



PEOPLE'S PARLIAMENT, ALWAYS IN SESSION



STALIN TAKES LEGAL ACTION AGAINST DMK MEN FOR VANDALISM

P4



NETANYAHU FACES MIDNIGHT DEADLINE TO FORM COALITION GOVT

P9



'MARSHAL ALL RESOURCES TO FIGHT COVID SURGE IN INDIA'

P10



MUCH ADO ABOUT SPECTATORS IN TOKYO OLYMPICS

P12

WEATHER

Partly cloudy sky. The maximum and minimum temperatures would be around 40 and 25 degrees Celsius respectively.

RAINFALL: Nil

RELATIVE HUMIDITY

Max: 71% Min: 23%

TEMPERATURE

Max: 41.6°C (+3) Min: 24.7°C (0)

SUN RISES

05:37 hrs

MOON RISES

02:49 hrs

SUN SETS

18:59 hrs

MOON SETS

13:21 hrs

THUMBNAILS



A medic administers Covid-19 vaccine at Sarawati Vihar polyclinic, in the Capital on Tuesday. ■ SNS

J&K ex-Guv Jagmohan passes away: Former Union minister and Jammu and Kashmir Governor Jagmohan, whose tough measures as an administrator in various roles won him many admirers but also drew criticism from some quarters, passed away following an illness. He was 93. The J&K administration has announced a three-day state mourning till Thursday on his demise. Jagmohan was first appointed the erstwhile state's Governor in 1984 and completed his five-year tenure.

PS

Kangana's Twitter account permanently suspended: Twitter on Tuesday said it has permanently suspended Kangana Ranaut's account for repeatedly violating its rules. "We've been clear that we will take strong enforcement action on behavior that has the potential to lead to offline harm. The referenced account has been permanently suspended for repeated violations of our Hateful Conduct policy and Abuse Behaviour policy," a spokesperson said.

(SEE P4)

India's Covid tally crosses 2 cr-mark

Receives essential medical supplies from US, Ireland, UAE and Kuwait

SINS & PTI
NEW DELHI, 4 MAY



Relatives mourn the death of a Covid-19 victim, at a crematorium in New Delhi on Tuesday.

India's total tally of Covid-19 cases crossed the 2-crore mark with over 50 lakh infections being added in just 15 days. The total tally of cases in the country mounted to 2,02,82,833 with 3,57,229 new infections being reported in a day, while the death toll increased to 2,22,408 with 3,449 new fatalities, according to the Union health ministry data updated today.

Registering a steady increase, the active cases have climbed to 34,47,133; the number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 1,66,13,292, while the case fatality rate was recorded at 1.10 per cent, the data stated.

The 3,449 new fatalities include 567 from Maharashtra, 448 from Delhi.

Foreign supplies arrive: India today received essential medical supplies from several countries, including the US, Ireland, United Arab Emirates and Kuwait, as hospitals across the country continued to reel under an exponential growth in Covid-19 cases.

Seven tankers each carrying 20 metric tonnes of Liquid Medical Oxygen (LMO) arrive at Mundra Port in Gujarat in the first such shipment of LMO to India. A special flight from the US brought to Delhi

the country's fifth consignment of medical aid comprising 545 oxygen concentrators.

The second shipment of medical supplies from Ireland, included two oxygen generators, 548 oxygen concentrators, 365 ventilators and other medical equipment.

An Indian Air Force aircraft carrying 450 oxygen cylinders arrived in Chennai from the United Kingdom, External Affairs ministry spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said.

India also received a shipment of 282 oxygen cylinders, 60 oxygen concentrators, ventilators and other medical supplies from Kuwait.

Under the additional package, Denmark is sending to India 53 ventilators and Spain is supplying 119 oxygen concentrators and 145 ventilators.

US travel ban comes into force: The travel ban imposed by US President Joe Biden for people coming from India

Nearly 16 crore got jobs: The cumulative number of Covid-19 vaccine doses administered in the country has crossed



15.89 crore on Tuesday with more than four lakh people aged between 18 to 44 years vaccinated in the Phase-3 drive.

A total of 4,06,339 beneficiaries of the age group between 18 and 44 years received their first dose of Covid vaccine across 12 states and Union Territories.

Cumulatively, 15,89,3,291 vaccine doses have been administered through 23,35,822 sessions so far, as per the provisional report till 7 am today, said ministry of health and family welfare (MoHFW).

While 4,06,339 beneficiaries aged between 18-44 years have received first dose, those aged between 45 and 60 account for 5,30,50,669 who were administered first dose and 41,42,786 injected the second.

Students seeking to commence studies in the fall, academics, journalists and individuals who provide critical infrastructure support in countries affected by a geographic Covid-19 restriction may qualify for the exception, it said.

The new travel restrictions have been imposed for an indefinite period and will require another presidential proclamation to end it.

Certain categories of students, academics, journalists and individuals have been exempted from the ban, according to the US State Department.

US nationals, those having green cards, their non-citizen spouses and children below 21 years, are among the various categories exempted from the restrictions.

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US nationals, those having green cards, their non

CM: 2 months free ration for 72 lakh beneficiaries

Delhi govt to also give Rs 5K each to 1.56L auto, taxi drivers to help them tide over Covid crisis

SNS & PTI

NEW DELHI, 4 MAY

Amid the continuing Covid-induced lockdown in Delhi, chief minister Arvind Kejriwal today announced that his AAP government will provide free ration for two months to all 72 lakh ration card holders in the city besides giving a financial assistance of Rs 5,000 each to auto-rickshaw and taxi drivers to help them tide over the current crisis.

However, the decision to provide free ration does not mean that the lockdown imposed in the city to break the chain of coronavirus transmission will continue for two months, the CM said during an online briefing.

The national capital, for now, will remain under lockdown till 10 May to check the current furious wave of coronavirus which has pushed its healthcare system to the brink of collapse and overwhelmed its crematoria and cemeteries.

"The government decision to help the poor with free ration for two months and to all 1.56 lakh auto-rickshaw and taxi drivers with an aid of Rs



5000 does not mean that the lockdown will continue for two months. Let us hope that the lockdown does not continue for such a longer period," Kejriwal said.

He said the lockdown had been imposed because there was no better way to control the surge of the coronavirus infection.

"We realise that the auto-rickshaw and taxi drivers are poor people like daily-wagers who have been hit hard by the lockdown. They need financial help during these difficult hours. Of course, what we are giving them is a small amount,

as they must have been earning much more than this," the CM said.

"We imposed the lockdown to contain the spread of Covid, and I am hopeful that we will end this as soon as possible," he said.

"The Delhi government provided financial assistance of Rs 5,000 to each of the 1.56 lakh auto and taxi drivers during the last year's lockdown and will do so again this time to help them," he maintained.

The Delhi government imposed a lockdown in the national capital to check the spread of Covid. However,

lockdown creates a financial crisis for people, especially for the poor and daily wage earners who find it difficult to run their homes, the CM noted.

Last week, the Delhi government had announced financial assistance of Rs 5,000 for construction workers, he said.

Describing the current situation in Delhi as a "very difficult time", Kejriwal appealed to people to help each other in finding hospital beds, oxygen, medicines and provide food wherever needed.

"We are undergoing a very difficult time and the second wave has been extremely dangerous. There is so much despair and sadness all around. This is the time to become good human beings and help each other," he said.

Kejriwal also called on all political parties to help people. "Appeal to all political parties to rise above political affiliations and help people irrespective of their class, caste or religion," he said. This is not the time to indulge in politics and everyone, whether they belong to the BJP, Congress or AAP, should help those who have been hit by the pandemic, he added.

"We are undergoing a very difficult time and the second wave has been extremely dangerous. There is so much despair and sadness all around. This is the time to become good human beings and help each other," he said.

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GOI doesn't get it. The only way to stop the spread of Corona now is a full lockdown- with the protection of NYAY for the vulnerable sections

RAHUL GANDHI

CONGRESS LEADER

Capital

'You can put your head in sand like an ostrich, we won't': HC raps Centre on O2 crisis, asks why it shouldn't face contempt

PTI

NEW DELHI, 4 MAY

The Delhi High Court Tuesday directed the Centre to show cause as to why contempt not be initiated against it for failing to comply with order on supply of oxygen to Delhi for treating COVID-19 patients.

"You can put your head in sand like an ostrich, we won't," the high court told the central government.

It added that the Supreme Court has already directed, and now the high court is also saying that the Centre will have to supply 700 MT oxygen daily to Delhi right away by whatever means. We would not hear anything except compliance, an annoyed bench orally observed.

The bench, which heard for nearly five hours the matter relating to oxygen crisis and other COVID-19 related issues that Delhi is grappling with, said, We see grim reality everyday of people not able to secure oxygen or ICU beds in hospitals which have reduced beds due to the gas shortage.

A bench of Justices Vinay Singh and Rekha Palli also rejected the Centre's submission that Delhi was not entitled to 700 metric tonnes of medical oxygen in light of existing medical infrastructure.

It said the Supreme Court's April 30 detailed order directed the central government to provide 700 MT of oxygen per day to Delhi and not just 490 MT.

We had told you contempt is the last thing in our mind but

it is certainly in our mind and don't drive us to that last point. We mean business now. Enough is enough. Be clear on this. We are not going to take no for an answer. There is no way you won't supply 700 MT.

There is Supreme Court order and now we are also saying that you will have to supply 700 MT oxygen daily to Delhi right away by whatever means. We would not hear anything except compliance, an annoyed bench orally observed.

The bench, which heard for nearly five hours the matter relating to oxygen crisis and other COVID-19 related issues that Delhi is grappling with, said, We see grim reality everyday of people not able to secure oxygen or ICU beds in hospitals which have reduced beds due to the gas shortage.

"We, therefore, direct the central government to show cause why contempt not be initiated for not only non-compliance of our order of May as also of order of the Supreme Court dated April 30. To answer the said notice, we direct the presence of Piyush Goyal and Sumita Dawa (senior Central government officers) tomorrow, it said. The bench also said just because the Delhi government earlier demanded less oxygen,

therefore the people of this city should suffer and the Centre will ignore the revised requirement and will let people die.

On the submission of ASG Chetan Sharma that the compliance affidavit of April 30 order will be filed in the Supreme Court tomorrow morning, the bench said it will understand what good a compliance affidavit will be do when as a matter of fact 700 MT of oxygen is not delivered to Delhi. Even the earlier allocated 490 MT and revised 590 MT is not delivered even for a single day.

Sharma submitted that the apex court has not directed supply of 700 MT of oxygen per day to Delhi.

The court disagreed with him and said a plain reading of the top court's orders showed that it had directed the central government to supply 700 MT of liquid medical oxygen by making good the deficit.

The bench noted that the apex court's order recorded Delhi government counsel's submission that as against the demand of 700 MT of oxygen per day, manufacturers have been able to supply only 440 MT.

It said the apex court noted that the projected demand of Delhi in coming days will be 976 MT of oxygen by increasing

the medical infrastructure and that the situation must be remedied forthwith.

It asked as to what does this direction of the apex court mean and what was the doubt in it. This itself is sufficient to show that the Supreme Court has directed that Delhi should be provided with 700 MT of oxygen per day. If there was any doubt, it could be cleared by further reading of the paragraph.

The bench said the top court had noted the assurance given by Solicitor General Tushar Mehta that the national capital with not suffer and its demands of oxygen will be met.

However, the high court said this assurance has not been met and it has seen how big and small hospitals have been rushing to court on SOS basis due to lack of oxygen to treat critical patients.

It pains us that the aspect of supply of oxygen for treatment of COVID-19 patients in Delhi should be viewed in the way it has been done by the Centre, it said.

It added that on one hand there is need to augment capacities to meet the rising numbers, while on the other hand, the existing infrastructure is crumbling and available beds cannot be put to use.

Classified

PUBLIC NOTIFICATIONS

PUBLIC NOTICE

Miss Lalitlalungi Pachauwa, Nationality-Indian Holder of Indian Passport No. L6782206 and Mr. Paul Ringel, Nationality-German Holder for German Passport No. C4JHTW01F intend getting married at Shanghai, China under The India-Egyptian Marriage Act, 1969, India. Objection, if any may be conveyed to the Consulate General of India, Shanghai, 30 (thirty) days.

Contact: Consul (Consular), ccons.shanghai@mea.gov.in Consulate General of India, 1008, Shanghai International Trade Centre, 200, 1 Yan'an West Road, Shanghai-200336.

People's Republic of China, www.cigshanghai.gov.in. By, Lalitlalungi Pachauwa Nantong, Jiangsu, China

Zothankhuma Advocate Enr. No. D/118/2013

shall be entertained within 15 days from the date hereof of otherwise certified copy of the said deed will be treated as original deed for all purposes which please note.

Shyamal Kumar Jana Advocate 10, K.S. Roy Road, 6th Floor Kolkata-700001 Mob.: 98316-39731

OUR CLIENT intends to purchase from its present owners Sudip Kumar Singh Duddoria, Pratibha Duddoria and Darshan Duddoria All that land measuring 03 cottahs 02 chittacks and 37 square feet, more or less, together with a three storied residential house constructed thereon, measuring a total built-up area of 575 square feet, more or less, situate at Municipal Premises No. P360/1, Hemanta Mukherjee Sarani (previously Municipal Premises No. P360, 700029, P.O.: Sarat Bose Road, P.S.: Lake, within Ward 86 of KMC).

Supriyo Basu & Associates Room No. 48, Ground Floor Temple Chambers 6, Old Post Office Street Kol-700001 Ph.: 8910825107 E-mail:

sourav.banerjee@sba.firm.in

CHANGE OF NAME

I. SABITA Rani Sarkar, of 9206258P, Ex-Hav. Kshitish Chandra Sarkar, resident of Balia Madhyapara, P.O.: Balia, Dist.: Nadia, W.B., Pin-741223 have changed my name & date of birth from Sabita Rani Sarkar (D.O.B.: 22.11.1957) to Sabita Sarkar (D.O.B.: 01.01.1956), vide affidavit dated: 04.2021 before 1st Class (JM) court at Alipore, W.B.

Pinjra Tod (Break the Cage) was founded in 2015 to make hostels and providing guest accommodations less restrictive for women students.

Narwal and Kalita, arrested last year in connection with the communal riots in north east Delhi and in judicial custody presently, are lodged in Central Jail-6 of Tihar.

On the issue of vaccination of the inmates, the prison department told the court that at present only 12 inmates in Tihar's Central Jail-6 were over the age of 45 years and they have been vaccinated.

The court, thereafter, asked the lawyer for the prison department to "take instructions as to the vaccination policy that is being proposed for vaccinating the inmates in the Central Jail-6, Tihar" as "there are greater chances of spreading of the COVID-19 infection within the enclosed premises of the prison".

On holding of online and physical meetings of prisoners with their lawyers or families, the department said that while the latter has been suspended entirely in view of the pandemic, the former was resumed from May 3.

On the requirement of computers in the legal aid centre in the prison, the court asked the Delhi State Legal Services Authority to file a report on how many computers and printers would be required there.

HC asks Prison dept about vaccination policy for inmates in Tihar's Central Jail-6

PTI

NEW DELHI, 4 MAY

The Delhi High Court has asked the prison department of Delhi government whether it has any policy to vaccinate all the inmates in Tihar's Central Jail-6 here, as "there are greater chances of spreading of the COVID-19 infection within the enclosed premises of the prison".

This was one of several queries the court posed to the prison department on the issues of online and physical mulaqats or meetings, tele-calling facilities for inmates who have tested COVID positive, operationalising of the computer centre in the jail and computers for the legal aid room there.

The queries by Justice Prathiba M Singh came while hearing a plea filed by two JNU students -- Natasha Narwal and Devangana Kalita -- who are also Pinjra Tod activists, seeking various facilities which included physical mulaqats, computer centre for video conferencing and legal aid.

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Sisodia lists Delhi govt's bids to augment O2 beds

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, 4 MAY

Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Tuesday visited Sanjay Gandhi Memorial Hospital in Mongolpuri to inquire about the Covid-19 situation and review the oxygen supply position at the hospital, which recently installed an oxygen plant imported from France. The plant is now operational and the current occupancy of patients at CGH is 175. We are hoping and waiting for the oxygen supply to increase in Delhi so that all 500 beds at the centre can be occupied.

Sisodia was accompanied by Health Minister Satyendar Jain when he visited two Covid care centres. Sisodia said, "To augment the number of ICU and oxygen beds in Delhi, the Chief Minister had decided to con-

vert Ramlila Ground into a Covid care centre. Health Minister Jain and I visited Ramlila Ground to take stock of the 500 ICU beds that are being set up there. I'm happy to note that this work is in full swing and we hope it will be ready within the next week."

Sisodia added, "I take great pride in our doctors, who are tirelessly and relentlessly working towards saving the lives of citizens and emerging as true warriors in our fight against this deadly virus. The Delhi government's commitment to defeat Covid-19 sees no bounds and we are doing everything in our capacity to reduce this surge. I appeal to all citizens to follow lockdown protocols and get vaccinated as soon as possible. Let us together win this fight against the coronavirus."

Delhi got average of 393 MT oxygen a day last week against requirement of 976 MT: AAP MLA

PTI

NEW DELHI, 4 MAY

Delhi Jal Board vice chairman Raghav Chadha on Tuesday said 41 hospitals with around 7,000 people on oxygen support sent SOS calls to the city government on May 3.

He also said that the national capital received an average of 393 metric tonnes (MT) of oxygen a day last week against the requirement of 976 MT.

Forty-one hospitals, with 7,142 people on oxygen support, sent SOS calls to the Delhi government on Monday, Chadha said, adding that 'Team Kejriwal' promptly responded to all the SOS calls and delivered 21.3 MT of oxygen to these hospitals.

The AAP leader, who has

been leading efforts to mitigate the oxygen crisis in Delhi hospitals, rued that Delhi received an average of 393 MT of oxygen a day last week against the requirement of 976 MT.

He noted that 393 MT is just 40 per cent of the total demand.

Chadha said the city got 433 MT of oxygen, just 44 per cent of the total requirement, on Monday.

He said the Delhi government has created SOS reserves which are used when hospitals run out of oxygen and the suppliers are

not able to provide refills. Team Kejriwal is working round-the-clock to ensure that life is lost in such a situation, the AAP MLA added.

Several hospitals here continue to grapple with the shortage of medical oxygen, as coronavirus cases continue to spike every passing day.

On May 1, 12 COVID-19 patients,



TMC has always been sensitive to the needs of women...Our CM is a self-made leader, and would want every woman in the state to become self-reliant, too.

ON SEVERAL SCHEMES OF TMC WITH AN EYE ON IMPROVING LIVING STANDARDS OF WOMEN

TMC MLA CHANDRIMA BHATTACHARYA

The Statesman
NEW DELHI, WEDNESDAY 05 MAY 2021

03

Pb CM sends an SOS to PM, HM for O2 for Covid patients

With 10K patients on oxygen support in Punjab, Capt urges Modi, Shah to urgently resolve O2 crisis

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 4 MAY

Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh on Tuesday sought the immediate intervention of both the Prime Minister and the Union home minister to ensure uninterrupted supply of medical oxygen to the state.

The CM sent out separate letters to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union home minister Amit Shah, as the number of Covid patients on varying levels of oxygen support in the state went up to 10000.

Expressing deep concern over the possibility of imminent loss of lives due to oxygen shortage across Punjab, Capt Amarinder said with mounting coronavirus case-load he was unable to increase Level 2 and Level 3 beds due to oxygen availability constraints.

The state was facing the prospect of shortage of oxygen beds, he said, pointing out that the Union government had expressed its inability to even allow Punjab's local industry to undertake commercial import of Liquid



Medical Oxygen (LMO) from Pakistan through the Wagah-Attari border, which is geographically proximate. Further, despite assurance that "adequate supply would be ensured to us from alternate sources, I regret to point out that this has not happened", said Capt Amarinder.

The total allocation of

LMO from outside the state is currently 195 metric tonne (MT), of which 90 MT is from Bokaro in eastern India.

The balance 105 MT comes from LMO facilities in Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

However, Punjab is not getting its daily allocated quota, said the CM.

The existing backlog for

Punjab from these LMO facilities is 5.6 MT from Panipat (Haryana), 100 MT from Sela Qui, Dehradun (Uttarakhand) and 10 MT from Roorkee, the CM said.

Pointing out that Punjab had now been given to understand by the Centre that there would be likely disruption of LMO supply from today from

Panipat and Barotiwala, the CM said this would cause great stress on the already limited oxygen availability in the state, thus causing a medical emergency, including risk of loss of life for the large number of patients who are in critical condition and on regular oxygen support.

The disruption should be avoided, he said, adding that, if necessary, the state must be compensated immediately from a nearby additional source.

Referring to the shortage of tankers, the CM said the state was airlifting two empty tankers daily to Ranchi, with the filled tankers returning by road from Bokaro on a 48 to 50 hours journey.

Capt Amarinder said that the state government had already requested the Centre to allocate 20 additional tankers (conducive to rail travel) to allow for regular evacuation of 90 MT LMO from Bokaro on a daily basis, but had been told that only two would be provided, and even those were yet to come. He urged the Prime Minister and the home minister to step in immediately to help resolve the major crisis.

SAD asks Punjab govt to allow all shops to open

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 4 MAY

The Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) on Tuesday asked the Congress-led Punjab government to extend the timings for opening of shops and allow all shops to open keeping in view economic concerns while adding that prohibitory orders could be simultaneously issued to avoid crowding.

In a statement here, the former minister and senior vice president of the party Dr Daljit Singh Cheema said the government should take all necessary steps to ensure there was no overcrowding in markets but simultaneously it should ensure all shops were allowed to do business in a regulated manner.

The SAD leader also condemned the Congress government for its ill advised decision to close procurement in market sub yards. He said earlier the government had advised farmers to keep their produce at home because of shortage of gunny bags and tardy lifting. He said the government had now followed this with a directive to close down market sub yards.

The SAD leader said this

would only cause further crowding in grain markets at a time when the government was enforcing a partial lockdown in the state.

Punjab is currently in a soft

lockdown situation, with strong curbs in place, with additional restrictions imposed by the government on Sunday. Under it, all shops selling non-essential items will remain shut. Those dealing in medicines and essential items like milk, bread, vegetables, fruits, dairy and poultry products like eggs, meat, mobile repair will be allowed.

Centre clears 6 PSA O2 plants for HP

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 4 MAY

The Central government on Tuesday sanctioned six PSA (Pressure Swing Absorption) oxygen plants for Himachal Pradesh and once these plants become functional, the number of oxygen plants will increase to 13 in the state.

The chief minister Jai Ram Thakur thanked the Central government for approving six new PSA oxygen plants for the state and said these plants will ensure adequate oxygen supply to the state to meet requirements for treating Covid patients.

"The oxygen plants will be set up at Civil Hospital, Palampur, Zonal Hospital Mandi, Civil Hospitals of Rohru and Khaneri in Shimla district, Nahari Medical College and Regional Hospital Solan.

This will ensure adequate oxygen supply to about 1400 beds in these health institutions," he added.

Thakur further stated that the Union government had already sanctioned seven oxygen plants for the state that were being established at Dharamshala, Mandi, Shimla, Chamba, Nahan, Hamirpur and Tanda.

"Out of these seven plants, oxygen production has started in Dharamshala, Mandi and Shimla plants whereas remaining plants would also be made functional at the earliest.

HP Cong demands imposition of lockdown amid virus surge

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 4 MAY

Amid steep spike in Covid cases and deaths in Himachal Pradesh, state Congress chief Kuldeep Singh Rathore on Tuesday called on chief minister Jai Ram Thakur to impose lockdown in the state.

Rathore criticised the BJP government for failing to handle Covid situation efficiently in the state and said there was no other way left than to impose lockdown in Himachal to break the chain of Coronavirus.

The rapid spread of Covid in the state has created an atmosphere of fear and insecurity among the people and the situation is also the result of partial treatment meted out to states by the Central government," he added.

Rathore urged the state government to take concrete steps to curb the spread of Covid in the state and said the number of infected persons and fatalities were increasing



in the state after witnessing the daily upward trend of spike in Covid cases in Kangra district and entire state.

"The increase in Covid cases has become a major challenge for the state government and health department and as a strict measure to break the chain of viral disease, the government should impose lockdown," he added.

It is worthwhile to mention here that Himachal had recorded 35,682 Covid cases with 449 deaths in the month of April and over 9,100 cases and 138 deaths till 4 May.

A total of 1,08,453 Covid cases had been recorded in the state and the death toll mounting to 1,622 in the state while 85,516 persons have been cured of the disease.

The worst affected districts with Covid surge in the state are Kangra with 5,005 active cases, followed by Solan (2,709), Mandi (2,425), Solan (2,709), Shimla (2,283) and Sirmaur (2,239).

day by day.

"The state government should impose lockdown in the state, however, it should be ensured that migrant labourers and poor don't face any kind of difficulties," he added.

Earlier, former chief minister and senior BJP leader Shanta Kumar too had called for imposition of lockdown

Increase Covid beds in Kangra: CM to officials

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 4 MAY

Himachal Pradesh chief minister Jai Ram Thakur on Tuesday directed officials to enhance hospital bed capacity for Covid patients in Kangra district amid a spike in Covid cases in the district.

Addressing a virtual meeting of senior officers of Kangra district, Thakur said makeshift arrangements should be made in Paraur to provide additional 250 bed capacity within next 10 days which would be gradually increased to about 1000 beds.

Proper and smooth supply of oxygen must be ensured and ICU bed capacity must be enhanced to provide better treatment to critically ill patients.

Besides, private laboratories must be empanelled and requisitioned so that more RT-PCR tests could be conducted and results could be provided to the patients at the earliest," he added.

He stated that a foolproof mechanism must be evolved for transportation of patients



to the hospitals besides making adequate arrangements of drop back vehicles to transport the patients back home after treatment.

The state government had also decided to provide incentives to various categories of doctors and para-medical staff on duty in Covid hospitals.

The 4th and 5th year MBBS students, contractual doctors and junior/senior residents will be provided an incentive of Rs 3000 per month. While nursing students, GNM third year students and contractual lab staff will be provided an incentive of Rs 1500 per month till 30 June, the CM said.

The Chief Minister further stated that the government was striving hard to increase the bed capacity throughout the State particularly in districts with high load of Covid-19 patients.

Apart from 1,000 bed capacity to be created at Paraur, efforts were on to create bed capacity of 200 at

Radha Swami Satsang Vyas complex at Mandi and 300 additional bed capacities at new OPD block of IGMC, Shimla.

In addition, the space had also been identified at Baddi-Barotiwala area for creating an additional 500 bed capacity for the Covid patients, he added.

He also visited Radhaswami Satsang Vyas at Paraur in Kangra district and gave necessary directions for construction of makeshift Covid hospital at the earliest.

Till date, as many as 3,59,489 samples had been tested out of which 19,570 had been found positive in Kangra district.

There were 5,384 active cases in the district and the positivity rate of the district was 5.44 percent while the recovery rate was 70.34 percent.

The vaccination drive was going on smoothly in the district and till date 3,82,851 doses of vaccine had been administered to frontline workers, corona warriors and people of above 45 years.

H'yan PWD rest houses thrown open for healthcare workers

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 4 MAY

Doctors and paramedical staff involved in providing essential services in Haryana during the Covid-19 pandemic will now be given free of cost lodgings and food facilities in the rest houses of the public works department (PWD) situated across the state.

The deputy Chief Minister, Dushyant Chautala, who also holds the portfolio of the PWD portfolio on Tuesday issued orders to the concerned departmental

officers in this regard.

While issuing the order, the deputy CM said the government has taken this decision so as to ensure well-being of the doctors and paramedical staff who are dedicatedly performing their duty during this pandemic.

He said that due to this, the employees who are dedicatedly serving the people of the state during this time of crisis instead of going back to their home can stay in a PWD rest house free of cost.

The deputy CM also informed that PWD rest house will be under the district deputy commissioner and chief medical

would also reduce the fear of infection spread and they will also get proper facilities to live in the rest house.

He said that in these Rest Houses, arrangements to provide free food for doctors, paramedical and staff involved in providing essential services would be made by the government so that they do not face any kind of problem.

The deputy CM also informed that PWD rest house will be under the district deputy commissioner and chief medical

Delhi Police arrests 4 for selling O2 concentrators at higher rates

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 4 MAY

Delhi Police arrested four persons on Tuesday for allegedly selling oxygen concentrators at exorbitant prices, police said.

Police seized 115 oxygen concentrators from one gang which was selling these at a cost of Rs 1.1 lakh each in black market, police said.

The gang was busted after police sent a decoy customer to nab the perpetrators. The

accused have been identified as Anuj, Shekhar, Keshav and the kingpin, Anil Jain, police said. During further investigation, the accused disclosed various places to the police where they hid other concentrators. An ambulance driver was arrested on Monday for allegedly charging Rs 9,000 to ferry a Covid patient, while two nurses were held for stealing dead patients' Remdesivir.

Earlier, the city police had released 170 oxygen concentrators seized in north Delhi last week to various hospitals. On

Monday, Delhi police arrested 13 persons for allegedly indulging in hoarding Remdesivir injections, oxygen cylinders and concentrators in different parts of the national capital. An ambulance driver was arrested on Monday for allegedly charging Rs 9,000 to ferry a Covid patient, while two nurses were held for stealing dead patients' Remdesivir.

The national capital is witnessing a surge in the number of daily COVID cases and hos-

pitals in Delhi are grappling with a burden on medical infrastructure. Hospitals and COVID care centres in the city are reeling under a shortage of ICU beds, medical oxygen, ventilators, and life-saving drugs.

Police conducted several raids for the past few days to nab gang members running such rackets. In another such raid, Delhi Police arrested Sayed Faiz on Monday from Shahen Bagh area who was selling oxygen concentrators for Rs 1.4 lakh.

Faridabad to start 'Doctor on Call Service' for Covid patients

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 4 MAY

Finance commissioner of Haryana and additional chief secretary, revenue and disaster management department, Sanjeev Kaushal on Tuesday instructed officers to ensure "Doctor on Call Service" in Faridabad within two days.

He also asked the officers to ensure enhanced Covid-19 testing and submitting its report within a day of testing, setting up a call centre by the District Administration, providing kits of all essential medicines, including oximeters, constantly monitoring the oxygen supply, curbing black marketing of oxygen and essential medicines and ensuring the display of rate list for treatment being given outside each private hospital.

Holding a review meeting of the status and arrangements of Covid-

19 with district administration officers in Faridabad today, Kaushal said immediate action will be taken against those who impede oxygen supply or supply of medicines or are indulging in black marketing. He instructed the police officers to ensure implementation of lockdown and also take action against those who leave their homes without any work. Instructing the officers of the health department, he said that the rate list for treatment should be affixed outside each private hospital. Each private hospital should take the same fees from patients as prescribed.

Kaushal laid emphasis on maximum testing and said that those who have symptoms of Covid-19 should be tested immediately and timely test reports should be available in order to prevent the spread of the Coronavirus. Along with this,



Kaushal instructed the officers of the District Administration to ensure that the testing report is provided within a day so that the work of preventing the spread of the infection can be done as soon as possible. He also gave instructions to work at micro level for testing and said that for this we will have to activate more administrative staff.

He said that call centres have to be strengthened for disseminating information. Along with this, for the convenience of patients, the "Doctor on Call Service" is to be started within two days.

Chief Executive Officer of Faridabad Metropolitan Authority and Commissioner of Municipal Corporation, Garima Mittal has been appointed to carry out this work and this service will be started for the residents of Faridabad within two days so that people can be given consultation via telephone.



People waiting at a vaccination centre to get their first dose at Block Primary Health Centre, Bolpur in Birbhum on Tuesday. ■ IANS

Sujata Mondal demands recounting of votes: Suspecting deep conspiracy, the defeated TMC Arambagh Assembly candidate Sujata Mondal on Tuesday approached the Arambagh SDO demanding recounting of votes of Arambagh Assembly seat as she alleges hacking of the EVMs. ■ SNS

Civic body staff demand ₹ 5000 to lift body: The conservancy staffs with the Kalna Municipality allegedly had demanded Rs 5000 in cash from the wage-labourer family members of a Covid victim to help recovery of the corpse from the victim's house where it was waiting for nearly 12 hours before shifting to the crematorium. ■ SNS

TMC worker stabbed to death in Ketugram

BURDWAN, 4 MAY

A TMC leader was hacked to death in Burdwan (East) last night which led to the death toll of political killings to five since the day of poll results. Srinivas Ghosh (54), the elected member of TMC governed Ketugram Panchayat along with three others were attacked at Mal village last night.

Party's district officials said, "they were dragged out of their houses by the BJP cadres who were armed with daggers and choppers." Ghosh allegedly butchered to death while the other two TMC supporters also suffered severe gashes on their arms and back-shoulder. They were shifted to the Katwa Sub Divisional Hospital.

Prosenjit Das, TMC's spokesperson alleged: "the BJP began unleashing terror in different blocks like Jamalpur, Raina, Purbasthali, Ketugram across the district. Four of our party men have been killed by the BJP in the last 48 hours."

Krishna Ghosh, the BJP's organizational district president in Katwa has denied involvement of his party men in the Mal village incident. At Samaspur village in Raina, a TMC supporter Ganesh Malik was hacked to death allegedly by the BJP cadres and in neighbouring Jamalpur constituency, two other TMC supporters – Bibhas Bag and Shahjan Shah were hacked to death at Nabagram yesterday. ■ SNS

TENDER

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR J&K E-GOVERNANCE AGENCY, IT DEPARTMENT CIVIL SECRETARIAT, JAMMU

Subject: Corrigendum to Notification No 14-JaKeGA of 2021 Dated 12.04.2021 regarding "Supply, Installation and commissioning of LAN Network Setup at Civil Secretariat Jammu".

**Corrigendum No. 03 To
Notification No.: 14-JaKeGA of 2021 Dated:- 04.05.2021**

This is in reference to the tender published Vide Notification No: 14-JaKeGA of 2021 dated 12.04.2021 regarding "Supply, Installation and commissioning of LAN Network Setup at Civil Secretariat Jammu". In this connection, the schedule for key activities is revised as under.

S. No.	Key Activity	Date and Time
01	Response to the queries	11.05.2021
02	Online Submission of Bids	Start Date From 10:00 AM of 12.05.2021 End Date 26.05.2021 up-to 04:00 PM
03	Opening of Technical Bids	27.05.2021 at 04:00 PM

Bidders are requested to talk into account the revised schedule and submit bids accordingly.

Sd/- (Simrandeep Singh)
Secretary to Govt, IT Deptt/
Chief Executive Officer, JaKeGA

No. DIPK-1253/21
Dated:- 04.05.2021

The politics of hatred practiced by BJP was rejected by people in West Bengal.

SAMAJWADI PARTY PRESIDENT AKHILESH YADAV
CLAIMING HIS PARTY WAS SET TO WIN UP ASSEMBLY POLLS NEXT YEAR



Nadda arrives in Bengal; blames TMC for violence

On CM's oath-taking ceremony, elected BJP MLAs will opt for a sit-in demonstration



BJP National president JP Nadda after visiting the family members of Abhijit Sarkar, who allegedly died in post-poll violence in Kolkata. ■ SNS

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, 4 MAY

The BJP's national leader, Sambit Patra, today claimed that the glory of winning the Bengal Assembly polls by Trinamul Congress has fizzled out due to the alleged state-sponsored violence post-elections while the party's newly-elected MLAs will opt for a sit-in demonstration tomorrow when Mamata Banerjee will take oath as the chief minister.

Addressing the press, Patra likened the TMC with Nazis and dubbed the incumbent government as "fascists". He said it was embarrassing that amidst the ongoing Covid crisis in the country, reports of violence are surfacing in which houses, business establishments and properties of BJP leaders are either looted or set on fire by TMC goons under the watch of police.

After results, post-poll vio-

Party is with workers facing atrocities by TMC goons: Ghosh

SNS/PTI
KOLKATA, 4 MAY

The BJP's West Bengal president Dilip Ghosh on Tuesday said that the party is with the workers who, he claimed, are facing atrocities at the hands of goons owing allegiance to the Trinamul Congress after the announcement of assembly election results two days ago.

The state is in the grip of post-poll violence that allegedly left several BJP workers dead and injured,

ence broke out in West Bengal in which 9 BJP workers lost their lives. TMC, however, has denied the charges.

Patra said 2.28 crore Bengalis voted for the BJP and questioned, "Mamata Ji you won and everyone congratulated you for it. You are a woman and a daughter of Bengal. Aren't these women who are being killed and raped also daughters of Bengal? Do they deserve this?"

Meanwhile, BJP's national president JP Nadda arrived today in Kolkata to meet the victims' families at Kheyada, Narendrapur and Sonarpur.

He met the family members of the slain BJP leader Avijit Sarkar, who was allegedly beaten to death at Beliaghata. Nadda said, "Each killing of our karyakarta (workers) will

prompting the Centre to seek a report from the state government on the incidents of attack on opposition workers.

"I have not done the politics of running away in adverse situations. We have fought a daunting battle," Ghosh said. Claiming that attacks are taking place at places where the TMC won with a huge majority, Ghosh said that the BJP leadership is with the workers who have fought the election risking their lives.

be avenged, inch by inch, legally and democratically.

BJP leader, Swapan Dasgupta alleged that 1000 Hindu families were attacked who fled away to escape death. They took shelter in an open field, BJP headquarters and nearby meeting room at Maheswari Bhawan.

BJP's newly-elected MLAs will also start dharma on 5 May when Mamata Banerjee will take the oath, party sources said.

BJP created a WhatsApp group "Torture After the Election WB", in which BJP supporters shared incidents with details, party sources said.

On Monday, Union home minister Amit Shah had sought a report on large-scale violence in Bengal after the poll result was declared.

Firhad Hakim called a meeting with all councillors and informed that the state govt has taken the decision keeping in view the covid situation.

since the elections process has ended and results declared, the MCC has ceased to exist from 3 May.

It reasoned, thus keeping in view the Covid situation that would require the municipal corporation to take necessary measures, the BOA of the KMC is once again restored to discharge its functions. It however mentioned that all members of the board shall continue to fulfil their duties without drawing any emolument or renumeration, or any financial gain or any prerequisite.

TMC leader Firhad Hakim who was the mayor, and later the chairman of the

board, today called a meeting with all councillors at Roxy cinema hall and informed that the state government has taken the decision keeping in view the covid situation. He said that all the ward coordinators (councillors) too have been re-appointed to discharge their duties in all 144 wards of the KMC which include helping citizens to obtain death certificates in covid cases. They were instructed to carry out ward-wise awareness campaigns using hired autos from tomorrow onwards.

Hakim also said that two more safe homes are being created at Rajarhat and Gitanjali with provisions of providing oxygen. He assured that tie-ups have also been done with government hospitals like SSKM or Sambhamath Pandit where patients can be transferred from these safe homes. Private hospitals have also been kept in the loop.

State govt reinstates KMC board of administrators

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, 4 MAY

The State Urban Development and Municipal Affairs (UD&MA) Department today issued a notice informing that in the wake of the Covid situation, the board of administrators (BOA) of the Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) that was in charge of discharging civic body duties but remained suspended during the polls, has been re-instated.

The notice issued informed that with the Model Code of Conduct coming into effect, the Election Commission had temporarily restrained certain persons from participating or exercising the functions of members of the BOA appointed in various municipal corporations. Khalid Ahmed, IAS, principal secretary of UD&MA department was instead engaged as the administrator during all this time but now

is in the Covid situation that would require the municipal corporation to take necessary measures, the BOA of the KMC is once again restored to discharge its functions. It however mentioned that all members of the board shall continue to fulfil their duties without drawing any emolument or renumeration, or any financial gain or any prerequisite.

TMC leader Firhad Hakim who was the mayor, and later the chairman of the

DMK men vandalise 'Amma' canteen

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHENNAI, 4 APRIL

While CM designate M K Stalin conducted marathon meetings with top officials, including chief secretary Rajeev Ranjan, health secretary J Radhakrishnan, finance

secretary and revenue secretary to discuss measures to be implemented to control the spread of the pandemic even before fixing date of oath-taking ceremony, few DMK cadres in Chennai city damaged the euphoria by vandalising an Amma Unavagam (budget restaurants started by Jayalalithaa).

According to a series of tweets put out by the AIADMK, the incident took place in the city's JJ Nagar area today.

Video clip of two DMK men removing and throwing away two flex boards embossed with the name and picture of 'Amma' from a state-run canteen here went viral on Tuesday and they were expelled from the party.

Launched in 2013 by then Tamil Nadu chief minister J Jayalalithaa, the flagship scheme was one of the first of its kind launched in India, to provide subsidised food for

the poor. It employs women from self-help groups (SHGs). Several states emulated the scheme in other parts of India.

Last year when the pandemic first broke out, the Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) even announced that the food would be given out for free, as a result of the economic distress accompanying the lockdown.

After Stalin held discussions with officials on Monday, a day after his party posted a spectacular victory in the Assembly elections, the state government announced implementing a string of fresh restrictions from 6 May.

The restrictions will be in force between 4 am and 6 May and 4 am of 20 May.

Following the incident, newly elected Saidapet DMK MLA and former Chennai Mayor Subramanian MA took to Twitter and said that DMK chief Stalin had ordered legal action against the miscreants who vandalised the outlet and also ordered that they be expelled from the party.

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*Govt should deploy resources in saving lives
rather than building PM's new house...*

CONGRESS LEADER PRIYANKA GANDHI VADRA
SLAMMING THE CENTRE OVER ITS CENTRAL VISTA PROJECT

The Statesman

NEW DELHI, WEDNESDAY 05 MAY 2021

05

Plea to increase cremation, burial sites in Delhi

Delhi High Court seeks responses from Centre and state govt on a PIL in view of 'overwhelming' number of people dying due to Covid-19 daily

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 4 MAY

The Delhi High Court on Tuesday sought responses of the Centre and the Delhi government on a PIL to temporarily increase the number of cremation and burial sites in the city in view of the "overwhelming" number of people dying due to Covid-19 daily.

A bench of Chief Justice D N Patel and Justice Jasmeet Singh issued a notice to the Centre, Delhi government, National Disaster Management Authority and the municipal bodies seeking their stand on the plea by a lawyer.

The court directed the authorities to consider data provided by the petitioner, Pratyush Prasanna, while fil-

ing their replies.

In his plea filed through advocate Snigdha Singh, Prasanna has claimed that "due to an acute shortage of hospital beds and other necessities such as testing kits and oxygen supply, there have been an overwhelming number of deaths in the country, especially in the national capital region".

As a result, the cremation sites and burial grounds are also full and, therefore, a substantial amount of time was being taken to cremate the body, the plea has claimed.

"Hence, a temporary increase in the number of cremation sites, grounds, burial sites is necessitated," the petition has said.

It has sought directions to make alternate arrange-



Police personnel distribute masks during an awareness campaign against spread of coronavirus, in Guwahati on Tuesday. ■ AGENCY

ments for converting any park, field, open space, stadium or any other similar place as cremation site/ burial ground.

The petition has said that

the devastation caused by the lack of preparedness is such that there are massive backlog of dead bodies and the largest crematoriums are also turning away bodies or are charging higher amounts for

it. It has also sought directions to the authorities to ensure proper supply of wood and other necessary materials for carrying out the last rites of the dead. It has also sought that medical supplies like PPE Kits etc be provided to the family, friends and relatives who would be attending or carrying out the cremation/ burial.

The petition also seeks a direction to the authorities "to ensure electric crematoriums are available at all the crematoriums" and to increase their numbers.

Kejriwal extends financial aid to auto, taxi drivers:

The Delhi government will provide free ration for two months to 72 lakh ration card holders and financial assistance of Rs 5,000 to autorickshaw and taxi drivers in the city to help them tide over the Covid-19 crisis, chief minister Arvind Kejriwal said on Tuesday.

However, the decision to provide free ration does not mean that the lockdown imposed in the city to break the chain of transmission will continue for two months, he said during an online briefing.

The national capital is under lockdown till 10 May to check the rising number of Covid-19 cases.

Pandemic led to mental health problems too

AHMEDABAD, 4 MAY

As several voluntary organisations extended their helping hands to Covid-19 patients by sourcing medicines, food and oxygen, an invisible aspect like mental health during the pandemic had remained neglected.

As mental health remaining fit and balanced is equally important during these difficult times, a group of volunteers based in Gujarat have joined hands to arrange psychiatric counselling for those facing such issues.

Since the last ten days of its start, the "Talk It Out" helpline number has received more than 250 calls from people suffering from mental health issues due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the resultant home confinement.

The issues covered by the psychiatrists and counsellors ranged from personality disorders, fear of Covid, domestic violence due to job loss, examination anxiety and child behavioural change, coordinator of the initiative Mr Dev Desai told The Statesman on Tuesday.

Soon after publicising the helpline numbers on the social media, calls came from all over the country and also one from Thailand where a Gujarati girl is stranded for months, he said. The idea came up when some of the volunteers were discussing what could be done to help the people mentally affected by the pandemic. Three organisation, Ehsas, ANHAD and WAYVE tied up with nearly 70 psychologists and counsellors who offered their services for free. ■ SNS

Full Lockdown only way to stop Covid: Rahul

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 4 MAY

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday said the only way to stop the spread of coronavirus now was a full lockdown with the protection of minimum income guarantee scheme, NYAY, for the vulnerable sections.

Gandhi also said that a lockdown is now the only option because of alleged "complete lack of strategy" by the government of India.

"GOI doesn't get it. The only way to stop the spread of NYAY for the vulnerable sections," Gandhi said in a tweet.

Later, in another tweet, Gandhi said he just wants to make it clear that a lockdown is now the only option because of a "complete lack of strategy" by the government of India.

"They allowed, rather, they actively helped the virus reach this stage where there's

no other way to stop it. A crime has been committed against India," the former Congress chief alleged.

The Congress has been asserting that the central and state governments move to control the situation by resorting to partial curfews, travel restrictions, closure and lockdowns will again be restricting economic activity that will hit the poor and, therefore, it was imperative to provide monthly income support.

8 Asiatic lions in Hyderabad zoo test Covid-19 positive

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD, 4 MAY



the infection was not caused by any variant of concern.

All the eight lions were isolated and treated by the vet team of the zoo.

Moreover the animal keepers were provided with PP. The lions have recovered following the treatment and are once again active and taking regular diet said the zoo authorities in a statement. The authorities have also started taking measures to stop the spread of the infection from public and zoo staff to the inmates.

On 24 April the eight inmates exhibited signs of respiratory distress and the veterinary team of the zoo collected oral discharge swabs and the samples were sent to Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology - Laboratory for Conservation of Endangered Species (CCMB-LaCONES) for diagnosis. The laboratory confirmed that all the eight Asiatic lions tested positive. However further analysis of the samples revealed that

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On

Telangana ban

By a government Order (No 73 dated 30 March 2021 but made public only on 24 April) the Telangana government has banned 16 organisations, including political parties, as 'unlawful' under the Telangana Public Security Act. The belated public announcement was made at a time when some of these organisations were engaged in providing succour to people trapped in the Covid-19 pandemic. Article 19(1)(c) of the Constitution provides every citizen the freedom to form associations. The government order declaring entire organisations as unlawful without any specific charge against any individual or the organisations is not only undemocratic, but also against the Constitution of India. The reason for the ban is the government's claim that these activists are moving in urban areas by adopting various guerrilla tactics to wage war against the State. The rationale is strengthened by the fact that they have "joined hands with several organisations and alluring the members into their fold inciting inflammatory statements, meetings and rallies highlighting various issues against the State and the Union government." The GO goes on to state that these organisations "are organising protests in barren lands in Chhattisgarh besides demanding the release of GN Saibaba, Varavara Rao, Rona Wilson and other leaders of various front organisations who were arrested in the Bhima Koregaon case and demanding repeal of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, farm laws, CAA/NRC etc." In order to justify the impugned GO, the Telangana Rashtra Samithi government of K Chandrashekhar Rao has declared all these 16 groups as 'front organisations' of the outlawed Communist Party of India (Maoist). Another reason listed for the ban order is the demand of these organisations for the repeal of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and the National Register of Citizens. It may be recalled the Telangana Assembly itself passed a resolution on 15 March 2020 against the CAA, the National Register of Citizens and the National Population Register on 15 March stating they violated the constitutional guarantees of equality, non-discrimination and secularism and would endanger the lives of vulnerable people who do not possess adequate documentary proof of citizenship. It was on the strength and support of these organisations that the TRS succeeded in wresting Telangana from Andhra Pradesh as a separate State and Chandrashekhar Rao became Chief Minister seven years ago. The organisations banned under GO 73 are: the Telangana Praja Front, Telangana Democratic Front, Telangana Asanghattha Karmika Samakhy, Telangana Vidyarthi Vedika, Telangana Vidyarthi Sangham, Democratic Students Union, Adivasi Students Union, Committee for the Release of Political Prisoners, Telangana Raithanga Samithi, Tudum Deppa, Praja Kala Mandali, Forum Against Hindu Fascism Offensive, Civil Liberties Committee, Amarula Bandhu Miruda Sangham, Chaitanya Mahila Sangham and Revolutionary Writers Association.

In search of learning...

The Supreme Court has come down hard on the ballooning fees of schools in the dreadful season of the pandemic. Given the inevitable closure of schools and the switcheroo to online instruction, the Bench (coram: AM Khanwilkar and Dinesh Maheshwari, JJ) has ruled that schools must reduce fees not the least because their operational costs have come down with the suspension of various campus facilities. The order will doubtless be welcomed by the guardians and, at another remove, stoke reservations among the school authorities. The Bench has made it explicit that the managements must be sensitive to the problems that people are facing because of the pandemic and simultaneously help "students and parents in these harsh times". The court has observed that "in law, the school managements cannot be heard to collect fees in respect of activities and facilities which are, in fact, not provided to or availed of by its students due to circumstances beyond their control." Not wholly unrelated must be the fact that the apex judiciary has welcomed the Rajasthan Schools Regulation of Fee Act to stop what it calls "profiteering" by the school managements. Additionally, parents have been made integral to the process that fixes the fee structure in the state. The Court has rapped the school authorities generally on the knuckles, making it clear that charging fees in respect of activities in abeyance is "nothing short of indulging in profiteering and commercialisation". The critique is perfectly warranted because several of the private schools that have come up in recent times function as commercial enterprises with air-conditioned buses and classrooms. Of course, the quality of the instruction that is imparted may be quite a different story. Very pertinently has the court pointed out that "school managements must have saved overheads and the recurring cost on petrol, diesel, maintenance, water charges and stationery". The Bench has conceded that it is for the school authorities to "reschedule the payment of fees in such a way that not even a single student is left out or denied the opportunity of pursuing education, so as to effectuate the adage - live and let live". Rightly has the court exposed the fiddle with overheads. It has made it clear that overheads and operational costs that have been saved for more than a year would be nothing but an amount undeservedly earned by the school without offering such facilities for more than a year. Without insisting on a mathematical praxis, "we would assume that school managements have saved around 15 per cent of their annual fees". Pre-eminently, the apex judiciary has exposed the canker of what it calls "profiteering" by imposing charges that have become largely irrelevant in the season of the pandemic and its frightful resurgence. The Supreme Court has spared a thought for the parent of the child in search of learning.

Adieu Tribunals

Abolition of tribunals and transfer of their jurisdiction to Courts is an easy option for the Government but for citizens, abolition of tribunals shuts down an avenue for securing quick and inexpensive justice. Perhaps, instead of wholesale abolition, the Government should have thought of improving the working of tribunals by providing human and financial resources for tribunals to function effectively



The Tribunals Reforms Ordinance 2021, that abolished eight tribunals at one go, has sparked a fair bit of criticism. According to the objects and reasons for the Ordinance, abolition of the tribunals would be "beneficial for the public at large, reduce the burden on public exchequer, (and) also address the issue of shortage of supporting staff of tribunals and infrastructure." But the abolition of the tribunals has not been well received. The film community has come out hammer and tongs against the abolition of the Film Certification Appellate Tribunal (FCAT), that heard appeals against Central Board of Film Certification orders, and abolition of the Intellectual Property Appellate Board has disappointed the legal fraternity.

The abolition of some well-functioning tribunals along with some defunct ones is surprising, because tribunals were established in furtherance of the Constitutional commitment of providing quick and inexpensive justice, with the express purpose of overcoming delays and backlog in the administration of justice and reduce the cost of litigation.

The first tribunal to be established in India was the Income-tax Appellate Tribunal (ITAT) in 1941. Looking at the ITAT's success in speedy disposal of cases, successive Law Commissions recommended the formation of more such tribunals to deal with cases of specialised nature. The Law Commission of India in its 14th Report (1958) "Reform of Judicial Administration" recommended the establishment of appellate Tribunal or Tribunals at the Centre and in the States.

Later, in its 58th Report (1974) titled 'Structure and Jurisdiction of the Higher Judiciary', the Law Commission urged that separate high-powered Tribunals or Commissions should be set up to deal with service matters. Thereafter, the High Court Arrears Committee set up under the chairmanship of Justice JC Shah (1969), recommended the setting up of an independent Tribunal to handle service matters pending before the High Courts and the Supreme Court. The Swaran Singh Committee, 1976 reached a similar conclusion. Consequently, the Constitution was amended to provide for establishment of 'Administrative Tribunals' under Article 323-A and 'Tribunals for other matters' under Article 323-B.

Afterwards also, the Law Commission of India in its 124th Report (1988) titled 'The High Court Arrears - A Fresh Look' had

observed that specialist tribunals could reduce the pendency of cases in High Courts by 45 per cent. The Law Commission concluded:

"1.27. To sum up, the approach of the Commission is to reduce number of appeals, to set up specialist courts/tribunals, simultaneously eliminating the jurisdiction of the High Court which, when translated into action by implementing the reports submitted by the present Law Commission, would, on a very superficial assessment, reduce the inflow of work into the High Court by nearly 45 per cent of its present inflow."

Once again, on directions of the Supreme Court, the Law Commission examined the working of tribunals in its 272nd Report (2017), and noticed no significant shortcomings. Various recommendations, to improve the performance of tribunals, were made in the report of the Law Commission, but none of its recommendations was adopted.

Though tribunals exist in almost all advanced countries e.g. England, USA, France, Australia, the present Government does not appear favourably inclined towards them.

PM Modi had declared, as far back as April 2015, that there was a need to evaluate whether tribunals lead to faster delivery of justice or were "barriers" to slow down justice. Mr Modi also suggested that the budget allocated to tribunals could be diverted to Courts. Consequently, it was decided to bring down Central Tribunals from 36 to 18.

By provisions included in the Finance Act 2017, eight tribunals were merged in other tribunals. No particular logic was followed for the merger; for example, the Airports Economic Regulatory Authority Appellate Tribunal was merged with Telecom Disputes Settlement and Appellate Tribunal. The Government also framed some rules regarding qualifications, experience and other service conditions of members of tribunals. In a setback to the Government, a Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court struck down the abovesaid rules, and referred the issue of the validity of the passage of the Finance Act 2017 as a Money Bill, to a larger bench. The court also directed that the Government should carry out an appropriate exercise for "amalgamation of

existing Tribunals adopting the test of homogeneity of the subject matter."

After acquiring a majority in the Rajya Sabha, the Government had no need to be circumspect, as in 2017, so the Tribunals Reforms Bill, abolishing eight tribunals was introduced in the Lok Sabha in February 2021. Since the Bill could not be passed due to paucity of time, the Bill was notified in the shape of Tribunals Reforms Ordinance on 4 April 2021.

Analysis suggests that the performance of tribunals has suffered, inter alia, due to the conflicting vested interests of the Government, Judiciary and Bureaucracy. The Government feels embarrassed by certain decisions of tribunals, like the ones of the FCAT approving exhibition of some controversial films and of the Central Information Commission classifying political parties as public bodies. The Government thinks that it would be better off without tribunals, which needlessly give controversial findings. Pursuant to this line of thought, some tribunals were marked for abolition and some important bodies like the Central Information Commission were rendered ineffective by keeping most posts of members vacant.

Most significantly, the Government would like to dole out memberships of tribunals to its loyalists.

The Judiciary, particularly the High Courts, see tribunals as rivals. Despite a pendency

exceeding 51.53 lakh cases and an endemic shortage of judges, the High Courts are loathe to surrender even a negligible part of their jurisdiction to tribunals and spare no opportunity to run them down. Additionally, the Judiciary wants retired judges to man all tribunals, which does not go down well with other stakeholders. Then, in a turf war with sister services, the IAS wants to hog all post-retirement appointments, simultaneously reducing opportunities for other services.

Other forces are also at play. Finance Act 2021 lays down that all benches of the Income-tax Appellate Tribunal would have dynamic jurisdiction and would hold only virtual hearings. As it is, a heavy responsibility lies on the Tribunal, which is the apex fact finding body under the Income-tax Act. The change in law, made "to impart greater efficiency, transparency and accou-

nability" would end face to face hearings, which are necessary to adjudge the important questions of fact and law, before the Tribunal. But, the move could benefit some top lawyers who could represent cases before Tribunal benches at various locations during the course of a single day.

Also, the working of many tribunals suffer because members view post-retirement appointments as sinecures. Not having done much original work in their high posts immediately before retirement, many appointees are not physically or mentally equipped to do the hard work expected of them. With an unsupportive Government and the many pulls and counter-pulls, the tribunal system has not realised its full potential in India.

Abolition of tribunals and transfer of their jurisdiction to Courts is an easy option for the Government but for citizens, abolition of tribunals shuts down an avenue for securing quick and inexpensive justice. Perhaps, instead of wholesale abolition, the Government should have thought of improving the working of tribunals by providing human and financial resources for tribunals to function effectively.

A well-functioning tribunal could sum up the evidence and give a definitive finding of fact which would help the High Court in its dispensation of justice. Tribunals could ease the burden on the higher judiciary even more, if higher courts confined themselves only to those appeals against judicial judgements that raise questions of law.

The way forward could be to constitute a Selection Board for the appointment of chairmen and members of tribunals, who should have uniform conditions of service and a reasonable tenure in office. The Selection Board would ensure that tribunals always function at full strength. Finally, to enhance their effectiveness, tribunals should have the power of contempt so that both parties, particularly the Government, obey its decisions.

Law courts with their elaborate procedures, legalistic fronts and attitudes have proved incapable of rendering speedy and affordable justice. On the other hand tribunals have emerged with the promise of "speedy, effective, decentralised dispensation of justice (and) also the expertise and knowledge in specialised areas that was felt to be lacking in the judges of traditional Courts." (MP Jain and SN Jain, Principles of Administrative Law)

It is for us to choose between the two alternatives.

A MEMBER OF THE

ANN
ASIAN NEWS NETWORK

ASIAN VOICES
Cracks in chicken egg experiment

Can a chicken hatch from hard-boiled eggs? Most of us will say "no" but a training school principal said "yes, with the use of superpowers!" Not only did the educator believe in her theory, the editorial team of a journal believed her and published her findings. The ridiculous claim has landed the principal and the journal in trouble with authorities instructing the training centre and magazine to cease operations pending investigations. It is reported that the principal has resigned.

The controversy unfolded recently when Pictorial Geography magazine published two papers, Turning hard-boiled eggs into fresh eggs ~ an experimental report on hatching chicken and Hard boiled eggs turned into raw eggs and hatched chicken experimental report (hatching process). The papers were written by Guo Huaping, the head of Chunlin Training Centre in Zhengzhou, Henan province, and her team.

The authors claimed that teachers and students at the centre had hatched chickens from 40 hardboiled eggs using "parapsychological consciousness".

In the first article, which saw print in June last year, Guo pointed out that a team of 10 teachers and students boiled 10 eggs for 23 minutes, then put each of them in a paper cup and started the parapsychological process.

After 20 minutes, the eggs were turned into liquid form. "The eggs were sent to the chicken farm for hatching, waiting for result," she wrote.

In the subsequent report, published in March this year, Guo claimed

THE STRAITS TIMES

the experiment was successful. After the papers were uploaded to the Internet, the journal came under fire with netizens calling the reports pseudoscience and questioning the credibility of the magazine. Li Mo poked fun at Guo and asked her to turn senior citizens into youngsters and bring the dead to life again.

"She is insulting our intelligence and common sense," wrote another Internet user. Following the uproar, the Jilin provincial press and publication bureau sent a team to investigate the magazine, which was under its supervision.

Zhengzhou city's human resources bureau is also investigating Guo's training centre. In a response last Monday, Guo insisted the findings were factually correct and the experiments involved the science of turning back time and predicting the future.

"I do not know the theory. I only know the result," she told local media, adding that she was not a physician but only a psychology enthusiast. On the following day, she apologised for making the conclusion too soon. She admitted that the first paper was not written by her.

"The magazine asked if I have anything, I took the opportunity since it was not expensive, just around 700 yuan (RM440) to publish the paper," she added.

Her statement sparked another round of backlash when the public found out that articles in academic journals could be published for such an amount, leading to questions on the credibility of these magazines. Guo is usually known by her pen name Guo Ping. Her training centre, set up in 2009, provides various courses for people to train as a nutritionist, marriage counsellor, entrepreneur, human resources manager, home tutor and babysitter. It also offers other courses to unleash students' potential and "mind power".

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

editor@thestatesman.com

As we get poorer...

SIR, Dr Manmohan Singh, the distinguished economist and ex-Prime Minister of India, once remarked: "India happens to be a rich country inhabited by very poor people." Indeed, India has the highest number of people living below the poverty line. According to a study of the World Bank, India accounts for one in three of the poor worldwide. Nearly 800 million people lived on less than US\$1.90 a day in 2013, around 100 million fewer people than in 2012.

Rural Indians (around 70 per cent of population) are living with irregular jobs for over a year. The MGNREGA is no longer able to



meet their demand for jobs. They are cutting back on food items as incomes get reduced. Anecdotal stories of survival are available in abundance. The country has not counted its poor

methodically since 2011 and its uninterrupted progress of poverty reduction has remained stalled since the 1970s. However, the global Multidimensional Poverty Index reported in 2019 that India had succeeded in lifting around 271 million people out of poverty between 2006 and 2016.

The first wave of Covid-19 struck India at a time when the country recorded its lowest economic growth in over a decade. The slow economic growth impacted rural India disproportionately. The impact gets aggravated by the pandemic. Nationwide lockdown to contain the first wave of the pandemic did not just pummel the economy, it severely upended people's lives as well. Many lost their jobs,

some took pay cuts while the self-employed saw income drops. Millions of people in urban areas and even the middle class slipped below the poverty line. The Pew Research Centre, a US-based think tank, using World Bank data estimated that the number of poor people in India with income of US\$2 per day (or less in purchasing power parity) has more than doubled - from 60 million to 134 million ~ in just a year due to the pandemic-induced recession. Therefore, the number of poor people increased in India by 74 million last year.

This means India is back in a situation which can be called a 'country of mass poverty' after 45 years.

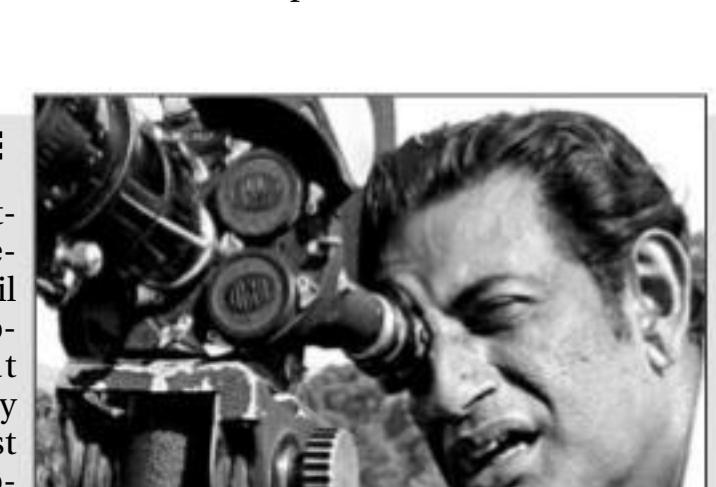
Yours, etc., Jaydev Jana, Kolkata, 3 May.

FITTING TRIBUTE

SIR, Amitabha Bhattacharya's 'A Centennial Tribute' (April 1) is a befitting accolade to the great genius, Satyajit Ray - one of the greatest film makers, a popular writer and artist - on the occasion of his hundredth birthday. Bengalis of course love Satyajit and admire his works. But Bhattacharya's observation on the film Pather Panchali "the film succeeded in Bengal before making international waves" calls for a comment. The matter is 66 years old but still, if memory serves me right, Calcutta newspapers had reported empty seats in cinema halls when the film was released. The scenario changed as soon as the information of the film receiving an award at the Cannes Film Festival reached here.

Ray inherited a keen sense of humour from his illustrious father, Sukumar Ray, the best humour poem composer in Bengali. Even in his first film Pather Panchali, a serious art film, a touch of humour found place in the character of the grocer, portrayed by Tulsi Chakraborty, who conducted his primary tutorial in the shop. And Lalmohan Ganguly, Jayatay, appearing in Feluda films, is simply immortal.

Yours, etc., Sanjit Ghatak, Narendrapur, 2 May.



Will a better human strain emerge after pandemic?

ANJALI MEHTA

The Indian public is trying to cope with the gravest medical crisis in recent history. There is an acute shortage of hospital beds and oxygen, leading to a high fatality rate among Covid patients. Everywhere, people are grieving over the loss of loved ones and there is palpable anger at the lack of preparedness. These shortages which hinder treatment and cost lives make even doctors feel very helpless.

Over and above their medical duties, doctors find themselves being pulled in different directions. They are having to get involved in chores such as sourcing scarce oxygen supplies and to get multiple forms signed from relatives. These protect them from liability not related to medicine – such as medicine stocks running out or ICU beds not being available. Where they were once able to offer comfort and reassurance to most people, they themselves are at their wits' end. They feel very uncomfortable at having to ask prospective patients to come for admission with their own medicines and cylinders. Outside, at the hospital gates, people wait expectantly, hoping a miracle will happen and an empty ICU bed will surface. Such miracles are rare. Many people don't make it to the inside of a hospital and breathe their last on the roadside. Even crematoriums are overburdened and have run out of space.

The new mutated virus strain in this wave is causing a lot more medical uncertainty as it is not easily detected anymore. Because the RT-PCR tests were designed on the genome of the original strain, they are often not able to detect the presence of the new virus. Could the virus be having a dormant form like the Varicella Zoster virus (Chicken pox, - which rests in various nerve ganglia and gets active producing shingles years later), when the host immunity is lower or the environment conducive? Maybe this form erupts suddenly once its gestation cycle is complete. Who knows?

In India, this massive outbreak has occurred just when the beautiful

flowers of spring were blossoming everywhere. Echoing Darwin's theory, the virus is trying to survive, by evolving. Whereas evolution in contemporary species is slow, this virus seems to be doing so at supersonic speeds. It also now seems to be taking a faster route to its target organ of choice, the lungs, bypassing the nose and throat areas. And it has cast its net over a much wider area. We see so many younger people getting infected with Covid compared to the ancestral strain which largely spared the young and healthy. Matching this uncertainty are various man-made ones. There is uncertainty about the availability of vaccines and their efficacy against newer strains. The data on the disease is not fully reliable or transparent. It does not seem to accurately reflect ground realities. For example, in many instances, the official death toll has been starkly different from the crematorium records by a factor of 20-25 on some days. Due to this patchy data, it becomes difficult to formulate and test various medical hypotheses. Yet, in the midst of this absolute pandemonium caused by the stealthy attack of the virus, there is a group of people carrying on with their lives with an enviable certainty as if nothing of import has happened. We have an international cricket league tournament going on towards which already meagre resources are being diverted. People fly off on exotic holidays and post vacation snaps even as journalists post pictures of a profusion of pyres and lines of waiting ambulances. We have seen elected representatives host crowded public religious events and address large election rallies, totally unmindful of the fact that this can help propagate the virus and spread sickness and death country-wide. This indifference is strange, coming as it does after a severe round of suffering caused by the first wave of the pandemic last year.

Can we really live in a bubble, impervious to what is happening around us?

We have suggestions from people to stay happy even as the world around us collapses. Of these, some sensitive



souls are truly well meaning. Some others do not want to face reality, and want to bury their heads in the sand. A third group wants to hide reality and diffuse public anger. It may be most healthy to allow feelings and moods to play out in people in their own natural way. Hiding rage and grief beneath an artificial veneer of inappropriate cheerfulness may adversely impact minds already traumatized with worry and sorrow. A false sense of security may also cause people to lower their guard. Accepting harsh reality may render us better placed to deal with it.

Far worse than callousness, are those trying to profit from the grim situation. We have medical vendors who are building up their personal fortunes by selling oxygen cylinders and medicines at highly inflated prices, while people desperately fight to save their loved ones. We even have priests who have hiked rates fourfold for performing the last rites of the deceased.

For immediate redressal of the black marketing in medical commodities, the answer is likely very straightforward - the products should be made freely available. A simple regulation

can be made for suppliers and chemists to not sell more than a limited amount to an individual buyer to ensure a more equitable distribution and pre-empt hoarding. The huge amounts of foreign aid in the form of medical supplies coming into India from countries all over the world needs to be transparently documented by customs and distributed to the most vulnerable. The public will feel very reassured if they can track the life-saving goods directly.

Not everything, however, can be painted black. We are also witnessing models of selflessness. People rallying round to help others. There is a sea of concerned humanity, people sharing resources with each other - literally saving lives and stepping in wherever the need arises. Gurdwaras have been at the forefront of providing free oxygen to the community and NGOs are back in action distributing free meals. Despite having faced severe scrutiny and an acute depletion of funds due to complex regulatory laws, NGOs have still bounced back. Even in an extremely weakened state they are standing tall and inspiring everyone

with their work ethic and abundant social responsibility.

In fact, in his public address on combating Covid, a prominent leader appealed chiefly to civil society groups and NGOs to help turn the tide. What would undoubtedly add punch to this effort would be for the leaders to themselves lead by example - in terms of wearing masks and ensuring distancing when addressing the public.

The pandemic has brought out both the generous as well as the selfish sides of humans - 'the good, the bad and the ugly' as the title of a popular Western movie goes. In this macabre dance for survival, hope springs eternal that it is the human species that survives. That it can mutate into a superior species after its literal trial by fire. Our fervent hope is that the new human variant can live in a responsible manner and in greater harmony with each other and with nature. Apart from healthcare resources, what human behaviour patterns prevail may well decide the fate of mankind during and after this pandemic.

The writer is a Delhi-based medical practitioner

100 YEARS AGO OCCASIONAL NOTE

Elsewhere will be found an interesting account of the Fascisti party in Italy, which came into being last year as the result of the supineness of the Italian Government when faced by the menace of an insurgent communism. The Fascisti represent all those who have something to lose by the disruption of society. They are the result of the "revolt of the middle classes," which has so often been threatened in England but has never yet materialised. They indicate that, even if the arm of Government should become paralysed, through fear of incompetency, it does not necessarily follow that anarchy will ensue. It seems pretty certain that, if Russia had possessed a middle class four years ago, the Lenin regime either would never have come into existence, or would have been speedily overthrown. The only flaw about the Fascisti programme is that they believe in meeting violence by violence, and have frequently acted upon that belief. At the same time the solidity of the Fascisti personnel undoubtedly acts as a brake upon this tendency. Their main value is the check which they are able to offer to the subterranean activities of the revolutionaries in Italy, who, like most other revolutionaries, look to Moscow for their inspiration and for more concrete help. A similar organisation sprang up in America to combat the sabotage of the pro-German element during the war.

NEWS ITEMS

PANIC CAUSED BY STUPID RUMOUR

An Uluberia correspondent writes: Uluberia and the neighbouring villages are in a panicky condition due to a silly rumour that the manager of a certain mill now under construction has sent out agents to kidnap 108 boys, who are to be offered as a sacrifice to propitiate the presiding deity of the mill. Two Sikhs, Munna Singh and Ganesh Singh, were taken for kidnappers and were so severely assaulted that they are now lying in a precarious condition in Uluberia hospital. Two Gurkhas, whose identity has not yet been established, have it said, been to death.

BETTER PART OF VALOUR

Allahabad, May 4 News from the Frontier indicates that a gang of about 500 Khotis, Suleiman Khel Waziri and Kakars, whose operations under the leadership of Sheritan were recently reported, have decided that discretion is the better part of valour. The Pioneer states that they have made their way over the border in a direction to the north-east of the scene of their unsuccessful attack on Mektar, an attack which was repelled by the pluck of the local tribes. It was at one time thought possible that the gang would make for the Sherani district, but evidently the strong dispositions made for their reception, added to their set-back at Mektar have induced them to abandon the Zhab area for the present at all events.

UNFOUNDED STORIES ABOUT NAJAF

Karachi, May 4 The Daily Gazette publishes a letter from Sayed Mouli Haji Mahomed Asgar, religious head of the Shias of north-west India, in which the writer says it has been alleged that the Government was directly or indirectly concerned in the throwing of explosives at the holy place of Najaf. He has made personal inquiry from two very reliable pilgrims who were at Karbala and Najaf at the time of the alleged bombardment, and they had satisfactorily proved that there was no foundation for the allegation. It appears that the insinuation was made in some hostile foreign papers, with a view to prejudicing British sincerity of purpose and exploiting their own political ends.

HINDU-MAHOMEDAN FRICTION

Division has occurred in the northern part of the Tangail sub-division between Hindus and Mahomedans. Mass meetings are being held in villages where speeches are made expressing anti-Hindu and anti-Mahomedan feelings. In some villages a section of Mahomedans has taken a distinct anti-Hindu attitude, while in others some Hindus have taken retaliatory steps and friction is apprehended. It is stated that poor Mahomedans are not being allowed to cultivate lands belonging to Hindus, with the result that large quantities of lands are now lying fallow. On April 20, it is alleged, about 300 Mahomedans of Raspal Ull Kumarpura, and some other adjoining villages within the jurisdiction of the Sarisbari police station gathered in an open field and destroyed the crops standing upon lands belonging to Hindu residents of Kwamara.

Deep-rooted issues behind crisis

VAGEESH JAIN



India finds itself in the throes of a humanitarian disaster. Until March 2021, case numbers were low in most parts of the country, leading many to think that the worst was over. Much like in Brazil though, jingoism, overconfidence and false reassurance from the political elite negated hard-won progress.

Mass gatherings have acted as state-sanctioned super-spreader events. More infectious variants and a sluggish uptake of vaccines are also fuelling the current surge. These are the triggers, but there are more deep-rooted issues at the heart of the current crisis.

India is an inherently high-risk country for an epidemic. The country holds 1.4 billion people, living in crowded areas with extensive community networks and limited facilities for sanitation, isolation and healthcare.

Most do not have the luxury of isolating at home for prolonged periods. Over 90 per cent of workers are self-employed with no social safety net. The vast majority rely on daily earnings to put food on the table. Many predicted that because of all of this, the initial wave of Covid in 2020 would have a devastating impact.

The fact that it did not led some to believe that the Indian population was innately less vulnerable to Covid. An old theory, the hygiene hypothesis, was dusted off in an attempt to explain the low number of cases. The idea is that poor hygiene trains people's immune defences, so when people are exposed to the coronavirus,

their bodies are well-equipped to deal with it.

But this theory largely relied on population studies that failed to account for various factors involved in disease severity at an individual level. Even with higher quality research, correlation does not imply causation, especially with the threat of new variants on the horizon. And yet this theory settled comfortably into the national psyche of a traditionally patriotic country.

Complacency gave the coron-

a virus an opportunity to spread. Unlike in the first wave though, proportionally more cases have progressed into deaths this time around because the health system was overwhelmed. Supplies of oxygen, ventilators, health workers and beds are critically low in hotspots like Delhi. But the fact that so many require medical care in the first place, is a symptom of longstanding structural deficiencies in the Indian health system.

Age is the single biggest risk factor for severe disease and death with

Covid. India has an exceptionally young population, with only 6 per cent aged 65 and over. Even with a slightly more deadly virus, one would expect most to recover at home without the need for hospital care. But a relatively unhealthy middle-aged population in part offsets this advantage.

Air pollution is closely associated with lung and heart disease. A whopping 17.8 per cent of all deaths in India were due to pollution in 2019, and Delhi, currently flooded with Covid patients seeking oxygen, is the most polluted capital in the world.

Obesity is also a growing concern in India, with high rates in urban areas where Covid outbreaks have been most concentrated. The prevalence of diabetes in those aged 50-69 years is over 30 per cent, much higher than in other Asian countries. One in five women of reproductive age has undiagnosed high blood pressure.

All of these are significant risk factors for death from Covid. Having an unhealthy population also leads to excess deaths because non-Covid health services are suspended during such emergencies.

Despite these health needs, total health expenditure in India represents only 3.9 per cent of GDP, well below the 5 per cent minimum recommended to achieve universal health coverage. The nation remains starved of the resources needed for a robust, resilient and well-equipped health system.

What money is spent goes into an expensive hospital-based system predominantly delivered through the private sector. Most people do not have insurance and pay for care out of

their own pockets. This can lead to unnecessary costs and delays in seeking care or getting tested, which is critical to controlling epidemics in the early stages.

Private institutions operating in this way rely on people becoming unwell to generate revenue. There is no incentive to prevent disease. A largely commercialised and profit-driven system centred on treating disease has skewed investment away from essential public health functions. It is this market failure that is in part responsible for India's ailments, and many avoidable deaths during this epidemic.

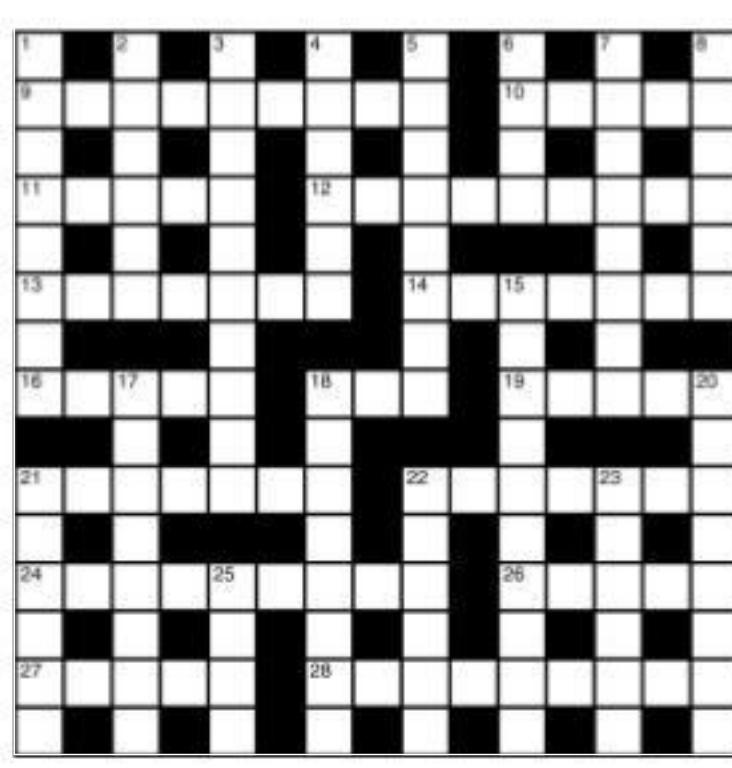
Despite a recent expansion of primary care centres and a large health insurance scheme for the poor, infrastructure remains poorly aligned with need. As a result, capacities for infectious disease control like surveillance, testing, contact tracing, guidance and research were limited at the start of the pandemic. Efforts to prevent and control chronic diseases have also been traditionally neglected despite their escalating burden and early onset in the Indian population.

India is a high-risk setting for an epidemic, but the current situation was not inevitable. As more are infected, the pool of susceptible people will shrink, the virus will relent, and the country will rebuild. There will be a chance to reflect on the fundamental goals of the health system. For future epidemics, bolstering hospital capacity will be necessary but not sufficient. Death must be averted not just by treating disease, but by preventing it altogether.

The writer is NIHR Academic Clinical Fellow in Public Health Medicine, University College London. This article was published on www.theguardian.com

NO 28903

CROSSWORD



YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

D	R	A	C	U	L	A	S	O	C	I	A	L	I	T	O	G	
E	R	I	T	K	O	G											
O	B	O	E	P	A	T	I	C	U	L	A	S	O	C	I	T	O

ACROSS

- 9 Rash having primitive song about twitch (9)
- 10 Animation shown where monkey loses tail (5)
- 11 Sleuth Jane, not seeing river, finds wood (5)
- 12 Buhuel has one to relieve revolutionary reviewer (9)
- 13 Reduce pressure and scrub round (7)
- 14 Say yew outside old church is poetic feature (7)
- 16 Teaching degree presented by setter for example (5)
- 18 One having scaly body and feathers round neck (3)
- 19 Put figures together to sound reasonable (3,2)
- 21 Superior attitude of hot film

- 22 See 6 Down
- 24 Earthy scent from lab dish shortened task (9)
- 26 Boss must carry doubly large instrument (5)
- 27 Virtuoso lacking power to bring into use (5)
- 28 Terrible snore can echo, causing vibration (9)
- DOWN
- 1 Passé mood duet to be reworked (8)
- 2 Upset manipulated figures losing a penny increase (4,2)
- 3 Brewed treacle that goes into superb snowball (10)
- 4 Cooler frost initially seen on hilltop (6)

- 5 Bond actress up when devilish snatches husband (8)
- 6/22A No longer fit public torment includes greeting (4,3,4)
- 7 Sorry Watts had dry heaves (8)
- 8 Save energy with curse undone (6)
- 15 Broken pane with closet reflecting different colours (10)
- 17 Bony obstruction presents challenge (8)
- 18 Check daily temperature graph (3,5)
- 20 Use lay-by in Jersey? (8)
- 21 Wi-Fi connection? (6)
- 22 Spotted flyer in extremely tough attack (6)
- 23 Upright character smooth enrolling student for Easter? (6)
- 25 Beer losing head: nothing to get enthusiastic about (4)

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



There could be an impact on our production if lockdowns continue because then sales outlets would remain closed

R C BHARGAVA
CHAIRMAN, MARUTI SUZUKI INDIA

THUMBNAILS

Bajaj pledges ₹200 cr for Covid relief: Pune-based Bajaj Group on Tuesday pledged an additional financial support of Rs 200 crore towards Covid-19 response. The financial support will be utilised to alleviate the immediate on-ground challenges as well as to build capability and resources to tackle a possible third wave, Bajaj Group said in a statement. This contribution is in addition to Rs 100 crore donated by the group last year to support the government's fight against the deadly pandemic. PTI

5G trials: The department of telecom on Tuesday approved applications of telecom companies ~ Reliance Jio, Bharti Airtel, Vodafone and MTNL ~ for conducting 5G trials but none of them will be using technologies of Chinese entities. The list of telecom gear makers approved for trials include Ericsson, Nokia, Samsung, C-DOT and Reliance Jio's indigenously developed technologies. This means that Chinese gear makers will not be part of the 5G trials. PTI

HDFC Bank: HDFC Bank on Tuesday unveiled organisational changes under "Project Future - Ready" to power its next wave of growth. The bank is reorganising itself into three clear areas of business verticals, delivery channels and technology / digital to further build its execution muscle in all the three areas and be ready for the future, said a Press release. The creation of focused business verticals and delivery channels will enable it to capitalise on the opportunities across customer segments in the time to come, it added. SNS

New fund offer: Canara Robeco Asset Management Company Limited has announced the launch of their new fund offer ~ Canara Robeco Focused Equity Fund ~ an open-ended equity scheme, investing in maximum of 30 stocks in large-cap, mid-cap and small-cap companies across diversified sectors. The 15-day NFO period will close on Friday, 7 May 2021, said a Press release.

JSW Steel pact: JSW Steel's US-based subsidiary has signed an agreement with Allegheny Technologies Inc (ATI) to convert carbon steel slabs into hot rolled coils. The move will help JSW Steel USA Ohio Inc to deliver high-quality hot rolled coils (HRC) products to its customers in the US, the company said in a statement on Tuesday. PTI

Amway project: Direct selling company Amway has announced the successful completion of the first phase of project Nari Shakti. Initiated in the eastern region, project Nari Shakti is aimed at bringing Amway's women direct sellers to the forefront by enhancing their existing skills to run their Amway businesses independently, said a Press release. SNS

Sensex skids for third day on Covid worries

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 4 MAY

Equity market benchmark the Sensex surrendered early gains to finish in the red for the third consecutive session today following brisk selling in frontline stocks.

The grim Covid-19 situation and continued selling by foreign funds has sapped risk appetite, traders said.

After a gap-up opening, the 30-share BSE index succumbed to profit-taking in afternoon trade to finish at 48,253.51 points, down 465.01 points or 0.95 per cent.

On similar lines, the broader NSE Nifty slumped 137.65 points or 0.94 per cent to close at 14,496.50 points.

Dr Reddy's was the top loser

Goldman Sachs lowers GDP growth forecast to 11.1%

Against the backdrop of number of states and cities announcing lockdowns of various intensities

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 4 MAY

Wall Street brokerage Goldman Sachs has lowered its estimate for India's economic growth to 11.1 per cent in fiscal year to 31 March 2022, as a number of cities and states announced lockdowns of varying intensities to check the spread of coronavirus infections.

India is suffering the world's worst outbreak of Covid-19 cases, with deaths crossing 2.22 lakh and new cases above 3.5 lakh daily. This has led to demand for imposition of nationwide strict lockdowns to stem the spread of the virus ~ a move that the Modi government has so far avoided after the economic devastation last year from a similar strategy.

Instead, it has left it to the states to impose restrictions to manage the virus. Several states and cities have imposed lockdowns of varying degrees.

"The intensity of the lockdown remains lower than last

year," Goldman Sachs said in a report. "Still, the impact of tighter containment policy is clearly visible in higher frequency mobility data across key India cities."

As containment policy has tightened, high frequency data - particularly on the services side - has taken a hit. The manufacturing side - as indicated by high frequency data on electricity consumption, and the stable April manufacturing PMI ~ has been more resilient.

Labour market indicators suggest that the daily unemployment rate has ticked up moderately in recent weeks, but the employment impact so far is much more contained than in April-June last year.

"Overall, most indicators still suggest that the impact has been less severe than it was in Q2 (April-June) last year," Goldman Sachs said.

While the lockdown impact is much less severe than last year, the recent declines in services indicators, including e-way bills, mobility, rail freight

and cargo traffic, has led to trimming GDP estimates.

"While activity is likely to rebound back quite sharply from Q3 (July-September) onwards ~ assuming restrictions can ease somewhat over that timeframe ~ the net result is to lower our FY'22 real GDP growth forecast to 11.1 per cent (from 11.7 per cent previously), and our 2021 calendar year growth forecast to 9.7 per cent (from 10.5 per cent)" it said.

Goldman Sachs is not the first brokerage which has downgraded the GDP growth projections.

While Nomura last month downgraded projections of economic growth for the current fiscal year (April 2021 to March 2022) to 12.6 per cent from 13.5 per cent earlier, JP Morgan projects GDP growth at 11 per cent from 13 per cent earlier. UBS sees 10 per cent GDP growth, down from 11.5 per cent earlier and Citi has downgraded growth to 12 per cent.

India's GDP growth had been on the decline even before the pandemic struck earlier last year. From a growth rate of 8.3 per cent in financial year 2016-17, the GDP expansion had dipped to 6.8 per cent and 6.5 per cent in the following two years and to 4 per cent in financial year 2019-20. In the Covid-ravaged 2020-21 fiscal (April 2020 to March 2021), the economy is projected to have contracted by up to 8 per cent.

The Reserve Bank of India has projected FY'22 GDP growth at 10.5 per cent, while The World Bank sees 2021-22 growth at 10.1 per cent.

New confirmed cases are up sharply from 2 lakh a day two weeks ago. Active cases have increased to 34 lakh from 15 lakh two weeks ago.

"The outbreak is broadening to other states such as Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka, with Maharashtra's share in total active cases falling to 20 per cent, from 60 per cent a couple of weeks ago," the Goldman Sachs report said.

Testing has increased and so has the daily positive rate to 21.3 per cent, from 13.1 per cent two weeks ago.

locations across the UK.

A large proportion of the workforce will be hired from recently graduated students from leading colleges and universities in the UK to ensure a diverse talent pool and support upskilling efforts, Infosys said.

In a separate statement, IT firm Mphasis said it is expanding its footprint in the UK with a special focus on customer-led digital transformation initiatives in banking and insurance by establishing a nearshore centre outside of London. It will invest over GBP 25 million (about Rs 255 crore) upfront towards establishing the UK centre.

Mphasis expects to create close to 1,000 jobs in the UK, to begin with, and be able to cater to customers even beyond the UK.

Wipro has announced the setting up of an innovation centre in Holborn, London and will invest GBP 16 million over the next four years towards the centre. The 20,000 sq ft innovation centre will serve as Wipro's flagship centre in the UK and offer technology expertise to companies in the UK and globally.

problem but transport logistics taking a toll due to the second surge was a matter of concern.

CIL reduced its coal inventory by 12.2 MTs in April 2021 to 87.2 MTs. The company began FY'22 with a record stockpile of 99.3 MTs, largely due to Covid prompted tepid demand for the dry fuel.

CIL produced around 42 MTs of coal in April 2021 and overburden removal at 116 million cubic metres achieved 94 per cent of the month's target.

Meanwhile, CIL said, in an effort to combat Covid-19, it has set up a total of 3,000 beds, most of them oxygen supported, including ICU beds. Additional 900 beds are being planned of which 60 are ICU, it added.

Besides, 1820 oxygen cylinders and over 200 ventilators are on ready condition, CIL said.

Mutual fund distributors allowed to register online

NEW DELHI, 4 MAY

Industry body Amfi today said it has revised the online registration facility for obtaining fresh ARN and EUIN numbers.

When contacted, a SAIL official said "it is market driven" and did not comment further.

While JSW Steel declined to comment, AMNS India and JSPL did not reply to a query on the reason for the price hike.

Reacting to the price hike, realtors' apex body Credai said since January 2020, there has been a steep hike in the prices of construction raw materials.

Prices of steel are at an all-time high and have nearly doubled since then. As a result of steel price hike alone, construction costs have increased by 3-5 per cent, it said.

The online registration facility comes as a great boon and relief to new applicants seeking fresh ARN and EUIN in the current lockdown situation in many parts of India in the wake of resurgence of Covid-19 pandemic, Amfi said in a statement. The Association of Mutual Funds in India has restarted a completely paperless online registration process through its website for obtaining ARN and EUIN using OTP-based Aadhaar authentication.

"At Amfi, we look at technology as an enabler that can help ease the process and reduce time spent by distributors or their employees on mundane tasks, so that they can better utilise their time on helping their clients. We urge all our distribution fraternity to take benefit of this feature," Amfi chief executive N S Venkatesh said.

In 2017, the industry body introduced a completely online facility for applying for ARN/EUIN using Aadhaar, as well as for ARN and EUIN renewal. However, the online registration facility for fresh ARN using Aadhaar had to be withdrawn pursuant to Supreme Court order in September 2018, on the usage of Aadhaar. With UIDAI now allowing Aadhaar-based e-KYC, using OTP that can be availed by requesting entities, Amfi has been able to revive the online ARN and EUIN registration.

PTI



We would prefer to have a more stable, more predictable relationship. And if Russia moves in that direction, so will we

US SECRETARY OF STATE ANTONY BLINKEN
ON US-RUSSIA RELATIONSHIP

The Statesman
NEW DELHI, WEDNESDAY 05 MAY 2021

09

THUMBNAILS



Priests attend a religion procession celebrating Orthodox Easter at the Iversky Monastery a monastery of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Ukraine on Tuesday.

G7 mulls a message to China: The West ain't over just yet

Bilken says West will defend the international rules based order from subversive attempts by China

AGENCIES
LONDON, 4 MAY

The Group of Seven rich democracies will on Tuesday discuss ways of countering challenges from China and Russia without trying to contain Beijing or escalate tension with the Kremlin, two of its top diplomats said.

Founded in 1975 as a forum for the West's richest nations to discuss crises such as the OPEC oil embargo, the G7 is debating responses to the two vast and increasingly assertive countries as well as the Covid-19 pandemic and climate change.

"It is not our purpose to try to contain China or to hold China down," U.S. President Joe Biden's secretary of state, Antony Blinken told reporters on Monday ahead of the first in-person G7 foreign ministers meeting since 2019.

He said the West would defend "the international rules based order" from sub-

versive attempts by any country, including China. China is the focus of discussions on Tuesdays morning while afternoon talks will turn to Russia, including how to respond to a troop manoeuvres on the border with Ukraine and the imprisonment of Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny.

China's spectacular economic and military rise over the past 40 years is seen by diplomats and investors as the most significant geopolitical events of recent times, alongside the 1991 fall of the Soviet Union which ended the Cold War. The G7 combined is still packs a powerful punch: it has about \$40 trillion in economic clout and three of the world's five official nuclear powers. China, now the world's second largest economy, has never been a member of the G7.

Britain will seek to agree decisive action from G7 partners to protect democracies at a time when it says China's economic influence and Russ-

ian malign activity threaten to undermine them.

"The UK's presidency of the G7 is an opportunity to bring together open, democratic societies and demonstrate unity at a time when it is much needed to tackle shared challenges and rising threats," British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said.

Longer term, there are deep concerns in both Washington and European capitals about how the West should act towards both Beijing and Moscow, which both argue that Western criticism is unjustified and counter-productive.

Blinken said the United States would prefer more stable ties with Russia but that much depended on how Russian President Vladimir Putin decided to act, especially in theatres such as Ukraine which Blinken will visit this week. "We have reaffirmed our unwavering support for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine," Blinken said.

In a statement, China's foreign ministry urged the Philippines to respect the nation's sovereignty and

China calls for 'basic etiquette' after Philippine outburst

AGENCIES
BEIJING, 5 MAY

China urged the Philippines on Tuesday to observe "basic etiquette" and eschew megaphone diplomacy after the southeast Asian nation's foreign minister used an explosive-laced Twitter message to demand that China's vessels leave disputed waters.

The comments by Teodoro Locsin, known for occasional blunt remarks, follow Manila's protests over what it calls the illegal presence of hundreds of Chinese boats inside the Philippines' 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

In a statement, China's foreign ministry urged the Philippines to respect the nation's sovereignty and

jurisdiction and stop taking actions that complicate the situation. "Facts have repeatedly proved that microphone diplomacy cannot change the facts, but can only undermine mutual trust," it said.

"It is hoped that relevant people in the Philippines will comply with basic etiquette and their position when making remarks," the statement said.

Meanwhile, Teodoro Locsin Jr apologised for his tweet. Locsin said he was apologising only to his Chinese counterpart, Wang Yi, to ensure their friendship would continue. "I won't plead the last provocation as an excuse for losing it; but if Wang Yi is following Twitter, then I'm sorry for hurting his feelings, but his alone, Locsin tweeted.

Mexico City metro overpass collapses onto road; 23 dead



ASSOCIATED PRESS
MEXICO CITY, 4 APRIL

Someone had been pulled alive from a car that was trapped on the road below. She said 49 of the injured were hospitalised, and that seven were in serious condition and undergoing surgery.

There are unfortunately children among the dead, Sheinbaum said, without specifying how many. The overpass was about 5 meters (16 feet) above the road in the borough of Tlalnac, but the train ran above a concrete median strip, which apparently lessened the casualties among motorists on the road below. A support beam gave way just as the train passed over it, Sheinbaum said.

The Mexico City Metro has had at least two serious accidents since its inauguration half a century ago. In March of last year, a collision between two trains at the Tacubaya station left one passenger dead and injured 41.

Israel: Netanyahu faces midnight deadline to form coalition govt

ASSOCIATED PRESS
JERUSALEM, 4 MAY

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu faced a midnight deadline on Tuesday to put together a new coalition government - or be looking at the possibility of leading his Likud party into the Opposition for the first time in 12 years.

Netanyahu has struggled to secure a parliamentary majority since 23 March - when elections ended in deadlock for the fourth consecutive time in the past two years. Despite repeated meetings with many of his rivals and

unprecedented outreach to the leader of a small Islamist Arab party, Netanyahu has not been able to close a deal during a four-week window.

That window was to expire at midnight, at which point the matter returns to President Reuven Rivlin in the absence of an agreement.

A failure to reach a deal would not immediately push Netanyahu out of office.

Rivlin could give him an additional two weeks to form a coalition. He could give one of Netanyahu's opponents an opportunity to form a government, or in a final move of desperation, send the mat-

ter straight to parliament.

That would give lawmakers a chance to choose one of their own as PM. If all options fail, the country would face another election this fall, meaning months of continued political paralysis.

In the 23 March election, Netanyahu's Likud emerged as the largest single party, with 30 seats in the 120-member Parliament. But to form a government, he needs to have the support of a 61-seat majority.

That task has been complicated in large part by members of his own religious and nationalist base.

'Myanmar violence could lead to civil war'

ASSOCIATED PRESS
UNITED NATIONS, 4 MAY

China's UN ambassador on Monday urged stronger diplomatic efforts to resolve the confrontation in Myanmar since the Feb. 1 military coup, warning that further violence could lead to a chaotic situation "and even a civil war."

Zhang Jun also warned that "any wrong handling" might lead to further tension in Myanmar. The UN Security Council on Friday strongly backed calls by Southeast Asian nations for an immediate cessation of violence and

talks as a first step toward a solution following the military coup in Myanmar that ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu



Kyi and her party reversed years of slow progress toward democracy.

The council again demanded the restoration of democracy and the release of all detainees including Suu Kyi and condemned the use of violence against peaceful protesters and the deaths of hundreds of civilians.

Zhang, who described Myanmar as "a friendly neighbor," strongly backed diplomatic efforts by the Associa-

tion of Southeast Asian Nations known as ASEAN and by UN special envoy for Myanmar Christine Schraner Burgener, and expressed hope they would produce results. He said, "China is not in favor of imposing sanctions. We should really be creating a more favorable environment for bringing the country back to normal and finding a political solution through dialogues among the relevant political parties within the constitutional and legal framework," he said.

Myanmar for five decades had languished under strict military rule that led to international isolation and sanctions. As the generals loosened Zhang was asked whether

China was concerned that Myanmar could descend into civil war, given that its military is fighting the Kachin and Karen ethnic minorities, which maintain their own armed forces, while also confronting pro-democracy protesters.

"We do have similar concerns," Zhang said. "We do believe that with diplomatic efforts we can avoid the further escalation of the tension." "With further escalation of the tension, there will be more confrontation, and with more confrontation there will be more violence, and with more violence there will be more casualties, and then we may go further down the wrong direction," he warned.

As Lebanese cry for justice, politics paralyses the system

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BEIRUT, 4 MAY

Even after she was taken off an investigation into alleged financial crimes by a money transfer company, the defiant Lebanon's state prosecutor charged ahead. She showed up at the company's offices outside of Beirut with a group of supporters and a metal worker, who broke open the locked gate.

Aoun, an investigating judge for the Mount Lebanon district, presents herself as a crusader against corruption and accuses higher-ups of

trying to stop her.

But to her critics, she's a tool of her backer, Lebanon's president, who they say uses her to punish his political opponents and protect his allies.

That is the problem in Lebanon: the judiciary is so deeply politicized it paralyzes the wheels of justice, mirroring how factional rivalries have paralysed politics. Political interference in the judiciary has for years thwarted investigations into corruption, violence and assassinations.

But mistrust of the judiciary is thrown into even starker relief

now, when Lebanese are crying out for politicians to be held accountable for the disastrous crises in their country not only the financial collapse but also last August's massive explosion in Beirut's port that killed scores and wrecked much of the capital. The explosion has been blamed on incompetence and neglect.

Lebanon's political posts are split up in a power-sharing system among sectarian-based factions. Judicial appointments are subject to the same sectarian allotment and horse-trading.

Ghada Aoun is a Maronite Christian, she is the country's president, Michel Aoun, and her supporters are mainly members of the president's Free Patriotic Movement. The two are not related.

The state prosecutor, Oueidat, is a Sunni Muslim, like the prime minister-designate, Saad Hariri. The country's top financial prosecutor is a Shiite Muslim, chosen by the country's top Shiite factions, Amal and Hezbollah. Positions all through the judicial hierarchy are similarly divided up. Those who hold on to power have set up a

and prices skyrocket.

The central bank is struggling to gather enough hard currency to ensure fuel for electricity or other key imports, much less maintain its long-time peg of the currency to the dollar. Even more galling for the public, the wealthy and politically connected transferred billions of dollars to safety outside Lebanon even after banks imposed informal capital controls at the beginning of the crisis. Most people have been unable to access their dollars in bank accounts since late 2019.

Slovakia's new government wins confidence vote

BRATISLAVA (SLOVAKIA), MAY 4

The new Slovakian government formed after a secret deal to buy Russia's Sputnik V coronavirus vaccine triggered a political crisis won a mandatory confidence vote in Parliament on Tuesday. Lawmakers voted 89-55 to endorse the four-party coalition government led by Prime Minister Eduard Heger.

President Zuzana Caputova appointed the new Cabinet on April after the government of populist Prime Minister Igor Matovic resigned, becoming the first European government to collapse due to its handling of the pandemic. The new Cabinet kept the same four-party coalition in power and avoided the possibility of an early election.

AP

LEISURE

10 MINUTE CROSSWORD



SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD

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SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD

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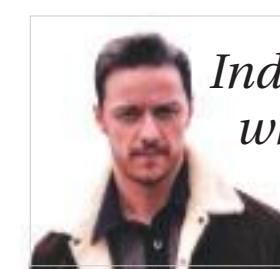
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India needs help. You can help...donate what you can if you can.

HOLLYWOOD STAR JAMES MCAVOY

URGES FANS TO DONATE TO INDIA AMIDST MASSIVE COVID CRISIS

WEATHER

CITY	MAX(°C)	MIN(°C)
SINGAPORE	32	25 H
HONG KONG	29	24 H
TOKYO	22	16 R
LONDON	12	2 R
DUBAI	35	26 S
SAN FRANCISCO	16	9 S
NEW YORK	12	9 R
MOSCOW	13	9 R

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

THUMBNAILS



Japan's Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi, left, poses with Britain's Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab at the start of the G7 foreign ministers meeting in London, on Tuesday. ■ AP

Kuwait to bar unvaccinated from traveling:

Kuwait's government is barring unvaccinated residents from traveling abroad starting later this month, the latest attempt to tame the spiraling coronavirus outbreak in the Gulf Arab sheikhdom. ■ AP

Police arrest German for threatening politicians:

Police in Berlin have arrested a 53-year-old German man on suspicion of sending dozens of threatening letters to politicians, lawyers and journalists that were signed with the acronym of a far-right extremist group, officials said Tuesday. ■ AP

Drug-trafficking gangs busted in Italy:

Italian police have busted two drug-trafficking gangs in major raids in the area surrounding the Sicilian city of Messina. Over 25 were arrested. ■ IANS

US: Black man attacks Sikh with hammer

NEW YORK, 4 MAY

A Sikh man was attacked with a hammer by a Black assailant who shouted at him "I don't like you" and "You're not the same skin" at a hotel in Brooklyn here, prompting a prominent New-York based advocacy group to call on investigators to examine if the assault was a hate crime incident. Sumit Ahluwalia, of Astoria has said his assailant was fuelled by racial hatred.

He said the man, a Black, assaulted him on 26 April at his workplace, the Quality Inn in Brownsville. He said the man came into the lobby of the hotel at around 8 am and started shouting while the front desk lady asked him if he needed help. Ahluwalia stepped into the lobby to speak with the man and to seek the hotel security guard.

"At that point, the assailant started running towards me, very fast, and he put his hand in the pocket I thought, he's pulling out a gun," the report stated. ■ PTI

Fauci: Marshal all resources to fight Covid surge in India

We are very sorry that India is going through this very, very difficult time, says Dr Anthony Fauci

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
WASHINGTON, 4 MAY

Terming the situation in India "very desperate", America's top public health expert Dr Anthony Fauci has suggested the government marshal all its resources, including the armed forces, to immediately build makeshift field hospitals, and urged other countries to help with not only materials but also personnel.

Following is the transcript of an exclusive interview of Dr Fauci, by PTI's Washington correspondent:

Q: Can you start with your assessment of the situation in India right now?

Fauci: I think it's quite obvious to everyone that the situation in India is extremely serious.

When you have shortages of hospital beds and shortages of oxygen and shortages of supplies that really becomes a very desperate situation which is the reason why we feel it's important for the rest of the world to help out, to the extent they can, and that India itself can be doing things that I think could address this very emergent situation.

Q: So, the two questions are how and in what way the world can help India right now.

And secondly, what are the steps you think India should take to address this situation on a firefghting basis?

Fauci: Well, I think the world can help by supplying India with materials, and perhaps even personnel, but certainly, materials that they need to adequately address it.

The US is also getting personal protective equipment, as well as supplies to help the Indians, to be able to manufacture vaccines themselves,

US ban on travellers from India comes into effect



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
WASHINGTON, 4 MAY

The travel ban imposed by US President Joe Biden for people coming from India, which is experiencing one of the worst waves of the Covid-19 pandemic, came into effect on Tuesday.

Biden issued a proclamation on Friday restricting travel from India starting from 4 May.

Certain categories of students, academics, journalists and individuals have been exempted from the ban.

The US nationals, those having green cards, their non-citizen spouses and children below 21 years of age, are among the various categories exempted from the restrictions. The new travel restrictions have been imposed for an indefinite period and will require another presidential proclamation to end it.

"I have determined that it is in the interests of the United States to take action to restrict and suspend the entry into the United States, as non-immigrants, of non-citizens of the United States who were physically present within the Republic of India during the 14-day period preceding their entry or attempted entry into the United States," says the proclamation signed by Biden on Friday. The decision was taken at the recommendation of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The number of new cases in India is accelerating at a rapid rate, he said. The travel ban exemption to certain categories is in line with a similar exemption that the US has granted to some categories of travellers from Brazil, China, Iran and or South Africa.

that would be needed in the rural, so sending rapid diagnostic tests. We send a million of these such as the drug remdesivir. I forgot what was another question.

Q: Steps you think India should take now to address this?

Fauci: Yeah, you know, I had

mentioned this to another outlet a few days ago, so I'll repeat it for you.

I mean there are certain things that couldn't be done immediately.

There are things that can be done on an intermediate basis and then there's the long-range thing.

mentioned this to another outlet a few days ago, so I'll repeat it for you.

I mean there are certain things that couldn't be done immediately.

Since we have such a close relationship with India. We are very sorry that India is going through this very, very difficult time.

First of all, right now, they should start getting as many people vaccinated as they possibly can.

With vaccine that they develop themselves in India, as well as supplies of vaccines that they may be able to procure from other suppliers. I recommended, and I believe at least parts of India are doing it, that you shut down the country in lockdown.

The second thing is that you will recall again last year when China had a very serious problem.

They marshalled their resources very, very rapidly, built new hospitals, to be able to handle all the people who required hospitalisation.

And although I have not been to India to see this myself. And although I have not been to India to see this myself.

Recently, from what I see in the media, that is a drastic shortage of hospital beds, and people are being taken care of in makeshift arrangements so it wouldn't be possible, perhaps, with the help of your own military to put up field hospitals that you would do if this were awarded time, so that people who are sick and require a hospital bed, will have a hospital bed.

So, those are some of the things that I would recommend they do.

Q: Anything else you would like to talk about India or any other thing for the awareness of the Indian audience?

Fauci: No, I think it's important that there's a great deal of solidarity, and the people of the rest of the world, certainly those of us in the United States.

Since we have such a close relationship with India. We are very sorry that India is going through this very, very difficult time.

No Indian Covid variant found in S Africa yet:

South Africa has so far not detected the Indian variant of the Covid-19 virus that is wreaking havoc in India, the country's National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD) said after a traveller from India tested positive.

They are still awaiting results from the UK and other countries.

US flights with medical supplies delayed:

The US Air Force flights that were scheduled to leave for India with essential life-saving supplies have been delayed till Wednesday due to maintenance issues, the Pentagon said here on Monday.

Israel to send medical equipment:

Israel will be sending life-saving equipment to India throughout the week to assist it in the fight against coronavirus, a statement issued here on Monday.

Siblings raise \$280,000 for medical supplies:

Three Indian-American siblings raised more than \$280,000 to send essential oxygen supplies for coronavirus patients in India.

World

Serum Institute set to invest 240 million pounds in UK



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LONDON, 3 MAY

UK of a one-dose nasal vaccine for coronavirus, in partnership with Codagenix INC," it said.

Poonawalla, who is currently in London and had recently hinted at plans to expand vaccine production outside India, described his meetings in the UK as "excellent".

"We shall work even harder and strengthen India's fight against Covid-19, he said on Twitter.

In the field of healthcare, another Indian investment highlight includes 59 million pounds by biotech firm Global Gene Corp over the next five years. It will create 110 highly skilled jobs in the UK, mostly based in the R&D centre at Wellcome Genome Campus in Cambridge, which is the site of the Human Genome Project.

"I'm very pleased that Global Gene Corp has decided to join the legions of Indian companies investing in the UK, boosting our healthcare sector and driving economic growth," Prime Minister Johnson said in a statement.

Sumit Jamuar, Chairman & CEO of Global Gene Corp, said the ambition with the investment is to make an "exponential leap" into the healthcare of the future through genomics from discovering the next generation of drugs to precision medicine" in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The UK is at the forefront of the genomics revolution with her Genome UK strategy, he added.

Firms drop H-1B lawsuit against US federal agency

WASHINGTON, 4 MAY

A group of seven American businesses on Monday announced to have dropped an H-1B lawsuit against the US Citizenship and Immigration Services after the federal agency agreed to accept and adjudicate previous decisions on foreign work visas.

In March, the American Immigration Council, on behalf of the seven businesses, had filed a suit, challenging USCIS' arbitrary rejection of H-1B petitions filed after October 1 solely because the H-1B workers' intended employment start date fell after October 1.

The lawsuit alleged that based on this timeline, USCIS created an absurd choice: foreign workers needed to start on October 1 (and not a day later) or the US employer had to misrepresent the intended employment start date by back-dating the petition.

Arbitrary rejections restrict business immigration in the US. ■ PTI

REARGUARD ACTION



A police officer winds up to throw a stun grenade at protesters during a national strike against tax reform in Cali, Colombia on Tuesday. ■ AP

'Climate pledges see world closing on Paris goal'

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BERLIN, 4 MAY

Recent pledges by the United States and other nations could help cap global warming at 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 Fahrenheit) by the end of the century, but only if goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050 succeed, scientists said on Tuesday.

More than 190 countries agreed in Paris six years ago to keep average temperature increases below that level ideally no more than 1.5°C (2.7°F) by 2100 compared to pre-industrial times. The Climate Action Tracker, compiled by a group of researchers who translate emission pledges into temperature estimates, projects that the world is currently set to overshoot the Paris accord's target by 0.9 degrees.

But 131 countries that make up almost three-quar-

ters of global emissions meet their pledged or discussed net zero goal, then the 2-degree target could be met, said Niklas Hoehne of the New Climate Institute. That's 0.1 C cooler than the previous optimistic forecast the group made in December.

Hoehne said US President Joe Biden's recent ambitious new climate goals had contributed significantly to the revised estimate, along with the European Union, China, Japan and Britain.

Deaths at sea highlight failings in Europe migration policy



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BERLIN, 4 MAY

As the waves pounded the grey rubber boat carrying more than 100 Africans hoping to reach Europe from Libya, those aboard dialed the number for migrants in distress frantically.

In the series of calls to the Alarm Phone hotline, passengers explained that the dinghy had run out of fuel while trying to cross the Mediterranean Sea and was quickly filling up with water and panic.

On the other end of the line, activists tried to keep the migrants calm as they relayed the boat's GPS coordinates repeatedly to Italian, Maltese and Libyan authorities and later to Frontex, the European Union's border and coast guard agency, hoping authorities would launch a rescue operation as required under international maritime law.

An analysis of logs and emails from Alarm Phone and the NGO SOS Mediterranea as well as reports by the Libyan coast guard show that the national authorities contact-

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW YORK, 4 MAY

Billionaire philanthropists Bill and Melinda French Gates have announced they are divorcing after 27 years of marriage, saying they no longer believe "we can grow together as a couple", but will continue to work together at their foundation that has an endowment of about \$50 billion.

In a joint statement posted on Twitter by both, they said: After a great deal of thought and a lot of work on our relationship, we have made the decision to end our marriage.

They said that over the last 27 years they built a foundation that works all over the world to enable all people to lead healthy, and productive lives. "We continue to share a belief in that mission and will continue our work together at

the foundation, but we no longer believe we can grow together as a couple in this next phase of our lives," the statement said.

The duo, two of the richest persons in the world, asked for "space and privacy" for their family "as we begin to navigate this new life. The divorce announcement puts focus on the couple's sprawling Seattle-based organisation, The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, which had reported

total net assets of \$43.3 billion at the end of 2019.

Bill, 65, co-founder of Microsoft, had met Melinda, 56 when she had joined the technology giant as a product manager. After dating for a few years, they got married in January 1994 in Hawaii. The couple has three children aged 18 to 25.

The foundation said in a statement that the two would remain co-chairs and trustees and no changes were expected.

ed at the organisation.

"They will continue to work together to shape and approve foundation strategies, advocate for the foundation's issues and set the organisation's overall direction," the statement said.

Late last year, the Foundation had announced new commitments totaling USD 70 million to global efforts to develop and distribute safe, affordable, and timely vaccines for low- and middle-income countries amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

Bill, formerly the world's richest person, was named by Forbes as the fourth richest person in the world with a net worth of 124 billion dollars.

A report in The New York Times quoted Rob Reich, a professor of political science at Stanford University as saying that, "The Gates Foundation is the most important and influential philanthropic entity in the world today. The divorce may have huge repercussions for the foundation and for its work across the

The copper microbe

Would bacteria become workhorses of the future?

S ANANTHANARAYANAN

Micro-organisms drive the process of fixing nitrogen from the air, the Earth's largest chemical process, which enriches soil and sustains all vegetation. Within the bodies of living things, processes on the land and sea, and in laboratories and factories, micro-organisms perform myriad tasks. It is estimated that the workforce of bacteria on Earth numbers five million trillion trillion (or 5×10^{30}). Could this resource be used to simplify or replace current, polluting industrial processes?

A paper in the journal, *Science Advances*, by Louise Hase Gracioso, Janire Peña-Bahamonde, Bruno Karolski, Bruna Bacaro Borrego, Elen Aquino Perpetuo, Claudio Augusto Oller do Nascimento, Hiroki Hashiguchi, Maria Aparecida Juliano, Francisco C Robles Hernandez, Debora Frigi Rodrigues, from the University of São Paulo, the Federal University of São Paulo, the University of Houston and JEOL Limited, an enterprise in Tokyo, suggests that it can be done. They propose an application where bacteria are harnessed to undertake extraction of metallic copper from its compounds, an industrial process that consumes energy and uses toxic reagents.

Copper is a pivotal material of the modern world. As it is relatively easy to extract from the ore, copper has been used since prehistoric times. With the discovery of electricity, however, its consumption has skyrocketed, in power lines, generators, motors and transformers. And the future of copper mining? Although abundant in the crust of the Earth, only a fraction is within reach, and copper that is mined would suffice only for 50-60 years. For this reason, a method that could tap the distributed sources of copper may be what we need, quite apart from current methods of extraction being energy intensive and polluting.

While it is true that copper exists in nature as a metal, most of it is in ores, in combination with other elements, or mixed with impurities. The extraction from ore is a two-step process. The first is to grind, sift and roast the ore in hot air, to get rid of sulphur. It is then melted and treated with fluxes, to get it to a workable state. The final process is purification with the use of electricity. While all processes consume energy, the last, to attain high purity, is truly energy intensive.

The ingots of partly refined copper are immersed in an electrolyte, a conducting solution of copper sulphate, and a current is passed from the copper ingot to a rod of pure copper. The copper atoms in the ingot pass into the medium and collect at the opposite end. Other metals that are present do not participate and



WENDY WHITMAN COBB

For most people, getting to the stars is nothing more than a dream. On 28 April 2001, Dennis Tito achieved that lifelong goal – but he wasn't a typical astronaut. Tito, a wealthy businessman, paid (US) \$20 million for a seat on a Russian Soyuz spacecraft to be the first tourist to visit the International Space Station. Only seven people have followed suit in the 20 years since, but that number is poised to double in the next 12 months alone.

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration has long been hesitant to play host to space tourists, so Russia – looking for sources of money post-Cold War in the 1990s and 2000s – has been the only option available for those looking for this kind of extreme adventure. However, it seems the rise of private space companies is going to make it easier for regular people to experience space.

From my perspective as a space policy analyst, I see the beginning of an era in which more people can experience space. With companies like SpaceX and Blue Origin hoping to build a

future for humanity beyond Earth, space tourism is a way to demonstrate both the safety and reliability of space travel to the general public.

Development of space tourism

Flights to space like Tito's are expensive for a reason. A rocket must burn a lot of costly fuel to travel high and fast enough to enter Earth's orbit.

Another cheaper possibility is a suborbital launch, with the rocket going high enough to reach the edge of space and coming right back down. While passengers on a suborbital trip experience weightlessness and incredible views, these launches are more accessible.

The difficulty and expense of either option has meant that, traditionally, only nation-states have been able to explore space. That began to change in the 1990s as a series of entrepreneurs entered the space arena. Three companies led by billionaire chief executive officers have emerged as the major players – Virgin Galactic, Blue Origin and SpaceX. Though none have taken paying, private customers to space, all anticipate doing so in the very near future.

British billionaire Richard Branson has built

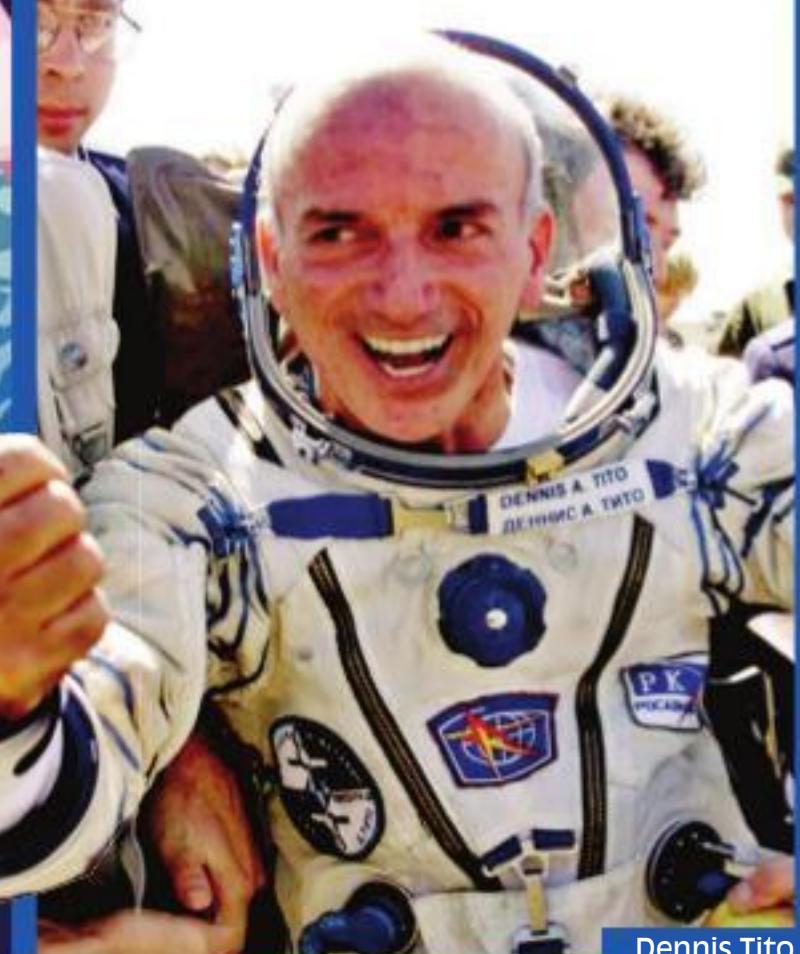
his brand on not just business but also his love of adventure. In pursuing space tourism, Branson has brought both of those to bear. He established Virgin Galactic after buying SpaceShipOne – a company that won the Ansari X-Prize by building the first reusable spaceship. Since then, Virgin Galactic has sought to design, build and fly a larger SpaceShipTwo that can carry up to six passengers in a suborbital flight.

The going has been harder than anticipated. While Branson predicted opening the business to tourists in 2009, Virgin Galactic has encountered some significant hurdles – including the death of a pilot in a crash in 2014. After the crash, engineers found significant problems with the design of the vehicle, which required modifications.

Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos, respective leaders of SpaceX and Blue Origin, began their own ventures in the early 2000s. Musk, fearing that a catastrophe of some sort could leave Earth uninhabitable, was frustrated at the lack of progress in making humanity a multiplanetary species. He founded SpaceX in 2002 with the goal of first developing reusable launch technology to

NEW GENERATION OF COSMIC EXPLORERS

Space tourism – 20 years in the making – is finally ready for launch



Dennis Tito

ions, such as copper, and transform them into a valuable commodity."

The paper points out that copper finds applications in light sensitive, electro-chemical cells, sensors, solar cells, inks, varnishes, and, as copper is toxic to many microbes, in antimicrobial coatings. Copper, in the form of single atoms just released from copper compounds, even more than in the form of nanoparticles, is also effective for special applications, as in catalysts, where it forms short-lived combinations with reagents, or to "dope" materials as a trace impurity. Creating copper atoms in this form, however, involves tedious processing and needs toxic chemicals. There are studies where it has been done with the help of bacteria or fungi, the paper says, but they need the support of additives.

In the current study, the authors examine a bacterium, found in copper mines, which is able to generate atomic copper without the use of toxic solvents or energy. Atomic copper that was isolated in copper mines in a region in Brazil suggested that micro-organisms could extract metal atoms from the environment, the paper says. And this implied also that microbes could clear sites that are contaminated by copper.

That the bacterium concerned could do this, the paper says, was first shown visually, by the change in the green colour of the bacteria growth medium, which contained copper sulphate. In 48 hours, the mixture changed from green to orange – indicating the presence of metallic copper. Sophisticated electron microscopy then showed that the orange mixture contained copper, and in the form of separate atoms.

In electron microscopy, what is shone through the sample is not light, but a beam of electrons. Just as light, in the case of interaction with a solar cell, for instance, behaves like a particle or a "photon", particles like electrons can exhibit wave behaviour, and those waves are of extremely short wavelengths. The result is that the electron microscope can make out details at extremely small dimensions – good enough to show that the particles in the sample have the dimensions expected of copper atoms.

The mechanics of how the bacteria went about this process was studied with the help of proteins that were expressed by the bacteria, when in the presence of copper sulphate and otherwise. While 562 proteins were there when there was no copper sulphate, 458 proteins were expressed when copper sulphate was present. Of the 458 proteins, 313 were also there among the 562, but the remaining 145 proteins were expressed only in the presence of copper sulphate. Analysis of those unique proteins then led to an understanding of what brought about the extraction and stabilising of the copper atoms.

That the bacteria from the copper mine are able to isolate copper atoms opens "up exciting strategies to produce in large-scale atomic copper via sustainable manufacturing and at low cost for existing and future applications," the paper says. And the beginning of a field of research into using microbes to extract other metals for applications in science, technology, engineering and medicine, the paper says.

The writer can be contacted at response@simplescience.in

PLUS POINTS

Chernobyl clean-up



On the 35th anniversary of one of the world's worst nuclear disasters, new research has been published that could help to contain and clean up the most dangerous radioactive materials that still remain at the site in Chernobyl.

The study, led by Claire Corkhill from the University of Sheffield's department of materials science and engineering, has employed a new approach of using ultrabright x-rays to better understand the hazardous waste that has been left behind inside the nuclear reactor.

The technique provides proof of concept for the first time that using ultrabright x-rays can yield rich chemical information on some of the most dangerous materials left at Chernobyl and provide a safe way of analysing them. Using ultrabright x-rays has also enabled the team to forensically unravel how nuclear fuel at the site transformed into a lava-like substance immediately after the disaster, which has solidified in large masses and are obstructing decommissioning efforts.

The researchers studied simulant Chernobyl material with two of the world's brightest microscopes – called x-ray synchrotrons – in Switzerland and the US. They were able to measure very small samples of their material and identify uranium-containing features that were one twentieth of the size of a human hair. By building 2D chemical images of the uranium features, the team were able to reconstruct the timeline of events that occurred in the moments immediately after the accident, during the formation of the melted down nuclear fuel. Testing the technique on the simulant Chernobyl material has provided proof of concept that the method could be used to safely analyse real samples from Chernobyl like never before.

Corkhill, Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council early career research fellow and reader at the University of Sheffield, said, "Like a forensic analysis of a crime scene, the chemical analysis performed on our simulant materials allowed us to piece together the last moments of the Chernobyl nuclear fuel as it melted together with other components in the reactor to form a volcanic-like lava. Our analyses are consistent with the limited data available on real samples, which is extremely exciting."

The study, "Safely probing the chemistry of Chernobyl nuclear fuel using micro-focus X-ray analysis", is published in the *Journal of Materials Chemistry A*.

Purifying salt

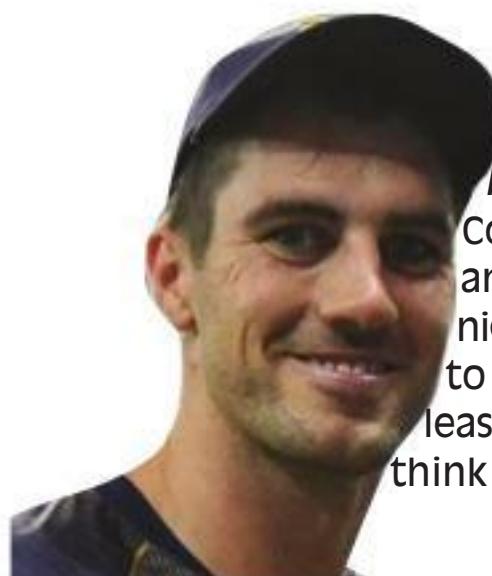
Researchers at the Indian Institute of Technology-Guwahati have developed a microfiltration process to remove microplastics from seawater in order to prevent the inclusion of plastic residues in edible salt extracted from it. Kaustubha Mohanty and Senthilmurugan Subbiah, department of chemical engineering, IIT-Guwahati, have recently published the results of this research in the journal *Environmental Technology & Innovation*, in a paper co-authored by their research scholar, Naveenkumar Ashok Yaranal.

Research performed in East Asia has shown that 90 per cent of the table salt brands sampled worldwide have micro-plastics. Another study by IIT-Bombay showed that eight brands of Indian sea salt were contaminated with micrometre-sized particles of polyesters, polyethylene terephthalate, polyamide, polyethylene and polystyrene. Microplastics ingested by humans can disrupt hormones, leading to infertility, and cause nervous system problems, and even cancer.

While there have been many studies to identify and quantify micro-plastics in various food products, including salt, there have been fewer attempts at finding ways to remove them. The IIT-Guwahati team has, for the first time, shown efficient removal of micro-plastics from synthetic seawater using hollow fibre microfiltration membranes.

"In our hollow fibre membrane filter, hundreds of tiny straw-like tubes are bundled together to create a filter matrix," explained Mohanty. The walls of the tubes are filled with microscopic pores, and when water is passed through the tubes, the micro-plastics are trapped inside, thus freeing water of this pollutant.

Hollow fibre membranes are already used extensively in daily life applications such as reverse osmosis pre-treatment, industrial water/waste-water, juice processing and other biotech applications, including in dialysis membranes used for kidney ailments.

For more updates www.thestatesman.com**THUMBNAILS**

Perera retires: Former Sri Lanka limited-overs cricket captain Thisara Perera announced his retirement from international cricket on Monday. The 32-year-old all-rounder told Sri Lanka Cricket that he was stepping down to clear the way for youngsters.

La Liga: Sevilla lost at Athletic Bilbao 1-0 and fell behind in the race for the Spanish league title. Sevilla remained six points off the lead but with four rounds to go. A victory would on Monday have put four teams within three points of each other entering the final period.

Parma relegated: Parma were relegated from Serie A after losing 0-1 at Torino, whose right back Mrgim Vojvoda scored on Monday to condemn them to the second division. Parma's fifth successive defeat left them 12 points below Cagliari in the last position.

Watch out: Manchester United will punish fans for the protests on Sunday which led to the Premier League game against Liverpool being postponed. Protesting against the club's American owners, they stormed into the stadium closed due to Covid-19 restrictions.

Henry's warning: Thierry Henry has warned Arsenal supporters a potential takeover by Spotify founder Daniel Ek could take a "very long" time as he said the Swedish billionaire wanted to bring back the identity and DNA of the club. Ek recently tweeted his interest.

Owners' charter: England's Premier League said on Monday it was drawing up an owners' charter designed to avoid future attempts to join a breakaway European Super League as police launched an investigation into the protest that scuppered Sunday's marquee match.

Green light: The Europa League final in Gdansk on 26 May will be allowed to host up to 9,500 spectators after Uefa said it had received approval from the Polish authorities. The final will be held at Stadion Energa in Gdansk at a stadium capacity of 25 per cent.

Barty won: Ashleigh Barty won the battle when the last two champions of the French Open clashed and she beat Poland's Iga Swiatek 7-5, 6-4 in the third round of the Madrid Open. Barty had won in Paris in 2019 and Swiatek, in 2020. Each had unbeaten runs on clay.

Nadal v novice: Rafael Nadal handed Carlos Alcaraz a PlayStation as the boy's prize at a minor tennis tournament in Spain. Now the Spanish great is about to play against the promising youngster, who won on Monday, in the second round of the Madrid Open.

World snooker: In front of a full house at the Crucible Theatre in Sheffield, Mark Selby won the world snooker championship for the fourth time beating Shaun Murphy 18-15 in the final. Selby captured the biggest prize in the sport also in 2014, 2016 and 2017.

BFI Executive Director R K Sacheti dies: The Boxing Federation of India's Executive Director R K Sacheti died on Tuesday after battling COVID-19. He was 56. "With a deep sense of sorrow & grief, we inform you that Mr. RK Sacheti, ED (BFI) left for heavenly abode today morning, creating a huge void in the sports world," the BFI said in a statement.

Mourinho returns: Jos Mourinho was hired Tuesday to coach Italian club Roma starting next season. The move came a few hours after the club's American owners announced that current coach Paulo Fonseca will depart at the end of this season.

'TAKE IT EASY'

Kolkata Knight Riders' Pat Cummins (*in photo, left*) understands how grim India's battle is against Covid-19 but does not think suspending the Indian Premier League will help. "Us playing every night for three or four hours hopefully contributes to making people stay at home more, or at least... can help them get through each day. I don't think ending the IPL is the answer," he has said.

IPL suspended after multiple Covid cases; BCCI assures foreign players of safe return

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 4 MAY

A barrage of COVID-19 cases forced the IPL's indefinite suspension on Tuesday, a move that was welcomed by the franchises even as the league's jittery foreign recruits waited for BCCI's plan of action to ensure their return amid some strict travel restrictions.

The decision to postpone the league was announced after SunRisers Hyderabad batsman Wriddhiman Saha and Delhi Capitals spinner Amit Mishra joined the infected players' list, which already had Kolkata Knight Riders' Varun Chakravarthy and Sandeep Warrier. Chennai Super Kings' bowling coach L Balaji was among the prominent non-playing staff to test positive.

"The Indian Premier League Governing Council and BCCI in an emergency meeting has unanimously decided to postpone IPL 2021 season, with immediate effect," a statement from the IPL read after the development was confirmed by its chairman Brijesh Patel to PTI.

"The BCCI does not want to compromise on the safety of the players, support staff and the other participants involved in organising the IPL. This decision was taken keeping the safety, health and well-being of all the stakeholders in mind," it added. The IPL said BCCI will do all it can to ensure that players in the event get back to their homes safely.

IPL features cricketers from England (11), Australia (14), South Africa (11) and New Zealand (10) among other countries.



The event also featured nine West Indians, three Afghans and two players from Bangladesh. Several former foreign players, especially from Australia, were also a part of the support staffs and commentary teams. "These are difficult times, especially in India and while we have tried to bring in some positivity and cheer, however, it is imperative that the tournament is now suspended and everyone goes back to their families and loved ones in these trying times," the IPL stated.

"The BCCI will do everything in its powers to arrange for the secure and safe passage of all the participants IPL 2021."

The cricket boards of Australia, New Zealand and South Africa backed the decision and expressed confidence in BCCI's planning for their players' safe

return. But Australia made it clear that it won't seek exemption from the travel ban which is in place till May 15 for flights from India.

"Cricket Australia and the Australian Cricketers Association respect the decision of the Australian Government to pause travel from India until at least May 15 and will not seek exemptions," a joint release from CA and ACA stated. The tournament began on April 9 and ran smoothly before KKR's COVID-19 cases caused the initial panic on Monday.

"...we will take stock if we can find a suitable window later during the year. It could be September but these are all speculations. As of now we are not conducting it any further," BCCI vice-president Rajiv Shukla told PTI. The 2020 IPL was also held in a bio-secure bubble in the UAE and at that time, infections were only reported before the start of the event.

India is currently recording over 3 lakh cases everyday and more than 3,000 daily deaths.

The explosion of cases has

for the midway postponement of this season. I would say something in the range of Rs 2200 crore will be closer to accurate estimation," the BCCI official said. The tournament began on April 9 and ran smoothly before KKR's COVID-19 cases caused the initial panic on Monday.

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The explosion of cases has

severely burdened the country's healthcare facilities causing an acute shortage of oxygen, hospital beds and crucial medicines.

The IPL was being staged across six venues in a caravan mode where only two venues were being put to use at one go.

At the time of suspension, matches were being held in Ahmedabad and Delhi and the league was due to move to Bengaluru and Kolkata next week just days before this suspension. Three Australian players -- Adam Zampa, Kane Richardson and Andre Tye -- had left the left the league citing pandemic concerns. Senior Indian off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin was also forced to withdraw after several members of his family, including his wife, children and parents, tested positive for the virus.

We will find a way to send back foreign players: IPL chairman

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, 4 MAY

IPL chairman Brijesh Patel (*in photo*) on Tuesday said the BCCI will "find a way" to send the league's foreign recruits back to their respective countries after the event was suspended indefinitely due to a COVID-19 outbreak in its bio-bubble.

The suspension of the tournament was announced after SunRisers Hyderabad's wicketkeeper-batsman Wriddhiman Saha tested positive for COVID-19 along with Delhi Capitals' veteran spinner Amit Mishra. "We need to send them home and we will find a way to do that," Brijesh told PTI when asked how will the foreigners return home but did not elaborate beyond that.

The foreigners involved in the lucrative league are concerned about returning to their respective countries due to travel restrictions imposed in the wake of a deadly resurgence of the pandemic in India. The BCCI had assured foreign players of a safe return unless

situation.

"The players are in a relatively safe environment and those within affected teams are in isolation," read an NZC statement posted by 'ESPNcricinfo'.

"We'll continue to liaise with the BCCI, the ECB and New Zealand government authorities in terms of managing their situation - but at this juncture it's too early to discuss potential options."

India and New Zealand players were supposed to travel together in a charter flight to the UK where they will clash in the World Test Championship final in June.

Of all the foreign recruits, the Australians have been the most vocal about their anxieties.

On Monday, cricketer-turned-commentator Michael Slater, who was doing commentary in the IPL, escaped to Maldives and launched a scathing attack on his country's Prime Minister Scott Morrison for not allowing its citizens to return from India, calling the travel ban, till May 15, a "disgrace".

BCCI set to incur losses of over Rs 2000 crore due to COVID-forced IPL postponement

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 4 MAY



Rs 440 crore per season and BCCI is likely to get less than half of that amount because of the postponement. Add to it, associate sponsor companies like Unacademy, Dream11, CRED, Upstox, and Tata Motors, who pay in the range of Rs 120 crore each. Some subsidiary sponsors are also there. "Slash all the payments by half or a bit less and you will be reaching a loss in the range of 2200 crore. The actual losses could be much more but this is back of the hand calculation for the season," the official said.

The loss of a substantial amount of money will also reduce the central revenue pool for the season (the money that BCCI distributes among eight franchises) to nearly half.

The official, however, didn't divulge how much each franchise would lose due to the suspension of the tournament.

"It is difficult to say what kind of sponsorship and co-sponsorship money they earned this season as the economic climate has been pretty hostile," he said.

If Star pays per match, then the amount for 29 matches would be Rs 1580 crore approximately out of what would have been Rs 3270 crore for a full tournament. This means a loss of Rs 1690 crore for the Board. Similarly, mobile manufacturers VIVO, as tournament's title sponsors, pay

Franchises, stakeholders unite in COVID fight, hail IPL suspension

AGENCIES
KOLKATA, 4 MAY

Franchises and stakeholders of the Indian Premier League on Tuesday hailed the BCCI's decision to suspend the tournament indefinitely, insisting that cricket can wait while the country fights an unprecedented COVID-19 crisis.

"We're all in this together. The safety and security of everyone in VIVO IPL 2021 is of paramount importance and we support the decision of BCCI to postpone the tournament," Royal Challengers Bangalore said in a statement.

ment of IPL with immediate effect is the correct course of action taken by BCCI and the IPL governing council. Hope to see IPL back soon in better & safe environment," Azharuddin wrote.

Former England batsman-turned-commentator Kevin Pietersen said it was heartbreaking to see India suffering.

"Royal Challengers Bangalore will work in consultation with the BCCI to ensure that everyone has a safe passage back home," it added.

Former India captain Mohammed Azharuddin also lauded the BCCI for doing the right thing by postponing the tournament.

"In view of the COVID crisis in India and with players testing positive, the postpone-

pae legend Dale Steyn wished a speedy recovery to those infected. "Covid don't care. It has no favorites. Get well to those sick and hopefully everyone else will get home safe and in good health," Steyn tweeted.

On Tuesday, Sunrisers Hyderabad wicketkeeper Wriddhiman Saha and Delhi Capitals' veteran spinner Amit Mishra also tested positive for the virus as BCCI announced the postponement with immediate effect.

"India - it's heartbreaking to see a country I love so much suffering. You WILL get through this! You WILL be stronger coming out of this! Your kindness & generosity NEVER goes unnoticed even during this crisis!" he tweeted.

While former Australia cricketer and Kolkata Knight Riders' chief mentor David Hussey took to Twitter to say he was "shattered", South African

Mumbai Indians and Punjab Kings announced they will work with BCCI to ensure a safe return of all their members.

"With the postponement of VIVO IPL 2021, Mumbai Indians will work with BCCI and the respective authorities to ensure safe and secured travel for each member of the franchise," MI tweeted. "Punjab Kings will work closely with BCCI and other authorities to ensure all the team members get back home safely," PKS stated.

Sunrisers also expressed their gratitude to the frontline workers and tweeted: "...together, we will fight the situation and come out, safer and stronger."

Former India cricketer Vinod Kamboj urged everyone to take proper precautions.

"Looking forward to better times ahead when we can enjoy the game again. But till then, request everyone to take precautions and get vaccinated as soon as possible. We shall come back stronger," he said.

Tokyo Games committee to set spectator cap in June

THE YOMIURI SHIMBUN/ANN
TOKYO, 4 MAY



A spectator cap for Tokyo Olympic events will be set in June based on coronavirus guidelines for sporting events in Japan in the month, according to the Games organising committee. The central government, Tokyo metropolitan government, International Olympic Committee, International Paralympic Committee and the Tokyo Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games reached the agreement in an online meeting recently. The organising committee had planned to set a spectator cap in April but the decision was postponed due to the rising number of virus variant cases and the declaration of state of emergency in Tokyo and other areas. "We are prepared to accept the idea of having no spectators, but if the situation allows, we would like many people to attend events," said Seiko Hashimoto (*in photo*), president of the organising

committee. "We will have to decide on no spectators if (allowing spectators) is expected to have a negative impact on the medical system." She added, "I understand that a full-stadium situation is highly unlikely at this stage." At the meeting, an agreement was reached on the second edition of the "playbook" guidelines to prevent athletes and others from being infected with the novel coronavirus.

The guidelines have become stricter. For example, the frequency of testing for athletes and others was changed from "at least once every four days" to "every day in principle." The International Olympic Committee estimates that about 60 percent of the 10,000 overseas athletes at the Tokyo Olympics will be vaccinated against the novel coronavirus before coming to Japan, according to sources involved in the Games. Some countries have already begun vaccinating their athletes. It is possible the estimate could grow higher, and those involved expect a boost in the safety at the Games if vaccinations progress. The USA and South Korea have already started plans to inoculate their athletes. The IOC believes that more than half of the 200 participating countries and regions will inoculate their athletes, and informed the Organising Committee and the Japanese government as such. Since a mass outbreak at the athletes' village could scupper the Games, the IOC strongly supports giving athletes a vaccine. In the second edition of the Playbook for athletes and officials, the Organising Committee states that "the IOC will work with the NOCs to encourage and assist their athletes, officials and stakeholders to get vaccinated in their home countries." But it clearly notes, "You will not be required to have received a vaccine in order to participate in the Games."

Hockey: India's Europe tour postponed

LAUSANNE, 4 MAY

India's upcoming FIH Hockey Pro League away fixtures against Spain and Germany later this month have been postponed due to the international travel restrictions imposed in the wake of surging COVID-19 cases in the Asian country, the world body (FIH) informed on Tuesday.

The Indian men's hockey team was scheduled to play against Spain on May 15 and 16, followed by two-legs in Germany on May 23 and 24. "FIH, Hockey India as well as the Hockey National Associations of Germany, Spain and Great Britain since the matches initially planned in London on 8-9 May were also postponed are currently looking at all potential options to rearrange these matches at a later date," the FIH said in a statement. PTI

Varane ruled out of semi-final

THE INDEPENDENT
MADRID, 4 MAY

Real Madrid have suffered a blow with the news that Raphael Varane (*in photo*) will not make tomorrow's trip to London to take on Chelsea after picking up a thigh injury.

Los Blancos must score at Stamford Bridge in the second leg after being held 1-1 by the Blues in the first leg of their Champions League semi-final.

The France international suffered the injury during the 2-0 win over Osasuna in La Liga on Saturday, which saw him leave the game at half-time. Newspaper AS speculated that Varane would miss around 10 days, which would likely see him miss Sunday's crucial match against title rivals Sevilla, as well as next Thursday's trip to Granada. Varane was absent throughout the Champions League quarter-final against Liverpool due to testing positive for Covid-19, though he was able to recover.

er and complete 90 minutes off leaders Atletico Madrid, with four matches remaining in the season. Karim Benzema cancelled out Christian Pulisic's away goal in the closely-fought first leg, with the winner destined to face Manchester City or Paris Saint-Germain in the Istanbul final.

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