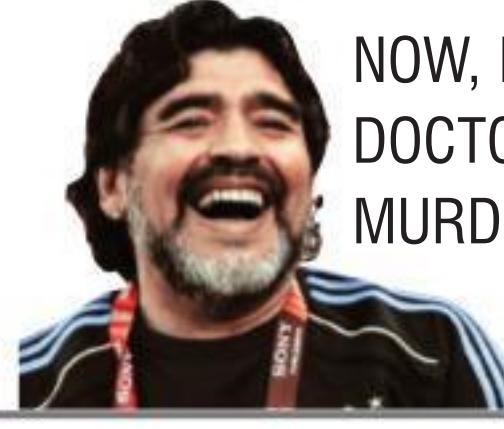




SONIA SEEKS FREE  
EDUCATION FOR  
ORPHANED CHILDREN



BIDEN, NETANYAHU FACE  
ROUGH EARLY TEST  
OF RELATIONSHIP



PEOPLE'S PARLIAMENT, ALWAYS IN SESSION

NOW, MARADONA'S  
DOCTORS FACE  
MURDER CHARGE



'WORLD CUP IN  
INDIA? NOT ON  
YOUR NELLY!'

P5

P9

P12

P12

## WEATHER

Mainly clear sky. The maximum and minimum temperatures would be around 35 and 21 degrees Celsius respectively.

**RAINFALL:** Nil

**RELATIVE HUMIDITY**

Max: 100% Min: 60%

**TEMPERATURE**

Max: 31.4°C (-9) Min: 19.3°C (-7)

SUN RISES SUN SETS

05:27 hrs 19:09 hrs

MOON RISES MOON SETS

13:37 hrs 02:32 hrs

## THUMBNAILS



Kerala Governor Arif Mohammad Khan and Pinarayi Vijayan after the latter took oath as the chief minister of Kerala on Thursday. (P4)

**Calcutta HC defers hearing in Narada case:** The Calcutta High Court on Thursday deferred hearing in the case filed by CBI against bail given to TMC leaders arrested by the agency in the Narada sting tape case due to unavoidable circumstances. A division bench comprising Acting Chief Justice Rajesh Bindal and Justice Arijit Banerjee is hearing an application by the CBI to transfer the bail applications from the Special CBI Court to the High Court.

**Govt extends FY21 ITR filing deadline:** The government on Thursday extended the due date of filing income tax returns for 2020-21 for individuals by two months till 30 September. The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) has also extended the ITR filing deadline for companies by a month till 30 November. As per the income tax law, for individuals whose accounts are not required to be audited and who usually file their income tax return using ITR-1 or ITR-4 forms the deadline to file ITR is 31 July.

P8



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 20 MAY

**KEY TAKEAWAYS**

- » Concerns about any spread of infection in the young generation due to mutations
- » Cautions against complacency and asks officials to ensure Covid appropriate behaviour
- » Prevent wastage of vaccine doses, states told

of the last one-and-a-half years and told officials to work to ensure that people continue to follow Covid appropriate behaviour.

When the tally goes down, people start thinking that there is no need to worry now, he said, cautioning against it.

Modi called for collective responsibility in this regard among the government machinery, social organisations and elected representatives. Challenge remains as long as the infection is present even at a minor scale, he said.

In his second round of interaction with district magistrates and field officials on the pandemic, Modi spoke about concerns in various quarters about any spread of infection in the young generation due to mutations in the virus and asked officials to analyse the statistics in their districts. They will have to be better prepared for the future, he said.

There have been reports that the virus may hit the young generation, a demography which has so far not been affected hard as the adult population with people in the older age bracket being seen as more susceptible. Noting that active cases have seen a decline in the last few days, Modi referred to the experience

## 'Not allowed to speak, PM's Covid meeting a super-flop'

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
KOLKATA, 20 MAY



West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee, who attended a virtual meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Covid management, complained this evening that she was humiliated as all the chief ministers were made to sit like puppets with none of them, including her, being given a chance to speak.

She alleged that it was "a one-way insult, one-way humiliation" and that "dictatorship" is prevailing in the country.

"They didn't ask us about medicine, vaccines, Remdesivir or oxygen situation. What I felt bad about was that although the CMs were officially invited, he didn't talk to us, no one was allowed to speak. How do we speak about the public demands? We are not bonded labourers. A dictatorships going on. We, the CMs, felt insulted and humiliated. It was just a casual, super-flop meeting. The Prime Minister's feeling so insecure that he did not even listen to the chief ministers. What is this fear about?" she told journalists at Nabanna after the meeting.

The PM's interaction was a planned event with district magistrates on the Covid situation. However, several chief ministers, including those from UP, Rajasthan and Maharashtra, where these officers are posted, were also invited.

Responding to Miss Banerjee's comments, the BJP's Bengal unit president Dilip Ghosh claimed that she is blaming Narendra Modi to hide her government's failure to deal with the Covid-19 situation in the state.

TMC-turned-BJP leader Suvendu Adhikari also counter-attacked his former mentor, saying that while Miss Banerjee had skipped several meetings with the PM, she now hijacks a PM-DM meet to say she was denied a chance to speak.

PTI

Modi also said that there is a need to prevent vaccine wastage, saying every dose wasted is denying someone protection shield against the disease. Asking officials to analyse data separately for urban and rural regions besides those for tier 2 and 3 cities, Modi said it will help them prepare their strategy accordingly.

## Govt aims to ramp up daily testing capacity

SNS & PTI  
NEW DELHI, 20 MAY

The government aims to ramp up India's daily testing capacity for Covid-19 to 45 lakh by the end of June from the current capacity of 16-20 lakh per day, the Centre said on Thursday as a record 20.55 lakh tests were conducted in a span of 24 hours, the highest ever conducted in a single day in India.

ICMR Director General Balram Bhargava said the ICMR has so far approved a home-based rapid antigen testing (RAT) kit manufactured by Mylab Discovery Solutions Ltd, Pune, while kits by three more companies are in pipeline and likely to get the approval within a week. Bhargava said kits for home testing will be available in the market in 3-4 days. "We are doing 16-20 lakh tests this week and we have a capacity of about 20 lakh tests by end of the month and upto the end of next month we can have the capacity of upto 45 lakh because ICMR has validated

more than 105 RAT companies and approved 41 of them and 31 of them are indigenous," he said.

Out of the 45 lakh tests, 18 lakh will be RT-PCR, while 27 lakh will be Rapid Antigen Tests. More than 20.55 lakh tests were conducted in a span of 24 hours, the highest ever conducted in a single day in India.

Health Ministry Joint Secretary Lav Agarwal said a continuous decline in the Covid-19 active cases has been noted in the last 15 days. "From being 17.13 per cent reported on 3 May, the active cases now comprise 12.1 per cent of the country's total infections. A positive trend in recovery has also been noted. The recovery rate which was 81.7 per cent on 3 May has increased to 86.7 now," he said.

**Delhi cases drop further:** Delhi today reported 3,231 fresh coronavirus infections, its lowest single-day tally since 1 April, and 233 Covid-linked fatalities while the pos-



itivity rate dipped to 5.5 per cent, according to the Delhi government's latest health bulletin. The new Covid cases were detected out of a relatively lesser number of tests ~ 58,744. (SEE P2)

## OUR DAILY BREAD



Needy people stand in a queue to collect food distributed by volunteers, during the Covid-induced lockdown, in Kolkata on Thursday.

AGENCIES

## Notify black fungus as epidemic, states told

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, 20 MAY



A black fungus-infected patient at Mucormycosis ward of government ENT hospital in Hyderabad.

skin through a cut, scrape, burn, or other types of skin trauma.

According to the ministry, the disease is being detected among patients who are recovering or have recovered from Covid-19. Telangana and Rajasthan have already declared mucormycosis as an epidemic. Tamil Nadu on Thursday declared it a notifiable dis-

ease. On May 18, the Haryana government also framed regulations called The Haryana Epidemic Diseases (Mucormycosis) Regulations, 2021.

Cases of black fungus have been reported in various parts of the country including Karnataka, Uttarakhand, Telangana, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Haryana and Bihar.

Mucormycosis, which is primarily affecting people recovering from Covid-19, has also infected several people in the national capital, apparently linked to the steroids administered in the treatment of Covid-19.

### 'Import meds to treat black fungus'

Delhi High Court on Wednesday asked the Centre to take steps to get the medicine Amphotericin B ~ used for treating black fungus which is primarily affecting Covid-19 recovered people, from wherever it is available in the world.

The court said the Centre should inform it about steps taken to import the medicine, the shortfall of which was coming in the way of treatment of Mucormycosis. PTI

Mucormycosis, which is primarily affecting people recovering from Covid-19, has also infected several people in the national capital, apparently linked to the steroids administered in the treatment of Covid-19.

Saliva and nasal discharge in the form of droplets and aerosols, by an infected person is the primary mode of virus transmission. While droplets fall within two metres from an infected person, smaller aerosol particles are carried in the air up to 10 metres

## Aerosols can travel 10 metres, warns govt; stresses on proper ventilation

SNS & AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, 20 MAY

Smaller aerosol particles can travel in the air for 10 metres, the government has warned in new guidelines on fighting Covid-19.

The advisory, "Stop the Transmission, Crush the Pandemic ~ Masks, Distance, Sanitation and Ventilation to prevent the spread of SARS-CoV-2 virus" stressed that wearing masks, maintaining distance, adequate sanitation and proper indoor ventilation is key to stopping the coronavirus.

Saliva and nasal discharge in the form of droplets and aerosols, by an infected person while exhaling, talking, speaking, singing, laughing, coughing or sneezing is the primary mode of virus trans-

missions. While droplets fall within two metres from an infected person, smaller aerosol particles are carried in the air up to 10 metres

missions. While droplets fall within two metres from an infected person, smaller aerosol particles are carried in the air up to 10 metres, the advisory, issued by the Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser said.

An infected person who shows no symptoms can also transmit the virus, the advisory iterated. People should continue wearing masks, double masks or N95 masks,

it said.

Well-ventilated spaces play a crucial role in diluting the Covid-19 viral load of infected air and help in decreasing the risk of transmission from infected people to others, it said. "...ventilating spaces with improved directional air flow decreases the accumulated viral load in the air, reducing the risk of transmission," the advisory said. Introducing outdoor air in offices, homes and larger public spaces is advised, it said, stressing that measures to improve ventilation in these spaces must be taken up on urgent priority in urban and rural areas alike.

Simple strategic placement of fans, open windows and doors, can introduce outdoor air and improve the air quality inside, it stated.

## No respite



A health worker collects swab sample for Covid-19 test, at khag area in Budgam

### Mylab launches Covid test kit

Mylab Discovery Solutions on Thursday announced that it has received the Indian Council of Medical Research's (ICMR) approval for the country's first self-use rapid antigen test for Covid-19, CoviSelf. The test can be purchased for Rs 250 without a prescription from local pharmacies and online channel partners.

### Foreign aid

A total of 13,093 oxygen concentrators, 15,801 oxygen cylinders and nearly 6.1 lakh Remdesivir vials received as global aid have been delivered or dispatched to states and union territories from April 27 to May 19, the Union Health Ministry said.

### 116 former civil servants to PM

The Central government should provide for free vaccination to all Indian citizens and greatly ramp up RT-PCR testing in both rural and urban areas, a group of former civil servants said on Thursday in an open letter to PM Modi. They said the government seems to be more concerned with managing the narrative of "efficient" management of the Covid crisis rather than addressing the crucial issues at stake.

## Tauktae: 49 dead on sunk barge, search on for 37 missing

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 20 MAY

### SEARCH OPS: FOURTH DAY

» While 440 persons on two barges and the drillship were brought to safety, barge P-305 carrying 261 personnel sank

» Out of 261, 186 were rescued and the bodies of 49



Rescued crew members of the barge P305 off Mumbai coast

~ activated its emergency response system and issued instructions to all installations to take action.

Afcons' construction barge Support Station-3, while moving to a safe location, encountered mechanical problems and it started drifting. It had 202 persons onboard. Its Gal Constructor barge, with 137 persons on board, was at a safe location but its anchors gave away and it too started drifting.

ONGC's drillship Sagar Bhushan's anchors gave away. All its 101 persons as also those aboard Afcons' two barges were rescued to safety. Afcons' P-305 barge's anchors also gave away and it then hit an unmanned platform before capsizing. Out of 261 crew, 186 were rescued.

11 is on. Naval and Coast Guard vessels and aircraft scoured the waters off the west coast to look for the missing. The Indian Navy has deployed six vessels -- INS Kochi, INS Kolkata, INS Talwar, Beas, Betwa and Teg, while Coast Guard has deployed ICG Smart, Juliet, ICG 206, CG Patrol and ICG Shoar for the search operations. ONGC has also deployed

20 of its vessels to assist the rescue operations, which has also been joined by one vessel of Afcons. Fifteen helicopters have been doing sorties to evacuate persons stuck on the five vessels, they said. Sources said based on the weather warning, ONGC which operates the giant Mumbai High oil and gas field and other fields in the region

## Gujarat toll touches 53

AHMEDABAD, 20 MAY

As many as 53 people have lost their lives in incidents related to cyclone Tauktae in different parts of Gujarat, officials said on Thursday.

Most of the casualties were due to incidents of wall collapse due to the cyclone, which made a landfall on Monday night near Una town in Gir-Somnath and wreaked havoc for around 28 hours before it weakened into a depression, an official from the State Emergency Operations Centre said.

&lt;p



The present BoA at the SMC has given more priority to engineering defections from other parties

ASOK BHATTACHARYA, FORMER MAYOR, SMC

ON THE TMC-LED BOARD OF ADMINISTRATORS AT THE SILIGURI MUNICIPAL CORPORATION

# Delhi govt to set up centres for black fungus treatment

CM stresses on need to curb spread of this infection & ensure proper treatment for its patients

SNS & PTI  
NEW DELHI, 20 MAY

**A**mid increasing incidence of black fungus infection, Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal today said that dedicated centres will be set up for the treatment of black fungus or mucormycosis cases at three Delhi government-run hospitals.

The CM made this announcement after discussing the rise in black fungus cases at a high-level meeting attended by deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia, health minister Satyendar Jain and chief secretary Vijay Kumar Dev among others.

"Three important decisions were taken at the meeting. One will be set up at Lok Nayak Jai Prakash Narayan Hospital, Guru Tegh Bahadur Hospital and Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital for



treatment of black fungus," the CM stated.

A government statement said there will be a special team of doctors deployed at each of these centres for efficient functioning.

Kejriwal asserted that the drugs used in the treatment of this fungal infection will be arranged in adequate quantity. He also highlighted the need for creating awareness among people about preventive measures against this disease.

He said Delhi is the capi-

tal of the country and that people from outside the city also come here for treatment.

"We should have sufficient medicines to cater to the need of everyone coming for the treatment of black fungus. We have to stop the spread of the disease and give best possible treatment to those suffering from it," the CM said.

He noted that the Delhi government will also procure the required drugs from the central government.

Explaining further his government's plan to combat the disease, Kejriwal said the government will prepare a detailed plan and issue special SOPs on how to raise awareness among Covid-19 recovered people for prevention of the disease.

Hospitals in Delhi have reported increased number of back fungus cases among those recovering from Covid during the current second

wave of coronavirus and it could be ascribed to "irrational use of steroids at home without consulting doctors", medical experts have said.

The fungal infection, which affects the brain, lungs, and sinuses, can be lethal to those suffering from diabetes and having compromised immune systems.

According to Suresh Singh Naruka, senior consultant, ENT, Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals, mucormycosis is more among people with low immunity due to diabetes, kidney disease, liver disorder, old age, cardiac issues, or those on medication for autoimmune diseases like rheumatoid arthritis.

"If such patients are administered steroids, their immunity reduces further, allowing the fungus to thrive," he said. Yudhyavir, assistant professor (anaesthesiology and critical care), AIIMS, noted that

Amphotericin-B used in the treatment of mucormycosis is not commonly available and is manufactured in lesser quantities. Before Covid outbreak the drug was not being used much. Now, its demand has risen, leading to its shortage, he said.

He said steroids reduce inflammation in lungs, but also reduce immunity and increase blood sugar levels in both diabetics and non-diabetic Covid patients. This is leading to an explosion in the number of black fungus cases.

Mohit Agarwal, additional director and head of Medical Oncology Department, Fortis Hospital, Shalimar Bagh, said the large number of black fungus cases this year can be attributed to the high Covid caseload, more severe cases during the second Covid wave, and irrational use of steroids at home without consulting doctors.

## Covid cases, positivity rate continue to drop in Capital

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, 20 MAY

Delhi today reported 3,231 fresh coronavirus infections, its lowest single-day tally since 1 April, and 233 Covid-linked fatalities while the positivity rate dipped to 5.5 per cent, according to the Delhi government's latest health bulletin.

The new Covid cases were detected out of a relatively lesser number of tests — 58,744.

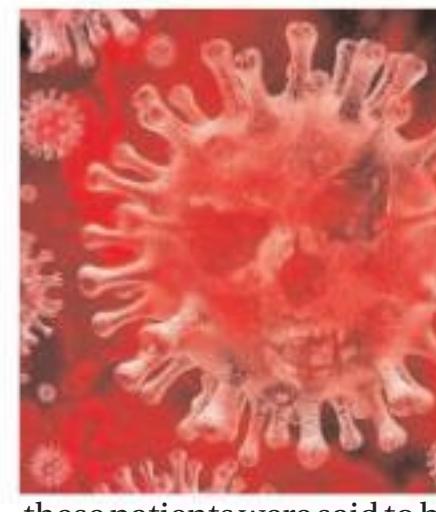
The national capital had recorded 2,790 infections on 1 April.

The count of coronavirus cases in the city was 3,846 yesterday and 4,482 on 18 May.

Delhi's Covid positivity rate today came down to 5.5 per cent from 5.78 per cent yesterday and 6.89 per cent the day before, according to the health bulletin.

The city today reported 233 Covid-related fatalities. Its coronavirus caseload mounted to 14,09,950 while the Covid toll rose to 22,579, the bulletin stated.

There were now 40,214 active coronavirus cases in Delhi. As many as 23,851 of



these patients were said to be getting treatment under home isolation.

Delhi had 56,833 containment zones currently, the bulletin said.

Of the 24,424 hospital beds meant for Covid patients in the city, 11,962 beds were vacant, it added.

Meanwhile, Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal handed over a cheque for Rs 1 crore to the family of a deceased "corona warrior" Shivji Mishra, who was a school teacher. He got infected by Covid during duty hours, resulting in his death soon after, according to a statement made by the Chief Minister's office.

'50 pc of Delhi vax centres for 18-44 may be shut from today'

PTI  
NEW DELHI, 20 MAY

AAP MLA Atishi on Thursday said nearly half of the vaccination sites for the 18-44 age group in Delhi are likely to be shut from Friday as the city has less than a day's stock of Covishield left. The vaccination centres administering Covaxin to the people in the city have been shut for nearly a week, she said. "We have less than a day's stock of Covishield left for the 18-44 age group. There are 99 schools where 368 vaccination sites are there. Nearly 150 of these sites will have to close down from tomorrow owing to vaccine shortage," Atishi said while issuing the vaccination bulletin. The national capital has two days of Covaxin and nine days of Covishield stockleft for the 45 plus age group, healthcare workers and frontline workers, she said. The AAP MLA added that 50,000 doses of Covishield will be received by the city government Thursday evening.

## Experts divided over unhygienic masks being contributing factor for black fungus

SNS & PTI  
NEW DELHI, 20 MAY

Amid a rise in black fungus cases particularly in COVID patients in Delhi, some medical experts feel that "unhygienic masks" and poorly ventilated rooms could be a contributing factor, while others said "no clinical evidence" has been established linking the two.

Doctors at many leading hospitals here said many patients, both COVID and non-COVID ones, have presented themselves at the facilities who have been infected with mucormycosis or black fungus and had a history of exhibiting poor hygienic practices, including wearing unwashed masks for a long time.

According to Dr Suresh Singh Naruka, senior consultant, ENT, Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals, the primary factor is "irrational use of steroids".

"Second, I would reckon is unhygienic practices, like wearing masks over a long time without

washing them, or staying in a poorly ventilated rooms such as a basement, or less airy rooms. So, I would say, the second factor is also a trigger point for contractor mucormycosis," he said.

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

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

"In many cases, we also found that people who had contracted black fungus had self-medicated themselves on steroids, after their oxygen concentration levels had dropped, making them susceptible to this ailment which is being found more in COVID patients

under treatment or recovery than others," Naruka said.

The Apollo doctor said earlier, during pre-COVID days, he was seeing one case on an average per month, which has now jumped to "2-3 black fungus patients per day", adding that some of them have also suffered from facial palsy and hearing loss.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday said dedicated centres will be set up for the treatment of black fungus or mucormycosis cases at three city government-run hospitals.

He made the announcement after discussing the rise in black fungus cases with officials and specialists at a meeting here.

"Three important decisions were taken at the meeting. Centres will be set up at Lok Nayak Jai Prakash Narayan Hospital, Guru Tegh Bahadur Hospital and Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital for treatment of black fungus," the CM tweeted.

Dr Ajay Swaroop, chairman of

the ENT department at Sir Ganga Ram Hospital here, said, mucors live in every human body along our nasal passage and nasopharyngeal region "symbiotically".

"It is when a person's immunity is lowered, as in the case of COVID, that these mucors start growing and cause infection. The red flags are nasal discharge with blood stains, swelling in nose of eye," he said.

However, he advised people to not rush to hospitals and consult a doctor first, and only in case of red flags, should go further about it.

At Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, 60 cases of black fungus have been reported till date since the rise in coronavirus cases. Twelve of them are COVID-positive ones, and the rest post-COVID cases, within 2-3 weeks of their recovery period, Swaroop said.

Asked if unhygienic masks could trigger black fungus, he said, "There is no clinical evidence yet, to establish the link between the two".

Since the outbreak of the pandemic last year, health and administrative authorities have been emphasising on seeking compliance of wearing of mask and other COVID-appropriate behaviour.

"People are afraid of contracting the virus, so many of them keep on wearing the same mask, over and over again without washing, and that runs the risk of contracting the infection, as fungus will grow in a moist or unhygienic areas," Naruka of Apollo hospital said.

Masks should be ideally washed after a person returns home from outside every time, just in hot water or some disinfectant or cleansed with a sanitiser at least.

A senior doctor at LNJP Hospital said just a couple of patients of black fungus are there at the hospital. However, they are being isolated as much as possible from the regular COVID patients.

Asked if the mask hygiene was a factor in triggering the infection, the doctor said, nothing conclusive can be said yet.

## HC asks city hospitals to set up PSA O2 plants

PTI  
NEW DELHI, 20 MAY

The Delhi High Court Thursday asked all the big hospitals in the national capital with 100 or more beds to install PSA oxygen plants, saying the bitter experience everyone had due to the acute shortage of medical oxygen, for treating COVID-19 patients, has left a lesson to be learnt.

The high court said it is high time that at least big hospitals with 100-bedded facilities or more should have their own Pressure Swing Absorption (PSA) oxygen plants which should have a capacity of at least two times of their normal requirement as this would go a long way in reducing dependence on outside sources.

A bench of Justices Vipin Sanghi and Jasmeet Singh also asked the Delhi government's Principal Secretary (Health) to take up the aspect of PSA oxygen plants with hospitals and file a status report in this regard by May 27.

Considering that the pandemic is once in a century and hopefully we will see the end of it sooner or later, we are of the view that larger hospitals with 100-bedded facilities or more should have their own PSA plants which should have a capacity of at least two times of their normal requirement, the bench said.

It also said smaller hospitals and nursing homes with 50 to 100 beds should have PSA plants with a capacity of their normal requirement. It will help in long way if such a situation again arises in future, the bench said.

The bitter experience that everyone has had in Delhi with huge shortage of medical oxygen has certainly left a lesson to be learnt particularly by hospitals, the bench observed.

The court noted an earlier submission made by the doctor of Max Hospital that they will be willing to set up PSA plants in their open parking space, however, the hospital should be allowed to construct multi-level parking at their own cost.

The court said since installation of

the plants will need some space, it would be appropriate for the municipal corporations and Delhi Development Authority (DDA) to bring about some relaxations in building by-laws with regard to coverage area so that PSA plants can be installed at open parking spaces of the hospitals.

It asked the MCDs and DDA to address these issues for which the amicus curiae will convene a meeting with the two authorities as well as representatives of the hospitals and nursing homes within one week.

The court said these directions should be complied with by all the hospitals in the national capital, which comes under the Delhi government, Central government, municipal corporations and others and it should also be followed in case of new hospitals also.

Besides, the court also perused the status reports filed by the Delhi government and Centre stating that some PSA plants are installed in their hospitals and some are in the process of being installed.

The Centre's counsel told the court that some plants which are to be installed have not been received as they form part of the aid being received from several countries.

The court said the position as it appears today is that most of the plants are yet to be installed and made operational and added that the installation of those which are being manufactured within India, should be prioritized in case the need arises in future if another wave comes.

It also said the Centre and Delhi government shall designate nodal officers, sufficiently senior, to monitor the aspect of supply and installation of PSA plants in the hospitals here, if not done already.

Regarding augmentation of cryogenic tankers to carry medical oxygen for the national capital which should include the projected increased demand as shown earlier, the high court asked the Central and Delhi government to file their respective status reports.

## Classified

### TENDERS

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### QUOTATION NOTICE

Sealed quotations are invited from Malda Dist. Central Co-op. Bank Ltd. for engagement of Security Guards. Visit: www.maldaccdb.org for details.

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**AIR-SURCHARGE;** Kathmandu

# To procure Covid vax, Punjab to approach global manufacturers

With the state facing an acute shortage of Covid shots, CM Capt Amarinder asks health dept to explore possibilities of floating a global tender for procurement of vaccines from all possible sources

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
CHANDIGARH, 20 MAY

Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh on Thursday directed the health department to explore possibilities of floating a global tender for the procurement of vaccines from all possible sources to ensure early inoculation in the state.

The state government will also reach out directly to all vaccine manufacturers for direct purchase of various Covid vaccines, including Sputnik V, Pfizer, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson, he announced.

Punjab has a storage space for 35 lakh Sputnik V vaccines, which require storage temperature of minus 18 degrees Celsius. The CM said all efforts would be made for procurement of vaccines to meet the acute shortage in the state, which had received fewer than 44 lakh vaccine doses so far from the Union government, of which only one lakh is currently available for use and which will also be exhausted within a day.



The state government was forced to stop vaccination for Phase I and Phase 2 categories in the last three days because of non-availability, pointed out the Chief Minister, directing all departments concerned to continue pursuing the matter of supply aggressively with the Centre.

As per Govt allocation for Phase III (18-44 age group), the state government has been able to buy only 3.6 lakh vaccine doses, including 63,000 received yesterday. A total of 2.3 lakh doses have already been used, leaving only 1.3 lakh for use as of now, said the CM.

## HP CM seeks SHGs' support in fight against Covid

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
SHIMLA, 20 MAY

Himachal Pradesh chief minister Jai Ram Thakur on Thursday said Self Help Groups (SHGs) can play a vital role in helping Covid patients' families and can provide vital help in case of all the family members get infected by taking care of their livestock, farm activities etc.

Addressing a virtual meeting of SHGs from Shimla, Thakur lauded their initiatives taken to supplement their income and said the state government will provide all possible help to promote their products and get better markets.

He stated that 'Mukhyamantri Ek Bigha Yojna' had proved a boon to the rural women in increasing their farm income and under this scheme, a woman of Self Help Group can avail the benefit of up to Rs 1 lakh provided she holds MNREGA job card.

"Since the inception of this scheme, 10,364 works have been sanctioned in favour of women and expenditure of Rs 13.90 crore has been incurred."

This scheme has particularly helped the rural women during the corona pandemic and the SHGs must also come forward to help migrant labourers at this time as they could face difficulty in getting employment due to the coro-



na curfew," he added.

He further stated that since women constitute about half the population, thus one cannot even think of overall development of the society without active participation of the women.

It was the BJP government in the state that 50 per cent reservation had been provided to the women in PRIs and Urban Local Bodies and in the recently concluded elections to the PRIs and ULBs, as many as 60 per cent seats were won by the women.

The CM said that the women SHGs had not only strengthened the economy of the rural women but had also strengthened the rural economy as a whole and had gone a long way in ensuring the empowerment of the women.

The state government will provide all possible help to the SHGs in promoting their products and also providing them a better market for their pro-

duce so that they could get remunerative prices for their products.

Himachal is today passing

through a difficult phase of

Covid and in this testing time, it becomes the duty of every citizen to help the people in distress," he stated.

He called on the women

SHGs to come forward to extend helping hand to the families having Covid patients and women should also play a vital role in educating the people of the rural areas regarding the SOPs.

He added that the women

could also play a major role in motivating the people for maintaining social distancing in social and religious functions.

The CM urged the SHGs to

come forward to motivate

the people to postpone reli-

gious and other celebrations

and added SHGs must also

help the people in providing

facemasks and sanitizers to the

needy in the hour of distress.

## HC asks Centre to inform on steps taken to import 'black fungus' drug

PTI  
NEW DELHI, 20 MAY

The Delhi High Court Wednesday asked the Centre to take steps to get the medicine -- Amphotericin B -- used for treating black fungus which is primarily affecting COVID-19 recovered people, from wherever it is available in the world.

The court said the Centre should inform it about steps taken to import medicine, the shortfall of which was coming in the way of treatment of Mucormycosis (black fungus) which has been on rise in the national capital and elsewhere in the country.

"You need to import this bridge the gap between your plan to enhance the capacity and completing manufacture before we lose more precious lives. So act fast on this, it said and asked the Central government to file a status on present production capacity of the medicine, details of producers licensed to produce it, and by when it would be manufactured with the increased capacity."

The court noted that the domestic production of the medicine is far less than what is required in India and the Centre has informed that the production capacity of some of the producers has been doubled now.

It, however, said, looking at

the shortfall in the supply, we are afraid that mere doubling of production will not suffice. It is not clear by when the augmented production will come in actual production.

The bench said, the Centre may place on record the steps taken to import the medicine to augment the supplies within the country.

The bench said there are two things premium here, that is, time and human lives and if the supplies of the drug are not proper, it would be neither here nor there and it would not serve the purpose as the shortage is by two-third of the total demand.

You need to import this bridge the gap between your plan to enhance the capacity and completing manufacture before we lose more precious lives. So act fast on this, it said and asked the Central government to file a status on present production capacity of the medicine, details of producers licensed to produce it, and by when it would be manufactured with the increased capacity."

The court, which was told that currently Delhi has around 200 cases of Mucormycosis (black fungus), also asked the Centre to inform about the pre-

*Those having mild symptoms can be put up in the home where oxygen facilities will be provided to those who require it.*

ACTOR JISHU SENGUPTA

## Problem in O2 supplies almost over, claims Haryana govt

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
CHANDIGARH, 20 MAY

The Haryana government on Thursday said in the battle against Covid-19, the state has almost overcome the problem in oxygen supplies by ensuring timely delivery of oxygen cylinders at the doorstep of the home of isolated patients.

As of today a provision of 13,949 oxygen beds has been made in the state besides the provision of 5,350 ventilators, an official spokesperson said. In addition, a total of 9,896 oxygen cylinders have so far been

delivered in the state against the request for 15,396. Officials however, found that 5,473 requests for the oxygen cylinders were not in order.

At present, in Haryana around 240 metric tonne (MT) of oxygen is coming daily from seven different locations in the country, nodal officers have been appointed to ensure that the tankers are evacuated timely and oxygen supplies reach the decided destination. The state was initially granted a quota of 156 MT which, at the intervention of the Chief Minister was raised to 282 MT, the spokesperson said. Six PSA (Pressure Swing Absorption) technology-based plants in Faridabad, Sonipat, Karnal, Ambala, Panchkula and Hisar are continuously producing oxygen gas in the capacity of 200 litres of oxygen per minute.

Meanwhile, the Centre has also approved 43 more PSA technology-based plants of which two plants will be set up in medical colleges and the other 41 plants would be set up in various districts. These plants will start production by the month of June. Each plant

will produce 500 to 1,000 litres of oxygen per minute, the spokesperson said.

For the treatment of COVID-19 patients in rural areas, 5 to 20 D-type Oxygen gas cylinders are being arranged at each community health centre.

In each district, a location for the filling of oxygen cylinders has been fixed. The Deputy Commissioners with the help of the Nodal Officer are continuously ensuring proper management required to be made at these cylinder refilling sites in their respective districts. The facility of Oxygen

Mobile Bank has also been started in Karnal and 22 Industrial Plants located in 13 districts of the State are also providing oxygen hospitals.

The state government has sought the cooperation of various charitable and voluntary organisations to join hands with the state government for riding over the crisis of oxygen availability.

The institutions are getting themselves registered on the www.oxygenhry.in portal. So far, 378 NGOs have been registered on this portal to supply oxygen cylinders



## Remembering Sh. Rajiv Gandhi on his 30<sup>th</sup> Death Anniversary

'We are on the threshold of a mighty revolution... it is a revolution that will bring democracy to the doorsteps of crores of Indians.'

“ With these words late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi had ushered in the Panchayati Raj revolution in the country back in 1989, empowering millions of our people in villages. Today, as we pay tributes to him, we pledge to harness the power of the Panchayats in Punjab to fight the Covid pandemic that is fast spreading in our villages. That would be the most befitting tribute to the great leader, whose vision for India continues to steer our values and goals. ”

Capt. Amarinder Singh  
Chief Minister, Punjab



Department of Information & Public Relations, Punjab



Decision to bring in new faces in the government in Kerala was taken in the long-term interest of the party and for the state.

CPI(M) GENERAL SECRETARY SITARAM YECHURY  
JUSTIFYING K K SHAILAJA'S OMISSION FROM THE NEW LDF CABINET

THUMBNAILS



Monkeys eat tomatoes offered by people, during Covid-19 lockdown, in New Delhi, on Thursday.

AGENCIES

Dome buses at Atal tunnel: Himachal Pradesh government is mulling to start vista dome buses for tourists at Atal Tunnel Rohtang, besides developing facilities for visitors at south and north portal of the tunnel, chief minister Jai Ram Thakur said on Thursday.

SNS

Four Maoists surrender: Four Maoists, including a couple, surrendered in Chhattisgarh's Dantewada district on Thursday and three of them tested positive for Covid-19, police said.

PTI

Flesh trade: Police rescued two women and a girl from flesh trade after raiding a flat in Mira Road of Maharashtra's Thane district, an official said on Thursday.

PTI

## AP House passes resolution opposing Centre's decision to privatise Vizag Steel Plant

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
HYDERABAD, 20 MAY

The resolution unanimously passed today by the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly opposing the Centre's decision on 100 per cent disinvest its shareholding in Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Limited or the Vizag Steel Plant also highlighted the recent role of the public sector unit in supplying liquid medical oxygen to states like Maharashtra which were facing a crisis due to shortage of oxygen while battling the second wave of Covid-19.

Industries and investment minister M Goutham Reddy moved the resolution in the House and another YSRCP MLA, G Amarnath, from Vizag spoke on the resolution before it was adopted.

Apart from mentioning the suggestions from the chief minister to make the unit profitable, including allocating captive mines and financial restructuring, the resolution pointed out that RINL

## Vijayan sworn in as CM for 2nd time

20 ministers also took the oath of office and secrecy

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, 20 MAY

CPI-M politburo member Pinarayi Vijayan, who led the LDF to an unprecedented consecutive victory in the 6 April Assembly polls, on Thursday took oath as the chief minister of Kerala for the second time along with 20 ministers of the new Cabinet.

Governor Arif Mohammad Khan administered the oath of office and secrecy at the specially set up marquee at the Central Stadium in Thiruvananthapuram, strictly following Covid-19 protocols, including staggered seating arrangements.

After chief minister Vijayan took the oath, other minister-designates from the constituent parties were sworn in, in the following order - K Rajan of the CPI, Roshy Augustine of Kerala Congress (M), K Krishnan Kutty of Janata Dal (S), AK Saseendran of the NCP, Ahmed Devarkovil of the INL and Antony Raju of the Democratic Kerala Congress.

Then, other minister-designates, V Abdurahman, G R Anil, K N Balagopal, R Bindu, J Chinchu Rani, MV Govindan, P A Mohammed Riyas, P Prasad, K Radhakrishnan, P Rajeev, Saji Cherian, V Sivankutty, VN Vasavan and



Veena George took oath in alphabetical order.

While 15 ministers, including the chief minister, took the solemn oath, six - including Roshy Augustine and K Krishnankutty - took oath in the name of God. Except Vijayan, Radhakrishnan, Krishnankutty and Saseendran, all other ministers are new faces.

The ceremony began after the governor reached the venue at 3.30 pm and concluded at 4.50 pm. Opposition Congress-led UDF leaders skipped the function in view of Covid-19 pandemic.

Before the swearing-in ceremony, in the morning, Vijayan and minister-designates from the CPI-M visited the Punnapra-Vayalar martyr's memorial in Alappuzha and paid tribute to the martyrs.

Kerala High Court had on Wednesday directed the state government to restrict the number of participants in the ceremony and to ensure that Covid-19 protocol is strictly maintained during the function.

CPI-M general secretary

Govt presents ₹2.29 lakh-crore budget:

Finance minister B Rajendranath presented this year's Budget with an estimated expenditure of 2.29 lakh crore and revenue of Rs 1.77 lakh crore, leaving a revenue deficit of Rs 5,000 crore as well as fiscal deficit of Rs 37,029 crore.

While the state will spend Rs 23,205.88 crore on debt servicing social welfare schemes retained their significance.

The government has earmarked Rs 48,083.92 crore for 22 freebie schemes this year.

The pandemic ensured nearly 14,000 crore was allocated to health, including Rs 1000 crore for combating Covid-19 and vaccinations.

Finance minister Rajendranath incorporated a 'gender budget' as well as 'child budget' this year with an outlay of Rs 47,283 crore and Rs 16,748 crore, respectively.

Opposition TDP boycotted the Assembly session.

### 'FIR against Param Bir under SC/ST Act not vendetta'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MUMBAI, 20 MAY

The Maharashtra government on Thursday told the Bombay High Court that it had registered an FIR against former Mumbai police chief Param Bir Singh under the Atrocities Act as the complaint in the matter, lodged by an inspector, prima facie disclosed commission of cognizable offences.

An affidavit filed by Vivek Pansare, DCP (Zone III) Thane, opposed Singh's petition seeking that the FIR be quashed, and said the same was not maintainable as no grounds have been made out.

"I say that the complaint prima facie discloses commission of offences under the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act and relevant sections of the IPC, the affidavit said.

## CTUs join SKM to observe 26 May as 'Black Day'

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, 20 MAY

Ten Central Trade Unions (CTUs) have joined farmers' Samyukt Kisan Morcha's (SKM) call to observe 26 May as a 'Black Day for Indian Democracy'. That is the day Narendra Modi government took oath of office in 2014 and then again on 30 May in 2019.

In a joint statement, the CTUs said the 'Black Day' call was given because the Modi government had in its seven years of office not only failed to deliver on its promises, but was acting in a "blatantly irresponsible manner" in the face of the terrible second wave of the corona pandemic.

"It has simply disowned its

responsibility in tackling the pandemic and asked the states to provide medical help to the bewildered population," the CTUs said.

There were shortages of vaccine doses, oxygen, hospital beds, even cremation facilities were alarming, and the announcements of vacinating the 18-44 age group were withdrawn subsequently.

The government was completely in the dark about what needs to be done in this hour of grave crisis, the CTUs said.

The national trade unions said the government had no funds to tackle the pandemic, but was shamelessly going ahead with the 'Central Vista Project' costing Rs 20,000 crore, and arresting those criticising the government.

The CTUs, including INTUC,AITUC,HMS,CITU,AIUTUC,TUCC and others,

This is the day Narendra Modi government took oath of office in 2014 and then again on 30 May in 2019

100 undertakings to be monetized, a new term coined for privatisation and sale of these undertakings.

The national trade unions said the government had no funds to tackle the pandemic, but was shamelessly going ahead with the 'Central Vista Project' costing Rs 20,000 crore, and arresting those criticising the government.

"It is condemnable that the Modi government remains adamant and insensitive not to listen to the problems of the farmers," the CPI said.

in a charter listed their demands that included free vaccine for all, strengthening public health system at all levels; immediate help to all unorganised/informal sector workers and unemployed people in terms of free food grains and cash subsidy of Rs 7,500 per month; and repeal of the controversial laws and guaranteeing MSP to agitating farmers.

The Communist Party of India (CPI) in a separate statement extended support and solidarity with the farmers' agitational plan, including the 'Black Day' protest on 26 May.

"Modi government remains adamant and insensitive not to listen to the problems of the farmers," the CPI said.

## At least 4k-6k Myanmar refugees sought safety in India: UN

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
UNITED NATIONS, 20 MAY

An estimated 4,000 to 6,000 refugees from Myanmar have sought safety in India, a spokesperson for the UN chief has said, as the world body voiced concern over the rising levels of displacement of people since the military coup in the country in February.

The United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) said that in Myanmar, as of last week, approximately 60,700 women, children and men have been internally displaced. More than 1,700 refugees have crossed into Thailand in March and April, most of whom subsequently returned to Myanmar, and an estimated 4,000 to 6,000 have sought safety in India. Spokesman for the Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, Stephane Dujarric told reporters at the daily press briefing on Wednesday.

### MIGRANT ROW



» UNHCR said in Myanmar, as of last week, approximately 60,700 women, children and men have been internally displaced.

» The UN team in Myanmar has called on all countries across the region to offer refuge and protection to all people seeking safety

refrain from violence and the use of disproportionate use, including the use of live ammunition.

Dujarric said that UN officials in Myanmar are still gravely concerned over rising levels of displacement since the military takeover of the Government on February 1.

Clashes between the Myanmar Armed Forces and ethnic armed organisations in border areas has intensified, he said.

Last week, a statement issued by the spokesperson for the UN chief had said that 100 days since the Myanmar military takeover that left hundreds of civilians killed and included numerous arbitrary arrests and other human rights violations, the Secretary-General renews his call on the country's military to respect the will of the people and act in the greater interest of peace and stability in the country.

## DSP Davinder Singh with 'terror links' dismissed from police

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU, 20 MAY

Deputy superintendent of J&K Police, Davinder Singh, who was last year arrested while ferrying two terrorists on the Srinagar-Jammu highway was on Thurs-

day dismissed from service by the UT administration. The dismissal order said the Lt-Governor has dismissed Singh under sub-clause (c) of the proviso to clause (2) of the Article 311 of the Constitution.

The UN team in Myanmar has called on all countries across the region to offer refuge and protection to all people seeking safety

### TENDER

#### NORTHERN RAILWAY Corrigendum

No. CIIID/SLR/Tender/2020 (Part-V)

Ref: Tender published date: 11.05.2021 and Tender opening date:- 24.05.2021. It is to inform all concerned, that due to the lockdown imposed by Delhi Government, the NIT for leasing of SLR parcel space in special trains, published in various English & Hindi newspapers, which was earlier scheduled to be opened on 24.05.2021 through IREPS portal i.e. [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in) is now postponed and the same shall be opened on 02.06.2021 at 15:00 hrs. Moreover, Items no. 2, 3, 4, 5 & 6 of Nit are withdrawn due to Non-availability because of administrative reasons.

Item no.	Train no.	From	To	Comptt	Tender No.
2.	04739	DEE	BKN	FI	SLR-FI-04739-April 21
3.	04739	DEE	RJ	SLR-RJ-04739-April 21	
4.	04021	DEE	JP	FI	SLR-FI-04021-April 21
5.	04021	DEE	JP	FI	SLR-FI-04021-April 21
6.	04021	DEE	RJ	SLR-RJ-04021-April 21	

Other information of NITs shall remain unchanged. 1082/2021

Serving Customers with a Smile

#### SOUTH DELHI MUNICIPAL CORPORATION

##### PRESS NOTICE FOR NOTICE INVITING TENDER

NIT No: EE-Project South-I/SZ/TC/2021-22 Date: 19.05.2021 Name of work: Action Plan on alternative technologies for drainage system in SDMC areas-Removal of Waste Water in Pushp Vihar Drain, South Zone, Estimated Amount Rs.294.81 Lacs, Earnest Money Rs.5,90,000/-, Time of Completion 06 months. Tender Cost Rs.2,500/- (non refundable) H/A-F-100-1064. Date & time of Pre bid meeting: 02.06.2021 at 03:00 PM in the Office of Superintendent Engineer(Project)SZ, Under Sewa Nagar Fly Over, Defence Colony, New Delhi -110003. Last Date of Download/Purchase Tender Document 18.06.2021 20:00 PM. For tender documents, online tendering time table and the details of the work please refer <https://etenders.gov.in>. All details of revision, clarification, corrigendum/addendum, time extension etc. (if any) in respect of the above tender will be uploaded on the above mentioned website only and no press notice of any kind shall be issued. Bidders should regularly visit the website to keep themselves updated in respect of these tenders.

Ex. Engineer (Project)-I South Zone  
RN NO.11/DPU/S/2021-22

#### HIMACHAL PRADESH PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT E-PROCUREMENT NOTICE INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)

1. The Executive Engineer, Nerkowk Division, H.P.PWD, Nerkowk H.P on behalf of Governor of H.P invites the online bids on item rate in electronic tendering system in 2 cover system for the following work from the eligible and approved Contractors/Firms registered with H.P.PWD, Department.
Name of Work
Estimated Cost
EMD
Cost of tender
Eligible Class of Contractor
Time limit
i. Construction of 82.00 mtr. span PSC Box Girder Bridge at Lassi ka Padhar over Suketi Khad on Rakkar to Panchali Ghar Near Dhangu Dadour Null road (SH- Construction of balance work of both side approaches).
Rs. 89,08,531/-
Rs.1,78,000/-
"C & above"
Six Months
2. Availability of Bid Document and mode of submission: The bid document is available online and bid should be submitted online on website <a href="http://hp.tenders.gov.in">http://hp.tenders.gov.in</a> bidder would be required to register in the website which is free of cost. For submission of bids, the bidder is required to have Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) from one of the authorized Certifying Authorities (CA). "Aspiring bidders who have not obtained the user ID and password for participating in e-tendering in HPPWD may obtain the same from the website in this tender.
3. Key dates:-
1. Date of online publication
02-06-2021 at 11:30 A.M.
2. Document download start and end date
02-06-2021 at 11:30 A.M. up to 11-06-2021 at 11:00A.M.
3. Bid submission start and end date
02-06-2021 at 11:30 A.M. up to 11-06-2021 at 11:00A.M.
4. Date of technical bid opening



A family member performs the last rites of a Covid victim at a crematorium set up in Bengaluru on Thursday. IANS

**50,000 images of moon:** A 16-year-old amateur astrophotographer, Prathamesh Jaju from Pune has captured over 50,000 images of the moon and ultimately pieced them together to create a detailed image. It took him around five hours to capture the moon using his telescope and camera, and 40 hours to process the image using different editing softwares. PTI

**Fire at Delhi hospital:** A fire broke out at the ESI hospital in West Delhi's Punjabi Bagh area on Thursday. Delhi Fire Service officials said no injury has been reported, they said. "A call was received around 1.16 pm that a fire has broken out on the second floor of the ESI Hospital in Punjabi Bagh area," said head, Delhi Fire Service. PTI

**Free vax in TN for 18+:** The free of cost Covid inoculation drive in Tamil Nadu for beneficiaries in the 18 to 44 age bracket was inaugurated here on Thursday by CM K M Stalin. The vaccination exercise began at the Netaji Apparel Park in Tirupur which has a 12,000 strong workforce would be administered the jabs. PTI

**UP mosque row:** Opposition Samajwadi Party and Congress on Thursday strongly condemned the pulling down of a mosque in Uttar Pradesh's Ram Sanehiyat tehsil by the administration of Barabanki district and demanded a judicial probe into the incident and suspension of the officials concerned. PTI

# Covid: Jaishankar calls for int'l cooperation

Says this pandemic might be the most serious in living memory; but it should be seen as a recurring challenge and not as a one-off



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 20 MAY  
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, 20 MAY

External affairs minister Jaishankar today said the Covid challenge has created a stronger case for greater international cooperation, be it in vaccine production or to facilitate economic recovery.

"Those with shared interests and common values will find it easier to forge stronger partnerships. To make a real difference, the global order must address the concerns and issues that the pandemic has thrown up" he said addressing the 'Future of Asia' conference.

He said the world was truly confronted by a 'black swan' event in the shape of Covid a year and a half ago, considering the enormity of the pandemic. "Since then, even

## 3rd wave possible if vax not ramped up: Scientist

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 20 MAY

If the vaccination drive against coronavirus is not ramped up and Covid appropriate behaviour is not maintained, there is a possibility of a third wave of the pandemic in 6-8 months, said M Vidyasagar, a scientist involved in the Sutra Model which uses mathematics to project the trajectory of Covid. He, however, stressed the Sutra Model has not predicted any third wave and it is working on it. The

though we may have addressed some facets of a very complex challenge, it continues its devastating course across geographies," he added.

Jaishankar pointed out that India was currently going through a particularly difficult situation. "Understandably, the world's attention is focused primarily on the public health response."

The economic consequences of the pandemic were of course immediately felt, though its social ones are now also starting to be realised. What perhaps is yet to be fully comprehended is its long-term impact on the glob-

al order, including on the future of Asia," he added. The minister said this pandemic might be the most serious in living memory; but it should be seen as a recurring challenge and not as a one-off.

"It demands international cooperation on a scale that could not have even been conceived of earlier. No national capacity, however large, can be adequate. And just overflows from such capacities are clearly not enough to address global needs. Even a collective response, by itself, could fall short if it is just an aggregate of the present capac-

vaccination in our model for our future forecasts," he added. According to a study by the San Raffaele hospital in Milan, antibodies against coronavirus remained in the blood of patients with Covid for at least eight months after they were infected.

A recent sero-survey by the Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology suggested that the neutralising antibodies declined significantly after five-six months, making people prone to reinfections.

"We are also adding the aspects of immunity and its," he said. India engaged with US entities for procuring vaccines: India remains engaged with US entities for procuring vaccines and their subsequent manufacturing in India, the government said today.

"We have noted the recent announcement by the US of making a certain amount of vaccines available to other countries," MEA spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said. His statement came following US President Joe Biden's announcement on Monday that his administration would send an additional 20 million vaccines abroad by the end of June.

## Bihar hospitals destroy RT-PCR test samples

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
PATNA, 20 MAY

Even as the people make rounds of the government health centres to get reports of the RT-PCR tests to know if their family members are infected with Covid, the collection centres have been found destroying the swab samples by setting them on fire. At least two such incidents have been reported from two health centres in Bihar in the past 24 hours.

The first incident was reported from Sadar hospital in Katihar district where hospital staff were caught on camera burning hundreds of swab samples. As per the report, some 500 samples were destroyed by consigning them to the flames in the backyard of the hospital. The incident came to light after someone noticed smoke billowing out from behind and made videos of the samples put on fire. Reports said these samples had got destroyed after not being sent to the laboratories for testing. Eventually, they were destroyed by the hospital staff amid pres-

sure from the villagers to get the test reports, as per the report.

Katihar civil surgeon Dr DN Pandey, however, denied the report saying it was the hospital wastes which were burnt. "We send the collected samples to labs for testing the day they are collected. Every district has fixed the sample targets," he claimed. According to him, the burnt wastes were the ones which were lying at TrueNat lab located nearby inside the hospital.

The second incident was reported from a health centre located in Shashtrinagar locality of Patna. The local residents were shocked and surprised when they saw the swab samples and swab sticks going up in flames and informed the local media. The centre in-charge, on the other hand, said the burnt items were medical wastes.

Army technicians recommission O2 plant in J&K: Amidst the Covid



spike in Kashmir, technicians of the Srinagar-based Chinair Corps of the Indian Army on Thursday recommissioned an oxygen plant that was lying in disuse for the past five years. The oxygen plant of Enn Dee Gases, which is located at Rangreth has the capacity of filling 700 cylinders of oxygen per day. SNS

**Indian staffer of NZ mission dies:** An Indian staffer of the New Zealand High Commission in New Delhi has died due to Covid. The staffer had joined the high commission in 1986 when Sir Edmund Hillary was the High Commissioner. SNS

**Indian Navy designs O2 recycling system:** Amid the second wave of Covid, the Diving School of the Southern Naval Command of the Indian Navy has conceptualised and designed an 'Oxygen Recycling System' (ORS) to alleviate the O2 shortage, according to the Defence Ministry. The ORS is designed to extend the life of the existing medical oxygen cylinders 2-4 times. SNS

## NEED OF THE HOUR



Women wait in a long queue outside a government ration shop, amid coronavirus pandemic, in Jabalpur, on Thursday. IANS

## PoK separatists

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
SRINAGAR, 20 MAY

Peeved over the silence of leaders of separatist groups, their factions in Pakistan and in occupied-Kashmir are making desperate attempts to foment trouble in Jammu and Kashmir by giving calls from across the border for 'bandhs' and strikes to mark the death anniversary of Mirwaiz Farooq at their homes due to the pandemic.

The death anniversary of both the leaders falls on Friday.

Farooq and Lone were killed by terrorists of the banned Hizbul Mujahideen in 1990 and 2002 for opposing growing gun culture in the Kashmir Valley.

Officials keeping a watch on developments in the union territory as well as monitoring activities of sep-

## trying to foment trouble in J&K: Officials

al Investigation Agency, the Central Bureau of Investigation and the Enforcement Directorate.

## APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION

General public is hereby informed that an unidentified dead body of male Age: Approx 65-70 years, Complexion: Wheatish, Height: 5', Built: Thin, Face: Long, was wearing Orange colour T-Shirt, was found dead at Railway abandoned Quarters, Saleem Garh, near Red Fort, Delhi, in the area of P.S. Kotwali, Delhi on 06.05.2021. In this regard a DD No. 25-A, dated 06.05.2021, has been lodged at P.S. Kotwali, Delhi.

His dead body has been preserved in Subzi Mandi Mortuary for 72 Hrs. Any person having any information or clue about the deceased may kindly inform to the undersigned on the following address or telephone nos.

**SHO P.S. Kotwali, Delhi**  
DP/1204/N/2021 Ph.: 011-23977100, 8750870121

## SEARCH FOR KIDNAPPED

The general public is hereby informed that a girl namely Laxmi D/o Dinesh R/o H.No. 24, Gali No. 01, Village Sadatpur, Dayal Pur, Delhi has been kidnapped since 12.04.2021 from the area of PS Karawal Nagar, Delhi. In this regard, FIR No. 158/21, dated 15.04.2021 u/s 363 IPC has been registered at P.S. Harsh Vihar, Delhi. Since efforts have been made by the local police to trace out the kidnapped girl but no clue has come to light so far. The description of the kidnapped girl is as under:

**Name:** Laxmi, **Gender:** Female, **Age:** 14 years, **Height:** 5'1", **Complexion:** Fair, **Face:** Long, **Built:** Medium, **Wearing:** Black colour kurta, red colour pant and slippers on her feet. If anyone has any information regarding this kidnapped girl, kindly inform SHO/Harsh Vihar, Delhi.

E-mail : cic@cbi.gov.in  
Ph.: 011-24368638, 24368641  
Fax : 011-24368639  
DP/764/NE/2021



Laxmi

## DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL-I, DELHI

4<sup>th</sup> FLOOR, JEEVAN TARA BUILDING, PARLIAMENT STREET, NEW DELHI-110001  
O.A. No. 1399/2018  
UCO BANK ..... Applicant

DEVENDER KUMAR & Ors. .... Defendants

To,  
1. DEVENDER KUMAR S/o. SHRI SHYAM SUNDER, R/o. P-50, P-Block, Vishnu Garden, New Delhi-110018.  
2. GEETA W/o. DEVENDER KUMAR, R/o. P-50, P-Block, Vishnu Garden, New Delhi-110018.

3. M/S. BULLAND BUILDTECH PVT. LTD. [Through Its Directors] Having Its Office At: A-2, Bulland House, Khampur Extension, New Delhi-110062.

Whereas the above named applicant has instituted a case for recovery of Rs.31,93,579/- (Rupees Thirty One Lakhs Ninety Three Thousand Five Hundred Seventy Nine Only) against you and whereas it has been shown to the satisfaction of the Tribunal that it is not possible to serve you in ordinary way. Therefore, this notice is given by advertisement directing you to make appearance before D.R.T. on 03.07.2021 at 10:30 A.M. (for further details kindly visit D.R.T. website: www.tribunal.gov.in Phone Number 011-23748473).

Takes notice that in case of your failure to appear on the above mentioned day before this Tribunal, the case will be heard and decided in your absence. Due to ongoing Pandemic Situation, all the matters will be taken up through Video Conferencing and for that purpose:-

(i) All the Advocates/Litigants shall download the "Cisco Webex" application / Software.

(ii) "Meeting ID" and "Password" for the next date of hearing qua cases to be taken by Registrar / Recovery Officer-I and Recovery Officer-II shall be available one day prior to the next date at D.R.T. Official Portal i.e. "drt.gov.in" under the Public Notice Head.

(iii) In any exigency qua that, the Advocates / Litigants can contact the concerned official at Ph. No. 023748473.

Given under my hand and seal of the Tribunal on this 30<sup>th</sup> April of 2021. Respondent may contact under mention Phone number for further enquiry. Mr. Amit K. Dar, Ld. Registrar, D.R.T.-I, New Delhi. Phone No.: 011-23748473, E-mail : drt1delhi-dfs@nic.in.

SEAL OF COURT  
By Order of this Tribunal,  
For Registrar

## IMPORTANT NOTICE

It is notified for the information of rail passengers that the Railways have decided to cancel the following Special Trains due to low occupancy and other operational reasons as per the following details:-

### CANCELLATION OF SPECIAL TRAINS

Train No. & Name	Date from Cancellation
02287 Sealdah-Bikaner Jn. Duronto Special	23.05.2021 to till further advice
02288 Bikaner Jn.-Sealdah Duronto Special	25.05.2021 to till further advice
05203 Barauni Jn.-Lucknow Express Special	22.05.2021 to till further advice
05204 Lucknow-Barauni Jn. Express Special	23.05.2021 to till further advice
05269 Muzaffarpur-Ahmedabad Express Special	27.05.2021 to till further advice
05270 Ahmedabad-Muzaffarpur Express Special	29.05.2021 to till further advice

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

Visit RailMadad website: www.railmadad.indianrailways.gov.in  
Download RailMadad app.  
RailMadad Helpline No.: 139  
Please join us on

NORTHERN RAILWAY  
Your Convenience - Our Concern  
Visit us at : www.nr.indianrailways.gov.in  
"SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE"

## IMPORTANT NOTICE

It is notified for the information of rail passengers that the East Coast Railway has decided to cancel/reduce the frequency of the following Rajdhani Special Trains due to low occupancy and other operational reasons as per the following details:-

### TEMPORARY CANCELLATION/REDUCTION IN THE FREQUENCY OF RAJDHANI SPECIAL TRAINS

Train No. & Name	Running (via)	Existing days of run (from originating station)	Active days of run (from originating station)	Date(s) of Cancellation	Days of Cancellation
02823 Bhubaneswar - New Delhi Rajdhani Special	Tatanagar Jn	Mon, Tue, Thu, Fri	Tuesday	21, 24, 27, 28 & 31.05.21	Mon, Thu, Fri
02824 New Delhi - Bhubaneswar Rajdhani Special	Tatanagar Jn	Tue, Wed, Thu, Sat	Wednesday	22, 25, 27, 29.05.2021 & 01.06.2021	Tue, Thu, Sat
02825 Bhubaneswar - New Delhi Rajdhani Special	Adra Jn	Wednesday, Sunday	Sunday	26.05.2021	Wednesday
02826 New Delhi - Bhubaneswar Rajdhani Special	Adra Jn	Monday, Friday	Monday	28.05.2021	Friday
02855 Bhubaneswar - New Delhi Rajdhani Special	Sambalpur City, Anara	Saturday	--	22.05.2021 & 29.05.2021	Saturday
02856 New Delhi - Bhubaneswar Rajdhani Special	Sambalpur City, Anara	S			

## Signal, Spectacular

It sure has been a phenomenal achievement on the part of China, which has successfully landed a spacecraft on Mars. The six-wheeled Zhurong robot was targeting Utopia Planitia, a vast terrain in the planet's northern hemisphere. The vehicle used a combination of a protective capsule, a parachute and a rocket platform to make the descent. The achievement is remarkable not the least because of the intricate nature of the task. China's singular rival, America has thus far mastered the technological craft of landing on Mars. Not that other countries have not tried; unfortunately, they either crashed or lost contact soon after reaching the surface. "You were brave enough for the challenge, pursued excellence and placed our country in the advanced ranks of planetary exploration," President Xi Jinping said in his congratulatory message. With remarkable promptitude, warm compliments have also been advanced by Thomas Zurbuchen, the head of science at the US space agency (Nasa). "Together with the global science community, I look forward to the important contributions this mission will make to humanity's understanding of the Red Planet," he said. The Russian space agency, Roscosmos, said the success augured well for its future cooperation with China. It took 17 minutes to unfold its solar panels and send a signal back to Earth. Zhurong, which means God of Fire, was carried to Mars on the Tianwen-1 orbiter, which arrived above the planet in February. The mission was calibrated to the extent possible. It surveyed Utopia, taking high-resolution images to pinpoint the safest place to put the rover down. The aim with all such ventures is to pick a spot that is devoid of imposing craters and where the landscape isn't covered with large boulders. Chinese engineers had to follow the landing effort with a time lag. The distance to Mars is 320 million kilometres. Which would mean that radio messages take almost 18 minutes to reach the Earth. To use the terminology of science, every stage of the Zhurong robot's approach to the surface would have been conducted "autonomously". Landing on Mars has always been a daunting challenge but China would have had confidence going into the procedure not the least in view of the competence it has shown in its space endeavours. The narrative is spectacular. It has been putting rovers on the Moon, and bringing lunar samples back to Earth. This month it launched the first segment of a space station above the planet. Saturday's success would be an enormous fillip to the country. Dean Cheng, a research fellow in Chinese political and military affairs at the Washington-based think-tank, The Heritage Foundation, said: "From the Chinese perspective, space benefits Chinese diplomacy, Chinese technology; it's a great advertisement; it reinforces the legitimacy of the Chinese Communist Party to its own people". The landing on Mars has been as much a scientific achievement as it has been a political one.

## Vaccines from US

Joe Biden's gesture towards coronavirus patients is in refreshing contrast to the direly ignoble attitude of his predecessor, one that has wrecked the health of the nation and its economy. The US President has announced he will send an additional 20 million doses of vaccines abroad by the end of June including, for the first time, shots approved for domestic use, where supply is beginning to outstrip demand. In a remarkable bout of benevolence, almost exceptional, the United States will export 20 million doses of vaccines from Pfizer, Moderna Inc. or Johnson & Johnson. This is in addition to 60 million AstraZeneca doses that he had already planned to give to other countries, according to a senior administration official. Reports suggest that the measures constitute only the first step as America rivets its attention to quelling the pandemic abroad. Mr Biden had previously pledged that the US would soon become an "arsenal" of global vaccine supply. It will be a rare distinction should the supply chain - across the world - attain fruition. The American President will also announce very shortly that he is appointing Jeff Zients, who has served as the White House coronavirus response coordinator, in charge of his effort to beat back the pandemic globally. Mr Zients will work with the National Security Council and other agencies to export doses abroad. While it wasn't clear which countries would receive US shipments, the announcement is undeniably a watershed moment in the pandemic and what they call a "pivot" for Biden's administration. The US government, under two Presidents, claimed nearly all of the several hundred million doses of vaccines produced on its soil. That approach allowed Mr Biden to advance what has been one of the most successful domestic vaccination efforts in the world, but stoked inequities between nations that can produce their own shots and those that cannot. Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson vaccines are authorized for use in the US, but AstraZeneca's shot is not. The United States is set to cross a threshold of 60 per cent of adults who have received at least one shot. Meanwhile, several low-income nations and even some fairly developed ones, notably India, are struggling to secure supplies of vaccines. People are queuing up since dawn and returning home having drawn a blank. Covax, a global programme aimed at easing vaccine procurement and access for lower-income countries, is facing a supply shortage and expects the shortfall to reach about 190 million doses next month, according to UNICEF, one of its partners. Mr Biden had previously pledged up to \$4 billion for Covax. He has faced pressure to do more to help the world, as the US winds down nearly all mitigation measures such as masking while other countries try to quell fresh outbreaks and new variants with limited vaccine supply. The US President has launched what he calls a "new phase" of his pandemic effort.

# Connecting with Nehru ~ I

Although Nehru's life at Cambridge was quite sedate and uneventful, the intellectual environment of the university stimulated his mind. Nehru was exposed to the Fabian socialism of Bernard Shaw and the ideas of Karl Marx, both of whom influenced him profoundly in forming his political views

**R**ecently I became interested in knowing more about Nehru, whose 57th death anniversary will be observed on May 27. My interest in Nehru's life stems primarily from three reasons. First, my knowledge of Nehru is rather limited. Second, the fact that Nehru has become the bête noir of the Hindu right whetted my curiosity to know about him. Third, there's a general agreement among many historians that Nehru remains an enigma. It's against this context that I decided to read Nehru's Autobiography, because the book traces Nehru's mental development in his own words.

It's not just Nehru's elegant prose which makes Autobiography an extraordinarily interesting book. Nehru's Autobiography is a tour de force because he writes with such candour about his limitations and he is also brutally honest in sharing his opinion about other Indian political figures, including Gandhi. What is singularly powerful about this book is his ability to engage in self-scrutiny and self-criticism without any self-pity. Being a man of a private nature, Nehru is reticent about personal and emotional issues.

Although Nehru builds a wall of privacy as he pens his narrative, there are fissures from where one can take a peek into his complex persona. Given the limited space of this op-ed, I am writing this piece as a quick snapshot that selectively presents some aspects of Nehru's life that stood out to me.

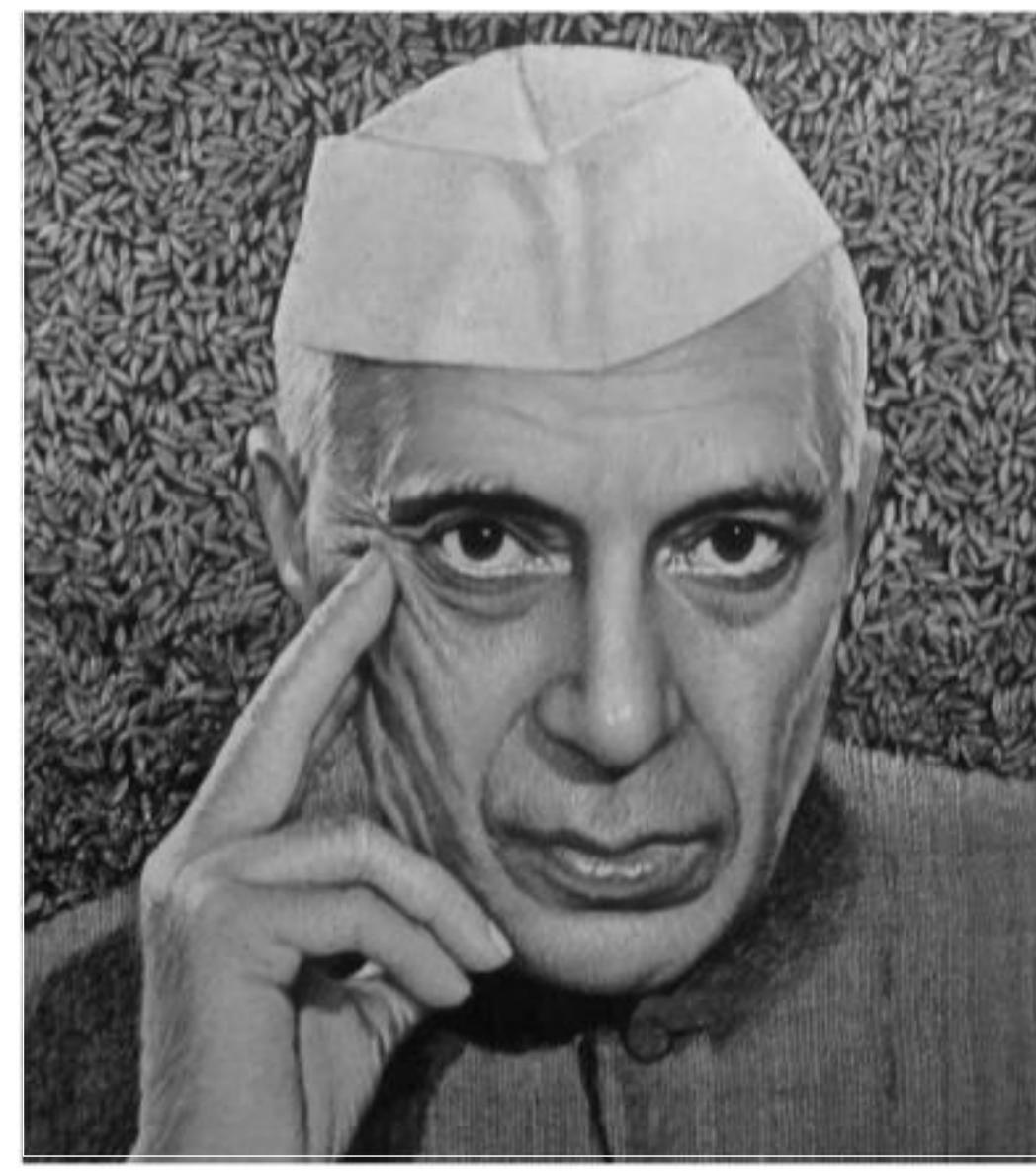
The first thing that struck me in the book was the radical differences between Nehru's parents' personalities. Nehru's father, Motilal Nehru, was a rich, highly successful lawyer with lavish tastes. He was the family's patriarch, making all the decisions.

Although Motilal displayed good humor and bonhomie, he had a choleric temper, which his servants often had to deal with. Regarding Motilal's vile temper, Nehru wrote the following:

"But much as I admired him and loved him I feared him also. I had seen him lose his temper at servants and others; he seemed to me terrible then, and I shivered with fright, mixed sometimes with resentment, at the treatment of a servant. His temper was indeed an awful thing, and even in after years I do not think I ever came across anything to match it in its own line."

Nehru deeply loved and admired Motilal, but he was always terrified of his temper. Nehru recalled an incident when he had taken one of the two pens Motilal always kept on the desk without his father's permission. When the purloined pen was found in Nehru's possession after a thorough search, Nehru received a terrible thrashing from Motilal. The beating was so severe that various kinds of creams and ointments had to be applied to his badly bruised body for days.

Unlike Motilal, Nehru's mother, Swarup Rani, was a quiet



woman of sweet disposition. She doted on Nehru, smothering him with her love and affection. Nehru knew that his mother would condone everything he did due to her "excessive and indiscriminating love" for him. The following brief quote describes Nehru's relationship with his mother: "I saw much more of her than I did of father, and she seemed nearer to me, so I would confide in her when I would not dream of doing so to father."

Nehru's childhood, as he described in his Autobiography, was quintessentially lonely. There was no dearth of company in the huge house that Motilal had built for the family because it was always filled with Motilal's friends; their talk and laughter reverberated throughout the house, but, for Nehru, there were only adults to talk with. Nehru was lonely because his two younger sisters were much younger than him, and he also didn't have any opportunity to play with children of his age:

"My two sisters are very much younger than I am, and between each pair of us there is a long stretch of years. And so I grew up and spent my early years as a somewhat lonely child with no companion my age. I did not even have the companionship of children at school, for I was not sent to any kindergarten or primary school... And so in the midst of that big family I felt rather lonely and was left a great deal to my own fancies and solitary games."

When Nehru turned 11, Motilal appointed a resident tutor, Ferdinand T. Brooks, a theosophist, who helped widen Nehru's intellectual and moral

horizons. Brooks not only helped develop in Nehru a taste for literature and science, but he also exposed him to the works of important Western philosophers and mystics and to Dhammapada, Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita. Being only 11, Nehru could not fully comprehend these books, but he found them fascinating.

At the tender age of 13, he was accepted as a member of the Theosophical Society, where he performed all the ceremonies of initiation under the supervision of Annie Besant. Nehru's interest in theosophy waned when Brooks left his teaching job. Although Nehru lost interest in theosophy, some of

its basic tenets like monism, reverence for all religions, and spiritual emancipation remained with him.

At the age of 15, Nehru was sent to Harrow in England for schooling, where he was lonely, homesick, and felt quite out of place. He wrote in his Autobiography: "Never before had I been left among strangers all by myself, and I felt lonely and homesick... I was never an exact fit. Always I had a feeling that I was not one of them, and the others must have felt same way about me."

Given the fact that Nehru has devoted only a couple of pages in his Autobiography to write about his experience at Harrow, it is safe to assume that his time at Harrow was rather uneventful. After graduating from Harrow, Nehru attended Trinity College in Cambridge for three years. At Cambridge, despite his conviviality, he once again felt a deep sense of loneliness at being "almost overpowered by the sense of my solitary condition."

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

**ASIAN VOICES**

## Discipline and the public

As cases spiked alarmingly on Monday after a four-day dip in new infections, the Health Ministry issued a notice asking everyone to be disciplined and continue taking precautions. Drawing from instances worldwide, the ministry also added that countries which focused on breaking the chain of transmission were more successful than countries that focused on treatment.

All quarters of society must act coherently and follow the prohibitory order to stop the further spread of Covid-19, it said before alerting that the second wave had overwhelmed Nepal's health resources and the next few weeks would decide the course of the pandemic.

For over a year now, the pandemic has changed the course of our lives. We continue to adopt Covid-appropriate behaviour to safeguard ourselves and others from the killer virus. Our behaviour will play an essential role in curbing new infections and fatalities because the coronavirus spreads primarily from human to human, and in settings like mass gathering and indoors where it is transmitted more easily. As Nepal grapples with record single-day surges and deaths, public health protocols are more important than ever to minimise the life-threatening risks posed by more transmissible variants of Covid-19. The second wave is hard evidence that failure to implement public health and social measures will accelerate our risks.

A widespread community-level transmission like we are seeing right

**THE KATHMANDU POST**

now, if left uncontrolled, can completely bring down our system, making the science-guided containment mantra of test-trace-treat obsolete. With this regard, stringent measures such as lockdowns and prohibitory orders at the cost of disruption become imperative.

For two years in a row, the world has witnessed how our fragile health system can come crumbling down with a surge in new infections, resulting in more deaths, especially among the high-risk age group. Our situation has only worsened with the second wave, which within a short period has filled hospitals with severe cases resulting in an acute shortage of medical oxygen, hospital beds and other resources.

As we appeal to the world for scarce vaccines and critical resources, we have to take a moment to reflect on why we are where we are today and where we still lag miserably, for there is evidence that until everyone is vaccinated, public health measures and Covid-appropriate behaviour are our only defence against the pandemic. Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli was not entirely wrong when, in the much-ridiculed interview to CNN, he blamed the people for the second wave. While the leadership and his administration have repeatedly failed to manage the unprecedented crisis, the public is equally to blame for disregarding all protocols as cases dropped significantly after reaching peak cases in fall 2020. What's shocking is, this continues to be the case amid prohibitory orders as people swarm like bees while out for groceries, completely disregarding precautionary measures. Worse, people are still leaving for their home districts from the Kathmandu Valley, the top hotspot in the country.

(To be Concluded)

**LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

editor@thestatesman.com

## Bribes for ministers

SIR, This refers to the front page report, "No bail yet for arrested leaders" (18 May). It bears recall that investigation into the Narada sting operation - in which Trinamul leaders including ministers were seen accepting bribes - was tasked with the Parliament's ethics committee, which largely consists of BJP members but has held no meeting so far. Since the Calcutta High Court ordered an investigation into the sting in 2017, the timing of the CBI's action is revealing.

Unable to stomach not just the defeat in Bengal but

also its scale, which gave the impression of an ideological resistance to the BJP's divisive antics by the majority of voters, the BJP's instruction for selective arrest was planned to prompt TMC protests that could help consolidate charges of lawlessness that the BJP is drumming up. Regrettably, the TMC protesters walked into this trap, throwing Covid norms to the winds during a lockdown. It was also imprudent for the Chief Minister to rush to the CBI's Nizam Palace headquarters to interfere with the central agency's work.

BJP's vindictive attitude became apparent when within 24 hours of taking oath by Ms Banerjee on May 5, a four-member fact-finding team of the Union Home Ministry tasked with looking into reasons for the post-poll violence in West Bengal, arrived in the state. The State is staring at an explosion in Covid-19 infections, and Ms Banerjee has her task cut out. She has imposed a lockdown till May 30, to tackle the unprecedented surge.

The arrest of four leaders, including the ministers

is yet another instance of the misuse of power during the pandemic. Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar resorted to actions which may give rise to the perception that he is acting at the behest of the

BJP high command. The BJP seems to expect benefits that eluded it electorally by overturning a government elected with a huge mandate, but the history of Bengal, especially 1968-69, may

act as a warning. Cooperative federalism and Covid control do not seem to figure on the BJP's agenda as far as Bengal is concerned.

Yours, etc., S S Paul,  
Nadia, 18 May.

## CYCLONE PRIORITIES

SIR, Once again a furious tropical cyclone has left a trail of death and destruction before making landfall in Gujarat. Cyclone Tauktae swelled into an extremely severe cyclonic storm, dumping enormous volumes of water all along the west coast, and caused loss of life in Kerala, Karnataka, Goa, Maharashtra and Gujarat, before weakening overland. To thousands who had to be evacuated to safe locations, this year's pre-monsoon season presented a double shock, as they were caught between a fast-spreading virus and an unrelenting storm.

Many coastal residents would have felt a sense of having gone through an experience similar to last year when the severe cyclonic storm, Nisarga, barrelled landwards from the Arabian Sea, pounding Alibaug in Maharashtra as it came ashore. The twin crises have, however, strained the capacities of multiple States, especially the coastal ones, although the impact of the storm was considerably mitigated by disaster response forces.

How well India is prepared to handle cyclones depends on developing greater expertise in forecasting and disaster management, and making policies to increase resilience among communities. The importance of precise early warnings cannot be overemphasised, considering that the Arabian Sea has emerged as a major source of severe cyclones, and their intensity is aggravated by long-term rise in sea surface temperatures linked to pollution over South Asia and its neighbourhood.

Climate-proofing lives and dwellings should be on the priority list of the government. It should plan to build sturdy homes of suitable design, create adequate storm shelters, provide accurate early warnings, and ensure financial protection against calamities through insurance for property and assets. Governments must rise to the challenge.

Yours, etc., Sanjay Chopra, Mohali, 19 May.



RAJA MURTHY

We are living through an epochal time in human history, the past 15 months like never before. For never before were entire populations of so many countries practically put under "house arrest" by a bizarre, sinister virus - a virus about which governments apparently know little or do not reveal what they know.

At the centre of it all is the mind to cope with pandemics and problems. "Mind matters most" is a reality that matters most in such times when life is turned upside down. Positivity not negativity helps us cope with resultant problems. Seeds sown this moment are fruits we reap later, just as we experience now fruits of seeds sown in the past. Since thoughts are seeds of actions, what arises in the mind matters most, every moment.

"Moments that have passed are no longer real, only memory," said my revered Vipassana teacher Sayagyi U Goenka (1924 - 2013), an extraordinary human being who served humanity by teaching Vipassana in its original purity. "Similarly, moments yet to come are unreal; you can only have expectations, fears and hopes of the future."

Wise sages to successful sportsmen emphasize the need for the mind to be in the present moment. To live in the present moment is to live without fears of the future and painful or pining-full memories. But a mind rolling in random thoughts suffers anxiety, regret, anger, sadness, fear, craving and delusions. The wandering mind suffers more in stressful times such as in 2020 and 2021.

Training is needed to strengthen the mind, as with physical exercises for a healthy body. Between various mind-training methods available, we choose between genuine, beneficial practices and fraudsters selling "meditation" techniques and exploiting the gullible. Choose also between easy band-aids giving temporary surface-level relief, or the difficult surgery of the mind that cleans and heals the mind at the deepest, root level.

The saying "health is wealth" includes a healthy mind. In health of the mind, I never use the word "spiritual" because it tends to indicate removal from practicalities of daily life. The mental workout of daily meditation is as much needed as physical exercise. A healthy mind benefits daily life and life beyond.

Thanks to word of mouth from people experiencing such benefits,

## Strengthening the mind for these difficult times



more people than ever before in India and worldwide are daily practicing genuine mind-training methods or meditation practices.

In Europe for instance, Vipassana courses ([www.dhamma.org](http://www.dhamma.org)) are fully booked online within minutes of the schedule being announced. More people from the corporate world are benefiting from meditation.

First-time students in a beginner's residential 10-day Vipassana course (taught free of cost) start by observing the in-coming and outgoing natural respiration as the object of meditation. This practice called 'Anapanasati' is totally opposite to regulating the breath in pranayama. By using the natural breath - instead of short-cuts of using artificial objects of meditation such as regulating the breath or mantras - the mind becomes much sharper, more concentrated, subtler and purer at a deeper level.

By the third day, the new student starts becoming aware of bodily sensations. Sensations are any tangible

feeling - from gross sensations such as pain, throbbing, pressure, heat, cold, itching, to subtler sensations such as tingling, vibrations. For the first time in life, we become consciously aware of the subtle biochemical flow within every moment, an electro-magnetic reality in the body every moment from our birth to death. Vipassana is the practice of the mind being aware of the deeper reality of sensations, with equanimity, from moment to moment.

Why observe sensations? These bodily sensations are the core story of our life. The apparent reality is we react to the outside world, to seeing a beautiful form, hearing praise or criticism, touching, tasting something in the outside world. But the Vipassana practitioner experiences the actual reality: how the mind reacts with craving or aversion to pleasant or unpleasant sensations. External situations are merely triggers. The real cause of our happiness or suffering is within - the intensity of blind reaction with craving or aversion to sen-

sations. The deepest part of the mind is continuously in contact with bodily sensations (as when even in deep sleep we rub a mosquito bite), not with objects of the outside world.

What we call being in "a good mood" or "feeling bad", happiness or sadness, attachment or addictions, is in reality reaction of craving or aversion to sensations. This is the inner reality we are ignorant of. Life changes with less ignorance to this reality. The Vipassana practitioner uses sensations - arising due to whatever cause - as tools to develop equanimity. This is the middle path between blind reaction and suppression: objectively observe the reality, as it is, not as we prefer or imagine it to be. Then we can make wiser decisions with a more balanced mind. Harmful negative reaction turns to positive, beneficial action. Equanimity is real happiness.

We gain life-changing experiential wisdom. By objectively observing rapidly arising, passing bodily sensations, we are in tune with the funda-

mental cosmic reality: impermanence. The big ego and blind attachment to things and views gradually reduce. This is the universal subatomic reality ruling everything in the universe, an inescapable impermanence. No point developing attachment to what is impermanent, changing, arising, passing every moment.

This is easy to understand but very hard to practice because the mind is conditioned to wandering, rolling in negativity. But working patiently, persistently, the increasing awareness and equanimity to sensations - moment to moment - enables experiencing what is real happiness. We realize what matters most in life.

"Be master of this present moment, and be master of your future," said the fully enlightened super-scientist Buddha who re-discovered Vipassana. "You are your own master, you make your own future".

The writer is a senior Mumbai-based journalist.

## Artificial intelligence and privacy

ABDULLAH SHIBLI

Nobel Prize-winning author Kazuo Ishiguro's latest novel *Klara and the Sun*, his first since receiving the award in literature in 2017, has some relevance for policymakers and ordinary citizens across the globe. The main protagonist in this dystopian science fiction story is Klara, an artificial friend (AF) - a human-like teenager who behaves and thinks almost like her cohort of the same age and is a fast learner, as any device or robot using artificial intelligence (AI) can be expected to be. However, what we also learn is that if robots, even if they are super-intelligent, are allowed to make decisions that affect the lives of humans, it might lead to unintended consequences unless there are strict guidelines protecting privacy and other individual rights.

Many discerning readers might already be aware that AI is whipping up quite a storm, particularly as it makes inroads into facial recognition software, law enforcement, and hiring decisions in the corporate world. Policymakers in many countries are alarmed, realising the pros as well as the cons of this revolutionary technology. The European Union (EU), which has been at the forefront of safeguarding privacy rights, unveiled strict regulations in April 2021 to govern the use of AI, a first-of-its-kind policy that outlines how companies and governments can use AI technology, also known as "machine learning". While these new rules are yet to be implemented and are still on the drawing boards, their impact will be similar to

that of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which was drawn up to keep global technology companies such as Amazon, Google, Facebook and Microsoft in check.

The EU has been the world's most aggressive watchdog of the technology industry, with its policies often used as blueprints by other nations. As mentioned, the bloc has already enacted the world's most far-reaching data privacy regulation, the GDPR, and is debating additional antitrust and content-moderation laws. "We have to be aware that GDPR is not made for blockchain, facial or voice recognition, text and data mining [...] artificial intelligence," said Axel Voss, a German member of the European Parliament and one of the creators of GDPR.

AI, in simple terms, is a computer program that enables the machine to learn how to mimic the problem-solving and decision-making capabilities of the human mind. An AI-enabled device learns how to respond to certain situations and uses algorithms and historical data to recognise a face, predict the weather, or support a search engine like Google. AI is playing a critical role in autonomous vehicles (such as drones and self-driving cars), medical diagnosis, creating art, playing games (such as Chess or Go), search engines, online assistants (such as Siri), image recognition in photographs, spam filtering, predicting flight delays, and much more.

Large technology companies have poured billions of dollars into developing AI, as also have scores of others that use it to develop medicine, underwrite insurance policies, and judge credit-

worthiness. Governments use versions of AI in criminal justice and in allocating public services like income support. The potential for AI is enormous, and here is the rub. To what extent can machines be manipulated to gain financial or strategic advantage by those who fund this research or manufacture them? Are they really neutral? Can machines adapt to the humans it interacts with, or do existing biases become hard-wired?

Facial recognition algorithms have been at the centre of privacy and ethics debates. Imagine a scenario where a government buys facial recognition software and uses it to track attendees during protest marches. In Hong Kong, the police used a system, created by Cellebrete of Israel, to access the phones of 4,000 protesters. A researcher at an AI global conference has conclusively proven that AI is at least as good as humans in determining medical diagnosis. However, rights groups have argued that "people should be told when their medical diagnosis comes from AI and not a human doctor." And using the same logic, one could propose that the same warning be issued if, for example, advertising or political speech is AI-generated.

Coming back to *Klara and the Sun*, Henry Capaldi, a scientist and artist, says to Klara, "there's growing and widespread concern about AF (artificial friends) right now.. People are afraid what's going on inside," meaning inside the "black box" of AI. Capaldi then goes on to outline the source of the anxieties that wider society has about the decision-making processes of AI. These anxieties can be summarised as follows: a lack

of transparency, how decisions are made inside the black box, and the rules that are used to make a decision. For example, if a company is using AI to judge an applicant's creditworthiness, the rules that the algorithm uses to make the decision might give rise to some discomfort. If an applicant is denied a loan for a small business, one could ask, "Was this a fair decision?" Similarly, if the government uses AI software in criminal justice and allocating public services like income support, there again is a need for accountability, transparency, and public confidence in the process.

There is some good news on this front. There is a proposal going around that all machine-learning research papers should include a section on societal harms, as well as the provenance of their data sets. Some other areas where regulatory oversight may be needed are: the use of AI by politicians to influence voters and marketing companies who create promotions to persuade people to buy their products. "Government is already undermined when politicians resort to compelling but dishonest arguments. It could be worse still if victory at the polls is influenced by who has the best algorithm," according to an editorial in April in the prestigious journal *Nature*. "With artificial intelligence starting to take part in debates with humans, more oversight is needed to avoid manipulation and harm." Another idea is that in addition to meeting transparency standards, AI algorithms could be required to undergo trials, akin to those required for new drugs, before they can be approved for public use.

The Daily Star/ANN

NO 28918

CROSSWORD

### ACROSS

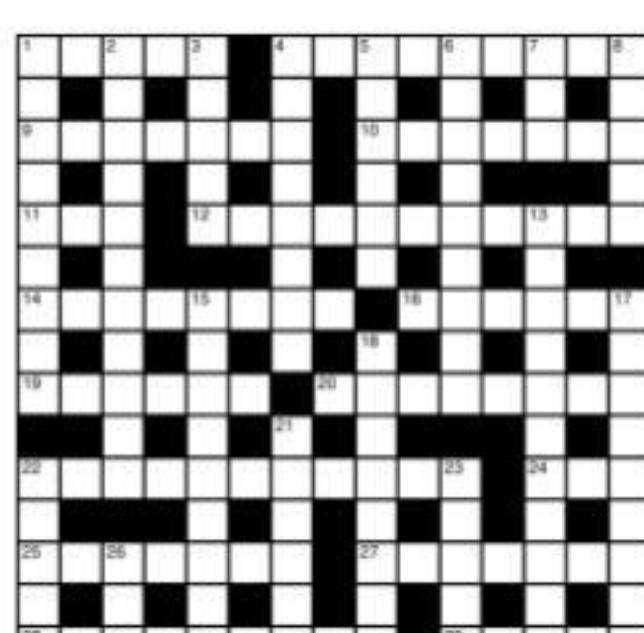
- Basket case's beginning to feel senses wobble (5)
- Adaptation of Dune left many without excitement (9)
- Scenery material recalled character in Hamlet (7)
- No ball carried by university rugby Forward, that's clear (7)
- Wrong indicator? Not good (3)
- Museum to fashion youngster - Scots boy - with instant education I promoted (11,11)
- Absolutely guaranteed college boy can join club (8)
- Lot of team taken aback, with member put on the back foot (6)
- Adding warmth to connection lacking heart (6)
- Live movement capturing a couple of

lines related to dance (8)

- See 12
- What follows a do, back in time (3)
- Better money required to secure a team leader (7)
- Italian car designer upset at odd bits of trim (7)
- Prepared in advance to study old article about crackpot (5-4)
- Endless source of devastation in place (5)
- Restraining expression of disgust is not nothing (6)
- Amended moral bias is delectable (9)
- European with energy and self-confidence (3)
- Large part of Canada that may accommodate European country (5)
- Fake misattributed in the auction, not old (11)
- Frank and Bill with yen for standing for office (9)
- See 1
- Algebraic quantity that may work to contain two bits of arithmetic (8)
- Appointed grandma to dismiss a chaperone (6)
- Be charged in court, wasting time, nothing less (5)
- Conan Doyle hero - name set to enthrall one (5)
- Small amount of coal? It's a lot of fuel (3)

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

### YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION



100 YEARS AGO

### OCCASIONAL NOTE

Among the war-time restrictions that were enforced under the Defence of the Realm Act were those that referred to the use of dangerous drugs, and the authorities at Home seem to be unwilling to revert to pre-war conditions in this matter. Under the new Dangerous Drugs Act passed last year the Home Secretary has drawn up regulations which approximate in strictness of control to those that were enacted in war time. These regulations are for controlling and restricting the possession, sale, and distribution of raw opium, and also for controlling the manufacture, sale, possession, and distribution of morphine, cocaine, ecgonine, and diamorphine (commonly known as heroin) and their respective salts, and medicinal opium, and preparations and substances containing not less than one-fifth per cent of morphine, or one-tenth per cent of cocaine, ecgonine, or diamorphine. Persons, including medical practitioners, who dispense prescriptions containing any of these drugs, are required to keep separate books for all dealings in four groups of drugs. Except when lawfully dispensed from a prescription given by a qualified medical practitioner in accordance with specified conditions, the drugs which have been mentioned may be supplied only to persons specially authorised to receive them. The regulations seem to be drastic and must involve an appreciable addition to the work of doctors and druggists, but the advisability of a stricter control than used to be exercised seems to be generally recognised.

NEWS ITEMS

### SEDITION CHARGE AGAINST DR. CHOLKAR

Nagpur, May 20

During the hearing of the sedition case against Doctor Cholkar, Gajanagar Ali stated in cross-examination that Cholkar, in his opinion, intended that the orders and resolutions of the Congress should be considered by his audience as laws. The witness was asked to point out from his notes passages which, in his opinion, showed that Cholkar wanted his audience to go beyond the Congress programme. The order and resolution which the Congress has published is the law and obey it, thinking it to be the Penal or Criminal Procedure Code. Do not give homage and patronage of whatever kind to the British Government, the Government of India and the C.P. Government. The case was adjourned until Monday, when arguments on both sides will be heard.

### MANGO CAUSES SCHOOL BOY'S DEATH

Two Bengali school boys, Projabati and Mukaram, residing at Baruipur, played truant. Proceeding to a mango grove, they picked unripe fruit. In order to burst a mango, Projabati threw it against a tree trunk. The mango ricocheted, and hit the other lad on the leg. The latter, thinking he had been assaulted, was enraged, and threw the mango back at his supposed assailant. Unfortunately the fruit struck Projabati on the spleen, which was ruptured and he fell dead on the spot. At Alipur yesterday Mukaram was charged before Mr. A.P. Peters, Deputy Magistrate, with culpable homicide not amounting to murder. The accused pleaded that the death was a pure accident. A fine of Rs 40 was imposed as a punishment for the infliction of simple hurt.

### ANGLO-INDIANS AND THE ARMY

Simla, May 20

A communiqué states that although the retention of separate Anglo-Indian units of artillery, cavalry and infantry is not contemplated, it is proposed in future to provide further openings for suitable members of the community in the signal service, in light armoured motor batteries, and with the coast artillery, and also to open to them recruitment in the supply and transport corps the remount, veterinary, and ordnance services, either by forming small local sections in these services or by establishing a miscellaneous list from which men would be attached as required to the above services. Terms of enlistment and rates of pay would be the same as those in force in the British army for men similarly employed.

### ATTEMPTED THEFT FROM A BANK

The case of Aswini Kumar Bose, the young Bengali who was arrested while walking out of the Imperial Bank in Calcutta with a bundle of notes of the value of Rs 81,136, took a new turn yesterday when the accused pleaded guilty. On the last day of hearing accused behaved strangely in the dock and was accordingly ordered to be kept under medical observation. Yesterday, the police Surgeon gave it as his opinion that the man was perfectly sane and capable of standing his trial. The hearing was then proceeded with, and a few witnesses were examined, when the accused, of his own accord, pleaded guilty. The case was adjourned, on the application of the defence pleader who intimated that he would cite mitigating circumstances in favour of his client.





The Competition Commission of India should take extra care and ensure that no omission or commission results in undermining of market processes.

NIRMALA SITHARAMAN  
UNION FINANCE MINISTER

## THUMBNAILS

BSE SENSEX		May 20, 2021
Top Losers		
Open:	49,971.52	Change:
Close:	49,564.86	-337.78 (-0.68%)
Previous close:	49,902.64	Closing Price in ₹ % Change
Tata Steel	1,105	-5.11
ONGC	111	-2.70
Sun Pharma	687	-2.36
Power Grid	229	-2.03
HDFC Bank	1,436	-1.51
Axis Bank	706	-1.51
Bharti Airtel	521	-1.44
Kotak Bank	1,709	-1.28
Nestle India	17,277	-0.96
ICICI Bank	620	-0.89

**KBK Infographics**

**Iranian crude:** India will resume buying crude oil from Iran once the US sanctions are eased, an Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) executive said on Thursday, adding Iranian crude was beneficial for Indian refineries. India stopped importing oil from Iran in mid-2019 following sanctions on the Persian Gulf nation by the Trump administration. US President Joe Biden's administration and Iran have been involved in talks to revive the nuclear deal in exchange for the lifting of sanctions. "I do not have any doubt why we will not be buying Iranian crude if sanctions are lifted," IOC director (finance) S K Gupta said. PTI

**Nomura forecast:** The second wave of the pandemic in India is more of a humanitarian crisis rather than an economic one, and is likely to have peaked, a Japanese brokerage said on Thursday. Nomura said it expects the overall hit to sequential growth in April-June to be much less severe than last year when there was a complete nationwide lockdown, and less than what the drop in mobility suggests. It estimated the economy to contract by only 3.8 per cent in June quarter as compared with March quarter. PTI

**Torrent Power profit:** Torrent Power on Thursday posted a consolidated net profit of Rs 398.10 crore in the January-March quarter driven by higher revenues. The company had posted a consolidated net loss of Rs 273.94 crore in the quarter ended on 31 March 2020, a BSE filing said. Total income of the company rose to Rs 3,116.54 crore in the quarter from Rs 3,020.84 crore in the same period a year ago. PTI

**TCI share soars:** Shares of logistics firm TCI Express on Thursday zoomed nearly 17 per cent after the firm reported a 123.9 per cent rise in net profit for the quarter ended 31 March. The stock rallied 16.84 per cent to close at Rs 1,258.80 on the BSE. During the day, it zoomed 19.99 per cent to Rs 1,292.80 ~ its 52-week high. On the NSE, it jumped 16.74 per cent to close at Rs 1,265. TCI Express on Wednesday reported a 123.9 per cent rise in net profit at Rs 42.57 crore for the quarter ended 31 March. PTI

# Covid derails auto industry's recovery momentum: Report

The industry was poised for a comeback in current fiscal after witnessing two challenging years: Icra

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MUMBAI, 20 MAY

## GROWTH ESTIMATES LOWERED

The second wave of the pandemic in the country has derailed the recovery momentum of the domestic auto industry, which was poised for a comeback in the current fiscal after witnessing the two consecutive challenging years, ratings agency Icra said today. Unlike the first wave where infections were largely localised to urban clusters, the second wave has seen deeper and wider penetration, including into rural hinterlands. Accordingly, outlook for various segments has been revised downwards, it said.

While pick-up in the vaccination drive is expected to support flattening of the curve going forward, an elongated recovery cycle or possibility of a third wave offers further downside risks to Icra's volume estimates, according to Icra.

Many auto original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) and auto ancillaries resorted to plant shutdowns as a restric-

- Domestic two-wheeler volumes in 2021-22 are expected to grow by 10-12 per cent now as against 16-18 per cent earlier.
- The passenger vehicle segment may see a lower growth of 17-20 per cent now as against 22-25 per cent expected earlier.
- The commercial vehicle segment is expected to



grow by 21-24 per cent (albeit on a low base) in 2021-22 now, compared with 27-30 per cent that was expected earlier.

Accordingly, the ratings agency has revised the growth estimates for most of the different automotive segments downwards.

Segment-wise, Icra said, the two-wheeler volumes are expected to be the most impacted, with the target consumer segment's affordability and demand sentiment sharply hit by the second wave.

Accordingly, domestic two-wheeler volumes in 2021-22 are expected to grow by 10-12 per cent now as against 16-18 per cent earlier.

The agency added that as per an Icra note, while these would cause near-term supply disruptions in the sector, the larger and prolonged impact is likely to be on account of the impact on various demand drivers.

per cent now as against 16-18 per cent earlier. The passenger vehicle segment may see a lower growth of 17-20 per cent now as against 22-25 per cent expected earlier, as per Icra estimates.

Overall, the commercial vehicle (CV) segment is expected to grow by 21-24 per cent (albeit on a low base) in 2021-22 now, compared with 27-30 per cent that was expected earlier.

Icra said recovery trends were quite encouraging from the second half of 2020-21 onwards, with various automotive segments reporting healthy sequential recovery, post relaxation of the lockdown-related restrictions.

It, however, added that the sudden and severe onset of the second wave of the pandemic in the country has derailed the recovery momentum of automobile OEMs and auto-ancillaries to an extent.

Icra Ratings vice-president and group head Shamsher Dewan said: "The second wave of the pandemic, the intensity of which has taken the entire country by sur-

prise, is expected to impact near-term automobile purchases across segments."

Additionally, the significant medical spends have eroded the purchasing power of individuals and families to a greater extent, which would impact large-ticket discretionary purchases like vehicles, at least over the near term, he said.

The domestic passenger vehicle (PV) segment would also see a softening of demand due to the spread of pandemic to hinterlands, hit on disposable income and rising vehicle costs (including fuel cost). Accordingly, it will see a lower growth of 17-20 per cent now as against 22-25 per cent expected earlier, it said.

Within the CV segment, medium and heavy commercial vehicles (M&HCVs) would see relatively lower impact from the second wave of the pandemic, as construction and mining activities continue largely unimpacted so far. However, the light commerce vehicles (LCVs) are likely to face some demand moderation.

of their stressed assets calls for measures to clean up the bank books.

"An asset reconstruction company and asset management company would be set up to consolidate and take over the existing stressed debt," she had said in the Budget speech.

It will then manage and dispose of the assets to alternate investment funds and other potential investors for eventual value realisation, she added.

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

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

The government guarantee would be invoked if there is a loss against the threshold old value.

## Total inks deal to supply LNG to Arcelor's plants in Gujarat

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 20 MAY

### Under the deal, Total will supply up to 0.5 million tons of liquefied natural gas per year until 2026, a company statement said.

French energy giant Total today said it has signed a deal to supply imported LNG to ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel's (AMNS) steel and power plants in Gujarat.

Under the deal, Total will supply up to 0.5 million tons of liquefied natural gas per year until 2026, a company statement said.

"We are pleased to partner with AMNS and to supply the growing industrial LNG player, with a global portfolio of nearly 50 million tons per year by 2025 and a global market share of around 10 per cent.

It has interests in liquefaction plants in Angola, Australia, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, the United States, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Russia and Qatar, and markets LNG globally.

(40 per cent) that acquired Essar Steel in bankruptcy proceedings in 2019.

"The LNG will be sourced from Total's global portfolio and offloaded either in Dahej or Hazira LNG terminal, on the west coast of India," it said. "AMNS will use the LNG to run its steel and power plants located in Hazira, Gujarat state," it added.

AMNS India is a joint venture between ArcelorMittal (60 per cent) and Nippon Steel

The supply of LNG will contribute to the reduction of AMNS's carbon emissions, in line with Total's ambition

to offer its customers energy products that emit less CO2 and to support them in their own low-carbon strategies."

While the pact strengthens Total's relationship with AMNS, the supply of gas in its liquid form (LNG) will contribute to the decarbonisation of the steel industry, which still relies heavily on coal.

Total is the world's second-largest privately owned LNG player, with a global portfolio of nearly 50 million tons per year by 2025 and a global market share of around 10 per cent.

It has interests in liquefaction plants in Angola, Australia, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, the United States, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Russia and Qatar, and markets LNG globally.

## Airtel CEO warns of rise in cyber fraud

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 20 MAY

**With the growing second wave of the pandemic and lockdowns in various parts of the country, there has been a massive increase in online transactions. Unfortunately, there has also been a corresponding increase in cyber fraud.**

**GOPAL VITTAL - AIRTEL CEO**

Airtel CEO Gopal Vittal today warned about a rise in cyber frauds amid a massive surge in online transactions during the second wave of the pandemic, and asserted the company is working "relentlessly" and coming out with safety features to ensure customers are not vulnerable to fraudsters.

In an e-mail outreach to customers, Vittal highlighted the modus operandi being adopted by fraudsters and also drew attention to cyber frauds related to digital payments.

"With the growing second wave of the pandemic and lockdowns in various parts of the country, there has been a massive increase in online transactions. Unfortunately, there has also been a corresponding increase in cyber fraud," Vittal said.

Sounding out a warning on

the kinds of fraud that users could likely face, he said that Airtel has developed an "industry first feature" that is geared towards conducting secure online transactions "without the fear of being duped by a fraudster".

"Please note that Airtel does not sell VIP numbers on the phone and will never ask you to download any third-party apps. In both instances, please immediately call 121 to confirm. In fact, I would say when in doubt simply call 121," Vittal advised in his mail to Airtel subscribers. Cautioning against fraudsters calling customers pretending to be Airtel employees, he said that this could be under the pretext of incomplete KYC form.

The fraudster may request the customer to install the "Airtel Quick Support" app from the Google Play Store to allow them to help. As no such app exists on the play store, when the customer tries to install it, they are redirected

to TeamViewer Quick Support App.

"The TeamViewer Quick Support app allows the fraudster to remotely take over the device and accounts associated with the device. And so, if the customer does install it, they allow the fraudster into all their accounts connected to the device," Vittal said urging users to guard against such instances. Similarly, the fraudster may call or send an SMS claiming to be from Airtel and promising highly discounted VIP numbers.

"As a part of the transaction, the fraudster requests a pre-payment as a token / booking amount. Post receiving these funds, the fraudster ceases all contact with the person and becomes untraceable," Vittal warned.

Cyber frauds related to payments are also on the rise, due to the increase in digital transactions, he noted.

## Housing loan market rebounds: Report

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MUMBAI, 20 MAY

### 9.6% GROWTH IN Q3

- The housing loan market in the country registered a year-on-year growth of 9.6 per cent in terms of portfolio outstanding (PoS) in the third quarter of FY'2021 despite the Covid-19 pandemic.
- The portfolio outstanding of the sector stood at Rs 22.26 lakh crore as of December 2020, as compared to Rs 20.31 lakh crore as of December 2019, according to a quarterly report released by credit information bureau CRIF High Mark.
- The industry had witnessed 10.4 per cent growth in PoS in December 2019 quarter over December 2018 quarter.
- The report said the growth was flat in quarters ending March 2020, June 2020 and September 2020 due to Covid-19 pandemic, the resulting

nationwide lockdown and suspension of most of the business and lending activities in large parts of the country. "However, there has been a rebound in housing loan originations in the quarter ending December 2020," the report noted.

Affordable housing segment (ticket size up to Rs 35 lakh) constituted 90 per cent of the market by volume and

nearly 60 per cent by value as of December 2020. Within the affordable segment, loans under ticket size of Rs 15 lakh comprised 70 per cent by volume and 38 per cent by value.

According to the report, young borrowers and millennials (less than 36 years), with high aspirations and commensurate disposable incomes are increasingly being seen as an attractive audi-

ence for housing loans, with a share of 27 per cent in the annual originations in FY20-21 (till December 2020).

Public sector banks have retained the largest market share in housing loans by value and volume, with a near 45 per cent share over the last three years. As of December 2020, the top five public sector banks constituted nearly 30 per cent of the housing loan industry book by value, the report said.

As of December 2020, top five private banks constituted 15 per cent of the industry book by value, the report said.

Housing finance companies (HFCs) command an overall market share of nearly 37 per cent by value. The top five (out of the nearly 140) HFCs (including non-banking financial companies) as of December 2020 constituted 27 per cent of the pan-India housing loan book, it said.

In a circular, the CBDT said an extension of time limits is being given for certain

tax compliances "to provide relief to taxpayers in view of the severe pandemic".

Also, the deadline for issuing Form 16 by employers to employees has been extended by a month till 15 July 2021, the CBDT said.

The due date for filing the tax audit report and transfer pricing certificate has been extended by a month till 31 October and 30 November, respectively. For filing belated or revised return of income, the due date is now 31 January 2022. Besides, the deadline for financial institutions to furnish the statement of financial transaction report has been extended till 30 June from 31 May 2021.

Nangia & Co LLP partner Shailesh Kumar said the extension of due dates is likely to provide some relief to taxpayers on the tax compliance front.

Bosch reports six-fold jump in net profit to ₹ 482 crore

NEW DELHI, 20 MAY

Auto component major Bosch today posted a six-fold increase in its consolidated net profit to Rs 482 crore for the fourth quarter ended on 31 March 2021, driven by robust sales.

The company had reported a net profit of Rs 81 crore during the January-March quarter of 2019-20.

Revenue from operations rose to Rs 3,218 crore during the fourth quarter from Rs 2,237 crore in the same period of FY'20, Bosch Ltd said in a regulatory filing.

For the 2020-21 fiscal, the company reported a consolidated net profit of Rs 481 crore as against Rs 650 crore in 2019-20 financial year. Revenue from operations stood at Rs 9,716 crore as compared with Rs 9,842 crore in financial year 2019-20.

&lt;p



To achieve equal rights for all countries, we cannot do without increasing the representation and voice of African countries in international affairs.

CHINESE STATE COUNCILOR AND FOREIGN MINISTER WANG YI  
AT A PRESS MEET

The Statesman  
NEW DELHI, FRIDAY 21 MAY 2021

09

# Israel unleashes strikes as expectations for truce rise

PM Benjamin Netanyahu has pushed back against US calls to wind down the Gaza offensive

ASSOCIATED PRESS

GAZA CITY, 20 MAY

**I**srael unleashed another wave of airstrikes across the Gaza Strip early Thursday, killing at least one Palestinian and wounding several, and Hamas fired more rockets, even as expectations rose that a cease-fire could be coming.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has pushed back against calls from the US to wind down the Gaza offensive, appearing determined to inflict maximum damage on Hamas in a war that could help save his political career.

Still, officials close to the negotiations say they expect a truce to be announced in the next 24 hours. Explosions shook Gaza City and orange flares lit up the pre-dawn sky, with bombing raids also reported in the central town of Deir al-Balah and the southern town of Khan Younis.



An Israeli artillery unit fires shells towards targets in Gaza Strip, at the Israeli-Gaza border on Wednesday.

As the sun rose, residents surveyed the rubble from at least five family homes destroyed in Khan Younis.

There were also heavy airstrikes on a commercial thoroughfare in Gaza City.

The Israeli military said it struck at least three homes of Hamas commanders in Khan Younis and another in Rafah, targeting military infrastructure, as well as a weapons storage unit at a home in Gaza City.

With hundreds already killed in the worst fighting since Israel and Hamas' 2014 war, the US President Joe Biden told Israel on Wednesday that he expected a significant de-escalation today on the path to a cease-fire but Netanyahu pushed back. The UN's top human rights body will hold a special session next week to address the grave human rights situation in Palestinian areas of Gaza.

President Joe Biden's efforts to persuade Benjamin Netanyahu to halt military strikes against Hamas in Gaza are plunging the two leaders into a difficult early test of the US-Israeli relationship.

The two have had other moments of tension over the years, and their current differences over the war in Gaza create a challenge that Biden was trying mightily to avoid. Biden told Netanyahu in a telephone call Wednesday that he expected significant de-escalation of the fighting by day's end, according to the White House, but the prime

minister came right back with a public declaration that he was determined to continue" the Gaza operation until its objective is achieved. Netanyahu did allow that he greatly appreciates the support of the American president, but said nonetheless that Israel would push ahead. This is not where Biden had hoped to expend his time and energy.

Early in Biden's term, foreign policy has taken a back seat. The president has tried to avoid getting bogged down in an interminable effort to establish an elusive Mideast peace that many of his White House predecessors have dedicated precious time to without much success.

TikTok parent ByteDance founder resigns

BEIJING, 20 MAY

Chinese tech unicorn ByteDance Ltd co-founder billionaire Zhang Yiming on Thursday announced that he will step down as CEO, in a surprise move.

Zhang, one of China's wealthiest entrepreneurs, said he is ready to step down after nearly a decade of running the world's largest unicorn. ByteDance hit the global headlines after TikTok ran into trouble in India.

Iran president gives his most upbeat view yet of nuke talks

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
TEHRAN, 20 MAY

Iran's president on Thursday offered his most optimistic assessment yet of ongoing talks to resuscitate his country's nuclear deal with world powers, claiming there had been "major" agreement among diplomats even as other nations involved suggested challenges remain.

The comments by President Hassan Rouhani come as Iran prepares for a June 18 election to determine who will replace the relatively moderate cleric. Saving his signature atomic accord before the vote could boost reformist and moderate candidates backing Rouhani's agenda in an election in which many believe hard-liners already hold an edge.

Speaking at a ceremony inaugurating several petrochemical projects, Rouhani asserted that solutions to major issues like sanctions had been agreed to by diplomats, while other issues remained under discussion.

## Mobs attack Syrians heading for presidential vote in Lebanon

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
BEIRUT, 20 MAY

Lebanese mobs attacked buses and cars carrying Syrians expatriates and those who fled the war heading to the Syrian embassy in Beirut on Thursday, protesting against what they said was an organised vote for President Bashar Assad.

Scattered mobs of anti-Syrian Lebanese, most of them from the Christian rightwing Forces group, waited for convoys of cars and buses carrying



Syrian voters at intersections in Beirut, outside the capital and in the eastern Bekaa region.

They pelted them with rocks and smashed windows

with sticks.

**Syrians cast early ballots:** In Beirut, a few hundred of Assad supporters turned up early at the hilltop embassy outside the capital to cast their ballot.

The election is the second since the country's civil war broke out 10 years ago and is seen by the opposition as well as Western and some Arab countries as a sham designed to give the incumbent a new mandate with a veneer of legitimacy.

China, US argue over naval activity in South China Sea

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
BEIJING, 20 MAY

China on Thursday issued its second protest in as many days over United States naval activity in the region, drawing an unusually sharp response from the US 7th Fleet, which accused Beijing of attempting to assert illegitimate maritime rights at the expense of its neighbours.

A statement from the Chinese People's Liberation Army's Southern Theatre Command said the guided missile destroyer USS Curtis Wilbur illegally intruded into its territorial waters surrounding the Paracel island group in the South China Sea on Thursday.

It said Chinese forces mobilised to track and monitor the ship and warned and expelled it.

The Paracels are also claimed by Vietnam.

China accused the US of increasing regional security risks, "misunderstandings, misjudgments, and accidents at sea".

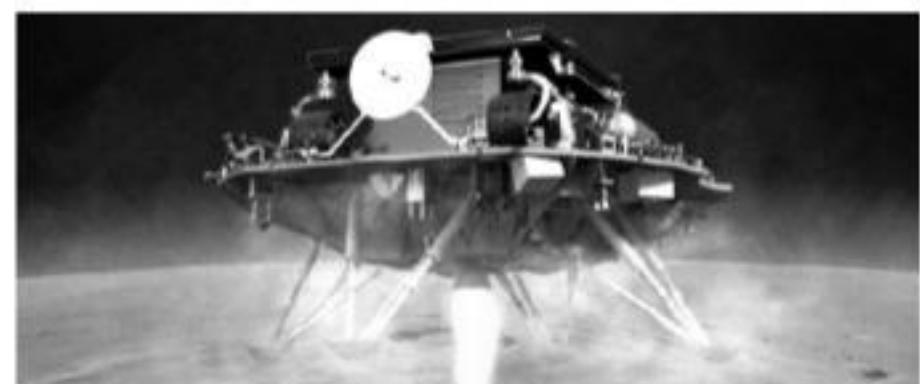
## China delays mission while NASA congratulates on Mars images

ASSOCIATED PRESS

BEIJING, 20 MAY

China postponed a supply mission to its new space station Thursday for unspecified technical reasons, while photos sent back from Mars by its newly arrived rover earned plaudits from NASA despite only sporadic contacts between the Chinese and American space programmes.

The Tianzhou-2 cargo spacecraft was expected to have been launched early Thursday morning. China Manned Space announced the delay on its website but didn't say when the rescheduled launch may occur.



The launch of Tianhe, or Heavenly Harmony, was considered a success although China was criticized for allowing the uncontrolled reentry of part of the rocket that carried it into space. Usually, discarded rocket stages reenter the atmosphere soon after liftoff, normally over water, and don't go into orbit.

NASA Administrator Sen. Bill Nelson said at the time that China had failed to meet responsible standards regarding space debris.

In a message posted to the NASA website on Wednesday, Nelson congratulated the China National Space Administration on receiving those first images.

## Chinese authorities order video denials by Uyghurs of abuses

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
URUMQI, 20 MAY

China has highlighted an unlikely series of videos this year in which Uyghur men and women deny US charges that Beijing is committing human rights violations against their ethnic group. In fact, a text obtained by AP shows that the videos are part of a government campaign that raises questions about the willingness of those filmed.

Chinese state media have published dozens of the videos praising the Communist Party and showing Uyghurs angrily denouncing former U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo for declaring a genocide in the far west Xinjiang region.

The videos, which officials have insisted are spontaneous outpourings of emotion, have also featured prominently in a series of government news conferences held for foreign media.

But the text obtained by AP is the first concrete confir-

mation that the videos are anything but grassroots. Sent in January to government offices in the northern city of Karamay, the text told each office to find one Uyghur fluent in Mandarin to film a one-minute video in response to Pompeo's "anti-China remarks."

"Express a clear position on Pompeo's remarks, for example: I firmly oppose Pompeo's anti-Chinese remarks, and I am very angry about them," the text said.

"Express your feelings of loving the party, the country and Xinjiang (I am Chinese, I love my motherland, I am happy at work and in life, and so on.)"

While it's not impossible officials were able to find Uyghurs willing to be in such a public relations campaign, China's track record in Xinjiang and its documented abuses of Uyghurs have led many experts to conclude it's more likely those in the videos were forced to take part.

"There's something instinctive about these videos which feels ingenuine, but the significance is that there's hard evidence here that the Chinese government is requesting these kinds of videos," said Albert Zhang, a researcher at the Australian Strategic Policy Institute who recently coauthored a report on Beijing's disinformation campaign on Xinjiang.

Xinjiang spokesperson Xu Guixiang did not directly deny the authenticity of the text, but said it didn't follow the usual format of state orders and that his understanding was that "the government has never issued this kind of notice or made this kind of request." He suggested the videos were made voluntarily.

## LEISURE

### 10 MINUTE CROSSWORD



**ACROSS**  
1 Broth, for example (4)  
4 Vase (3)  
6 Directly above (4)  
8 Downcast (8)  
9 Terse (4)  
10 Difference of opinion (12)  
12 Scanty (6)  
13 Garland (6)  
15 Hard bargaining (5-7)  
17 Society (4)  
18 Etiquette (8)  
20 Jester (4)  
21 Boy (3)  
22 Merge (4)  
  
**DOWN**  
1 Tious, 12 Portico, 13 Offset, 14 Cropper, 15 Assistant, 16 Bright, 20 Run.  
2 Recent, 3 Confucius, 4 Completely (7)  
5 Jog with the elbow (5)  
6 Recovering (2,3,4)  
7 Rejoice (5)  
11 Worth of respect (9)  
13 Military leader (7)  
14 Flimsy (7)  
15 Divide by two (5)  
16 Eject (5)  
19 Lout (3)

**SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD**  
1 Cur, 2 Portico, 3 Lick, 4 Vow, 5 Yew (Curlicue), 6 Auction, 7 Ballt, 10 Conscience-  
12 Tious, 13 Offset, 14 Cropper, 15 Assistant, 16 Bright, 20 Run.  
2 Recent, 3 Confucius, 4 Completely (7)  
5 Jog with the elbow (5)  
6 Recovering (2,3,4)  
7 Rejoice (5)  
11 Worth of respect (9)  
13 Military leader (7)  
14 Flimsy (7)  
15 Divide by two (5)  
16 Eject (5)  
19 Lout (3)

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

### BEETLE BAILEY/Mort Walker



### RED EYE/Bill Yates & Mel Casson



### DADDY DAZE/John Kovaleski



### NEED TO KNOW

#### HOSPITALS

22586262, 22585007

#### RAILWAY INQUIRY

General Inquiry 139

#### ROADWAYS INQUIRY

ISBT (General Inquiry): 23868836, 23865181

#### FLIGHT INQUIRY

AIR INDIA Flight Inquiry and Reservation 1800125151

#### ROADWAYS

INDIGO AIRLINES New Delhi City Office 43513185, Call Center 09910383838, 18001803838, Reservation 43513186; Indigo Airlines Air

#### RAILWAY

Port 011-25671580; Terminal 1 23860626

#### RAILWAY

Rajasthan Roadways 25671579, 18001803838

#### RAILWAY

JET AIRWAYS Flight Inquiry and Reservation 39841111

#### RAILWAY

EMIRATES Flight Inquiry and Reservation 33773377

#### RAILWAY

Air Canada Flight Inquiry and Reservation 41528181

#### RAILWAY

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

#### RAILWAY

Kuwait Airways Flight Inquiry and Reservation 23354373

#### RAILWAY

Port 011-25671580; Terminal 1 23860626

#### RAILWAY

Rajasthan Roadways 25671579, 18001803838

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#### RAILWAY

JET AIRWAYS Flight Inquiry and Reservation 39841111

#### RAILWAY

EMIRATES Flight Inquiry and Reservation 33773377

#### RAILWAY

Air Canada Flight



To date, the United States has provided over \$500 million in Covid relief to India.

WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY JEN PSAKI

## WEATHER

CITY	MAX (°C)	MIN (°C)
SINGAPORE	33	27 H
HONG KONG	31	29 H
TOKYO	22	16 H
LONDON	14	11 CL
DUBAI	37	28 S
SAN FRANCISCO	16	9 S
NEW YORK	23	14 H
MOSCOW	20	12 CL

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

## THUMBNAILS



President Joe Biden poses for a photo during the commencement for the United States Coast Guard Academy in New London, Connecticut. AGENCIES

**Priot riot:** Rioting and fighting among inmates at a prison in western Guatemala caused the deaths of at least six prisoners, police said Wednesday. Authorities said the violence at the prison in Quetzaltenango province, which holds 2,250 prisoners, broke out after visiting hours ended late Tuesday. AP

**Teens killed in bus shooting:** Relatives of two people killed after shooters opened fire on a party bus driving on a San Francisco Bay Area freeway have identified them as two teenagers who were celebrating a friend's 21st birthday. AP

**Alaska man survives brown bear:** Allen Minish was alone and surveying land for a real estate agent in a wooded, remote part of Alaska, putting some numbers into his GPS unit when he looked up and saw a large brown bear walking about 30 feet away. The mauling left Minish with a crushed jaw, a puncture wound in his scalp. The doctors are worried about it. AP

## Spain's migrant drama highlights EU outsourcing policy flaws

## ASSOCIATED PRESS

BRUSSELS, 20 MAY

The sight of hundreds of migrants swimming or climbing fences separating the Spanish enclave of Ceuta from the rest of Africa this week is a stark reminder of just how dependent the European Union can be on the whims of countries it chooses to pay to enforce its migration policy.

Since well over 1 million migrants entered the EU in 2015, most of them refugees fleeing conflict in Syria, the world's biggest trading bloc has spent vast sums trying to ensure that migrants no longer set out for Europe on arduous



Spanish security forces guard the Spanish enclave of Ceuta, near the border of Morocco and Spain. AGENCIES

overland treks or dangerous sea journeys.

The EU granted billions of euros and other incentives to Turkey, for instance, to stop people leaving for Europe. Yet, just over a year ago, the

government in Ankara waved thousands of people through the land border to Greece, sparking violence that almost erupted into open conflict.

That dispute was over Turkey's view that the EU had

failed to amply support its invasion of northern Syria. Since then, the 27-nation bloc has quietly gone about reinvigorating the EU-Turkey deal, with an offer of yet more money and trade incentives.

Perhaps the authorities in Morocco are using the same playbook when an EU country takes action they, too, find unacceptable. Morocco is playing with people's lives. They must not use people, among them our own citizens, as pawns in a political game, said Virginia Alvarez, Head of Internal Policy at Amnesty International Spain.

What is clear is that more than 8,000 people crossed into Spanish territory over

two days this week. Many risked their lives by swimming around a breakwater to reach a beach on the European side.

Hanne Beirens, Director of the Migration Policy Institute, said that migration can feature very prominently at the negotiating table when the EU is drafting agreements with outside countries, whatever their nature.

Today, if as a third country you hold a migration card in your hand, you're a powerful player, Beirens said.

The inability of the EU, home to 27 of the richest countries in the world, to find a fair way to manage people seeking sanctuary or better lives

for permitting a militant group leader from Western Sahara, a region Morocco annexed in 1975.

In the first public comments on the situation in Ceuta by a Moroccan official, Mostapha Hamid, minister for human rights, said in a Facebook post on Tuesday that Spain's decision to receive the Polisario Front leader was reckless, irresponsible and totally unacceptable.

As events in Ceuta unfolded, Spain on Tuesday approved a \$37 million transfer to beef up Morocco's policing of irregular migration flows. Madrid said the economic package was already budgeted before the latest developments.

## EU signs new deal with Pfizer-BioNTech

Hungary has opted out of the deal and decided not to be part of the new purchase agreement

## ASSOCIATED PRESS

BRUSSELS, 20 MAY

The European Union's executive arm on Thursday finalised a third vaccine contract with Pfizer and BioNTech through 2023 for an additional 1.8 billion doses of their Covid-19 shot to share between the bloc's countries except for Hungary, which opted out of the deal.

The European commission said the contract, which was agreed on behalf of all 27 EU countries earlier this month, will allow the buying of 900 million doses of the current shots and of a serum adapted to the virus' variants, with an option to purchase an extra 900 million shots.

All other member states will have the opportunity to purchase vaccines under the new contract. Hungary is using vaccines from China and Russia in addition to Western jabs. About 40 per cent of



European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen during an official visit to the Pfizer pharmaceutical company. AGENCIES

Hungary's population has received at least one dose of vaccine, the second-highest vaccination rate in the EU.

The signature of the new agreement comes less than a week before a court hearing in Brussels pitting the Commission against the pharmaceutical company AstraZeneca, which is accused by the EU of failing to deliver the promised number of doses of its own vaccine.

The Commission said that the deal with Pfizer-BioNTech stipulates that the production of doses must be based in the EU and that essential components are

sourced from the region. From the start of the supply in 2022, the delivery to the EU is guaranteed," the Commission said.

EU Commission president Ursula von der Leyen told an event organized by Germany's WDR public television that, by the end of this week, 260 million doses of vaccine will have been delivered in Europe. She acknowledged that countries such as the U.S. and U.K. were faster to start with, but said that has been put into perspective over time.

After its much-criticized slow start, she said the bloc's Covid-19 vaccination drive is a success.

China providing vaccines to African states: China said Thursday it is providing Covid-19 vaccines to nearly 40 African countries, describing its actions as purely altruistic in an apparent intensification of what has been described as "vaccine diplomacy."

The vaccines were donated or sold at "favourable prices," Foreign Ministry official Wu Peng told reporters.

Wu compared China's outreach to the actions of some countries that have said they have to wait for their own people to finish the vaccination before they could supply the vaccines to foreign countries," in an apparent dig at the United States.

"We believe that it is, of course, necessary to ensure that the Chinese people get vaccinated as soon as possible, but for other countries in need, we also try our best to provide vaccine help," said Wu, who is director of the ministry's Africa department.

The U.N. Security Council called on Wednesday for accelerated availability of Covid-19 vaccines for Africa.

China's vaccine diplomacy has been a surprising success: It has pledged roughly half a billion doses of its vaccines to more than 45 countries.

## UK's vaccine programme expands further

## PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

LONDON, 20 MAY



Britain's Prince William has received his first dose of a vaccine to protect against Covid-19 and used the moment to express his gratitude to front-line healthcare workers for their efforts with the country's further expanding vaccine rollout programme.

The 38-year-old second-in-line to the British throne, who had kept his Covid-19 positive test during the first wave of the pandemic in April 2020 under wraps to avoid causing worry, received his jab on Tuesday and released an image on Twitter on Thursday morning.

It is not yet known if his wife, Kate Middleton, has received her first vaccine dose as well. His 95-year-old grandmother, Queen Elizabeth II, and his father Prince Charles, 72, have all spoken about receiving their first doses earlier this year.

William's confirmation comes as the National Health Service (NHS) expanded its vaccination programme fur-

ther from over-36s to now cover all those aged 34 and over. Text messages inviting people to book a vaccination will be sent to those aged 34 and 35 from Thursday. Younger groups in their thirties are expected to be invited over the next few days and weeks, with all adults expected to be eligible from next month. This is incredible news and means we remain on track to hit our target of offering a vaccine to all adults by the end of July, said UK Health Secretary Matt Hancock.

The minister had told a Downing Street briefing on

that there is increasing confidence that the vaccines are effective against all variants, including the B1.617.2 variant first discovered in India currently under strict monitoring in the UK.

"We're not getting the respect and now pay that we deserve. I'm just sick of it. So I've handed in my resignation," McGee said.

The government has proposed 1 per cent pay rise for NHS staff this year.

McGee also told the programme, which will be broadcast on May 24, that "a lot of nurses" felt the government "hadn't led very effectively" and that there had been "indecisiveness" and "so many mixed messages".

## 35 Republicans buck Trump, back Capitol riot probe

## ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON, 20 MAY



Thirty-five House Republicans joined Democrats Wednesday in voting to create a bipartisan commission to investigate the January 6 attack on the Capitol, risking the wrath of former President Donald Trump and flouting GOP leaders who condemned the proposal as unfairly partisan and unneeded.

The Republican mavericks were led by New York Rep. John Katko, who wrote the measure with Homeland Security Committee Chairman Bennie Thompson, D-Miss. Katko, that panel's top Republican, was battling two tides that have overwhelmed Congress in recent years: the nearly overwhelming potency Trump still has among Republicans and a jagged-edged partisanship that often

confounds even mundane legislation.

I encourage all members, Republicans and Democrats alike, to put down their swords for once, just for once, and support this bill," said Katko.

A moderate and a former prosecutor, Katko defended the proposed commission as a fair and needed step toward

understanding the riot, how it happened and what security improvements the Capitol needs to prevent a future assault.

The 35 defectors represented a relatively modest but still significant proportion of House Republicans, of whom 175 opposed the legislation. Their defiance under-

scored the party's rift as some lawmakers supported an investigation of the shocking and violent Capitol attack while leaders tried to avoid enraging the former president, whose support they believe they'll need to win House control in the 2022 elections.

The Democratic-run House approved the measure 252-175 and sent it to the Senate, where Democrats face an uphill fight to garner at least 10 Republican "yes" votes they will need to prevail.

Three Republicans spoke in favour of the legislation: Katko and Fred Upton and Peter Meijer of Michigan.

All were among the 10 who'd voted days after the attack to impeach Trump for encouraging his supporters to attack the Capitol. Trump was later acquitted by the Senate. If not for resistance by the Capitol Police, Who knows

how many of our heads would have been swinging on those gallows that members of the mob erected outside the building, Upton said.

Meijer, a freshman, took what seemed veiled shots at Trump, House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., and some of his G.O.P. colleagues.

Without mentioning names, Meijer said the attack occurred "with the encouragement of prominent elected officials." He said some who initially criticized the attack "have walked back their words or softened their speech."

Meijer added, "More troubling, there has been an active effort to whitewash and rewrite the shameful events of that day to avoid accountability."

The measure would create a 10-member commission with five members appointed by each party to investigate the Capitol riot.

## HELLFIRE



Fire burns among houses during a wildfire in the village of Schinos, near Corinth, Greece, late Wednesday, May 19, 2021. AGENCIES

Dutch court orders Ghosn to repay salary

## ASSOCIATED PRESS

AMSTERDAM, 20 MAY

A Dutch court on Thursday rejected fugitive auto executive Carlos Ghosn's wrongful dismissal claim against an Amsterdam-based alliance between Nissan and Mitsubishi and ordered him to repay nearly \$6 million salary he received in 2018. Ghosn vowed to appeal.

The ruling came in a case in which Ghosn sought to have his 2018 sacking from Nissan-Mitsubishi BV overturned and demanded 15 million euros (\$16.5 million) in compensation. The court in Amsterdam rejected his claims, saying he did not have a valid contract with the company at the time.

The salary he was ordered to repay covers payments made to him by the Dutch joint venture from April until November 2018. Nissan's decision to fire Ghosn after he was accused of financial misconduct in Japan. AP

## Sarkozy goes on trial over 2012 campaign financing

## ASSOCIATED PRESS

PARIS, 20 MAY

Former French President Nicolas Sarkozy goes on trial on Thursday on charges that his unsuccessful 2012 re-election bid was illegally financed, a scandal that has thrown his conservative party into turmoil.

Sarkozy, 66, is facing allegations that he spent almost twice the maximum legal amount of 22.5 million euros (\$27.5 million) on the presidential race he lost to Socialist Francois Hollande. He has denied wrongdoing.

Sarkozy, who was president from 2007 to 2012, faces up to one year in prison and a fine of \$4,580, if found guilty.

The trial, initially scheduled to start in March but postponed because one of the lawyers was hospitalized with Covid-19, is scheduled to last until June 22.

The proceedings will get underway less than three months after Sarkozy was convicted of corruption and influence peddling in another case. He has appealed that verdict.

Following several scandals, French law since 1990 has strictly limited political campaign spending.

According to the judicial investigation in his case, Sarkozy indisputably benefited from fraud that allowed him to have, during his 2012 campaign, resources much superior to what the law authorized.

An investigative magistrate concluded that Sarkozy and his close entourage decided to hold spectacular and expensive rallies. The campaign's total cost allegedly reached at least \$52 million.

The investigation did not establish whether Sarkozy allegedly participated in trying to cover up the over-spending, which included forging invoices, or ordered fraudulent actions himself.

## Oxford college to keep statue of Rhodes

## LONDON, 20 MAY

The governing body of a college at Oxford University said Thursday it will not take down the statue of Victorian imperialist Cecil Rhodes on its facade despite the recommendation of a specially appointed commission.

Oriel College's governing body said there were regulatory and financial challenges and that it would focus more time and energy on improving educational equality, diversity and inclusion amongst its student cohort and academic community. The decision follows a long-running campaign for the removal of the statue of a man who made a fortune in the late 19th century from gold and diamond mines where miners laboured in brutal conditions.

The decision represents somewhat of a U-turn by the college. The commission did not establish whether Sarkozy allegedly participated in trying to cover up the over-spending, which included forging invoices, or ordered fraudulent actions himself.

end of last year. The group cautioned that the figures were likely a significant underestimate because Covid-19 travel restrictions impeded the collection of data.

It's shocking that someone was forced to flee their home inside their own country every single second last year, said NRC secretary-general Jan Egeland. We are failing to protect the world's most vulnerable people from conflict and disasters.

# 'I can't not tell the truth'

In this interview, *Moonlight* director Barry Jenkins gets candid about his new series *The Underground Railroad* and his next directorial venture, a sequel to *The Lion King*

JAMES MOTTRAM

**F**our words to make Barry Jenkins shudder: Make America Great Again. "I think when you say that, there's got to be some kind of cavity or some vacuum," says the filmmaker, visibly perturbed at the thought of Donald Trump's divisive 2016 presidential campaign slogan. "Because we're not acknowledging a very particular element of American history; we're not acknowledging a very particular element in the foundation of what this country was built on."

That "particular element" is slavery – the backdrop to his latest work, *The Underground Railroad*, a 10-part Amazon series adapted from the Pulitzer Prize-winning 2016 book by Colson Whitehead. Following his last two movies, the Oscar-winning drama *Moonlight* and his equally accomplished James Baldwin adaptation *If Beale Street Could Talk*, this latest project confirms Jenkins, if we didn't already know it, as one of America's most potent directors.

When we talk over *Zoom*, the 41-year-old is a lively presence, denim-clad and yet to sound weary when it comes to answering questions about the show's more violent episodes. *The Underground Railroad* focuses on Cora (South African-born newcomer Thuso Mbedu), an enslaved woman who makes a bid for freedom from the Georgia plantation where she lives and endures. Like Steve McQueen's Oscar-winning *12 Years A Slave* before it, Jenkins' series does not flinch when it comes to graphic brutality.

One man is strung up, whipped and burnt alive. It's truly horrifying and will probably put some off the rest of the show. "I don't know what to say to people who can't get past that or can't take that," says Jenkins. Nothing was "falsified or over-sensationalised", he says. Nevertheless, he deliberately didn't adapt Whitehead's book into a movie for the cinemas. With TV, you have control. "You get to a scene that's too much, you can pause and fast forward through it. You can choose who you want to watch it with, and you can choose when you want to watch it."

Jenkins is all too aware of the fate that befell recent Amazon show *Them*, the story of a Black family that moves into an all-white LA neighbourhood and is terrorised by supernatural forces. The phrase "trauma porn" was bandied

around on social media, with many complaining the show was exploiting racial prejudice for entertainment. Similarly, Jenkins read advance comments online about *The Underground Railroad*, with people saying they didn't want to see depictions of slavery; "I only want positive imagery" was the cry.

If *The Underground Railroad* offers a "different kind of trauma", as he puts it, Jenkins felt it essential not to buckle. "If we assume that we can't look at these images, if we can't bear witness to this brutality, we risk erasing my ancestors, and we risk this vacuum, this chasm, this cavity." He pauses. "Because I can't not tell the truth. I can't not tell the truth." He points out that only one-and-a-half episodes take place on the plantation. "We just barely scratched the surface of what this world was actually like, of how militaristic it actually was."

Indeed, Cora's journey swaps out grisly realism for metaphorical flights of fancy. The title refers to the network of safe houses and secret routes that aided runaway slaves in the American South in the 19th century, reimagined by Whitehead as a literal subterranean train track. The locomotive that spirits Cora from state to state, allowing her to witness first-hand the ills of American society in this harrowing odyssey, also took Jenkins back to his childhood in Miami, Florida.

When he first heard the phrase "underground railroad", he took it literally. "I saw Black people on trains underground in a very grounded way. I just knew it was real. As a child – and I grew up in a very hard way – you just don't have those filters: 'Oh, this thing is impossible.' None of it. And so, I heard it, and I thought, 'Oh, yeah, of course. Of course, we built trains underground.'"

Reading Whitehead's book, he wanted to "lean into this feeling" he had as a child. Jenkins's tough childhood is well-documented. His mother was addicted to crack, and he grew up in the care of a woman named Minerva, who also looked after his mother, sharing a two-bedroom apartment with seven others. Where he's from, "the idea of having a career in anything doesn't really occur to you". At school, he hoped to make it to the NFL. He only came to study film at Florida State University after seeing a sign for the programme on his way to a football game.

Jenkins plundered early memories for *Moonlight* (his second feature following 2008's *Medicine for Melancholy*). The coming-of-age story of a young African American struggling with his sexuality and identity in Miami's Liberty City, this sensuous tri-part tale touched a nerve, arriving after the #OscarsSoWhite storm had led to a call for greater industry diversity. Then it happened – on Oscar night, Warren Beatty and Faye Dunaway read out the wrong card, falsely announcing musical *La La Land* – and not *Moonlight* – the Best Picture winner.

As Jenkins has noted, *Moonlight*'s win brought further unsavoury prejudices to the fore "in slightly sinister way" – the "Oh, it's because it was the Black film" train of thought, as he puts it. Just as *Moonlight* began the festival tour that ultimately led to the Oscars in 2016, Jenkins optioned *The Underground Railroad*, meaning the project



Jenkins while filming the new series  
Thuso Mbedu in a still from *The Underground Railroad*

was on a parallel track to the racial divisions fissuring in Trump's America. "There was so much fearmongering and just so much darkness over the last four years," he says.

Jenkins was well into production when the Black Lives Matter protests erupted last year, but even before that, the atmosphere in America simply strengthened his belief that he couldn't soften the tougher aspects of Whitehead's book. "Otherwise 30 years from now, some other people are going to be still on the street shouting, 'Make America Great Again'." He feels hopeful, at least, with Joe Biden now in the White House. "I do think people's hearts and minds are expanding even just a little bit right now."

Jenkins's next planned movie – a sequel to *The Lion King* – may just reflect this uplift. He watched the original 1994 Disney cartoon "literally hun-

dreds of times" with his nephews, but the chance to make a follow-up to Jon Favreau's 2019 hit remake, created using state-of-the-art "virtual reality" tools, was intriguing.

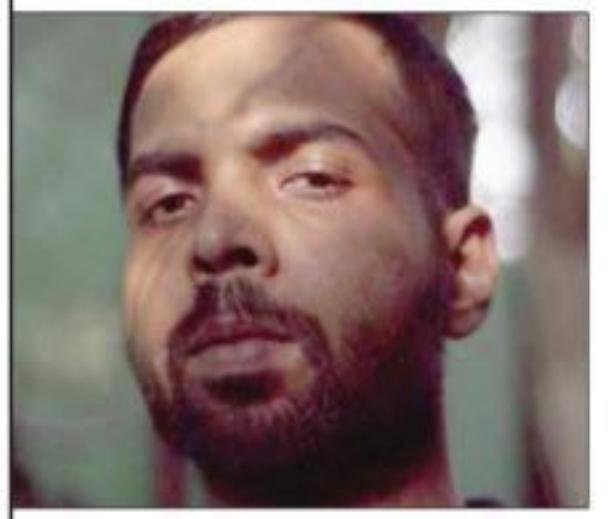
Jenkins was also encouraged by Chloé Zhao, who has followed her Oscar-winning *Nomadland* with another Disney blockbuster, the forthcoming Marvel superhero ensemble *Eternals*. While some will doubtless see this as a worrying trend in cinema, as art-house darlings are snapped up by the studios for their latest cash cows, Jenkins sees it as vital to keep the door wide open for people of colour to direct on this grand, operatic scale. If he's doing it, it'll help filmmakers in the future get the same opportunities.

*The Underground Railroad* is streaming now on Amazon Prime Video

The independent

## SNIPPETS

### Dream role



Casting director-turned-actor Abhishek Banerjee would love to play Al Pacino's iconic character, Tony Montana from Brian De Palma's 1983 classic *Scarface*.

"I've been fascinated with Al Pacino all my life. Someone like Tony Montana in *Scarface* – that's the kind of dream role I have. If I ever get to play something like that, I am sure I am going to kill it. The energy, the gruesomeness of such a character is always very exciting. It is very liberating and helps you vent your inner anger," said Banerjee.

After working in theatre in Delhi, he arrived in Mumbai around 12 years ago with the dream of becoming an actor. He took up casting direction in order to support himself in the expensive city. His life changed after he garnered critical appreciation for his performance in the 2018 horror comedy *Stree*.

"Before *Stree*, I used to doubt myself as an actor. Filmmakers did not know me. No matter how talented you are, till the time people trust you, I don't think you can showcase your talent. *Stree* gave me that opportunity. Whatever I am today is because of that film."

The 36-year-old actor is not interested in confining himself to Hindi cinema. Rather, he wants pan-India recognition.

On the work front, Banerjee features in the latest Netflix anthology *Ajeeb Daastaans*. The actor has his kitty full with upcoming projects like *Dostana 2*, Akash Khurana's *Rashmi Rocket*, Amar Kaushik's *Bhediya*, Umesh Shukla's *Aankh Micholi* and Satram Ramani's *Helmet*.

### Luna laments



Harry Potter star Evanna Lynch has revealed which moment from the books she wished had not been cut from the film adaptations.

Throughout the franchise, Lynch portrayed the eccentric and kindhearted Luna Lovegood. Her father Xenophilius Lovegood was played by Rhys Ifans.

The 29-year-old recently revealed which scene from the sixth novel, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, she was particularly sad to see cut from the Warner Bros film adaptations.

Lynch told Insider that she felt the excluded moment, which takes place aboard the Hogwarts Express train, was crucial to depicting her character's personality.

"Luna says something like, 'Oh, people don't expect you to be friends with us, they expect you to have cooler friends,'" the actor recalled.

"And Harry's like, 'You are cool,' and she's like, 'Oh, thank you, that's really nice.'"

Speaking about why she believes it is an "important moment," Lynch explained, "She is someone who's so at peace with herself and accepts herself no matter what, but she really cares about her friends."

"She's got a really tender heart," said the actor.

Lynch was speaking to promote the soon-to-be-opened Harry Potter flagship store in New York City.

The new store, which is due to open its doors on 3 June, has been described as immersive, and will span three floors and over 21,000 sq ft.

—The independent



posters of films and film stars, and the back office of a studio classify a self-reflexive film as a special genre.

It extends to characters munching

popcorn and watching a movie in a darkened theatre in Farhan Akhtar's *Dil Chahta Hai* (2001), where one of the three couples goes to watch a movie

## WHERE REEL MEETS REAL

Sandip Sarkar's new web series, *Next*, is an addition to the rich legacy of India's self-reflexive cinema

and is transported into the song-dance number on screen. The director takes viewers down memory lane, with a quick flashback to the manner in which films pictured song-dance scenes through the 1950s into contemporary times. Director Kalpana Lajmi plays a similar celluloid tribute to film song sequences of old times in *Darmiyaan* (1997). The "casting couch" is also referred to in such films.

Sarkar, who has written the story of *Next*, says, "We are trying to show how the lines between real and reel life get blurred at times. Actors are often coerced into choosing paths that are not necessarily ethical or morally right. Dia in *Next*, for example, crosses the line of propriety and takes the journey through compromise though her out-of-work husband and shocked father do not like the choices she has made."

On the face of it, the title *Next* carries the core of the story unfolding in the web series. The main story is about how and why successful actors of the film industry are being killed one after the other. Singer Usha Uthup has belted out the title song and this is another point of attraction in the series.

It has a wonderful cast comprising Sabyasachi Chakraborty, Chandan Sen and Badshah Moitra. Others in the cast include Sarkar – already an established actress on television and cinema – who portrays the central character of Dia. Samadarshi Dutta plays her husband, Chatterjee appears as Dia's father, with Biswajit Chakraborty.

Said to have been based on a true

Guru Dutt's *Kaagaz Ke Phool* (1959) is perhaps the most telling among self-reflexive films made in India. It is a subtle tribute to the glorious days of the studio era, using its history from about the 1930s to the 1940s as its backdrop.

An early shot in the film reveals Suresh leaning from the balcony of a cinema hall where *Vidyapati* (1937), an unforgettable musical romance, is playing to a full house. The films that Suresh is shown making or having made in the film are the ones that actually exist in the archives of Indian cinema.

Sudipto Chatterjee's *Pankh* (2010) launched an incisive attack on over-ambitious mothers who push their kids into films to play roles that go against their biological sex. The five-year-old boy forced to portray little girls' roles becomes Baby Kusum, a child star. But when he comes back 20 years later to try his luck as a hero, he fails. He is constantly dogged by his mother's vicarious obsession to make him a star, his hallucinations and conversations with an alter-ego – a fantasy woman – and his conflict about his gender identity as a grown man.

Said to have been based on a true story of a child star, the film could have defined a new insight into the industry. It did not because it was not publicised at all and was badly made.

Let us hope *Next* turns out to be a thriller with a heart that beats for cinema people.

The writer is a senior film critic



## 'CHANGE IMMINENT'

Barcelona president Joan Laporta (photo, left) has said changes are imminent at the club as they approach the end of a disappointing season. Barca can at best finish third in La Liga, having seen Atletico Madrid race towards the title with arch-rivals Real Madrid also above them.

For more updates

www.thestatesman.com

## THUMBNAILS

**Medical cushion:** The government has decided to widen its medical insurance cover for sportspersons by increasing the number of beneficiaries, including contractual coaches and members of the support staff, from this year in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.



**Bhuvneshwar bereaved:** India pacer Bhuvneshwar Kumar's father, Kiran Pal Singh on Thursday died at his Meerut residence after battling liver cancer for the last eight months. He was 63 and is survived by his wife Indresh Devi and son and daughter Bhuvneshwar and Rekha respectively.

## Now, Maradona's doctors face murder charge

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
BUENOS AIRES, 20 MAY

Seven people under investigation over the November death of Argentine football legend Diego Maradona (in photo) face charges of premeditated murder, AFP has learned from a judicial source.

The accused - which include Maradona's neurosurgeon Leopoldo Luque, psychiatrist Agustina Cosa-chov and psychologist Carlos Diaz - face eight to 25 years in prison if found guilty. The indictment is based on findings by a board of experts into Maradona's death from a heart attack last year, a source from the San Isidro Attorney General's Office, which is leading the investigation, said on Wednesday.

That report concluded that the footballing icon had received inadequate medical care and was left to his fate

for a "prolonged, agonising period" before his death, which came just weeks after undergoing brain surgery

on a blood clot.

"After so many injustices, the case has come full circle," the source told AFP.

The accused are prohibited from leaving the country and must appear ahead of an inquiry between 31 May and 14 June. The legal proceedings were prompted by a complaint filed by two of Maradona's five daughters against Luque, whom they had blamed for their father's deteriorating condition after the brain surgery. Prosecutors believe Maradona's death was not the result of malpractice or negligent actions of his doctors, but that they knew the former football star would die and did nothing to prevent it.

The prosecutors obtained a series of messages and audio that show that the

medical team was aware that Maradona was using alcohol, psychiatric medication and marijuana in the last months of his life. Among the conclusions of the report, the medical board said that "the signs of life risk" shown by the former Naples and Barcelona star were ignored, and that his care in his final weeks was "plagued by deficiencies and irregularities."

The recriminations and accusations over Maradona's death are taking place alongside another case, over his disputed inheritance, involving his five children, his brothers and Matias Morla, his former lawyer. Maradona is an idol to millions of Argentines after he inspired the South American country to only their second World Cup triumph in 1986.

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## 'Dravid likely to go with team to Sri Lanka'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI/SOUTHAMPTON, 20 MAY

National Cricket Academy chief and former India captain Rahul Dravid (in photo) is set to be the head coach of the Indian white-ball squad that will tour Sri Lanka in July.

Dravid, who stopped travelling with the India A and U-19 teams after taking over as NCA head in Bengaluru, will be the head coach of the second-string side in the absence of Ravi Shastri, who will be busy with the Test side in England at the same time.

"He will travel with the team to Sri Lanka in all likelihood," a source in the Board of Control for Cricket in India said. Bowling coach Paras Mhambre will be part of the

support staff. India are expected to play three One-Day Internationals and as many Twenty20 Internationals in Sri Lanka in July though the schedule has not been announced yet.

The squad will have plenty of fringe players and some white-ball specialists. Hardik Pandya, Shikhar Dhawan and Shreyas Iyer are in the running for the team's captaincy. Iyer, though, has to be declared fit after undergoing shoulder surgery.

## Crowds for final

The World Test Championship final between India and New Zealand in Southampton will be held in the presence of 4000 spectators, Hampshire head Rod Bransgrove has said.

The Covid-19 situation has improved in the UK and



from 18 June.

"We're staging a four-day county game from today and for the first time since September 2019 fans were allowed

for a cricket match in England. The other county games of this round will begin tomorrow and those games too will see crowds," Bransgrove said yes-

## Fresh call for WC to be shifted from India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
SYDNEY, 20 MAY

Former Australia batsman Mike Hussey (in photo), who tested positive for Covid-19 in the Indian Premier League's so-called bio-secure bubble, has advocated moving this year's Twenty20 World Cup from India to the United Arab Emirates as teams will be "nervous" about travelling to the sub-continent because of the raging pandemic.

Batting coach Hussey was among three members of the Chennai Super Kings contingent who contracted the virus during the IPL, which had to be suspended after infections had been detected in four teams.

"I think it's going to be very difficult in my view to play that tournament in India," Hussey told Fox Cricket upon his return to Sydney, where he is undergoing a 14-day quarantine. Hussey had also spent two

weeks isolating in India after testing positive for the virus in New Delhi from where he was taken to Chennai in an air ambulance. "We're talking about eight teams in the IPL. I think there is probably a similar number, maybe more, teams coming in from overseas (for the T20 World Cup), there'd be more venues."

As I said earlier, if they're playing in different cities, that is when the risk goes up. I think they'll have to have some pretty big contingency plans, perhaps looking at the UAE or somewhere like that could host the World T20. I think there will be a lot of cricket boards around the world that'd be pretty neat."

## 'If you do piecemeal investigation, it will keep biting you on backside'

AGENCIES  
MELBOURNE, 20 MAY

Former England captain Michael Vaughan has described Cricket Australia's probe into the 2018 ball-tampering controversy as "piecemeal investigation", saying it has left many questions unanswered and will keep coming back to bite the governing body.

The trio of then Australian skipper Steve Smith, his deputy David Warner and Cameron Bancroft were banned for their roles in the ball tampering scandal which happened during the Cape Town Test in 2018.

The scandal, however, came back to the spotlight after Bancroft recently stated that whether the Australian bowlers knew of the plan to use a sandpaper on the ball during the Cape Town Test against South Africa, was "self-explanatory."

today."

"Not many former professionals I have spoken to believe something like that would be confined to just three people. There might be some in a dressing room who may not like it and disagree with a course of action, but say nothing because they do not want to go against the captain. I can see how that happens," Vaughan wrote in the Sydney Morning Herald.

"Ultimately, this shows what happens if you do a piecemeal investigation and leave questions unanswered. It will keep biting you on the backside and does not do anyone any good."

Former Australian skipper Michael Clarke too stated that it won't be "surprising" if the bowlers knew about the plot and criticised the cricket body for "sweeping it under the carpet".

The Australian bowling quartet comprising Pat Cummins, Josh Hazlewood, Mitchell Starc and spinner Nathan Lyon, who were all part of the team during the ill-fated series, issued a joint statement on Tuesday to claim innocence and call for an end to "rumour-mongering and innuendo".

Bancroft, who was caught using sandpaper on the ball and was handed a nine-month ban, later reportedly claimed that he was left flustered by the unexpected line of questioning and that there was no malice behind his remarks.

Vaughan said it is now difficult for Cricket Australia to ban more players in retrospect.

"Cricket Australia probably felt it looked into it properly and hoped everyone would move on. A lot of damage was done to Australian cricket's reputation and to those involved," he wrote.

## Singh afflicted

NEW DELHI/CHANDIGARH, 20 MAY

Milkha Singh has tested positive for Covid-19 and is in isolation in his Chandigarh residence. The 91-year-old, popularly known as the Flying Sikh, is asymptomatic and claims to be in "high spirits."

He said: "A couple of our domestics tested positive for Covid-19 and is in isolation in his Chandigarh residence. The 91-year-old, popularly known as the Flying Sikh, is asymptomatic and claims to be in "high spirits."

At the next one, Hamilton damaged his Mercedes trying to fend off Verstappen's superb start into the first corner of the Emilia Romagna Grand Prix. The nature of the wheel-to-wheel racing has thrilled fans, but also prompted Hamilton to say he's

## Hamilton and Verstappen continue F1 rivalry



After four close races between Formula One champion Lewis Hamilton (in photo) and title rival Max Verstappen, the tension looks set to keep rising at this weekend's Monaco Grand Prix.

Hamilton is aiming for a record eighth F1 title to move one ahead of Michael Schumacher, and he leads the championship by 14 points ahead of Verstappen, who is seeking his first Hamilton leads Verstappen 3-1 in wins so far, but each race has seen them finish 1-2. Verstappen could have won the first in Bahrain only to give position back after going outside of track limits near the end.

Hamilton has already sealed a record-extending 100th pole position and is aiming for his 99th win. He puts his longevity down to a calm approach. "I am more long-term, it's aamarathon-not-a-sprint sort of mentality, which is ultimately

why I have the stats I have," the 36-year-old British driver said. "I will continue with that and do everything to make sure we avoid connecting (on the track)."

But as the youngest winner of an F1 race at 18, and with 11 race wins already at the age of 23, Verstappen did not take very kindly to Hamilton's claim that he was trying to impress people. "I have nothing to prove and avoiding contact goes both ways. So we have (both) done well," the Dutch driver said. "We race hard, we avoided the contact both sides. Let's hope we can keep doing that and keep racing hard against each other."

Verstappen has never won the Monaco GP but expects Red Bull to be strong in Saturday's qualifying on a track where taking pole is crucial, since overtaking is extremely hard on the sinewy 3.4-kilometer (2.1-mile) street circuit. "We've had a competitive start, so I just hope that it's going to be the same here," Verstappen said. "I'm sure that we will have a com-

petitive car."

Hamilton expects a strong challenge from Red Bull, which won in Monaco three years ago and has increased its speed since then even though it still falls short of Mercedes.

"This is a track that has always been strong for them and given how close the gap is between us, you can imagine this weekend they could be ahead," Hamilton said. "But we are going to do everything we can to make sure that is not the case."

Hamilton's teammate Valtteri Bottas has taken one pole position but has yet to challenge for a win this season, and the Finnish driver's title hopes already look bleak in what could be his last season with Mercedes. He is third overall with 47 points, exactly half the tally of Hamilton, who won the previous race here in 2019.

It was cancelled last year because of the coronavirus but some fans will be allowed in this time, starting at Thursday's two practice sessions.

## Spanish league ends with title finale, possible farewells

AGENCIES  
BARCELONA, 20 MAY

Two of Spain's most modest stadiums are set to offer scenes of joy and sorrow on Saturday.

Atletico Madrid can ensure it clinches its first Spanish league title in seven years with a win at Valladolid, while Lionel Messi and Ronald Koeman could participate in their last game for Barcelona when they visit the already relegated Eibar.

Atletico enters the final round of the competition with a two-point lead over defending champion Real Madrid. If Diego Simeone's side fails to win at Valladolid, Madrid can retain its title by beating Villarreal. Madrid holds the tiebreaker advantage with Atletico in case they finish level on points.

In a provincial city 190 kilometers (118 miles) north of Madrid, Valladolid needs a

team to complete their quarantine in India and arrive here. We are ready to host them," Bransgrove said.

## Pink-ball Test

The Indian women's cricket team will compete in their first day-night Test from 30 September when they tour Australia this year. The match will be played in Perth, which has not hosted a day-night game as yet, Cricket Australia said after BCCI secretary Jay Shah had made an initial announcement.

The Indian team, currently quarantining in Mumbai for two weeks, depart for the UK on 22 June. Virat Kohli and his men will undergo a 10-day quarantine in Southampton but are expected to be allowed to train during the period.

"We are waiting for the Indian women's cricket team to complete their quarantine in India and arrive here. We are ready to host them," Bransgrove said.

will play their first Test in seven years from 16 June in England. The team will also play three ODIs (19-24 September) and as many T20Is (7-11 October) Down Under.

India last played a Test against Australia in 2006. The Perth match will be only the second day-night Test in the history of women's cricket. The only one played so far was between Australia and England at Sydney in November 2017.

The match ended in a draw. Preparing for both the England and Australia Tests will be a challenge since women do not play with the red ball even on the domestic circuit.

England and Australia are the only teams which regularly play Test cricket, mainly against each other in the Women's Ashes.

have a preparatory camp inside a bio-bubble here before its first match on June 3 against hosts Qatar. The other two matches are against Bangladesh (June 7) and Afghanistan (June 15).

The round of matches is being played in Doha in view of the COVID-19 pandemic situation which doesn't allow the original format of home and away matches.

The Indian team, fourth in Group E with three points, is already out of contention for a World Cup berth but it is still in the reckoning for the 2023 Asian Cup in China.

The AIFF thanked Qatar Football Association (QFA) for allowing the team to arrive much before the matches and have a preparatory camp in Doha, the All India Football Federation said in a release.

"The squad will, thereafter, be allowed to kick-off their preparatory camp as part of their preparation for the 2023 Asian Cup in China.

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Villarreal will face Manchester United in the Europa League final on Wednesday in Gdansk, Poland, aiming to win the first major title in club history. If it beats the English powerhouse, it will also qualify for the Champions League.

In the Spanish league, Villarreal is currently in seventh place, a spot that earns a berth for next season's new Europa Conference League.