limited number of manufacturers can result in confusion and conflict of interest among the states and private players, owing to the absence of any price regulation.

The manufacturers will be lured into maximising profits by selling to the highest paying private purchasers rather than state governments. The bigger states may get preference over smaller ones.

In early 2020, it was well known to Indian manufacturers that excessive dependence on single source could prove to be disastrous. But we have failed to learn



valuable lessons. Sadly, our active pharmaceutical ingredients and raw materials still come from China and America, because of which Indian drug manufacturers facing adverse circumstances. Does placing all eggs in one or two baskets in critical areas like vaccine and drug manufacturing solve our problem? In fact, such a policy has cost India dearly in terms of

human and economic losses. We need to diversify our supply chains.

The idea of former P.M. Dr Manmohan Singh ~ of allowing other vaccine manufacturers to expand the production capacity by invoking compulsory license of vaccine technology ~ can cater to the needs of a large and populous country like India. Countries like

America, England and Israel have successfully rolled out vaccines in a short span of time. Such cross-national learnings can help fight against the virus, as vaccination and Covid-appropriate behavior are the only saviours.

The Supreme Court has echoed the advice of Dr Singh by asking the government whether it has considered the emergency provi-

sions of section 92 of the Patents Act 1970. Such a regulation would allow multiple manufacturers to their wherewithal to make vaccines.

Considering that demand is outstripping vaccine supply in India, it is hoped that the government takes prompt action.

Yours, etc., Vijay Singh Adhikari, Nainital, 5 May.

A MEMBER OF THE **ANN**
ASIAN VOICES

Digital revolution and the young

As massive online platforms have given rise to numerous virtual marketplaces, a gap has opened between the real and the digital economies. And by driving more people than ever online in search of goods, services, and employment, the novel coronavirus pandemic is widening it. The risk is that a new digital industrial complex will hamper market efficiency by imposing rents on real economy players whose daily operations depend on technology. The premise of the Fourth Industrial Revolution is that the tangible and intangible elements of today's economy can coexist and create new productive synergies. The tangible side of the economy provides the infrastructure upon which automation, manufacturing, and complex trade networks rest, and intangibles-logistics, communications and other software and Big Data applications-allow for these processes to achieve optimal efficiency.

More to the point, the tangible economy is a prerequisite for the intangible economy. Through digitalization, tangibles can become intangibles and then overcome traditional limitations on scale and value creation. While heavily transactional and capital-intensive, this process hitherto has been a positive mechanism for growth, providing some equity of opportunities for small and large countries alike.

But this standard account of the Fourth Industrial Revolution omits the recent decoupling of the digital and real sectors of the economy. Digitally native companies that benefited from

CHINADAILY

the suspension of traditional factors of production have been growing even faster than they did before the pandemic. By the beginning of September 2020, Facebook, Amazon, and Apple's share prices had more than doubled since the start of the pandemic, with Apple becoming the first company ever to achieve a \$2 trillion valuation. And while the shares of Netflix and Alphabet (Google)-the other so-called FAANG companies-hadn't quite doubled, they were trading at or near all-time highs.

Moreover, ExxonMobil, the S&P 500's oldest member and a former icon of the tangible economy, was driven out of the index by Apple's decision to split its stock. Those who own and run the tech giants are making ever more money while the rest of the world continues to experience economic devastation.

With real economy assets being positioned far below digital financial assets, a K-shaped corporate recovery has emerged. Digital companies can grow apparently without limit, whereas others' growth remains circumscribed by the finite conditions under which they operate. This trend is not only challenging neoliberal assumptions about the creation of value; it is also pushing us toward a scenario in which government policies to redistribute value will no longer be plausible options.

To be sure, governments and some within the private sector have proposed remedies, such as a tax on digital assets, while proponents of a laissez-faire approach continue to insist that any form of government intervention will merely introduce more market distortions. But neither camp has offered enough evidence for its preferred policy. We suggest three other solutions.

ANDREW SHENG

Is democracy in decline, retreat or under siege? This is a soul-searching question by many who agonize over the lost golden age of democracy, freedom and a rules-based world order.

Democracy, from the Greek words "demos" - people, and "kratos" - rule, is usually defined as a system of government in which the majority rules, with consideration for minority rights; as Abraham Lincoln defined it, "government of the people, for the people and by the people". But during his time, women and slaves were not entitled to vote or participate in their governance. The crux of the democratic ideal lies in the question - "who rules?"

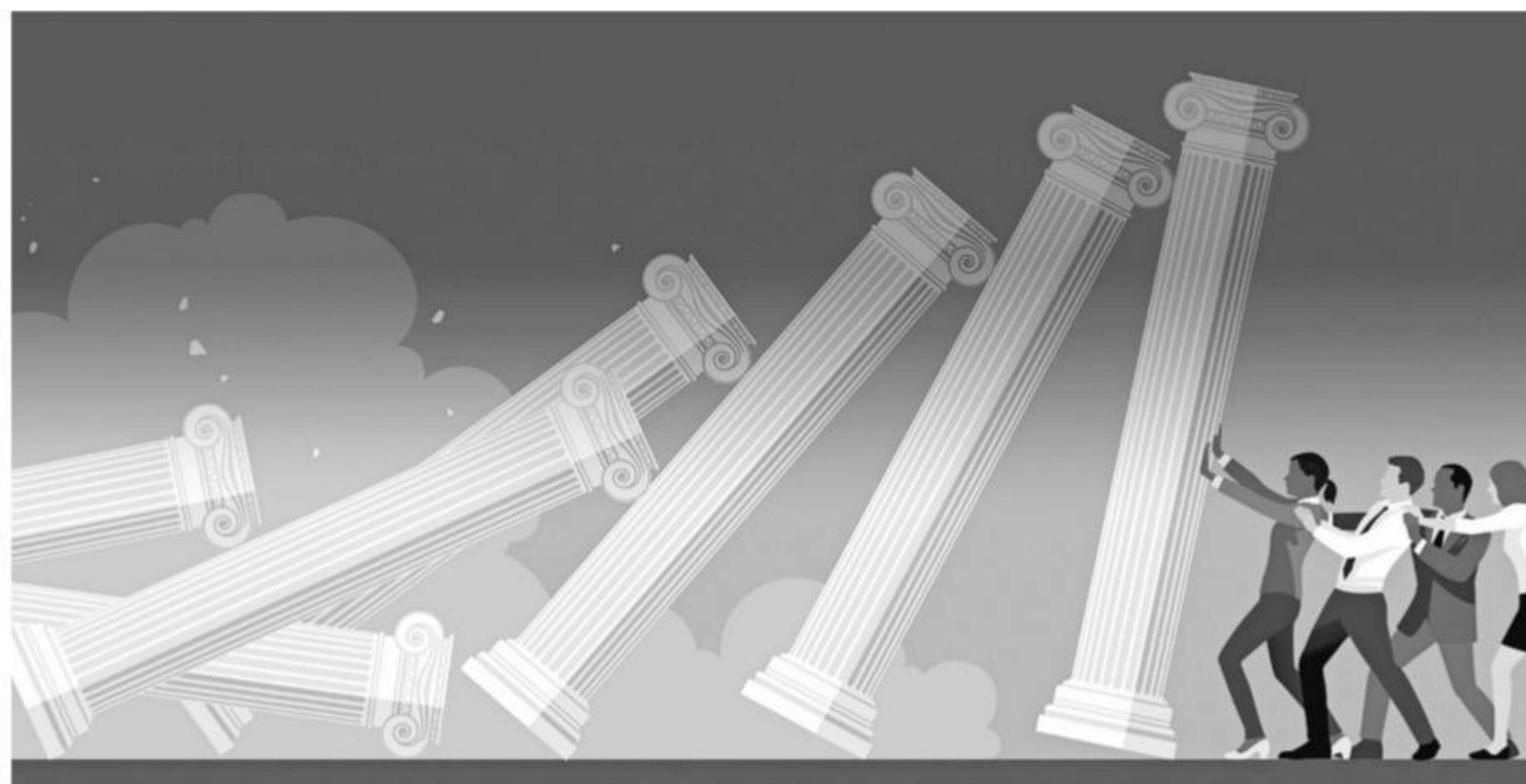
Notice that democracy was rarely granted by the British empire, which never gave democracy to her colonies (other than white Canada or Australia) until forced to grant them independence after she became exhausted by two World Wars. Democracy was adopted as part of the American tool-box to be pushed so that more people would be like Americans, free and equal, at least in theory.

This is not to say that the idea of democracy does not appeal to people of different cultures and political backgrounds. The Chinese idea of democracy, first expressed by Sun Yat-sen (1866-1925) embodied in San Minzhu-I or Three People's Principles, embraced citizens of common culture defined by nationalism, governance rights (constitutionality), and people-centered welfare.

In a survey of 50,000 people in 53 countries polled by the Alliance of Democracies Foundation, 71 per cent of Chinese surveyed agreed that China has the right amount of democracy, whereas only 33 per cent of Russians thought so. Indeed 81 per cent of those surveyed agreed that it was important to have democracy in their country. What was remarkable was that 44 per cent of those polled thought that the US threatens democracy in their country, as against Chinese influence (38 per cent) or Russian (28 per cent). The biggest threat to democracy is seen as inequality (64 per cent) and big tech companies (48 per cent).

Democracy in practice today is built around the process of procedural democracy, in which people vote openly, freely and regularly to choose their government. The best governance arrangement is presumed to be the Montesquieu Trinity of Executive, Legislature and Judiciary where mutual checks and balance deliver

Is democracy in retreat?



what the people want. In the last decade, economists like MIT Professor Daron Acemoglu argued that democracy fosters economic growth. But if growth has not been equally shared, democracy comes under threat from populist authoritarianism, which often is democratically elected to power.

Freedom House, which annually produces a report on global freedoms, claims that 2020 was the 15th consecutive year of long-term global democratic decline. Two important trends mark this decline – US domestic political problems and the reclassification of India, the world's most populous democracy, from Free to Partly Free status.

Is this democratic backsliding real or scientifically proven? Political scientists Waldner and Lust (2018) argue that the health of global democracy can no longer be adequately measured by simply counting democracies and autocracies. There are a group of countries they call WINDS or weakly institutionalized new democracies that easily backslide to military coups or autocratic politics due to poor institutions that cannot deliver. The poorer the

country, the more vulnerable it is to political change.

In short, democracy as an ideal depends on the quality of institutions and if these institutions corrode, become politically captured or are unable to deliver what politicians promise, then democracy or whatever ideology is in power will inevitably be subject to change by peaceful or violent means.

In my view, the Austrian philosopher/economist Joseph Schumpeter remains spot on in his classic diagnosis of Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy (1942). The 18th century definition of democracy was an institutional arrangement to realize the common good through procedural arrangements that deliver "the will of the people". But how do we define "common good" and what arrangements ensure that it is delivered? Schumpeter foresaw that "whenever individual wills are much divided", it is very likely that the political decisions produced will not conform to "what people really want." That is exactly why people are disillusioned with politics, because the politicians are unable to deliver what they really want.

Schumpeter, the innovative

genius, saw that just as the entrepreneur engages in "creative destruction", it is political competition that creates the leadership that delivers what the people want. He saw that dynamic leadership and the contest of ideas and execution deliver this or fail in the process. Indeed, what the people want at different times and places may be different. Political leadership is all about understanding the mood of the moment, seizing the opportunities and organising the institutions to deliver. The trouble is that democracy alone does not ensure that the government will be any better in delivery of outcomes than any other arrangement, such as an autocracy.

That failure to deliver is why democracy is retreating or at least re-grouping. As globalisation, technology, demographics and climate change have made life much more complex, demanding instant decision-making, even the best of the democracies have seen concentration of power in presidential executive power, overriding judicial or parliamentary checks. When institutional checks and balances fail due to corruption, corrosion or incompetence, then new

forms of political leadership arise to challenge the old.

We should not fear change, but welcome it.

As Hayek the foremost market philosopher recognized, "a limited democracy might indeed be the best protector of individual liberty and be better than any other form of limited government, but an unlimited democracy is probably worse than any other form of unlimited government, because its government loses the power even to do what it thinks right if any group on whom its majority depends thinks otherwise" (Letter to *The Times*, 1978).

Democracy is a work-in-progress, not carved in stone to be worshipped. Each country and community have to find its own form of democracy to arrive at what is best for the community as a whole. To survive, it has to meet the Darwinian test of evolutionary competition from many different modes of governance. Darwin never said the survival is of the best, only the fittest.

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

NOW AND AGAIN

Nuggets about a doyen

TIRTHANKAR MITRA

It seems to be only the other day that I met Satyajit Ray at the office of the children's magazine Sandesh, which he edited with his aunt Leela Majumdar and cousin Nalin Das. I was a subscriber and having seen Sonar Kella, the first Ray film to feature the evergreen sleuth Feluda aka Prodosh Chatterjee, I was eager to know more about the multifaceted man.

After having pestered the magazine's office staff with questions about Ray, I was walking down the stairs when I met him. I was tongue-tied but screwed up courage to take a good look at the tall, dark and handsome man whom his friends jokingly referred to as Orient Longman.

I had to look up to get a good view as he stood head and shoulders above us. Ray hardly noticed me and was talking to a very fair man.

I had just passed by when I heard his voice. "No, it is the other way around," he said.

As a schoolboy with a limited vocabulary, I had not come across the word baritone. But I heard it for the first time on that day and came to know its meaning later.

With time, I came to know more about him. Having watched the Apu trilogy, Charulata, Debi, Parash Pathar, Abhijan, Seemabaddha, Aranyer Din Ratri on the big screen and Nayak on the small screen, the day the film's hero Uttam Kumar passed away I had gathered more than a vague idea about Ray and his films.

I learnt about his extensive research for his films. If I regretted my teenage hero Amitabh Bachchan's voice being used and not his acting, I also knew Ray was the best judge in these matters.

My sources of information about Ray were two individuals very close to him, actor Rabi Ghosh and photographer Nemai Ghosh.

The anecdotes about Ray in which the duo were not bit players were relayed to me by younger family members of the two men.

Once Rabi Ghosh had asked Ray how a film hero ought to look. The maestro looked up and said, "Certainly not like you, Rabu".

I came across Ray at a function in Nandan, an auditorium named by him. He had just undergone a major operation because of which the organisers requested him not to rise to deliver his speech.

"No, I prefer to be on my feet," Ray said and delivered his speech. The voice was a bit weak but the reasoning and choice of words were impeccable.

I had a brief telephonic conversation with him after the iconic Bourne and Shepherd studio was engulfed in flames. Ray, the quintessential Kolkatan, regretted the loss of heritage.

He was lying in state at Nandan when I stood in a queue to pay my respects. The funeral was marked by unruly scenes in which the ruling dispensation did not cover itself with glory and its fallout was the arrest of a goon and the unceremonious removal of the then city police chief.

100 YEARS AGO

THE RECENT RIOTS AT NAGPUR

To The Editor Of The Statesman

SIR, - The account by the Associated Press of the recent riots in Nagpur is likely to give a misleading impression to your readers of the true feelings of the public in this city. It would almost appear that the entire population of Nagpur was in sympathy with the rioters. This, I can assure you, is very far from the actual facts; while the phrase "local leaders" can only be used in a very limited sense. They may be leaders of the Koshtis and Momins, but the bulk of the inhabitants, who are living in a state of terror, would be delighted to see the last of them. The important point is that this riot was a test case, the extremists wishing to ascertain how far they can go. On behalf, not merely of the European community, but of the vast majority of Indians I ask "Does Government propose to restore public safety and public confidence?"

J.C.M. WILSON.
Nagpur.

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION FOR ANGLO-INDIANS

To The Editor Of The Statesman

SIR, - With reference to the idea of establishing a University College for Anglo-Indians, to which Col. Leslie referred at the annual meeting of the Anglo-Indian and Domiciled Europe an Association, may I point out that the Anglo-Indian Community stands at the crossroads today. Now we can only do this with a higher education than we receive at present. As far as secondary education is concerned, I think it would not be unfair to say that the Anglo-Indian boy receives as good an education as any Indian boy; and as a community, we are at least as high as, if not higher than the Parsees in point of literacy. What we really lack, I speak of the vast majority, is a university education. It was first discussed at the Simla Conference in 1911 and then at Coonoor in 1917, but for various reasons it was set aside as impracticable.

(Rev.) W.A. HOBSON.
St. John's Church.

POLITICAL DIARY | KALYANI SHANKAR

All hands must be on deck

The third wave of Covid is coming but even the experts do not know when and how it will strike India. This warning came from the government's chief scientific adviser K Vijayraghavan this week.

The next wave will hit the country even as India is literally gasping from the brutal second wave. There is scarcity of oxygen in some states like Delhi and Maharashtra. There is vaccine shortage, bed shortage and many states have imposed lockdowns to contain the pandemic.

Dr Vijayraghavan has said that the "third phase is inevitable given the amount of virus circulating. But it is difficult to predict the timeline. We should prepare for the new (third) wave." But he played it down two days later claiming that "third phase may not happen if care is taken". Other experts have said that the third wave might hit around October and suggested the government should prepare a multi-level action plan for dealing with it.

During the first wave in 2020, India won praise from many countries for handling things well. The second wave hit when the country was complacent.

While the Centre and the states are coping with shortages, many Covid variants are active in India and more might emerge. The most dangerous of these is the Double Mutant virus, B.1.617. So far, Covid variants from Brazil, South Africa and the UK have hit the country. Experts also say



that when the first Covid virus would kill the lungs in 10 days, the second one could do that in five to seven days while the third variant could kill the lungs in three or four days.

According to some studies, in the first wave, the virus attacked the elderly. In the second wave younger people were affected but the third wave could be dangerous for children. However, doctors say that if

children under 18 are given vaccines, we will be able to fight the third wave. The good news is that both Serum institute and Bharat Biotech are developing such a vaccine.

The Supreme Court too has taken note of the possibility of a third wave and has asked the Centre to submit an action plan. The court said the third surge, which, as per experts "is around the corner", would affect

children. "So when a child goes to a hospital, a mother and father will go too," the court said, adding, "that is why vaccination will have to be over for this group of people. We must plan for this scientifically and make arrangements". The apex court has also asked the Centre and states to consider lockdown.

There is need to plan for more medical personnel. It is welcome news that the health ministry has taken key decisions like the step to boost the availability of medical staff to fight Covid this week. Experts say that there is a shortfall of 33 per cent doctors, 45 per cent nurses, 75 per cent beds and so on. So, our healthcare had been working sub-optimally even before the pandemic.

India's first phase of vaccination targeted vulnerable populations benefiting nearly 10 million healthcare workers, 20 million frontline workers and 270 million people above the age of 50. We also exported 64 million vaccine doses to 70 countries. The vaccination drive is on.

According to a United Nations (UN) spokesperson, on 28 April 2021, India turned down the UN's offer of assistance from its integrated supply chain saying it has its own "robust" system to manage the logistics of getting material for dealing with the Covid-19 surge.

What is required urgently are long term and short term plans for containing the pandemic. While formulating the national action plan, the rulers - both at the Centre and in the states - must work together leaving aside their political differences. Prime

Minister Narendra Modi followed this last year by taking the chief ministers and even the public on board. But gradually political differences overtook other things. The involvement of chief ministers is necessary because it will be their responsibility to implement the plan.

Secondly, the Prime Minister should convene an all-party meeting to involve political parties in the process, as the pandemic is very serious. On their part, the parties should think of the national interest and keep aside their political differences to support the government.

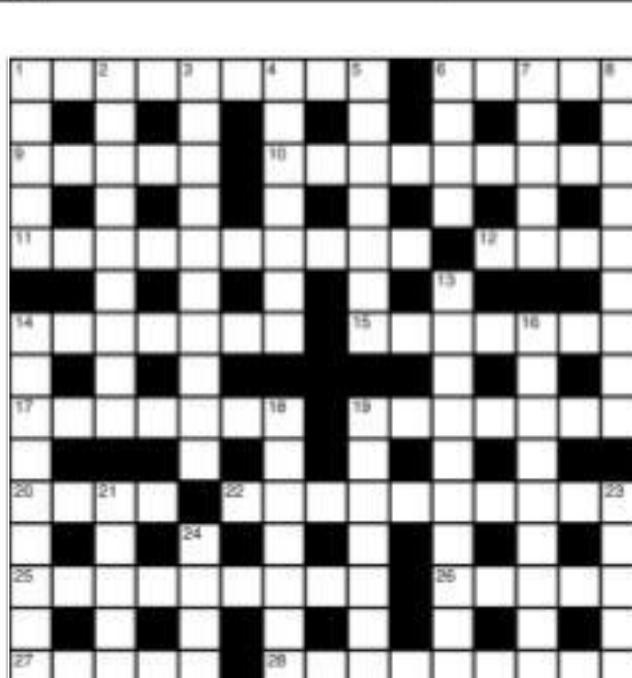
Thirdly, there is also a need for global cooperation. Rich nations should not leave the poorer countries behind and they should share information and also help the poor countries.

According to the health ministry, India has been receiving Covid relief materials from different countries including the United Kingdom, Ireland, Romania, Russia, UAE, USA, Taiwan, Kuwait, France, Thailand, Germany, Uzbekistan, Belgium and Italy since last month. It also received 1764 Oxygen Concentrators, 1760 Oxygen Cylinders, seven Oxygen Generation Plants, 450 ventilators, over 1.35 lakh Remdesivir vials and 1.20 lakh Favipiravir strips.

Fourthly and more importantly, the public should be more responsible and follow government regulations such as wearing a mask and keeping social distance etc. for their own good. It is not just the government but the whole country that needs to be vigilant.

NO 28907

CROSSWORD



SOLUTION FOR 02 MAY

- | ACROSS | | DOWN | |
|--------|--|------|---|
| 1 | Soldier and sailor returning after leave (6,3) | 19 | girl doing a bunk (7) |
| 6 | Die for soft rugs from the east (5) | 20 | Artist's mother to pose for painters around the London area (7) |
| 9 | Girl maintaining it's indispensable (5) | 22 | Exceptional talent shown by Bill in race abroad (10) |
| 10 | Breast feeding Polish queen becoming abrasive perhaps (9) | 25 | Happen to be right about anger following answer by Penny (9) |
| 11 | Handy to have tin for cash (5,5) | 26 | What Madame Defarge does fools king in the beginning (5) |
| 12 | Suffer when exposed in speech (4) | 27 | Grant makes a profit (5) |
| 14 | Poins is taken in by girl's facial expression of disgust (7) | 28 | Officer extremely lucky as a rule (9) |
| 15 | Went to protect my back in advance (7) | 19 | Daughter having too much port (5) |
| 17 | Tolerant fellow and striking | 20 | Office suit annoyed by legal proceedings about to be dismissed (9) |
| | | 3 | Rarely messed up by experts in team events (5,5) |
| | | 4 | Do up shop near the centre of Alfreton (7) |
| | | 5 | Worried teens in court become unable to relax (5,2) |
| | | 6 | Numberless photos of foolish people (4) |
| | | 7 | Specimen not originally large enough (5) |
| | | 8 | Game failing to start after concern for winger possibly (9) |
| | | 13 | Head of languages getting |
| | | 14 | extremely upset during squabble with servile flatterer (10) |
| | | 16 | In distress it's seen by almost everybody as absolutely necessary (9) |
| | | 18 | Rotation is good after shock at home (7) |
| | | 19 | Ponder over trace of ergot on popular plant (7) |
| | | 21 | Let loose at the outset then relax (5) |
| | | 23 | Attempt to speak in support of drugs (5) |
| | | 24 | Employed by some pious educators (4) |

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

110 officials of CBIC and 119 officials of CBDT have lost their lives in the line of duty amidst the pandemic. The nation is grateful for your service.

ANURAG THAKUR, MINISTER OF STATE FOR FINANCE
WHILE CONDOLOING THE DEATH OF 229 TAXMEN

THUMBNAILS

Reliance Home Finance's net loss widens: Reliance Home Finance on Saturday reported widening of its net loss to Rs 444.62 crore in the fourth quarter ended 31 March 2021. The Anil Ambani-controlled Reliance Capital subsidiary firm had reported a net loss of Rs 238.37 crore in the same quarter of the previous fiscal year. Sequentially also, the loss widened from Rs 339.55 crore in quarter ended December 2020. The troubled housing financier is undergoing a debt resolution. Its income during January-March 2021 fell 42.4 per cent to Rs 162.08 crore as against Rs 281.34 crore in the year-ago period, Reliance Home Finance said.

PTI

CSB Bank profit: Private sector CSB Bank on Saturday posted an all-time high net profit of Rs 218.40 crore for the fiscal ended March 2021. "The bank recorded an all-time high net profit of Rs 218.40 crore in FY'21 as against Rs 12.72 crore in FY'20, an increase of 1,617 per cent," CSB Bank said in a regulatory filing. During the last quarter ended March of FY'21, the lender reported a net profit of Rs 42.89 crore against a loss of Rs 59.70 crore in the same quarter of fiscal 2019-20, CSB Bank said.

PTI

D-Mart profit: Avenue Supermarts Ltd, which owns and operates retail chain D-Mart, on Saturday reported an increase of 52.56 per cent in its consolidated net profit to Rs 413.87 crore for the fourth quarter ended March 2021. The company had posted a net profit of Rs 271.28 crore in the January-March quarter a year ago, Avenue Supermarts said in a BSE filing. Its revenue from operations during January-March 2021 was up by 18.47 per cent to Rs 7,411.68 crore.

PTI

Clensta launch: Health and wellness company Clensta International has launched their Clensta Lotion. The product offers 99.9 per cent germ protection for up to 12 hours and reduces the extended use of alcohol-based sanitizers and washing hands multiple times a day, it said.

SNS

NEWSFEED

HUDCO Celebrates 51st Foundation Day

On the occasion of the 51st Foundation Day of Housing & Urban Development Corporation Ltd, officials and stakeholders from across the country joined a live webcast to commemorate years of distinguished service to the nation. Shri Durga Shanker Mishra, Secretary, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, the Chief Guest on the occasion, addressed the officials and appreciated HUDCO's stupendous contribution towards nation building. Shri Kamran Rizvi, Chairman and Managing Director, HUDCO con-

gratulated the employees for their commitment and dedication to HUDCO's business model of 'profitability with social justice', in a very tough and challenging year. Shri M. Nagaraj, Director (Corporate Planning) welcomed the participants and Shri. D. Guhan, Director (Finance) proposed the vote of thanks.

POWERGRID Infrastructure Investment Trust to open IPO of its Units on April 29, 2021 and close on May 3, 2021

POWERGRID Infrastructure Investment Trust ("POWERGRID InvIT" or "PGInvIT") is issuing Units aggregating up to ₹49,934.84 million ("FreshIssue") and the Selling Unitholder is offering up to such number of Units aggregating up to ₹27,415.08 million in the Offer/Bid/Offer opens on April 29, 2021 and closes on May 3, 2021. The Anchor Investor Bidding Date shall be one Working Day prior to the Bid/Offer Opening Date i.e. April 28, 2021. The Price Band for the Offer is from Rs. 99 to Rs. 100 per Unit. Bids can be made for a minimum of 1,100 Units and in multiples of 1,100 Units thereafter by Bidders other than Anchor Investors. Initial Public Offer in reliance upon Regulation 14(4) of the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Infrastructure Investment Trusts) regulations, 2014, as amended (the "InvIT Regulations").

KIIT First Indian Varsity to Get Five Stars in QS Star Ratings

KIIT Deemed to be University has become the first Indian university to achieve the "Five Stars Rating" from the prestigious QS Star Ratings System. The rating results were published on April 27, 2021. The QS Intelligence Unit, a division of QS Quacquarelli Symonds Ltd, rated KIIT as a Five Stars institution, the maximum achievable,

after rigorous and independent data collection and analysis of performance metrics in a range of indicators across eight categories. The rating will be valid for three years.

To expedite customs clearance of goods and for maintaining balance between customs control and facilitation

Shri S. S. Rao elected as Chairman PR Society Delhi Chapter

Shri S. S. Rao, Chief General Manager, PR, Power Finance Corporation (PFC) has been unanimously elected as Chairman, Public Relations Society of India, Delhi Chapter for the period of 2021-23. Till now he was holding the position of Secretary of the society. Shri Sarvesh Tiwari, Managing Director, PR Professionals and a veteran media personality has been elected as Vice-Chairman of the society. Shri G. S. Bawa, former GM (PR), Airports Authority of India has been elected unopposed as Secretary, PRSI Delhi Chapter. The members of the new governing body have taken over charge from 24th April, 2021. The election results were announced by the Election Officer, Shri Dinesh Kumar, former ED (HR), AAI during the online AGM held in vir-

NFL to install Oxygen Plants in four districts

To augment the oxygen availability amidst the acute Covid crisis, National Fertilizers Limited (NFL) has ordered 04 Oxygen Plants for installation in Government Hospitals in four districts i.e. one each in Noida, Gorakhpur, Lucknow in U.P. and Bhopal in Madhya Pradesh. Each plant will have capacity of 20 NM3 / hr i.e. 70 cylinders per day. This initiative aims to equip the Government Hospitals in the districts with uninterrupted oxygen supply

to manage the Covid-19 patients and other patients needing such support. With this, each of the Government Hospitals under the project will have a captive oxygen generation facility and will help in strengthening the public health system.

TRIFED joins hands with The LINK Fund to work towards tribal development

TRIFED, as the nodal agency working for the empowerment of tribes, has been focusing its efforts on finding new ways to improve the lives and the livelihoods of the tribal people. With this objective in mind, TRIFED has now entered into a collaborative project titled "Sustainable Livelihoods For Tribal Households in India" with The LINK Fund, a philanthropic operational foundation, headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, which is mandated to implement

NHPC conducts Covid-19 test camps at Ministry of Power and NHPC Corporate Office

NHPC, India's premier hydropower company conducted Covid testing camps at Ministry of Power, Govt. of India, New Delhi from 27th April to 28th April 2021 and at NHPC Corporate Office, Faridabad on 28th April 2021. A total of 89 people underwent RT-PCR tests at Ministry of Power and 98 people at NHPC Corporate Office. Ministry of Power, Govt. of India has made NHPC the

nodal agency for arranging Covid testing for all CPSUs and other organizations under the Ministry of Power in Delhi and NCR region. The testing camps were conducted by NHPC Medical Division in association with Max Lab at New Delhi and Metroplus Healthcare Ltd. at Faridabad. The Covid testing camps are being carried out with full safety precautions and following guidelines.

Crisis of shipping containers

Covid-19 has affected our life in more than one way. Its impact on the global trade and consequent effects on our daily lives are directly felt. More than 17 million containers (TEUs) are circulating globally which are exclusively handled by more than 5300 vessels. Approximately 85 percent of global trade happens in containers. However, a major collateral crisis created by the pandemic has tilted the balance in favour of exports not only since the latter half of the year 2020 and our policy of Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan' has also given fillip to exports and reduced imports. Indian exports, 90% of which is done through the sea, have rebounded on the path of recovery faster. While the imports have remained sluggish the exports have been slowly gaining momentum. Shutting down of container production due to pandemic was another contributory factor to the container crisis in general.

business**Industry will welcome resumption of India, EUFTA talks: CII**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 8 MAY

BTIA would really benefit the EU with better access to the huge and rapidly growing Indian market and India with technology and innovation access.
CHANDRAJIT BANERJEE
CII DIRECTOR-GENERAL

Indian industry will welcome a resumption of formal negotiations for the BTIA and is ready to support the negotiations in any way possible," he said. He also said that both the regions need to focus on investment facilitation and protection.

Speaking at the function, Markus J. Beyrer, director-general of Business Europe, Confederation of European Business, said he completely agreed with CII director-general on resuming the FTA talks.

"Several rounds of (talks) held until 2013, but the negotiations could not be completed as differences remain over some key issues. But

India's exports to EU member countries stood at about \$54 billion in financial year 2019-20, while imports aggregated at \$52 billion.

breach of the said mandate of law as provided under Sections 14 and 15 of the Bureau of Indian Standards Act, 2016 (BIS Act), there is a penalty in offense as provided under Section 29 of the BIS Act, 2016 punishable with maximum imprisonment of one year. It is also submitted that within the time available, it could not be possible for all the jewellers and for every piece of jewellery presently available to be hallmarking before these provisions of law come into force."

Saiyam Mehra, vice-chairman, GJC, said: "It is further submitted that there are also other problems arising out of the present Covid restrictions, which prevent a person to travel from one district to another district and that there are several districts, which do not have any hallmarking centres yet. And the court has in the meanwhile, directed that no coercive action shall be taken against the jewellers under Section 29(2) of the BIS Act, 2016, till next date of hearing on 14 June 2021. This is a big relief to the jew-

ellers who shall now be fully protected from any actions from BIS even though they may wish to still go ahead with mandatory hallmarking."

Dinesh Jain, director, GJC, who represented GJC in the writ petition filed, commented: "The writ has been admitted on merit and notice has been issued to BIS and all respondents. BIS is wise enough to know what to do in such a situation and we are sure that BIS shall not proceed with mandatory hallmarking without doing their homework properly. GJC is fully supporting hallmarking and pray in the writ petition that a "high-level committee" be constituted by Honourable court to streamline and resolve all issues for the benefit of consumers, jewellers and core objective of BIS."

All India Gem and Jewellery Domestic Council (GJC) represents over 5,00,000 players comprising manufacturers, wholesalers, retailers, laboratories, gemologists, designers, and allied services to the domestic gems & jewellery industry.

PSU banks told to be careful of Cairn's attempt to seize fundsPRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 8 MAY

attempt Cairn makes to legally attach the deposits, two sources aware of the matter said.

This will allow the Indian government to quickly take legal recourse to prevent the assets from being taken over, they said, adding that this has been done out of abundant caution and funds with banks are not of Government of India but of public.

A nodal officer has been appointed to deal with this subject in the finance ministry for escalating the matter to the competent authorities for the further action, the sources added.

The sources also said banks are keeping enough funds in their nostro account so that they can carry on activity of trade finance and other overseas businesses.

An nostro account refers to an account a bank holds overseas at another bank in the currency of that jurisdiction. Such accounts are



used for international trade and to settle other foreign exchange transactions.

Last year, Cairn Energy Plc won two high-profile international arbitrations over the levy of taxes on the UK-based company using legislation that gave India power to levy taxes with retrospective effect.

The UK-based firm has already taken steps to have the arbitration award recognised in nine major jurisdictions such as the US, UK, France, the Netherlands, Singapore and Canada's Quebec province, where Indian sov-

ereign assets have been identified.

It has not said what it might go after but assets could include Air India's planes, vessels belonging to the Shipping Corporation of India and property owned by state banks.

On the other hand, the government, which participated in an international arbitration brought by the Scottish firm against being taxed retrospectively, has appealed against The Hague-based tribunal's ruling. The ruling asked the government to return the value of shares expropriated and liquidated, tax refunds withheld and dividend seized to recover a wrongly levied retroactive tax demand.

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.

ONCC Videsh consortium: LCN project in Mozambique put on hold due to force majeure

Considering the evolution of the security situation in the north of the Cabo Delgado province in Mozambique, the Area 1 Operator Total E&P Mozambique Area 1 Limitada informed the withdrawal of all Mozambique LNG project personnel from the Afungi site.

This situation leads Total E&P Mozambique Area 1 Limitada, as operator of Mozambique LNG project, to declare force majeure.

project, to declare force majeure. ONCC Videsh Limited, wholly-owned subsidiary and overseas arm of Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Limited (ONGC), holds 16% Participating Interest (PI) in the Area 1 concession through its subsidiaries ONGC Videsh Limited (OVRL) and Beas Rovuma Energy Mozambique Limited (BREML). ranked 86th in 'Reduced Inequalities' of SDG. For this, it has ranked within 100 universities of the world at least in a single parameter. KIIT has got the rank 101+ in Partnership for the Goals' and 201+ in Quality Education & Peace and Justice & Strong Institutions each. It is the only university in eastern India to achieve such an impressive rank. In 2020 KIIT was ranked in 501+. KIIT was also the winner of Awards Asia 2020 in the category 'Workplace of the Year' by the Times Higher Education.

ONCC to play larger role in country's pursuit of energy security

A number of press reports pertaining to the purported communication from Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas are noticed that convey an impression that the role of ONGC may be significantly affected in the wake of its potential restructuring. The fact on the contrary is that the Govt. has been continuously encouraging ONGC to play a much larger role in the context of India's oil and gas sector. ONGC Board approved Energy Strategy 2040 in April 2019 that outlines strategic growth initiatives across the energy value-chain. Besides, there have been regular interactions of ONGC with various stakeholders including the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (MoPNG), in order to further augment the role of ONGC in domestic upstream sector. The expectation and the strategy for ONGC is to act as the fulcrum around which an ecosystem for thriving oil and gas industry in the country can be created consistent with expectations for meeting Prime Minister's vision to reduce import dependence.

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Crisis of shipping containers

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Deeds are the best answer to injurious words. That way Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT) Deemed to be University, Bhubaneswar remains a torchbearer among the fraternity and its achievements don't require a spokesman. KIIT has been placed among the top universities of the world in the Times Higher Education (THE) Impact Rankings-2021 announced on 21st April 2021. KIIT's commitment to sustainability and Equity gets recognition by THE. As KIIT has been fulfilling all criteria of United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, THE has given 201+ rank to KIIT in the overall Impact ranking. Also, it has been



ranked 86th in 'Reduced Inequalities' of SDG. For this, it has ranked within 100 universities of the world at least in a single parameter. KIIT has got the rank 101+ in Partnership for the Goals' and 201+ in Quality Education & Peace and Justice & Strong Institutions each. It is the only university in eastern India to achieve such an impressive rank. In 2020 KIIT was ranked in 501+. KIIT was also the winner of Awards Asia 2020 in the category 'Workplace of the Year' by the Times Higher Education.

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Covid fatalities rise in Odisha

11,807 new cases, 21 deaths, under reporting alleged

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
Bhubaneswar, 8 MAY:

The sharp rise in daily COVID-19 fatalities amid allegations of under-reporting of virus-induced deaths evidently sends ominous signs of the contagion taking firm grip in Odisha at a time when the state has been consistently clocking a daily average of 10,000 plus cases in the current month.

The further disconcerting note in COVID situation in the State lies in the fact that the Test Positivity Rate (TPR) is showing no signs of abating logging around 22 to 25 percent on a daily basis.

Meanwhile in the continuing surge in infections, Odisha on Saturday reported 11,807 new COVID-19 cases and 21 deaths.

The death toll recorded today is the highest ever daily fatality.

The new cases were detected after 50,864 samples were tested on Friday. The test positive rate (TPR) in the state stood at 23.21 percent, indicating that one in every 4.3 people undergoing COVID tests was detected contracting the virus in the past 24 hours.

The daily testing still hovers around 45,000-50,000 and the figures of infected cases need to be viewed in this backdrop.

The spike in daily death toll has emerged as a major area of concern. While 133 deaths were officially reported in April, as many as 128 fatalities



First consignment (1 lakh doses) of state procured Covishield reaches Bhubaneswar.

SNS

ties were reported in the first eight days of the current month.

But people at the district level, including senior political leaders, have been alleging under-reporting of fatalities.

Another mismatch in figures provided by official sources and the allegations at the district level by political leaders is with regards to the availability of beds and ventilators. The officials are putting out gross totals and indicating vacancies wherever as people tend to try and avail the best facility where it is always fully occupied, said politicians. One of them in a western Odisha district said there were 10 ventilators at a health care centre but no functional till two days ago.

A few others allege that people rush to the best available hospital as they find the new facilities created at the district level short of manpower in terms of doctors and specially nursing staff. We may create additional beds, ventilators, oxygen cylinders etc but what about the nursing staff and human resources

quizzed a political leader of the ruling party in Bargarh district.

The state had recorded the maximum 11% TPR in the first wave of COVID outbreak last year while it has jumped to 20 to 25% in the ongoing 2nd wave of the contagion with some parts logging 50% positivity rate.

The situation is quite alarming in the state capital Bhubaneswar and Cuttack.

The State's recovery rate currently stands at 84.34%.

Odisha currently has 90,335 active cases, which account for 17.23% of total positive cases registered in the state.

Sundargarh district reported 1922 new cases, the highest in the state over the past 24 hours while Khordha including Bhubaneswar logged 1510, Cuttack 1052.

The sharp jump in Cuttack over the last three days triggered apprehensions of community transmission. Cuttack is equipped with 1200 beds, 300 ICU beds and soon another 100 beds will be added to the capacity at SCB Medical College in the city said official sources.

Odisha initiates steps for buffer stock of LMO

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, 8 MAY:

With pandemic health crisis fast deteriorating in Odisha, the state government has initiated steps to create a buffer stock of medical oxygen for emergency treatment of Covid patients.

The government feels comfortable with the available medical oxygen but is worried over the dearth of cylinders.

To ensure surplus stock of medical oxygen to meet with the exigencies, the government has decided to hire medical oxygen cylinders from private parties on a monthly rental basis.

"In order to maintain ade-

quate stock of medical oxygen cylinders, during the current COVID-19 pandemic, the State Government is pleased to hire empty medical oxygen cylinders from private organizations and have fixed the hiring charges", stated a notification by the health and family welfare department.

It is pertinent to note here that the State produces 375 tonnes of liquid medical oxygen per day.

The State which is currently having surplus stocks continues to supply the medical oxygen to needy states like Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh & Delhi from industrial towns of Rourkela, Angul and Jajpur.

Over 20 percent positivity rate in 19 districts of Odisha

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, 8 MAY:

The COVID-19 infection in Odisha has evidently assumed virulent proportion with as many as 19 out of 30 districts in the state logging a Test Positivity Rate (TPR) of more than 20 per cent in the past week from 1 May to 7 May, according to the latest data released by the union health ministry.

Sambalpur district with a high TPR of 57.1% stands ninth amongst the districts in the country and has recorded a steep upward trend in case positivity in the past one week. It is part of the western

Odisha districts which have borders with Chhattisgarh and the initial spurt was from the neighbouring state.

As many 301 districts in the country including 19 from Odisha reported above 20% TPR in the last 24 hours, it said.

Madhya Pradesh in central India accounted for the maximum number of 37 districts with more than 20% TPR followed by Karnataka (25), Maharashtra and Rajasthan (23). Odisha besides West Bengal reported 20% TPR in 19 districts.

Sambalpur district in the western parts of the state with 57.1% has recorded the highest TPR followed by Kala-

handi- 46.2%, Sundargarh- 37.4%, Khordha and Boudh- 34.1%, Bargarh- 33.5%, Angul- 31.4%, Nuapada- 30.7%, Deogarh- 27%, Bolangir and Bhadrak- 25.6%, Cuttack, Puri and Jharsuguda- 24.9%, Nabarangpur- 24.5%, Balasore- 23.2%, Keonjhar- 23.1%, Jajpur- 22.5% and Sonepur- 20.1%.

The districts like Changlang (Arunachal Pradesh)- 91%, Yanam in Puducherry 78%, Dibang valley in Arunachal Pradesh- 75%, Bikaner 75% in Rajasthan and Pali (75.2 and 70.4%) Nuh in Haryana 64%, Lahul and Spiti in Himachal Pradesh 60.3%, Sonipat- 57.6% in Haryana has higher TPR than Odisha's Sambalpur.

Elections govern fuel prices, not crude rates: BJD

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, 8 MAY:

TN, Assam, Kerala and Pondicherry over the fuel prices started going up on a daily basis.

In some states petrol has shot up to Rs 100 per litre while diesel is selling at Rs 95 per litre.

Elections and not international crude price is what governs fuel prices under the current dispensation, it charged.

Acche Din has turned to be Bure Din for people, chidied the BJD while noting that internationally India is being looked as a 'failure' as far as Covid management is concerned.

The international media and experts have pointed out how India failed to abide by the early warnings in February and instead claimed to have won the war against Covid.

Lorry runs over a house



STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHAWANIPATNA, 8 MAY:

A 14 wheel loaded lorry lost balance and ran over a road side house near National Highway 26 in Kantesir village of Kalahandi district killing one person.

The lorry ran over the house of Mohan Rana and overturned.

Madana Rana, 50, wife of the house owner died on the spot.

The driver of the lorry fled the place. Police has registered a case in this regard.

Tahsildar assaulted while enforcing COVID guidelines

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
PARALAKHEDMUNDI, 8 MAY:

The R Udayagiri tahsildar, Smurteeranjan Satapathy was brutally attacked and injured by a mob at Cheli-gada village of Gajapati district when he tried to enforce Covid guidelines at a marriage

The vehicle of the tahsildar was also attacked.

Satapathy sustained bleeding injuries and was taken to the R Udayagiri hospital. His condition is stable said doctors attending to him.

A police case has been registered.

The District Collector Anupam Saha has directed the local officers to investigate and submit a report.

It may be noted that a few days ago a similar incident had taken place in Balasore district when a lady tahsildar was heckled at a marriage function. She lodged a police complaint and even protested against alleged police inaction.

Two killed, four hurt in elephant attack



STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BARIPADA, 8 MAY:

the woman and the minor girl killing them on the spot.

Divisional Forest Officer of Rairangpur Arun Kumar Mishra said that on being informed, the officials of Bisoi range reached to the spot and rescued the injured persons. The critically injured who was admitted in Bisoi hospital later shifted to PRM MCH as her condition stated to be critical. Four others had sustained minor injuries.

The DFO said that the forest department had prohibited the entry of people to the reserve forest area in view of the movement of elephants. But people tend to intrude to collect forest produce.

Meanwhile, sanitation and hygienic conditions at the Covid Care Hospital, at Betaguda run by the district admin-

Antibiotics, antipyretic drugs fly off the shelf

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
PARALAKHEDMUNDI, 8 MAY:

The doctors stressed on the diligent use of medicines, and not to take antibiotics without consulting a physician as reports of certain drugs flew off the shelf of medicine stores in rural areas and small towns

"Even for normal flu or cold, people are getting panicky and using every type of antibiotic unaware of the side reactions it causes," said the chief district medical officer Dr P K Patra.

It may be mentioned here that antibiotics like Azithromycin, Cefixime, and antipyretic like Dolo 650, Crocin, etc are flying off the shelf of all pharmaceutical outlets.

Many have started providing a 'Covid kit' based on widely circulated prescriptions of infected persons under treatment at hospitals.

Similarly, sanitizers, masks, Dettol, savlon etc are showing hiked-up sales.

Meanwhile, sanitation and hygienic conditions at the Covid Care Centre in any other places, and the patients have no option but to go to the government hospital.



stration remains much to be desired.

Most of the Corona infected patients admitted to this government-run facility, allege that the surrounding is unclear and the bathrooms stink.

"My younger brother along with his daughter (in her teens) were admitted yesterday to the Betaguda Covid Care Center. The cleanliness and the related issues left a lot to be desired and the patients admitted here are complaining" said Devaraj Patra.

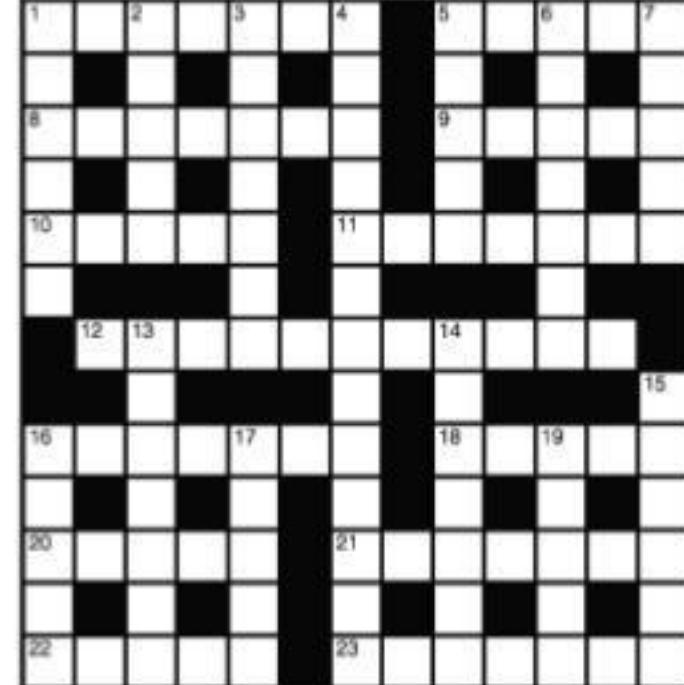
Unlike in other districts of the state, there are no private Covid Care Centres in any other places, and the patients have no option but to go to the government hospital.



Odisha DGP Mr Abhay at the inter-state border checkgate at Girisola to ensure proper sealing and vigil of travellers. Odisha has sealed its borders with Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, West Bengal and Chhattisgarh.

LEISURE

10 MINUTE CROSSWORD



SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD

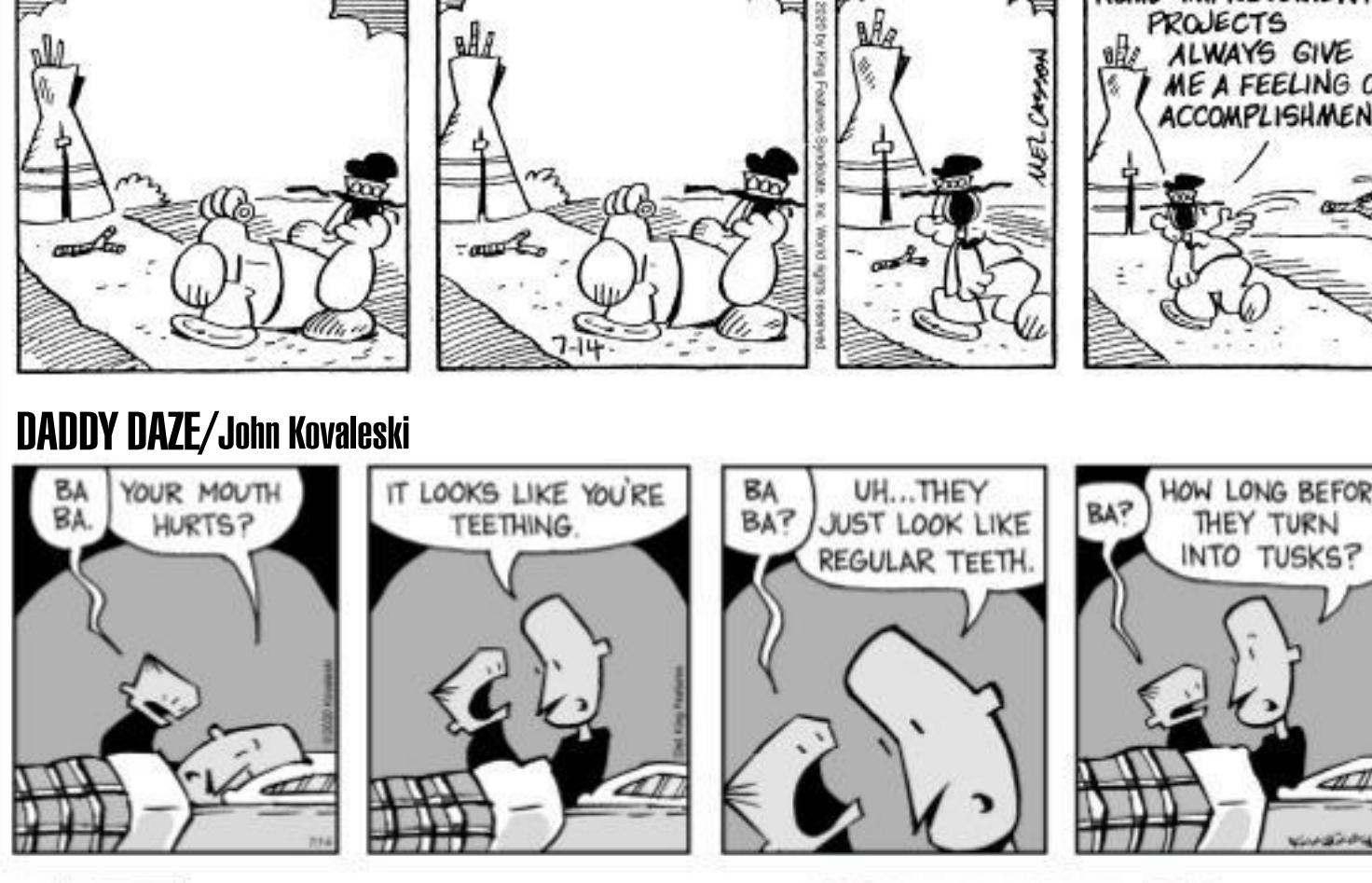
ACROSS	DOWN
1 Tender (7)	1 Small pool of liquid (6)
5 Grab (5)	2 Beginning (5)
8 Interrupt (7)	3 Gaffe (4,3)
9 Indian yoghurt dish (5)	4 Approved automatically (6-7)
10 Illuminated (3,2)	5 Swagger (5)
11 Quality (7)	6 Foolish (7)
12 Type of embroidery (5-6)	7 Sidestep (5)
16 Dried grape (7)	13 Set free (7)
18 Hue (5)	14 Wishy-washy (7)
20 Cognisant (5)	15 Sport (6)
21 Cinema snack (7)	16 Personnel (5)
22 Group of ships (5)	17 Representative (5)
23 Bumper cars (7)	19 Home (5)

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

BEETLE BAILEY/Mort Walker



DADDY DAZE/John Kovaleski



NEED TO KNOW

HOSPITALS 22586262, 22585007

RAILWAY INQUIRY 23860626

General Inquiry 139

Toll Free Nos. 180012511

Chemist Shop 42000447

Vaidyasaigaram Institute for Mental Health and Neuro-Sciences 2692400, 26924304

Batra Hospital & Medical Research Centre 29051280, 299581320

Deen Dayal Upadhyay 25496320, 25494403

Guru Tegh Bahadur 23717473, 23325320

ROADWAYS INQUIRY 23864470

AIR INDIA Flight Inquiry and Reservation 18001801407

INDIGO AIRLINES New Delhi City Office 43513185, Call Center 09910383838,

18001803838, Reservation 43513186; Indigo Airlines Air-

port 011-25671580; Terminal I-B 25671576, Palam Road 25671579, 18001803838

JET AIRWAYS Flight Inquiry and Reservation 39841111

EMIRATES Flight Inquiry and Reservation 33773377

Air Canada Flight Inquiry 25656421/25656431 Reservation 41528181

Air France Flight Inquiry and Reservation 23466262 (City) 25652294 (Airport)

Kuwait Airways Flight Inquiry and Reservation 23354373

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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



Activists from Greenpeace have projected a rainbow and the words "Peace" on the Binnenalster with a hydroshield, a semicircular water fountain, in Hamburg, Germany. AP

Drone attack on Iraqi base: A drone strike early on Saturday targeted a military base in Iraq that hosts US troops, causing only minor damage and no casualties, Iraq's military and the US-led coalition said. The pere-dawn attack damaged a hangar, tweeted coalition spokesman Col. Wayne Marotto. AP

Rio de Janeiro shootout death toll rises to 28: The death toll from a police raid on a drug gang in a poor Rio de Janeiro neighbourhood on Thursday has risen to 28, civil police said on Friday. The bodies of three more victims removed from the favela on Friday. AP

Scotland's pro-independence government close to a majority

The Scottish National Party won 40 seats and is clearly on course to win its fourth straight term



First Minister and SNP party leader Nicola Sturgeon celebrates after retaining her seat for Glasgow Southside at the count for the Scottish Parliamentary Elections in Glasgow, Scotland, Friday. On winning her seat in Glasgow, Nicola Sturgeon, said early results indicated that her party was on course to win its fourth straight election in Scotland but that the final outcome would not emerge until Saturday evening.

ASSOCIATED PRESS
LONDON, 8 MAY

Counting resumed on Saturday in Scotland's parliamentary election with the governing Scottish National Party very close to securing a majority that would see it make a push for another independence referendum.

With 49 constituencies counted, the SNP had won 40 seats and is clearly on course to win its fourth straight term in office. However, given the country's electoral system, which also allocates some seats by a form of proportional representation, it may fall short of the 65 seats it would need in Edinburgh-based Parliament to have a majority.

Balloots also continue to be counted in the Welsh parliamentary election and a swath of local elections in England. But it's the Scottish election that could have the biggest UK-wide implications as it could fast-track another referendum on its

future within the U.K.

Were the SNP to win a majority, its leader, First Minister Nicola Sturgeon, would argue that she has a mandate to call another referendum. Were the party to fall short, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who has the ultimate power to allow a referendum, could argue that she didn't.

On Saturday, he wrote in the *Daily Telegraph* newspaper that another referendum would be irresponsible and reckless in the current context as Britain emerges from the coronavirus crisis.

Speaking after winning her seat in Glasgow on Friday, Sturgeon said her immediate priority would be to deal with the pandemic and then when the time is right to offer this country the choice of a better future.

Scotland has been part of the UK since 1707 and the issue of Scottish independence appeared settled when Scottish voters rejected secession by 55 per cent to 45 per cent in a 2014 referendum.

Boris Johnson welcomes wins in local elections

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LONDON, 8 MAY

UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson was enjoying an election bounce on Saturday as many of the local and by-election results went in favour of his ruling Conservative Party.

In what is seen as a result in support of the government's coronavirus vaccination programme as well as the handling of Brexit, the Opposition Labour Party faced a crushing bye-election defeat in a traditional stronghold of Hartlepool in north-east England, which the party had held for many decades.

The Johnson-led Conservatives secured key victories over Labour as they took control of a number of councils in the West Midlands.

The Tories have hailed it as a continuation of the crushing Labour defeats in the 2019 general election.

What happened in 2019

But the UK-wide decision in 2016 to leave the European Union ran against the wishes of most Scots and 62 per cent voted in favor of staying within the bloc while most voters in England and Wales wanted to leave. That gave the Scottish nationalist cause fresh legs.

Scotland's deputy first minister, John Swinney, said that the party would still have the right to call an election if it fell short but enough other pro-

was that people mandated us to get Brexit done and to begin the process of uniting and levelling up. I think what's happened now is they can see we did get Brexit done and to a certain extent they can see we delivered on that, said Johnson, on a visit to Hartlepool to congratulate the new Conservative parliamentarian Jill Mortimer.

"I think what people want us to do now is get on with delivering on everything else. And so, number one is continuing the vaccine rollout making sure we go from jabs, jabs, jabs to jobs, jobs, jobs. Make sure we have a strong economic recovery. But then get on with a massive project for this country and it is a very ambitious thing," he said.

"Every government has tried it to some extent but I don't think any government has tried it as wholeheartedly as this government is trying. And that is uniting and levelling up," he added.

independence members were elected, such as from the Scottish Greens. I'm very confident that will be the case, he told.

So far the elections in England have been largely positive for Johnson's Conservatives, notably its victory in a special election in the post-industrial town of Hartlepool for a parliamentary seat that the main opposition Labour Party had held since 1974.

The win extended the party's grip on parts of Eng-

land that had been Labour strongholds for decades, if not a century. Many of these seats that have flipped from red to blue voted heavily in 2016 for Britain's departure from the European Union. The speedy rollout of coronavirus vaccines also appears to have given the Conservatives a boost.

On what was dubbed Super Thursday, around 50 million voters were eligible to take part in scores of elections, some of which had been postponed a year because of the pandemic that has left the UK with Europe's largest coronavirus death toll.

For the Labour Party and its leader, Keir Starmer, the Hartlepool result was a huge disappointment and has led to another bout of soul-searching in the party.

Hopes had been high that Starmer would help Labour reconnect with its lost voters in the north of England when he took the helm a little more than a year ago after succeeding the more left-wing Jeremy Corbyn, who led the party in 2019 to its worst election performance since 1935.

Starmer, a former director of public prosecutions, said he took full responsibility for the party's defeat in Hartlepool, adding that he would soon be setting out a strategy of how it can reconnect with its traditional voters. He didn't give further details.

Starmer and Labour should have some results to cheer over the weekend with Sadiq Khan and Andy Burnham expected to win second terms as the mayors of London and Manchester, respectively. The Labour government in Wales has also done better than anticipated and is set to hold onto power.

EU says US stand on patent virus waiver is no 'magic bullet'



Lithuania's President Gitanas Nausėda, left, speaks with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen during an EU summit in Porto, Portugal. AP

ASSOCIATED PRESS
PORTO (PORTUGAL), 8 MAY

European Union leaders cranked up their criticism of the U.S. call to waive COVID-19 vaccine patents Saturday, arguing the move would bring no short or mid-term relief.

Instead, they urged Washington to lift export restrictions if it wants to have a global impact on the pandemic. "We don't think, in the short term, that it's the magic bullet," said EU Council President Charles Michel on the second day of an EU summit in Portugal. French President Emmanuel Macron insisted that giving any priority to discussing intellectual property rights now, "is a false debate."

Macron and other EU leaders have insisted that first of all production capacity must be ramped up by, among other things, reconverting factories so they can quickly start producing vaccines through a transfer of technology.

Developed nations should also increase vaccine donations to poorer countries. Only after that, Macron said, can the debate on patent waivers start having an impact.

"Today, there is not a factory in the world that cannot produce doses for poor countries because of a patent issue," Macron said.

Washington Post says DoJ secretly obtained reporters' records

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON, 8 MAY

The Trump Justice Department secretly seized the phone records of three *Washington Post* reporters who covered the federal investigation into ties between Russia and Donald Trump's 2016 presidential campaign, the newspaper said Friday.

The disclosure sets up a new clash between the federal government and news organizations and advocates for press freedom, who regard the seizures of reporters' records as incursions into constitutionally protected newsgathering activity. Similar actions have occurred only rarely over the past decade, including a seizure of phone records of Associated Press reporters and editors over a 2012 story that revealed a foiled bomb plot.

In a statement published by the newspaper, Cameron Barr, the Post's acting executive editor, said: "We are deeply troubled by this use of government power to seek access to the communications of journalists. The Department of Justice should immediately make clear its reasons for this intrusion into the activities of reporters doing their jobs, an activity protected under the First Amendment."

The action is presumably

aimed at identifying the reporters' sources in national security stories published in the early months of Trump's administration, as federal investigators scrutinized whether his 2016 campaign had coordinated with the Kremlin to sway the election.

The records' seizure was approved by Justice Department leadership last year. The reporters - Ellen Nakashima, Greg Miller and Adam Entous, who has since left the Post - were notified in letters dated 3 May that the Justice Department had obtained records for their home, work or cellphone numbers.

The records sought cover the period of April 15, 2017, to July 31, 2017, according to the newspaper. Justice Department guidelines for media leak investigations mandate that such actions are to be taken only when other avenues for obtaining the information have been exhausted, and that the affected reporters are to be notified unless it's determined that it would impede the investigation or interfere with national security.

While rare, the Department follows the established procedures within its media guidelines policy when seeking legal process to obtain telephone toll records and non-content email records from media members as part of a

newspaper. The government also said it had received a court order to get email records from the reporters that would have shown who they had emailed and when, but that it did not obtain those records, the newspaper said.

EU agrees potential 1.8 billion-dose purchase of Pfizer jab

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BRUSSELS, 8 MAY

The European Union cemented its support for Pfizer-BioNTech and its novel Covid-19 vaccine technology Saturday by agreeing to a massive contract extension for a potential 1.8 billion doses through 2023.

EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen tweeted that her office has just approved a contract for a guaranteed 900 million doses" with the same amount of doses as a future option.

The new contract, which has the unanimous backing of the EU member states, will entail not only the production of the vaccines, but also making sure that all the essential components should be sourced from the EU.

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The European Commission currently has a portfolio of 2.6 billion doses from half a dozen companies. Other contracts and other vaccine technologies will follow, von der Leyen said in a Twitter. Pfizer-BioNTech had an initial contract of 600 million doses with the EU. Saturday's announcement also underscores the confidence the EU has shown in the technology used for the Pfizer-BioNTech

"It is imperative that the new Justice Department leadership explain exactly when prosecutors seized these records, why it is only now notifying the Post, and on what basis the Justice Department decided to forgo the presumption of advance notification under its own guidelines when the investigation apparently involves reporting over three years in the past," Brown said in a statement.

The government also said it had received a court order to get email records from the reporters that would have shown who they had emailed and when, but that it did not obtain those records, the newspaper said.

'Britain free of Covid-19 by August'

LONDON, 8 MAY

The new coronavirus will no longer be circulating in Britain by August, the government's departing vaccine taskforce chief Clive Dix told the *Daily Telegraph*.

"Sometime in August, we will have no circulating virus in the UK," Dix said, adding that he believed the vaccine booster programme could be pushed back to early 2022.

The announcement of the huge contract extension comes as the EU is looking for ways to meet the challenges of necessary booster shots, possible new variants and a drive to vaccinate children and teenagers.

America's Pfizer and Germany's BioNTech have already said that they would provide the EU with an extra 50 million doses in the 2nd quarter of this year, making up for faltering deliveries of AstraZeneca.

In contrast to the oft-criticized Anglo-Swedish AstraZeneca, von der Leyen has said that Pfizer-BioNTech is a reliable partner that delivers on its commitments.

Two weeks ago, the EU launched legal proceedings against AstraZeneca for failing to respect the terms of its contract with the 27-nation bloc.

AGENCIES

Prospects dim for passage of LGBTQ rights Bill in Senate

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON, 8 MAY

the Republican claims are false and overblown.

The International Olympic Committee has allowed transgender athletes to compete for years under specific parameters, and, to date, there have been no known transgender women compete in the Olympics. Only one known transgender woman has competed at the Division I level in the NCAA. And though legislators in around 30 states have introduced legislation to ban or limit transgender athletes from competing on teams that align with their gender identity, few lawmakers have been able to cite specific cases in their home states where it became an issue.

"We are waiting for this avalanche of problems," said the chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, Democratic Sen. Dick Durbin of Illinois, characterizing the Republicans' argument. "They haven't really surfaced." But Republicans are unwilling in their opposition to the legislation, spurred on by conservative groups who are pushing anti-transgender laws nationwide. With no Republicans signed on, for now, Democrats are unlikely to win the 60 votes needed to pass the Equality Act, potentially putting the issue in limbo indefinitely.

South Africa's royal scandal: New Zulu king's claim disputed

ASSOCIATED PRESS
CAPE TOWN, 8 MAY

A new Zulu king in South Africa was named amid scenes of chaos Friday night as other members of the royal family questioned Prince Misuzulu Zulu's claim to the title and bodyguards suddenly whisked him away from the public announcement at a palace.

The controversy over the next king, a largely ceremonial role but one with great significance for South Africa and its 12 million Zulu people, has arisen after the death in March of King Goodwill Zwelithini, who had reigned since 1968.

Zwelithini apparently named one of his six wives, Queen Mantfombi Shiyiwe Dlamini Zulu, as the regent of the Zulu kingdom in his will, but her death just over a week



ago after holding the title for only a month has thrown the royal succession into turmoil. The commotion broke out at the reading of Queen Mantfombi's will and hours after

ed and interrupted the announcement at the KwaKhangelankengane Royal Palace in South Africa's KwaZulu-Natal province, while two princesses have already questioned whether the late king's will gave Queen Mantfombi the right to nominate a successor on her death.

King Zwelithini reportedly had 28 children with his different wives, and Queen Mantfombi was not his first wife. The dispute over succession has been rumbling for a month since the former king's death, fascinating many South Africans with their very own royal scandal.

Earlier on Friday, Prince Misuzulu, who wore a traditional leopard-skin headband reserved for royalty, called for unity among the Zulu royal family. But another prince object-

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At the beginning of the pandemic, when our hospital beds were stretched, India sent assistance. And today, we are determined to help India in its hour of need

PLEDGING THAT THE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION IS DETERMINED TO HELP INDIA IN ITS HOUR OF NEED

THUMBNAILS



Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, right, meets Pakistan's PM Imran Khan, at Riyadh airport in Saudi Arabia.

Pak Opp leader stopped from flying: Pakistan's Opposition leader Shahbaz Sharif on Saturday was barred from flying to the UK by the country's top investigation agency though a top court here allowed him to seek medical treatment abroad, his party spokesperson said. The Lahore High Court on Friday granted Shahbaz a "conditional permission" to travel to the UK for medical treatment from 8 May to 3 July.

Sri Lanka approves Pfizer: Sri Lanka on Saturday approved Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine for emergency use in Sri Lanka, as the island nation battles a third wave of the virus, while suffering a restricted supply of vaccines from neighbouring India. Dr. Sudharshani Fernando, the minister overseeing the fight against the epidemic, said in a statement the government would order 5 million doses of the Pfizer vaccine. Sri Lanka is the first country in South Asia to approve Pfizer vaccine.

Death toll in Mexico subway collapse rises to 26: The death toll from the collapse of an elevated section of the Mexico City metro rose to 26 Friday after an injured passenger died in a hospital. A total of 33 victims remain hospitalised, recovering from injuries suffered in the Monday accident. A total of about 80 people suffered injuries when beams supporting part of the elevated line failed as subway cars were passing over it.

AP

US cautions citizens against travelling to Nepal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KATHMANDU, 8 MAY

The US government has cautioned its citizens against travelling to Nepal, alerting them about the limited medical supplies there, as the country battles a surge in the Covid-19 cases.

In a notice on its website, the state department has cautioned its citizens wishing to visit Nepal about limited medical facilities and government services in the country in the wake of the spike of coronavirus cases.

"Be aware that infrastructure, government services and medical assistance may not be up to US standards," the notice, issued on Friday, said. Nepal is facing an acute shortage of Covid-19 vaccines and other essential medical supplies and hospitals running out of beds and oxygen due to the increasing number of patients.

The US administration has allowed voluntary departure of family members of its government staff and non-emergency government employees working in Nepal.

Nepal is currently witnessing more than 9,000 new

Medics: 200 Palestinians hurt in Al-Aqsa clashes

Protests have reignited in recent days over threatened eviction of Palestinians in east Jerusalem

ASSOCIATED PRESS
JERUSALEM, 8 MAY

A night of heavy clashes between Palestinians and Israeli police at the Al-Aqsa mosque compound and elsewhere in Jerusalem left more than 200 Palestinians wounded, medics said on Saturday, as the city braced for even more violence after weeks of unrest.

Nightly protests broke out at the start of the holy month of Ramadan over police restrictions at a popular gathering place and have reignited in recent days over threatened eviction of dozens of Palestinians from their homes in east Jerusalem, which is claimed by both sides in the decades-old conflict.

It was unclear what set off the violence at Al-Aqsa, which erupted when Israeli police in riot gear deployed in large numbers as thousands of Muslim worshippers were holding evening prayers at the sprawling hilltop esplanade.

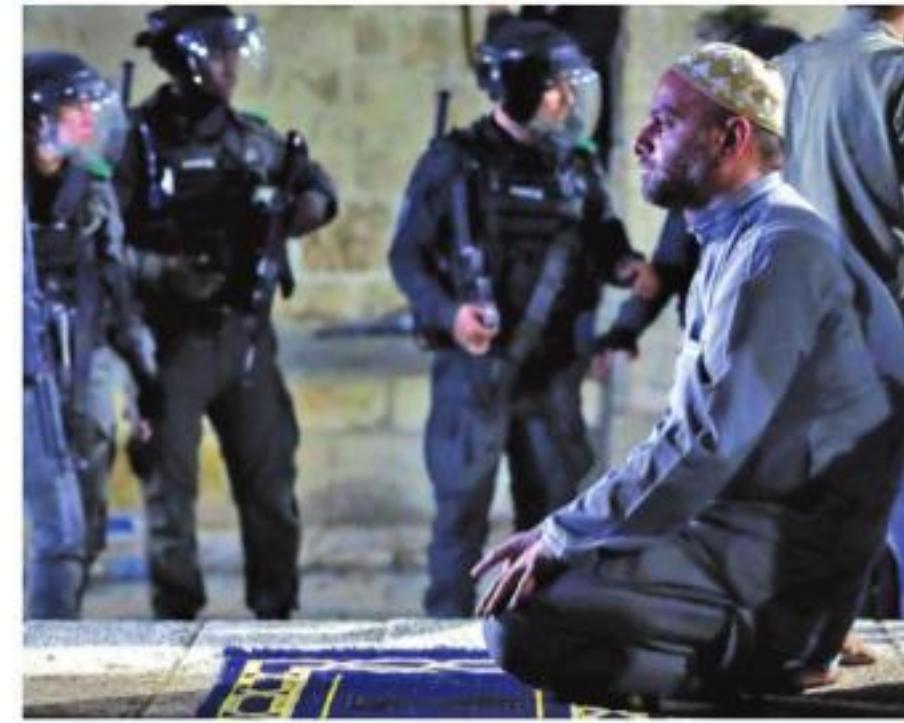
Throughout the night large groups of protesters could be seen hurling rocks as Israeli

police fired rubber bullets and stun grenades. At one point, the police entered one of the buildings in the complex, which includes the Al-Aqsa mosque and the iconic golden Dome of the Rock.

The Palestinian Red Crescent emergency service said 88 of the wounded were hospitalised. The Palestinian Health Ministry said 83 people were wounded by rubber-coated bullets, including three who were shot in the eye, two with serious head injuries and two with broken jaws.

The Israeli police said protesters hurled stones, fireworks and other objects at them, wounding 17 officers, half of whom were hospitalised. "We will respond with a heavy hand to all violent disturbances, riots and attacks on our forces," it said in a statement late Friday.

The Al-Aqsa mosque compound is the third holiest site in Islam. It is also the holiest site for Jews, who refer to it as the Temple Mount because it was the location of the biblical temples. It has long been a flashpoint in the Israeli-



Palestinian conflict and was the epicenter of the 2000 Palestinian intifada, or uprising.

Some 70,000 worshippers had attended the final midday Friday prayers of Ramadan at Al-Aqsa, the Islamic endowment that oversees the site said. Thousands protested afterwards, waving the green flags of the Islamic militant group Hamas and chanting pro-Hamas slogans.

At the beginning of Ramadan in mid-April, Israel

blocked off a popular gathering spot where Palestinians traditionally socialize at the end of their daylong fast. The move set off two weeks of clashes before Israel lifted the restrictions. But in recent days, protests have grown over Israel's threatened eviction in Sheikh Jarrah in east Jerusalem of dozens of Palestinians embroiled in a long legal battle with Israeli settlers trying to acquire property in the neighborhood.

The United States said it was "deeply concerned" about both the violence and the threatened evictions, and was in contact with leaders on both sides to try and de-escalate tensions. "It is critical to avoid steps that exacerbate tensions or take us farther away from peace," the U.S. State Department said in a statement.

The European Union also urged calm. It said the potential evictions were of "serious concern," adding that such actions are "illegal under international humanitarian law and only serve to fuel tensions on the ground."

Neighboring Jordan, which made peace with Israel in 1994 and is the custodian of Muslim holy sites in Jerusalem, has also condemned Israel's actions, as has the Gulf kingdom of Bahrain, which normalized relations with Israel last year in a U.S.-brokered deal.

Israelis and Palestinians are bracing for more unrest in the coming days.

Chinese rocket debris set for re-entry by early Sunday

AGENCIES
BEIJING, 8 MAY

Remnants of China's largest rocket launched last week are expected to plunge back through the atmosphere late Saturday or early Sunday, a U.S. federally funded space-focused research and development centre said.

China's foreign ministry said on Friday that most debris from the rocket will be burned up on re-entry and is highly unlikely to cause any harm, after the U.S. military said that what it called an uncontrolled re-entry was being tracked by US Space Command.

In a tweet sent on Friday evening in the United States, the Aerospace Corporation said that the latest prediction for the re-entry of the Long March 5B rocket body by its Center for Orbital Reentry and Debris Studies (CORDS) was for eight

hours on either side of 0419 GMT on Sunday.

CORDS' latest "informed prediction" of the rocket body's re-entry location was given near the North Island of New Zealand, but it noted that re-entry was possible anywhere along paths covering large swathes of the globe.

The Long March 5B comprising one core stage and four boosters - lifted off from China's Hainan Island on April 29 with the unmanned Tianhe module, which contains what will become living quarters on a permanent Chinese space station.

The Long March 5-family of rockets have been integral to China's near-term space ambitions - from the delivery of modules and crew of its planned space station to launches of exploratory probes to the moon and even Mars.

The Long March 5B re-entry is unusual because dur-

ing launch, the first stage of the rocket reached orbital velocity instead of falling downrange as is common practice," the Aerospace Corporation said in a blog post.

"The empty rocket body is now in an elliptical orbit around Earth where it is being dragged toward an uncontrolled reentry."

The empty core stage has been losing altitude since last week, but the speed of its orbital decay remains uncertain due to unpredictable atmospheric variables. It is one of the largest space debris to re-enter Earth, at 18 tonnes.

The core stage of the first Long March 5B that returned to Earth last year weighed nearly 20 tonnes, surpassed only by debris from the Columbia space shuttle in 2003, the Soviet Union's Salyut 7 space station in 1991, and NASA's Skylab in 1979.

THE MADDING CROWD



Shoppers crowd a marketplace in Dhaka, Bangladesh on Saturday.

AP

Singapore offers foreign worker levy rebate to companies in labour shortage

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
SINGAPORE, 8 MAY

Companies that would get the advantage of increase in foreign workers levy rebate are from the sectors of construction, marine shipyard and process (CMP) sectors. Around 15,000 companies are facing labour shortage due to Singapore stopping of arrival of workers from India, B'desh

Around 15,000 foreign companies in Singapore facing labour shortage due to the government's decision to stop the arrival of workers from India and Bangladesh will be given a hike in foreign workers levy rebates from May to December, Ministry of Manpower (MOM) announced on Saturday.

Singapore has halted the arrival of passengers from India and Bangladesh considering the massive spike in the number of cases of coronavirus.

As per the new decision taken by the Singapore government the companies that would get the advantage of increase in foreign workers levy rebate are from the sectors of construction, marine shipyard and process (CMP) sectors.

Around 15,000 companies in the construction, marine shipyard and process (CMP) sectors, facing labour shortage due to Singapore's stopping arrival of workers from India and Bangladesh, will see an increase in foreign workers levy rebates from May to

December, the ministry said in a statement.

The rebate for each work permit holder in the CMP sectors will go up from 90 Singapore dollars per month to 250 Singapore dollars per month. The original rebate of 90 Singapore dollars per work permit holder in the CMP sectors has been in place since August last year.

Since last June, 920 million Singapore dollars has been set aside to extend foreign workers levy rebates for the 15,000 companies or so in the construction, marine shipyard,

process sectors, according to media reports.

"The tighter border restrictions and stricter Safe Management Measures due to COVID-19 have resulted in significant manpower shortages and increased costs for the CMP sectors," said the Ministry, adding that the number of work permit holders in these sectors fell by nearly 60,000, or 16 percent, last year.

The first round of the increased rebate in May will be paid out in June.

"Employers can consider making use of the FWL (foreign worker levy) rebate to retain existing workers and bring in Work Permit Holders from lower-risk countries or regions," said the Ministry in the statement.

A decision will be made closer to the end of the year if this rebate would be extended beyond December.

"The CMP sectors play an essential role in Singapore's development, and Government agencies are working closely with the CMP sectors through the Industry Transformation Maps to transform their businesses and reduce manpower reliance to become

more resilient to future shocks," it

"However, these efforts will take time to bear fruit. In the immediate term, the increased costs continue to weigh heavily on these firms."

On Friday, the ministry said new entry applications for work pass holders from higher-risk countries and regions would no longer be accepted with immediate effect.

However the new restriction excludes workers needed for key strategic projects and infrastructural works.

Higher-risk countries and regions refer to all places except Australia, Brunei, mainland China, New Zealand, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau.

Singapore has stopped entry for all long-term pass holders, short-term visitors with recent travel history to India, which is battling a COVID-19 crisis.

That entry ban, which began on April 24, was expanded to include visitors with recent travel history to Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, according to media reports.

I'm good: Ex-Maldives Prez after surviving bomb blast

AGENCIES
MALE, 8 MAY

Former Maldives president Mohamed Nasheed is conscious after life-saving surgery, his family said on Saturday, as police made two arrests in connection with a blast they said was being treated as a terrorist attack.

Nasheed, the Maldives' first democratically-elected president, is an outspoken critic of Islamic extremism in the Sunni Muslim island archipelago, and has been instrumental in investigating graft allegations against opposition leaders. The country has a reputation for political unrest.

Nasheed was deposed and exiled in what he called a coup in 2012, while in 2015, former President Abdulla Yameen escaped unharmed after an explosion on his speedboat.

In 2007, a blast that was blamed on Islamist militants targeted foreign tourists and injured 12 people.

tors were happy with Nasheed's recovery.

"He is out of life support and breathing on his own," he said in a tweet. "Managed to exchange a few words. Promised to come back stronger. I believe him."

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Burkina Faso's army chaplains tested by extremist conflict

ASSOCIATED PRESS
KAYA(BURKINA FASO), 8 MAY

In the more than 15 years Salomon Tibiri has been offering spiritual succor as a military pastor in Burkina Faso, he's never fielded so many calls from anxious soldiers and their relatives as in recent years, when the army found itself under attack by Islamist extremist fighters.

"Before the crisis there was more stability," Tibiri said, seated in a military camp church in the city of Kaya, in the hard-hit Center-North

region. "Now (the soldiers) are busier, and when you approach them you feel their stress - much more stress."

Once considered a beacon of peace and religious coexistence in the region, the West African nation has been embroiled in unprecedented violence linked to al-Qaeda and the Islamic State since 2016, throwing an ill-equipped and undertrained army into disarray - and overwhelming the chaplains tasked with supporting them.

In interviews in the Center-North and in Ouagadougou, the capital, military chaplains told that they are stretched thin by the unprecedented conflict and what assistance they are able to provide through phone calls and prayer.

Just seven chaplains, hailing from Protestant, Catholic and Muslim faiths, are charged with spiritually advising some 11,000 soldiers and helping maintain their morale. The army has not devoted what little resources it has for them to embed with units, and they say the distance only makes it harder to keep soldiers motivated. The troops "face death

every day ... At this moment they also need to have much more spiritual help," said Noel Henri Zongo, a chaplain and Catholic priest.

It's crucial work as experts say the psychological effects of conflict like what's occurring in Burkina Faso can be particularly tough on soldiers who are experiencing it in their country for the first time. It can put them at greater risk for post-traumatic stress disorder and also increase the likelihood of them acting in ways contrary to their moral values.

Last year 524 civilians were killed by soldiers and local defense militias fighting alongside them, according to the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, more than the 432 killed by the extremists. At least 180 bodies were found in mass graves near the government-controlled town of Djibo, with evidence of army involvement in large-scale executions according to Human Rights Watch.

Etienne Bonkoungou, another of the chaplains, said he regularly counsels troops grappling with the question of whether their participation in the fight

makes them defenders or killers. "The Bible says not to kill, so as a soldier these questions often arise," Bonkoungou said. "To kill another, to watch a colleague die (or kill someone yourself), should you kill? Should you not kill?"

To help them reconcile that dilemma, he uses biblical examples of devout people fighting in wars, and advises that "even sometimes God himself orders killing."

Soldier Luc Yelkouni acknowledged that the conflict "impacts our morale."

A 29-year-old veteran of

not say what they think the army should do, one said it would be helpful if there were four or five more of them. And they wish they could be physically closer to those deployed for dangerous duty.

"The role of a chaplain is to be present where the men are," Zongo said, "and what he needs to bring is the necessary capacity to face danger and to get up after failure."

The army, whose communications team facilitated the chaplain interviews and sat in on them, did not respond to a request for comment.

Singapore reduces entry approvals for foreigners holding work passes

ASSOCIATED PRESS
SINGAPORE, 8 MAY

pass holders who obtained approval to enter prior to 5 July will not be allowed to enter, the ministry said.

"We will inform employers on when to re-apply for entry when the situation has stabilised and will prioritise them for entry approval then," said the ministry stated.

"In view of the need to reschedule the entry of work pass holders who had already obtained approval to enter, we regret that we will not be accepting new entry applications from Tuesdays onwards," said the Ministry of Manpower on Friday.

Construction, Marine Shipyard and Process work pass holders who have earlier obtained approval will be allowed entry as approved, except for a small group with planned arrivals in June who will be rescheduled to arrive in subsequent weeks.



ENGLISH SEPTEMBER

The availability of players from the world's top two Twenty20 internationals teams – England and India – should prompt the Indian cricket board to host the rest of the Indian Premier League in England in September, says Kevin Pietersen (in photo, left). The IPL was postponed indefinitely last week as there were Covid-19 infections in its bio bubble.

For more updates

www.thestatesman.com

THUMBNAILS

Working group: The Sports Authority of India (SAI) and the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) have formed a working group to help former international athletes and coaches in battling the raging COVID-19 pandemic. The order did not specify how the Group plans to extend help to the athletes and coaches.

Rahane gets first dose: Indian Test team's vice-captain Ajinkya Rahane on Saturday said he has received the first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. "Got my first dose of the vaccine today. I urge everyone to register and get yourself vaccinated, if you're eligible," tweeted Rahane along with his picture.

Pant donates: India wicket-keeper batsman Rishabh Pant on Saturday joined the fight against the raging COVID-19 pandemic, pledging an undisclosed amount to procure oxygen cylinders with beds and kits for the affected patients. The 23-year-old said he will donate the amount to Hemkunt Foundation, a Gurugram-based NGO.

Better under pressure: Gearing up for her second Olympics, seasoned Indian shooter Rahi Sarnobat says she enjoys being under the pump during competitions as it gets the best out of her. Sarnobat is part of the 15-member Indian team that will depart for Zagreb, Croatia on May 11 for a training-cum-competition tour, from where it will fly directly into Tokyo for the Olympics.

Wrestling Olympic Qualifiers: Putting up an abject show, India's Greco Roman wrestlers drew a blank at the World Olympic Qualifiers as none of them could earn a Tokyo Games quota, here on Saturday. India's brightest chance was with Gurpreet Singh but he was ousted after losing his 77kg pre-quarterfinal just 48 seconds to 2020 European champion Rafiq Huseynov from Azerbaijan.

Rani, six teammates recover: Indian women's hockey captain Rani Rampal, her six team-mates and two support staff members have recovered from COVID-19 infection after spending two weeks in quarantine at the Sports Authority of India's (SAI) Centre in Bengaluru. The six other India players are Savita Punia, Sharmila Devi, Rajani, Navjot Kaur, Navneet Kaur and Sushila while the two support staff are video analyst Amritaprasak and scientific advisor Wayne Lombard.

Laureus World Sports Awards: World No. 2 tennis player Naomi Osaka has been named 'Sportswoman of the Year' at the Laureus World Sports Awards for her achievements on and off the court, while tennis legend Billie Jean King was awarded the 'Lifetime Achievement Award' by the Laureus Academy. This is Osaka's second recognition at the Laureus Sports Awards.

Neymar signs new PSG deal: Neymar has committed his future to Paris Saint-Germain by extending his contract until 2025. The Brazil forward joined the Ligue 1 champions from Barcelona on a five-year deal at a world-record cost of 222 million euros in August 2017.

Serena-Osaka clash on cards: Japanese tennis ace and world No. 2 Naomi Osaka could clash with Serena Williams in a mouth-watering quarter-final match of the Italian Open (May 8-16), the draw for which was announced on Saturday. In another interesting quarter-final matchup, No. 1 seed from Australia, Ashleigh Barty could face Aryna Sabalenka in a rematch of the Stuttgart and Madrid Open finals.

When Prasidh Krishna came home with coronavirus

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BANGALORE/CHRISTCHURCH/
MALE, 8 MAY

Kolkata Knight Riders paceman Prasidh Krishna (in photo) has tested positive for the coronavirus and is in quarantine in his home town of Bangalore, a Board of Control for Cricket in India source said today. The 25-year-old Krishna, included yesterday in the Indian squad for an England tour as a stand-by, is the fourth KKR player to have contracted the dreaded virus.

Varun Chakravarthy, Sandeep Warrier and Tim Seifert are the other KKR players who tested positive earlier. According to the source, both Krishna and Warrier got it from Chakravarthy during a training session. He said Krishna was Chakravarthy's close friend.

"Prasidh like all India players left the bio-secure bubble on 3 May with two negative results. But on reaching Bangalore, he tested positive," the source said.

The BCCI is hoping that by the time the UK-bound players enter a bio bubble in India on 25 May, Krishna will have tested negative. Seifert will not be on the charter flight home with the other players and the support staff.

He will instead stay in isolation in Ahmedabad before returning to Chennai, to be



treated in a private hospital. Seifert failed both his pre-departure tests and is experiencing moderate symptoms.

New Zealand Cricket chief executive David White said Seifert had had seven negative tests in the 10 days leading up to his pre-departure protocols, and was confident he would be receiving the best of care from his franchise.

"It's really unfortunate for Tim and we'll do everything for him that we can from this end, and hopefully he will be able to test negative, and be

cleared and approved for discharge as soon as he's well again. "Since receiving the news, we've organised support for Tim and have also, via the players association, been in contact with his family to ensure they're kept fully informed and updated on developments," White said.

Once Seifert serves the statutory period of isolation and tests negative, he will be transferred back to New Zealand where he will serve a mandatory 14-day period of managed isolation. One of two charter flights transporting New

Zealand's IPL contingent back home has already left India, and the other one was to leave this evening (New Zealand time) after being delayed for logistical reasons. All those on the flights have been, and will be, following prescribed pre-departure and in-flight protocols, including Covid-19 tests, social distancing, mask-wearing and best-practice hygiene, and will again be assessed on arrival in Auckland.

Seifert is currently awaiting transfer to Chennai, where he will be treated in the hospital where former Australia player Michael Hussey has been staying since testing positive for the virus earlier this week. White said he was grateful to the BCCI and the IPL franchises for organising the charter flights and medical assistance. There have also been changes to the arrangements for New Zealand's UK-bound Test contingent, with Kane Williamson, Mitchell Santner, Kyle Jamieson, and physio Tommy Simsek, travelling to the Maldives (rather than staying in New Delhi) ahead of leaving for England. New Zealand trainer Chris Donaldson, who

initially signalled his intention to return home on one of the NZ-bound charter flights before returning to England, has instead opted to remain with the UK-bound players and is also in the Maldives.

The decision for this group to transfer to the Maldives was taken after advice that their entry into the UK, initially thought to be about 11 May, was likely to be delayed further by a week.

In another development, it has been reported that the Indian cricket board will explore all options to try to complete the IPL but is yet to discuss offers from English outfits to host the remaining matches. Warwickshire, Surrey and the Marylebone Cricket Club have offered to host the IPL's remaining 31 matches in September. London Mayor Sadiq Khan last month said he was keen to get the lucrative league to come to England.

Royal Challengers Bangalore shared a team video on their Twitter in which chairman Anand Kripalani told the players the BCCI had "indicated" the tournament would resume in September.

The BCCI is still carrying out negotiations regarding the duration of 10 days of soft quarantine (training allowed) for players after reaching the UK where they will be based for three and half months.

will join from the start of the tour or come after the WTC final when there is a substantial gap of more than a month before the start of the Test series on August 4.

The BCCI is also confident that all the players will get their first dose of vaccine before embarking on their journey to the UK. However it will be difficult for Prasidh Krishna, who has tested positive after coming in contact with Varun Chakravarthy, to get vaccinated before leaving for UK.

"You have a gap between the time you test negative for COVID-19 and get your vaccination. So even if Prasidh tests negative by May 18th or 20th, he would need a four-week gap before he gets his first dose."

In case it's a 10-day quarantine, the Indians will be allowed to move around the city from June 13 while the WTC final against New Zealand will start on June 18.

Indian cricket team to leave for UK on 2 June

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 8 MAY

Indian cricketers will complete an eight-day hard quarantine period in Mumbai before leaving on June 2 for a marathon tour of United Kingdom, where they will play six Test matches including the marquee World Test Championship final against New Zealand.

The BCCI is still carrying out negotiations regarding the duration of 10 days of soft quarantine (training allowed) for players after reaching the UK where they will be based for three and half months.

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In case it's a 10-day quarantine, the Indians will be allowed to move around the city from June 13 while the WTC final against New Zealand will start on June 18.

It is also learnt that looking at the length of the tour, players' families will accompany them. However it is still not clear whether the WAGS and children

Summit showdown in England likely



LONDON, 8 MAY

The all-English Champions League final could be played at home after Turkey was added to England's 'red list' of countries where all but essential travel was banned due to severe coronavirus outbreaks. Chelsea and Manchester City are due to meet on 29 May in Istanbul and Uefa was hoping to allow around 10,000 fans into the biggest club game of the European football season. But the British government yesterday warned supporters not to travel to Turkey after imposing new travel restrictions, and said the English Football Association was in talks with Champions League organiser Uefa about staging the game in Britain, instead.

The most logical English venue to move the game to is Wembley with the London stadium staging eight games of the European Championship across June and July, so it has Uefa's required logistics and broadcasting infrastructure already in place. Wembley was also already due to stage the 2024 Champions League

1980 Olympics team members, Ravinder and Kaushik succumb to COVID-19 the same day

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 8 MAY

India on Saturday lost two of its most revered hockey stars, Ravinder Pal Singh and M K Kaushik - who were both members of the 1980 Moscow Olympics-winning side - to COVID-19. While the 60-year-old Singh succumbed to the dreaded disease in Lucknow on Saturday morning after battling for nearly two weeks, Kaushik died after failing to recover from the ailment there.

Kaushik, who guided the Indian men's team to 1998 Asian gold medal in Bangkok, was 66 and is survived by his son and wife. He had tested positive for COVID-19 on April 17 and was admitted to a nursing home here. "He was put on ventilator this morning but passed away just now," a bereaved Ehsan, his son, told PTI.

Kaushik had first developed symptoms last month but RTPCR and RAT tests returned negative. It was only after he went for a CT scan on chest on April 24 that he was detected with COVID pneumonia and was hospitalised.

Since then his condition was between, neither stable nor serious. His oxygen level dropped drastically at night in last few days. Kaushik's wife was also getting treatment at the same hospital after contracting the virus but she was recovering well.

Kaushik had coached both the senior men and women's

teams. Under his coaching, India men's team won two medals at the 1998 Asian Games in Bangkok while the women's team won bronze medal at the Doha Asian Games in 2006.

He was awarded the Arjuna Award in 1998, before being bestowed with the Dronacharya award in 2002.

Earlier in the day, Singh died after spending two weeks at the Vivekananda Hospital in Lucknow. According to family sources, Singh had recovered from the virus and was shifted to a non-COVID ward on Thursday after testing negative. But his condition suddenly deteriorated on Friday and he was put on a ventilator.

Singh, who also played at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics, did not get married and is survived by a niece, Pragya Yadav. Singh also played in the 1979 Junior World Cup and took voluntary retirement from State Bank of India after quitting hockey. Born in Sitapur on September 6, 1960, Singh excelled as a centre-half from 1979 to 1984.

Hockey India mourned the untimely demise of Singh.

"Hockey India extends its deepest condolences to Ravinder Pal Singh's family. Ravinder made an immense contribution to Indian hockey and his achievements will always be remembered. May Ravinder's family and friends have the strength to pass through this difficult time," HI president Gyanendra Ningombam said.

That they will be safe there. They aren't. They perhaps can't be. Sport didn't think it up. People who control it nowadays did. Covid-19 forced them into it but they didn't think either medically or psychologically.

A spell of quarantine, hard or not, is antithetical to the freedom players can't make do without to be at their best. High-ups wanted to put sport on television and did so. But when you watch a game on the telly, though, it isn't difficult to make out they're flagging.

Dr Das Gupta says sport of all kinds will have to take a backseat while the coronavirus tears through a country, leaving it ravaged.

"Think of the way we're

Bopanna goes down fighting in quarter-final

AGENCIES
MADRIS, 8 MAY

Rohan Bopanna (in photo) and Denis Shapovalov of Canada fought hard before losing in three sets to the German duo of Alexander Zverev and Tim Puetz in the men's doubles quarter-finals of the Madrid Open here.

Bopanna and Shapovalov went down 6-4, 3-6, 10-5 against their German opponents to crash out of the Association of Tennis Professionals Masters 1000 tournament.

The Indo-Canadian pair hit five aces compared with its opponents' three, but permitted themselves five double-faults against two by the German pair.

The Germans were also better on first serve, with a win percentage of 83, against 79 for their rivals.

Earlier in the tournament, the unseeded pair of Bopanna and Shapovalov stunned top seeds Juan Sebastian Cabal and Robert Farah in straight sets.

"Today again, but when it counted, in the decisive moments, I did everything wrong," Nadal has been trying to regain his best form after not playing much because of the coronavirus pandemic. He got off to a slow start on clay

when things are worse than they really are," Nadal said he did not enjoy the faster pace in Madrid, prompted by the high altitude in the Spanish capital, even though he had won the tournament five times. Nadal still tried to look on the bright side.

"It was a week with many positive things. I did a lot of things well in training," he said.

"Leave Madrid with good sensations in general, but with a bad sensation of having played a match like today."

like he played better than Zverev at times but could not take advantage of his chances. He felt like he had let the quarter-final slip away by making too many "unjustified" mistakes.

"It was a different match from the one against Rublev (in Monte Carlo), when the conditions favoured me. Here there was a sensation that I was not in control of things, so when you lose it feels like things are worse than they really are," Nadal said he did not enjoy the faster pace in Madrid, prompted by the high altitude in the Spanish capital, even though he had won the tournament five times. Nadal still tried to look on the bright side.

"It was a week with many positive things. I did a lot of things well in training," he said.

"Leave Madrid with good sensations in general, but with a bad sensation of having played a match like today."

Hamilton tops qualifying at Spanish GP for 100th pole

AGENCIES
MONTEMELLO (SPAIN), 8 MAY

Lewis Hamilton won his 100th career pole position after barely edging Max Verstappen to the fastest time in qualifying for the Spanish Grand Prix on Saturday. Hamilton pushed his Mercedes to a flying lap of 1 minute, 16.74 seconds. Verstappen in his Red Bull was only 0.03 seconds behind.

Verstappen pushed his Red Bull to a session-best lap of 1 minute, 17.83 seconds.

Hamilton, who leads Verstappen by eight points in the Formula One standings, was just 0.23 slower in his

Fact of the matter: bio bubbles aren't quite secure

PULKESH MUKHOPADHYAY

Whether or not it ignites a fierce, no-verbal-holds-barred debate around sport, an opinion seems slowly to be building up that the so-called bio-secure bubbles that competitive events hinge on today, given the raging coronavirus pandemic worldwide with its variably marked surges in different lands, are not really all that well, safe. We may link it to what befell the Indian Premier League of Twenty20 cricket recently, but, as Dr Shanti Ranjan Das Gupta points out, breaches were reported from global football

SHORT POINT

surprises galore with its mutations. Its remedy, if any, is unknown. It's now being said it can be inhaled from even toilet fixtures and that explains why so many people have stayed at home and come to be afflicted, leaving everyone baffled. It's perhaps a risk not worth taking when players are bunged into confinement in the belief

now, vaccines or no vaccines. A Covid-19 patient may be taken to hospital all right but the availability of treatment, to put the most charitable construction upon it, is completely uncertain. Oxygen can't be accessed even if money is spent. Bodies are piling up," Dr Das Gupta says.

Sport had better wait now and be patient for an entry that will be welcomed. And, instead of appearing not to care, it perhaps needs to show it really does. Players have done their bit in the battle against the coronavirus at a very perilous time in this land but sport, institutionally, has been pathetically inert. That's not cricket.