



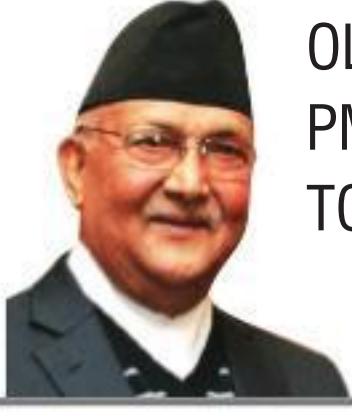
PAK TERROR FINANCING



'POLLS SMASHED
INVINCIBILITY MYTH'

P6

P7



OLI REAPPOINTED NEPAL
PM AFTER OPP FAILS
TO MUSTER MAJORITY

A CRICKETER
BATTLES ON
COVID CREASE



P11

P12

WEATHER

Partly cloudy sky with possibility of light rain. The maximum and minimum temperatures would be around 39 and 25 degrees Celsius respectively.

RAINFALL: Nil

RELATIVE HUMIDITY

Max: 74% Min: 36%

TEMPERATURE

Max: 37.9°C (-1) Min: 23.2°C (-2)
SUN RISES 05:30 hrs MOON RISES 08:42 hrs SUN SETS 19:05 hrs MOON SETS 22:20 hrs

THUMBNAILS



Jama Masjid wears a deserted look on Eid al-Fitr, during the ongoing Covid-induced lockdown, in New Delhi on Friday. IANS

Centre moves SC seeking quota verdict review: The Centre has moved the Supreme Court seeking review of the 5 May majority verdict which held that 102nd Constitution amendment took away the power of state governments to declare Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (SEBC) for grant of quota in jobs and admissions. The Centre has maintained that the amendment did not take away the power of the state governments to identify and declare SEBC and the two provisions which were inserted did not violate the federal structure.

No interim protection from arrest to Kalra: The Delhi High Court on Friday declined to grant interim protection from arrest to Navneet Kalra, seeking anticipatory bail in connection with alleged black marketing of oxygen concentrators, agreeing with the reasons given by the trial court while denying him the relief. Justice Subramonium Prasad listed the matter for hearing on 18 May.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 14 MAY

The Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said the coronavirus pandemic is rapidly spreading in rural areas, as he urged citizens to take precautions, wear masks and maintain social distance to check spread of the disease that has claimed at least 2.6 lakh lives. The government, he said, is working on "war footing" to control the second wave of infections and is setting up new hospitals and oxygen generating plants while augmenting supplies of medicines and vaccines. He asked states to crack down on black marketing of medicines and other essential items.

"I want to warn you about corona. This pandemic is spreading fast in rural villages. Every government is taking efforts to stop this. Awareness about this among rural people and cooperation of the panchayat institutes are equally important. You have never disappointed the nation. We hope this time too, to protect yourself and

related to supply of medical oxygen to patients. On Thursday, Advocate General Devidas Pangam had told a bench of Justices Nitin Sambri and Mahesh Sonak that there were logistical issues involved in maneuvering the tractor which carries the trolleys of oxygen and in connecting the cylinders to the manifold here in the last four days.

The horror at the GMCH is continuing even as the Goa bench of the Bombay High Court is hearing petitions related to deaths during the "dark hours" at the premier hospital.

While the state government has not revealed the exact cause of recent deaths at the GMCH, it has told the HC that there were "logistic issues"

mutant strains. She also explains why the vaccination of children is not prioritised and in what form herd immunity could be achieved.

Excerpts:

Q. When can we expect the second wave to have a downward trajectory?

A. One just can't predict this for the whole of India currently, as outbreaks of Covid-19 are not same in all regions. However, a lockdown for three to four weeks in areas where virus spread is high will slow it down, depending on what control measures have been implemented.

Longer term, the level of vaccination will be the key factor for stopping virus spread.

Q. Why is the virus mutating at such a rapid rate in India?

A. All viruses make errors when they multiply in the cells - more transmission,

GOA HOSPITAL HORROR
In the last four days, total 75 people have succumbed at Goa Medical College and Hospital (GMCH), a government-run Covid facility during the "dark hours". While the state government has not revealed the exact cause of recent deaths at the GMCH, it has told the Bombay HC there were "logistic issues" related to supply of medical oxygen to patients.

related to supply of medical oxygen to patients. On Thursday, Advocate General Devidas Pangam had told a bench of Justices Nitin Sambri and Mahesh Sonak that there were logistical issues involved in maneuvering the tractor which carries the trolleys of oxygen and in connecting the cylinders to the manifold here in the last four days.

The number of patients who have died during the "dark hours" (between 2 am and 6 am) at the hospital has touched 75 in the last four days.

As per state government

statistics, 26 patients had died at the GMCH during the wee hours of Tuesday, followed by 21 on Wednesday, 15 on Thursday and 13 on Friday.

The Goan government had told the HC on Thursday that during the process of attaching the oxygen manifold there was some interruption, which results in fall of pressure in the supply lines of oxygen to patients. It was pointed out that it is basically on account of these factors some casualties may have taken place," the bench had said.

"We expect the state administration to find out ways and means to overcome these logistical issues so that precious life is not lost on account of any deficiencies in the matter of supply of oxygen to patients," the HC had said.

As per state government

of large gas cylinders)." The senior official confirmed that 13 more patients, admitted in various Covid-19 wards in the GMCH, died during the wee hours of Friday.

The number of patients who have died during the "dark hours" (between 2 am and 6 am) at the hospital has touched 75 in the last four days.

As per state government

their lives and we have an entire team of hundreds of volunteers at IYC that was working round the clock to arrange material and provide it to people. We are continuing our work and not scared of police or any PIL.

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INDIAN YOUTH CONGRESS PRESIDENT

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The government has miserably failed to protect the people and vaccinate people.

FORMER KARNATAKA CHIEF MINISTER SIDDARAMAIAH
ON RAISING RS 100 CRORE FOR PROCURING VACCINES

'Delhi govt to bear cost of living, edu of kids orphaned by Covid'

CM says his govt'll also help families who lost earning members; Delhi sees a dip in virus cases

SNS & PTI
NEW DELHI, 14 MAY

Chief minister Arvind Kejriwal today said the Delhi government will extend financial help to families which have lost their earning members to the coronavirus infection and will also bear the expenses on upbringing and education of children orphaned by the Covid pandemic.

The CM pointed out that in the past 24 hours, Delhi has recorded about 8,500 Covid cases as against over 28,000 cases on April 20 and that the positivity rate has come down to about 12 percent as against 36 per cent on 22 April.

But the fight against the coronavirus has not ended and there is no room for laxity, Kejriwal said during an online press briefing.

"I know many children who have lost both their parents. I want to tell them that I am still there. Do not consider yourself an orphan. The government

will take care of their studies and upbringing," Kejriwal said.

"I know elderly citizens who have lost their children. They depended on their earnings. I want to tell them that their son (Kejriwal) is alive. The government will help all such families who have lost their earning members," he said. The CM said such families could be given financial aid but they need care and affection too.

"They need empathy. It is my request to all the neighbours and the relatives of such families to take care of them. These families are facing great challenges. Give them love. The two crore people of Delhi, we are a family. In these times of despair, we need to help each other. On the occasion of the festival of Eid, I pray for the health and happiness of all," he said. Kejriwal said the lower positivity rate means that a lesser number of people are falling ill in Delhi. The number of people being admitted to hospitals has also reduced, he said.

"In the past 10 days, the

number of patients in hospitals of Delhi was reduced by more than 3,000 patients. Which means that 3,000 beds have become empty. Now, there is no problem being faced to get beds in hospitals, yet one thing to be observed is that the ICU (intensive care unit) beds are still full," he added.

He also said that 1,200 new ICU beds have been prepared and would be ready to be utilised by Friday or Saturday.

Kejriwal thanked the people of Delhi for following lockdown restrictions. "We imposed a very strict lockdown in Delhi, but the people of Delhi offered their complete support.

Everyone adhered to the lockdown completely," he said.

"But the battle is not won yet. Even now 8,500 cases have come up. This has to be reduced to zero. We have to end coronavirus entirely," he said.

The CM cautioned Delhiites against any laxity and said that "if we do not take precautions, the cases will increase

again". The Delhi government was also preparing more oxygen beds, buying thousands of oxygen cylinders, installing new ICU beds, so that in case the coronavirus cases increase, the city is fully prepared, he added.

Delhi today reported 8,506 new coronavirus cases, the lowest in over a month, with a positivity rate of 12.40 percent, while 289 more people succumbed to the infection, the Delhi government's health department said.

The relatively lower number of fresh cases could be attributed to lesser number of tests—68,575. The positivity rate is the lowest since 11 April when it had stood at 9.4 percent. The number of new infections is the lowest since 10 April when 7,897 people were diagnosed with the disease, according to official data.

Meanwhile, Delhi health minister Satyendra Jain held the Kumbh Mela responsible for the Covid spread in rural parts of the country.

PTI
NEW DELHI, 14 MAY

The vast expanse of Jama Masjid's courtyard wore a deserted look and families stayed home on Friday as Eid-ul-Fitr celebrations remained a low-key affair in the city amid the COVID-19 restrictions.

The celebrations marking the end of the holy month of Ramzan, which would have been an opportunity to meet and greet relatives and friends in a different time and year, was limited to a timid affair due to the unrelenting scare of the coronavirus infection.

Shahi Imam of Jama Masjid Ahmed Bukhari said the celebrations were affected because of the pandemic. "People were troubled this year. The happiness that comes with Ramzan and Eid was also missing. Some were sick, there were so many deaths. Even if somebody dies in the neighbourhood, a Hindu or Muslim, it affects you personally," Bukhari told PTI.

He said usually people come to his house throughout the day on Eid, but "today we only talked on phone or conference calls".

Delhi-based student Kulsum Jaha rued that there were



On the occasion of Eid people offer special prayer to get rid of pandemic, at Fateh Puri Mosque in the Capital on Friday.

SUBRATA DUTTA

no guests at her home this time.

"Usually there are guests throughout the day. The number of dishes also reduced so much. It's just not the same this year. And the COVID situation is just so scary," she said.

This was the third time in a row that Eid was celebrated in a subdued manner in the national capital. Last year, Eid-ul-Fitr in May and Eid-ul-Azha in July were celebrated under the shadow of the first wave of the

However, being alive and healthy in this COVID era is like an Eid itself," Saifi said. Delhi reported 8,506 new cases, the lowest since April 10, on Friday with a positivity rate of 12.40 percent, even as Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal pointed out that the number of serious patients has not declined much as ICU beds in hospitals are still full. The less number of fresh cases can also be attributed to a smaller number of tests—68,575—conducted on Thursday.

Delhi University student Afraida Sneha Wazbeez also missed the "fun affair" of getting to meet family and friends, and having "yummy food" to eat.

"Normally, we used to send people food or we used to receive food during the month of Ramzan but because of the COVID-19 lockdown restrictions and fear of the virus, we weren't able to do that. Getting to meet relatives, family and friends—visiting them, eating the yummy food, be it Pulao, chicken, etc. It was overall a fun affair," she said. However, this year Ramzan felt "more spiritual" for her, as "we had a lot of time, and we did end up reading the Quran and offering namaz".

Kejri govt 'failed' in oxygen storage & distribution, has 'criminal liability' for deaths: BJP

PTI
NEW DELHI, 14 MAY

The BJP on Friday alleged that the "criminal liability" for the death of many patients in two Delhi hospitals due to lack of oxygen falls on Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, saying his government "failed" in proper distribution and storage of the life-saving gas.

Citing a report by the Petroleum and Explosives Safety

Organisation (PESO), a central agency, BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra said the Delhi government on a few occasions returned the liquid medical oxygen supplied to the national capital because it had no storage capacity and even asked neighbouring states like Haryana and Uttar Pradesh to keep the additional quota in reserve.

All this while Kejriwal and his deputy Manish Sisodia

kept blaming the Centre and other states for the oxygen crisis and accused the central government of meting out "step-motherly" treatment to the city. Patra said, adding that it was the chief minister who treated his own people in a "step-motherly" way.

"The way you work has been exposed today.... The (oxygen) crisis could have been averted and managed. I am sorry to tell Arvind Kejri-

wal that the crisis was grossly mismanaged by you. I hope you and Sisodia will answer and apologise too. Your work have been all about spreading confusion," Patra said at a virtual press conference.

Citing one incident, the BJP leader said Linde plant in Faridabad was expected to supply 120 MT liquid medical oxygen to Delhi on May 9 but the local government sent 74

MT back due to non-availability of storage space or less demand in Delhi.

The Delhi government could not prepare for the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic despite the Centre's warnings to all states, and has worked only to spread confusion and do politics over the crisis, he claimed.

While it kept seeking more oxygen, it could not make arrangements for storing the gas, he said.

Classified

PUBLIC NOTIFICATIONS

PUBLIC NOTICE
Notice is hereby given to all concerned that certain cheques bearing signatures of our Client Sh. Naresh Gupta, s/o Lt. Sh. Geeta Ram, O/H-20, Uggay Nagar, Near Peer agarhi Chowk, Delhi-41 ("Director" of N.K.Wears Pvt. Ltd. Ona Filaments Pvt. Ltd. and "Proprietor" of Sonu Udyog, who had lost/missing from his office. In this regard complaints have been filed before the Mianwali Police Station, New Delhi.

The details of cheques for N.K. Wears Pvt. Ltd. of Union Bank of India, Udyog Nagar, Branch 3305077, 3305096, 33005108, and 33005109, for One Filaments Pvt. Ltd. of State Bank of Patiala, Wazirpur Industrial Area Branch 366713, 549438, 544839, 363547, 363549, 363550, 366797, 366798, 366799, 692780, 383962, 148222, 366800,

and "Proprietor" of Sonu Udyog, who had lost/missing from his office. In this regard complaints have been filed before the Mianwali Police Station, New Delhi.

692620, 692621, 692623, 425178, 425179, 425180, 366736, 425145, 383960, 148220, 148223, 269744, 269745, 387250, 467178, 467180, 467181, 403551, 403572, 403573, 403584, 403592, 705134, 705135, 705136, 705137, 705138, 705139, 705140, 705219, 705220, 705264, 705265, 705266, 705267 and 705268.

Suspecting misuse, under instructions of our Client this notice is hereby given so that no person should engage in any legal transaction in respect of the said cheques in any manner whatsoever. Any person doing the same shall do it at its own cost/risk and that our Client shall in no manner be liable for the same.

Manesh Kumar & Asso., Advocate Chamber No. E-314, Karkardooma Courts, Delhi-110032.

LOST & FOUND

I, RICHIK Bandyopadhyay of St. Xavier's College School, Kolkata have irretrievably lost my Pass Certificate for ISC Examination, Year of Passing 2023, Index Number B/3285/004. Please contact: 907813395.

SALE agreement of Magnolia Infrastructure Development Limited with Mahua Chatterjee and Ashutosh Chatterjee has lost and also lodged complaint Bidhannagar North P.R. vide GD Entry No. 421/2021 Dt. 09.05.21. If any person got the original document please inform within 10 days to us: 9433677435, 8697731089.

LOS OF HDFC Ltd. FD Certificate of Satya Hari Ghosh, Cert. No. CC/10600980, 10600997, 12488698, 13278139, 13777803, 13777700, 15468635, 15468666, 15660262, 15660279 & 1 Cert. name of Bela Ghosh No. CC/15619905.

No interim protection from arrest to Kalra till May 18 in O2 black marketing case: HC

PTI
NEW DELHI, 14 MAY

The Delhi High Court Friday declined to grant interim protection from arrest to Navneet Kalra, seeking anticipatory bail in connection with alleged blackmarketing of oxygen concentrators, agreeing with the reasons given by the trial court while denying him the relief.

Sessions court had on Thursday dismissed Kalra's anticipatory bail plea, saying the allegations against him were serious and his custodial interrogation was required to "unearth the entire conspiracy". I am persuaded by the reasons given by the trial court which is a valid ground for me not to grant any interim protection now," Justice Subramoniu Prasad said while listing the matter for hearing on May 18.

The observation came after Kalra's lawyers – senior advocates Abhishek M Singhvi and Vikas Pahwa – urged the court to grant some interim protection if the matter was going to be adjourned till May 18 on the request of Additional Solicitor General (ASG) SV Raju.

Singhvi told the court that the police was actively searching for Kalra and was visiting the homes of his relatives and close friends and it ought not to be done when the high court was hearing his plea for anticipatory bail. He said he was not in a "begging game" with the authorities and was relying on the high court to protect his client's rights as the police was out looking for him with a "fanaticism" as if he were a "trophy".

When the hearing commenced on Friday afternoon, ASG Raju urged the high court to hear it on Tuesday, May 18, as

he had a lot of material, like information with regard to shell companies, which he needed to place before it and would require some time. Heavens would not fall if the matter is taken up on May 18, Raju said, adding that there was no need for giving such a preference, like hearing the case on a holiday, to Kalra as his plea for anticipatory bail is just like that of anyone else seeking the same relief.

Singhvi opposed the contention saying it was an attempt to embarrass the court. He said one of the charges against his client was that he had overcharged for the concentrators and to investigate it, Kalra's arrest was not required. He said that under the Drug Price Control Order (DPCO) 2013, there is a provision for adjusting the overcharged amount or refunding it. The high court said a number of concentrators were seized from his properties and price stickers, including blank ones, were found at the including blank ones, were found at the

"Therefore, the question is would it be a violation of the DPCO 2013," the court said, adding that if so, then can the Essential Commodities Act, under which the DPCO comes, be given the go-by.

It is Kalra's contention the Essential Commodities Act is not applicable in the instant case as no price was fixed for oxygen concentrators imported from abroad.

The high court also asked Kalra how many concentrators were sold by him prior to seizure of the 105 units from two of his restaurants.

It also said that according to the trial court, Kalra had sold spurious and inferior concentrators at a higher price.

Singhvi said he will provide data regarding sale of the concentrators on the next date.

Blind parents lose only child to virus; couple mourn death of 5-month-old 'Pari'

PTI
NEW DELHI, 14 MAY

Nine-month-old Krishu, the only child to his blind parents, succumbed to COVID-19 at a Delhi government-run hospital, while his father, battling the deadly virus at another hospital.

On Thursday evening, Jitender Singh 'Shunty', a former BJP MLA, buried Krishu in a corner of the Old Seemapuri cremation ground. This was the second time in two days that Singh was burying a child so young.

The 59-year-old humanitarian, who has given dignified cremations to over 2,000 strangers during the second wave of COVID-19, buried five-month-old Parion Wednesday evening, near the spot where Krishu now rests.

A relative of Krishu told PTI that the boy was the only child to his parents who live in Dilshad Gar-

den in East Delhi.

"Both the parents are blind," he said, choking on his tears.

Krishu's mother contracted the infection around 18 days ago and since she breastfed the child, he also became ill, the relative said.

A few days ago, Krishu was admitted to the Guru Tegh Bahadur Hospital, where he died in the early hours of Thursday.

His father, Shashank Shekar, 26, is battling for his life in the Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital in Tahirpur.

"He doesn't know he lost his beloved Krishu today. Please do not tell him. Now, I don't want to lose him too," the mother, Jyoti, said, as she broke down over the phone.

Parion's father, Prahlad

OFFICE OF THE MEDICAL DIRECTOR
INDIRA GANDHI HOSPITAL, GNCTD
SECTOR 9, DWARKA, NEW DELHI

Cancellation of Walk-in-interview

Reference to Advertisement no DIP/Shabdharth/0052 dated 9th May 2021, walk-in interviews for the post of nurses, nursing orderlies, security, pharmacists, lab technician, lab assistants, OT Assistant, OT Technician, ECG technician scheduled at Indira Gandhi Hospital from 13/05/2021 to 17/05/2021 have been cancelled due to administrative reasons and Covid emergency.

Now applications are invited through email for the following posts:

S. N.	Name of Post	Number of Posts	Honorarium per day per shift (INR)	Minimum Qualification

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I don't think that the state government has not done what was required, but mutual confrontation should not be there.

CLAIMING THAT DISTRIBUTION OF VACCINES IS BEING DONE VERY RATIONALLY

As virus surges in rural Pb, CM urges villagers to be on guard

Capt urges the state's rural people to allow only Covid-free persons to enter their villages

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 14 MAY

With Punjab's rural areas, which were largely unaffected in the first coronavirus wave, now showing a Covid spike, Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh on Friday urged villagers to restrict movement into their villages to only those persons who are free of the virus.

Addressing the people of the state in a live Facebook telecast, the Chief Minister called for strict measures in the rural areas over the next two months, which he described as extremely crucial. "Now the rural areas are seeing a surge in cases, so we need to be very careful," he said, urging villagers to conduct 'thikri pheras' (vigil at village borders) to keep outsiders away and allow only Covid-free people to enter.

Exhorting people to "save your mohallas and villages to save yourself, your families and Punjab", the Chief Minister asked them not to delay going



to hospitals. "We have teams of doctors everywhere, approach them if you feel unwell," Capt Amarinder urged them, stressing that the delay in going for treatment was leading to people ending up in level three (L3) hospitals.

Noting that there are three stages of the disease, of which the first can be managed at home, Capt Amarinder repeated his plea to the people to go

to the doctor at the first sign of symptoms. "Let the doctor decide the course of treatment, don't get into diagnosis and medication yourself," he appealed to them.

"I fail to understand why we are harming the interests of the state and your families in this manner," he said, adding that "we do not want Punjab to go the way of Delhi and Maharashtra, which have experienced unprecedented problems amid the second wave." The disease was wreaking havoc the world over, with even the most advanced countries not immune to it, Capt Amarinder said, urging people to help his government save the state.

Giving figures, the CM disclosed that Punjab so far had 4.75 lakh plus coronavirus cases, with Thursday's 24-hour figure being at 8484. While the state's Covid death toll stood at 11297, it had lost 184 lives to Covid yesterday, he added. As of date, there are 9619 patients on oxygen and 429 on ventilator support.

Assembly polls outcome manifested

India's secular character: Punjab CM

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 14 MAY

Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh on Friday said India's secular character was manifested in the defeat of "communal forces" in the recent Assembly elections in Tamil Nadu and West Bengal.

The CM said this while declaring Malerkotla as the 23rd district of the state during the state-level celebration of 'Eid-ul-Fitr', held virtually in view of the pandemic situation. On the occasion, the Chief Minister underscored India's secular character, which he said was manifested in the defeat of communal forces in the recent Assembly elections in Tamil Nadu and West Bengal.

Pointing to the city's significance in Sikh history, Amarinder said people across the globe, especially Sikhs, revered Sher Mohammed Khan, former Nawab of Malerkotla, and who lovingly addressed him 'Bhatee' (nephew) during his early childhood visits to the city.

In a statement here, Prof Chandumajra said in this hour of crisis, the prime goal is to save lives. "Punjabis have been hit by a most severe second wave of the pandemic and the government has been found wanting in dealing with the situation. It is best the army medical corps is taken on board and handed over major Covid Centres," he said. The former MP said doctors and medical staff from the Western Command had done a good job handling the 100 bed super-specialty wing of the Rajindra hospital at Patiala. "It should be handed over Covid treatment facilities in other major cities of the State also on a similar pattern as per

Hand over Covid centres in Pb cities to Army Western Command: SAD to Capt

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 14 MAY

the demand of the people who have expressed satisfaction with the services being rendered by the army medical corps in Patiala," he added.

Prof Chandumajra also asked the government to spend Rs 660 Crore which had been earmarked for the state from the National Disaster Management Fund to provide much-needed economic succour to the people.

He said financial assistance of Rs 5,000 should be extended to all truckers as well as taxi and auto owners, Rs 3,000 to rickshaw pullers as well as labourers and khetmazdoor. He said similarly a bonus of Rs 100 per quintal should be given on the recently harvested wheat produce. He also advocated that bi-monthly electricity and water bills should be waived off immediately and that the government should extend this facility to the common man for the next six months.

Prof Chandumajra also asked the state government to accelerate the vaccination process by issuing global tenders for vaccines. He said the government should also stop black marketing of life-saving drugs and cap treatment costs at private hospitals.

HP CM asks DCs to help Covid victims' kins in doing last rites

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 14 MAY



He stated that in rural areas, BDOs had been designated as nodal officers in their respective areas for this purpose.

Adequate PPE kits, dead body bags, disinfectants, sanitizers, waste disposable bags etc would be provided to the hospitals and PHCs so that the same could be made available to the people for performing the last rites as per the protocol.

The BDOs should work in close coordination with the hospitals/PHCs, panchayats and panchayat secretaries/patwaris so as to ensure that the bereaved families do not face any inconvenience in performing last rites of the deceased, the CM said. He also asked the nodal officers to ensure proper communication and information channels to address all issues pertaining to the last rites of the deceased.

He requested MLAs to contact the family members of the deceased so that they could get moral support in this hour of distress.

Thakur further stated that family members of deceased should contact the municipal authorities, executive offi-

'Over 1.23L vaccinated in Delhi on 13 May'

PTI
NEW DELHI, 14 MAY

AAP MLA Atishi said on Friday that over 1.23 lakh people were vaccinated the previous day in Delhi and nearly 43.67 lakh doses had been administered so far.

As many as 10 lakh people have taken both the doses, Atishi said while issuing the vaccination bulletin.

"The Delhi healthcare system is proceeding with vaccination at a good pace. The vaccination in 18-44 age group has declined owing to 144 centres being shut due to unavailability of Covaxin," she said.

Delhi has three days of Covaxin and two days of Covishield stock left for the 45-plus age group, frontline and healthcare workers. Eight days of Covishield vaccine stock is left for the 18-44 age group, she said.

Atishi underscored that the only way to counter the third wave of the virus would be through vaccination.

Delhi recorded 8,500 new coronavirus cases on Friday and the positivity rate was 12 percent, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said.

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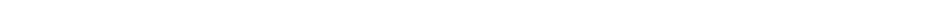
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President, Governing body





GOI's vaccine policy is compounding the problem. Vaccine purchase should be centralised and distribution decentralised. India cannot afford this.

CONGRESS LEADER RAHUL GANDHI

CITICIZING GOVERNMENT'S VACCINE POLICY, SAYING IT IS DISCRIMINATORY

The Statesman

NEW DELHI, SATURDAY 15 MAY 2021

04

Pak drone dropped arms in J&K

JAMMU, 14 MAY

A day after the armies of India and Pakistan as a goodwill gesture revived the tradition of exchanging sweets on the Eid festival, a Pakistani drone on Friday dropped an AK 47 rifle, a pistol and ammunition for terrorists in the Samba sector of Jammu.

A BSF spokesman said that the arms and ammunition was wrapped in polythene packets and was dropped in the morning by a Pakistani drone. Alert troops of the BSF recovered the consignment in the Samba Sector. The dropped arms and ammunition included an AK 47 rifle, one 9mm pistol, one pistol magazine, 15 pistol bullets and one wooden frame to support the payload carried by the drone.

9.5 cr farmers get PM-KISAN funds

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

MUMBAI, 14 MAY

Prime Minister Narendra Modi today released the eighth installment of financial benefit of Rs 2,06,67,75,66,000 crore to 9,50,67,601 beneficiary farmers, including West Bengal farmers for the first time, under the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN).

The Prime Minister also interacted with farmer beneficiaries across the country during a video conferencing event that included the union agriculture minister.

While talking to beneficiaries, the prime minister commended individual farmers for their work to promote agriculture in the region. This included Mr Arvind from Unnao in Uttar Pradesh for training young farmers in new farming tech-

niques, Mr Patrick from Car Nicobar in Andaman and Nicobar Islands for large-scale organic farming, Ms N Venneruram from Anantapur in Andhra Pradesh for guiding more than 100 adivasi (tribal) farmers of her region.

Mr Modi also appreciated the efforts from Meghalaya for innovatively producing spices like ginger powder, turmeric, cinnamon in the hilly areas of Meghalaya and Mr Khurshid Ahmed from Srinagar, Jammu & Kashmir, for organically cultivating vegetables like capsicum, green chillies and cucumbers.

Speaking on the occasion, the PM noted that for the first time farmers in West Bengal are benefiting from this scheme. He lauded efforts of farmers for record produce in food grains and horticulture even amid pandemic problems. The Central



PM Narendra Modi releases the 8th installment of financial benefit under Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) scheme, through video conferencing, in New Delhi, on Friday

government, he mentioned, is setting new records in procurement at MSP every year. Paddy and wheat procurement at MSP have set new records,

including 10 per cent more wheat already procured at MSP compared to last year. Rs. 58,000 crore for wheat procurement had earlier been

deposited directly in bank accounts of farmers thereby saving them from exploiting and corrupt middlemen.

The central government is

constantly trying to provide newsolutions and newoptions in farming, the PM said, with organic farming one such priority. The more profitable organic farming is practiced across India by young farmers, including organic farming on both banks of the Ganges within a five kms radius and helping to keep India's most important river pollution-free.

Modi informed that the Kisan Credit Card's deadline has been extended and installments can now be renewed by 30 June, to help farmers during the prolonged pandemic. More than two crore Kisan Credit Cards have been issued in recent years.

He said the government is fighting Covid-19 "with all its might and ensuring that every government department is working day and night to ease the pain of the nation".

Monsoon to make early arrival over Kerala: IMD

NEW DELHI, 14 MAY

The southwest monsoon is likely to arrive over Kerala on May 31, a day earlier than its normal onset date, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Friday. The normal onset date of monsoon over Kerala is June 1.

"This year, the onset of the southwest monsoon over Kerala is likely to be on May 31 with a model error of plus or minus 4 days," the IMD said. In the Indian monsoon region, initial monsoon rains are experienced over south Andaman Sea and the monsoon winds then advance north-westwards across the Bay of Bengal. According to the new normal dates of monsoon onset or progress, the southwest monsoon advances over the Andaman Sea around May 22.

As a cyclone is expected to form over the Arabian Sea, the cross-equatorial south westerlies have temporarily strengthened over the Arabian Sea. The cross-equatorial flow is very likely to strengthen and deepen over the Bay of Bengal from 20 May and a sustained rainfall activity is likely over the south Bay of Bengal and Andaman Nicobar Islands from May 21.

Hence, the monsoon advance over Andaman and Nicobar Islands is very likely around May 21.

In the last five years, monsoon arrived early in 2017 (May 30) and 2018 (May 29). In 2016 and 2019, monsoon made an arrival over Kerala on June 8, seven days after its normal onset date.

The southwest monsoon, which brings nearly 75 per cent of rainfall to the country, is expected to be normal this year, the IMD said in the first Long Range Forecast for the southwest monsoon 2021 last month. PTI

Covid: TN to impose strict lockdown

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

CHENNAI 14 MAY

A day after an all party meet chaired by chief minister M K Stalin decided to intensify the existing lockdown restrictions, the CM today held a meeting with senior officials from the police department to decide on the strict implementation of the lockdown norms.

Police continued to throng the roads in the large numbers in Chennai and other parts of state which giving concerns for the authorities.

Police personnel have requested the public not to venture out unnecessarily. They have asked the people to wear mask and maintain social distancing at all time.

During the all party meeting, it was agreed to constitute an all party legislator's committee to offer suggestions on improving the Covid guidelines.

Those who attended the meet decided to intensify the lockdown restrictions to prevent mortality rate and to stop people roaming out without valid reasons.

Amid reports that roads getting jammed due to soft action by the Tamil Nadu police, which had announced that people should not be punished. A total of five resolutions were adopted at the meeting, which included further intensification of the lockdown norms as there was an urgent need to protect people's lives from Covid-19.

The meeting chaired by CM decided that the lockdown currently in force in the State will be intensified and guidelines will be made stricter in order to protect the lives of the citizens of the State.

At the meeting, all the parties agreed to suspend public meetings, political events and agreed to advise people to follow the lockdown guidelines and support the relief measures being undertaken, an official release said.

Meanwhile, facing acute shortage of medical oxygen with several hospitals in the state not being able to accommodate patients for want of oxygen beds, the state government has issued guidelines for optimal usage of oxygen. The guidelines issued states that the hospital or ward has to be classified into various zones based on the need of the patient.

Import of raw items led to price hike in Indian medical supply: China

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

BEIJING, 14 MAY

China on Friday said the prices of some of the Covid medical supplies like oxygen concentrators being procured by Indian companies from Chinese manufacturers have gone up as they had to import raw materials to meet the excess demand from India.

Responding to a question from the official media here on India's Consul General in Hong Kong Priyanka Chauhan's recent remarks calling on China to stop surging prices of medical supplies to India, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying told a media briefing that China has been encouraging its companies to meet India's procurement to meet the country's surge in coronavirus cases.

Soaring prices of medical supplies like oxygen concentrators and disruption of cargo flights to India are slowing arrivals of medical goods, Chauhan said.

On price increases, especially of the oxygen concentrators, the Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson said that the feedback from the Chinese manufacturers suggests that they had to import raw materials to meet the excess demand from India.

The Indian side has also raised their demand through different channels, which has led to excessive demand in the market and driven up prices because the Chinese manufacturers have to import raw materials to meet the excess demand from India.

Giving details of the materials procured by India recently, she said in April, China exported to India over 26,000 ventilators and oxygen concentrators, over 15,000 monitors and nearly 3,800 tonnes of medical materials and drugs.

Chinese companies have received orders from India for more than 70,000 oxygen concentrators and are stepping up their production for early delivery, she said.

COVID CRISIS

- » Soaring prices of medical supplies like oxygen concentrators and disruption of cargo flights to India are slowing arrivals of medical goods
- » Chinese companies have received orders from India for more than 70,000 oxygen concentrators and are stepping up their production for early delivery
- » In addition, India has a strong demand for raw and auxiliary materials for vaccine production.

expressed Beijing's commitment to keep the industrial supply chains open. We have faced similar problems before. We hope all parties can work together to ensure openness and stability of the supply chains, Hua said. The cargo flight disruptions were amplified by the decision by Sichuan Airlines to suspend all its 11 cargo flights for 15 days from 26 April. Sichuan Airlines has announced plans to restore three of its freight flights from Chongqing and Xian to Delhi from 17 May.

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Reply to RTI plea: Huge rush of orders for Remdesivir, ventilators

KOTA (RAJ), 14 MAY

Amid the grim situation in the country, the Union government has ordered the procurement of 46,386 ventilators and 53.70 lakh vials of Remdesivir injection.

Out of the order, various manufacturers till Wednesday have supplied over 38.05 lakh injections and 43,979 ventilators to various states, UTs and the Central government's facilities, says the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. Out of 43,979 ventilators supplied to various anti-Covid facilities, 38,958 have been installed, the ministry said in reply to a plea under the Right to Information Act.

Out of the Remdesivir injections, allotted or ordered to be procured for various states, Maharashtra has been allotted 11.57 lakh injections and has secured a supply of merely 7.99 lakh, the reply said. After Maharashtra, UP has procured over 3.63 lakh doses of the injection against an allotment of 4.95 lakh doses, while Gujarat has been supplied 3.54 lakh injections.

The Union ministry has given its response in reply to a plea by RTI activist Sujeet Swami, Karnataka for which an order for procurement of 5.75 lakh injections had been placed. It has procured 3.26 lakh vials, the reply to RTI plea revealed. Similarly, an order for the supply of 2.20 lakh injections had been placed for the Delhi which has secured over 1.81 lakh of its doses. Telangana is the only state which has secured more vials than what it had ordered for 1.98 lakh against an order of 1.45 lakh vials. PTI

Man carries mother's body for cremation after kin refuse help

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

SHIMLA, 14 MAY

As Covid infection continues to rage in Himachal Pradesh resulting in a spike in deaths creating fears among netizens, a disturbing incident of a man carrying mother's body on shoulders in Kangra district had come to light as relatives and villagers refused help, fearing they might catch the viral disease.

The incident had created quite a debate in the state as no one came forward to help the family with the man's wife carrying cremation material in one hand while holding onto minor child in another.

The incident took place in Bhangwar village in Ranital town in Kangra district, around 210 km from state headquarters Shimla. Kangra deputy commissioner Rakesh Kumar

Parajapati said the woman was tested positive for Covid few days back and died on Thursday while in home isolation.

The man identified as Vir Singh was contacted by local panchayat representatives that they were sending help and PPE kits for cremation but he refused by saying that his relatives were bringing the same. "But by the time the administration could reach him to provide assistance, Singh carried his mother's body on shoulders to the cre-

matorium, situated 600-700 metres away from his residence after his relatives refused help," Prajapati told The Statesman. Prajapati said, we have now decided to cremate bodies of Covid patients who died in home isolation and local SDMs and Tehsildars will remain present to oversee the rituals. The administration is already cremating 90 per cent of covid patients who die in hospitals, he stated.

"But from now, even I and SP will also participate in cremation to convince the society that we can remain safe by adopting Covid appropriate behaviour and also help each other in these times of crisis," he added. "If we are so afraid of the virus that we can't even help each other in such a crisis, then we are already dead," he added.

The south west monsoon, which brings nearly 75 per cent of rainfall to the country, is expected to be normal this year, the IMD said in the first Long Range Forecast for the southwest monsoon 2021 last month. PTI

FESTIVE PROTOCOLS



Children celebrate Eid, in the Capital on Friday. ■ SNS

TENDER

Himachal Pradesh Jal Shakti Department "NOTICE INVITING E-TENDER"

Online bids on items rate basis are invited by the Executive Engineer Jal Shakti Division Kaza District Lahaul and Spiti Himachal Pradesh on behalf of Governor of Himachal Pradesh, in electronic tendering system in three covers for the under mentioned work from the contractors/firms of appropriate class enlisted with Himachal Pradesh Jal Shakti Department/PWD/CPWD / other department and Govt. undertaking departments.

Sr. No. Name of Work E/Cost E/Money Cost of Form Time

1. Providing LIS to Village Nidang in G.P Tabo SH- S/E of Pumping machinery and allied accessories , Laying & jointing of GI flanged pipe in Rising main and P/F and installation of DG Set suitable to the requirement of installed Pumping Machinery Rs. 245800/- Rs. 44430/- Rs 400/- Six

1. Tender documents and other instructions can be downloaded or viewed online from the portal <http://hp.tenders.gov.in> by the firms/individual registered on the website which is free of cost.

2. As the bids are to be submitted online are required to be encrypted and digitally signed, the bidders are advised to obtain Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) from suitable vendors or from any authorized agency at the earliest.

3. KEY DATES WILL BE AS UNDER:-

1. Date of online publication	11/5/2021 5.00 PM
2. Downloading of e-tender Documents	From 11/5/2021 at 5.00 AM upto 17/5/2021 at 5.00 PM
3. Date of submission of e-tendering	From 11/5/2021 at 5.00 PM to upto 17/5/2021 at 5.00 PM
4. Physical submission of earnest money deposit and cost of tender form.	Upto 18/5/2021 11.00 AM
5. Date of opening bid	11:30 AM on 18/5/2021
(i) Cover-1 Eligibility Criteria and Technical Bid	
(ii) Cover-2 Financial Bid	Should be intimated separately
6. Site Visit	-
7. Pre-Bid Meeting	-

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

The e-tender documents shall be uploaded online in Two (2) covers:-

Cover-1 shall contain scanned copies of "Eligibility information and Technical Bid"

Cover-2 shall contain "Financial Bid" on the prescribed form.

4. Cover-1 shall contain scanned copies of following "Eligibility Information" (Scanned copies to be uploaded in pdf. File).

a). The earnest money shall be through online mode(e-payment) or FDR of any nationalized bank/NSC/Saving Account of any Post office of Himachal Pradesh duly pledged in the name of Executive Engineer Jal Shakti Division Kaza . Certificate of exemption alongwith affidavit to ensure Correct nests of information.

b). The cost of tender form (non refundable) in the shape of online (e payment)/Demand Draft /Banker Cheque (Preferably non account Payee) duly pledge in favour of Executive Engineer Jal Shakti Division Kaza Distt (HS & HP)

c). Certificate of registration with Jal Shakti Department in appropriate class and latest renewal thereof.



Taiwan is an indispensable partner in the global fight against COVID-19 and pursuit of post-pandemic recovery



Support Taiwan's full inclusion in all WHO meetings, mechanisms, and activities

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought the world to its knees, exacting a heavy and extensive toll on the health and lives of humankind. More than 150 million people across the globe have been infected by the virus and more than three million have lost their lives. The message is loud and clear: this is not the time to fight on territorial or political issues or in the name of race, creed, caste, religion, ethnicity or colour. The situation demands a united fight against the virus that has posed the biggest challenge to the global community since World War II.

While major countries went into a shutdown in the wake of the outbreak of COVID-19 around this time last year, Taiwan took the pandemic head-on by making optimum use of the massive healthcare public infrastructure the country has created over the years and the technology at its disposal. We can proudly claim that the "Taiwan Model" has set an excellent example and earned global recognition for the series of actions we took and demonstrated to the world that "Taiwan can help, Taiwan is helping." The pandemic has further strengthened international affirmation of the importance and imperative need for Taiwan to participate in global cooperation mechanisms for disease prevention, leading to an unprecedented support for its participation in WHO.

No country can fight an epidemic alone. International cooperation is the only path to epidemic prevention and control. Taiwan, while willing to be an indispensable partner in the international community's recovery efforts, remains committed to seeking institutionalized participation in WHO. The accession will stand to benefit WHO and the international community in our collaborative efforts to contain COVID-19.

SHARING THE TAIWAN MODEL—A SUCCESSFUL EXPERIENCE OF FIGHTING COVID-19

Under the concerted efforts of its government and people, Taiwan has relied on its distinctive healthcare system, cooperative citizens, democratic spirit, and technological prowess to employ smart disease prevention systems as part of the implementation of numerous innovative policies, which have effectively contained COVID-19. Taiwan has proactively exchanged information on anti-pandemic measures with public health officials, experts and scholars from other countries by organizing COVID-19 related forums and by participating in APEC's High-Level Meeting on Health and the Economy and other virtual bilateral and multilateral conferences. It has also taken the initiative to hold more than 140 online professional meetings with government officials and experts from hospitals, universities and think tanks in over 60 countries as of February 2021.



The first batch of 150 oxygen concentrators and 500 oxygen cylinders have arrived in New Delhi on Sunday 2 May. The following batches of medical equipment will be airlifted to India soon.



Maha Siddiqui's Exclusive Interview with Taiwan's Former Vice President Chen Chien-jen
Tonight at 6:30 PM and
Tomorrow at 9:30 PM on World 360



Taipei Economic and Cultural Center in India

駐印度台北經濟文化中心

WHO must fully accept Taiwan's participation; No gap should be allowed in the global anti-pandemic system:

Taiwan is a transport hub for the Asia-Pacific region. Yet, Taiwan is unable to comprehensively participate in the WHO-led multilateral public health system and network, thus creating the risk of a gap in the global anti-pandemic system.

Taiwan's real-time information exchange with the world via WHO's IHR:

As the COVID-19 pandemic broke out from late 2019 to early 2020, Taiwan took the lead in reporting information to WHO via the International Health Regulations (IHR) mechanism, and continues to do so. However, to date, WHO is yet to include the contact information of Taiwan's Centers for Disease Control on the IHR intranet (Event Information Site, EIS). As a result, countries have been unable to obtain key information from Taiwan and exchange information with Taiwan via WHO's IHR in a timely manner, gravely impacting the efficacy of international cooperation against the contagion.

WHO has improperly listed Taiwan data under China:

WHO sadly continues to improperly list confirmed cases in Taiwan under China in its COVID-19 reports. This unacceptable approach fails to acknowledge the fact that the People's Republic of China and Taiwan are separate jurisdictions, neither subordinate to the other. It also misleads other countries in terms of how they gauge the spread of the pandemic. On the basis of professionalism, pragmatism, and global public health and welfare, we are confident WHO shall rectify the improper listing of cases as soon as possible and include Taiwanese experts in all regional meetings and mechanisms on COVID-19 containment.

Improvements to be made for Taiwan's participation in WHO technical meetings:

Taiwan's continued exclusion from WHO laboratory networks has severely undermined the health rights of the Taiwanese people and the global efforts against disease. Other than WHO's political considerations, China's obstruction has been the primary reason for this. WHO and China have time and again declared that Taiwanese experts have been involved in all of WHO's consultations "so they are fully engaged and fully aware of all the developments," and that WHO has been "engaging with technical colleagues on the Taiwanese side over the whole course of this event . . . in all aspects of technical cooperation." These claims are factually incorrect, to say the very least.

CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 pandemic has again reminded people worldwide that disease knows no boundaries. Having been left high and dry in the past during numerous epidemics, Taiwan all the more realizes the importance of mutual support and is keen to work hand in hand with WHO and the comity of nations to grapple with such formidable challenges. We stand by our commitment to participate in international healthcare cooperation and again urge WHO to maintain a professional and neutral stance, renounce improper political considerations, and invite Taiwan to attend the WHA as an Observer. Only the democratically elected government of Taiwan can represent its 23.5 million people at WHO and protect their rights to health. It would be in the fitness of things for WHO to seek an appropriate avenue for institutionalized and comprehensive participation by Taiwan in all WHO meetings, mechanisms, and activities. Taiwan also earnestly appeals to its international friends in all sectors to staunchly support Taiwan's participation in the global health network and facilitate its further contributions in the post-pandemic era. Taiwan must be allowed to share our experience with the global community in fighting the pandemic in the interest of humanity.



Taiwan is delivering critical medical supplies to India. Taiwan is committed to providing necessary assistance to the people of India in Time of need



The River

The sacred river deserved better not the least because it flows through the cow belt. This is quite the most charitable construct that can be placed upon the dumping of bodies of Covid victims in the Ganga as it meanders through Uttar Pradesh and Bihar and also, of course, Malda in West Bengal. This has lent a heartrending dimension to the resurgence of the pandemic, much too horrendous even at the mildest estimation. Fearing the spread of infection, the bodies are not even touched by the next of kin, let alone taken for cremation. With remarkable promptitude, therefore, the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) has written to state governments across the country, underlining the grim reality. Specifically, such inhuman dumping of the dead is a "grave violation of Covid protocol and it necessitates urgent action". Of such action, there has been virtually nil; even the state governments in Patna and Lucknow have been seemingly impervious to the cancer that permeates the supposedly sacred water.

One must give it to the West Bengal government that has directed Malda's district administration to step up surveillance for bodies in the Ganga and cremate them in a manner that is concordant with Covid protocol. The nub of the matter must be that every rule in the book as well as municipal regulations have been violated in at least two states. While the willful pollution of the river persists unchecked, it has scarcely been realised that such dumping of the dead in the Ganga not merely causes pollution, but is frightfully unhygienic, one that "increases the risk of spreading infections in the communities inhabiting in and around the regions of the river banks", according to the NMCG. It would be no exaggeration to suggest that few locations are as polluted as the rivers of the country. Such pollution is as astonishing as it is incredible, most particularly in Varanasi ~ incidentally Narendra Modi's constituency ~ where the Ganga has a profound connotation with religious rituals riveted to the river and its ghats. Trashed to irrelevance in the event is the hi-falutin Ganga Action Plan that has achieved little ever since it was conceived. And of course the irony of sins that were purged at the Kumbh not so long ago in the same waters having acted as a superspreader will not be lost on those who now think little of dumping bodies in the river. The tragedy deepens as over the past two days, unidentified and unclaimed bodies have been seen floating in the Ganga in Bihar's Buxar district and in neighbouring Ballia and Ghazipur districts of UP. The problem is fairly extensive with the Chief Secretaries of Bengal, Bihar, UP, Uttarakhand and Jharkhand being put on alert, with a directive on "effective control on future incidences of people dumping bodies in the Ganga and its tributaries". There ought to have been a crackdown at the threshold. There wasn't. And the hideous disposal of the dead is spreading. Jean Renoir, the French filmmaker from whose film we borrow the title of this comment, would have been appalled.

Pak terror financing

With its back to the wall, Pakistan appears to be turning the screws on terror financing. The country has been on the grey list of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), and has now resolved to streamline its network of investigation. It is open to question, however, whether it will thus be elevated in the FATF's reckoning. The government in Islamabad intends to introduce new rules on forfeiture, management and auction of properties and assets relating to Anti-Money Laundering (AML) cases and transfer of investigations and prosecution of such cases from police, provincial anti-corruption establishments and other similar agencies to specialised entities in order to achieve the FATF benchmarks. Indeed, two sets of rules are on the anvil, specifically the AML (Forfeited Properties Management) Rules 2021 and the AML (Referral) Rules 2021 under the "National Policy Statement on Follow the Money", which has been approved by the federal cabinet helmed by Prime Minister Imran Khan. The new rules and notifications for changes in the existing schedule of the Anti-Money Laundering Act 2010 will come into force with immediate effect and will be coupled with the appointment of administrators and special public prosecutors for implementation. The new measures will form the criteria for the FATF to judge whether or not Pakistan has complied with three outstanding benchmarks out of 27, that had held up its exit from the grey list in February this year. Several review meetings of the FATF are scheduled to begin in the second week of June, culminating in the next FATF plenary between June 21 and 25. The three outstanding aspects are: (i) demonstrating that terrorist financing (TF) investigations and prosecutions target persons and entities acting on behalf or on the directive of the designated persons or entities; (ii) demonstrating that TF prosecutions result in effective, proportionate and dissuasive sanctions; and (iii) demonstrating effective implementation of targeted financial sanctions against all designated terrorists, particularly those acting for them or on their behalf. Also to be strengthened is the administrative aspect. This is being effected quite obviously to facilitate investigation, an initiative that is addressed to the FATF gallery.

The government has decided to appoint dozens of administrators with the powers to confiscate, receive, manage, rent out, auction, transfer or dispose of or take all other measures to preserve the value of the properties and perishable or non-perishable assets. These will include goods at godowns, maalkhanas or any other place and will be confiscated. Should the redefined policy be properly implemented, the federal government will be in a position to protect the financial system and the economy from criminal operations.

Vaccine Inequality

Several developing countries like India, Brazil, Cuba and Southeast Asian nations have the capacity and experience to produce vaccines. Vaccine production needs international cooperation, in terms of raw materials which are scattered across the world as well as technology and production capacity. A waiver enables transfer of technology which will attract investment



Going against its avowed policy of protection of intellectual property (IP) rights, the USA has partially supported the pleas of India and South Africa before the WTO for waiving the patent only on Covid vaccines for a limited period, citing the extraordinary situation that "calls for extraordinary measures". This is no cause for jubilation as yet. So far, the rich world has reaped most of the benefits from vaccines, while the poor nations have been left high and dry. Africa and low-income countries in Asia and Latin America have barely received any vaccine, and only a handful of countries have appropriated most of the one billion vaccine doses that have so far been administered bringing infection rates under control, while infections are still rising in 36 countries. Untold miseries and human tragedies are unfolding in India with daily cases soaring above 350,000 in a deadly surge of the virus since April.

As expected, the vaccine manufacturers who have made a windfall profit last year from their vaccines ~ Pfizer's profit alone is expected to be above \$7 billion ~ are reacting strongly against it, forgetting that given the scale of the pandemic and the mounting death tolls in poor countries, this is not the time for calculating profit. The pharma companies' views are well-known, as articulated by Ms Michelle McMurry-Heath, CEO of Biotechnology Innovation Organisation, the trade association for the biotech sector. "Patents are the reason that Covid-19 vaccines exist", she wrote. "Waiving them would undermine our response to this pandemic and future health emergencies."

It is true that pharma companies spend a large amount on R&D and success rate is low ~ she asserts that only 10 out of some 200 Covid-vaccine development programmes are available today and that the costs of both failures and successes must be recovered by the companies. That is why, she says, "the proposal to waive IP is so shockingly misguided: it tells the successful firms and their investors that the results of their effort can be appropriated by anyone." It's another matter that most of these companies received substantial government grants and regulatory support for clinical trials and approval.

In the USA, six vaccine companies had received public funds worth \$12bn. Development of AstraZeneca/Oxford vaccine was almost entirely financed by public funds. Public investment in R&D of the pharma companies are always underplayed while offering platitudes like, "IP is the invisible filament that turns ideas

into products... The result is a win for investors, economies ~ and patients ~ everywhere." A warning then follows such inanity, "One must also consider the possibility that the nations pushing hardest for the patent suspension are self-interested ~ exploiting the pandemic to acquire innovative technology invented in America and Europe. This could have national security implications: mRNA platform technology has bioweapon potential."

These arguments are clichéd and poor nations with large populations that provide markets and profit for the rich countries' firms have heard such homilies all too often. The argument ignores that fact that no nation is an island in an intricately interconnected world, and 'no one is safe until everyone is safe'. The virus recognises no borders, and is mutating with astonishing speed to become more transmissible. As long as it continues its deadly progression, its potential to mutate to even more virulent strains threatens to undermine the efficiency of vaccines already developed.

The only solution, as Mariana Mazzucato, Jayati Ghosh and Els Torrebee pointed out, is a people's vaccine "available to all, affordable by all" to 'resolve the "vaccine apartheid" that is creating moral, health and economic catastrophes.' Without the patents, they argued, the global production capacity can be augmented to inoculate everyone ~ 60 per cent of the world population this year, and the rest by 2022.

So far, vaccine distribution has been extremely inequitable ~ Moderna and Pfizer have supplied primarily to the USA, and AstraZeneca and Johnson & Johnson to Europe. Only India has utilised its vaccine manufacturing capacity ~ the largest in the world ~ to supply to poor countries not only in its neighbourhood but across the world till the second wave struck it so ferociously that it was forced to impose a ban on vaccine exports. Russian and Chinese vaccines have mostly catered to their own populations, though other countries are now procuring them. Some rich countries have also hoarded vaccines ~ the USA is sitting on a huge stockpile of more than 300 million doses it does not need while the vast majority of the world still remains un-inoculated and will take years at the current rate of production. Issues like IP rights, risks, costs and competition are inconsequential when the world is reeling

under a crisis never seen before.

Pharma companies are arguing that poorer countries will not be able to ramp up production quickly and will also compete for scarce supplies, hitting production. As Albert Bourla, CEO of Pfizer, said, "It will unleash a scramble for the critical inputs we require in order to make a safe and effective vaccine. Entities with little or no experience in manufacturing vaccines are likely to chase the very raw materials we require to scale our production, putting the safety and security of all at risk." This is another cliché.

Several developing countries like India, Brazil, Cuba and Southeast Asian nations have the capacity and experience to produce vaccines. Vaccine production needs international cooperation, in terms of raw materials which are scattered across the world as well as technology and production capacity. A waiver enables transfer of

technology which will attract investment, thereby helping create an ecosystem in countries which have the requisite capacity to manufacture and supply vaccines at affordable cost. Presently the EU pays less for AstraZeneca vaccines than Bangladesh, Uganda and South Africa.

India and South Africa were backed by some 100 of 186 countries at the WTO last October in arguing that the only way to ensure "fair, equitable and affordable access" to Covid-19 vaccines and drugs was patent waiver. The WHO attempt in May 2020 to create a "Covid-19 Technology Access Pool" to encourage pooling of IP rights has practically remained a non-starter, and its April 2020 COVAX initiative to pool international resources for equitable access to vaccines has also remained ineffective.

The pharma companies favour licensing agreements to boost production, like Serum Institute of India which is manufacturing the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine under a licensing agreement with the company, of course by making royalty payments. Indeed, WTO has a longstanding agreement designed to protect IP known as the Trade-Related Aspects of IP Rights (TRIPS) which also provides access to essential drugs in cases of national health emergency by granting compulsory license (CL) of patented drugs. A CL is granted by a country where patients are unable to access such medicine. A recent case

is of the rheumatoid arthritis drug Baricitinib made by the US drug giant Eli Lilly, which charges Rs 45,000 per-patient treatment, an amount unaffordable to most Indians.

After it was found useful for treatment of Covid, the Hyderabad-based Natco Pharma has filed for and been granted CL, under which it will manufacture and supply the 4 mg drug as a generic medicine at only Rs 30 per tablet, at one-hundredth of Eli Lilly's price of Rs 3230. But CL cannot be used liberally, it may attract trade sanctions by developed countries. Raw materials may need to be imported and besides there are other issues. Only in a handful of cases has CL been actually invoked.

Of course, there are many bottlenecks, like shortages in supply chains and seamless movement of raw materials across borders, that need to be addressed before making the patent-waiver actually work. Vaccine technology is complex, with high-performing messenger RNA (mRNA) vaccines requiring highly sophisticated infrastructure and quality control that require huge investment and time. Whether a patent-waiver can boost production and ensure equitable distribution will depend on how the developed and developing countries collaborate to combat Covid.

At the WTO which works on consensus, negotiations and the process of waiver could be so lengthy that the virus will get ample time to mutate and become even more lethal; besides, the rich world ~ the EU, Britain and Switzerland who are united in their opposition to IP waiver ~ has to come on board. If there is any time for poor countries to unite to make multinationals see sense and reason, it is now. Pending resolution at the WTO, Governments must directly open negotiations with vaccine makers.

This is certainly not the time for business as usual ~ the companies must be made to realise that this is the payback time for them for all the profits they have earned from developing countries. Human lives are much more precious than their profits. Developing countries must together force them to relax their stranglehold on vaccines which is creating a major hurdle to boost production, and they should not shy away from using coercive power if necessary, of course only as a last resort. As the respected scientific journal Nature commented, "A pandemic is not a competition between companies, but a race between humanity and a virus", and humane considerations must prevail over everything else.

A MEMBER OF THE **ANN**
ASIAN VOICES

All hat and no cattle

The global pandemic situation is far worse than it looks. The University of Washington estimates reveal that Covid-19 has snuffed out 6.9 million deaths across the globe, and this is more than double the officially reported number.

Many countries are struggling to save lives, and shocking scenes of mass cremations in India and other such heartrending instances reported from Brazil, etc., must be weighing on the conscience of the global community heavily, but the response of the developed world to the pandemic has been appallingly slow and woefully inadequate.

It is now engaged in a vaccine patent row to the neglect of what needs to be done urgently to save lives the world over. Pope Francis got it right, on Saturday, when he declared that the world was infected with the 'virus of individualism', and the 'laws of intellectual property, etc., had taken precedence over the laws of love and the health of humanity'. The world is facing a 'catastrophic moral failure' as Head of the World Health Organization (WHO) Dr. Tedros A. Ghebreyesus has said.

'Vaccine nationalism', which characterises the developed world's pandemic response, is a major impediment to efforts being made to achieve global herd immunity against Covid-19 through vaccination, according to the WHO, which has called for the cooperation of the rich nations to carry out an equitable vaccine rollout across the globe.

This fervent appeal has not yielded the desired results if the slow progress of COVAX (COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access) initiative is any indication. As vaccine donations have not reached a satisfactory level, the pandemic-hit countries have had to think of alternative ways of meeting their urgent vaccine needs.

The Island Online

Hence their desperate call for lifting vaccine patents in the hope that such action will help boost the global jab production.

India and Brazil are among the nations that have urged the World Trade Organisation (WTO) to lift patents on the Covid-19 vaccines to boost the world's fight against the virus.

This proposal has struck a responsive chord with most countries, but some European nations are not favourably disposed towards it. They are reportedly in favour of a voluntary licensing system similar to the one between Oxford-AstraZeneca and the Serum Institute of India.

The proponents of this method of boosting global vaccine production in the short-term point out that the rich countries could make the licensing system mandatory for their pharmaceutical companies, which, however, will have to be compensated; the WTO regulations permit this kind of arrangement.

Opinion is however divided on the effectiveness of the proposed patent waiver. The opponents thereof argue that patents are necessary as they provide incentives and encourage innovation; this is the reason why Covid-19 vaccines have been produced in record time, they maintain.

It is also being argued in some quarters that even if the patents are lifted, it will take a long time to commence vaccine production elsewhere. This argument cannot be dismissed as baseless in that there is much more to vaccine production than recipes.

Supply chains have to be established, personnel trained, facilities made available and necessary processes set up. All these could be time-consuming. The world cannot wait as the virus keeps mutating and destroying more and more lives, and the only way to neutralise it is to inoculate as many people as possible across the world so as to achieve global herd immunity.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR editor@thestatesman.com

Gowri Amma's place in history

SIR, Please refer to your yesterday's report "Kerala's K R Gowri Amma no more". History will be far kinder to Kalathilparambil Raman Gouriamma, the tallest woman politician Kerala has ever produced, than to the Communist Party of India (Marxist) to which she devoted much of her life, even sacrificing her marriage to remain true to her ideology. She died on Tuesday at the age of 102. The state owes much to its first woman minister, not least for her passionate advocacy of women's empowerment. The CPI-M projected her as the chief ministerial candidate in the

assembly election victories. Gouriamma, as she was known, was also a staunch and fiery advocate of women's emancipation. The CPI-M projected her as the chief ministerial candidate in the elections of 1987. Yet, at the moment of reckoning, it chose theoretician EK Nayanar over her, and with this, her disillusionment with the CPI-M began. The final blow to the woman leader, who

was as instrumental in building the party in Kerala as stalwarts such as EMS Namboodiripad and VS Achuthanandan, was her expulsion from the CPI-M in 1994, a blow from which she never recovered politically. But true to form, she formed Janathipathyam Samrakshana Samithi (JSS) taking on the formidable Left forces in the state.

But, perhaps due to her mercurial temperament and inability to counter the CPI-M politically, she came back to it in 2016. The party has since moved away from the ideological beliefs she held dear. Kerala's poor farmers and labourers owe a huge debt of gratitude to

FIRST DOSE

SIR, Devendra Saksena is lucid in his article "Killed by Procedure" (12 May). As per media reports only 3 to 4 per cent of India's population has been vaccinated which means a huge chunk of people are still outside the process. Authorities must start the process with the first dose but where is the elusive first dose? The governments ~ both at the Centre and in states ~ are concerned about the second dose as if everyone has received the first. I have been trying my best to get the first jab but in vain. How will the authorities complete the process systematically if the paucity of vaccine is so acute? If the vaccination process remains so messy, a grimmer situation will inevitably follow.

Yours, etc., Aranya Sanyal, Siliguri, 12 May.

Gouriamma who rewrote the history of the state's working class. Chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan's tribute summed up her eventful life when he said modern Kerala's history is Gouriamma's biography.

Yours, etc., Khokan Das, Kolkata, 13 May.



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'Polls smashed invincibility myth'

A senior Trinamul leader, **PROF SAUGATA ROY** is one of the country's leading parliamentarians and is known and respected for his intellect, erudition and eloquence. A veteran politician, Roy has been active in public life for the past several decades. He was a physics teacher in Kolkata's Ashutosh College from 1974 to 2007. He has been a Trinamul MP from the Dum Dum parliamentary constituency near Kolkata since 2009. Before joining the Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamul, Roy was a West Bengal Congress stalwart. He was elected from the Barrackpore parliamentary constituency in 1977. He had also been a five-time MLA. He was Union minister of state for petroleum in the Charan Singh ministry in the late 1970s. He became a minister in the Congress-led UPA government too. In an interview with **APARAJIT CHAKRABORTY**, Ray spoke on a wide range of political issues. Excerpts:

Q. What is your assessment of the outcome of the recent Bengal Assembly polls?

A. The result was on our expected lines. It is a repetition of what happened in 2016. This time BJP led a high-voltage campaign. It became a fight between Bengali inclusiveness and outside influence. Ultimately Bengali sentiment went in favour of Trinamul Congress. The overall result was excellent, especially in areas in and around Kolkata, North and South 24 Parganas and some districts like East Burdwan and Birbhum, where we captured almost all the seats. There are some pockets where we could not do well. These are small losses compared to the gains made in several other districts where Mamata Banerjee's appeal and Bengali sentiment won. So the overall result is impressive.

Q. Do you think the Bengal election results could impact national politics in the coming days?

A. It is too early to say. But the myth of invincibility of Narendra Modi and Amit Shah has been broken and shattered. Despite the aggressive campaign done by Modi and Shah, BJP has been defeated in Bengal. It is a personal defeat of Modi and Shah.

Q. Do you think Mamata Banerjee could emerge as the face of a combined Opposition against a PM Modi-led BJP in the 2024 general elections?

A. That is too early to say. Mamata Banerjee has not decided her future course of action. In this Covid situation she is trying her best to set everything in order.

Q. What are your thoughts on the state of affairs prevailing in the country's principal Opposition party, Indian National Congress?

A. I should not comment on any other parties. But Congress is in bad shape. They have performed badly throughout the country. In Kerala and Assam, where they had expected to make a comeback, they could not utilise the anti-incumbency factor there. In Tamil Nadu they played a minor role as part of a coalition. In Bengal, they have been wiped out — they could not win a single seat. They received a huge setback. They should set their house in order. They must act together.

Q. The BJP has blamed the Trinamul for the post-poll violence and killings in Bengal. Your response?

A. There is no major post-poll violence. Of course, some stray incidents have taken place. Some people have died. This happens in any state after any major election. Even in Uttar Pradesh after the panchayat polls,



some violence has taken place. But in West Bengal everything was put under control after Mamata Banerjee was sworn in as chief minister. All this happened as BJP is frustrated with the seats they got.

Q. The Election Commission of India (ECI) has drawn fire from various quarters including the higher

judiciary for conducting the recent round of Assembly polls in the midst of the second wave of coronavirus. Your comments?

A. The ECI has worked totally in a partisan manner. It seems that sometimes it was acting at the behest of the central BJP leadership. Holding of West Bengal election in eight phases can't be justified under

any condition and election in eight phases along with the deployment of central paramilitary force from all over the country led to the spread of Corona in this state. Elections could be held in three or four phases in Bengal. Corona would not have spread. Just to have a favourable situation for BJP in this Assembly poll, all this was done without any reason. Officers were changed frequently. ECI started behaving as a super government but they could not control the situation.

Q. The raging, ferocious Covid storm has devastated the entire country, overwhelming its health facilities, crematoriums and cemeteries amid a deadly shortage of oxygen, hospital beds and essential medicines. This remains the big story across the globe. What is your take?

A. Failure to tackle the second Covid wave of pandemic is the failure of the Central government led by Narendra Modi. They did not anticipate the second wave, they don't have enough vaccines, oxygen, not enough hospital beds and not enough anti-Covid medicine to contain the spread of the virus. On every count it is a major failure of the Central government. Modi should be squarely blamed for this failure. The Supreme Court and the High Court commented on the failures of ECI and Central government in this regard.

Q. What is your response to West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar's criticism of the Mamata Banerjee government on various issues including post-poll violence?

A. West Bengal Governor's role is pathetic. He has made many political comments. He has lost all respect due to his political partisanship. There is no language to criticise him. He is the object of ridicule, what else can I say.

Oli threw Nepal under the bus



AMISH RAJ MULMI

they need.'

Much has already been written about Oli's criminal neglect of the health emergency all around us, including by this commentator, so harping on it once again is an exercise in futility. Many have also noted the utter lack of regard shown by the political opposition to the second wave and their naked lust for power while citizens are gasping for oxygen and dying from the lack of it. With Monday's trust vote, the country has fallen into further disarray. A black hole of misgovernance and instability stares us in the face, and there is a feeling of helplessness all around. If hospitals cannot be supplied oxygen, is there anything left to say?

It has been repeated several times that a pandemic of this magnitude often amplifies the schisms within a society. That stands true for Nepal as well, where the wealthy can

be airlifted in helicopters while the less fortunate are turned away by hospitals before dying in the streets. Now, this political abyss our leaders have thrown us in, where citizens are pretty much left to fend for themselves, has broken that most vital element that is required to govern a state: The social contract between the citizen and the state.

Under this idea, citizens have delegated the responsibility of their lives and rights to an authority - the republic, in our instance - in exchange for the payment of taxes and the upholding of laws as laid down by the state. In Nepal, historically, this contract has been loosely implemented. Local laws continued to be practiced even after the creation of the modern Nepali state - with the exception of laws barring cow slaughter and the consumption of beef, and upholding the socio-religious hierar-

chy. Several Himalayan highland communities continue to practise a set of rules that bind them to the community in question while negotiating the larger legislative practices the Nepali state imposes upon them. We see this in everyday practice with the guthis, who take a call on religious practices that sometimes run corollary to the state, such as the dispute over the dates of Tihar in 2020. There was a basic equation of trust that affirmed the citizens' belief in the state, one reason why we've seen relatively peaceful transitions between various versions of the Nepali state after several movements. These transitions retained the basic structure of the existing state despite the calls for inclusion and representation.

We've also seen local governments in Nepal respond quicker to the needs of their communities than the federal government, including during this wave. But local governments are also, in theory, part of the Nepali state. So how have some of them responded quicker, if not better, despite the budgetary constraints they face? The aforementioned loose social contract could be conjectured as one reason. Local governments know their communities better, and are able to deliver services - and show that the state exists to care for them, even if minimally - thus upholding the social contract that binds citizens to their local units.

However, the federal republic that we are, the right to expansive policy making has been co-opted by the federal unit, especially under the Oli government which eroded the rights of provincial and local units and viewed them as extensions of the federal government. Further, all the arms of the state - from the judiciary to the election commission - have been influenced to some degree by the Oli government's autocratic ten-

dencies. And it was at his doorstep that the ultimate responsibility for managing the pandemic fell upon. Unfortunately, he was not up to the task, and the results are now all around us.

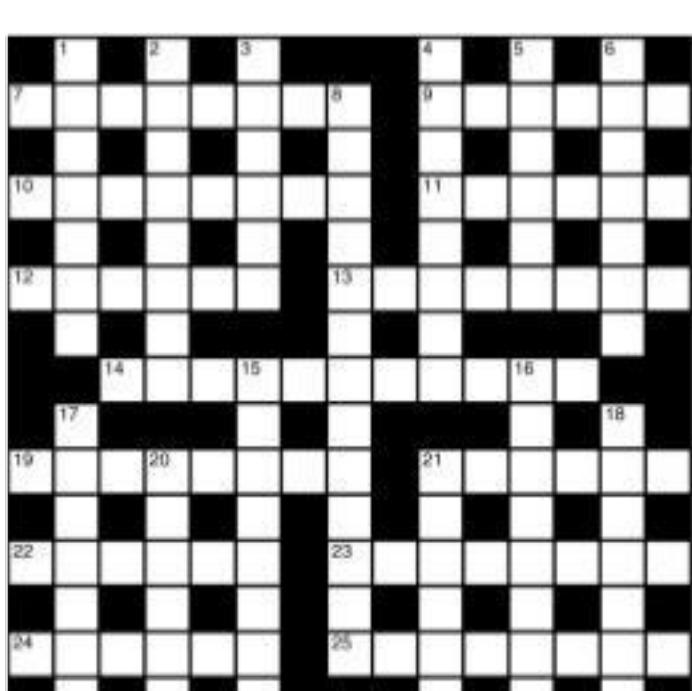
Even during the most stable of periods, the average Nepali citizen had few expectations from the state. If it were not so, millions of Nepalis would not be surrendering their basic rights to the country they have to go find work in. Nobody expected the government to create magic during the pandemic; if the healthcare systems of more developed countries could be overwhelmed, countries like ours would feel the heat much worse. But it was about showing up, and taking firm decisions that showed an iota of planning, which would show that ordinary Nepali lives matter to this state.

And now, in our country's darkest hour, when citizens have no recourse to something as basic as oxygen and a hospital bed, our state has disappeared. First it was unscientific lies; then it was the nonchalance with which leaders encouraged their followers to gather in crowds for inaugurations or new temples. Now, the state has stopped functioning altogether, because we simply do not have a government.

The deeper this political morass goes, and as more die from lack of something as basic as oxygen, the past will become more wistful. People will long for it; in any case, we love to imagine the past as a golden age. And that will bring its own share of concerns. Leadership often is not about solving a crisis immediately; it is as much about turning up and showing that you care. The current Nepali state has shown it just does not care for its citizens. By doing that, this generation of leaders is making us lose our trust in the republic.

The Kathmandu Post/ANN

CROSSWORD



YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

SOLUTION FOR 08 MAY



ACROSS

- 7 In which joint ventures may be supervised (8)
- 9 Beetle about having run into destroyer (6)
- 10 Relation flying from the east (8)
- 11 Foreign currency for exchange (6)
- 12 Short service collecting money for another (6)
- 13 Local network process interrupting web when current surges first (8)
- 14 Family called about old English fruit (5,6)
- 19 Methodical, obsessive UK finance centre withdrawn (8)
- 21 Setter demanding
- 22 Black alloy, cool, turned yellow when exposed (6)
- 23 Maybe there's more about single air, one that's sweet? (8)
- 24 Fights arranged, at worst intermittently cancelled (3-3)
- 25 Tease old lady for pinching a spice (8)

DOWN

- 1 Disheartened fighter rejected harsh conflict (4,3)
- 2 Move stealthily before hard and difficult battle (8)
- 3 Vessels positioned on course almost recalled (6)
- 4 In dire straits, a figure of the aristocracy (8)
- 5 Mother hen reported in the
- 6 Old country (6)
- 8 Articles separately buried by red revolutionary grounded in the US (7)
- 15 Barn you once used to block Yorkshire runner (8)
- 16 Metallic amalgam that could make nut gleam (8)
- 17 Take strength from us in stirring novel (7)
- 18 Defeat finally conceded — woe is ancient besieged city (7)
- 20 Record having passed? Not according to this (1-5)
- 21 Overturned litigant film custodian issuing notice (6)

NO 28913

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

OCCASIONAL NOTE

Light is gradually accumulating upon the back stairs form of Indo-Afghan relations. The interesting statement from Pandit Malaviya, which we publish elsewhere today, indicates that Mr. Mahomed Ali was perfectly justified in declaring the other day, with reference to the narrative of Swami Shradhanand, that the "whole story was false," so far as he was concerned. It now transpires that an Afghan "emissary" did actually obtain an interview with Pandit Malaviya, about a year ago, but it is easy to imagine that after the decidedly discouraging view taken by that gentleman of any attempt on the part of the Afghans to invade India, he had not the heart to pursue the subject with any of the other extremists. With an exquisite tact which must have greatly heightened the effect of his subsequent remarks, the Pandit appears to have thanked the Afghan emissary and his friends for their sympathy for India; but on the prospect of successfully invading this country he seems to have drawn a picture lugubrious enough to have damped the spirits of a Genghis Khan. The Hindus to a man, and the Mahomedans in an enormous majority, he assured him, would range themselves against the invaders, and the Afghans would be lucky if they got back to Afghanistan without being followed by an invading British-Indian Army in their turn. Anything more depressing for an Afghan emissary it would be difficult to imagine.

NEWS ITEMS

TECHNOLOGICAL INSTITUTE AT JAMSHEDPUR

Mr. S. Dawson, Principal, Victoria Jubilee Technical Institute came recently to discuss details about the proposed Technological Institute. It is understood that the Institute will be started as soon as the principal, who has been appointed in England, arrives in India. The Institute will be located in the girls' school building, and a building will shortly be constructed for the girls' school near the Mrs. Perin Memorial School for Boys. The estimated capital outlay for equipment is three lakhs of rupees, of which one lakh is expected to be contributed by the Government of Behar and Orissa. The running expenses, including stipends to students at the rate of Rs 60 per mensem, would be Rs 1,71,000 a year. The Government of Behar and Orissa will probably contribute Rs 20,000.

POST OFFICE SAVINGS BANK FRAUD

Allahabad, May 14
A daring fraud is alleged to have been committed in connection with the Allahabad Post Office Savings Bank. There is an account standing in the name of the Revd. Mr. Buchanan of Indore, and during his absence from India the account was transferred from Indore to Allahabad. Some one made a deposit of Rs 600 last March and a few days after withdrew the whole amount, about Rs 2,600, the application purporting to be in the name of the depositor personally. It is now alleged that a fraud was committed by a Savings Bank clerk of the Indore post office, who has been brought here under arrest by the Indore police.

BOAT LADEN WITH DYNAMITE

The boat laden with ten tons of dynamite which collided with a pontoon of Howrah Bridge on Wednesday last, and which was beached opposite the workshops of Messrs. Jessop and Company at Howrah, has been taken in water and there was danger, if this had reached the dynamite, of a disastrous explosion. Dr. Shelton, Chief Inspector of Explosives, is personally supervising operations in connection with the removal of the deadly cargo. He engaged the services of Sappers and Miners and efforts were made to lift the boat bodily from the water. This failed and it was then decided to remove the cased into another boat and dump them in deep water higher up the river.

CLUBS IN FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES

The financial difficulties of some of the great London clubs has resulted in their committees considering the possibility of amalgamation, in order to reduce expenses. The secretary of a famous club says expenses have risen 200 per cent. Scarce money means fewer members, at a time when a full membership roll is an absolute essential. Many clubs have in addition had to raise their subscription which has made matters worse, especially in the case of the country member, who only uses his club two or three times a year, and naturally cavils at an added expense for which he receives so little in return. The only thing that has enabled clubs to go on as long as they have without raising prices has been the enormous cellars they have had to fall back on.



States should consider a special dispensation for vaccination of staff of banks, insurance companies and other financial services providers on priority.

DEBASISH PANDA

SECRETARY, DEPARTMENT OF FINANCIAL SERVICES

THUMBNAILS

Jio offer: Reliance Jio on Friday said it is working with Reliance Foundation to provide 300 free minutes of outgoing calls per month, which amounts to 10 minutes per day, for the entire period of the pandemic. The scheme will be available to JioPhone users who have not been able to recharge due to the ongoing pandemic, the company said in a statement. Reliance Jio is the first company to announce free talk time for users in the second wave of pandemic where in many states have imposed lockdowns or lockdown-like restrictions as a desperate measure to restrict the spread of the virus.

PTI

L&T profit: Engineering and construction giant Larsen & Toubro (L&T) on Friday reported 11.3 per cent rise in consolidated net profit at Rs 3,820.16 crore for March quarter 2020-21. The company had posted a profit after tax of Rs 3,430.10 crore in the year-ago period, L&T said in a filing to BSE. Income during the quarter under review increased to Rs 49,116.16 crore, from Rs 44,905.76 crore in the year-ago period, the filing said.

PTI

Koo cash chase: Twitter rival Koo is in discussions with investors to raise funding and hopes to close a deal in the next 3-4 months, Koo co-founder Aprameya Radhakrishna said. Koo, which has over the past few months seen a massive surge in user base in the country, is looking at raising "more than what was raised in the last round". In February, Koo said it had raised \$4.1 million in series A funding from Accel, Kalaari Capital, Blume Ventures and Dream Incubator, and Zone4 Capital.

PTI

REITs, InvITs: The Securities and Exchange Board of India on Friday extended the due date for regulatory compliances by Infrastructure Investment Trusts (InvITs) and Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs) by one month in the wake of the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic. The extension of one month is over and above the timelines, as prescribed under Infrastructure Investment Trusts (InvITs) and Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs) regulations and the regulator's circulars, Sebi added.

PTI

Yes Bank sale: Yes Bank has invited bids for sale of immovable assets of a borrower, E Commerce Magnum Solution Ltd, to recover dues of over Rs 345 crore. In an e-auction sale notice, Yes Bank said it took physical possession of the immovable properties mortgaged to it on 29 August 2020 pursuant to a demand notice issued to the borrower and mortgagor in January 2020. The e-auction will take place under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest (Sarfaesi) Act.

PTI

Can GoAir turned Go First pass re-branding challenge?

The budget airline has filed preliminary papers for an initial share sale worth ₹3,600 crore

RAJA MURTHY
MUMBAI, 14 MAY

Mumbai-based budget airline GoAir has rebranded itself to become Go First (as reported in The Statesman on 13 May), but its new ambition to become "India's ultra-low-cost airline" makes its challenges more challenging by the pandemic that continues mercilessly slaughtering the aviation industry.

As a crucial bonus, aviation analysts point out to Go First having a basic advantage of operating the country's youngest fleet among low-cost carriers.

Most of the Go Air-turned Go First fleet has the Airbus A320 neo that offers multiple benefits, including 20 per cent savings in fuel burn per seat, high-density seating (ultra-cattle class), two tons of additional payload, 500 nautical miles of more range and other lower operating costs.

A320 neo fans include Qatar Airways chief executive officer Akbar Al Baker and Ben Baldanza, the man behind the re-branded Go First.

In his earlier job as the chief executive officer and president of American low-cost carrier Spirit Airlines, Baldanza said the A320 neo had helped Spirit in five years be the "highest margin operator of all commercial airlines in the United States, and we have been maintaining profitability through a very volatile macro-economic set".



Baldanza was credited for turning Spirit around from a loss-making airline with his pioneering but then controversial innovations that involved basically charging their customers for nearly everything - from food and drink to seat options. Baldanza's all manner of extra charges even had him having to answer the US Congress. "I am excited by the revamp of Go Air to Go First," Ben Baldanza told the media in his current role as vice-chairman of the rebranded Go First. "India

is a fast developing airline market. Indian consumers are highly value-conscious, but also quite demanding when it comes to their flying experience... I hope that combinations of attractive airfares, a squeaky clean flying experience, well-sanitised flights and on-time performance will rescue Go First and end Go Air woes."

He hoped that his combinations of "attractive airfares, a squeaky clean flying experience, well-sanitised flights and on-time performance" will rescue Go First and end Go Air woes.

"If history is any indicator, expect everything from hand luggage, seat bookings, and printed boarding passes to become paid at Go First," predicted aviation analyst Pranjal Pandey in the London-based aviation digital journal "Simply Flying". "As India's first ultra-low cost carrier (ULCC), Go First will have the chance to define the term in India."

Funding such optimistic re-definitions will be the IPO that Go First has filed, as a Wadia Group-owned airline. The IPO hopes to raise ₹3,600 crore (\$490.2 million). The Wadia Group admitted plans to use the IPO funds to clear loan defaults and dues of Go Air.

Under the guiding spirit of Baldanza, Go First could go more free or go more bust. Under Baldanza, the Florida-based Spirit Airlines successfully became a pioneering breed of the world's first ultra-low cost airlines.

Baldanza's unapologetically charged for "extras" as well as sold advertising space for nearly everything in the airline cabin - overhead bins, napkins, cups, seatback trays, sickness bags and even flight attendant uniforms.

Baldanza's ultra-low-cost plans for Go First can be awaited with interest, for a cost conscious and Covid-19 hampered Indian air passenger market.

Three-fold jump in exports

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 14 MAY

India's exports in April jumped nearly three-fold to \$30.63 billion from \$10.36 billion in the same month last year, according to government data released today.

Imports too rose to \$45.72 billion last month as against \$17.12 billion in April 2020, the data showed. Trade deficit widened to \$15.10 billion as against \$6.76 billion in April 2020. Exports in April last year had plunged by a record 60.28 per cent due to the Covid-19 pandemic induced lockdown.

In March this year, exports grew by 60.29 per cent to \$34.45 billion. Due to the low-base effect, exports in April 2021 recorded a growth rate of 195.72 per cent.

Oil imports stood at \$10.8 billion as compared to \$4.66 billion in the corresponding



month last year.

Major export commodities which have recorded positive growth in April include gems and jewellery, jute, carpet, handicrafts, leather, electronic goods, oil meals, cashew, engineering, petroleum products, marine products and chemicals.

Meanwhile, rates for the tax refund scheme for exporters - remission of duties and taxes on exported products (RoDTEP) - are expected to be announced in the coming two weeks, a senior official said today.

Director General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) Amit Yadav said it is working with the finance ministry on the scheme. Last year, the government approved the RoDTEP scheme for reimbursement of taxes and duties to exporters, with a view to give a boost to the country's outbound shipments. The scheme was implemented for all goods, with effect from 1 January.

"My sense is that in the coming two weeks, we would be in a position to have an announcement of the rates for RoDTEP," he said at a PHDCCI webinar.

Apex exporters' body the Federation of Indian Export Organisations (Fieo) has time and again asked the government to announce the rates for different sectors under the scheme as delay would have implications for future exports.

Number of independent directors on decline; PSUs responsible: Report

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 14 MAY

The total number of independent directors (IDs) has decreased in 2020 as compared to 2019 and 2018, and the reduction is mainly on account non-appointment of directors on boards of state-owned entities, according to a report.

The total number of independent directors reduced to 2,249 in 2020 as against 2,396 in 2019 and 2,494 in the previous year, said the report by Institutional Investor Advisory Services India Limited (Iias) based on the study of the board composition of Nifty 500 companies as on 31 December 2020.

"This reduction can mainly be attributed to the reduc-

tion in the number of IDs in PSU companies. The other reason for the decrease in IDs has been churn in the companies forming part of the Nifty 500 over this period," it said.

The outgoing companies in the Nifty 500 in 2020 when compared to 2019 had 208 independent directors on their boards while the incoming companies had 188 independent directors, whereas when compared to 2018, the outgoing companies in 2020 had 395 IDs on their boards while the incoming companies had 331 IDs, it said.

The PSUs forming part of the Nifty 500 had 133 fewer IDs in 2020 compared to the earlier year, the report said, adding, there were 72 PSU companies as part of the Nifty 500 in both

outs for PSUs embedded directly into regulation justify the exceptions, but violations of regulations continue on account of poor enforcement," it said.

RBI's recent regulations on governance of scheduled commercial banks also have a carve-out for PSBs, given them an unnecessary differential status, it said.

"With increasing empowerment of investors, and the expectations of responsible investing, we expect domestic asset managers to hold boards to greater accountability. As is often the experience in other markets, directors will be compelled to directly engage with key stakeholders, including large investors, suppliers, and customers," it said.

Indices end flat in see-saw trade

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 14 MAY

The BSE Sensex eked out marginal gains today after two sessions of deep declines as investors scooped up Asian Paints, RIL and FMCG stocks amid a rebounding trend in overseas markets.

A recovering rupee also propped up the market, though the Covid-19 situation and pace of vaccination weighed on investor sentiment, traders said.

The BSE benchmark swung between gains and losses during the session, before finally finishing 41.75 points or 0.09 per cent higher at 48,732.55 points.

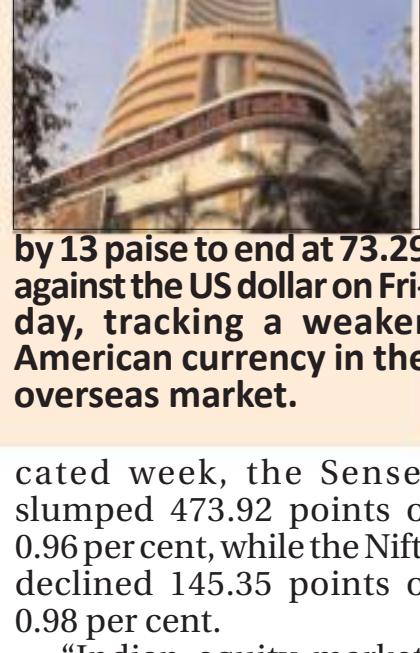
MARKET WATCH

- » The BSE benchmark swung between gains and losses during the session, before finally finishing 41.75 points or 0.09 per cent higher at 48,732.55 points.
- » The broader NSE Nifty slipped 18.70 points or 0.13 per cent to 14,677.80 points.
- » The rupee strengthened

81.13 per cent jump in consolidated net profit to Rs 869.89 crore for the March quarter. ITC, Nestle India, L&T, HUL, PowerGrid and Reliance Industries were among the other winners.

On the other hand, IndusInd Bank, M&M, Dr Reddy's, SBI, NTPC and ONGC led the losers' chart, dropping up to 2.82 per cent. Out of the 30 Sensex companies, 20 finished in the red.

During the holiday-trun-



by 13 paise to end at 73.29 against the US dollar on Friday, tracking a weaker American currency in the overseas market.

cated week, the Sensex slumped 473.92 points or 0.96 per cent, while the Nifty declined 145.35 points or 0.98 per cent.

"Indian equity markets remained largely range-bound over the last week. The Covid situation in India is no doubt grim and hence the health issue is something that could keep markets volatile in the near term," said Shiban Kuriyan, senior EVP & head - equity research, Kotak Mahindra

AMC. Going forward, market will likely track the pace of vaccinations, trajectory of active cases curve and management commentary of companies. Rollback of localised lockdowns and trend of inflation in many global commodities like crude oil and steel will be other key factors to watch out for, she noted.

Sectorally, BSE FMCG, capital goods and consumer durables ended on a positive note, while metal, realty, utilities and auto indices lost up to 3.61 per cent.

Broader BSE mid-cap and small-cap indices skidded as much as 1.18 per cent.

Meanwhile, international oil benchmark Brent crude was trading 0.92 per cent higher at \$67.67 per barrel.

The rupeestrengthened by 13 paise to end at 73.29 against the US dollar today, tracking a weaker American currency in the overseas market.

Dr Reddy's Q4 net profit dips 29% to ₹557 crore

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 14 MAY

18,420 crore during the last fiscal year as compared with Rs 16,357 crore in 2019-20.

"In FY'21, we continued to grow across all our businesses, enhance productivity and strengthen our development pipeline," Dr Reddy's Laboratories co-chairman and MD GV Prasad said.

The company is prioritising its efforts to launch Sputnik V vaccine across India while working on the development and commercialisation of several drugs for the treatment of mild to severe Covid-19 infections, he added.

Net sales, however, rose to Rs 4,608 crore in the quarter under review as compared with Rs 4,336.1 crore in the fourth quarter of fiscal year 2019-20.

For 2020-21 fiscal year, the company posted a consolidated net profit of Rs 1,952 crore in the March 2021 quarter. The company's net profit stood at Rs 353.2 crore in the year-ago period, the company said late

Thursday night.

Its revenue from operations grew by 7.5 per cent to Rs 2,524.2 crore in the quarter from Rs 2,346.1 crore in the year-ago period, it added.

For the full fiscal 2020-21, Mphasis' net profit was up by 2.7 per cent to Rs 1,216.8 crore from Rs 1,184.8 crore. Excluding one-time income tax benefit of Rs 42.4 crore in FY20, net profit grew by 6.5 per cent.

Revenue from operations was higher by 9.9 per cent to Rs 9,722.3 crore in FY'21 from Rs 8,843.5 crore in the previous financial year.

Mphasis' board of directors has recommended a dividend of Rs 65 per share (inclusive of special dividend of Rs 27) for financial year 2020-21. This is subject to shareholders' approval at the ensuing annual general meeting of the company.

Akshaya Tritiya: Jewellers expect 10-15% sales

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 14 MAY

Akshaya Tritiya, a highly auspicious day to purchase gold, has started on a sombre note and jewellers are expecting only 10-15 per cent sales as the onset of the Covid-19 second wave, local restrictions and partial lockdowns have affected consumer sentiment.

"As most of the states are under lockdown to curb the infections there is almost no business activity. The day of Akshaya Tritiya has begun on a slow note and whatever booking or enquiries are happening, it is only through tele or digital medium. Jewellers are expecting only 10-15 per cent sales this Akshaya Tritiya in places where the lockdown is not imposed or there are partial shutdowns.

ASHISH PETHE
CHAIRMAN, ALL-INDIA GEMS & JEWELLERY DOMESTIC COUNCIL

ing only 10-15 per cent sales this Akshaya Tritiya in places where the lockdown is not imposed or there are partial shutdowns.

The second wave of the pandemic is turning out to be much worse than last year with huge loss of life across the country causing an overall negative consumer sentiment, Pethe said.

India's Covid-19 tally of cases climbed to 2,40,46,809, while the death toll rose to 2,62,317 with 4,000 fresh fatalities, according to the Union health ministry data updated today.

During the ongoing second

wave of the Covid-19 infections, many states have imposed lockdowns or lockdown-like restrictions as a desperate measure to restrict the spread of the virus.

PNG Jewellers chairman and managing director Saurabh Gadgil said the day has begun with enquiries and bookings, however, as delivery is not possible due to lockdowns the sales during this Akshaya Tritiya is likely to be tamed and muted.

Usually, 30-40 tons of gold is sold on the auspicious occasion of Akshaya Tritiya. However, this time sales are not likely to reach even 1 ton.

"We are urging customers to place orders for later delivery. As last year the base was very low, this year will be better, that is 10-15 per cent more than 2020. However, sales are not likely to reach even 1 ton. Usually on a normal Akshaya Tritiya, 25-30 tons of gold is sold across the country," he noted.

Retail stores are closed in several major cities like Mumbai, Delhi, Pune, and in gold consuming states like Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra.

Petrol, diesel get more expensive

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 14 MAY

Odisha logs highest single-day Covid count and fatality

Positivity rate jumps to 22%, several districts in red zone

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, 14 MAY

Odisha on Friday reported record-shattering daily virus infection and fatality logging 12,390 positive cases and 22 fatalities, the highest ever single day infection and causality in the state.

The state reported 10,000-plus positive cases for the third day in a row with cumulative caseload climbing to 5,88,687, leaving the COVID managers grappling to try and put brakes on the second wave of COVID-19.

With 22 more COVID patients dying, the overall death toll has jumped to 2,273 while the active cases rose to 1,04,016 with the lat-

est spike of virus infection.

The state recorded a spike of 1,741 positive cases at substantial rise of 16.34 percent in the last 24 hours while the test positivity rate in the past 24 hours increased from 20.69 percent to 22.04%.

As many as 99,046 virus infections have been reported since 5 May, when lockdown was enforced in the state. Since the past ten days, 9,904 cases are being reported in the State at a daily average.

While people questioned the rationale of the lockdown as it showed no impact, the health authorities tried to explain that the number of cases would have perhaps been 20,000 per day had the lockdown not been

imposed.

The Khordha district, of which state capital Bhubaneswar is a part, detected the maximum 2,201 cases, followed by Sundargarh (882), Cuttack (719), Sambalpur (677), Angul (532) and Baragarh (507).

Currently, the Khordha district has 15,937 active cases, the highest in the state followed by Sundargarh at 11,718.

Of the infected people in Odisha, 65 percent are men while 35 percent are women. Of the total 5,88,687 covid-infected people in Odisha, as many 3,07,928 people are from 15-40 age groups accounting for 52.30% of the caseload.

The state's recovery rate

currently stands at 81.93% with 4,82,345 cured of the disease so far.

Odisha currently has 1,04,016 active cases.

The state's share is 2.45% in the country's confirmed virus caseload while the active cases are 2.81% of India's total active cases.

With the state capital Bhubaneswar registering 988 new Covid cases in the past 24 hours, the municipal corporation stepped up surveillance, testing and tracing measures with a focus on slum areas said newly appointed BMC Commissioner Sanjay Singh. Ambulances with GPS facility have also been launched in Bhubaneswar for COVID management, he added.

Naveen disburses Rs 920 cr to account of 42 lakh farmers under KALIA scheme

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, 14 MAY

On the eve of Akshay Tritiya, (festival which also relates to commencement of sowing operations), Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik disbursed Rs 920 crore to the bank accounts of 42 lakh farmers as another installment of assistance under the KALIA (Krushak Assistance for Livelihood and Income Augmentation) scheme.

Describing farmers as the saviors of the Indian economy during Covid triggered slump last year, the CM said KALIA, a flagship scheme of Odisha, is the best in the country and it has brought about 'smiles' on the face of farmers of the state.

Farmers are the pride of the nation, their hard work and sacrifice are unmatched. The



contribution of the farmer is invaluable, he said.

Odisha government is committed to see that the peasant community, their families prosper and their income rises manifold, he said.

KALIA is a scheme that includes over 42 lakh beneficiaries including landless farmers.

In his address on virtual mode today, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik said hopefully there will be a good monsoon and favorable climate for agriculture operations.

Stating that agriculture operations were exempt from restrictions imposed by way of lockdown in the state, the Chief Minister appealed to

farmers to abide by the Covid protocol and remain safe.

Touching on the sentiments of the people, the Chief Minister said tomorrow is Akshay Tritiya, an auspicious day when the Chandan Yatra of Lord Jagannath takes place at Puri. With the divine blessings, farmers will commence their tilling and sowing operations.

Insufficient data to recommend widespread Ivermectin use in Covid-19 patients: Experts

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 14 MAY

There isn't enough data to back the widespread use of Ivermectin in Covid patients and it can be recommended only in some mild to moderate cases, experts say as three states go ahead with plans to distribute the anti-parasitic drug as a preventive despite WHO warning against such measures.

The oral drug, used to treat a number of neglected tropical diseases, should be used for Covid patients only in the absence of better treatment options, several scientists and doctors cautioned.

The debate over Ivermectin, widely prescribed by doctors here, has intensified with Karnataka, Uttarakhand and Goa announcing this week that they would distribute it as a preventive against Covid, ravaging large parts of the country in a more virulent second wave. The World Health Organization and others have warned

against such measures.

Safety and efficacy are important when using any drug for a new indication. @WHO recommends against the use of ivermectin for #COVID19 except within clinical trials, WHO Chief Scientist Soumya Swaminathan said in a tweet on Tuesday.

The effectiveness of Ivermectin is being investigated in a number of clinical trials across the world due to its potential anti-inflammatory properties and in-vitro (performed in a petri-dish or test-tube) activity against Covid virus, said Monica Gulati, senior dean, Faculty of Applied Medical Sciences, Lovely Professional University (LPU), Punjab. However, till date, due to the paucity of large clinical trials, the data available is not sufficient enough to recommend the use of Ivermectin for the treatment of Covid emphatically at this point of time," Gulati said.

Just to give the benefit of doubt to the treating abilities of Ivermectin we should continue the use of the drug for mild to moderate cases, added Gulati.

Well-designed and large clinical trials, she stressed, are

needed to provide evidence-based recommendations on the issue. It is a drug for treating worm infections and may be recommended in only some cases in the current scenario but not all, warned Rachit Srivastava, consultant, general medicine, at Apollo TeleHealth in Hyderabad.

For stating it to be an absolute drug of choice we need more trials. In the current pandemic, the pros are much more than cons in selecting Ivermectin for patients with mild to moderate diseases with symptoms, using it to prevent progression and making a better prognosis, Srivastavasaid.

In the absence of other effective medicines, there could possibly be some benefits from Ivermectin.

Just to give the benefit of doubt to the treating abilities of Ivermectin we should continue the use of the drug for mild to moderate cases, added Gulati.

Well-designed and large clinical trials, she stressed, are

Covid patients die at AP-T'gana border; HC steps in

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD, 14 MAY

Two Covid-19 patients from Andhra Pradesh allegedly died at the border while waiting for approval to enter the state after Telangana once again stopped ambulances from other states. Telangana High Court stepped in and issued a stay order on a circular from the chief secretary making prior approval of the state government mandatory.

The High Court in an earlier order had said that the move of the state government was unconstitutional and observed that government may choose to regulate entry of patients from other states only after a circular is issued with advance notice.

However, the chief secretary of Telangana wrote to his counterparts in other states in a letter dated 11 May that Covid-19 patients from other states coming in without any tie up with a hospital was los-

ing precious time while going from one hospital to another and also spreading the infection. Henceforth, patients from outside need to have a proper tie-up with hospitals which will in turn apply in a prescribed format giving all details to the control room.

The control room will then issue the authorisation to travel. However, no advance notice was given and ambulances started piling up at the AP-Telangana border.

The patients, one from Nandyal in Kurnool district and another said to be from Kadapa allegedly died after being denied entry at Pullur toll plaza on AP-Telangana border. Nearly 20 ambulances were stopped by Telangana police. Kurnool MLA Hafeez Khan rushed and spoke to the police contingent deployed at the border.

AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi intervened and the husband was admitted to a government hospital in Kurnool.

Nt'l platform will be set up to track impact of vaccines

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 14 MAY

A national tracking platform will be established soon to determine the impact of the jabs against Covid and the breakthrough infections that are likely to occur among those with complete and partial immunisation," said Dr N K Arora, the INCLEN Trust chairperson who heads the COVID-19 Working Group.

The vaccine tracker will be particularly important to monitor the impact of increasing the dosing schedule of Covishield, he said, as the government on Thursday accepted the working group's recommendation to extend the gap between the two doses of the Covishield vaccine from 6-8 weeks to 12-16 weeks.

The current data harmonisation work of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and other agencies can be leveraged to set up this facility for review of ground realities on real-time basis, the NTAGI has recommended.

The government panel has also recommended that pregnant women may be

offered the choice to take any of the vaccines and that lactating women can be inoculated any time after delivery.

The NTAGI has also stated that those having laboratory test proven SARS-CoV-2 illness should defer vaccination for six months after recovery, the sources said.

According to the health ministry's current protocol, vaccine is to be taken four to eight weeks after recovery from Covid infection and pregnant and lactating women are not to be administered the shots.

The NTAGI recommended that all pregnant women visiting for antenatal care (ANC) may be informed about risks and benefits associated with Covishield and Covaxin.

Based on the information provided, a pregnant woman may be offered the choice to take any of the vaccines.

Shortage of humane touch at help desks more killing than virus

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, 14 MAY

The shortage of 'basic information', let alone a kind comforting word to soothe the distressed families whose near and dear ones are lying in an inaccessible hospital bed is perhaps as stark as the grim reality of scarcity of vaccines, ICU beds or cylinders of oxygen.

Covid managers battle against seemingly insurmountable odds and confront new challenges every day across the country and state. They are all overstressed. It is a wonder that the doctors, nursing staff and a whole lot of others have not yet suffered a breakdown.

The catastrophic situation calls for superhuman efforts. The gloom is all-pervading.

Yet there are quite a few small things that need to be done without adding to the burden

of doctors and nurses.

It is not that these have cropped up right now due to the new strain of the virus. These were largely unaddressed during the first wave last year and sadly continued to do so.

The human touch is lacking, if not entirely missing.

There are innumerable complaints and several heart-wrenching ones of family members pleading for 'some update or information on their near and dear ones in hospitals. The anxiety of the family is killing.'

The families make frantic phone calls to all the people that they know seeking help for 'information about the patient.'

It is no secret that bureaucrats, political leaders and even journalists receive hundreds of such calls for help every day.

Some of them succeed to get a bit of information, though sketchy, after days of despera-

tion while others fail.

The help desks at hospitals or helpline numbers, in most cases, are not equipped or manned adequately to attend to the tsunami of calls.

A software engineer trying to find out the 'condition' of his father at a hospital said he had called up several people including a few 'influential persons' to get 'some information. The mechanical answer that I got in the few times that I managed to get to speak to someone at the hospital was 'he is okay,' said the young engineer.

People have had to 'pull strings' to get to know the health of the patients.

An officer had to wait for a day to get himself registered on a helpline and say that doctors have advised hospitalization. He got help only after several friends intervened to get things moving.

Naveen needs to reactivate Mo Sarkar calls to hospitals

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, 14 MAY

Shouldn't Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik make at least 10 telephone calls to Covid Hospitals and Covid Care Centres and talk to doctors and patients or hospital managers and provide the much-needed solace to people in times of stress and distress?

The question is raised among people here who regard the CM as a rare breed

of gentleman politician' who had exhibited similar compassion earlier when, under the Mo Sarkar scheme, he used to call people who had been to the police station to seek feedback on how they were treated at the 'hana'.

They also recall the passionate appeal of the CM to people of Puri town to avail the once in a lifetime opportunity to serve Lord Jagannath by sacrificing their land, shops and houses for creation

update the distressed family members.

Allegations of delay in information relating to death are also doing the rounds in some districts. I kept receiv-

ing calls 10 days after my father's death, said a person of Bargarh district while noting at the insensitivity of the call centre. There were other instances of the family of the deceased being wrongly informed that he was doing well.

A senior IPS officer narrated his plight of trying to get a test report of his aged relative who lives with him for four days while another officer said 'our WhatsApp group is full of how helpless our batchmates are across the country.'

There is no dearth of social workers and volunteers who can support the help desks and provide them minimum required update to families.

Each Covid hospital should have a procedure to provide a report/update to the help desk.

A protocol in this regard has to be formed for cremation/burial of bodies with dignity.

The human healing touch does not need a global tender nor can it be procured or produced. It requires a mind to do so and a passionate appeal to people for such services.

LEISURE

10 MINUTE CROSSWORD



SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Cry of disapproval (3)
3 Gently stroked (8)
5 Hand part (6)
9 Impressive (4)
10 Revive (8)
12 Dismal (6)
13 Salvaged (6)
15 Maple tree (8)
18 Unit of length (4)
20 In spite of that (12)
21 Alpine singer (8)
22 Can (3)

DOWN
1 Twaddle (10)
2 Summary (7)
3 Young cow (4)
4 Involuntary response (6)
5 Guard (8)
6 Edit (text) (5)
8 Alpine trousers (10)
11 First public performance (8)
14 Nunney (7)
15 Savage (6)
17 Statement of beliefs (5)
19 Sustain (4)

BEETLE BAILEY/Mort Walker



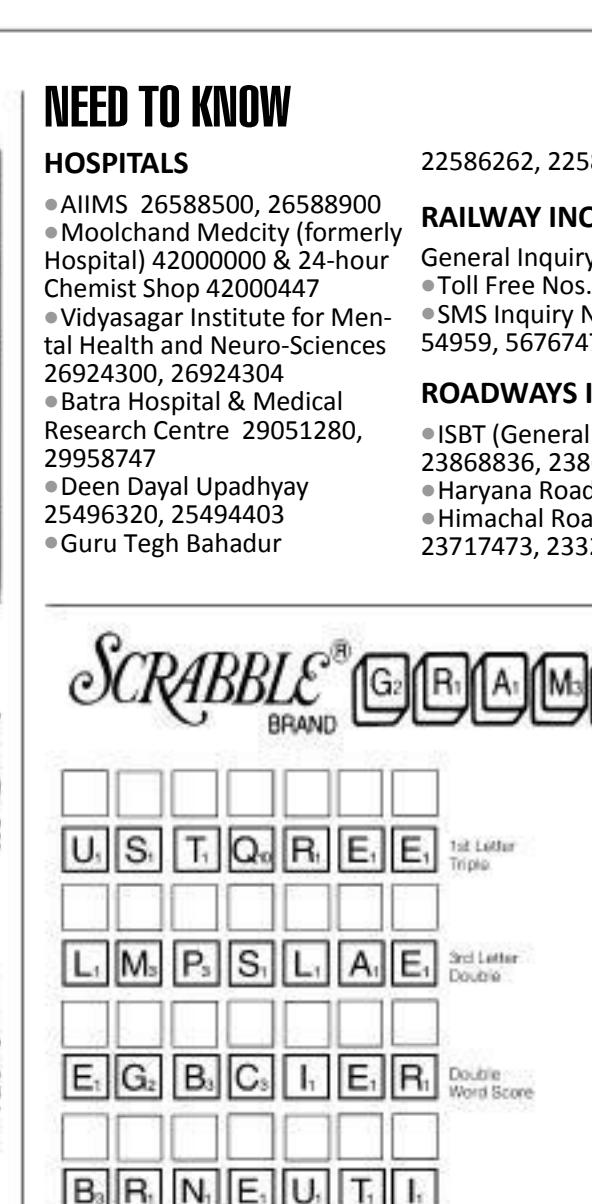
RED EYE/Bill Yates & Mel Casson



DADDY DAZE/John Kovaleski



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Ukraine is slowly but surely turning into some kind of polar opposite of Russia, some kind of anti-Russia

RUSSIAN PRESIDENT VLADIMIR PUTIN

STATING THAT MOSCOW WILL ACT TO PRESERVE NATIONAL SECURITY

WEATHER

CITY	MAX	MIN
SINGAPORE	30°C	28°C H
HONG KONG	26°C	20°C H
TOKYO	18°C	12°C CL
LONDON	17°C	9°C H
DUBAI	31°C	27°C S
SAN FRANCISCO	13°C	04°C C H
NEW YORK	16°C	08°C C H
MOSCOW	15°C	05°C H

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

THUMBNAILS



Bosnian coal miners break their Ramadan fast underground at a mine in Zenica, Bosnia.

AP

Indians detained in Scotland: Two Indians detained by British Border Force officials on suspicion of immigration offences in the Scottish city of Glasgow have been released after residents swarmed the street for eight hours to block their van from leaving, according to media reports. The two were released on bail.

Saudi releases Bakr Bin Laden: Saudi Arabia has released construction tycoon Bakr Bin Laden after more than three years since he was detained as part of a corruption crackdown in 2017. The former chairman of Saudi Bin Laden group and a half-brother of Osama bin Laden, was released a few days ago but is barred from travel.

Irish health system says it's targeted in ransomware attack

LONDON, 14 MAY

Ireland's health service says it has shut down its IT systems after being targeted in a significant ransomware attack."

The Health Service Executive said Friday that the move is a precaution, and appointments for coronavirus vaccination have not been affected.

It was unclear how wide the disruption to the health system was. Dublin's Rotunda maternity hospital said it was canceling most routine appointments due to the IT issues, calling the situation a critical emergency. There is a significant ransomware attack on the HSE IT systems, the Health Service Executive said on Twitter.

"We have taken the precaution of shutting down all our IT systems in order to protect them from this attack and to allow us to fully assess the situation with our own security partners.

In the US, the nation's largest fuel pipeline was hit with a ransomware attack a week ago. The disruption of the Colonial Pipeline caused long lines at gas stations due to distribution problems and panic-buying, draining supplies at thousands of gas stations.

The attack highlighted concerns about the vulnerability of critical infrastructure to hacking groups and criminals.

B1.617.2 Covid variants spreading fast in UK

According to PHE, the number of cases of the highly transmissible variant has risen from 520 last week to 1,313 cases this week

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LONDON, 14 MAY

The case numbers related to the B1.617.2 variant of Covid-19, first identified in India, have more than doubled within a week in the UK, resulting in further surge testing and enhanced vaccine measures to be deployed in parts of the country where the strain is beginning to spread increasingly rapidly.

Public Health England (PHE) said on Thursday that its latest analysis shows the number of cases of the highly transmissible variant first detected in Maharashtra has risen from 520 last week to 1,313 cases this week.

Most cases are in the northwest of England, with some in London, and additional measures are being put in place

to "rapidly break chains of transmission".

UK Health Secretary Matt Hancock said the health authorities are monitoring the situation very carefully and will not hesitate to take further action if necessary, indicating that the roadmap to lifting all lockdown measures from 21 June may have to be reassessed.

This data demonstrates why our swift and decisive measures are in place. Everyone has a part to play in controlling this variant, from participating in surge testing, to following the rules, to getting the jab, said Hancock.

We are committed to working with local areas and deploying our world-leading genomic sequencing to get this variant under control. We are supporting areas where the cases of this variant are rising,

he said.

The minister said it is imperative that people who live in one of the 15 areas currently covered by surge testing processes get a free PCR test and everyone who's eligible needs to come forward and get their jab.

PHE said that while there is no firm evidence yet to show this variant has any greater impact on the severity of disease or that it evades vaccines, the "speed of growth is concerning".

UK Vaccines Minister Nadhim Zahawi said the authorities are looking at how to best utilise the vaccine roll-out to protect the most vulnerable in the context of the current epidemiology, including the possibility of bringing forward the second doses for the most vulnerable in some of the most affected areas.



Andy Burnham, the Mayor of Manchester, one of the hotspots of the variant, has also called for a speeding up in the age eligibility criteria for vaccines in the affected areas. The National Health Service (NHS) is now offering a jab to all over the age of 38.

Cases of this variant are rising in the community and we are continuously monitoring its spread and severity to ensure we take rapid public health action, said Dr Susan Hopkins, Covid-19 Strategic Response Director at PHE.

"Testing and isolating when required not only limits spread, it helps us to better understand how the variant behaves in the community which is vital to taking effective and proportionate action moving forward. The way to limit the spread of all variants is the same. Keep your distance, wash your hands regularly and thoroughly, cover your nose and mouth when inside, keep buildings well ventilated and meet people from other households outside", she said.

The variant was confirmed as a "Variant of Concern" by PHE on 7 May after a rise in cases and evidence of spread in some areas. Since then across the northwest of England, significant work is underway with local councils and partners.

In Bolton, mobile testing

units have been deployed and door to door PCR testing has been offered to 22,000 residents. A vaccine bus has been established in the heart of the community to increase vaccine uptake as part of a wider drive.

PCR testing, whole genome sequencing and enhanced contact tracing are being used throughout London to target the many small dispersed clusters. All positive tests in London with a high enough viral load are also being prioritised for genomic sequencing to check for variants, and surge testing can begin immediately if it is needed.

Taking this community-led approach has already proved effective in reducing transmission of variants in London to date, PHE said. To help identify variant cases, surge testing is being

deployed in 15 areas across England to suppress transmission, with more than 800,000 additional PCR test kits distributed.

Over 200 existing test sites and 130 schools have distributed test kits, with Mobile Testing Units deployed to provide PCR testing for people without symptoms.

The public is also being urged to continue to take up the offer of two free rapid tests a week, to help identify asymptomatic cases. Anyone who does test positive in this way should take a follow-up PCR test, which can be sent for genome sequencing to help catch new variant cases.

Fully vaccinated people not required to wear masks: CDC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
WASHINGTON, 14 MAY

In the biggest indication that the United States is fast returning to pre-pandemic life, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has said fully vaccinated people are no longer required to wear masks.

He said that the virus tragically rages in other countries.

"In less than four months, we've gone from 5.5 per cent to nearly 60 per cent of the adults in America with at least one shot in their arm. We've gone from stagnation to an economy that is growing faster than it has in nearly 40 years. We've gone from an anemic job creation, to a record for job creation for a new administration," Biden added.

In its latest guidelines, the CDC said fully vaccinated people can resume activities without wearing a mask or physically distancing, except where required by federal, state, local, tribal, or territorial laws, rules, and regulations, including local business and workplace guidance.

Those travelling within the US need not get tested before or after travel or self-quarantine after travel. The CDC said the vaccines are effective at preventing the Covid-19 disease, especially severe illness and death. The vaccines reduce the risk of people spreading Covid, it said.

The guidance applies to Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson (J&J) Janssen Covid-19 vaccines.

states. *New York Times* has reported that hospitalisations are the lowest they've been since April of 2020, over a year ago, right after the start of the pandemic. Deaths are down 80 per cent and also at their lowest level since April of 2020," Biden said.

He said that the virus tragically rages in other countries.

"In less than four months, we've gone from 5.5 per cent to nearly 60 per cent of the adults in America with at least one shot in their arm. We've gone from stagnation to an economy that is growing faster than it has in nearly 40 years. We've gone from an anemic job creation, to a record for job creation for a new administration," Biden added.

Referring to the latest CDC guidelines, Biden said fully vaccinated people are at a very, very low risk of contracting Covid-19.

Therefore, if you've been fully vaccinated, you no longer need to wear a mask. But if you've not been vaccinated, or if you've been getting a two-shot vaccine and you've only had your first shot but not your second, or you haven't waited the full two weeks after your second shot, you still need to wear a mask," the President said. He said 250 million vaccine shots have been given in 114 days.

"We are seeing the results. Cases are down in 49 of 50

MASK-LESS MOMENT



US Vice-President Kamala Harris and President Joe Biden smile and walk after speaking about new guidance on mask mandates, in the Rose Garden of the White House in Washington

UK anti-fraud agency probing Liberty Steel's Greensill links

ASSOCIATED PRESS
LONDON, 14 MAY

The business empire of Liberty Steel owner Sanjeev Gupta, including its financing arrangements with bankrupt Greensill Capital U.K., is being investigated by Britain's Serious Fraud Office, the agency said Friday.

The SFO said in a statement that it is investigating suspected fraud, fraudulent trading and money laundering within Gupta Family Group Alliance, including links to Greensill, the supply chain finance firm that went bankrupt earlier this year.

Because this is an active investigation, the agency said it won't be providing any further comment into its probe.

Gupta's companies were among the main clients of Greensill before its collapse in March. Their reliance on Greensill stoked concerns over their financial health when it went under. Liberty Steel, which employs 5,000 people, has sought a government bailout in the wake of Greensill's collapse.

Greensill's model worked by positioning itself between businesses and their suppliers. It would immediately pay invoices to suppliers for a fee. In effect, it gave suppliers certainty by ensuring that they didn't have to wait for months for payment.

The relationship between Gupta's companies and Greensill has been in the spotlight

over the past few weeks. Former Prime Minister David Cameron, who acted as an adviser to Greensill that involved him lobbying his contacts in government and in the civil service, has been caught up in the fallout of the firm's bankruptcy.

On Thursday, Cameron testified before lawmakers on his activities for Greensill, which he insisted was motivated by a desire to help support British workers and businesses "in the economic turmoil caused by Covid" and not by the prospect of making millions from his Greensill shares.

Opposition parties are calling for tougher rules on contacts between business representatives and government officials, saying Britain's laxly enforced lobbying regulations leave the door open to corruption.

The Financial Conduct Authority, Britain's financial regulatory body, has already announced a formal investigation into Greensill's collapse after receiving allegations that it said were "potentially criminal in nature."

Diplomats, donors concerned about sex abuse reports at WHO

ASSOCIATED PRESS
LONDON, 14 MAY

British, European and American diplomats and donors have voiced serious concerns about how the World Health Organisation handled sex abuse allegations involving its own staff during an outbreak of Ebola in Congo, as reported this week.

On Tuesday, the AP published an investigation documenting that senior WHO management was informed of multiple sex abuse allegations involving at least two of its doctors during the epidemic in 2018.

A notarized contract obtained by the AP showed that two WHO staffers signed

off on an agreement between WHO's Dr. Jean-Paul Ngandu and a young woman he allegedly impregnated in Congo. Ngandu promised to pay the young woman money, cover her pregnancy costs and buy her a plot of land.

The contract was made to protect the integrity and reputation of the organization, Ngandu said.

The UK has a zero tolerance approach when it comes to sexual exploitation and harassment and that extends to all international organizations that we fund, said Simon Manley, the UK's ambassador to the UN in Geneva. "We are speaking with WHO and other major donors as a matter of urgency

to establish the facts."

Britain is WHO's second biggest donor, after the US.

The US State Department had no immediate comment.

WHO has declined to comment on the specific allegations reported by the AP and said it is waiting for the results of a panel created last October to investigate sexual abuse during the Congo outbreak involving WHO staffers.

What's alarming is that WHO seems to be keeping this abuse quiet and not publicly condemning these allegations, said Clare Wenham, an assistant professor of global health policy at the London School of Economics, who has studied gender and funding issues at WHO.

coalescing into opposition to Biden's pick to lead the border patrol's parent agency, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP). The nominee is Tucson Police Chief Chris Magnus, who still needs to be confirmed by the US Senate.

The discontent was partly reflected in an unusual memo from the acting Border Patrol chief last month, who objected

to a new directive to stop using the term "alien" when referring to migrants, saying it would hurt agents' morale.

The interviews provide an anecdotal snapshot of the mood within border patrol and, as such, do not represent the views of all agents. One agent who spoke to reporters on the condition of anonymity said,

"There are always going to be

US Embassy in Moscow temporarily resumes halted consular services

ASSOCIATED PRESS
MOSCOW, 14 MAY

The US Embassy in Moscow said Friday it will temporarily resume some of the consular services it had halted earlier due to a Russian ban on hiring local residents.

The embassy said last month that the ban forced it to reduce its consular workforce by 75 per cent and starting 12 May, it would only provide emergency US citizen services and a very limited number of immigrant visas in case of life-or-death emergencies.

It said that non-immigrant visa processing for non-diplomatic travel would cease and it would stop offering rou-

tine notarial services, consular reports of birth abroad or passport renewal services for the foreseeable future.

On Friday, however, the embassy announced that it will resume routine US citizen services, including passport services, consular reports of birth abroad, and limited notarial services, as well as immigrant visa processing for priority and urgent cases, through July 16 after the Russian government informed it of the intent to postpone the ban.

Halting consular services leaves Russian businessmen, exchange students and romantic partners adrift because they won't be able to obtain visas in Russia.

The US ordered 10 Russian diplomats out, targeted dozens of companies and people and imposed new curbs on Russia's ability to borrow money. Russia quickly retaliated by ordering 10 U.S. diplomats to leave, blacklisting eight current and former US officials and tightening requirements for US Embassy operations.

Moscow has stepped in the breach, offering shots to more than 50 countries, from Latin America to Asia.

But delays in getting shots to those countries gives China and the United States time to fill the gap. In another blow, Brazil's regulator has denied approval to import Sputnik V, citing incomplete data on its safety and efficacy.

The Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF), which is responsible for marketing the vaccine abroad, said the manufacturing capacity for Sputnik V was increasing globally

and new manufacturers come on board.

RDIF told that it planned to produce enough doses to vaccinate 800 million people in 2021 and that it had demonstrated its strong commitment to honouring supply contracts.

It said it stood by an offer to provide doses for 50 million people in the European Union. Russia is hoping the vaccine will be approved by the European Medicines Agency.



We look forward to doing a great deal more through the collaboration among our countries in the months and years ahead

US SECRETARY OF STATE TONY BLINKEN

COMMENTING ON SUMMIT OF THE QUAD HELD BACK IN MARCH

The Statesman

NEW DELHI, SATURDAY 15 MAY 2021

11

THUMBNAILS



Afghan journalists take photos and film inside a mosque after a bomb explosion in Shahr-e-Dara district of Kabul.

AP

China Mars rover to land soon: China says its Mars probe and accompanying rover are expected to land on the red planet sometime between Saturday and Wednesday Beijing time.

AP

Singapore tightens safety measures: Singapore on Friday tightened restrictions on group gatherings and public activities following a spike in Covid-19 community cases. The current size of group gatherings allowed will be reduced from five people to two people from Sunday.

PTI

Sniffer dogs to identify Covid patients: Authorities at the Islamabad airport have decided to bring in sniffer dogs to identify coronavirus-infected inbound travellers to the Pakistani capital city. A senior airport official said that the well-trained sniffer dogs will detect the virus by smelling the odours generated by infected people.

IANS

Earthquake of 6.7-magnitude strikes off Indonesia: An earthquake measuring 6.7 on the Richter scale rocked Indonesia's North Sumatra province on Friday, but did not have the potential to trigger a tsunami.

IANS

Third locally-transmitted Covid case found in China: China's Anhui province on Friday reported its third locally transmitted Covid-19 cases. The case was detected in Feixi County under the provincial capital of Hefei. This is the second case in Feixi since the first confirmed case.

IANS

Twelve killed in explosion at Kabul mosque during prayers

AGENCIES

KABUL, 14 MAY

At least 12 people were killed in an explosion inside a mosque in the Afghan capital Kabul during Friday prayers as worshippers gathered for the second day of the Eid al-Fitr holiday, officials said.

Ferdous Faramaz, spokesman for the Kabul police, said the mosque's Imam was among the 12 dead and at least 15 other people were wounded.

He did not identify the mosque where the blast took place.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack. Taliban insurgents have called a three-day cease-

Palestinians flee as Israel pounds Gaza

The Gaza Health Ministry has informed the toll from the fighting has risen to 119 killed, which includes 31 children and 19 women

AGENCIES

GAZA CITY, 14 MAY

Palestinian families grabbed their children and belongings and fled neighborhoods on the outskirts of Gaza City on Friday as Israel unleashed heavy artillery fire at what it said was a large network of militant tunnels ahead of a possible ground invasion.

Israel has massed troops along the border and called up 9,000 reservists as fighting intensifies with the Islamic militant group Hamas, which controls the Gaza Strip.

Palestinian militants have fired some 1,800 rockets, and the Israeli military has launched more than 600 airstrikes, toppling at least three high-rise apartment buildings, and has shelled some areas with tanks stationed near the frontier.

As Israel and Hamas plunged closer to all-out war despite international efforts at a cease-fire, communal violence in Israel erupted for a fourth night.

Jewish and Arab mobs clashed in the flashpoint town of Lod, even after Israel dispatched additional security forces.

The Gaza Health Ministry



Palestinians flee their homes after heavy overnight Israeli missile strikes on their neighborhoods in the outskirts of Gaza City, on Friday.

AP

says the toll from the fighting has risen to 119 killed, including 31 children and 19 women, with 830 wounded. The Hamas and Islamic Jihad militant groups have confirmed 20 deaths in their ranks, though Israel says that number is much higher.

Seven people have been killed in Israel, including a 6-year-old boy and a soldier. Palestinians living outside Gaza City, near the northern and eastern frontiers with Israel, fled the intense artillery bombardment Friday. Fam-

ilies arrived at the UN-run schools in the city in pick-up trucks, on donkeys and by foot, hauling pillows and pans, blankets and bread.

"We were planning to leave our homes at night, but Israeli jets bombarded us so we had to wait until the morning," said Hediah Maarouf, who fled with her extended family of 19 people, including 13 children. "We were terrified for our children, who were screaming and shaking."

In the northern Gaza Strip, Rafat Tanani, his pregnant wife and four children were killed after an Israeli warplane reduced a building to rubble, residents said. It was a massacre, said Sadallah Tanani, a relative. My feelings are indescribable."

The fighting broke out late Monday when Hamas fired a long-range rocket at Jerusalem in support of Palestinian protests there against the policing of a flashpoint holy site and efforts by Jewish settlers to evict dozens of Palestinian families from their homes.

Diplomats said the United States, a close ally of Israel, had initially suggested a virtual public meeting could be helpful, they said.

Such statements are agreed to by consensus, and the United States did not believe it would be helpful, they said.

All council members also have to agree to a meeting under rules guiding the body's virtual operations during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Israel unleashed its offensive on militants in Gaza after Hamas fired rockets at Jerusalem and Tel Aviv in retaliation for Israeli police clashes with Palestinians near Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem during the month of Ramadan.

tants in the Gaza Strip amid constant rocket fire deep into Israel's commercial centre. read more

The 15-member council has met privately twice this week about the worst hostilities in the region in years, but has so far been unable to agree on a public statement, diplomats said.

Diplomats said the United States, a close ally of Israel, had initially suggested a virtual public meeting could be helpful, they said.

After the end of Eid al-Fitr prayers at Dhaka's main Baitul Mukarram Mosque, activists from the Islamic Movement Bangladesh, began protesting and were joined by thousands of others.

Bangladesh celebrated the key festival of Eid al-Fitr in a subdued manner after the government urged people to avoid large gatherings.

Authorities arranged prayers in phases at the Baitul Mukarram Mosque, where devotees maintained distancing to avoid spreading the coronavirus.

Afterward, protesters crowded together outside, carrying signs reading Boycott terrorist state Israel and chanting Down with Israel.

AP

China accuses US of 'coercive diplomacy'

ASSOCIATED PRESS

BEIJING, 14 MAY

China on Friday accused the United States of coercive diplomacy following comments by Secretary of State Antony Blinken to his Australian counterpart that the US will not leave Australia alone on the field or maybe I should say alone on the pitch in the face of economic coercion by China.

Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying accused the US of imposing economic sanctions and strong-arming other countries over trade issues to achieve its strategic goals.

Hua said China's telecommunications and other high-tech industries are now falling victim to US economic coercion, an apparent reference to firms including Huawei and ZTE that have faced US restrictions. Coercive diplomacy is a specialty of the United States, which has provided the world with classic textbooks and cases of coercive diplomacy through its

policies and actions," Hua said at a daily briefing.

There are now a growing number of people in the United States who are calling for strengthened dialogue and cooperation with China and urging the two countries to work toward each other to improve relations. They believe that a healthy, stable and sustained US-China relationship is in the interest of the people of both countries," she added.

Like the United States and China, Australia and China are in the midst of several major disputes as Beijing seeks to apply pressure over commerce and influence.

In meeting, Blinken told Australian Foreign Minister Marise Payne the United States and Australia are bound together by deeply held shared values that no other nation, including China, can uproot.

Both said that presenting a united front toward China is key and called for a more thorough and complete investigation into the origin of the pandemic.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

KATHMANDU, 14 MAY

KP Sharma Oli was sworn in as Nepal's Prime Minister on Friday, days after he lost a crucial vote of confidence in Parliament.

President Bidya Devi Bhandari administered the oath of office and secrecy to Oli, 69, as the 43rd prime minister of Nepal at a ceremony at Shital Niwas, the presidential palace.

Oli was appointed as prime minister by the president in his capacity as leader of the

largest political party in Nepal's House of Representatives.

He was reappointed to the post on Thursday night as the Opposition parties failed to secure majority seats in Parliament to form a new government.

Oli, the Chairman of CPN-UML, lost a crucial trust vote in the House of Representatives on Monday.

Oli will now have to take a vote of confidence at the House within 30 days, failing which, an attempt to form a government under Article 76(5) of the Constitution would

be initiated.

The ministers of Oli's Cabinet were also sworn in during the ceremony.

During the oath-taking ceremony, Prime Minister Oli and Deputy Prime Minister Ishwar Pokharel did not mention the word God though President Bhandari had mentioned it.

Earlier, the president had asked the Opposition parties to come up with the support of majority lawmakers to form a new government by 9 pm on Thursday after Oli lost the vote of confidence in the new Cabinet.

Pradeep Gyawali has been reappointed as Foreign Minister while Ram Bahadur Thapa and Bishnu Poudyal were appointed as ministers for Home and Finance. The oath-taking ceremony was kept brief keeping in mind the raging Covid-19 pandemic in the country.

Vice President Nanda Bahadur Pun and Supreme Court Chief Justice Cholendra Shumsher Rana were

among the distinguished personalities who attended the ceremony. There are 22 ministers and three ministers of state in the new Cabinet.

Oli previously served as prime minister from 11 October, 2015 to 3 August, 2016 and again from 15 February, 2018 to 13 May, 2021.

Earlier, the president had asked the Opposition parties to come up with the support of majority lawmakers to form a new government by 9 pm on Thursday after Oli lost the vote of confidence in the new Cabinet.

Until Thursday, Nepali Congress president Sher Bahadur Deuba, who got backing from CPN-Maoist Centre chairman Pushpakaral Dahal "Prachanda" was hopeful to get sufficient votes in the House to stake his claim as the next Prime Minister. The CPN-UML of Prime Minister Oli is the largest party with 121 seats in the 271-member House of Representatives.

Tourists from abroad have been anxiously waiting to get out of Kathmandu after the government extended the lockdown by two weeks, and cancelled all flights, except the two weekly bubble services to India, following a surge in coronavirus infections.

Foreign embassies have stepped up efforts to repatriate stranded trekkers and mountaineers.

Over 7,000 foreigners, including some 2,000 Indians, are estimated to be stranded in Nepal. The evacuation flights began on Friday.

Nepal allows 'special flights' for stranded foreigners

KATHMANDU, 14 MAY

Nepal has permitted special flights to evacuate over 7,000 foreign nationals, including Indians, stranded in the country after it suspended all international flights to check its worst Covid-19 surge amid acute shortages of medical facilities.

Tourists from abroad have been anxiously waiting to get out of Kathmandu after the government extended the lockdown by two weeks, and cancelled all flights, except the two weekly bubble services to India, following a surge in coronavirus infections.

Foreign embassies have stepped up efforts to repatriate stranded trekkers and mountaineers.

Over 7,000 foreigners, including some 2,000 Indians, are estimated to be stranded in Nepal. The evacuation flights began on Friday.

PTI

Myanmar frees indicted Japanese journalist in gesture to Tokyo

ASSOCIATED PRESS

BANGKOK, 14 MAY



inciting anti-military civil disobedience and riots.

Although the journalist is a lawbreaker, the case will be closed and he will be released at the request of the Special Envoy of the Japanese Government for National Re-

conciliation in Myanmar, in view of the close ties and future relations between Myanmar and Japan," the junta said in a statement read on TV.

The military seized power on Feb. 1, ousting the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi. It has faced large, constant popular opposition, which it has tried to suppress with force that has cost hundreds of lives and by muzzling the news media.

Japan has criticized the military government's deadly crackdown on opposition but has taken a milder approach than the United States and some other countries that imposed sanctions against members of the junta.

These passengers will quarantine at the Centre for National Resilience at Howard Springs in the Northern Territory, she said. The repatriation flight on Friday was the first flight after the Australian government

ALL IN ACTION



People wearing protective masks to help curb the spread of the coronavirus walk along a pedestrian crossing on Friday.

AP

Australians with Covid left in India after testing positive before repatriation flight

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MELBOURNE, 14 MAY

Several Australians in India who were scheduled to return home by a repatriation flight initiated by the Australian government were grounded on Friday because either they were infected with Covid-19 or were considered a close contact of someone who was positive, a top Australian diplomat said.

The repatriation flights facilitated by the Australian government for its stranded citizens in India resumed from Friday following a two-week ban due to Covid-19 health crisis in India.

Many passengers on the first flight on Friday were grounded due to Covid-19 positive test results, Australian High Commissioner to India



pointed, as are those Australians who will not be on today's flight," he said.

"My team has worked hard across India to get them bookings on this flight because they are vulnerable.

O'Farrell said anyone who had tested positive would still

such time that they test negative they won't be able to fly on one of these facilitated flights."

There are about 10,000 Australians, permanent residents seeking to return home from India.

Almost 1,000 of those are considered vulnerable who have been given priority to board the repatriation flights.

Australian foreign minister Marise Payne said the passengers would have to undergo a strict quarantine to make sure they are not carrying the variant of the coronavirus first identified in India.

These passengers will quarantine at the Centre for National Resilience at Howard Springs in the Northern Territory, she said. The repatriation flight on Friday was the first flight after the Australian government

imposed a temporary ban recently with a threat of criminal sanctions, including five years in jail and fines of up to 66,000 Australian dollars for people who try to return from India.

Payne said this temporary pause had helped mitigate the risk of potentially higher rates of infection presenting on arrival in Australia and ensured the quarantine system was able to receive further flights.

Friday's Australian flight brings the total number of government facilitated commercial flights from India to 39 returning over 6,400



CHAMPION OF CHAMPIONS

Simone Biles (photo, left) is back to competing. The Olympic gymnastics champion will return to competition for the first time in more than 18 months at the US Classic next week in Indianapolis. The 24-year-old hasn't taken the floor since winning her fifth world all-around championship in October 2019.

For more updates

www.thestatesman.com

THUMBNAILS

Hussey tests negative: Chennai Super Kings batting coach Michael Hussey has recovered from COVID-19, paving the way for his return to Australia on Sunday but Sunrisers Hyderabad's Wriddhiman Saha has received conflicting results in two coronavirus tests, prolonging his isolation.



Irfan negative: Olympic-bound race walker K T Irfan and four other elite track-and-field athletes have returned negative for COVID-19 in a confirmatory second test conducted at Sports Authority of India's Centre of Excellence in Bengaluru, the nodal body said on Friday.

Vihari playing county cricket and helping India's Covid-19 patients

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, 14 MAY



Crushing the pain barrier to save a Test match is no mean achievement but Hanuma Vihari (in photo) derives the biggest satisfaction nowadays from being able to find hospital beds and oxygen cylinders for Covid-19 patients making the most of a network of friends. Quite a few Indian cricketers have been doing their bit, from making cash donations to helping people access medical care. Vihari, in the UK for a county stint, has used his Twitter handle to appeal for help. He has also set up a team of 100 volunteers, comprising friends and followers from across Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Karnataka. Vihari's friends and followers have reached out to people with plasma, oxygen cylinders and

arranged food and hospital beds.

"I don't want to glorify myself. I am doing it with the intention of helping the people. It is just a start," the 27-

year-old said. Vihari left for England early in April to play for Warwickshire and is expected to join the Indian team in the UK when they arrive there on 3 June.

"The second coronavirus wave being so strong, getting a bed became a difficulty and that was unacceptable. So I decided to use my followers as volunteers and help as many people as I can," Vihari, who has more than 110,000 followers, said. "My goal is to reach out to people who can't afford or procure plasma, beds and essential medicines. I would like to do more in the future."

"I built my own team. It's all about good intentions and people do get inspired and come out to help me. I have around 100 people in a WhatsApp group as volunteers and it's because of their hard work that we have been able to help a few people. Yes, I am a cricketer, but I am able to help people because of my associates' untiring efforts to reach the distressed," said Vihari. He had started out on

Twitter but his team subsequently spread itself across various platforms.

When he is not facing Stuart Broad or Olly Stone, he makes sure that he and his friends vet all appeals for help. Asked about India's tour of England, Vihari said that if he was asked to open the innings, it would be okay with him. "I will do anything the team asks of me," said the man who had batted for three and a half hours with a torn hamstring to save the Sydney Test against Australia earlier this year.

"I batted top of the order most of my career so I'm used to the challenge," added Vihari. He opened for India in the 2018-9 Test series in Australia. Vihari knows very well that Washington Sundar grabbed his chances during his injury-forced absence but he is concentrating on his own game.



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Raman effect: Neetu David's selection panel, CAC members Lal and Naik under scanner

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, 14 MAY

Former opener WV Raman's (in photo) unceremonious ouster from the Indian women's team head coach's position has opened a can of worms with both the Madan Lal-headed Cricket Advisory Committee and Neetu David-led selection panel coming under the scanner of BCCI bigwigs.

Raman, who successfully coached the women's team to T20 World Cup final in Australia and is widely acknowledged as one of the best Indian coaches, was removed by Lal and Naik's CAC, which reinstated Ramesh Powar, who was removed from the same post in 2018.

Is Madan Lal's committee illegal as per Lodha norms?

"Madan paaji (that's how Madan

Lal is addressed in Indian cricket fraternity) celebrated his 70th birthday on March 20, 2021. The BCCI, in its appeal to Supreme Court against some of the reforms, doesn't ask for roll-back of age-cap of 70 years. So how come Madan Lal was allowed to sit in CAC meeting?" a senior member asked.

While the BCCI has no intention of using its veto over rule Lal and Naik, the board's top officials are unable to wrap their heads around as to what led to recommendation of Raman's removal.

Sulakshana Naik's role in CAC meetings

Former India player Sulakshana is the younger sister of Mumbai Cricket Association secretary Sanjay Naik. She has so far attended three CAC meetings for various appointments.

Someone who is abreast

with how the eight interviews were conducted said that it felt as if Naik had made up his mind that Raman had to be removed for just one bad series, despite knowing fully well that selection was not in his hands and it was done by her ex-teammate, Neetu David's panel.

"One surprising question that Raman was asked was how can he claim credit for women's team reaching T20 final as this is a team that was prepared by Ramesh Powar," the source said.

The line of questioning, according to the official, was clear that the platform was set for Powar to be reinstated.

"Even if we presume that Ramesh and Mithali Raj had problems back then and it wasn't good enough ground to remove Ramesh, does two wrongs make a right," he questioned.



If you go by the argument Sulakshana gave during Raman's 45-minute presentation, by that logic, Ramesh is inheriting a team that Raman prepared," he countered.

Did Raman and Neetu David

have a fall-out during SA selection?

The PTI has confirmed from multiple sources that Raman had red-flagged the kind of squad that David, Arati Vaidya, Renu Margrate, Mithu Mukherjee and V Kalpana picked for the

South Africa series, for which teen batting sensation Shafali Verma was not picked for the non-selection in the ODI team.

"If Raman had a counter-question that if Shafali's fielding is a problem for 50-over cricket, then it is bigger problem in T20 format where it is more important. Then how is she being selected in T20 format," the official asked.

"Do you know what kind of logic was given for dropping Shikha and Shafali? It is beyond comprehension," a peeved senior official said.

The selectors said that Pandey was unfit because she hasn't worked hard on training during lockdown and was "over-weight".

"But when they were asked to prove their point, they couldn't simply do it," the official alleged.

In the case of Shafali, her fielding was questioned and put forth as the reason for her non-selection in the ODI team.

"If Raman had a counter-question that if Shafali's fielding is a problem for 50-over cricket, then it is bigger problem in T20 format where it is more important. Then how is she being selected in T20 format," the official asked.

The selection of leg-spinner Prathyusha and left arm seamer Monica Patel has also been questioned as they didn't look ready for the rigours of international cricket.

Prathyusha gave 60 odd runs in 8 overs in one of the games.

"How did Monica get selected over Shikha Pandey?" is a question that is being asked.

Counter points against Raman

While the majority believe that the stylish southpaw of yester-years has been hard done by, there are a few critics who feel that there were some loose ends from his side too.

"Some girls complained that he will at times switch himself off during training sessions. Also some girls felt under-appreciated. Someone like Rajeshwari Gayakwad was not even once praised despite her being the best bowler during the series," a member from the anti-Raman camp said.

Another allegation against Raman is that he unwittingly gave gloveswoman Nuzhat Parween a debut cap without knowing that she has already played both ODIs and T20Is for India.

"How come a coach forgot that one of his players have already played. To be fair to Neetu, was Raman also doing his homework."

'Hardik doesn't fit into playing XI even in ODIs and T20s if he can't bowl'

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, 14 MAY

Former India selector Sarandeep Singh has backed the current committee's call to ignore Hardik Pandya from the Test squad and said the all-rounder doesn't fit into the playing XI even in the shorter formats if he can't bowl his quota of overs.

After undergoing a back surgery in 2019, Hardik has not bowled regularly since his comeback and not being able to offer his all-round skills cost him a place in the Indian Test squad for the UK tour.

Sarandeep, whose tenure ended with the historic tour of Australia earlier this year, was also surprised that a rare talent like Prithvi Shaw did not even make the standbys for the England tour.

"The selectors' decision to

ignore Hardik for Tests is understandable. He has not been able to bowl regularly after his surgery. If I feel he has to bowl 10 overs in ODIs and four in T20s to be part of the playing XI even in shorter formats, he can't just play as a batsman," Sarandeep said.

"If Hardik doesn't bowl, it disturbs the balance of the side hugely. You have to play an extra bowler because of that and someone like Suryakumar Yadav has to miss out. As we saw in the ODI series against England and Australia, we can't play with five bowling options.

"Then team now has other all-rounders in Washington Sundar, Axar Patel, Jaddu Bishen, Sharad Thakur can also be an all-rounder, he has shown that. They all can do the job if Hardik can't bowl."

Talking about Shaw not being picked for the UK tour,

Sarandeep said it is way too early to sideline a batsman like him.

"He has the potential to do what Sehwag did for India.

You can't sideline him so early in his career. He has scored tons of runs in domestic cricket after being dropped post Australia tour. He has corrected his technical flaws also and look how he played in the IPL."

"You have to back a talent like Shaw and even someone like Shubman Gill (he is in the team but did not get runs against England at home) for that matter."

The four standbys picked for the UK tour are opener Abhimanyu Easwaran, pacers Avesh Khan, Prasid Krishna and Arzan Nagwaswalla. Priyank Panthal got a hundred for India A in New Zealand. You have not picked him. You have not picked Devdutt Padikkal who also scored tons of runs."

How Bond has helped Bumrah get better as a paceman

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MUMBAI, 14 MAY

Jasprit Bumrah has said that former New Zealand speedster Shane Bond (in photo), bowling coach of Mumbai Indians, has played a major role in shaping his career.

The MI fast bowler, who will lead India's attack in the World Test Championship final against New Zealand, says "I always try to talk to him even when I am not here and with the Indian team. So, it's been a good journey, and hopefully, every year I keep learning something new and try to add new things to my bowling. He has played a major role in that. It's been a great relationship so far, and hopefully, this continues for many, many years to come."

He says that he was always fascinated by how Bond bowled himself. "I met him for the first time in 2015. As a child, I had seen him bowl and was

always very fascinated by how he used to bowl for New Zealand, and how he used to operate," the Indian said. Bumrah, who has so far played 19 Tests, says that Bond assisted him a lot in broadening his horizon which helped him grow as a cricketer.

"When I met him over here, it was a good experience. He helped me a lot to open my mind to different things that I could try. So that was very good and that relationship has only gotten better each and every year," added the Gujarat paceman.

Bond has described Bumrah as the best death bowler in the world.

Fair and square

India's head coach Ravi Shastri says his team deserved the status of the world's number one Test side after overcoming one obstacle, including a change in the points system, on their journey to the summit.

serving as the head coach of the Indian team since 2017, having got an extension after the 2019 World Cup.

Matter of points

Stuart Broad has questioned the points allocation system in the WTC, wondering aloud how a five-match Ashes can be worth the same as a two-game series between India and Bangladesh. The ICC says that the same number of points should be available from each series, irrespective of its length, so that countries that play fewer Tests are not affected.

"This team have shown a steely resolve and their unwavering focus to be crowned No 1. It is something the boys have earned fair & square. Rules changed midway through the competition but #TeamIndia overcame every hurdle along the way. My boys played tough cricket in tough times. Super proud of this bindass bunch," Shastri tweeted. The former India captain has been

not series results are taken into account.

In a five-match rubber, 20 percent of the points are available each match, while in a two-match series, 50 percent of the points are available every game.

Broad said that his country would always find it difficult to make the WTC final under the current system. "There's something in the idea and it has given a great context to the game but there needs to be work done on how it all comes together, I think," Broad added.

England played the most Tests (21) in the WTC. India were second with 17 matches, while bottom-placed Bangladesh played just seven games.

"We had an opportunity, but the amount of cricket we play as an England side in the current system makes it very difficult to get to the final," Broad said. England finished fourth in the WTC standings, behind Ashes rivals Australia.

Protests outside, struggles inside: Manchester United lose to Liverpool

ASSOCIATED PRESS

MANCHESTER, 14 MAY

The beefed-up defence outside Old Trafford was more robust than Manchester United's on the pitch inside. While United supporters again protested against the owning Glazer family - facing riot police and new steel barriers to guard the entrances - the game against Liverpool went ahead as planned after being called off 11 days earlier when some fans were able to storm the pitch.

United might have wished they hadn't, losing 4-2 for their first home defeat against their fiercest rival since Jrgen Klopp took charge of Liverpool six years ago after Roberto Firmino (in photo) scored twice. Not only was this United's third game since Sunday - with this rearranged fixture squeezed into the week - but the players had to get to the stadium much

earlier than usual after being unable to leave their hotel on 2 May due to the protests at Old Trafford.

"The players handled the situation well," United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer said.

"None of them have complained. They have got on with it. The preparations have been different. We're not going to make an excuse of that."

He also downplayed the sloppy defensive display, which was more demoralising than impactful given United had a four-point cushion in second place with two games remaining.

"Football would be really boring if no one made a mistake," Solskjaer said. "You try to eradicate them and work on them." For Liverpool, who were playing their first game since their reign as champions was officially ended by Manchester City, the win means the reset target

An online petition calling for the Tokyo Olympics to be cancelled has been submitted to the Tokyo government with over 35,000 signatures on Friday morning.

The rollout of the petition comes with Tokyo, Osaka and several other areas under state of emergency with coronavirus infections rising, particularly new variants.

The state of emergency is to expire on 31 May but is expected to also expand to other prefectures in the country. The postponed Olympics are to open in just under three months on 23 July.

The petition will also be sent to International Olympic Committee president Thomas Bach.

Utsunomiya said athletes were the victims here. He says the Tokyo and Japanese government should have decided to cancel the games earlier.

Virus emergency

Japan is set to further expand a coronavirus state of emergency, currently in Tokyo and five other prefectures, to nine areas as the government is determined to hold the Olympics in just over two months.

The petition was organised by Kenji Utsunomiya, a lawyer who has run several times for Tokyo governor. It registered about 50,000 signatures in the first 24 hours after being launched on 5 May.

Utsunomiya said athletes