



'PM MISSING ALONG WITH VACCINES, OXYGEN, MEDICINES'

P4



AN ELECTION DISSECTED

P6



BIDEN TEAM MOVES TO TACKLE PIPELINE POLITICAL PERIL

P10



'NEGATIVE PUBLIC OPINION IS SO MUCH SAWDUST'

P12



WEATHER

Generally cloudy sky with light rain. The maximum and minimum temperatures would be around 37 and 22 degrees Celsius respectively.

RAINFALL: 0.2 MM

RELATIVE HUMIDITY

Max: 72%	Min: 40%
TEMPERATURE	
Max: 35.3°C (+4)	Min: 21.3°C (-4)
SUN RISES 05:31 hrs	SUN SETS 19:04 hrs
MOON RISES 07:52 hrs	MOON SETS 21:27 hrs

THUMBNAILS



Smoke rises following Israeli airstrikes in Gaza City on Thursday as weary Palestinians are somberly marking the end of Ramadan. (P9)

IMD Issues cyclonic storm warning: The IMD on Thursday issued a warning and said that a low pressure area formed over the Arabian Sea is likely to intensify into a cyclonic storm by 16 May, which may bring heavy rainfall at some places in Goa and South Konkan region. "The low pressure will concentrate into a depression over the same region by Saturday morning and intensify into a cyclonic storm during the subsequent 24 hours, The India Meteorological Department said in the warning report.

UPSC postpones civil services preliminary exam: The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) on Thursday postponed the civil services preliminary examination, scheduled to be held in June, to 10 October in view of the alarming Covid situation. The commission conducts civil services examination annually in three stages - preliminary, main and interview - to select officers of Indian Administrative Service (IAS), Indian Foreign Service (IFS) and Indian Police Service (IPS) among others.

Govt: Jabs for all to be available in 5 months

Centre to arrange 216 crore vaccine doses between August & December

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 13 MAY

As states grapple with a shortage of coronavirus vaccines, the Centre Thursday said that over two billion doses will be made available in the country in five months between August and December, enough to vaccinate the entire population. VK Paul, Member (Health), Niti Aayog, also said the Russian anti-Covid vaccine Sputnik V is likely to be available by next week

► Between August to December, production of 75 crore doses of Covishield is estimated while 55 crore doses of Covaxin will be made available

However, the officer said that by the end of the year there will be enough vaccine doses in the country to inoculate the entire population.

"Over two billion doses will be made in the country in five months (August to December) for India and for the people of India. Vaccine will be available for all as we move forward," Paul said, adding that the number is likely to be ramped

up to three billion by the first quarter of the next year.

He said that the estimated 216 crore doses that are likely to be produced between August and December include 75 crore doses of Covishield and 55 crore doses of Covaxin.

Further, Biological E is expected to produce 30 crore doses, Zydus Cadila 5 crore, Serum Institute of India 20 crore doses of Novavax, and Bharat Biotech 10 crore doses of its nasal vaccine, while

Gennova will make available 6 crore doses and Sputnik V 15.6 crore doses, he said. The vaccine candidates of Biological E, Zydus Cadila, Gennova, Bharat Biotech's nasal vaccine are in various stages of clinical trials.

On the procurement of vaccines from Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson, Paul said the government is in touch with these firms through the Department of Biotechnology and the Ministry of External Affairs.

from 125 in 22-28 April to 338 between 6 and 12 May.

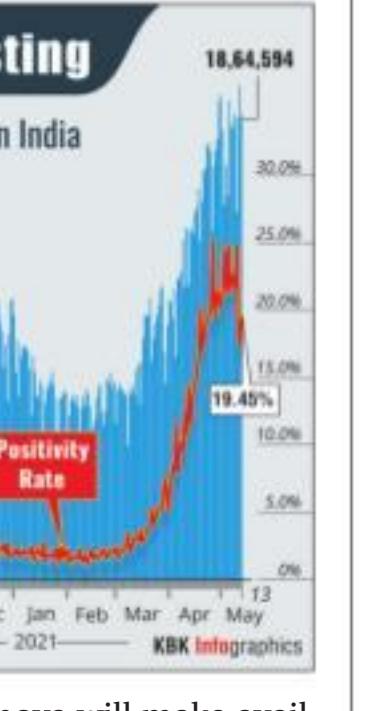
A senior official said as many as 12 states have more than 1 lakh active Covid-19 cases, while 24 states have more than 15 per cent case positivity rate.

On Thursday, India added 3,62,727 new coronavirus infections, taking the Covid-19 tally of cases to 2,37,03,665, while the death toll rose to 2,58,317 with 4,120 daily fatalities, according to Union Health Ministry data updat-

ed this morning. Active cases have increased to 37,10,525 comprising 15.65 per cent of the total infections.

The case fatality rate stands at 1.09 per cent.

Delhi's positivity rate slips below 15 pc: Delhi today recorded 10,489 new coronavirus infections and 308 more Covid fatalities, while the positivity rate came down to 14.24 per cent, the lowest in a month, according to the Delhi government's latest health bulletin. (P2)



Centre extends interval between Covishield jabs from 6-8 to 12-16 weeks

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 13 MAY

The government has accepted the Covid-19 Working Group's recommendation for extending the gap between the two doses of the Covishield vaccine from 6-8 weeks to 12-16 weeks, the Union health ministry said, while announcing the extension on Thursday.

However, no change has been suggested for the dosage interval for Covaxin, it said.

"Based on the available real-life evidences, particularly from the UK, the Covid-19 Working Group agreed for increasing the dosing interval to 12-16 weeks between two doses of Covishield vaccine. No change in interval of Covaxin vaccine doses was recommended," the ministry said.

The recommendation of the Covid-19 Working Group was accepted by the National Expert Group on Vaccine Administration for Covid-19 (NEG-VAC), headed by Dr V K Paul, Member (Health), Niti Aayog, in its meeting on 12 May, 2021," the ministry said.

It has accepted this recommendation of the Covid-19 Working Group of extension of the gap between the first and second doses of Covishield to 12-16 weeks, the health ministry added.

The Covid-19 Working Group is chaired by Dr N Karora, who is director at the INCLEN Trust.

Its members comprise Dr Rakesh Agarwal, Director and Dean, JIPMER; Dr Gagandeep Kang, professor, Christian Medical College, Vellore; Dr Naveen Khanna, Group Leader, Interna-



Women pose after getting vaccine against Covid-19. In the Capital on Thursday. ■ SNS

DCGI approves Covaxin for Ph. 2/3 trials on kids

NEW DELHI, 13 MAY

India's apex drug regulator, DCGI, has granted permission for conducting the phase II/III clinical trial of Bharat Biotech's Covaxin Covid-19 vaccine in the age group of 2 to 18 years, the Union Health Ministry said on Thursday. The trial will be conducted on 525 healthy volunteers.

Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech had proposed to carry out the clinical trial in the age group of 2 to 18 years. In the trial, the vaccine will be given by intramuscular route in two doses at day 0 and day 28. The proposal was deliberated in Subject Expert Committee (SEC) on Covid-19 meeting held on 11 May. ■ PTI

lege, Vellore; Dr J P Mulliyil, former professor, Christian Medical College, Vellore; Dr Naveen Khanna, Group Leader, Interna-

tional Centre For Genetic Engineering And Biotechnology (ICGEB), JNU, New Delhi; Dr Amulya Panda, Director, National Institute of Immunology; and Dr V G Somani, Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI).

The advisory group had also said that pregnant women may be offered the choice to take any anti-Covid vaccine, after adequately informing them of the risks and benefits associated with Covaxin and Covishield.

According to the Union Health Ministry's current protocol, vaccine is to be taken four to eight weeks after recovery from Covid-19 infection and pregnant and lactating women are not to be administered the shots.

The NTAGI has also stated that those having laboratory test proven SARS-CoV-2 illness should defer Covid-19 vaccination for six months after recovery, government sources said.

Also, all lactating women are eligible to receive the Covid 19 vaccines any time after delivery, the panel suggested.

Plateauing in daily new cases: Govt

SNS & PTI
NEW DELHI, 13 MAY

Plateauing in daily new Covid-19 cases and positivity rate has been recorded in the country over the past three days, the government said Thursday, but added 10 states still have a positivity rate of 25 per cent or more.

According to the government, the number of districts with week-on-week rise in Covid-19 tests, yet decline in positivity rate has increased

ed this morning. Active cases have increased to 37,10,525 comprising 15.65 per cent of the total infections.

The case fatality rate stands at 1.09 per cent.

Delhi's positivity rate slips below 15 pc: Delhi today recorded 10,489 new coronavirus infections and 308 more Covid fatalities, while the positivity rate came down to 14.24 per cent, the lowest in a month, according to the Delhi government's latest health bulletin.

Stop hike in prices of med supplies, China told

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BEIJING, 13 MAY

India has asked China to help stop the sharp increase in prices of essential medical supplies being procured from Chinese manufacturers by private Indian traders to deal with the Covid-19 surge in the country and restore the normal frequency of cargo flight services to maintain steady supply chain.

Soaring prices of medical supplies like oxygen concentrators and disruption of cargo flights to India are slowing arrivals of medical goods, India's Consul General to Hong Kong Priyanka Chauhan said. "What I would like to say is that our expectation at this point is that the supply chain should remain open and product prices should remain stable.

Even if there is a little bit of supply-demand pressure, there has to be some stability and predictability to product prices," she told the Hong Kong-based newspaper.

"And there has to be a sense of governmental level support and efforts. I don't have the information as to how

much influence the Chinese government can have in this matter but if they can, then it would be welcome," she said.

Her comments came against the backdrop of efforts by private Indian traders to source much-needed medical supplies, especially oxygen concentrators, to meet the shortages in hospitals.

The cargo flight disruptions were amplified by Sichuan Airlines' decision to suspend all its 11 cargo flights for 15 days from 26 April, citing the coronavirus situation in India. Though the state-run airline said it is reviewing its plans to restore the flights, it is yet to do so.

Freight Forwarders in Shanghai said that Sichuan Airlines has announced plans to restore three of its freight flights from Chongqing and

Xian to Delhi from 17 May. Currently, air shipments are being carried by other airlines including India's Spice Jet and Blue Dart, which bring the medical supplies from China.

When asked whether there should be more government-level cooperation between China and India during the pandemic for more of a guarantee on price stability and supply chain, Chauhan told the Post that India would be open to discussing the issue to see if a better mechanism could be agreed.

About the travel bans due to the Covid-19 situation in India, Chauhan said she appreciated the need for travel bans based on public health concerns, but added that India was asking China to facilitate cargo flights so that supplies could be delivered.

Passing a slew of interim directions to ameliorate the miseries of migrant workers facing difficulties in wake of the recent surge in Covid-19 cases and restrictions imposed in several parts of India, the apex court directed that dry ration be provided to them in the national capital region (NCR) under Atma Nirbhari Bharat Scheme' or any other

scheme by the Centre and governments of Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana.

A bench of Justices Ashok Bhushan and M R Shah said the Centre may also issue instructions to the Ministry of Railways to take necessary and adequate measures to cater to the need of migrant workers.

The top court passed the order on an application filed by three activists who sought

directions to the Centre and states to ensure food security, cash transfers, transport facilities and other welfare measures for migrant workers who are facing distress due to the curbs clamped in several parts of the country amid the pandemic.

NCT of Delhi, state of UP and state of Haryana (for the districts included in the NCR) shall ensure that adequate transport is provided to stranded migrant labourers (in the national capital region) who want to return to their home, the bench said.

It directed that district administration, in coordination with police, may identify such stranded migrant labourers and facilitate their transport either by road or train.

It directed the Centre as well as the governments of Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana to file their replies to the application suggesting means and measures by which they shall ameliorate miseries of stranded migrant labourers.

HEALING TOUCH



More than two years after the Pulwama terror attack, the Balakot airstrike and subsequent souring of relations, the Indian and Pakistani armies on Thursday revived the tradition of exchanging sweets to mark the Eid festival. Troops of the two countries exchanged sweets at five places on the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir.

SNS

Battle against deadly virus



NHRC notice over floating bodies: The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has issued notices to the Union Jal Shakti Ministry, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, after receiving complaints about several bodies found floating in the Ganga in the two states.

■ PM Modi to interact with DMs: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will interact with district magistrates of 100 districts with high caseloads of Covid-19 infections in two meetings on May 18 and 20, government sources said on Thursday.



GTA is just an instrument used by the TMC to play with our sentiments

RAJU BISTA, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT, DARJEELING

ON THE CENTRE'S COMMITMENT TO GRANT A PERMANENT POLITICAL SOLUTION TO THE HILL PROBLEM

Centre should procure vax from int'l market: Kejriwal

States fighting for Covid shots in global market reflect India's 'bad image', says CM; his govt urges Centre to give its surplus oxygen to other states as the city's O2 need has dipped

SNS & PTI
NEW DELHI, 13 MAY

Amid an acute shortage of Covid vaccines in the country, which have forced several states to resort to floating global tenders to procure them from international sources, Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal today said that the point that the states are left to "competing and fighting" with one another in the global market for Covid vaccines reflected a poor image of India.

The Centre should procure the Covid vaccines on behalf of the states, Kejriwal asserted.

"India states left to compete/ fight with each other in international market. UP fighting Maha, Maha fighting Orissa, Orissa fighting Delhi. Where is 'India'? Portrays such a bad image of India. India, as one country, shud procure vaccines on behalf of all Indian states," the Delhi CM and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) supremo tweeted.

In another tweet, Kejriwal also stated that the Centre approaching the vaccine-manufacturer

Kejriwal government has urged the Centre to purchase vaccines from the international market for the country rather than states doing it themselves.

Jain said he raised certain issues during a video conference with Union health minister Harsh Vardhan.

"Centre should cap prices of vaccine," Jain said at a press conference. "Companies should not be allowed to earn huge profits during such a crisis."

He also said he urged Vardhan that the vaccine formula should be shared with other companies to ramp up production.

Meanwhile, Sisodia today said that Delhi's oxygen requirement has dipped from 700 MT a day to 582 MT and that the AAP government has written to the BJP-led Centre that its surplus oxygen be given to other states.

The number of new cases has come down to around 10,400 from a high of around 28,000. The positivity rate has dipped from 35 per cent to 14 per cent.

More beds are available in the Covid hospitals now and the demand for oxygen has also

dipped," Sisodia told a virtual press conference.

Delhi needed 700 metric tonnes of oxygen per day when the coronavirus cases peaked. In view of the reduced bed occupancy and dip in the number of daily cases, the government has re-calculated the demand, which is 582 MT now, he added.

The Centre had recently increased Delhi's quota of oxygen to 590 MT per day.

"The Delhi government has written to the Centre, urging it to give the surplus oxygen to other states. We are a responsible government," Sisodia, who is also the nodal minister for Covid management in Delhi, said.

He thanked the Centre and the Delhi High Court for coming to the aid of Delhiites when they were in distress due to a massive surge in the number of coronavirus cases.

The number of oxygen-related SOS calls from hospitals has also reduced sharply, he said, adding that only one or two such cases were reported in the last 24 to 48 hours.

Jamia VC extends greetings to students, teachers on Eid

PTI
NEW DELHI, 13 MAY

Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI) University Vice Chancellor Najma Akhtar on Thursday extended her warm greetings to students, teaching and non-teaching staff members of the university on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr.

Saying "better days are on their way", Akhtar in her letter motivated everyone to remain optimistic about the present situation. "Let us pray together that this Eid fills us with unfailing optimism, positivity and resilience so that we can stand tall and persevere with our crusade to fight the COVID-19 crisis looming large," wrote the professor. "We all know that feeling of intense joy marks the festival of Eid-ul-Fitr. But today our country, combating the pandemic, demands this festival to be the celebration of boundless spirit of courage, confidence, generosity and profound compassion," she added.

The second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, which wreaked havoc across the national capital, was also behind the demise of several Jamia staff members, alumni, students and their relatives. Akhtar, on the occasion, said her heart goes out to the near and dear ones of those who lost their lives due to COVID-19 and assured them that the university would do everything at their disposal to keep their memories alive and provide all kinds of assistance to their family members.

SDMC rolls out 'O2 on wheels' for Corona patients

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 13 MAY

In a bid to provide relief to Covid-19 patients waiting for urgent hospitalisation or bed with oxygen, the South Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta in the presence of South Delhi Mayor Anamika and some others functionaries.

The South Corporation has said that the bus, made available by Aranya Foundation, will be used by it as per the emergency requirement.

Classified

TENDERS

ITI LIMITED
(A Govt. of India Undertaking)
22, Chittaranjan Avenue
Kolkata-700072
Phone: (033) 2212-6532 /
2212-7600

Corrigendum are uploaded against different tenders for different development work under MA & MA Grant. Tender submission date has been extended up to 25.05.2021.

For details please visit sites: <https://itilimited.eunivizade.com> & <https://tenders.itiltid.in> & www.eprocure.gov.in
AGM - MSP EZ

CHANGE OF NAME

I, ARPITA Kumar, W/o Debdulal Kumar, whose present date of birth which is 01.06.1995 is incorrect. My actual date of birth is 17.06.1997 in future for all document purpose her date of birth will be 17.06.1997, sworn before Sub-Divisional Executive Magistrate at Purulia dt. 26.04.2021.

I, NO. 1486543BN Sep/MT Barman Mitron, have changed my wife name from Gain Minu to Minu Barman after marriage vide affidavit on 20 Feb., 2021 before Nabendu Narayan Dutta, Notary Govt. of India, Siliguri (Darjeeling).

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The Statesman

KOLKATA

Statesman House,
4, Chowringhee Square
Kolkata-700001
Tel: (033) 22127070-76,
(033) 41071700

Fax: (033) 2212-6181 / 7107-1780
Email: thestatesman@vsnl.com
thestatesmandclassified@gmail.com

BANGALORE

No. 68, First Floor, Gold Tower,

50 Residency Road, Bangalore-560025.

Email: delhistratesman@gmail.com

bangalore@thestatesmangroup.com

Mob. 9212192123

Mob. 9811963623

MUMBAI

5, Kasturi Buildings, Jamshedji Tata Road, Mumbai-400 020

Mob. 9212192123

Tel: (022) 2202 1045.

Email: delhistratesman@gmail.com

mumbai@thestatesmangroup.com

manuelfrancis@thestatesman.com

CHENNAI

Fagun Mansion (4th floor), 26, Ethiraj

Road, Chennai-600 008, Tel: (044)

28278037, 28224800

Email: delhistratesman@gmail.com

chennai@thestatesmangroup.com

Swaminathan :9884924884

Mob. 9212192123

Mob. 9811963623

LUCKNOW

2/2, Butler Palace (Near Jopling Road),

Lucknow-226 001.

Email: delhistratesman@gmail.com

lucknow@thestatesmangroup.com

Mob. 9212192123

Mob. 9811963623

RANCHI

11/C, Road#1, Ashoknagar,

Ranchi - 834 002

Fax: (0651) 2247054

Email: delhistratesman@gmail.com

ranchi@thestatesmangroup.com

Mob. 9212192123

Mob. 9811963623

SHIMLA

Mob. 9212192123

Email: delhistratesman@gmail.com

Mob. 9418027111

AIR-SURCHARGE: Kathmandu - Rs. 2, Eastern Region - Re. 1
All other stations in India - Re. 1

Engineering student held for duping Covid patients' kin

PTI
NEW DELHI, 13 MAY

good communicator, he used Instagram to target his victims, police said, adding that he got the idea after receiving overwhelming response to a request for help that he posted on the photo and video sharing app.

He also used the name of a well-known foundation to gain trust of the victims and requested them to visit the website for verification, police officials added.

His victims are from Delhi, Noida, Faridabad, Mumbai and other cities, they said.

The matter came to notice after one of the relatives of a coronavirus patient duped by the accused complained against on the COVID helpline.

Delhi logs 10,489 new Covid cases, 308 deaths; positivity rate also dips

SNS & PTI
NEW DELHI, 13 MAY

Delhi today recorded 10,489 new coronavirus infections and 308 more Covid fatalities, while the positivity rate came down to 14.24 per cent, the lowest in a month, according to the Delhi government's latest health bulletin.

The city's Covid caseload mounted to 13,72,475 and the death toll rose to 20,618, the health bulletin said.

Today's figure of new infections is the lowest in the city since April 10 when 7,897 people had tested Covid positive. The positivity rate is the lowest since April 13, when it

had stood at 13.1 per cent, according to government data.

The national capital had reported 13,287 cases yesterday, 12,481 cases on Tuesday, 12,651 on Monday, 13,336 on Sunday and 17,364 on Saturday.

The positivity rate was 17 per cent yesterday, 17.8 per cent on Tuesday, 19.10 per cent on Monday, 21.67 per cent on Sunday and 23.34 per cent on Saturday. On April 22, Delhi recorded its highest positivity rate of 36.2 per cent.

Delhi had recorded 300 Covid deaths yesterday, 347 deaths on Tuesday, 319 on Monday, 273 deaths on Sunday, and 332 on Saturday. The highest single-day tally of 448 deaths

was reported on May 3.

Today's fresh cases were detected out of 73,675 tests, including 58,709 RTPCR/CBNAAT/True Nat tests, the bulletin stated.

As many as 15,189 people recovered from the infection over the last 24 hours, it said.

The number of active cases in Delhi currently stood at 77,717, down from 82,725 the previous day, and 48,340 of them were under home isolation.

Over 12.74 lakh Covid patients in the national capital have recovered so far, the bulletin stated.

Of the 23,423 hospital beds meant for coronavirus patients in the city, 5,212 were vacant, it added.

Out of Covaxin, Delhi govt urges SII to 'come to rescue' & provide Covishield

PTI
NEW DELHI, 13 MAY

In a letter to the SII, Director of Family Welfare, Delhi Government, Dr Monika Rana said, "We rely on your support for provision of sufficient quantities of vaccine in a time-bound manner." Delhi has a limited stock of Covishield for 18 to 44 years which will finish in one week and vaccination centres will have to be closed due to non-availability of vaccines," she said.

"In order to prevent this, you are requested to come to our rescue and provide for more vaccine

immediately," the letter read.

Delhi is facing an unprecedented crisis and timely vaccination of all the eligible beneficiaries will help control the pandemic, Dr Rana said.

As per official sources, in reply to her letter, Prakash Kumar Singh, Director, Government and Regulatory Affairs at Serum Institute of India said, "We fully understand your concern and assure you once again of our best efforts to meet the Delhi and country-wide vaccine requirements during

the COVID-19 pandemic."

"Under the leadership of our CEO, Adar C Poonawalla, the company has been working tirelessly to produce Covishield and is committed to further ramping up the production to its maximum rated capacity in coming two-three months to meet the COVID-19 vaccine needs of our country," Singh said in his letter.

On Tuesday, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi over vaccine shortage, saying the Centre should share the vaccine formula of the two manufacturers with other capable pharmaceutical companies to scale up production in the country.

HC criticises 'irritating' dialer tune asking people to get vaccinated when there is not enough vaccine

PTI
NEW DELHI, 13 MAY</



Stop firing from colleagues' shoulders.

AFTER SOME STATE MINISTERS SOUGHT ACTION AGAINST HIM FOR HIS OUTBURSTS AGAINST PUNJAB CM

The Statesman
NEW DELHI, FRIDAY 14 MAY 2021

03

Pb to join COVAX for global sourcing of Covid vaccine

Running short of jabs, Amarinder govt decides to join global initiative to procure them at best price

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 13 MAY

To address the Covid-19 vaccine shortage amid the deadly second wave of the pandemic, the Captain Amarinder Singh-led Punjab government on Thursday decided to join the COVAX facility alliance for global sourcing and procurement of Covid vaccines at the best price.

The decision was taken during the Cabinet meeting, which also approved the purchase of Covaxin for industrial workers, for whose vaccination the industry has expressed willingness to pay.

The state government has so far ordered only Covishield vaccine for the 18-44 age group, but with this decision, decks have been cleared to place orders for Covaxin too.

Reviewing the vaccination status and availability of the Covid vaccines in the state, the Punjab Cabinet said it was necessary to source vaccine from across the globe. Since the COVAX facility offers the best prices, the state should make



an attempt to join the same for procuring vaccines from the international markets, it decided. The suggestion for joining the COVAX was given to the Amarinder Cabinet by Dr Gagandeep Kang, who heads the Punjab expert group on vaccination.

In a brief presentation, health secretary Hussan Lal

Access, abbreviated as COVAX, is a worldwide initiative aimed at equitable access to Covid-19 vaccines directed by Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, and the World Health Organization.

Covid-19 Vaccines Global

informed the Cabinet that of the 30 lakh Covishield doses ordered by the Punjab government, the Serum Institute of India had so far confirmed 4.29 lakh, of which 1 lakh doses had been received.

He further disclosed that some Central government institutions and industrial establishments were requesting for early vaccination of their workforce. Given the shortage of vaccines, he pointed out that certain states were floating global tenders to import the same. The health secretary further apprised the Cabinet that for the 45 plus age group, the last tranche of Covishield vaccine (1,63,710 doses) was received on 9 May, taking the total to 42,48,560. As many as 3,45,000 doses were given to the armed forces, while the total vaccination utilization stood at 39,03,560.

For Covaxin in the 45 plus category, the last tranche of vaccine received was of 75,000 doses (6 May 2021), taking the total received to 4,09,080, of which utilization till date was 3,52,080, leaving availability of only 57,000 now.

Haryana to float global tender to procure Covid-19 vaccine: Vij

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 13 MAY

Haryana health minister Anil Vij on Thursday said global tendering will be done for the purchase of Covid-19 vaccine for the people of the state.

The health minister said with this decision, the vaccine will be made available for all residents of Haryana over the age of 18 years soon. This is a major step taken by the Haryana government for the vaccine.

He informed that free vaccine will be given to all citizens above 18 years of age in the state. Vaccination is very important to ensure robust protection against coronavirus and therefore the government will bring in the vaccine for citizens as soon as possible from wherever the vaccine is available across the globe.

Vij said that there is a need to review oxygen allocation. He has raised this matter in front of the Centre in a meeting of health ministers from across the country in a video conference. He said 700 metric tonne (MT) oxygen is being given to 85,000 active patients in Delhi and 258



MT oxygen is being given to more than one lakh active patients in Haryana.

Meanwhile, Vij said private hospitals charging more than the fixed rate during Covid-19 pandemic will not be spared. Also, strict action will also be taken against the government doctors who give prescriptions for purchasing medicine from outside even though medicines are available in hospital.

Addressing a meeting of officers held for review of village-to-village screening and general health screening today through video conferencing, the health minister said some cases have come

to notice where private hospitals are charging more than the prescribed rate, which is intolerable in any condition. He elaborated that during Covid-19 when free treatment is being given in government hospitals, complaints of overcharging in private hospitals is unfortunate. Private hospitals should treat Covid patients with humanity without overcharging and cooperate in public interest.

Vij said that all medicines are available in government hospitals, but in some places doctors are getting medicines from outside. Strict action will be taken against such doctors.

Laying emphasis on the need for sanitisation, he said that Section 144 should be strictly adhered to and shopkeepers who are not adhering to social distancing norms should not be allowed to open their shops. At the same time, he also instructed police officers to control the overcrowding in vegetable markets.

He said that all the hospitals should update the data on the number of patients from urban and rural areas and other states.

Punjab Police to get free meals delivered to poor Covid patients

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 13 MAY

Beginning Friday, the poor and underprivileged Covid patients living in Punjab can call up Hunger Helpline numbers 181 and 112 for delivery of free cooked meals at their doorstep through the Punjab Police department.

The humanitarian initiative was announced at the cabinet meeting by Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh, who declared that "we will not let anyone sleep hungry in Punjab."

Such patients can call on these numbers any time of the day or night, and will be provided cooked food at their homes by the police department, through Covid kitchens and delivery boys.

The department is tying up with such kitchens and delivery agents for this purpose, Director General of Police (DGP) Dinkar Gupta said, expressing pride at the initiative taken by the Punjab Police for ensuring food for the poor Covid patients in the state.

Leave political management, curb Covid spread: Rathore to Nadda

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 13 MAY

The Himachal Pradesh Congress's president Kuldeep Singh Rathore on Thursday criticised BJP national chief JP Nadda for writing a scathing letter to Congress chief Sonia Gandhi and said he should leave aside political management and instead focus on managing the Covid pandemic.

In a letter to Nadda, Rathore said India was going through a severe crisis in the second wave of Covid, however, he and Prime Minister Narendra Modi



were busy in the elections and holding big election rallies. "I want to bring your attention to the worsening situation of Himachal which is your own home state."

So far, more than 2,000 lives have been lost and more than one lakh people have been infected in the state due to the Corona epidemic.

It is very sad that you did not ask about the well-being of the people of Himachal even once and during this crisis, you are expected to take notable steps to improve the functioning of the state government," he added.

He stated that there was chaos in the whole country and there was public outrage against the Modi government.

Instead of pacifying this public outrage, he and the BJP were sacrificing everything to fulfill political objectives.

It is unfortunate that instead of fighting Corona, the BJP was fighting with Congress and ignoring the constructive suggestions of party leaders, he said.

"Today, in view of the public outrage in the country against BJP, you are engaged in a positive campaign for damage control for the party.

Your letter to Sonia Gandhi is not only contradictory but a failed attempt to hide the failures of the Central government and this shows the narrow mindset of the BJP.

Being the opposition party in a healthy democracy, Congress has every right to ask you any question on the grave problem the country is facing," he stated.

He further stated that the Central Vista project was unnecessary in times of crisis and at present, priority should be given to save the lives of the people.

If Modi government con-

tinues with works of the project even in these harsh conditions, then it shows the insensitivity of BJP towards the people. Rathore said he should have also mentioned the corpses in his letter which were seen flowing in Ganga river that highlights the failures of the government.

Not only this, Congress party in the country, rising above politics, was engaged in serving and helping people to deal with Covid crisis.

Similarly, Nadda and BJP should also leave political management and deal with Covid pandemic, he added.

Delhi school sets up walk-in 'O2 cafes' for Covid patients

PTI
NEW DELHI, 13 MAY

A prominent private school in Delhi has set up walk-in 'oxygen cafes' where coronavirus patients can sit for a few hours, get oxygen and go back home only after their condition improves, the dean of the institute, which also has a COVID care centre, said on Thursday.

However, if the doctors find the symptoms of the patient to be severe, they are then referred to the COVID care centre on the top floor, where they are monitored 24X7," he said.

Williams said they are in talks with all minority Christian schools to set up facilities for COVID patients.

"Many of the schools are looking at it. Lots of people from their administration are coming to our school to see. Some of them are trying to send volunteers who can work with us for a few days. We are encouraging all schools. Anybody can send volunteers, so that they can gain some expertise," he said.

"They (patients) feel positive. They sit, get oxygen for a few hours as doctors monitor them and as soon as their oxygen levels improve, they leave. This makes them much more relaxed," said Williams.

He said four classrooms of the school have been converted into 'oxygen cafes' and oxygen concentrators and cylinders are kept there.

"There are lots of patients who need oxygen right away. They walk in, the doctors assess them, they receive the initial burst of oxygen, which helps alleviate mild symptoms.

If the doctors find the symptoms to be severe, the patients are sent to the COVID care centre on the top floor, where they are monitored 24X7," he said.

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HP govt to provide incentive to ULBs' sanitation workers

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 13 MAY

The decision had been taken after keeping in view the vital services they were rendering in maintaining proper hygiene and sanitation in the urban areas, he added.

He urged ULBs representatives to maintain better coordination with the Health department to check the spread of Covid pandemic and said they should motivate people to adopt Covid appropriate behaviour and also for cremation of Covid patients as per SoPs.

Thakur stated that the state government was also mulling to provide PPE kits to nearest

health institutions so that they could provide the same to the people so that lastries of Covid patients could be performed as per the protocol.

Besides, steps must be taken to ensure that the migrant labourers do not face any inconvenience and were motivated to stay back.

He also urged religious organisations to come forward in serving humanity and said the religious leaders should motivate their respective communities to come forward in serving humanity during the Corona pandemic.

Haryana CM asks officials to sanitise every village amid Covid spread

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 13 MAY

Haryana Chief Minister, Manohar Lal Khattar, on Thursday gave directions to get sanitisation done in every village of the state.

Presiding over the meeting of deputy commissioners and nodal officers today to review the plans for conducting home screening and general health screening in the villages, the CM said 8000 teams have been formed to conduct door-to-door screening and health screening in rural areas of Haryana, out of which 1000 teams will start functioning in an active manner soon.

Khattar directed that within 10 days every person of every village should be screened and a general health check-up done. The CM said keeping in mind the increasing cases of Covid-19 in rural areas too,

any problem related to transport. The CM said funds have been issued to set up Isolation Centres and other arrangements have been made for control of Covid-19 in the villages. He said for three consecutive days, there has been a decrease in the number of Covid-19 patients.

Despite this, we need to act more cautiously, Khattar added.

The CM said that if complaints regarding private hospitals charging more than the rate prescribed by the government for Covid-19 patients are received, a case should be registered immediately. He said that private hospitals will be given a sum of Rs 1000 per person per day on admission of patients of Haryana. For this, it is mandatory for the hospitals to upload the patient's admission and discharge on gmdahrheal.com portal.



Delhi left with only 2-3 days' vax stock for 45+, key workers: Atishi

PTI
NEW DELHI, 13 MAY

The AAP leader Atishi Thursday said Delhi is left with just two-three days' stock of coronavirus vaccines for those above 45, and key workers.

For the 18-44 age group, the capital has eight days of Covid-19 vaccines available, she said.

"Delhi currently has three days of Covaxin and two days of Covishield stock for those above 45, and healthcare and frontline workers, of which 40.29 lakh have been utilised, Atishi said.

The city has received 8.17 lakh doses of coronavirus vaccines for the 18-44 category. Of this, 4.27 lakh have been utilised. The remaining doses, primarily Covishield, can last up to eight days, she said.

The city has already run out of Covaxin stock for 18+ cat-

egory. Therefore, most of the centres administering the Bharat Biotech vaccine have been temporarily shut till further orders.

The AAP leader said 74,448 people were vaccinated in Delhi on Wednesday.

Dispensaries conduct routine immunisation of children on Wednesdays and Fridays. So, there were fewer vaccination centres on May 12,

A total of 41.64 lakh doses have been administered to beneficiaries across all categories in Delhi since the inoculation drive started on January 16, according to the bulletin.

Cabinet minister, was adversely affected and all the good work he did is brought to nought.

Mehra said it also deters the individual from doing any such work for the benefit of the people in the future and therefore, people filing such pleas without allegedly doing proper research has to be discouraged.

He also questioned why such pleas were being filed only against one political party. Mehra's claims and contentions were disputed by the

applicant -- Vedansh Sharma -- who had filed the application alleging that Hussain was hoarding oxygen.

The court, however, did not agree with Mehra's contention as it said it was not going to stop people from coming to court and neither was it going to put fear in their mind. The court also said that it did not ask the MLA to stop his distribution if he was not taking oxygen from the quota allocated to Delhi.

"He stopped it on his own," the bench said.

AAP minister did not take O2 from Delhi quota, HC told

PTI
NEW DELHI, 13 MAY

The Delhi High court Thursday disposed of a plea alleging that AAP MLA Imran Hussain was hoarding oxygen after the submission by the Delhi government that he was not provided the life-saving gas by the state or refillers here from the quota allocated for COVID-19 patients.

Amicus curiae and senior advocate Rajeshwar Rao also told the court that the explanation tendered by Hussain

court's query to the Delhi government on May 10 as to whether the MLA was supplied any oxygen by the state or through the refillers from the

reputation of Hussain, a

Cabinet minister, was adversely affected and all the good work he did is brought to nought.

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No beneficiary will be entertained at the vaccination sites without having an appointment and the beneficiaries should come to the session sites as per their registered schedules only to avoid overcrowding and inconvenience.

All Deputy Commissioners and Superintendents of Police have also been requested to ensure law and order at these sites and the vaccination for this age group will be carried out on Mondays and Thursdays only," he added.



Eid-Ul-Fitr greetings during month of Ramadan, in a Jamia Masjid at Chanapura-Srinagar, in Srinagar on Thursday.

AGENCY

Elderly prisoner chained: A jail official was suspended on Thursday for chaining a 92-year-old prisoner to his hospital bed during treatment in UP's Etah district, authorities said. After a post on social media, showed the old man sitting on a hospital bed, wearing an oxygen mask with his feet chained to its footboard, UP ADC, (Jail) Anand Kumar ordered warden Ashok Yadav's suspension and sought clarification from his supervisory officer. PTI

Elgar case: Bombay High Court on Thursday directed the Maharashtra government to produce the latest medical report of lawyer-activist Sudhe Bharadwaj, an accused in the Elgar-Parishad Maoists links case, who is currently lodged at the Byculla women's prison. PTI

Atrocities FIR: Maharashtra government on Thursday told Bombay HC that it would not arrest former Mumbai Commissioner of Police Param Bir Singh till 20 May in connection with FIR registered against him by Thane police under the Atrocities Act. Senior counsel Darius Khambata told a bench that allegations of corruption levelled against Singh by a police inspector in Akola were of serious nature. PTI

Puri, Tharoor in war of words over vaccine policy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, 13 MAY

Union minister Hardeep Singh Puri and Congress MP Shashi Tharoor sparred on Twitter, with the BJP leader accusing Congress leaders of fuelling vaccine hesitancy and Tharoor hitting back, saying when will the Centre take responsibility for its "manifest failures" of policy rather than pointing fingers at the Opposition.

Puri, in a series of tweets on Wednesday, said some of Congress leaders like Shashi Tharoor are betraying an almost "childish stubbornness" in admitting their fault about India's vaccine policy.

"The Congress party's narrative on the vaccines is getting increasingly bizarre by the day," Puri said.

The entire pack through

Covid wave shifts to rural areas

States gear up to tackle virus spread in villages with online consultations, surveillance committees

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, 13 MAY

As the Covid wave gradually shifts to rural areas, several states are gearing up to check its spread through self-proclaimed lockdowns by Panchayati Raj institutions, creating a database of migrants and providing free online medical consultation to the sick.

The initiatives have been taken by states in consultation with the Centre to stop the virus from spreading further in villages, government sources said.

Among the measures include imposition of self-proclaimed lockdown by Panchayati Raj institutions in Gujarat and creation of migrant database for capturing the return of migrants in panchayats both from within and outside in Assam, besides announcing formulation of village defence plans.

In Madhya Pradesh, containment zones have been set up in villages with high rate of infections and villages have been divided in Red, Orange and Green zones based on number of active Covid patients. Control rooms have also been established at the block, district and state level.

Similarly, Maharashtra has initiated 'My Family My Responsibility' awareness campaign; and formed Corona Prevention Committee, besides carrying out door-to-door surveillance.

Kerala has started a transportation plan by providing ambulances in each gram panchayat to support the health system besides providing two chambered cars and auto rickshaws for needy.

Periodic awareness programmes, setting up of village monitoring committee and specific quarantine/isolation centres for migrant labourers have been set up in Haryana.

Door-to-door surveillance using pulse oximeter, temperature guns and antigen test kits and setting up of gram yoddha samiti in villages for supporting families of patients have been set up in Gujarat.

States like Andhra Pradesh have announced formulation of Corona Kattadi (mon-

itoring) Committee and gram panchayats in the states have passed resolutions of "No mask no entry", besides initiating proactive sanitisation and door-to-door surveillance.

Uttar Pradesh has set up village 'migrani samiti' in all gram panchayats with focus on promoting cleanliness, while Uttarakhand has set up village monitoring committees (VMC) and formation of block response team at the block level to ensure and monitor proper deliverables.

A 24x7 help desk system has also been set up by the Directorate of Panchayati Raj in the state.

West Bengal is undertaking awareness programmes in panchayats with the help of NGOs and self-help groups and is enabling safe operations of local markets/haats, besides smooth distribution of food grains to the poor under PDS.

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States fighting, competing with one another for vaccines in international market portrays bad image of India

DELHI CHIEF MINISTER ARVIND KEJRIWAL

IN THE BACKDROP OF A SHORTAGE OF VACCINE DOSES IN DELHI AND OTHER STATES

i
ndia



Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta, former Delhi BJP president, Vijay Goel, Lop Ramvir Singh Bidhuri and South Delhi Mayor Anamika Singh flag off a bus 'Oxygen On Wheels' by a NGO at Dr SPM Civic Center, in the Capital on Thursday



A Covid-19 patient on oxygen support waits for admission in a hospital, in Kanpur, on Thursday.

AGENCY

Jai Ram urges Pharma cos to ramp up drug production: Seeking support of pharma sector in fight against Covid pandemic, Himachal Pradesh chief minister Jai Ram Thakur on Thursday urged them to ramp up drug production to tackle virus spread. After a virtual meeting with heads of the pharma industry, Thakur said the state had emerged as 'Asia's Pharma Hub' and Himachal had been among the leading states in the country in helping the nation in fighting the pandemic since the last one year.

Maoist couple seeks medical aid from security forces: An ailing Maoist couple who approached security forces at Kamdetta BSF camp seeking medical help in Chhattisgarh's Kanker district have tested positive for coronavirus, police said on Thursday. Officials had earlier claimed there has been an outbreak of coronavirus infection in Naxal camps. The process of their formal surrender will take place once they recover, IGP (Bastar range) Sundarraj P said.

Oxygen situation improves in Meerut division: Amid increasing pressure due to surge in Covid-19 cases divisional commissioner Surendra Kumar Singh claims to have streamlined oxygen supply for Covid patients in all six districts of Meerut division. After the second wave there were reports of shortage of oxygen for patients in western UP districts. Five Covid patients even died recently in a Meerut hospital reportedly due to disrupted supply of oxygen. Singh said now 210 metric ton oxygen per day is available to meet the growing demand of hospitals for lifesaving gas.

IISc developing a Covid-19 vaccine: The Indian Institute of Science is developing a vaccine for Covid-19 with the initial results promising better neutralising effect compared to others available now. According to Professor Govindan Rangarajan, the vaccine ~ the human trial process for which is yet to begin ~ could come as a big break. This is because it can be stored in room temperatures up to 30 degree C. In an interaction with state health minister D K Sudhakar, in Bengaluru on Thursday, the professor said from a public point of view, this could enable the government to scale up distribution in a much faster and easier way. The minister had sought IISc's help in battling the raging pandemic. Prof Rangarajan claimed that the oxygen output was about 90 per cent while emphasising its efficiency when compared to the Chinese concentrators at 40-50 per cent.



Citizens wait in a queue to receive a dose of Covid-19 vaccine, during the second wave of epidemic in India, at ESIS Hospital in Navi Mumbai, on Thursday. ■ IANS

Court junks Kalra's anticipatory bail plea: A Delhi court on Thursday dismissed the anticipatory bail application of Navneet Kalra in connection with allegedly black marketing oxygen concentrators, saying allegations against him are serious and his custodial interrogation is required to unearth the entire conspiracy. Fearing arrest, Kalra had moved the court earlier this week to seek bail in the case, claiming that no offence was made out against him and that he is willing to join the investigation. Additional Session Judge Sandeep Garg dismissed his application and stated, custodial interrogation of accused is required to be carried out to unearth the entire conspiracy hatched between him and a number of co-accused persons. During a recent raid, 524 oxygen concentrators, were recovered from three restaurants owned by Kalra ~ Khan Chacha, Nega Ju and Town Hall ~ and he is suspected to have left Delhi along with his family. The concentrators are crucial medical equipment used for Covid-19 patients.

Puri, Tharoor in war of words over vaccine policy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, 13 MAY

Union minister Hardeep Singh Puri and Congress MP Shashi Tharoor sparred on Twitter, with the BJP leader accusing Congress leaders of fuelling vaccine hesitancy and Tharoor hitting back, saying when will the Centre take responsibility for its "manifest failures" of policy rather than pointing fingers at the Opposition.

Puri, in a series of tweets on Wednesday, said some of Congress leaders like Shashi Tharoor are betraying an almost "childish stubbornness" in admitting their fault about India's vaccine policy.

"The Congress party's narrative on the vaccines is getting increasingly bizarre by the day," Puri said.

The entire pack through

PM to transfer 19K crore to farmers

NEW DELHI, 13 MAY

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to release 8th instalment of Rs 19,000 crore to farmers under Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi, PM-KISAN scheme on Friday.

The event to be held through video-conferencing will witness the PM transferring more than Rs 19,000 crore to over 9.5 crore farmer families, according to a PM Office note.

Under the PM-KISAN scheme, a financial benefit of Rs 6,000 per year is provided to the eligible beneficiary farmer families, payable in three equal 4-monthly installments of Rs 2000 each. The fund is transferred directly to the bank accounts of the beneficiaries.

SNS

Govt, media attributed Covid spread to TJ meet: US report

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, 13 MAY

In its "International Religious Freedom Report 2020", the United States says the Indian government and media attributed some of the spread of Covid-19 in the country in March last year to a conference held in New Delhi by the Islamic Tablighi Jamaat organisation after the Press reported that six of the conference's attendees tested positive for the virus.

The Ministry of Home Affairs initially claimed a majority of the country's early Covid-19 cases were linked to that event. Some members of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) said conference attendees spread Covid-19 like terrorism, which politicians and some media outlets described as "Corona Jihad," said the report released

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For winning elections in a state, it (BJP) did not pay heed to the warnings of a second wave.



STATE POWER MINISTER AROOP BISWAS
CLAIMING 'THE COUNTRY HAS TURNED INTO A DEATH BED'

The Statesman
NEW DELHI, FRIDAY 14 MAY 2021

05

THUMBNAILS



A member of National Commission for SC speaking to a woman in an area hit by post-poll violence at Millipara in Burdwan (E) on Thursday.

SANJOY KARMAKAR

Derek hits out at Modi:
Trinamul Congress Rajya Sabha MP and party spokesperson Derek O'Brien today lashed out at the Prime Minister and Union minister for not electing Lok Sabha Deputy Speaker though two years have passed.

He said, "you have total disregard for the Constitution. As per Constitutional provision you will have to appoint Deputy Speaker within two months but two years have passed and you failed to elect one."

Yashwant Sinha, vice-president of TMC said on Thursday, "the West Bengal governor is acting according to a script provided to him by Modi and Shah who have not yet accepted their miserable defeat in the elections and who have no respect for the Constitution. They will never leave Mamata Banerjee in peace."

SNS

'Bengal grappling with Covid, violence'

The post-poll situation in the state took a grim turn owing to the 'unfortunate behaviour of the chief minister', Dhankhar alleged

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
COOCH BEHAR, 13 MAY

Claiming that people, who cast their votes as per their choice, are being subjected to attacks in West Bengal, Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar on Thursday said while the country is facing the Covid crisis, the state is grappling with the twin challenges of the pandemic and the post-poll violence.

"The country is facing the Covid crisis, and West Bengal is facing twin challenges of the pandemic and unprecedented post-poll violence only on the ground that some people decided to vote as per their own choice," he said while embarking on a visit to various places in Cooch Behar district.

He said the Mamata Banerjee government must ensure that everyone who took the law into their hands must be brought to justice.

The opposition BJP has been accusing the Trinamul Congress of indulging in violence against their supporters, a charge which the ruling party has made counter allegation against the saffron camp.

"History will judge Mamata Banerjee, the chief minister. History will also judge Jagdeep Dhankhar, the governor, and I will judge the bureaucracy and the media," he said.

Claiming that he did not get any response from the state government despite efforts being made to get information about the post-poll violence,

Dhankhar said the state government must provide him with the requisite particulars under Article 167 of the Constitution.

"I will perform my constitutional duties unhindered, undeterred by any situation whatsoever," he said.

The CM and the governor got involved in a war of words on Wednesday after Miss Banerjee wrote to him claiming that his planned visit to the post-poll violence-affected Cooch Behar violates norms, while Dhankhar hit back saying he was discharging duties mandated by the Constitution.

Speaking to reporters at the Cooch Behar airport after alighting from a BSF helicopter by which he travelled from Kolkata, the governor claimed that the chief minister has full power to control the situation.

He claimed that those who did not give political support to the ruling party were subjected to attacks and atrocities, and women and children of their families were also not spared.

Claiming that the post-poll situation in the state took a grim turn owing to the "unfortunate behaviour of the chief minister", the governor alleged, "During the elections, she had publicly said the central armed police force will not be there always and she will see after that.

"This kind of challenge and behaviour is not acceptable under the constitution," the governor said.

He urged the chief minis-



ter to make constructive decisions and said this is not the time for confrontation between the state and the Centre.

Dhankhar shown black flags at Sitalkuchi:

Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar was on Thursday shown black flags at Sitalkuchi, where five persons died on election day, when he went there to visit people allegedly affected in post poll violence.

Dhankhar was shown black flags by some people at Golokganj as his convoy travelled from Mathabhanga to Sitalkuchi though a posse of policemen put up a human wall to prevent protesters from coming down on the road.

Posters and placards criticising the visit of the governor were also seen at Jorpatki, the scene of firing by central armed police force (CAPF). Dhankhar went to Mathabanga and Sitalkuchi and

talked to people who claimed to have suffered attacks at the hands of goons owing allegiance to the TMC after the election results were announced on 2 May.

Women were seen wailing and falling at the governor's feet claiming that all their belongings had been looted and the men had fled their homes to escape attacks.

BJP MP Nisith Pramanik accompanied Dhankhar during his visit to the areas, where the saffron party has alleged loot and attack by goons owing allegiance to TMC.

TMC spokesman Kunal Ghosh accusing the governor of partisanship claimed that Dhankhar went to the houses of some BJP workers selectively and also claimed he was working at the bidding of the BJP and taking along its leaders during his visits.



Negative report must for flyers from UK, South Africa & Brazil

Lockdown relaxed: People flock markets

HYDERABAD, 13 MAY

Hyderabad today witnessed crowds and traffic jams as people flocked to markets during the four-hour window when lockdown restrictions were relaxed throwing all caution to the winds.

AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi lashed out alleging that they were being deliberately circulated, particularly in and around Charminar to blame a certain community for spread of the virus.

The state government decided to impose the lockdown to tackle the spread of Covid-19 and vaccinate more people in the meantime. IT minister KT Rama Rao during an interaction on Twitter said that the government was more than capable of vaccinating entire state in 45 days but the challenge was vaccine availability.

The state imposed a 10-day lock down since yesterday

although people are allowed to venture out between 6 am and 10 am everyday to buy their daily essentials. Some of the video footages which went viral were said to be old ones according to Hyderabad police.

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The state imposed a 10-day

lockdown to tackle the spread of Covid-19 and vaccinate more people in the meantime. IT minister KT Rama Rao during an interaction on Twitter said that the government was more than capable of vaccinating entire state in 45 days but the challenge was vaccine availability.

The AIIM guidelines for international passengers flying to West Bengal stated that all symptomatic passengers will have to undergo institutional quarantine. All international travellers except ones coming through flights

originating from the UK, Brazil, South Africa, Europe, and the Middle East, are advised to self-monitor their health for 14 days. All such passengers shall inform the state or national call center in case they develop symptoms at any time during the home quarantine period.

They have to give their samples in the designated area and exit the airport only after confirmation of a negative Covid report.

Transit travellers from these three countries who are found negative on testing at the airport shall be allowed to take their connecting flights and will be advised 14 day home quarantine. Non-transit passengers too have to give their swab samples. The

guideline highlighted passengers from the Middle East will also need to give samples for test at the airport. The thermal screening will be done at the airport. For international flights, guidelines stated that state authorities and airports should implement these guidelines and start a testing facility at the airport.

Meanwhile, for domestic passengers, 14 days of self-monitoring is must for all asymptomatic passengers. For symptomatic, health authorities will decide quarantine requirement on a case basis. It is compulsory for all passengers coming from outside Bengal to carry a Covid RT-PCR report, the test conducted within 72 hours before flight departure. Thermal

screening and health profiling will be done on arrival and

negative test reports will be verified at the origin airport

for those boarding from outside Bengal.

RAMGARHIA CO-OPERATIVE BANK LTD. H. O. PAHARGANJ, NEW DELHI-110055.

Ph.: 011- 4012447, 45595302

POSSESSION NOTICE UNDER SARFAESI ACT, 2002

Whereas the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the Ramgarhia Co-operative Bank Ltd., New Delhi, under the Securitisation and Re-construction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the powers conferred under section 13(2) read with Rule 9 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, issued demand notice upon the borrower and guarantors mentioned below to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

The borrower having failed to repay the due amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower, guarantors and the public in general that the undersigned has taken physical possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said Rules on the date mentioned below.

The borrower, guarantors in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the said property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of Ramgarhia Co-operative Bank Ltd., New Delhi - 110 055.

Name of Borrower	Name of Guarantor	Description of Property & Date of Physical Possession	Date Amount
Sh. Surender Kumar (prop) M/s Swami Narayan Roadlines	1) Smt. Sunita 2) Sh. Praveen Garg	1) Entire built up third floor with roof rights of property bearing No.15 in block -D, on Rana Partap Road, Area 75 Sq. Out of Kh. No. 262/258/2174, situated in Adarsh Nagar extn., Delhi -110038. 2) Nagar extn., Delhi -110038. Date of Possession -09.04.2021	Rs.48.83 Lakhs + Int. & Legal Charges
			Authorised Officer

Place: New Delhi, Date: 13.05.2021

CANCELLATION/REDUCTION IN FREQUENCY OF SPECIAL TRAINS

It is notified for the information of passengers that due to low occupancy and other operational reasons Railways have decided to cancel and reduce the frequency of following special trains, as per the details given below:-

CANCELLATION OF TRAINS

Train No. & Name	Date(s) of Cancellation (from originating station)
02486 Shri Ganganagar - Hazur Sahib Nanded Special Express	15.05.2021 till further advice
02485 Hazur Sahib Nanded - Shri Ganganagar Special Express	17.05.2021 till further advice
02440 Shri Ganganagar - Hazur Sahib Nanded Special Express	14.05.2021 till further advice
02439 Hazur Sahib Nanded - Shri Ganganagar Special Express	16.05.2021 till further advice

REDUCTION IN FREQUENCY OF TRAINS

Train No. & Name	Existing Frequency	Revised Frequency	Effective From
02065 Ajmer - Delhi Sarai Rohilla Special Express	5 Days/ Week	Tri-Weekly (Mon, Wed, Fri)	14.05.2021 till further advice
02066 Delhi Sarai Rohilla - Ajmer Special Express	5 Days/ Week	Tri-Weekly (Mon, Wed, Fri)	14.05.2021 till further advice
02458 Bikaner Jr. - Delhi Sarai Rohilla Special Express	Daily	Bi-Weekly (Wed, Sat)	15.05.2021 till further advice
02457 Delhi Sarai Rohilla - Bikaner Jr. Special Express	Daily	Bi-Weekly (Fri, Mon)	17.05.2021 till further advice
02443 Delhi Sarai Rohilla - Jodhpur Jr. Special Express	Daily	Bi-Weekly (Thu, Sun)	16.05.2021 till further advice
02444 Jodhpur Jr. - Delhi Sarai Rohilla Special Express	Daily	Bi-Weekly (Fri, Mon)	17.05.2021 till further advice
02471 Shri Ganganagar - Delhi Jn. Special Express	Daily	Bi-Weekly (Mon, Wed)	17.05.2021 till further advice
02472 Delhi Jn. - Shri Ganganagar Special Express	Daily	Bi-Weekly (Tue, Thu)	18.05.2021 till further advice
04731 Delhi Jn. - Bhatinda Jn. Special Express	Daily	Bi-Weekly (Mon, Wed)	17.05.2021 till further advice
04732 Bhatinda Jn. - Delhi Jn. Special Express	Daily	Bi-Weekly (Tue, Thu)	18.05.2021 till further advice

Note:- Presently train no. 02443/02444 Delhi Sarai Rohilla - Jodhpur - Delhi Sarai Rohilla Special Express is running between Delhi Sarai Rohilla - Degana - Delhi Sarai Rohilla and partially cancelled between Degana - Jodhpur - Degana, reduced frequencies shall also run as above.

All norms of the State and Central Government regarding COVID-19 including social distancing, sanitization etc, may be followed in the trains and at the Railway stations. All other precautions associated with COVID-19 should also be ensured.

For any kind of information passengers are requested to contact RailMadad Helpline No. 139 or may visit Indian Railways website <https://enquiry.indianrail.gov.in> or NTES App.

RailMadad Helpline No. 139

Visit RailMadad website : www.railmadad.indianrailways.gov.in & download Railmadad app.

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Full width banner logo



China's qualms

Geopolitics is in a state of flux. The fact that Xi Jinping's China perceives Quad to be a grouping against itself was palpable this week when Beijing threatened Bangladesh with reprisals if it considers participation in the four-nation entity. The threat has been couched with the fairly stern warning that such participation could result in a degrading of bilateral ties. We do not know if Quad, in the aftermath of its recent meeting, has rocked the Asian diplomatic boat. Yet we do know that China's ambassador to Bangladesh, Li Jiming, has said that bilateral ties would be "substantially damaged" should the Awami League government in Dhaka conduct dealings with the concert of four nations, described as an "anti-Beijing club", comprising the United States, Australia, Japan and India. While this is indubitably brazen interference in the conduct of a sovereign country's foreign policy, Beijing has made it clear that it views Quad as an anti-China grouping. The perception has been conveyed to the Hasina government by China's defence minister, Wei Fenghe, when he visited Bangladesh last week. To an extent, the crisis escalated on Wednesday with China accusing Quad of being what it called an "exclusive clique" against Beijing. Bangladesh has been remarkably swift in its reaction to China's stand. Indeed, Mr Li Jiming's "provocative remarks" were binned as "very unfortunate and aggressive" by the Bangladesh foreign minister, Abdul Momen, on Tuesday. "We are an independent and sovereign state. We decide our foreign policy". He has underlined the fact that Bangladesh had been following a "non-aligned and balanced foreign policy", and the country would pursue its dealings with the comity of nations in accord with the certitudes of its foreign policy. Mr Momen has distinctly drawn a distinction between an independent country's foreign policy and interference by a Big Power. China's attempted domination received an impetus with the Sri Lankan President, Gotabaya Rajapaksa, asserting that his country had been pursuing an independent foreign policy and will neither bend to pressure from major powers outside the region nor forge an alliance with any country. This was an oblique allusion to India, the United States, and Quad. China's equation with Delhi has soured with negotiations for disengagement stalled. Beijing is reportedly entrenching its position in eastern Ladakh. Arguably, China's inherent opposition to military alliances in South Asia could lead to what they call "hegemonism". Beijing's allusion to Quad and the bluntness with which Bangladesh was warned do suggest China's opposition to a grouping that intends to curtail its influence in the Indo-Pacific as well as areas that China considers to be within its geostrategic sphere of influence. Not wholly unrelated is medical diplomacy. China recently held a "virtual round table" with South Asian countries on Covid-19 and the endemic vaccine shortage. With the Chinese vaccine, Sinopharm, being approved by WHO, it will be easier for India's neighbours to authorise its use. Beijing's pique goes beyond vaccine diplomacy.

Jab for young

The Pfizer jab for the young in America will among other things facilitate the search of learning. America has achieved a breakthrough in the medical narrative after the bout of callous indifference of the previous dispensation. The Food and Drug Administration on Monday authorised the use of the Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine on children in the 12-15 age group. This is a crucial step in the nation's recovery from the pandemic. And for hundreds of thousands of families, it will doubtless spur the return to normalcy. With only adults immunised thus far, the disease has been a major worry for families with children. With the threat of transmission in classrooms thus reduced, the FDA's decision ought also to spur the reopening of schools and the opportunity to attend classes will be afforded to an estimated 17 million children. "This is great news," was how a paediatrician and vaccine expert in New York greeted the breakthrough. Hitherto, the vaccine was available to children above 16. The lowering of the entitlement age hasn't led to endemic shortage of the vaccine as it has in India for example. Considerable homework has already been done. Clinical trials have shown that children may safely receive the dose that is already available for adults. So very unlike his predecessor, it is gratifying to note that President Biden is taking keen interest in the matter. Going by his statement, about 20,000 pharmacies are ready to administer the vaccine to those above 12 and the list of youngsters to be targeted has already been drawn up in some states. There was no symptomatic coronavirus infection among children who have received the vaccine. This underlines the fact that it has been "highly effective" at preventing illness. According to the medical fraternity, the nation has "got the immune response we wanted. It was actually better than what we saw in the 16 to 25-year-old population and we had outright demonstration of efficacy". The company is still gathering data on potential asymptomatic infections by continuing to test the trial participants. The authorisation comes at an opportune time. Roughly one-third of eighth grade students, usually 13 and 14 years of age, are still learning remotely. Widespread vaccination is widely expected to hasten a return to the classrooms, indeed the conventional praxis of education. Nay more, it will also enable the young to participate in team sports that involve close contact. The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine can be stored for only five days in standard refrigerators, but the companies are planning to ship smaller packets for doctors' clinics. It is also developing a formulation that can be refrigerated for up to ten weeks. Vaccine shortages have come in the way of even those who are eligible getting the jab. While regulators in India have approved phase 2 and 3 trials for Bharat, the challenge here is to ensure supplies.

An election dissected

In a polarised situation with the Left and Congress virtually non-existent, the BJP's attempt to invest so much time and resources in a state election made the latter look like a referendum. Mamata became the symbol of resistance and was slowly accepted by her critics as well



The recently concluded legislative assembly election in West Bengal has brought out two models of political culture: a subject-participatory culture of the BJP where the local leadership plays a secondary and supplementary role directed by an all-powerful Leviathan as opposed to a time-tested, decisive and powerful local leadership represented by Mamata Banerjee's Trinamool Congress.

Mamata occupies this position having emerged out of her struggles and having led a number of popular movements. This is clearly reflected in the election result that has given her a decisive 9 per cent lead over the BJP. Even in the heyday of the Left party rule, the CPM could not reach anywhere near this mark despite a polarized Left vs Congress scenario. The CPM-led Left coalitions would win by a margin of 1 or 2 per cent votes only.

Where did the BJP calculations go wrong? The most important one was that it mistakenly assumed that this was going to be an abnormal and not a normal election. Ordinary voters vote for change only in extraordinary situations and not in normal ones. Apart from this, the BJP ignored India's cultural unity captured in the phrase 'unity in diversity' with distinctive subcultures that flourish in all non-Hindi speaking states. In its campaigns it erroneously spoke of 'Bengal' and 'sunar' while the correct words are 'Bangla' and 'sonar'.

Mahatma Gandhi, a mass leader and an excellent organizer understood the nature of India's composite culture which is why he rejected the British administrative map and offered an alternative in the form of linguistic states providing a firm endorsement of India's plurality. Even when he proposed a national lingua franca, he did not use Hindi but Hindustani which is a mixture of Hindi and Urdu, another facet of our composite culture.

Before BJP came to power at the Centre in 2014, there were two distinct phases in its growth. In the 1990s, with the sharp decline of the Congress exemplified by the humiliating exit of Sitaram Kesari and non-coopera-

tion and internal sabotage of the Congress' most competent Prime Minister, P V Narasimha Rao, a moderate leadership under Atal Behari Vajpayee seemed a viable alternative.

The BJP under Vajpayee was described by many as a humanized and a 'Congressised' party, as he represented visibly a continuity of a traditional accommodative culture. The NDA followed the footsteps of the Congress and Vajpayee shared a personal bond with Narasimha Rao.

But after the unexpected victory of the UPA in 2004 and 2009, the BJP changed its track. In view of and with mounting resentment against the Congress for its indecisiveness and exposure of huge corruption and unpreparedness for the Commonwealth Games, the undecided voters began to tilt towards the BJP-led NDA. Narendra Modi emerged as the man of the hour because Gujarat's improved delivery system and highways without potholes made him seem as the deliverer in a situation of static power structure. Since then, he has come to occupy the centre stage in Indian politics.

Modi's support base and image remained untarnished despite demonetization which for many was unnecessary and economically harmful and forming state governments where the BJP had not secured majorities by engineering defections. But the first major setback to Modi's leadership was exhibited when its trusted ally Shiv Sena parted with it and successfully formed a government in Maharashtra. Even when he proposed a national lingua franca, he did not use Hindi but Hindustani which is a mixture of Hindi and Urdu, another facet of our composite culture.

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From now to 2024 there are a

number of state elections includ-

ing in UP, India's largest state and

hence the most important. This

is slated for next year and look-

ing at the recently concluded

Panchayat election results, Yogi

Adityanath's return may have

come under a cloud.

The decisive defeat of BJP in

West Bengal has provided the

Opposition a firm and decisive

face. This is similar to Modi emer-

ging as an alternative between

2012 to 2014. Mamata's program-

mes, style of leader-

ship and her insis-

tence on India's com-

posite nation-

alism helped her to

score the hattrick.

These, coupled with

economic non-perfor-

mance and the mishan-

dling of the pan-

demic, particularly

the current phase

enables her to po-

sition herself as a

viable alternative in

the same way as

Morarji Desai be-

came the rallying point in 1977

after the Emergency. The Covid

pandemic has exposed the fact

that Gujarat like other states is

poorly equipped to tackle

the crisis.

The retreat of the state was

reflected in its poor outlay for

health of Rs 856 crore in 2021-22

which is less than Rs 150 per

head, much lower than even a

socio-economically back-

ward state like Bihar. Even in other

categories of human develop-

Gujarat's rank is 23 out of the 36

states and UTs.

Ironically the overemphasis

of the BJP leadership on cap-

turing power in West Bengal boomed

ranging allowing Mamata to over-

come anti-incumbency despite

her over-personalised nature of

politics. Modi's jibe of 'Didi oh

Didi' apart from alienating lots of

uncommitted voters also brought

to the surface the fact that BJP

had no reasonable alterna-

tive to the incumbent.

It also seemed to suggest

Mamata's importance as a leader

at the national level. Gandhi's

describing Jinnah as 'Qaid-e-

Azam' bestowed importance

making Jinnah respectable and

acceptable to many sceptical

Muslims. In a polarised situa-

tion with the Left and Congress

virtually non-existent, the BJP's

attempt to invest so much time

and resources in a state elec-

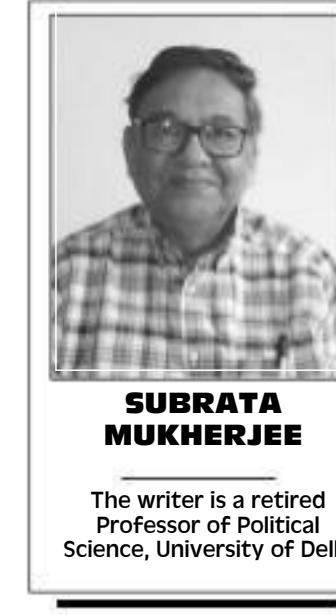
tion made the latter look like a

referendum. Mamata became the

symbol of resistance and was

slowly accepted by her

critics as well



SUBRATA MUKHERJEE

The writer is a retired Professor of Political science, University of Delhi

Sound decision on Assam CM

SIR, After days of speculation, Himanta Biswa Sarma was finally sworn in as the CM of Assam on Monday marking a significant change in the state leadership. After BJP's stellar performance in the Assam polls,

where it won an impressive 60 seats and its NDA coalition ended up with 75 out of 126 seats, a debate had gripped the state as to who deserved credit for the victory and who should be at the helm of the state.



SERPENTINE COILS OF DEATH

SIR, ~ It just slipped back
Stealthily, slowly, steadily
As the thunderous bragging
Deafened ears, numbed minds
Serpentine coils of death now
Meander down every
Highway and by-lane
Main roads and arteries
The toxic invisible omnipotence
Targets every susceptible pore
The empty cylinders lie like corpses
Alongside plastic-wrapped bodies.
Why everything locked down
No beds in hospitals
No vaccines in hospitals
No oxygen in hospitals
Ambulances are hospital cabins
Cars are hospital beds
Lorries carry dead bodies
Strapped bodies on car roofs
As hearses are few
Bodies float in the Ganga waters.

risky for the party central leadership to overlook him for the CM's post.

However, Sarma takes

over at a challenging time

for Assam. Covid cases have surged in recent days with as many as 30,190 new cases being reported between May 1 to 7. Sarma, therefore,

clearly has his task cut out and must hit the ground running.

Yours, etc., Sanjay Chopra, Mohali, 11 May.

paper.thestatesman.com

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Resilience of the American

SUNIL SHARAN

The American army has suffered two bruising defeats - in Iraq and in Afghanistan - yet is ready to fight some more to protect America's interests.

Official estimates of Covid deaths in the US are close to 600,000, but factoring in for underreporting, the toll might well have crossed a million. From April of last year to January of this year, America had four Covid waves.

Truth be told, it had one gigantic, tidal wave, all when vaccines were absent. And it had a mad king, who some thought would get everyone killed. The vaccines came and they have slowed down the surge.

Yet, in America today, people hardly talk about Covid deaths. The TV networks are full of the number of people getting vaccinated. When is the economy going to recover? How many jobs were created last month? These are all the talk of the town. Covid almost seems like a bad dream.

Napoleon said that give me strong mothers, and I will give you a strong nation. By any measure then, American mothers are strong. There is no moping around in America. There is a get-on-with-it-ness about America that is remarkable.

Divorce is not considered worse than death. If one gets divorced, it's not a lifelong stigma. One just moves on.

Take the rise of ride-hailing app services like Uber and Lyft. They destroyed the taxi industry in the country. In many other countries, the government would have prevented Uber and Lyft from taking off to protect the cab industry.

Not so on in America. Cab drivers in places like New York City saw their million-dollar taxi medallions reduced to dust and themselves shoved into grinding poverty. But the government feels that they can always find other jobs. Creative destruction is a popular term in Silicon Valley. Silicon Valley is built on creative destruction. And America has infected the world with it.

Take for instance the Green New Deal. Climate change is an impending threat. After denial by Donald Trump, now Joe Biden is betting his entire economy on green technologies. He may succeed or he may falter, but Americans must try, always try for the moon shot.

Americans want to move to Mars



and live there. Billionaires like Elon Musk of Tesla fame are trying to achieve that goal. Musk, with his electric cars, is already cannibalizing the fossil-fuel car industry of Detroit, a huge employer. Yet the federal government encourages him to do so by giving huge tax credits to consumers on each EV they buy.

Such a society then is always in ferment, always trying to reinvent itself. Americans are always thinking outside the box. America is the hegemon of the world, or sadly, it considers itself to be so. Even before Iraq and Afghanistan and Syria and Yemen and Libya have been quelled, the Pentagon is readying for its next war - this time against China.

It has roped India into the Quad alliance meant to contain China. It is not exactly clear what role each party in the Quad - the US, India, Japan, and Australia - will play in case of war with China. Will the US fight by sea and air alone? Will India fight on land, sea, and air? Does it have the capacity to do that?

Will Japan be stifled from fighting because of the security umbrella that the US covers it with? Australia has already said that it won't take on China, that it has too many economic interests with that country. The Quad is supposed to be a military alliance. What then are Australia and Japan doing in it? The Quad is not some war game to scare China.

China doesn't scare that easily.

Yet the US persists in its brinkmanship. Sad to say, it has dragged India into it as well. The US always seems to be at war. It is addicted to war. When will it stop the addiction? But once again the endless chest beating comes from a continuous desire to dominate the world.

You don't hear much chest beating in the US anymore about how the mad king almost killed his country during the pandemic. Nor do you hear remorse about the US taking the gold medal in the number of Covid deaths. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow was a beloved American poet of the 19th century.

In his poem, *A Psalm of Life*, he says the following:

*Let the dead Past bury its dead!
Act,—act in the living Present!
Life is real! Life is earnest!
And the grave is not its goal;
Dust thou art, to dust returnest,
Was not spoken of the soul.
Not enjoyment, and not sorrow,
Is our destined end or way;
But to act, that each to-morrow
Find us farther than to-day.
Let us, then, be up and doing,
With a heart for any fate;
Still achieving, still pursuing,
Learn to labor and to wait.*

The writer is an expert on energy and contributes regularly to publications in India and overseas.

The downtrodden of Afghanistan

NAJMUDDIN A SHAIKH

The explosions in the Sayed ul-Shuhada high school in western Kabul on Saturday last week killed over 60 people while more than 150 were injured. Most of the victims were young girls, aged 13 to 18 years, who were attending the afternoon shift of the school that catered exclusively to the Shia Hazara community in Afghanistan. The Afghan Taliban's condemnation of the attack was, to my mind, plausible though their claim that it was the handiwork of the militant Islamic State group working in concert with the Afghan government was clearly an attempt to hold the government responsible and perhaps understandable as a riposte to the government's claim that the Taliban were responsible.

Even if the Taliban did not carry out this attack there is no doubt that given their Deobandi and Salafi beliefs, they regard the Hazaras as heretics. What is even more tragic is that not just the Taliban but every ethnic or religious community in Afghanistan perceives the Hazaras in the same way.

The Hazaras constitute around nine per cent of the Afghan population though some claim a much larger percentage. They are theoretically descendants of the Changize Khan Mongols who settled in Afghanistan during the Mongol forays into South Asia. From the start, however, it seems that they had a lowly status and up to the 19th century, they could be sold and bought as slaves. Their persecu-



tion was particularly bad during the reign in Kabul of Amir Abdur Rehman who ruled from 1880 to 1901. He is better known for having negotiated the agreement with the British to demarcate and recognise the Durand Line as the border between Afghanistan and British India. The Hazaras could no longer be slaves but their status was that of serfs condemned to perform only menial tasks.

The New York Times in reporting on the school attack talked of it as "a foreshadowing of what is to come" meaning the deterioration of the security situation. This is unfortu-

nately true but even more important is the fact that to all Afghans, be they Pashtuns, Tajiks, Uzbeks, Turkmen or Baloch, the Hazaras deserve no better.

For the Taliban, this general Afghan contempt for the Hazaras is compounded many times by the role the Hazaras played in partnership with Uzbek opponents of Gen Rashid Dostum in 1997 massacring the Taliban trapped in Mazar-i-Sharif after their abortive effort to take over the city. More than 5,000 Taliban died mostly at the hands of the forces of Hizb-i-Wahdat, the Hazara political

and military party. It is unlikely but even if there is some sort of reconciliation between the Taliban and other Afghan parties, the Hazaras will not escape the revenge the Taliban, who have long memories, will take.

The Hazaras, before Pakistan was hit by the disease of sectarianism had a comfortable position in this country. Gen Musa, a proud Hazara, could write about rising from 'jawan to commander-in-chief'. Then the situation changed. The Taliban refused to surrender Riaz Basra of the Sipah-i-Sabha when his location in Afghanistan was conveyed to them,

being ready, it seemed, to cock a snook at Pakistan, the only country that was supporting them internationally.

From Riaz Basra's Sipah-i-Sabha have emerged the Lashkar-i-Jhangvi and other extremist organisations whose avowed goal is the elimination of the Shia who they regard as kafirs. As a result, in Pakistan, according to a 2019 report by Pakistan's National Commission for Human Rights, at least 509 Hazara have been murdered for their faith since 2013.

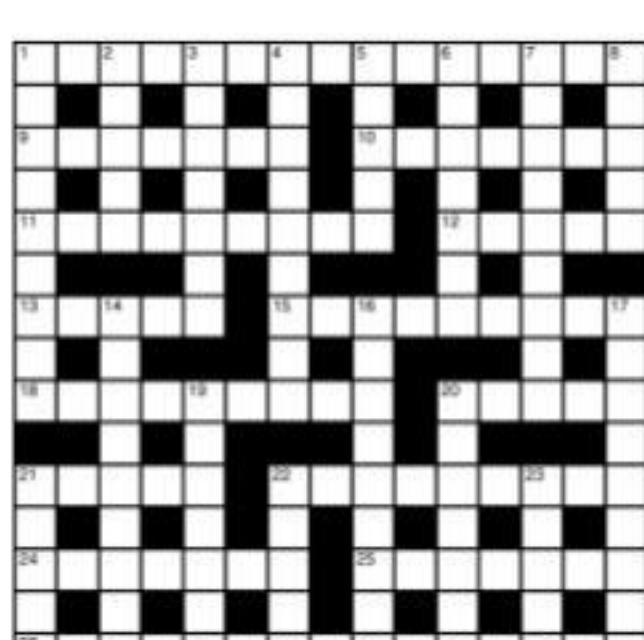
The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan says that from 2009 to 2014, nearly 1,000 Hazaras died in sectarian violence while thousands were injured. To curb attacks on the 600,000 Hazaras living in the towns of Mariabad and Hazara Town in Quetta, the authorities have built military checkpoints, roadblocks and walls around the areas. This has not stopped the attacks by such organisations as the Lashkar-i-Jhangvi.

Other Afghans, tired of the strife in their country, try to escape abroad but for no other ethnic group in Afghanistan or Pakistan is this more urgent than for the Hazaras. The prospects are limited and what looms ahead is the elimination of this ethnic group. In Afghanistan's chaotic state not much can be done, but in Pakistan, some analysts believe, that if the government — even while beset with problems of separatist movements in Balochistan — decides to take action it can clear out the madrassahs and sanctuaries of these organisations that dot the countryside from Lasbela to Quetta and beyond. Will it happen?

Dawn/ANN.

NO 28912

CROSSWORD



YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

ACROSS

- 1 Actor on *The Simpsons* maybe? (8,7)
- 9 Troubling quality – ask for husband (7)
- 10 Independent politician two journalists obstructed (7)
- 11 Coppers taking dope and ecstasy show remorse (9)
- 12 Some cattle rustler finally wearing symbol of peace (5)
- 13 Gun – one found on a slippery slope (5)
- 15 It's designed with you in mind – for this reason, don't start cryptic (9)
- 18 Ideas man is stopping other Queen moving round (9)

DOWN

- 20 Henry rejecting Boleyn's hair dye (5)
- 21 Joey Richardson's expressing emotions (5)
- 22 Papa's Got A Brand New Bag after interruption by posh, London Philharmonic Orchestra player (4,5)
- 24 It supplies crude painting effectively (3,4)
- 25 Reject striking actors (7)
- 26 Sailor smooths voyage on board ship bearing European flag (5,3,7)
- 1 Cold to trial TV show – it involves action, but lacks self-awareness (9)
- 2 Playwright sees nurse following bowel disorder (5)
- 3 A bomb that flew over a hill gets airman (7)
- 4 Manipulates topless teenagers in broadcast without adult (9)
- 5 Blame kept out of sight in church (5)
- 6 Enlisted revolutionary when I deported some characters (5,2)
- 7 Eccentric playing banjo, entertaining millions is jack
- 8 of all trades (3-6)
- 14 Irregular glue ear? Dr will clean occasionally (9)
- 16 Wordy newspaper reversed rule on use to wipe toilet (9)
- 17 Hundred players in audition with leading agents to make some bread (9)
- 19 Dodges game (7)
- 20 Essentially the high priest's a cereal cafe regular? (7)
- 21 Steals seat back (5)
- 22 Copy long division – can it raise the power? (5)
- 23 Get government file (5)

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

100 YEARS AGO

OCCASIONAL NOTE

In spite of the gloomy outlook presented by the industrial struggle in England, it is quite possible that the recent prophecy by that shrewd observer, Mr. J.H. Thomas, as to the imminence of peace, may speedily be fulfilled. From one point of view, the very threat of extreme measures by the railwaymen and transport workers suggests that the approaching exhaustion of the miners' resources has stimulated their extremist supporters in the other unions to a special effort on their behalf. It is quite certain that the miners, unaided, must surrender in a very short time. It is also certain that the railwaymen and transport workers will not be permitted to carry out their threat to hold up coal supplies beyond a certain point. This is the very emergency against which the Government have taken every possible precaution, with the amplest Parliamentary sanction, and, in view of the vital character of the issue, they may be trusted not to shrink from bringing all their resources into play to prevent the Triple Alliance from throttling the nation. This is perfectly well known to the three unions, and, in view of what happened last month, it is difficult to believe that the great body of their members are prepared for the desperate step of challenging, not merely the Government, but the nation, to a life-and-death revolutionary struggle.

NEWS ITEMS

RECENT DISTURBANCES AT PARTABGARH

Allahabad, May 13
In connection with recent disturbances in the Partabgarh district 65 cases were instituted on private complaint under section 506, Indian Penal Code. These cases involved proceedings against 307 persons, 50 cases relating to private complaints against 204 members of Kisan Sabhas. Nine of these cases were instituted by zemindars and related to direct interference with harvesting operations. There were in addition three cases of theft of zemindars' crops, involving 10 persons. Under section 506, 26 cases have been dismissed as the result of preliminary inquiry, on which the accused men were not summoned. Under section 107 of the Criminal Procedure Code, 79 persons were proceeded against resulting in 10 convictions and 54 discharges up to date. The discharges were generally the result of settlement of outstanding differences.

SPEECHES LIKELY TO CAUSE BREACH OF PEACE

Patna, May 13
At the High Court today, Sir Dawson Miller, Chief Justice, and Mr. Justice Coutts upheld the order of the Sessions Judge of Darbhanga, who rejected the application of Anirudha Prasad, a Seva Samiti preacher, against the action of the Sub-divisional Officer of Somastipur, who ordered the applicant under Section 107, I.P.C., to execute a bond of Rs 1,000, with two sureties of Rs 500 each, to keep the peace for one year, or in the alternative to undergo one year's simple imprisonment. In rejecting the application, the Sessions Judge stated that it was evident that applicant in his speeches had stated that the Seva Samiti were to assume the duties of police and choukidars.

The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan says that from 2009 to 2014, nearly 1,000 Hazaras died in sectarian violence while thousands were injured. To curb attacks on the 600,000 Hazaras living in the towns of Mariabad and Hazara Town in Quetta, the authorities have built military checkpoints, roadblocks and walls around the areas. This has not stopped the attacks by such organisations as the Lashkar-i-Jhangvi.

Other Afghans, tired of the strife in their country, try to escape abroad but for no other ethnic group in Afghanistan or Pakistan is this more urgent than for the Hazaras. The prospects are limited and what looms ahead is the elimination of this ethnic group. In Afghanistan's chaotic state not much can be done, but in Pakistan, some analysts believe, that if the government — even while beset with problems of separatist movements in Balochistan — decides to take action it can clear out the madrassahs and sanctuaries of these organisations that dot the countryside from Lasbela to Quetta and beyond. Will it happen?

Dawn/ANN.

NO 28912

CONFERENCE ON CHILD WELFARE

Simla, May 13
The National Association for the Prevention of Infant Mortality, which is a section of the National League for Health, Maternity and Child Welfare, London, and of which Their Majesties the King and Queen are patrons, is organising the second English-speaking conference on the welfare of infancy to be held in London on July 5, 6 and 7 next. Lieut.-Colonel F.H.G. Hutchinson and Lieut.-Colonel J.C.H. Leicester, both of whom will then be on leave in England, have been nominated to attend the conference as the official representatives of the Government of India. The Government of India have also been invited to send representatives to the International Congress for the Welfare of Children to be held at Brussels from July 18 to 21 next.





Special Window for Affordable and Mid-Income Housing (SWAMIH) Fund will benefit 1.16 lakh home loan borrowers

NIRMALA SITHARAMAN
UNION FINANCE MINISTER

THUMBNAILS

Retailers' plea: Retailers Association of India (RAI) on Thursday said workers and businesses in the retail industry are in need of urgent support as the restrictions to combat the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic has hit them hard. With the days of the lockdown continuing to extend in various parts of the country, RAI said it is getting increasingly difficult for retailers to retain employees and to keep their businesses afloat, and there is a need to inject capital into the industry.

PTI

Vedanta profit: Vedanta Ltd on Thursday reported a consolidated profit of Rs 6,432 crore for March quarter of financial year 2020-21 on the back of various factors, including better volumes and lower cost of production. It had posted a loss (attributable to owners of Vedanta) of Rs 12,521 crore in the same period of the previous fiscal. The company's income in the period under review increased to Rs 29,065 crore from Rs 20,382 crore in the same period a year ago.

PTI

Lupin aim: Drug major Lupin aims to tie up with global companies and ramp up production of medicines in its portfolio to lend its support to the fight against the second wave of Covid-19 sweeping across the country, a top company official said on Thursday. The Mumbai-based company plans to aggressively counter the infectious disease this time around while doing away with its strategy of being relatively less active during the first wave of the coronavirus pandemic.

PTI

Max Bupa plan: Health insurance company Max Bupa on Thursday announced the launch of "Senior First" - a plan for senior citizens, designed to provide unconditional support and care to seniors in their golden years. Senior First plan includes coverage options of up to Rs 25 lakh with no sub-limits on common health conditions like cataract, knee replacement, etc, according to a statement issued by the company.

SNS

Suzuki company head: Suzuki Motorcycle India Pvt Ltd (SMIPL) on Thursday said it has appointed Satoshi Uchida as its new company head as part of a global revamp by parent Suzuki Motor Corporation (SMC). Uchida has succeeded Koichiro Hirao with effect from 1 May 2021, SMIPL said in a Press statement.

PTI

TVS appointment: TVS Motor Company on Thursday said it has appointed Robert Hentschel as the chief executive officer (CEO) of iconic British brand Norton Motorcycle, which it acquired last year. Hentschel replaces John Russell who steps down from his role as an interim chief executive officer.

PTI

Corporates intensify 'compassion currency' to tackle Covid-19

CSR tracker CSRbox.org estimates Indian corporates have committed ₹5,806 crore in Covid-19 relief as of 3 May

RAJA MURTHY
MUMBAI, 13 MAY

Amid a re-surgent sinister pandemic and lockdown-driven economic turmoil, multinational and local companies have stepped up multi-pronged relief efforts to ease suffering of people in the country as well as employees and families.

Both better and lesser known corporate names have in the past 30 days increased Covid-19 efforts, adding to initiatives undertaken in the past turbulent year.

Corporate social responsibility tracker CSRbox.org estimates Indian corporates have committed ₹5,806 cr in Covid-19 relief as of 3 May.

Relief measures include monetary donations, boosting supply of oxygen cylinders, ventilators, increasing hospital beds for Covid care, contributing protective wear, food supply for the needy, taking care of families of employees who lost their lives due to Covid-19 and providing free

medical help.

In this most bizarre phase in recorded human history, the quintessential goodness of human nature has surfaced again to prove that compassion is the most valuable currency of life - and generosity and goodwill are best investments, in the all-important stock exchange of nature operating with the law of cause and effect as regulator.

Runwal Foundation of the Mumbai-based real estate company Runwal Group is offering "Runwal Stays", with rent-free, furnished accommodation at suburban Jogeshwari, Navi Mumbai and Thane for frontline medical workers.

L&T, that is gamely going on with its major underground metro project connecting south Mumbai to the international airport, has supplied 24 ventilators for urgent relief in south Gujarat, distributed masks to villages and will be delivering 22 oxygen generators to various hospitals across the country.

Coal India Ltd has donated ₹221 crore to the Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Sit-



1 million euros (approx. Rs 9 crore) in Covid-19 relief.

Ambuja Cements and ACC have donated ₹3.3 crore to Goonj, Praja Foundation and Mumbai Roti Bank - three NGOs working with daily-wagers, migrant labourers, slum-dwellers and homeless people stranded due to the lockdowns.

SBI Foundation, the CSR wing of State Bank of India, announced a further ₹30 crore for multiple relief measures, including food, healthcare infrastructure and Covid-19 research projects with the Indian Institute of Science.

Car makers Skoda and Volkswagen have contributed

sive care units and increase medical supplies to public healthcare facilities in Mumbai and Pune.

The Tata Group, Reliance Foundation, Google, Samsung, Microsoft, Amazon India, Mahindra & Mahindra, Honda India Foundation have announced additional contributions to Central and state governments and various NGOs across India. Paytm is importing more than 3,000 oxygen concentrators as part of its "Oxygen for India" initiative.

Quite unlikely there is any Indian company that has not contributed directly or indirectly to Covid-19 relief, in one way or the other.

Some NGOs have complained that foreign donations pouring into India in recent days being entangled in governmental regulations such as the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act, 2010 - but that is an unavoidable safety measure given that some of these NGOs have misused foreign funds for vested and personal inter-

ests. Honest service and genuine compassion though will overcome any pandemic hurdles. To support the reality of charity first beginning at home, many companies are undertaking measures to support their employees and families, particularly those orphaned by Covid-19.

Welspun India said yesterday that it would continue paying 50 per cent of the monthly salary for two years to families of employees whose cause of death has been certified as due to Covid-19. Families will also receive free medical insurance and free education for two children in the family up to graduation.

In a similar situation of a deceased employee, Borosil Ltd and Borosil Renewables Ltd will pay the full salary to his or her family for the next two years, besides the additional benefits due to the employee, and free education for the children.

Other corporates, including TCS, HCL, ICICI, Raheja, have announced similar measures under this new brand.

GoAir rebrands as Go First

MUMBAI, 13 MAY

After being in the skies for 15 years, Wadia Group-owned GoAir has rebranded itself as "Go First" as the airline focuses on ultra-low-cost business model amid the aviation industry grappling with pandemic headwinds.

The announcement today also comes amid reports that the airline was preparing for an initial share sale to raise funds for its ambitious expansion plans.

The Go Firsts ULCC (ultra-low-cost carrier) would operate single aircraft type across its fleet, which currently has both Airbus A320 and A320 Neos (new engine option) planes in operation, it said.

With a 7.8 per cent market share in March, the city-based airline crossed the 10 per cent market share threshold for the first time in June 2014 and barring a few occasions, it kept hovering in the sub-10 per cent range till the emergence of the pandemic last year.

The airline said that at the heart of the latest revamp is the full embrace of ULCC model and was in the process of transitioning all its operations under this new brand.

Cabinet clears MoU between ICAI & Qatar Financial Centre

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, 13 MAY

The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has approved signing a memorandum of understanding between the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) and the Qatar Financial Centre Authority.

The MoU aims to enhance cooperation between the two CA regulatory organisations, strengthen the profession in the Middle East and expand accounting services for Indian businesses in the region.

The MoU will involve India's ministry of corporate affairs, ICAI and the Qatar Financial Centre Authority (QFCA) in providing assurance and auditing, advisory, taxation, financial services and

allied areas. Among its 90,000 full-time members, the ICAI already has about 6,000 members in Qatar (Doha) and calls it one of more "vibrant" overseas chapters of ICAI. Established in 1981, Doha is the oldest among the 36 ICAI chapters outside India.

The ICAI says 300 of its members hold key positions in various private and public companies in Qatar and are actively involved in developing accounting work in that country. The MoU is expected to provide more impetus to ICAI prospects in the Middle East and support Indian businesses doing business in Qatar, thereby supporting growth of Qatar and India's economies.

CA professionals have ample potential in Qatar that is one of the world's wealth-

iest countries, ranked No.1 in the list of per capita GDP (\$129,000) compared to India's ranking of 122 with per capita GDP of about \$7,100, from 2017 estimates. India with a GDP of US \$2.7 trillion is ranked the world's 7th largest economy in the world, while Qatar is ranked 54th with \$191.4 billion.

The chartered accountancy co-operation between the two countries will include the crucial field of forensic accounting, as well as corporate governance, technical research and advice, quality assurance, issues for small and medium sized practices.

ICAI and QFCA will collaborate to boost Indian businesses in Qatar by organising roundtables, networking and other promotional events.

Nasscom seeks temporary relief from FCRA norms, writes to PM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 13 MAY

Nasscom today said it has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, seeking a temporary relaxation in the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) norms and further liberalisation of vaccine import to navigate through the deadly second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Terming data as strategic ammunition available for managing the pandemic, the IT industry body said insights and analytics from Covid tracking and vaccination data could play a key role in decision making and early warning signals.

All these steps, it said, will enable the industry to "do more and act faster to help the

country navigate the second wave and be better prepared to deal with future waves".

Nasscom said while the vaccination regime has been liberalised, the availability of vaccines - particularly for the private sector - continues to be "very challenging".

"While we are attempting to source available vaccines in India, we request the government to provide emergency use authorisation for all WHO-approved vaccines - Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, and others that have gone through stringent approval process globally, to ensure there is no vaccine divide in the country," it said in a statement.

India is registering a record number of Covid-19 cases daily that has put extreme pressure on the healthcare

infrastructure of the country. The number of new coronavirus infections touched 3.62 lakh cases and 4,120 fatalities, according to the Union health ministry data updated today.

Nasscom said the devastating impact of the second wave of Covid-19 is being felt across the country and its economic and social impact is unprecedented.

The association also pledged the industry's full support to the nation in dealing with the crisis.

Nasscom noted that many countries and global companies are providing aid to India and are helping the healthcare infrastructure deal with the surge in cases.

"However, the amended provisions of the FCRA Act 2020 are proving to be a deterrent.

Given the humanitarian crisis, we would request the government to grant a temporary waiver to the FCRA Act and the 2020 amendments," it added.

The association explained that this move will enable NGOs to transfer funds between FCRA-approved NGOs and non-FCRA-approved NGOs.

Wipro chairman Rishad Premji tweeted that these actions will "go a long way in helping arrest the immediate crisis at hand and also accelerate the only sustainable short/ medium-term solution to the pandemic through increased vaccine supply".

Nasscom has also highlighted that data and artificial intelligence (AI) have a critical role to play for India to deal with the Covid crisis.

FPIs' investment in equity surges 7%

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 13 MAY

ROBUST NET INFLOWS

► The value of foreign portfolio investors' (FPI) holdings in domestic equities reached \$552 billion in three months to March 2021, a surge of seven per cent compared to \$518 billion recorded in the previous quarter, according to a Morningstar report.

► This was largely on the back of robust net inflows



from FPIs, coupled with a strong performance of the Indian equity markets.

italisation dropped marginally during the period under review to 19.9 per cent from 20.1 per cent in December quarter.

Offshore mutual funds form an important component of total foreign portfolio investment, apart from other large FPIs, such as offshore insurance companies, hedge funds, and sovereign wealth funds.

During January-March

in the Indian equity markets remains intact. Further, the announcement of the government's pro-growth Budget was lauded by investors.

In addition, there was a gush of liquidity in the global financial markets after the US announced a \$1.9-trillion pandemic relief package. This ensured regular flows of assets into emerging markets like India.

Also, a rejig in some of the global indexes resulted in flows of assets into Indian equities, the report noted.

However, overseas investors turned net sellers in the month of April and offloaded net assets worth \$1.6 billion in the wake of second intense wave of Covid-19.

"Expectedly, this fanned concerns over the risks to economic recovery caused by the lockdown being imposed in several states to contain the spread of virus," the report pointed out.

According to the report, positive domestic and global factors ensured that the interest of foreign investors

First housing project under SWAMIH Fund

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 13 MAY

pandemic," she said while addressing the virtual event.

Talking about the project, she said the Centre had stepped in to provide funding to the stressed affordable and mid-income housing projects, thereby giving relief to the home buyers who had invested their hard-earned savings. "The government believes that once these homes are constructed and completed, a large amount of capital locked up in these projects will be released," said Sitharaman.

While sharing the details about the project, she also mentioned that it will provide employment to construction workers and will provide impetus to the allied industries such as steel and cement.

Further, it will improve portfolios of banks and NBFCs and significantly improve the economic sentiment.

per day) and Torrent Gas (20,000 cubic meters per day). This is the third auction that Reliance-BP conducted on a third-party independent platform.

form approved by the Directorate General of Hydrocarbons (DGH). The online web-based electronic bidding platform of CRISIL Risk and Infra-

structure Solutions Ltd (CRISIL) was also used for e-auction in February this year as well as in 2019.

In the three auctions, Reliance-BP has sold around 18 mmmscmd of domestic gas from new fields in the KG-D6 block, which would help substantially reduce reliance on imported LNG, sources said.

In the 5 May auction, Reliance-BP had asked bidders to quote a price linked to Platts JKM (Japan Korea marker), the liquefied natural gas (LNG) benchmark price assessment for spot physical cargoes.

The lowest bid that could be placed was JKM minus \$0.3 per million British thermal unit. The highest acceptable bid would be JKM plus

\$2.01 per mmBtu.

The bidding, they said, started with a \$0.45 discount to JKM price and intense competition led to the discovery of a price of JKM minus \$0.6 per mmBtu (discount of \$0.6 to ruling JKM price).

The intense competition indicates a preference for domestic gas vis-à-vis LNG for Indian consumers.

At current prices, the discovered price translates into a price of about \$9 per mmBtu, but the buyers will be required to pay only the cap or ceiling price that the government has set for such fields.

The government sets a cap or ceiling rate at which natural gas from difficult fields like deepsea can be sold. This cap for the period 1 April

2021, to 30 September 2021 is \$3.62 per mmBtu.

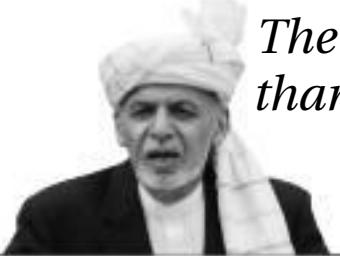
Even though the gas prices for April-September 2021 are capped by the government notified ceiling price of \$3.62 per mmBtu, the discovered formula would result in a price of more than \$6 per mmBtu in the second half of the fiscal and more than \$7.5 thereafter as the ceiling price will go up in lag with international prices, they said.

Ceiling prices are set by the government based on international prices prevailing in the last 12 months with a three-months lag.

With the return of demand, international rates have rebounded, which will reflect in the prices in the second revision due on 1 October.

Ola launches new

The Taliban will not have a better chance for peace than this as international forces are leaving the country.



AFGHANISTAN PRESIDENT ASHRAF GHANI
AFTER ATTENDING AN EID PRAYER IN THE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE

The Statesman
NEW DELHI, FRIDAY 14 MAY 2021

09

Israel masses troops along Gaza border as conflict soars

At least 83 have been killed in Gaza since violence started, straining hospitals filled with Covid patients

AGENCIES

JERUSALEM, 13 MAY

Israeli troops massed at Gaza's border and Palestinian militants pounded Israel with rockets in intense hostilities that have caused international concern and touched off clashes between Jews and Arabs in Israel.

Days of violence between Jewish Israelis and the country's Arab minority worsened overnight, with synagogues attacked and fighting breaking out on the streets of some communities.

With concern growing that the violence that flared on Monday could spiral out of control, the United States is sending an envoy, Hady Amr, to the region. But efforts to end the worst hostilities in years appear so far to have made no progress.

In renewed air strikes on Gaza, Israel struck a six-storey residential building in Gaza



Palestinians walk next to the remains of a destroyed 15-storey building after being hit by Israeli airstrikes on Gaza City on Thursday.

cities across southern Israel, sending thousands running for shelters.

Seven people have been killed in Israel, its military said. "All of Israel is under attack. It's a very scary situation to be in," said Margo Aronovic, a 26-year-old student in Tel Aviv.

Israel has prepared combat troops along the Gaza border and was in "various stages of preparing ground operations", a military spokesman said, a move that would recall similar incursions during Israel-Gaza wars in 2014 and 2008-2009.

Health authorities in Gaza said they were investigating the deaths of several people overnight who they said may have inhaled poisonous gas. Samples were being examined and they had yet to draw any final conclusions, they said.

The US President Joe Biden said he hoped fighting "will be closing down sooner than later".

Ben Gurion airport closed for landings

TEL AVIV, 13 MAY

Israel's Ben Gurion International Airport, located outside Tel Aviv, has been closed for landings amid rising tensions between the Jewish state and militants in the Gaza Strip, the country's airport authority said on Thursday.

Departures will be redirected to the Ramon Airport, a smaller airport outside the southern resort city of Eilat, the Israel Airports Authority said in a statement.

"The decision to reroute the flights is aimed to allow greater freedom of action in protecting the skies of Israel," the statement read.

Nepal hospitals refuse to admit Covid patients due to scarcity of oxygen

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

KATHMANDU, 13 MAY

Patients in Nepal are gasping for breath, as authorities said they were facing an acute shortage of medical oxygen due to which 16 people infected with Covid-19 died recently, according to media reports.

The deadly virus has so far infected 413,111 people and claimed 4,084 lives in the country, which has a population of approximately 29.5 million.

The government on Wednesday asked private hospitals to install their own oxygen plants to meet the need of oxygen within 15 days.

According to the decision, all private hospitals with more than 100 beds will have to install their own oxygen plant and the government will provide the necessary support for this purpose.

The Ministry of Health and Population said it was the responsibility of all the hospitals to set up their own oxygen plants.

"Since many private hospitals have not done so, we will

help them set up the plant to meet the increasing demand of oxygen for Covid patients," said Dr Jageshwar Gautam, spokesperson for the ministry.

The government has estimated that around 15,000 oxygen cylinders are required to meet the current demand for oxygen.

In contrast, there are only around 8,000 oxygen cylinders in the country.

Covid-19 Crisis Management Centre, an apex government body for dealing with the pandemic, during Wednesday's meeting, pointed out that the country might need 50,000 oxygen cylinders by July-end.

Some government hospitals in the Kathmandu Valley on Wednesday said that they no longer had oxygen supply to treat Covid patients, but they had enough cylinders to fill oxygen, the report said.

At least 12 hospitals in the Kathmandu Valley have announced plans to stop admitting Covid-19 patients for treatment due to shortage of oxygen.

The hospital is facing an acute shortage of oxygen and

Two climbers die on Everest

KATHMANDU, 13 MAY

A Swiss climber and an American have died on Mount Everest in the season's first casualties on the world's highest mountain, expedition organisers on Thursday.

The Swiss climber, Abdul Waraich, 41, scaled the peak before having difficulties, said Chhang Dawa of the expedition organiser, Seven Summit Treks in Nepal.

US national Puwei Liu, 55, also died at the highest camp on the mountain at South Col. He had reached the climbing feature named the Hillary Step.

the government is providing only 100 oxygen cylinders per day so we cannot admit any new Covid-19 patients to the hospital, the Grande International Hospital in Kathmandu said.

Three-day ceasefire begins in Kabul

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

KABUL, 13 MAY

A three-day ceasefire started on Thursday in Afghanistan as people celebrate the end of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan with the Eid-al-Fitr festival.

Last week, the Taliban militant group announced a three-day nationwide ceasefire, dpa news agency reported. In reaction to the Taliban offer, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani also ordered government security forces to respect the ceasefire.

The government also asked the Taliban for a permanent ceasefire, repeating previous

requests.

The provincial councillor for embattled northern Kunduz province said that the residents of the province were happy with the ceasefire as they can celebrate Eid without any threats.

It was the same in the embattled south-eastern province of Ghazni, where the residents have started celebrating Eid peacefully, local councillor Hamidullah Nawruz said. The province had witnessed heavy fighting in recent days between the government and militant forces, particularly those from the Taliban.

This is not the first time the Taliban have offered such a ceasefire.

The first three-day calm came in June 2018, the first the armed group had offered since their government was toppled by the US-led invasion in 2001.

DEVOTED TO GOD



Muslims perform Eid al-Fitr prayers marking the end of the holy fasting month of Ramadan on a street in Bekasi, West Java, Indonesia, on Thursday.

Nepal parties struggle to form new govt as deadline nears

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

KATHMANDU, 13 MAY

Nepal's political parties were struggling to reach a deal over the formation of a new government due to their factional feuds ahead of Thursday's deadline set by the President after Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli lost a crucial trust vote on Monday.

The political stalemate comes at a time when the country is experiencing its worst Covid-19 surge with acute shortages of health facilities and oxygen for patients. The Nepali Congress, under the leadership of party president Sher Bahadur Deuba, on Tuesday decided to stake a claim for the prime minister's post.

But its plans to stake claim to a coalition government, however, seems to have hit a snag after a section of the Janata Samajbadi Party (JSP-N), led by Mahanta Thakur, has

made clear that it won't participate in any government formation process.

The Thakur-led faction has around 16 votes in the House of Representatives. The Nepali Congress has 61 votes, backed by the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre), which has 49 votes.

The Congress-Maoist Centre alliance has the support of around 15 lawmakers from the Upendra Yadav-led faction of the Janata Samajbadi

Party. But together they can ensure just 125 votes 11 short of the required 136 in the 271-strong House to form a coalition government.

President Bidhya Devi Bhandari has asked the Opposition parties to come up with the support of majority lawmakers to form a new government by 9 PM Thursday.

In a bid to break the deadlock, CPN-UML lawmaker Bhim Bahadur Rawal, who belongs to the Madhav Kumar Nepal-Jhalanath Khanal faction of the party, on Tuesday urged lawmakers to resign en masse to facilitate the formation of a new government. Rawal on Wednesday wrote on his Twitter that to topple the Oli-led government, they need to resign from the Parliament.

"Extraordinary problems require extraordinary remedies. PM Oli should be toppled to prevent him from taking additional steps against national interests and party statute and to prevent him from engaging in undemocratic activities. For that, we should resign as members of Parliament. This is appropriate in terms of political morality and legal principles," Rawal tweeted.

If the 28 UML lawmakers quit en masse, the strength of the 271-member House of Representatives will be reduced to 243.

Virus, W Asia turmoil stifle Eid al-Fitr celebrations

ASSOCIATED PRESS

JAKARTA, 13 MAY

Muslims celebrated Eid al-Fitr in a subdued mood for a second year Thursday as the Covid-19 pandemic again forced mosque closings and family separations on the holiday marking the end of Ramadan.

In the embattled Gaza Strip, the call to prayer echoed over pulverised buildings and heaps of rubble as Israeli warplanes continued to pound the territory in the worst outbreak of violence since the 2014 war.

Hamas, the Islamic militant



group ruling Gaza, urged the faithful to mark communal prayers inside their homes or the nearest mosques and avoid being out in the open. It is all airstrikes, destruction and devastation, said Hassan Abu Shaaban, who tried

to lighten the mood by passing out chocolates to passers-by.

Worshippers wearing masks joined communal prayers in the streets of Indonesia's capital, Jakarta.

The world's most populous Muslim-majority nation allowed mosque prayers in low-risk areas, but mosques in areas where there was more risk of the virus spreading closed their doors, including Jakarta's Istiqlal Grand Mosque, the largest in Southeast Asia.

Indonesians and Malaysians were banned for a second year from travelling to visit relatives in the traditional Eid

homecoming.

In Bangladesh, however, tens of thousands of people were leaving the capital, Dhaka, to join their families back in their villages for Eid celebrations despite a nationwide lockdown and road checkpoints.

Experts fear a surge in cases in a country grappling with a shortage of vaccines and fear of Indian variants of the coronavirus spreading.

"I understand that we all miss our relatives at times like this, especially in the momentum of Eid," Indonesian President Joko Widodo said in televised remarks. But

let's prioritise safety together by not going back to our hometowns.

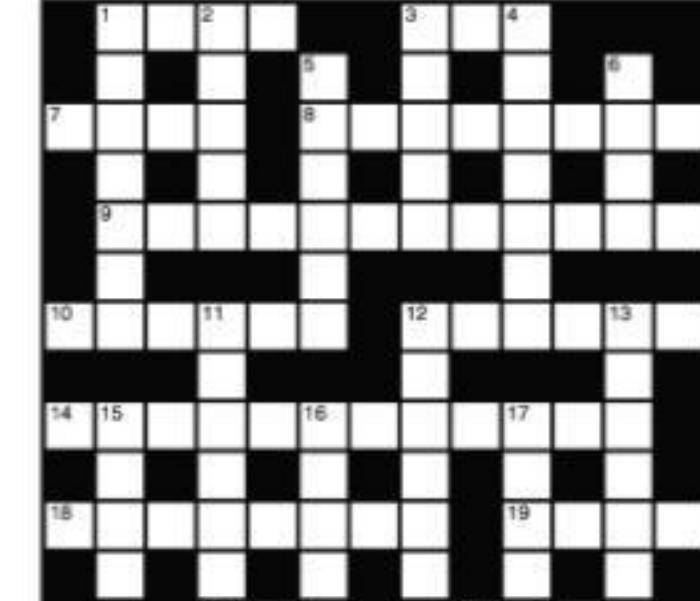
Despite the similar ban a year ago, the number of daily cases in Indonesia had picked up by 37 per cent three weeks after the holiday.

Similar patterns followed other holidays in the country that has counted 1.7 million infections and more than 47,600 fatalities from Covid-19.

While police set up highway checkpoints and domestic flights and other modes of transportation were suspended, anxiety lingered people will defy prohibition.

LEISURE

10 MINUTE CROSSWORD

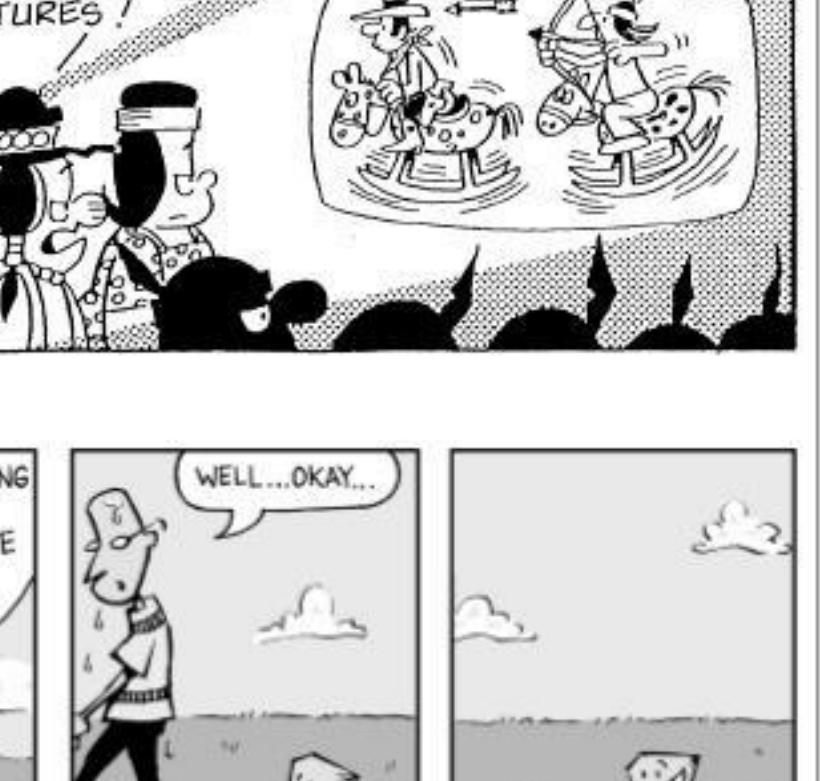
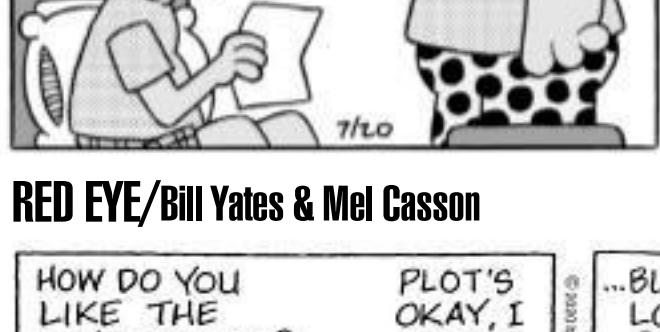


SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD

ACROSS	DOWN
1. Arm or leg (4)	1. Face coverings (5)
3. Opening in the ground (3)	3. Plant part (5)
7. Burden (4)	4. Small fish (Informal) (7)
8. Current (2-2)	5. Send for (6)
10. Sailor (6)	11. Canadian policeman (Informal) (7)
14. Pay (12)	12. Calm-natured (6)
18. Seasoned smoked beef (8)	13. Genuine (7)
19. Worry (4)	15. Dutch cheese (4)
20. Consume (3)	16. Perform (5)
21. Factual (4)	17. Deduce (5)

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

BEETLE BAILEY/Mort Walker



NEED TO KNOW

HOSPITALS

• AISB 26588500, 26588900
• Moolchand Medcity (formerly Hospital) 42000000 & 24-hour Chemist Shop 42000447
• Vidyasagar Institute for Mental and Neuro-Sciences 26924300, 26924304
• Batra Hospital & Medical Research Centre 29051280, 29958747
• Deen Dayal Upadhyay 25496320, 25494403
• Guru Tegh Bahadur 23717473, 23325320

RAILWAY INQUIRY

General Inquiry 139
• Toll Free Nos. 1800125151
• SMS Inquiry Nos. 57886, 54959, 5676747

ROADWAYS INQUIRY

|
| |



I was paid an annual amount, a generous annual amount, far more than I earned as prime minister

FORMER BRITISH PRIME MINISTER DAVID CAMERON

ABOUT WHEN HE LOBBED GOVERNMENT ON BEHALF OF THE NOW-COLLAPSED GREENSILL CAPITAL.

WEATHER

CITY	MAX	MIN
SINGAPORE	30°C	26°C R
HONG KONG	31°C	28°C S
TOKYO	37°C	15°C CL
LONDON	16°C	9°C H
DUBAI	36°C	27°C S
SAN FRANCISCO	16°C	11°C C
NEW YORK	23°C	12°C S
MOSCOW	23°C	-13°C R

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

THUMBNAILS



Indigenous demonstrators attend an anti-government march in Cali, Colombia ■ AFP

Special stamps in memory of Prince Philip: The UK's Royal Mail will issue a set of special stamps in memory of Prince Philip who passed away last month. A sheet of four black and white stamps, now available to pre-order, show Britain's longest serving escort to a British monarch in different stages of his life. ■ PTI

Man tries to set himself on fire on Eid: A man tried to set himself on fire during prayers for the Muslim holiday of Eid-al-Fitr in the Albanian capital, Tirana, police said Thursday. He had poured gasoline over himself and entered the Skanderbeg square. ■ PTI

Two militants held for planning attack on B'desh Parliament: The counter-terrorism unit of the Bangladesh Police have arrested two militants for planning and instigating an attack on the country's Parliament in Dhaka. The two militants are Abu Sakib, 22, a member of the banned outfit Ansar Al Islam, and Ali Hasan Osama, a radical orator. They were arrested on 6 May. ■ IANS

UK: Covid levels fall by almost half, at lowest since August

The European Medicines Agency said that it is 'pretty confident' that vaccines in use are effective

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LONDON, 13 MAY

The number of people infected with the coronavirus in England fell by almost half over the past month marking the lowest level of Covid-19 cases since last year, according to new statistics released in London on Thursday.

The Imperial College London-led Real-time Assessment of Community Transmission (REACT-1) study comes as it emerged that the government's Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) is due to hold a review meeting on Thursday to discuss the Variant of Concern (VOC) first identified in India, which UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson told Parliament was of increasing concern as it may be "considerably more transmissible" than the dominant variant in the UK first detected in the county of Kent last year.

The variant B.1.617.2 is one of three subtypes of the mutation first detected in India and was designated as a VOC by Public Health Eng-



land (PHE), with over 800 cases being traced in parts of the country.

"The scientists on SAGE will make their assessments, they will report back to the government and we will make decisions based on the data and the evidence that they provide," said James Cleverly, UK Foreign Office minister. It is feared that the 21 June date set in the UK government's complete lockdown easing roadmap may be impacted from the SAGE analysis.

The European Medicines Agency has said that it is "pretty confident" that vaccines currently in use are effective against the variant B.1.617.2, which remains the view of scientists in the UK at this stage.

Meanwhile, the REACT-1 study, based on over 127,000 home swab tests taken between 15 April and 3 May, shows that 0.1 per cent of the population is currently infected, or one in 1,000.

This compares with the study's previous testing round when 0.2 per cent or one in 500 had the coronavirus as of

30 March.

The researchers report that since January, the link between the rate of infections, hospitalisations and deaths has become decoupled, with infections associated with fewer hospitalisations and deaths which likely reflects the impact of the vaccination programme.

It is very encouraging that infections have continued to fall while rules have been relaxed in England, and it's likely that the vaccine rollout has played a key part in helping keep the virus at bay, said Professor Paul Elliott, director of the REACT programme from Imperial's School of Public Health.

"We need to continue to monitor trends in the coming weeks as restrictions are eased further, and in the meantime, we must continue to stick to the rules to help keep infections down and enable the vaccination programme to continue to protect people," he said.

The study also analysed the genetic code of a small number of positive swab samples to look for variants and while the majority were found to be the so-called Kent variant, the VOC from India was also found in London based on analysis of samples taken for routine testing.

At the moment it is unclear whether this variant is more transmissible than B.1.1.7 but this is a risk, so it will be important to closely monitor infections and hospitalisations in areas where this virus is present so that public health responses can be implemented if needed.

The REACT-1 study, carried out by Imperial College London in partnership with Ipsos MORI, is tracking current coronavirus infections in the community by testing more than 125,000 randomly-selected people each month over roughly a two-week period.

The study recruits new people each month to help ensure wider population and offers a high-resolution snapshot of the situation across a particular time period.

New Zealand mulls more quarantine-free bubbles

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE
WELLINGTON, 13 MAY

start between the Cook Islands and New Zealand from May 24.

Ardern said Niue is the next addition to the list, stressing that opportunities will be explored on quarantine-free travel with other countries although the task is "not without risk and complication".

Ardern did not give any specific plans but promised that New Zealand will "keep an open mind". She will lead a trade delegation to Australia in July, which will be her first overseas travel since the pandemic started last year.

In June, Trade Minister Damien O'Connor will travel to London and Brussels to discuss free trade agreements with the UK and the European Union.

Quarantine-free travel will

Times Square shooting suspect held



ASSOCIATED PRESS
NEW YORK, 13 MAY

was not immediately available.

Muhammad is suspected of wounding the three victims with stray bullets during a dispute at about 5 p.m. Saturday in Times Square, where police said he was apparently selling CDs.

Wendy Magrinat, a 23-year-old tourist visiting from Rhode Island, was shot in the leg. A 43-year-old woman from New Jersey was shot in the foot.

The 4-year-old girl, from Brooklyn, was also shot in the leg.

Magrinat, who was in the city for a Mother's Day trip, told the Daily News she was screaming, "I don't want to die, I don't want to die, I have a 2-year-old, after being hit by a bullet that will likely remain lodged in her leg for the rest of her life," chief of detectives James Essig said.

Information on a lawyer who could speak on his behalf

Biden team moves swiftly to tackle pipeline political peril

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON, 13 MAY

The Biden administration swung aggressively into action after a primary gasoline pipeline fell prey to a cyber-attack understanding that the situation posed a possible series of political and economic risks.

The president followed up later Wednesday with an executive order to improve cybersecurity. Biden's team seized on the shutdown as an argument for approving the president's \$2.3 trillion infrastructure package. Keeping up Biden's focus, the White House said the president would deliver remarks on the pipeline incident Thursday morning.

Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg said the cyber-attack was a reminder that infrastructure is a national security issue and investments for greater resilience are needed.

This is not an extra, this is not a luxury, this is not an option, Buttigieg told reporters at the White House on Wednesday. This has to be core to how we secure critical infrastructure. The administration took a variety of steps to address the gasoline situation.

The sudden supply crunch after Friday's hack showed the challenges that can pop up for a White House that must constantly respond to world events.

were reasons for optimism. We have been in very, very close contact with Colonial Pipeline, Biden said. I think you're going to hear some good news in the next 24 hours and I think we'll be getting that under control.

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The sudden supply crunch after Friday's hack showed the challenges that can pop up for a White House that must constantly respond to world events.

Floyd case: Officers allege witness coercion

ASSOCIATED PRESS
MINNEAPOLIS, MAY 13



diate comment on the allegations of coercion.

A spokeswoman for Dr. Andrew Baker, the medical examiner, said they could not comment due to the pending case. Chauvin, who was seen in widely viewed bystander video pressing his knee into Floyd's neck as the Black man said he couldn't breathe, was convicted in April of second-degree unintentional murder, third-degree murder and manslaughter. He's to be sentenced 25 June.

Paula said that in one of the conversations, Mitchell called Baker and told him he was going to submit an opinion piece critical of Baker's findings to the Washington Post.

Prosecutors have said that request should be denied. They've noted that department policy requires officers to intervene when excessive force is used, and Gray hasn't shown how the testimony of experts could be called into question by a lack of interventions.

All four officers have also been indicted on federal charges alleging they violated Floyd's civil rights.

and that prosecutors knew of it.

The former officers waived their right to appear at Thursday's hearing. Their trial is set for 23 August. Attorney General Keith Ellison, whose office is prosecuting the officers, has said allegations that his office was involved in a leak are false.

His office had no imme-

dence that Floyd died of asphyxiation.

But after talking twice to Dr. Roger Mitchell, a former medical examiner in Washington, DC he amended his findings to include neck compression as a factor, according to Paule.

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Lane, Kueng and Thao are charged with aiding and abetting second-degree murder and aiding and abetting second-degree manslaughter. Their trial was separated from Chauvin's to comply with Covid-19 courtroom spacing restrictions.

Bob Paule, Thao's attorney, said in a court filing Wednesday that Baker initially said there was no physical evi-

FUN TIME



One of three Siberian tiger cubs (*Panthera tigris altaica*) is shown by a keeper in the Kecskemet Zoo in Kecskemet, Hungary. ■ AP

Wealthy nations once lauded as successes lag in vaccinations

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WELLINGTON, 13 MAY

Some wealthy nations that were most praised last year for controlling the coronavirus are now lagging far behind in getting their people vaccinated and some, especially in Asia, are seeing Covid-19 cases grow.

In Japan, South Korea and New Zealand, the vaccination rates are languishing in the single figures. That is in sharp contrast to the US, where nearly half of all people have gotten at least one shot, and Britain and Israel, where rates are even higher.

Not only do those three Pacific countries rank worst among all developed nations in vaccinating against Covid-19, they also rank below many developing countries such as Brazil and India, according to national figures and the online



scientific publication Our World in Data.

Australia, which isn't providing a full breakdown of its vaccination numbers, is also performing comparatively poorly, as are several other places initially considered standout successes in battling the virus, including Thailand, Vietnam and Taiwan.

That could change as vaccination campaigns gather pace and supplies loosen.

But meanwhile, previously successful countries are being left exposed to the virus and face longer delays in reopening to the world.

Japan, for instance, has

announced an extension of a state of emergency through the end of the month and confirmed more than 7,000 new cases on Saturday alone, the highest daily number since January.

Bureaucracy has been part of the problem. Countries

that faced mounting death tolls from the virus often threw out the rulebook, rushing through emergency vaccine approvals and delaying second shots past the recommended timeline in order to maximize the number getting their first.

In Israel, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu per-

sonally negotiated with Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla to get early access to vaccines, and called in the military to get them in people's arms.

In the US, some groups handed out doughnuts, free drinks and even marijuana to get people to roll up their sleeves.

Japan went through a more traditional approval process that required an extra layer of clinical testing for vaccines that had already been tested elsewhere and were being widely used.

And once it did start getting shots, Japan faced a shortage of people to administer them. Under the conservative medical culture, people only trust doctors and nurses enough to do so.

Dentists are willing to help and are authorized, but have not been called upon.

Getting shots from phar-

macists at drug stores like in the U.S. or from volunteers with no medical background other than a brief training like in Britain remains unthinkable in Japan.

New Zealand also went through its own approval process, finally giving a thumbs up to the Pfizer vaccine in February, two months after US regulators had approved it for emergency use.

Covid-19 Response Minister Chris Hipkins last year promised New Zealand would be "at the front of the queue for vaccines. Now he says the issue is supply.

We can't move any faster than we can get the vaccines into the country, Hipkins told The Associated Press.

Australian farmers to get relief package for mouse plague

ASSOCIATED PRESS
SYDNEY, 13 MAY

The Australian state of New South Wales (NSW) on Thursday announced a relief package for farmers dealing with a catastrophic mouse plague in Australia, which he said is "the strongest mouse poison you can get on the face of the earth".

State Agriculture Minister Adam Marshall told the media that \$50 million (\$38 million) in funding will go to farmers dealing with the emergency, reports dpa news agency.

"We haven't seen a plague on this scale really since the early 80s, and everyone was hoping that the cool conditions in winter would actually see their numbers dent-ed. Nothing so far has worked," Marshall said. The plague of rodents has been running wild for months, with people bitten and crops decimated. As of late April, NSW Health had been notified of 23 cases of leptospirosis.

Village of art and dreams

Khwaabgaon, near Jhargram in West Bengal, has found renewed hope by embracing both traditional and contemporary visual media and crafts

SUROOPA CHATTERJEE

Tucked away in an almost forgotten pocket of West Bengal, surrounded by *sal*, *mahuad* and *palash* trees, is a tiny hamlet inhabited predominantly by the Lodha tribe where art seems to permanently reside in people's hearts. Formerly called Laalbazar, the place was rechristened Khwaabgaon or "the village of dreams" by scholar and writer Shibaji Bandopadhyay. It has stirred the curiosity and enthusiasm of art lovers across the state and even beyond its borders.

The task of reinvigorating the village, located five kilometres away from Jhargram railway station, was executed through a committed movement by Chalchitra Academy. Originally conceptualised by Kolkata-based artist Mrinal Mandal, who is co-founder and secretary of the academy, the art project was a collaborative labour of love among friends, artists and scholars.

Since 2012, Chalchitra Academy has been shining a light on traditional art forms and their varied histories. Alongside that, it has also been trying to build a bridge between folk and urban artists from West Bengal and other states across India. By consistently organising workshops, discussions and exhibitions in Kolkata and its surrounding districts, the academy has been keeping artists, enthusiasts and students informed about the archaeological, cultural and finer creative elements of Lokaja and Bhumija artistry.

Until a few years back, the Lodha community was largely neglected or denigrated. People from the tribe fought a daily battle against poverty and myriad social challenges to eke out a respectable form of living. The academy's sudden arrival seemed to imbue new dreams into the parched lives of the small local population.

According to Mandal, the art project endeavours to remedy the communi-

ty's situation as deeply and permanently as possible.

Artists from diverse backgrounds have chipped in to provide their skill in building the project and renowned painter Jogen Chowdhury even created a logo for it. Every Saturday, children of the village attend free classes on painting, sculpture, quilt work, *kutam* and meditation. All the village walls have been used as a medium by attending artists to paint, which has resulted in large attractive installations. They have caught the imagination of both traditional and contemporary artists, who have been frequenting Khwaabgaon and participating in workshops.

The villagers have been getting regular opportunities to interact and learn from acclaimed talents. Bidhan Biswas, famous *alpana* artist from Krishnagar, has taught local people how to use chalky soil for creating intricate designs with laterite earth on the *chitrapatas* and walls. Traditional *Patachitra* painters like Manu Chitrakar, Bahadur Chitrakar, Dukhushyam Chitrakar and Swarna Chitrakar from Nayagram have taught the extraction of natural pigments and gums from flowers, tendrils and leaves, and also explained how one can create floral and geometric designs on *chitrapatas*.

Co-founder of Chalchitra Academy, Jayati Banerjee has been teaching various forms of stitching and quilt work. Other artists have introduced the finer elements of eco-print by using flowers, fruits, soil and rusted metal parts to create pigments for designs on cotton-based fabrics. Recently, famous cartoonist and illustrator Debashis Deb paid a visit to the village and taught the art of caricature to children.

Three artists, all former students from Shantiniketan, collaborated with villagers to create art works using elements of rural life. Khwaabgaon sees frequent visits from art students of Kolkata who enjoy decorating the walls



of village huts with graffiti and vibrant paintings. The regular exposure to various styles and forms of creativity has inspired village children as many of them have taken up painting and portrayed their budding talents across the walls of their houses.

Laalbazar had hosted a folk festival called "Khwaabgaon Parban" where artists and enthusiasts engaged in workshops, discussions, musical sessions and a grand feast. There was also an attempt to revive an ancient performative art form of the Lodha tribe called *Chhang*. The academy even held an international workshop, "Sanglap Parva 2: Exploring the margin", in the presence of Tracy Lee Stum and Sayak Mitra, who had come down from the United States. They introduced concepts from the magical world of 3D-painting to the children of Khwaabgaon and neighbouring Jhargram.

Sand casting and mime workshops were held in December last year. Soujiti Das of Government College of Art and Craft, Kolkata along with

sculptor Rishin Keton Shaw presented their skill of decorative sand tile casting using waste products thereby inculcating the importance of recycling in both children and adults. Every year, during the *Badhna* and *Shorai* rituals, walls of the village huts get a fresh coat of paint to welcome the harvest season. All previous artworks get erased and are often redone with new images.

There was artistic exposure for members of the village with a shellac doll workshop held by the legendary Brindaban Chandra. The shellac dolls made in Khwaabgaon are finding interested buyers and villagers are opening new pathways for production, which would make it a self-sustaining project. Classes on embroidery and applique art have been conducted for women alongside pickle-making sessions after which quite a few bottles were sold to visitors.

As an ongoing effort for community outreach, two nearby villages, Uranshol and Gangadharpur, have

been added to the project. Weekly three-day programmes are organised with around 60 students, between the ages of 10 and 20, who learn the basics of visual art. Mandal says, "We are now working with more than 200 people across the three villages. We have been involved with Khwaabgaon for the last three years and are focused on developing the villagers' creative and financial strength. Our training programmes have helped them immensely as nowadays they have started making and selling crafts from their own innovative ideas. We recently worked in another village where we found huge interest to learn new skills. It is quite an encouraging sign."

Khwaabgaon needs to flourish and be supported as it is stitching back the value of art into people's minds. It is a glorious example of how a beautiful community can emerge with collaboration, imagination and inclusion.

The writer is a freelance contributor

SNIPPETS

Missed the boat



Guardians of the Galaxy star Dave Bautista has claimed that Marvel "dropped the ball" with their handling of his character's backstory.

Bautista played the literal-minded alien Drax the Destroyer in the first two *Guardians* films, as well as 2018's *Avengers: Infinity War* and 2019's *Avengers: Endgame*.

Speaking to *Collider*, the actor and former WWE star said, "I think Drax has a really interesting backstory which they dropped the ball on."

"That's no dig on Marvel," he said. "They had their slate, I know what they're focused on, that's what they have slated out. But man, I think they really missed the ball on Drax. He has such a great backstory."

Bautista said that incorporating more of the Marvel Comics backstory would have given him "the opportunity to show different sides" of the character, "emotionally, and physically as well".

"Because, if you notice, Drax, although he looks like a badass, you look at him and he looks terrifying, but Drax gets his a** kicked more than any other Marvel character," he said. "The whole 'Destroyer' thing just threw that out the window... people just fell so in love with the comedic side of Drax they tapped into that, then they tapped into it more, then they really dug a hole into it."

"But we missed a huge boat on that character, and I don't think it'll ever come back around. But I'm just really looking forward to finishing this whole journey."

Bautista can next be seen as Drax in *The Guardians of the Galaxy Holiday Special*, due to arrive on Disney Plus in December 2022, and in *Guardians of the Galaxy Vol 3*, out in cinemas in 2023.

-The independent

Celebrating life



Actor Boman Irani penned a note in memory of his late friend Phiroze, who passed away a year ago, and shared a message for those who have lost their near and dear ones to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

Talking about his late best friend Phiroze on his death anniversary, Irani wrote on *Facebook*, "Before you even begin to read this, I wish to state that this is not meant to sadden you in any way. In fact, I hope it gives you strength. In all honesty, the prime focus is to give myself strength first, only then will it have the desired effect on you."

"I have known Phiroze for 58 years now. Years and years of watching each other grow. The kindest Bawa on the planet. Not to be taken for granted if he felt you were doing something wrong. Then the kindness would turn into benevolent wrath... and when that happened, I listened," he wrote.

Talking about how he has dealt with the pain of losing his friend, the actor further wrote, "Last year on this day, Phiroze passed. I have avoided speaking of him, even going through his photographs or connecting with common friends. It was too hard. I would literally hide. Hide and avoid. Finally, it has taken me a year to speak of him..."

Suggesting that people celebrate the lives of those who have left the world in the pandemic, the actor said, "All through these trying times, I have been sending messages to people, who have lost their near and dear ones. My advice — let's celebrate their life instead."

TAPATI CHOWDHURIE

Father Saju George of the Society of Jesus has carved out a niche for himself as an accomplished Bharatanatyam dancer, teacher, scholar and writer. He is trained in the form under K Rajkumar, Khagendranath Barman, Leela Samson, CV Chandrasekhar, the late Kalandithi Narayanan and Priyadarshini Govind. In Kuchipudi, Derric Munro and Vempati Chinna Satyam have been his mentors.

George has also dabbled in Kathakali, Kooyattam, Manipuri, Kathak and other forms such as folk, tribal and creative dance. For a while, he was also trained in mridangam, chenda and Kalaripayattu.

George is the founder-director of Kalahrdaya, a college of fine arts inspired by the ancient Indian tradition of *gurukula*. Excerpts from an interview:

Who is a true artist?

A true artist is one whose search to express himself/herself is the only truth. A person may choose painting, sculpting, writing, singing, dancing or any other form that is close to their heart.

What made you pursue dance?

I chose to express myself through dance. I can articulate my innermost thoughts and feelings through this beautiful medium. Dance liberates my body, mind and soul to experience untold realms of joy. My prayer is to reach the feet of my lord through dance.

The language of Indian classical dance helps me to convey my beliefs and convictions to people. Dance is my calling within my Jesuit calling. At the age of five, I fell under its spell.

I learnt dance primarily by watching and imitating before learning it systematically. As a Catholic boy, I was neither encouraged nor had the right opportunity to learn the form. What I learned was from my siblings, sisters and Hindu friends. I could sit for hours together watching Kathakali, Mohiniyattam, Bharatanatyam and other forms.

When did you start learning formally?

Strangely, only after entering the Jesuit Order did I receive formal training in different styles of Indian classical

'TO DANCE IS TO BREATHE'

In this interview, Saju George speaks about his early days in Kerala, balancing the Jesuit faith with his inner calling of dance, and Kalahrdaya, his college of fine arts near Kolkata



dance and music. I have a two-year diploma, Master's and PhD in Indian classical dance. And for several years, I have been spending time with expert teachers to perfect my art.

What does dance mean to you?

For me, to dance is to breathe. Dance helps me become a master of my emotions — to express as well as not to. I experience the divine most deeply and intensely through dance.

When I am physically unable to dance, my soul dances. Dance is my most precious possession and it possesses me. I do not need a stage as my body is the stage and my soul, the dancer.

How do you prepare before performing?

I have performed more than 1,500 times in 28 countries. In dance, there

are two facets to preparation — physical and spiritual. Physically, I must make myself fit to move from simple to complex rhythms and music. It takes an hour and a half for me to get ready.

Mental preparation is a more prolonged one. My mind must be composed and peaceful without any distraction. Preparing the mind includes thinking, reflecting, memorising, recalling, meditating, praying, composing and choreographing.

Which themes do you prefer to emote?

Every theme is important to me. Gestures and movements may vary but the essence remains constant. There could be a spiritual experience depending on one's background and upbringing — for me it is the Christ experience. But that in no way sepa-

rates me from other experiences. In dance there is only inclusion and no exclusion.

What is your perception of dance as a mentor?

Helping my pupils to blossom as dancers is my aim. A dedicated dancer relishes its *rasa* (flavour), which is the quintessence of Indian aesthetics. I train children from the age of four to form their character. It is a holistic training programme, where they develop body, mind and soul.

As a Jesuit priest how do you handle your two callings?

Indian dance has taught me to think beyond India — to love it, respect all religious experiences and be a committed Indian Christian at the same time.

Hinduism is the only religion that

gives the aesthetics of dance the highest place by epitomising the divine as a cosmic dancer. God exists in Hindu understanding as a dancer, and hence, the Hindu tradition upholds the dignity of dance.

Multiculturalism and internationalism, rather than fundamentalism and communal disharmony, are needed in these times.

Do tell something about your early life.

I was born and brought up in a traditional Syrian Catholic family in Kerala and was the seventh among 10 children. At the age of 14, I wanted to become a missionary and my ideals were St Peter Damian, St Teresa of Kolkata and Albert Schweitzer.

After school, I joined the Kolkata Jesuit Province. Kolkata was a dream because of St Teresa, Rabindranath Tagore and Swami Vivekananda. I am privileged to have studied both at Jorasanko Thakurbari and Santiniketan. Kerala is my *janmabhumi* and Bengal is my *karmabhumi* and

gives the aesthetics of dance the highest place by epitomising the divine as a cosmic dancer. God exists in Hindu understanding as a dancer, and hence, the Hindu tradition upholds the dignity of dance.

Multiculturalism and internationalism, rather than fundamentalism and communal disharmony, are needed in these times.

How would you describe Kalahrdaya?

Kalahrdaya (Heart of Art) is the universal home of art and culture. It is a college of fine arts and a *gurukula*, located in Bakeswar village near Kolkata. The Art Peace Foundation is part of it and its aim is to promote peace through art. The institution was founded in 2001 primarily to serve poor and less privileged children and youth.

I plan to develop Kalahrdaya into a world-class college of Indian arts, particularly dance. I wish to keep up with these times while remaining rooted to tradition.

How can enthusiasts enrol in Kalahrdaya?

Currently it offers training in dance, music, painting and a few languages like Sanskrit, Malayalam, Tamil and English. At Kalahrdaya, a one-year diploma in dance with Bharatanatyam (Kalakshetra style) as major is being offered from St Xavier's (Autonomous) College, Kolkata.

Residential accommodation is available. The basic qualification is a Class XII school-leaving certificate along with a passion for dance.

The writer is a senior dance critic



HERE'S A CENTURY

Cristiano Ronaldo's (in photo, left) 100th goal for Juventus in all competitions helped keep alive his side's hopes of a top-four Serie A finish after a 3-1 win at Sassuolo on Wednesday. The result was not easy to come by for Juve, but goals from Adrien Rabiot, Ronaldo and Paulo Dybala meant they stayed fifth.

For more updates www.thestatesman.com

THUMBNAILS

Pant gets first dose of vaccine: Star India wicket-keeper batsman Rishabh Pant on Thursday received his first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. The 23-year-old player posted a picture of him taking the jab. "Got my first jab today. When you are eligible, please step up and get the vaccine. The sooner we do it, the sooner we can beat this Virus," wrote Pant on his Twitter handle.

Manjrekar bats for Thakur: India should play Shardul Thakur as the third seamer behind Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Shami in the World Test Championship (WTC) final against New Zealand next month, former India batsman Sanjay Manjrekar has said.

Valencia retires: Former Manchester United and Ecuador player Antonio Valencia on Thursday announced his retirement from football because of chronic knee problems. The 35-year-old Valencia made the decision after playing just 15 matches in almost six months for Mexican side Queretaro.

Xavi extends Al-Sadd contract: Xavi has signed a new contract with Al-Sadd to put an end to speculation linking him to La Liga giants Barcelona. A Barca great, Xavi has long been tipped to return to Camp Nou as head coach – firstly before Ronald Koeman's appointment at the start of 2020-21 and after Joan Laporta's presidential election victory. But Spaniard Xavi will remain in charge of Qatari side Al-Sadd until 2023, it was announced on Wednesday, DPA reports.

Bundesliga relegation: Two games remain for the Bundesliga's relegation candidates to avoid joining last-place Schalke in Germany's second division. Hertha Berlin's enforced two-week quarantine period after a coronavirus outbreak at the club turned out to be a blessing. Hertha returned to claim two wins and two draws in 10 days, and now needs only a win against Cologne on Saturday to be sure of survival.

Annual loss: The England and Wales Cricket Board chief reported an annual loss of £16.1 million (\$22.8 million) yesterday, with chief executive Tom Harrison warning that the ongoing effects of the coronavirus pandemic meant "we're not out of the woods yet." English cricket's governing body said the pandemic had whittled down cash reserves to just £2.2 million.

Paine's hint: Australian Test captain Tim Paine has hinted at stepping down from the position if his team defeat England in the Ashes series this year, backing former skipper Steve Smith to succeed him. The 36-year-old Paine has been under intense scrutiny after Australia were beaten 1-2 by an injury-ravaged India in a home Test series earlier this season.

India top Test rankings, once again

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
DUBAI/NEW DELHI, 13 MAY

India remained the world's number one Test side after the annual updating of the International Cricket Council team rankings released today. India head the table after gaining one rating point for an aggregate of 121, having accumulated 2914 points from 24 matches. Virat Kohli's (in photo) men are closely followed by their World Test Championship final opponents New Zealand, with a rating of 120. The New Zealanders have garnered 2166 points from 18 Tests and gained two rating points. India's 2-1 win over Australia and 3-1 win over England over the past year and New Zealand's 2-0 series wins over the West Indies and Pakistan have helped them stay ahead of the pack.

According to an ICC statement, the latest annual updating eliminates the results of 2017-18. It rates all matches played since May 2020 at 100 per cent and those of the previous two years at 50 per cent.

England (109) have climbed a place to third at the expense of Australia (108), down to fourth now. England's jump came after their 0-4 defeat by Australia in 2017-18 was dropped from the rankings.

Pakistan (94) have gained three points but remained fifth, while the West Indies (84), who beat Bangladesh 2-0 and drew 0-0 with Sri Lanka in series played this year, have jumped two places to sixth, their best position since 2013. South Africa (80) and Sri Lanka (78) have dropped a rung each to seventh and eighth positions, respectively, followed by Bangladesh (46), who have lost five points and Zimbabwe (35), who gained eight points. The Proteas thus



have again slid to their lowest level in Test ranking history.

India and New Zealand will square off in the inaugural World Test Championship final at Southampton's Ageas Bowl from 18 June.

Going great guns

Shafali Verma is set to make her Women's Big Bash League debut with two-time champions Sydney Sixers later this year. The 17-year-old is expected to be joined by left-arm spinner Radha Yadav, who is currently in talks with the Sydney Sixers franchise.

"Shafali's deal is done, it will be announced when the Women's Big Bash schedule is released," a Board of Control for Cricket in India source said, adding: "Radha is also in talks with Sydney Sixers."

Verma's father was required to sign a consent form as she was officially a minor. She joins the trio of Twenty20 skip-

per Harmanpreet Kaur (Sydney Thunder), opener Smriti Mandhana (Brisbane Heat) and all-rounder Veda Krishnamurthy (Hobart Hurricanes), which has featured in the WBBL.

The world number one batter in the women's Twenty20 International rankings will also be turning up for Birmingham Phoenix in the inaugural edition of The Hundred – the 100-ball domestic competition of the England and Wales Cricket Board planned for later this year.

While The Hundred, which was postponed last year owing to the Covid-19 pandemic, is scheduled to start on 21 July, the WBBL is to take place later in the year.

The Hundred will be the first overseas T20 competition for Verma, who has emerged as a powerful striker in world cricket with 617 runs at a strike rate of 148.31 in 22 international matches.

Ramesh Powar back as Indian women's cricket head coach

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 13 MAY

Former spinner Ramesh Powar on Thursday replaced W V Raman as the Indian women's cricket team's head coach, regaining the position more than two years after he was sacked owing to a bitter fallout with ODI captain Mithali Raj.

The 42-year-old was recommended by the Madan Lal-led Cricket Advisory Committee (CAC) after interviewing eight candidates, including Raman.

"The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) announces the appointment of Mr Ramesh Powar as the Head Coach of Team India (Senior Women). The BCCI had advertised for the post and received over 35 applications," a BCCI statement read.

The others in fray were former India wicketkeeper Ajay Ratra and four female candidates including former chief selector Hemlata Kala.

"Looking forward to take India women's cricket ahead. Thanks a lot CAC & BCCI for this opportunity," Powar tweeted after his appointment.

The CAC chose Powar for his clear vision for the team, said Lal. "He has been coaching for a while. His vision for the team impressed us the most. He has a clear cut plan for the team, what he wants do with it to take it to the next level. He also has full clarity on all aspects of the game. Now he needs to deliver on that," Lal told PTI.

It remains to be seen how Powar works alongside Mithali,

who had accused him of bias after the Harmanpreet Kaur-led T20 team dropped the veteran batter for the all-important World Cup semi-final against England. Mithali, in a letter to the BCCI after the event, had alleged that Powar "was out to destroy and humiliate" her. Powar had hit back asserting that Mithali "threw a lot of tantrums and created chaos in the team".

After being removed from his position in the women's team, Powar proved himself as a coach and earlier this year, led Mumbai to the Vijay Hazare Trophy after the domestic giants failed miserably in the T20 competition. He has also worked at the National Cricket Academy as a bowling coach.

Asked whether his acrimonious exit from the team and relationship with Mithali was discussed during Powar's interview, Lal said: "We did ask him about it and he said he wasn't at fault. He is okay working with all the players."

"I was also very impressed with the views of the four female candidates. It showed they are very much in touch and involved with the game. Future is bright for all of them," Lal added. Powar played two Tests and 31 ODIs for India. In his first stint with the women's team, Powar was at the helm from July to November 2018.

It was under his tutelage that India qualified for the semi-final of the T20 World Cup in 2019 when tests were conducted on Friday. They have been kept isolated from others," a source at the SAI Centre told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

Amul Milk
EID MUBARAK
AMUL DOODH PEETA HAI INDIA
For any clarification / enquiry please contact us on: Delhi: 011 - 28524336 / 37, Ghaziabad: 0120-2673093

Olympic-bound race walker, four others test positive

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 13 MAY

Olympic-bound race walker K T Irfan is among five elite track-and-field athletes who have tested positive for COVID-19 at the Sports Authority of India's Centre of Excellence in Bengaluru.

The tests were conducted last Friday and those who returned positive have been kept under quarantine.

"At least five elite athletes have tested positive for COVID-19 when tests were conducted on Friday. They have been kept isolated from others," a source at the SAI Centre told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

The source said another male race walker also tested positive but his name could not be confirmed.

"Four male players and 1 female player and 4 support staff tested positive for COVID-19," a SAI source stated.

"The female player had come from home. The players were tested on 6th and their results came positive on 7th. They received their first vaccine dose on 29th April.

"One male player and one female player were not vaccinated. They have been tested again on the 10th and their results are awaited tomorrow. One athlete would also be tested once more in 2-3 days' time."

Fans must be virus-free to attend final days of French Open

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
PARIS, 13 MAY

65 per cent limit of actual capacity. The tennis federation, however, has not received a waiver concerning the current rules in force in France, meaning there will be no fans present for the first nine evenings.

The nationwide curfew, now between 7pm and 6am, will be pushed back to 9pm on 19 May and 11pm from 9 June, meaning the 10th and final evening session, scheduled to start at 1800 GMT, will be able to be attended by a crowd of 5,000. This year's Roland Garros has already been pushed back by one week, with organisers hoping the Covid-19 situation in France will have improved enough to maximise the number of fans. Last year's Roland Garros was delayed by four months due to the pandemic. A maximum of 1,000 spectators were allowed on site each day.

In non-Covid-19 times, the French Open was capable of welcoming 38,436 fans on a daily basis.

The tennis federation is aiming to sell 118,611 tickets this year, against some 500,000 for the last properly held pre-Covid-19 tournament, in 2019.

"This is undoubtedly a very significant shortfall compared to a normal edition," Oudea-Castera acknowledged. "There will be very important work on clearing up the financial situation." Federation president Gilles Moretton added: "Roland-Garros is the lifeblood of the French tennis economy," with the tournament representing around 80 per cent of the federation's budget. Players, as was the case at last year's Roland Garros, will be lodged in two official hotels in a sanitary bubble.

Italian Open

Serena Williams' 1,000th tour-level singles match ended in defeat as she marked her return to action with a 7-6 (6), 7-5 loss to Nadia Podoroska in the second round of the Italian Open. The eighth-seeded Williams, who hadn't played since the Australian Open, rallied from a break down twice in the opening set yesterday and saved the first three set points she faced in the tie-breaker before Podoroska converted her fourth. The Argentine went on to win in one hour, 58 minutes.

Bosses begin legal battle with Super League holdouts

THE INDEPENDENT & AGENCIES
LAUSANNE/LONDON, 13 MAY



Uefa yesterday initiated disciplinary proceedings against Real Madrid, Barcelona and Juventus, the three clubs yet to renounce the aborted European Super League project. European football's governing body has appointed disciplinary inspectors to conduct an investigation regarding a potential violation of Uefa rules by the clubs "in connection with the so-called Super League project," it announced.

"Further information regarding this matter will be made available in due course." Uefa last week said it would take "appropriate action" against the three clubs who still supported the proposed Super League, a competition that would guarantee its founding members involvement every season, instead of having to qualify. It did not specify the violations that might have been committed, although its statutes prohibit "combinations or alliances" between clubs without the body's permission.

The maximum punishment under Uefa's disciplinary pathway is a two-year ban from European competition, while club

ment. Nine of the original 12 clubs have now dropped out. Tottenham Hotspur, Arsenal, Manchester City, Manchester United, Chelsea, Liverpool, Atletico Madrid, Inter Milan and AC Milan were on Friday given a financial penalty by Uefa for their involvement. They committed to taking "all steps within their power" to end their involvement in the breakaway league and agreed to participate in Uefa competitions for which they would qualify.

They also agreed to pay fines of 100 million euros (\$121 million) if they ever sought to play in an unauthorised competition. In response, Real, Barca and Juventus continued to defend the Super League proposal and condemned what they called threats from Uefa.

It's Porto!

Porto are set to be confirmed as host of the Champions League final between Chelsea and Manchester City after Portuguese authorities have approved the return of supporters to stadiums. Uefa is planning to announce by the end of the week that the 50,000-capacity Estadio do Dragao will be used for the 29 May showpiece with thousands of fans

from both English clubs set to be allowed into the game, people with knowledge of the planning told The Associated Press yesterday.

Gunners boozing

Emile Smith Rowe (in photo) took advantage of a defensive howler to score the winner as Arsenal beat Chelsea 1-0 at Stamford Bridge to stop the hosts from moving third in the Premier League. Italy midfielder Jorginho scattered back pass left out-of-position goalkeeper Kepa Arrizabalaga scrambling

to prevent an own goal, diving to palm the ball away just before it crossed the line. But Arsenal striker Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang was on hand to collect the ball and square it for Smith Rowe, who slotted home just inside the post. It was Arsenal's third straight Premier League victory and a much-needed morale-booster after their loss in the Europa League semi-finals left the Gunners without a chance of qualifying for the Champions League. Chelsea's loss means Thomas Tuchel's side remained fourth and gave renewed hope to chasing teams West Ham and Liverpool, hoping to clinch the title.

'Negative public opinion no threat to Tokyo Olympics'

ASSOCIATED PRESS
GENEVA, 13 MAY

The International Olympic Committee has downplayed concerns over Japanese public opinion calling for the Tokyo Olympics to be cancelled, before its virtual Press conference was interrupted by an activist protesting against the games. The conference yesterday followed a monthly meeting of the International Olympic Committee's executive board held amid a state of emergency in Tokyo to curb surging Covid-19 cases. Polling in Japan also persistently suggests people want the 23 July-8 August Olympics to be called off, having already been postponed by one year.

"We listen but won't be guided by public opinion," IOC spokesman Mark Adams (in photo) said, adding: "Everything is telling us ... that the

Games can go ahead and will go ahead."

Adams stood in for his boss, IOC president Thomas Bach, whose planned visit to Japan next week had been called off on Monday after states of emergency in Tokyo and other regions were extended through May.

The final question of the Press conference, held by video call, was offered to a reporter from Yahoo Sports. Instead, an activist appeared on the screen holding up a black-and-white banner opposing the Tokyo Olympics. "No Olympics anywhere, No Olympics anywhere," he said, before using a profanity and adding "No Olympics in LA, No Olympics in Tokyo," before the line was cut. The 2028 Olympics will be held in Los Angeles. Adams made light of the interruption noting if Bach had been present it "probably



would have made that stunt a little bit more interesting."

The NOlympics LA group later claimed on its Twitter account it had "crashed the IOC's Press conference."

A tricky week for the IOC comes just 78 days before the Tokyo Olympics are scheduled to open, which Adams said

would be a historic moment for the world and make the Japanese people proud. "I am very confident that we will see public opinion hugely in favour of the games," Adams said, adding that Japanese people strongly approved of Tokyo's candidacy. It won a bidding contest in 2013 against Madrid

and Istanbul.

Still, opposition has seemed to harden against an Olympics that has cost at least \$15 billion of mostly taxpayers' money.

Adams said there was private polling numbers known to the IOC and organisers in Tokyo though no details were given on Wednesday.

A "large and growing number" of participants will be vaccinated against Covid-19 before arriving at the athlete village in Tokyo, Adams said. The IOC has struck deals to buy Chinese vaccines and receive donations of doses from Pfizer to distribute to Olympic team delegations worldwide.

qualified for the games - 70 per cent of the total quota - with a further 10 per cent set to be earned by 29 June, Adams said. About 20 per cent of entries are being awarded according to world rankings in some of the 33 sports.

Amid the uncertainty and disrupted plans for the ongoing four-month torch relay in Tokyo, Adams said. The IOC has struck deals to buy Chinese vaccines and receive donations of doses from Pfizer to distribute to Olympic team delegations worldwide.

We pay homage to our Founding Father Late Sachindra Prosad Saha on the occasion of 88th Anniversary of the Founding Day on this auspicious day of Akshay Tritiya

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