



MAKING AMENDS

Actor Yuvika Chaudhary has apologised to the netizens for making a casteist remark in a YouTube video

LEISURE P2



MALAYSIA MAYHEM

Two light rail trains collided in a tunnel in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, injuring more than 200 people

INTERNATIONAL P10



STADIUM RENAMED

The Mohali International Hockey Stadium was officially renamed after the legendary Balbir Singh Sr

SPORTS P12

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IRREGULAR by MANJUL



The couple who got married mid-air on a plane wants your help... to plan their honeymoon!

33 more succumb to Covid in state

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 25: Odisha Tuesday registered its highest single-day Covid-19 fatalities at 33, pushing the death toll to 2,549, while the caseload surged to 7,14,380 as 10,939 more people tested positive for the infection, a senior Health official said.

Odisha has been witnessing a steady rise in Covid fatalities. The coastal state witnessed 32 deaths due to the viral infection May 24, while 28 people succumbed to the infection May 23. On May 22, state lost 26 lives to Covid-19, while 27 people died due to the infection a day before - May 21.



As many as 6,178 new cases were reported in quarantine centres, while 4,761 infections were detected during contact tracing.

Khurda district, under which Bhubaneswar falls, reported the highest number of new cases at 1,298, followed by Cuttack (922), Angul (819), Mayurbhanj (604), Jajpur (541) and Sundargarh (512). Khurda also registered the highest number of fresh fatalities at seven, followed by four each in Angul, Jharsuguda and Kalahandi, three each in Subarnapur and Sundargarh and two each in Keonjhar and Ganjam districts. Koraput, Kandhamal, Jajpur and Deogarh districts reported one death each.

MARKET WATCH			
INDEX		VARIATION	
SENSEX	50637.53	↓	14.37
NIFTY	15208.50	↓	10.80
DOLLAR	72.82	↓	₹0.15
EURO	89.68	↑	₹0.14
GOLD	₹48,736	↑	₹183
SILVER	₹72,002	↑	₹638

WEATHER			
	BHUB	CTK	
MAX	26.4°C	26.8°C	
MIN	23.4°C	22.8°C	
Humidity	91%	89%	Forecast
Rainfall	10.9mm	5.0mm	Light rain very likely

State braces for Yaas

THE CYCLONIC STORM WILL MAKE LANDFALL AT DHAMRA-CHANDBALI

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 25: The severe cyclonic storm Yaas formed over east central Bay of Bengal intensified into a very severe cyclonic storm Tuesday and is forecast to hit Odisha coast near Dhamra and Chandabali area Wednesday morning.

Till the time of filing this report, the cyclone was located at about 140 km south-southeast of Paradip and 220 km south-southeast of Balasore. It would be within 30 km of Dhamra at around 5 am, Wednesday. Early morning, Yaas is expected to make landfall between Dharma and Chandabali, said Director General of India Meteorological Department (IMD), Mrutyunjay Mohapatra said.

Under its impact, the wind speed with gale wind speed 155-165 kmph gusting to 185 kmph will prevail over north Odisha and adjoining West Bengal coasts. The cyclonic storm will affect Jagatsinghpur, Kendrapara and Bhadrak districts in Odisha from Wednesday early morning and will subsequently extend to Balasore district. Mayurbhanj district will experience wind speed of 120-130 kmph gusting to 145 kmph from Wednesday early morning till late evening, the IMD said in a bulletin.

Gale wind speed reaching 80-90 kmph gusting to 100 kmph would also prevail in Puri, Cuttack, Khurda, Jajpur and Nayagarh districts, while Ganjam district will witness wind of speed 60-80 kmph gusting to 90 kmph. As the outer portion of the system has entered the Odisha coast, moderate to heavy rainfall occurred in the

5,00,000 people evacuated till evening from 77 blocks in 11 coastal and adjoining districts

77 blocks described as "high intensity" and where the impact of Yaas will be severe are in focus

COVID POSES CHALLENGE FOR EVACUATION OF PEOPLE, AS MANY ARE UNWILLING TO SHIFT TO SHELTER HOMES FEARING INFECTION

Rough sea in the Bay of Bengal ahead of Cyclone Yaas landfall, at Digha in East Midnapore district, Tuesday

coastal areas and adjoining districts. At least 35 blocks recorded over 50 mm rainfall Tuesday.

Moreover, tidal waves of 2-4 meters high above astronomical tide are likely to inundate low-lying areas of Medinipur, Balasore and Bhadrak and about 2 meters above astronomical tide is likely to inundate low lying low lying areas of South 24 Parganas, Kendrapara and Jagatsinghpur districts at the time of the landfall, the Met department said.

Speaking to the media, Special Relief Commissioner (SRC) PK Jena said the cyclone will make landfall between 4.30 am and 5 am, Wednesday between Dhamra and Balasore. Subsequently, it will move towards Balasore and further towards Mayurbhanj & Jharkhand.

The state government has evacuated over 5 lakh people from 11 coastal and adjoining districts to safer places till the last report came. Jena said the evacuation process will continue till 9pm tonight and the state government has targeted to shift about 7.5 lakh people to safer places.

Jena said the government is focusing on 77 blocks described as "high intensity" and where the impact of cyclone Yaas will be severe. However, the prevailing Covid-19 pandemic has posed a challenge for evacuation as people are not willing to shift to the cyclone shelters fearing Covid infection.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has asked Minister of State, Home, DS Mishra to station at Balasore and monitor the cyclone management work.

Highest-ever number of NDRF teams deployed

NEW DELHI/ BHUBANESWAR: The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) has earmarked its highest-ever number of teams for deployment in Odisha and West Bengal to undertake relief and rescue operations during cyclone Yaas, its chief SN Pradhan said Tuesday. The federal contingency force has committed a total of 113 teams for deployment in five states and the Union Territory of Andaman and Nicobar Islands which are expected to be affected by the cyclone brewing in the Bay of Bengal. Out of these, 104 teams are deployed on ground while nine have been kept on "high alert" in these states, an NDRF spokesperson said.

No threat to DRDO's facilities: Official

BALASORE/BHUBANESWAR: The Integrated Test Range of DRDO has taken various measures to protect its facilities at Chandipur and Abdul Kalam Island in Odisha, which are likely to be affected by cyclone 'Yaas', an official said Tuesday. The ITR of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has three missile launch pads at Chandipur and one launch complex at Abdul Kalam Island, besides two separate mission control rooms and block houses. The island is 80 nautical miles (110 km) from the ITR, and more likely to be impacted by the cyclone, the official said. The control room and block house, however, have been designed to withstand wind speeds up to 400 km, sources said.

6 drown, 2 go missing in Malkangiri boat capsizes



Search for missing persons in Sileru river

POST NEWS NETWORK

Chittrakonda, May 25: At least six persons, including five minors, drowned, while two went missing after two boats, on which they were returning home, capsized in Sileru river under this block in Malkangiri district late Monday night.

Bodies of six persons out of the 11 travelling in the two boats have been recovered. Two went missing, while three swam to the river bank.

According to sources, 32 persons, including children, all belonging to Kandhaguda and Gunthawada villages of Chittrakonda block, had gone to work at a brick kiln in Andhra Pradesh.

They failed to return home due to inter-state travel restrictions following Covid-19-induced lockdown. Hence, they decided to return home by the river route at night to escape being caught by the law enforcement agencies.

Initially, 21 persons returned to their villages in two fishing boats. Later, the remaining persons were returning in two other fishing boats.

They were sailing smoothly but tragedy struck midway and one boat capsized after water seeped inside. However, six occupants of the ill-fated boat managed to swim and get into the second boat.

Due to overload, the second boat lost balance and overturned.

Mehul Choksi goes missing

Fugitive diamantaire Mehul Choksi, wanted in a ₹13,500-crore loan fraud in PNB, has gone missing in Antigua and Barbuda where he had been staying since January 2018

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 25: Fugitive diamantaire Mehul Choksi, wanted in a ₹13,500-crore loan fraud in Punjab National Bank, has gone missing in Antigua and Barbuda where he had been staying since January 2018, the Royal Police Force of the Caribbean island nation said in a statement.

The police force which has launched a missing person operation issued a statement along with the photograph of the businessman seeking information from public.

"The Police are investigating a Missing Person Report made of 62-year-old Mehul Choksi of Jolly Harbour. Mehul was reported missing on Sunday 23rd May 2021 at the Johnson Point Police Station," the statement said.

Choksi was last seen on Sunday in his car which was recovered by the police following searches but he could not be found, it said.



Mehul Choksi, wanted in a ₹13,500-crore loan fraud in PNB, has gone missing in Antigua and Barbuda where he had been staying since January 2018

"Antiguanewsroom", a local media outlet, quoted Commissioner of Police Atlee Rodney Tuesday that the police are "following up on the whereabouts of Indian businessman Mehul Choksi", who is "rumoured" to be missing.

The media reports say Choksi, who had taken the citizenship of the Caribbean island nation of Antigua and Barbuda, was seen driving in the southern area of the island Sunday. Choksi's lawyer Vijay Aggarwal confirmed the reports.

Choksi and his nephew Nirav Modi are wanted for allegedly siphoning off ₹13,500 crore of public money from the state-run Punjab National Bank (PNB), using letters of undertaking.

SEEKING SHELTER



Apprehending the fury of Cyclone Yaas, fishermen park their boats at a secured place on Puri beach

How CJI disqualified two choices of Modi govt for CBI chief

CJI NV Ramana referred to a SC judgement that had said officers with less than six months left in service should not be considered for police chief posts

AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 25: At a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi Monday evening to select the new chief of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), Chief Justice of India NV Ramana emphasised on a rule that eliminated from the race at least two government choices, sources say.

After a 90-minute meeting, the high-powered selection panel of PM Modi, the Chief Justice and Opposition leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury zeroed in on three names - former Maharashtra Director General of Police Subodh Kumar Jaiswal, Director General of Sashastra Seema Bal KR Chandra and Home Ministry Special Secretary VSK Kaumudi. Sources say during the discussions CJI Ramana raised a "six-month rule", which has never been cited before in the selection of a CBI director.

Justice Ramana referred to a Supreme Court judgement that had said



officers with less than six months left in service should not be considered for police chief posts. The selection panel must comply with the law, he said, according to sources.

Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, on the panel as the leader of the largest Opposition party Congress, backed the rule, giving it majority support in the three-member committee.

This disqualified Rakesh Asthana, the Border Security Force chief retiring July 31, and National Investigation Agency chief YC Modi,

retiring May 31 - two of the names seen to be at the top of the government's shortlist. The panel's meeting at PM Modi's residence took place after a nearly four-month delay.

Chowdhury had no objection to the names but put up a dissent note alleging that the government had followed a "casual approach" in listing candidates. He said he had originally received 109 names, which were pared down to 16 names yesterday before the panel met.

"The way the procedure was followed, it was in conflict of the mandate of the committee. On May 11, I was given 109 names... and today by 1 pm, 10 names were shortlisted, while by 4 pm, six names were shortlisted. This casual approach of the department of personnel and training is highly objectionable," the Congress leader said.

Indian Police Service (IPS) officers from four senior-most batches (1984-87) were considered for the post that has been vacant since February.

Subodh Kumar Jaiswal new CBI director

NEW DELHI: Senior IPS officer Subodh Kumar Jaiswal was Tuesday appointed as the new CBI chief for two years, according to a Personnel Ministry order. A 1985-batch Indian Police Service (IPS) officer of Maharashtra cadre, Jaiswal is currently the director general of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF). He has also served as Maharashtra's director general of police in the past. A Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led three-member selection committee had Monday shortlisted his name for the post.

The law says the committee will select the CBI director "on the basis of seniority, integrity and experience in the investigation of anti-corruption cases" from a list of IPS officers drawn from the four senior-most batches.

PETROL AND DIESEL PRICES SKYROCKET

AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 25: A day after holding back a hike, the oil marketing companies (OMCs) Tuesday increased the pump price of petrol and diesel across the country with global oil showing signs of firming amidst reports that Iranian oil may not hit the markets soon.

Accordingly, petrol prices increased by 23 paise per litre to ₹93.44 per litre and diesel by 25 paise per litre to ₹84.32 per litre in Delhi.

Across the country as well the fuel prices increased between 20-27 paise per litre but their retail prices varied depending on the level of local taxes. In Mumbai, petrol is now being sold at ₹99.71 a litre just one increase short of crossing another milestone of ₹100. This mark has already been breached in few other cities in Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Madhya

CITY FUEL PRICES			
	DELHI	CHENNAI	MUMBAI
PETROL	₹94.21 (+0.23)	₹93.44 (+0.23)	₹99.71 (+0.23)
DIESEL	₹91.93 (+0.27)	₹84.32 (+0.27)	₹93.44 (+0.27)

Pradesh. Premium petrol prices have been hovering over ₹100 a litre for past few couple of months now.

With Tuesday's fuel price increase, petrol and diesel prices have now increased on 13 days so far in the month of May. This has taken up petrol prices by ₹3.04 per litre in Delhi. Similarly, diesel have increased by ₹3.59 per litre in the national capital. Under daily price revision, OMCs revise petrol and diesel prices every morning.

leisure



KELLY DENIES HAVING PLASTIC SURGERY

Songstress Kelly Osbourne has denied her new look is an outcome of plastic surgery, in a new video post she shared with fans. She shared a video clip captioned: "Let's squash these stupid rumours!!! Can't you just be happy for me?"

LINDSAY LOHAN TO MAKE COMEBACK IN ROM-COM

Actress Lindsay Lohan is all set to make her acting comeback with a Christmas romantic comedy, about an heiress who has a skiing accident and suffers from amnesia. Lohan's role has been described as a "newly engaged, spoiled hotel heiress", reports *contactmusic.com*.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
Today, the stars put you on high alert... and not for nothing. You will save yourself from being swindled. Though you will easily manage to stay ahead of others, you may make a few enemies on your way. It's not a good day if you're looking to buy a house or vehicle, says Ganesh.

TAURUS
This day, you will be able to express and communicate your ideas and feelings very convincingly, assures Ganesh. All those to whom you come in contact with you today will be clear, and appreciative about whatever you tell them. At work your superiors are likely to be responsive and helpful.

GEMINI
Today, you are likely to be rather emotional and sentimental, says Ganesh. Your love for performing arts may make you take up lessons in classical music or traditional dance. And much to your delight, your sweetheart will treat you to a surprise candlelit dinner.

CANCER
You are likely start the day in the best of spirits today. Your enthusiasm and cheerfulness will be infectious, and you will be able to lift the mood wherever you go. However, your enthusiasm can be short-lived and pummeled under the weight of some bad news, leaving you distraught.

LEO
Talk of being busy! It seems like today, you shall take the cake, and perhaps, be the icing on it as well, says Ganesh. It is likely that the day is going to be very hectic for you in terms of work and business. You may be engaged in official conversations and dealings.

VIRGO
You will spend most of today in the company of family and friends, says Ganesh. Students may focus on upcoming examinations and will learn to balance study and leisure time, in equal measure. It is a good day to buy real estate.

LIBRA
"Every man has specific natural abilities", said Aristotle. This seems to be true for you today. Your natural talents will be acknowledged and documented at work. This might prompt your equals to hold you up above the rest, and for your seniors to positively encourage you to scale greater heights.

SCORPIO
You will find yourself thinking with your heart rather than your head today, says Ganesh. You may not be able to repress your feelings, and you should not even try. But you should be careful about how you express them, particularly in public as people may judge you wrongly on the basis of it, advises Ganesh.

SAGITTARIUS
Today, your superiors at work are going to trust you with many complicated assignments. But, after exerting yourself, you are sure to come out with flying colors and have your work appreciated. Do not be surprised if cash incentives come your way.

CAPRICORN
A good day always begins with a good start. It will be a good day for you today as you will start the day with a positive attitude to life, says Ganesh. Your unremitting dedication and determination will not only put you ahead of others, but will also help you get an edge over them.

AQUARIUS
You are a polished diamond. Adversities come and go, yet you remain unruffled. Today, you manage to please your boss, and beloved, and that is a feat! It is yet another day of contentment. And in a cyclical process, this again rejuvenates you into giving your best, says Ganesh.

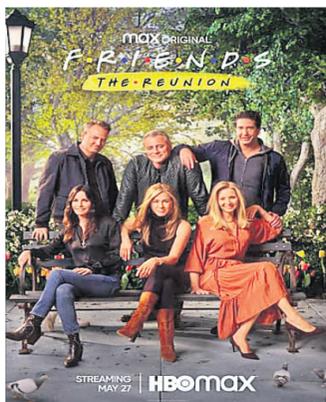
PISCES
Do not let your emotions influence your strategies in any way. Mixing business with sentiments is only for super spies. Keep a close check on your emotions and do not get carried away. Travel for business purposes is indicated, says Ganesh.

ZEE5 to exclusively stream Friends: The Reunion in India

New Delhi: India's home-grown video streaming platform ZEE5 announced to exclusively premiere *Friends: The Reunion* in India.

Manish Kalra, Chief Business Officer, ZEE5 India said, "We are extremely excited to bring *Friends: The Reunion* exclusively on ZEE5 for the Indian market. *Friends* is among the world's most watched and loved sitcoms and it is a great opportunity for us to present their reunion, something that the world has been talking about, on ZEE5 for *Friends*' fans in India."

HBO Max will debut *Friends: The Reunion* special Thursday, May 27 in the US, the one-year



anniversary of HBO Max's launch. *Friends* stars Jennifer Aniston, Courtney Cox, Lisa Kudrow, Matt LeBlanc, Matthew Perry, and David Schwimmer return to the iconic comedy's original soundstage, Stage 24, on the Warner Bros. Studio lot in Burbank for a real-life unscripted celebration of the beloved show.

Friends: The Reunion will feature a variety of special guest appearances including David Beckham, Justin Bieber, BTS, Cindy Crawford, Lady Gaga, Mindy Kaling, Tom Selleck, Reese Witherspoon and Malala Yousafzai. IANS

Yuvika regrets for using casteist slur

Mumbai: Actress Yuvika Chaudhary and her husband Prince Narula individually apologised Tuesday after the #Arrest Yuvika Choudhary started trending on Twitter. Yuvika drew netizens ire for posting a video featuring Prince on YouTube where she made a casteist remark.

In the video, Yuvika can be seen filming Prince as he gets a haircut. She refers to a certain community and says he looks like them.

This led to the #Arrest Yuvika Choudhary trending on Twitter.

A user said: "Yuvika Choudhary should be arrested. Example has to be set. There are many like her and Mummun Dutta.

"Hey #yuvikachoudhary you sd be ashamed of your words. The people you addressed are actually keeping this nation presentable. they sd be respected, you senseless people create chaos in 'society,' another tweeted.

The actress wrote: "Hi guys I didn't know the meaning about that word wt I used in my last vlog I didn't mean to hurt anyone and I can never do that to hurt someone I apologise to each n every one I hope you understand. Love you all."

Prince, too, took to his Instagram stories to apologise to fans. IANS



British-Indian artist's ode to Partition, 1984 riots

Preeti Kanan Singhania, a British-Indian musician popularly known as Bombay the Artist, has come up with a song titled *Raaha*. The song is based on Bombay's conversations with her grandmother who spoke poignantly about the 1947 partition and 1984 Riots that she had to go through as a young woman then.

Singhania started her journey after being inspired by her life and experience in Mumbai. While she was brought up in a primarily white neighbourhood in

England, her music inspiration had always been the likes of Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, SD Burman among others. Every aspect of her life there seemed to have an Indian influence, from her designs at fashion school to her music. She finally decided to come to Mumbai and experience the madness and thrill of the city while imbibing its impact on her.

While *Raaha* delves into the pain of the Partition for lovers, mothers, children and fathers, it is also emblematic of the current second wave that has raged through India. Speaking about launching the song, she said "*Raaha* is how I dealt with my grief and I want nothing more than my listeners to heal from this as well. These are tough times where people have lost a lot. We need to stay together and be kind to each other." IANS



Jacqueline glows in sunshine

Mumbai: Jacqueline Fernandez's new picture post Tuesday should surely pep up fans who are looking for some sunshine amid the pervading gloom all around.

In the Instagram frame, the actress sits on the floor in a floral summer dress, with sunshine brushing across her face as she seems to savour the glow.

"You can rise up from anything," she wrote as caption, with a red heart and a flexing bicep emoji to underline her message of love and empowerment.

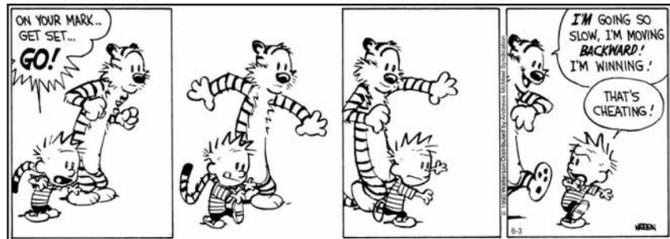
The actress' date diary is packed for now. She has *Ram Setu* and *Bachchan Pandey* coming up with Akshay Kumar, *Kick 2* with Salman Khan, *Cirkus* with Ranveer Singh and the multi-star cast horror comedy *Bhoot Police*.

Jacqueline has been actively involved with social service lately, having launched her foundation named You Only Live Once (YOLO), which aims at providing food and shelter to the needy. IANS

PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

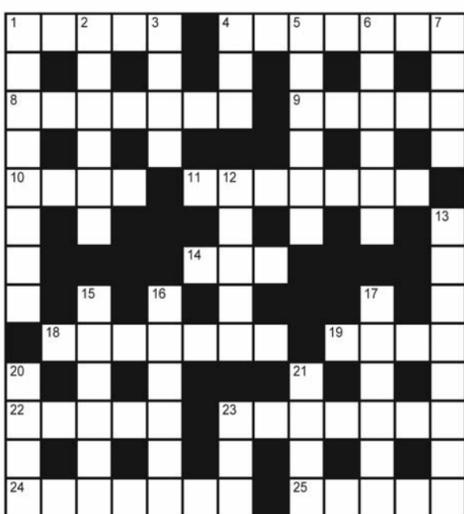


BREVITY



FUN post

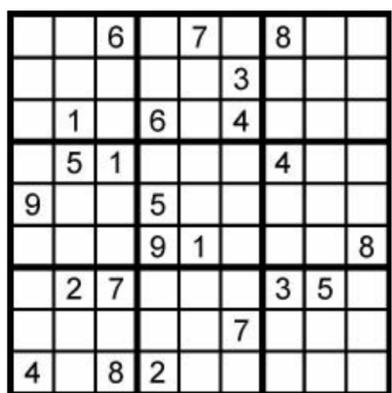
CROSSWORD



- Across
- 1 Redhead's dye
 - 4 Bay of Ob locale
 - 8 It may be under a photo
 - 9 Fritter away
 - 10 Fencing sword
 - 11 Gun barrel size
 - 14 Jimmy
 - 18 Hide
 - 19 Junket
 - 22 Egypt's capital
 - 23 Kind of cat
 - 24 Rose bush, maybe
 - 25 Gnatlike insect
 - 6 Vacation spot
 - 7 Pinnacle
 - 12 Major artery
 - 13 All done
 - 15 Dieter's concern
 - 16 Fish group
 - 17 Ally
 - 20 Mark left by Zorro?
 - 21 Injure
 - 23 Round Table title
- Down
- 1 Big house in Mexico
 - 2 Small fry
 - 3 Etcher's need
 - 4 Overhead light?
 - 5 Kind of pasta (3,3)

SUDOKU

To solve the Sudoku puzzle, fill in the boxes in such a manner that every row, column and 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9, without repeating any.



SOLUTIONS



CROSSWORD

SUDOKU

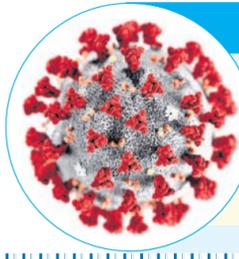


CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



WATER RITUAL

Jalaisai ritual being performed at Mausai Maa temple in Puri, Tuesday

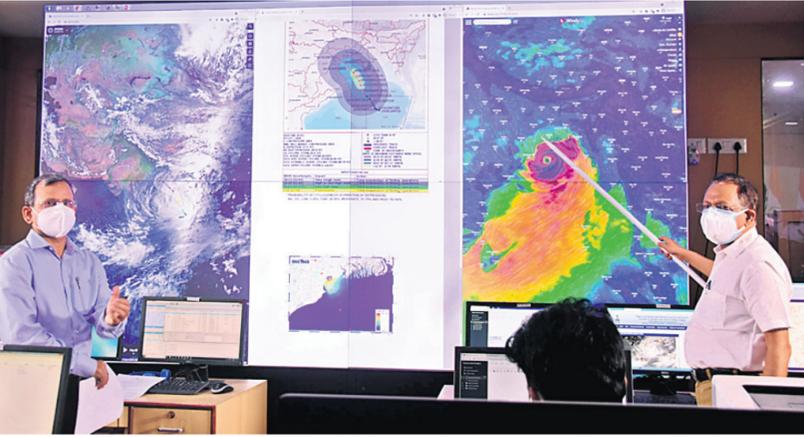


COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	16,82,64,024	14,97,11,181	34,92,759
India	2,69,48,874	2,40,54,861	3,07,231
Odisha	7,14,380	6,12,993	2,549

CM THRUST ON ZERO CASUALTY

CHIEF MINISTER NAVEEN PATNAIK REVIEWS ARRANGEMENTS WITH CHIEF SECRETARY AND SPECIAL RELIEF COMMISSIONER THROUGH CYCLONE MONITORING DASHBOARD



Chief Secretary SC Mahapatra and SRC PK Jena make a presentation on cyclone Yaas, Tuesday

THE CHIEF SECY SAID OVER 2.5 LAKH PEOPLE HAVE BEEN EVACUATED AND THE PROCESS IS IN FULL SWING. FIVE IAS AND AS MANY IPS OFFICERS HAVE BEEN DEPLOYED IN FIVE DISTRICTS, HE ADDED

SRC PK JENA MADE A PRESENTATION ON THE POSITION OF CYCLONE. HE SAID LATEST DATA SUGGEST THAT CYCLONE WILL MAKE A LANDFALL BETWEEN BAHANAGA AND BASUDEVPUR ON ODISHA COAST

five districts. We are constantly monitoring the situation," Mahapatra said.

Jena made a presentation on the position of cyclone. He said latest data suggest that cyclone will make a landfall between Bahanaga and Basudevpur on Odisha coast.

The SRC also briefed the CM about the arrangements made for drinking water, special arrangements at Covid hospitals, oxygen buffer, power supply, communication network and other arrangements. He assured CM about full preparedness. All are ready to face the cyclone with the rescue and restoration plan, Jena added.

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 25: A few hours before the very severe cyclonic storm Yaas making landfall, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik once again asked the senior officers to work towards saving each and every life.

Patnaik reviewed the arrangements for cyclone preparedness Tuesday evening with Chief

Secretary SC Mahapatra and Special Relief Commissioner (SRC) PK Jena on virtual mode, linking the state control room and cyclone dash board.

He said every life is precious; thus all possible steps should be taken to protect life. He sought the cooperation of people in evacuation. He also directed the administration to monitor the situation regularly. "All necessary precautions have

been taken for the cyclone. However, it must be monitored on a regular basis. The policy of our government is every human life is precious. I request the people to cooperate in every way to the state administration," the CM said at the meeting.

"Over 2.5 lakh people have been evacuated and the process is in full swing. Five IAS and as many IPS officers have been deployed in

TURBULENT TIME



The Puri sea witnesses high-altitude waves due to cyclonic storm Yaas, Tuesday. (Bottom) Incessant rain halts chariot construction work at Rath Yard in the Holy City

15K slum dwellers shifted to safety



Slum dwellers at a school in Cuttack

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, May 25: The Cuttack Municipal Corporation (CMC) has shifted a total of 14,839 slum dwellers to safer places as part of its preparations to deal with impending Cyclone Yaas.

"Altogether 14,839 people of 26 slums in the city have been shifted to the buildings of 23 schools as part of our efforts to face the cyclone," said an official of CMC.

According to the official, dwellers of Patapola, Dhableswar, Kathajodi Vihar (A&B), Stewart Patna, Mangala Sahi, Meria Bazar and Mochisahi slums among others have been shifted to safety.

"Four teams of CMC led by senior officials Abinash Rout and Paresh Kumar Nayak evacuated the slum dwellers through pick-up vans and buses," said the official.

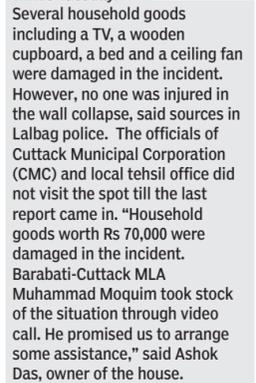
The CMC has made all arrangements to provide dry and cooked food to the evacuated slum dwellers. "At least seven women self-help groups have been engaged to provide food to the evacuees," added the official.

The civic authorities, meanwhile, urged the residents to arrange all essential commodities ahead of the cyclone and keep themselves confined to their homes during the calamity.

Notably, Nor'wester rains had

HOUSE COLLAPSES IN CUTTACK

Cuttack: An asbestos-roof house at Mehendipur area of the city here collapsed due to rain and gusty winds Tuesday. Several household goods including a TV, a wooden cupboard, a bed and a ceiling fan were damaged in the incident. However, no one was injured in the wall collapse, said sources in Lalbag police. The officials of Cuttack Municipal Corporation (CMC) and local tehsil office did not visit the spot till the last report came in. "Household goods worth Rs 70,000 were damaged in the incident. Barabati-Cuttack MLA Muhammad Moqim took stock of the situation through video call. He promised us to arrange some assistance," said Ashok Das, owner of the house.



damaged several temporary shelters meant for slum dwellers at Nuapada Balisahi recently. Around 136 slum dwellers' families were rendered homeless in the incident.

CP on toes for storm aftermath

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 25: The Commissionerate Police has made adequate arrangements to tackle the effects of impending severe cyclonic storm Yaas.

In a video message, Commissioner of Police Saumendra Priyadarshi revealed that additional forces have been mobilised at the police stations in the twin city. The cops on the ground have been sensitised about the issues related to cyclone and its aftermath.

All the essential items have been stored at the police stations.

"We have kept ready adequate number of advanced machines for road clearance, cutting of trees at the 7th Battalion, SS Battalion Reserve Police Line in Cuttack and Bhubaneswar. Small police teams have been kept ready for rescue and restoration works immediately after the cyclone. Appropriate steps have been taken to maintain communication system properly during and after the cyclone. DG sets are ready at the police stations for the power outage caused by cyclone. The PCR's have also been mobilized to answer any calls for help by people," the CP said.

Yaas may hit 37 lakh urban population

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 25: The Housing and Urban Development (H&UD) department Tuesday asked the officials of five districts—Jagatsinghpur, Kendrapara, Bhadrak, Jajpur and Balasore—to maintain high alert to deal with Yaas.

The department has asked the district administrations to implement a fool-proof evacuation mechanism and ensure zero casualty, sources said.

It has issued a detailed standard operating procedure (SOP) for the urban local bodies (ULBs) which are likely to be affected by the storm. It has been anticipated that around 37 lakh people in 1,137 wards of ULBs are most likely to be affected by the summer storm, sources said.

At least 2.7 lakh urban population of 93 wards may be severely affected by the storm. ULBs of Bhadrak, Balasore, Jagatsinghpur, Kendrapara and Jajpur are likely

to witness the worst impact of cyclone Yaas. All necessary arrangements have been made in these ULBs to manage the situation, said sources in H&UD department.

A dedicated team of the department, supervised by senior officials, is in active operation to deal with the situation. The implementation of the SoP is being monitored strictly. The issues related to timely assistance for the ULBs are addressed on priority basis, sources added.

A dedicated state-level control room of H&UD Department has been set up at the State Urban Development Agency (SUDA) in Bhubaneswar. The state-level control room will operate round-the-clock. Moreover, dedicated Control rooms have been established at 61 ULBs, which are likely to be affected by the cyclone.

"District administrations have formed dedicated teams to manage the situation. Special atten-



People travelling amid heavy rain in Bhubaneswar

BRACING FOR THE STORM

■ At least 2.7 lakh urban population of 93 wards may be severely affected by the storm

■ ULBs of Bhadrak, Balasore, Jagatsinghpur, Kendrapara and Jajpur are likely to witness the worst impact of cyclone Yaas

■ A dedicated state-level control room of H&UD Department has been set up at the State Urban Development Agency (SUDA) in Bhubaneswar

tion is being given to the ULBs of aforesaid five districts. Senior officials from other ULBs have been positioned in vulnerable ULBs to manage the situation," the department said.

More than 520 cyclone shelters with adequate accommodating capacity have been set up in the vulnerable ULBs. These shelters have the requisite essentials including dry food, water, toilet and medical kits. The officials have been asked to ensure proper care for the spe-

cially-abled people, women and kids. Strict adherence of Covid-19 protocols is mandatory in cyclone shelter houses. To ensure uninterrupted water supply, storage reservoirs have been filled and necessary back-up arrangements like DG sets have been made. More than 500 Aska lights and 500 generator sets have been made available to the vulnerable ULBs.

For dewatering purpose, 550 pump sets have been arranged in the ULBs. The department may

arrange more pumps if the situation requires so.

Dedicated control rooms for water supply issues have been established in all vulnerable ULBs and the numbers have been shared on social media. Over 180 water tankers have been hired and sent to all vulnerable ULBs.

Mobile rapid action teams have been formed under the engineer-in-charge to ensure quick repair to any damage that causes disruption in water supply.

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



Warder suspended for assaulting prisoner in Patnagarh sub jail

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 25: The state Prisons Directorate has suspended a warder on charges of assaulting two prisoners at Patnagarh sub jail in Bolangir district. The chief warder of the jail has been transferred with immediate effect.

According to sources, the prisoners of the sub jail lodged a complaint with the Prisons authorities accusing the warder, Abinash Rath, of beating two inmates in the presence of the chief warder. Subsequently, the Director General of Prisons directed DIG of Prisons for Sambalpur range and the senior superintendent of Sambalpur

Departmental proceedings against the chief warder have also been started

prisons to investigate the matter and submit a report to the headquarters at the earliest.

Accordingly, the Prisons Directorate Monday placed Rath under suspension and initiated departmental proceedings against him on the basis of the probe report.

Similarly, the superintendent of Patnagarh sub jail has also registered an FIR with Patnagarh police against the chief warder for legal action in the issue.

SOP issued for mental health hostels, orphanages

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 25: The state Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) department Tuesday released a standard operating procedure (SOP) for running of the mental health hostels, short stay homes, orphanages, child care homes amid Covid-19 pandemic.

The department disseminated the new norms among all the Collectors and other officials directing all such institutions to take special care of their inmates and follow the SOP so as to reduce the chances of spread of the disease.

The SOP said that entry of any new inmate must be done with Covid-19 testing besides mandatory thermal screening during entry.

"Upon arrival, the new inmates will undergo Covid test which will

be facilitated by the district control room in coordination with the district Mental Health Team. Facility staff shall ensure that the entrance has mandatory hand hygiene (sanitizer dispenser) and thermal screening provisions. Maintaining physical distance of a minimum of 6 feet, when queuing up for entry and exit inside the hostel/homes as far as feasible," the norms said.

"Only asymptomatic staff and students/inmates shall be allowed. All staffers and students are allowed entry only if they are using face cover/masks. The face cover/mask has to be worn all the times inside the hostels/homes. An isolation room must be earmarked in every hostel/home for isolation of suspected cases," it added.

It also talked about several



The SOP said that entry of any new inmate must be done with Covid-19 testing besides mandatory thermal screening during entry

Only asymptomatic staff and students/inmates shall be allowed. All staffers and students are allowed entry only if they are using face cover/masks

AN ISOLATION ROOM MUST BE EARMARKED IN EVERY HOSTEL/HOME FOR ISOLATION OF SUSPECTED CASES

restrictions for the inmates admitted to such institutions. They

have been allowed to venture out for a maximum of 15 minutes in a

week in case of important work.

"Rooms are allotted with proper spacing to ensure social distancing. At any point of time, there should not be more than two students/inmates in a room. Students are expected to maintain social distance. Crowding of students/inmates (more than two) in the hostel room is not permitted," the norms said.

It also added, "No visitor shall be allowed to the centres/homes. In case of emergencies, visitors may meet at a waiting room/space. Before allowing visitors, thermal screening, use of mask and sanitization be ensured to meet any inmate at the dedicated place."

The department has also asked the authorities to introduce a coupon system for mess services and training for the mess staff regarding Covid appropriate behaviour.

TROPICAL FRUIT



State for speeding up LMO, PSA plants

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 25: The state task force for medical oxygen management Tuesday reviewed the implementation of various liquid medical oxygen (LMO) and pressure swing absorption (PSA) plants in the state.

The task force decided to accelerate the implementation of 13,000 litre capacity LMO plant at Pandit Raghunath Murmu Medical College & Hospital at Baripada.

This facility will support the isolation wards, O&G wards, Paediatric wards as well as the ICU and HDU beds being run at the hospital. Keeping in view the emerging and future requirements, the task force also prioritized early commissioning of a 1,000 LPM capacity PSA oxygen generation plant at the institute.

Both the facilities – the LMO plant as well as the PSA plant – will be commissioned within maximum 12 weeks and ensure long term oxygen security in the district.

₹50L aid to kin of Anganwadi workers dying on Covid duty

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 25: The state government will continue with its earlier scheme of providing ex gratia of Rs 50 lakh if any Anganwadi worker dies on line of duty.

Women and Child Development (W&CD) department has informed this to all district social welfare officers (DSWOs) as there was a confusion among the Anganwadi workers, who are engaged in door-to-door survey to detect Covid-19 symptoms among people from May 24.

“The government has been pleased to decide to continue with the earlier policy guideline and allow payment of financial assistance of Rs 50 lakh to the spouse/next of kin of any person drafted by government to perform Covid-19 related duty and succumb to it while in active line of duty provided, he/she is not covered under Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package: Insurance Package (PMGKIP),” the department said in the letter.

Supervisors, Anganwadi workers and helpers are also covered under the financial assistance scheme and their spouse/next



An Anganwadi worker checks the oxygen level of a Cuttack resident (FILE)

Supervisors, Anganwadi workers and helpers are covered under the scheme and their spouse/next of kin will be eligible for the aid

of kin will be eligible for the financial assistance of Rs 50 lakh if any of them succumb to Covid while on active line of duty, it said. The DSWOs have been directed to bring this to the notice of

all so that there should not be any confusion. Moreover, the officers have been directed to ensure that adequate safety materials like masks, gloves, sanitisers and others are provided to Anganwadi workers during door-to-door survey.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik had last year announced an ex gratia of Rs 50 lakh for family members of Covid warriors, including healthcare personnel, ASHA and Anganwadi workers, and policemen engaged in Covid-19 duty who died of the infection.

Timely care key to tackle black fungus

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 25: The spread of black fungus infection (mucormycosis) has created a new health hazard especially in Covid patients and those who have recently recovered from the viral infection.

However, ophthalmologists claimed that the fungal infection causes grave threat to the eyes and it may also necessitate removal of the eye if infection goes out of control.

“This infection has become a new threat especially in patients of Covid-19 as the infection leads to reduction in the White Blood Cells (WBC) which fight infections while long-term steroids and other drugs also act in reducing the body immunity which in many cases clears the path for fungal infection,” said



Bulging of eyes, redness and restrictions in eyeball movements could be the signs of the fungal infection

Dr Suryasnata Rath, Director, LV Prasad Eye Institute here.

According to ophthalmologists, bulging of eyes, redness and restrictions in eyeball movements could be the signs of the fungal infection which needs specialised attention from ENT doctors and ophthalmologists.

“This infection has been found to be a very invasive infection where there are chances of deaths and also increased infections. Any

one developing symptoms of the disease should immediately consult a specialised eye surgeon, preferably an Oculoplasty Specialist. Alternatively, an ENT surgeon can also be consulted,” Rath said.

Several experts claimed that timely detection and medications often are used to treat the patients successfully. “If the disease is detected at an early stage, timely administration of drugs like Amphotericin and others could

arrest the disease and reduce the chances of morbidity and likely damages to the eye and brain cells,” said Dr Swyam Prayag Parida, associate professor, All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Bhubaneswar.

Doctors claimed that Covid patients must shun the practice of over-the-counter procurement of some steroid drugs like Dexamethasone, Prednisolone, Methyl prednisolone and others without the consultation of doctors. “Only doctors can make a decision on the steroids to be taken in Covid treatment, the right amount and timing. Unnecessary and prolonged usage of such drugs can make Covid patients, diabetic patients and others more prone to the disease,” said Dr Pooja Sah, a doctor working in a Covid hospital.

Cuttack will miss Ishwar's lip-smacking dish

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, May 25: Ishwar Behera, popularly known as Ishwar Mausa, who had been satiating the taste buds of numerous people through his lip-smacking dahibara aloodum for more than five decades now, passed away following a massive cardiac arrest last Sunday.

He was 72. A resident of Tulsipur in the Silver City, Behera is survived by wife, two sons and grandchildren.

As the news of his death broke out, people took to social networking sites to express their grief and shock over the loss. Many of his customers, even outside Odisha, termed it as a personal loss as Behera's death has left behind a void that cannot be filled.

Cuttack Municipal Corporation commissioner Ananya Das took to Twitter to condole Behera's demise terming it as 'a sad day for Cuttack'.



File photo of Ishwar Behera

In a Facebook post, avid blogger 'JustVish' wrote: “It breaks my heart to get this news that my childhood McDonald Ishwara Uncle is no more with us. He has been instrumental in shaping my love for dahibara and respect for street food...”

Behera lost his parents at the age of nine. For the next few years, a young Behera learnt the art of preparing 'Dahibara Aloodum' at

his sister's place in Bidanashi before starting to sell the delicacy in the Millennium City.

“He would walk all through the Silver City streets to sell two pots of the delicacy hung over his shoulders with a bamboo pole daily. As years rolled by, he managed to put up makeshift carts near Barabati Stadium and Biju Patnaik Square here,” said a septuagenarian Tulsipur resident, a Dahibara lover.

Asked, Ishwar's son Ganesh said he would carry forward Behera's legacy.

“Baba (dad) had been selling dahibara aloodum for the past 57 years. He used to prepare the items needed for the delicacy—right from batter to spices—all at home. I'll use the same recipe and try to ensure that people won't miss baba's 'Dahibara Aloodum'. I'll carry forward baba's legacy,” Ganesh said.

IN MEMORIAM



People pay homage to former chief minister Biren Mitra on his death anniversary at Mission Road in Cuttack, Tuesday

Naveen condoles preacher Charan Ramdas' demise

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar/Puri, May 25: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Tuesday mourned the demise of renowned Odia preacher Charan Ramdas, who died after recovering from Covid-19 in Puri Monday. He was 61.

According to sources, Ramdas had tested positive for Covid-19 a few days ago and was admitted to a Bhubaneswar-based private hospital. Some days later, he was discharged from the hospital and advised home isolation. He was under home isolation at his residence on Ramaballabh Road.



However, he had to be admitted at Infectious Disease Hospital (IDH) in Puri later as he developed respiratory problem. While undergoing treatment in the ICU, he breathed his last Monday evening.

Taking to Twitter, Patnaik said, “Saddened to learn about the death of renowned preacher Charan Ramdas. He had been a household name in Odisha through his simple way of elaborating mythological legends. May his soul rest in peace! My heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family members.”

Born March 11, 1969, Ramdas was known for his simple way of preaching of Jagannath culture and traditions. His simple style of narrating the legend associated with Hera Panchami put him on the map.

Covid vaccination drive suspended in 11 districts

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 25: The state Health department Tuesday suspended the ongoing Covid vaccination drive in 11 districts of Odisha and the urban areas of Bhubaneswar.



The 11 districts where there would be no vaccination sessions are: Balasore, Mayurbhanj, Kendrapara, Puri, Khurda, Jagatsinghpur, Keonjhar, Jajpur, Angul, Dhenkanal and Bhadrak.

The government has planned only 513 sessions for Wednesday. The health department said that Tuesday the government was able to inoculate a total of 1,05,853 persons through the 635 active sites.

Rlys moves 680 tonne O2 from Odisha, WB, J'khand

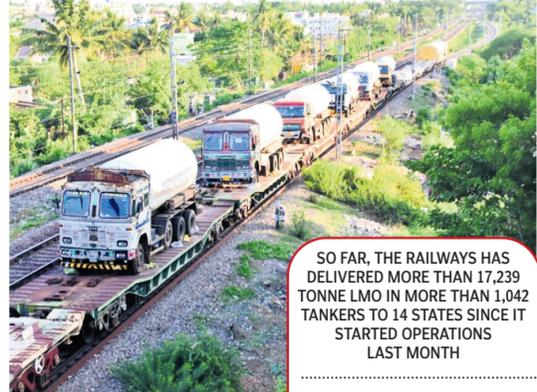
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 25: Indian Railways moved 680 tonne oxygen from Odisha, West Bengal, and Jharkhand in the last 12 hours in view of Cyclone Yaas, the national transporter said Tuesday.

Severe cyclonic storm Yaas is likely to make landfall near Dhamra Port in Odisha's Bhadrak district early Wednesday morning, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said.

“Oxygen Expresses moved 680 tonnes of oxygen relief from Odisha, West Bengal and Jharkhand in the last 12 hours before the cyclone gets stronger. Eight Oxygen Expresses have moved from the region,” a statement from the Railways said.

The country's major liquid medical oxygen (LMO) generation plants are based in this region and are now proving to be the source of the life-saving gas for other states for supply to hospitals during the Covid-19 pandemic.



So far, the Railways has delivered more than 17,239 tonne LMO in more than 1,042 tankers to 14 states since it started operations last month.

Providing relief to oxygen starved states, so far, 263 Oxygen Express trains have completed their journey while two more

SO FAR, THE RAILWAYS HAS DELIVERED MORE THAN 17,239 TONNE LMO IN MORE THAN 1,042 TANKERS TO 14 STATES SINCE IT STARTED OPERATIONS LAST MONTH

AMONGST THE SOUTHERN STATES, DELIVERY OF LMO TO TAMIL NADU, KARNATAKA AND TELANGANA CROSSED 1,000 TONNES EACH VIA THE OXYGEN EXPRESS TRAINS

loaded trains with more than 134 tonnes of LMO in eight tankers are

currently on the run. Amongst the southern states, delivery of LMO to Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Telangana crossed 1,000 tonnes each via the Oxygen Express trains.

Oxygen relief by Oxygen Express trains reached out to 14 states – Uttarakhand, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Haryana, Telangana, Punjab, Kerala, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Assam. Till the time of this release, 614 tonne oxygen has been offloaded in Maharashtra, nearly 3,649 tonne in Uttar Pradesh, 633 tonne in Madhya Pradesh, 4,820 tonne in Delhi, 1,911 tonne in Haryana, 98 tonne in Rajasthan, 1,421 tonne in Karnataka, 320 tonne in Uttarakhand, 1,099 tonne in Tamil Nadu, 886 tonne in Andhra Pradesh, 225 tonne in Punjab, 246 tonne in Kerala, 1,029 tonne in Telangana, and 80 tonne in Assam.

Railways has mapped different routes with oxygen supply loca-

tions and keeps itself ready with any emerging need of the states, the statement said. States provide tankers to the Indian Railways for bringing LMO, it added.

Oxygen Express trains started their deliveries 31 days ago, April 24, in Maharashtra with a load of 126 tonne.

Criss-crossing the country, Indian Railways is picking up oxygen from places like Hapa, Baroda, Mundra in the West and Rourkela, Durgapur, Tatanagar, Angul in the East and then delivering it to states of Uttarakhand, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Haryana, Telangana, Punjab, Kerala, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Assam in complex operational route planning scenarios.

The average speed of these critical freight trains is above 55 kmph in most cases over long distances. Technical stoppages have been reduced to a minute for crew changes over different sections.

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BRACING FOR YAAS



Policewomen rescue a baby in Chandbali area of Bhadrak



An excavator removing trees on Soro-Kupari road in Balasore



A woman filling a hurricane lamp with oil in Nischintakoli area of Cuttack



An elderly woman is being shifted to a cyclone shelter in Rajnagar area of Kendrapara



Villagers evacuate a sick elderly woman in Chandbali area



People being served food at a cyclone shelter in Balasore



As sea water plays havoc in a village in Rajnagar area, residents move to safer places



Waves eroding Dagara beach in Baliapal area of Balasore

OP PHOTOS

Kendrapara remains vulnerable to natural forces

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kendrapara, May 25: Even as the district administration is leaving no stone unturned to ensure zero casualty by evacuating people living in low lying areas to safer places ahead of the arrival of cyclonic storm Yaas, the coastal district continues to remain vulnerable to natural forces, a report said.

The district administration evacuated over 28,000 people to 570 multi-purpose cyclone centres by Tuesday afternoon. As many as 22 teams of fire brigade personnel, police, ODRAF and NDRF are manning the operations. BJD's organisational secretary Pranab Prakash Das visited the district and reviewed the situation in a meeting with district and block officials. Mahakalapara MLA Atanu Sabyasachi Nayak, Rajnagar MLA Dhruva Charan Sahu and Aul MLA Pratap Dev also participated in the meeting.

The high tidal waves lashing the



coast are indicative of the fact that all arrangements made to protect the coast of the district from the wrath of the sea have fallen flat with the natural forces continuing to play havoc in the district.

Villager Harihar Swain of Pentha of Rajnagar block said that even as the district administration is leaving nothing to chance and evacuating the people, the rising tidal waves have cast doubts on the safety and durability of the saline embankment and geo-synthetic tube wall built to

protect the sea side of the district from the ravaging forces of nature.

He said, with the sea surface remaining extremely rough, high tidal waves are continuously lashing the coast. The tidal waves could damage the saline embankment if they rise above one metre. He feared that the tidal waves might cross the coast and ravage his village as the large rocks and gabion boxes in the geo-synthetic tube wall have been washed away into the sea.

The 600-metre geo-synthetic tube

wall was built by the state government under the Integrated Coastal Zone Management Programme four years back at a cost of Rs 39 crore to protect Pentha and nearby areas from high waves, cyclones and tsunamis.

Another villager, Kailash Chandra Behera of Magarkanda under Rajnagar block said Yaas could cause substantial damage to the district. The tidal waves which had already destroyed a majority of the villages in seaside Satabhaya have entered the Barahipur village in the area. The tidal waves had also led to erosion of the tourist site Havelikhati Island.

Environmentalist Hemant Kumar Rout, and local intellectuals Kshitish Kumar Singh and Pratap Kumar Padi said the cyclonic storm has posed serious threats to the Bhitarkanika National Park. The high waves have led to erosion of Agarnasi, Babubali, Chinchiri islands in the geo-synthetic range. The tidal waves have also destroyed the saline embankments at Talachua and Purusottampur.

Lakhs go down the drain in tree translocation project

POST NEWS NETWORK

Baliguda, May 25: The forest department spent huge amount of money for translocation of scores of valuable trees from a roadside in Baliguda of Kandhamal district in 2019. But the drive has come a cropper, leading to wastage of money, a report said.

According to the report, a road expansion project was undertaken in the Baliguda area in 2019. A decision was taken to cut down 2,649 trees along both sides of the project. Of them, over 1000 valuable trees were identified for translocation.



The effort was initiated by Baliguda DFO Biswanath Nilnabar. Special machinery and labourers from outside were engaged in the tree translocation drive which cost lakhs of rupees. Various quarters welcomed the initiative to protect valuable trees. However, it was

learnt that not a single tree translocated from the roadside has survived.

Locals said, "The project has completely failed while the fund invested into the plan went down the drain. The money should have been utilised in other development works."

Traffic prohibited on NH-16 in Jajpur

Jajpur: In view of the cyclone Yaas, Jajpur district administration prohibited vehicular movement on the National Highway-16. The prohibition will remain effective from May 25 midnight till 12 noon the following day. NH-16 passes through the district towards Balasore. Informing about the restriction, Jajpur Collector Chakravarti Singh Rathore said the possibility of road accidents caused by Yaas is high. Keeping this in view, the district administration has decided to keep traffic off the NH-16 for the safety of people and their properties. But vehicles providing emergency services are allowed to ply on the NH during the prohibited hours, he added.

Paradip port suspends operation

AGENCIES

Paradip, May 25: Paradip port suspended its operations from 2 pm Tuesday as part of safety measures in view of the impending severe cyclone Yaas, which is likely to cross Odisha coast May 26, an official said. At least 12 vessels proceeded down to the deep sea so as to avoid the path of the storm, he said, adding that all the trucks, dumpers and large cargo handling equipment in the port area will be taken to a safe zone. "The authorities have been in coordination with the Odisha government and the Jagatsinghpur district administration to take all the precautionary measures," Paradip Port Trust Chairman Vinit Kumar told reporters. Severe cyclonic storm Yaas is likely



to make landfall near Dhamra port in Bhadrak district early Wednesday morning, the IMD said. The Jagatsinghpur district administration has been making arrangements for evacuating people living near the coastal areas to cyclone shelters. "Over 10,000 people have been evacuated in Jagatsinghpur till 10 am Tuesday," an official of the local ad-

ministration said. IG of Police (Operations) Amitabh Thakur and Jagatsinghpur SP Prakash R reached the Paradip Police Station to review the situation and held talks with personnel of NDRF and ODRAF. Kumar said the port authorities have provided food and drinking water to cyclone shelters in the district.

LMO plant becomes operational at MKCG

POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, May 25: A newly established liquid medical oxygen (LMO) plant at Maharaja Krushna Chandra Gajapati Medical College and Hospital (MKCGMCH) became operational, Tuesday.

The plant, after being operational, first supplied oxygen to the Covid Hospital-2 (DCH) functioning at the super speciality block of the hospital. Professor Dr Santosh Kumar Mishra, superintendent of MKCGMCH, said. Later, the plant will supply oxygen to the Covid Hospital-1 and other wards in hospital, he said.

The MKCGMCH is the first among the government hos-

pitals in the state to have its own oxygen plant. The plant has been established to supply oxygen to the patients through pipes and was inaugurated by the Chief Minister May 20.

Over 15,000 litre of liquid oxygen was brought in a large tanker from the Jajpur based Linde Oxygen Company and refilled in the plant. Collector Vijay Amruta Kulange reviewed the transfer of liquid oxygen to the plant and had a discussion with the concerned engineers.

Later at night, oxygen was supplied to the Covid hospital on an experimental basis so that no problem arises during its supply to the patients admitted to the hospital.

Casuarinas flattened

POST NEWS NETWORK

Balasore, May 25: As cyclonic storm Yaas inched towards its landfall, the sea became turbulent on the Balasore coast, leaving hundreds of casuarinas flattened near Talsari beach. Meanwhile, the administration has hurriedly evacuated people from coastal parts. Nearly 12,000 people have been shifted to cyclone shelters and schools, a report said. Huge waves have been tossing against the coast at Bhograi, Udaypur-Talsari, Kirtania, Choumukh, Kankadapal, Dagara, Bahabalpur, Kasaphala and Chandipur. Due to impact of rough sea, hundreds of casuarina trees were flattened at Dandidwip.

Hirakud to release floodwaters after June 1

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, May 25: Hirakud reservoir will release the season's first floodwaters into the Mahanadi after June 1. This was informed in a wireless message issued by the additional chief engineer, Hirakud Head Works and Additional Spillway at Burla in Sambalpur. The water will be released anytime between June 1 and October 10, said the message.

"This is for information and necessary action of all concerned that in the ensuing monsoon, the floodwaters from Hirakud Reservoir will be released into the river Mahanadi at



any time during the period from June 1 to October 10," the message read.

The authorities requested the local administration and all the concerned departments to take necessary measures to ensure that the riverbed and downstream of Hirakud dam remain clear as a safety measure against life and property.

Woman's body found under mysterious circumstances

Jajpur: Police recovered the half-naked body of a woman from the Genguti riverbed near Gopinathpur village under Bari police limits in Jajpur district, Tuesday. The identity of the deceased is yet to be ascertained, said the police. According to a source, some local people first spotted the body lying on the riverbed, Tuesday morning. Alerted, Bari police sent the body for post-mortem and seized a wooden plank, gold ornaments and a handbag from the spot. The villagers said that the woman might have been sexually assaulted before being killed by miscreants.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
RURAL WORKS DIVISION-II, DHENKANAL
KAMAKHYANAGAR
No. O-253-
E-Mail: rw.kamakhyanagar@yahoo.co.in
e-procurement Notice No.01/Road Work/2021-22

- Name of the work : Road work
- Total No. of works : 12 (Twelve) Nos.
- Tender cost : Rs.4.60 to 49.56 lakh (Approx.)
- Class of contractor : 'D', 'C' & 'B' class
- Period of completion : 2 to 3 calendar months
- Availability of tender : 27.05.2021 at 11.00 A.M. to 17.06.2021 upto 5.00 P.M.
- Last date & time of seeking : 16.06.2021 upto 4.00 P.M.
- Date & time of opening : 23.06.2021 at 11.00 A.M. of bid

Other details can be seen from the website <http://tendersorissa.gov.in>.

Sd/- Executive Engineer, R.W. Division-II
Dhenkanal, Kamakhyanagar
OIPR-25094/11/0001/2122

For Sale/Eaution: Wet Damaged Dalmia Cement – 19,786 Bags Lying at BALASORE, ORISSA, Contact Person – 09437104872 Last Date For Inspection & EMD Deposit – 03.06.2021 & Date Of E-auction: 05.06.2021 (3 PM), Auctioneer: Meenakshi- 9625137014 / M F Islam – 09911003339 (Insurance Claim Material Will Be Sold On 'As Is Where Is', 'Whatever There Is' And 'No Complaint' Basis).

For more details: www.SalvageManagers.com support@salvagemanagers.com

EAST COAST RAILWAY
HIRING OF VEHICLE
Tender Notice No.: ST-OT-VEHICLE-HDSPDP-221 Dt. 21.05.2021
Name of Works (HIRING OF ONE NUMBER OF LIGHT VEHICLE (TATA SUMO/ MAHINDRA BOLERO) OR SIMILAR NON-AC FOR OFFICIAL USE UNDER JUNIOR ENGINEER/SIGNAL/ KENDRAPARA OF KHURDA ROAD DIVISION FOR A PERIOD OF 12 MONTHS. (II) HIRING OF ONE NUMBER OF LIGHT VEHICLE (TATA SUMO/ MAHINDRA BOLERO) OR SIMILAR NON-AC FOR OFFICIAL USE UNDER SENIOR SECTION ENGINEER/TELE/ CHANDIKHOLE ROAD OF KHURDA ROAD DIVISION FOR A PERIOD OF 12 MONTHS.
Tender value: ₹8,47,336.08
Bidding Start Date: 28.05.2021, Date & Time of Tender Closing: 1100 hrs of 11.06.2021.
No manual offers sent by Post/Courier/Fax or in person shall be accepted against such e-Tenders, even if these are submitted on firm's letter head and received in time. All such manual offers shall be considered invalid and shall be rejected summarily without any consideration.
Complete information including e-Tender documents of the above e-Tenders is available in website <http://www.treps.gov.in>
Note: The prospective tenderers are advised to revisit the website 15 days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes/ corrigenda issued for this tender.
Divisional Railway Manager (S&T)/ PR-111/M/21-22 Khurda Road

FOCUS KERALA

UNBROKEN GLASS CEILING



There have been many analyses of what has been called the paradox of Kerala – good development indicators that should in theory make the space for gender empowerment, but that empowerment has eluded the state

istry. But mounting differences with the CPI(M) led to her expulsion in 1994.

Earlier this month, on May 11, just short of her 102nd birthday, Gowri Amma passed away. When she served as revenue minister, Gowri Amma was the only woman in the government headed by EMS Namboodiripad in 1957. She won eight elections and held many portfolios in the communist governments of 1957, 1967, 1980 and 1987. Her commitment to the party was beyond even her personal life. When the communist party split in 1964, she chose the CPI(M), irrevocably straining her marriage, as her husband TV Thomas remained with the CPI. The party did try to make up for the problems of the past with the Vijayan government holding a year-long birthday celebration for her in 2019, the year Gowri Amma turned 100.

There have been many analyses of what has been called the paradox of Kerala – good development indicators that should in theory make the space for gender empowerment, but that empowerment has eluded the state. The women leaders being side-lined are but a tiny window in what is thought to be a major concern beneath the statistics that look remarkably good. The 'progressive' tag does not sit too well considering the low numbers of women in the State Legislature and Parliament from Kerala. This time, the 140-member State Assembly has 11 women MLAs, a double digit after two decades. In 2016, a total of 108 women contested the polls, but only eight were elected. The figures for Parliament are even poorer. Kerala sends 20 MPs to the Lok Sabha and has nine Rajya Sabha seats, but since Independence, only nine state MPs from both houses of Parliament have been women. What this indicates is that development by itself does not change social and cultural norms. Just as GDP numbers by themselves do not deliver well-being, we are learning something similar about human development indicators. It is easy to build a school and get a degree but it takes much more than that to be learned.

The writer is the Managing Editor of The Billion Press.

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K K Shailaja, known as "Shailaja Teacher" in Kerala, and hailed as the "Coronavirus slayer" outside the state, has not been given a place in the new Cabinet of Pinarayi Vijayan. She will be around as Chief Whip of her party in the Legislative Assembly, a role that ensures members follow the party line, which the CPI(M) legislators usually do. Her exclusion from the ministry and relegation to a new role came as a surprise to many in and outside Kerala, which is known for progressive policies that have helped achieve the development indices it is proud of, and helped fight the pandemic better than many other states. Chief Minister Vijayan himself has been careful to project his concern for women. On May 9, he wrote: "The self-sacrificing mother is a much-glorified image. Often, this restricts women's freedom and self-sufficiency. The Left stands for equality that transcends gender. On this Mother's Day, let us welcome our mothers outside the confines of our homes into a wide world." So why was a high performing woman minister in the midst of a pandemic she managed so well, dropped?

Shailaja is not the first woman to hit what might be the rather hard glass ceiling in Kerala. In 1987, KK Gowri Amma, Kerala's first revenue minister was bypassed for the position of chief minister that she was widely considered to be a front runner for. She had helped stalwarts like EMS Namboodiripad and AK Gopalan build the party which came to power in 1957 giving Kerala the world's first democratically elected communist government. As a powerful revenue minister, Gowri Amma brought in revolutionary land reforms that changed the way of land use and upset the prevailing feudal system. It was her help in the early initiatives which focused on health and education that have ensured that the state continues to have the best healthcare indices and highest literacy rate.

She was considered a serious contender for the position of CM after the election in 1987, when EK Nayanar was chosen over her. In fact, Kerala has never had a woman CM and Gowri Amma was being reckoned as the first. Of course, India has had many shining examples of woman CMs else-

where, beginning with the noted Gandhian and freedom fighter Sucheta Kripalani, who was India's first woman CM of the largest state, Uttar Pradesh, between 1963 and 1967. Nandini Satpathy became the CM of Odisha in 1972, the second Indian woman to head a state. For most years, the country has always had at least one woman heading a state, with today Mamata Banerjee doing her third consecutive term in West Bengal. Across India, 16 women have headed states from Assam (Anwara Taimur: 1980-1981), Jammu & Kashmir (Mehbooba Mufti: 2016-2018), and Goa (Shashikala Kakodkar: 1973-1979) to Tamil Nadu (Jayalalitha: five terms between 1991 and 2016) since the 1960s.

Why has Kerala, in many ways a natural choice for a woman CM given the achievements of many women from the state, their role in politics, not to speak of matrilineal traditions that are seen in parts of the state, failed to have a woman CM? This is after all the state with a rich history of women participation and leadership on key issues, like the legendary freedom fighter AV Kuttimalu Amma who was jailed with her six-month old daughter way back in 1932 for participation in the civil disobedience movement in Thissur.

In the present times, Shailaja, like Gowri Amma, has earned a name for great capability and commitment. Her exemplary handling of Covid-19 and the flu outbreaks earlier were among the efforts that helped the government return this time bucking an over four-decades old trend that has al-

ternated power between the Congress-led UDF and CPI(M)-led LDF. The Financial Times, UK, placed her among its most influential women in 2020 and Britain's current affairs magazine Prospect picked her as the world's top "thinker for the Covid-19 age" from a group of 50 that listed New Zealand PM Jacinda Ardern and philosopher Cornel West. She also returned with the biggest margin of 61,000 votes from her constituency Mattannur.

So, her exclusion from the second Vijayan Cabinet on the grounds that no ministers would do a second term (barring the CM) has left voters wondering why an exception could not be made for the former health minister, who at least in some eyes was widely seen as a likely future CM. The Marxist party state committee meeting held before the new team was announced did not run its usual rambling course. Its brevity indicated Vijayan's complete hold on state party matters.

It was in some senses a replay of 1987. At a post-election meeting in that year, senior party leaders chose EK Nayanar over KR Gowri Amma although the party's election campaign repeatedly suggested that the state would have the first woman CM if they won. The slogan heard then was: Keralanaattil KR Gouri Amma bharikkum (Kerala will be ruled by KR Gouri Amma). Though she never got over the slight of being bypassed by a man she regarded as a novice, Gowri Amma accepted the agriculture and social welfare portfolio in the first Nayanar min-



Lekha Rattanani

THE 'PROGRESSIVE' TAG DOES NOT SIT TOO WELL CONSIDERING THE LOW NUMBERS OF WOMEN IN THE STATE LEGISLATURE AND PARLIAMENT FROM KERALA

Kumbhkarna Rising

Finally, the Centre seems to be waking up from its deep slumber and has sent External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar to the USA for shopping for vaccines produced by manufacturers in the USA. Despite its bravado, procrastination has been the hallmark of the Centre's response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Buying vaccines from the US market suffers from the same malady. Two of the major US manufacturers – Pfizer and Moderna - have already made it known that their orders are full and they won't be able to supply vaccines to new clients any time soon.

Obviously, it's a gross failure on the part of the Central government, which apparently did nothing while the pandemic has been raging, when so many countries, including the USA, European Union, Japan, South Korea and Australia, had placed orders for millions of doses with the American companies when the pandemic broke out in 2020 itself.

Now, when the second wave has engulfed the whole of India with a daily caseload ranging from 200,000 to 400,000 and the country is plagued by inconceivable shortage of vaccines, Jaishankar landed in the USA on 24 May to procure vaccines from American companies and explore the possibility of their joint production. He is slated to hold discussions with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken besides meeting senior officials of the Biden administration during his five-day visit. The MEA has told the media that Jaishankar will have "interactions" with business forums on economic and Covid-19 related cooperation between the two countries. But, to what purpose now, when those American companies are busy fulfilling their commitments to other countries? That is the question the Centre will have to answer next. It is again another monumental failure of the government and the foreign affairs establishment that all the major countries have deposited money with the US companies and placed orders for the vaccines which are being supplied in pre-decided schemes and phases.

Even this delayed start by the Centre in looking for foreign vaccine supplies is marked by machinations to pass the blame for its colossal failure to inoculate the citizens on to the states. After wrongly monopolising procurement and distribution of the two vaccines - Covishield produced by Serum Institute of India (SII) and Covaxin by Bharat Biotech - it allowed 50 per cent of the doses to be purchased by the states and private hospitals. The allocation itself is a scandal as the Centre has decided to do nothing when different prices are being charged by the two companies from the Centre, states and in the open market. This has led to a situation where people are being forced to cough up as much as ₹2,000 for a single dose from private hospitals.

The next betrayal by the Centre came when it left it to the states to procure vaccines from foreign markets. The government at Centre perhaps knew too well that the states won't get the vaccines as the orders with the foreign manufacturers are full. Also, the matter came to the notice of the public when the US manufacturers told the governments of Punjab and Delhi that they would only negotiate with the Centre and not with the states. These companies, by their pronouncement, spoil a brilliant move of the Union government to dump the failures on the states. It's only then that the country came to learn about Jaishankar's foray into the US markets.

What the Punjab government's Nodal Officer (Vaccination) Vikas Garg said May 24 is revealing, indeed. He said Pfizer communicated to the state government that it is working with federal governments across the world to supply its Covid-19 vaccine for use in national immunisation programmes. The pharma major explained its supply agreements are with national governments and supra-national organisations and implementation within the country being a decision for local governments based on relevant health authority guidance. This is because the development, manufacturing, distribution and storage of complex innovative products, including the mRNA technology, requires globally-optimized supply chains. "We have a robust supply chain currently in place with established capabilities - one each in the US and one in Europe - that can quickly manufacture and deploy the vaccine for use across the world," a Pfizer spokesperson stated to the Nodal Officer. Pfizer and BioNTech have set a target to deliver over 2.5 billion vaccine doses in 2021. This includes expanding their manufacturing capabilities and increasing the supplier base for key materials to the supply chain, said the company official.

Punjab and Delhi governments have approached various vaccine manufacturers - Pfizer, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson - for direct purchase of Covid vaccines. The reply from Sputnik V and Johnson & Johnson are reportedly still awaited.

The upshot of all this is that the Centre has steadfastly been misleading the country with the false propaganda that the PM was the greatest leader in the world fighting the pandemic and that India is the top vaccine manufacturer of the world supplying vaccines to foreign countries more than to its own people. The truth is it has shown criminal negligence and monumental incompetence to deal with this national disaster.

Last but not least, let us not undermine the importance that country specific internal politics plays in international diplomacy. The manner in which PM Modi had openly pitched India's support for former US President Donald Trump in a pre election congregation in Houston, Tx, and also that very perceivable delay on the part of India to congratulate Joe Biden on his victory would certainly play a crucial role now. India's efforts at sourcing US vaccines would have certainly gained that slight disadvantage. Slight for others, immense for Indians.

WISDOM CORNER

- Kind words do not cost much. Yet they accomplish much. - BLAISE PASCAL
- The good life is one inspired by love and guided by knowledge. - BERTRAND RUSSELL
- Vanity working on a weak head, produces every sort of mischief. - JANE AUSTEN

WORDSWORTH

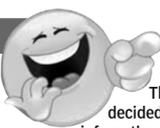
Nescient

This is a most useful word, meaning ignorant or unknowing. It's unknown to most people, with which you may bait your opponents: if they don't know the word, then their ignorance is doubly obvious. It's rare, though it appears in Ulysses by James Joyce, in which he speaks of "the lethargy of nescient matter". The noun, nescience, is somewhat more common; G K Chesterton used it in The Innocence of Father Brown: "Flambeau had been missed at Harwich; and if he was in London at all, he might be anything from a tall tramp on Wimbledon Common to a tall toast-master at the Hotel Metropole. In such a naked state of nescience, Valentin had a view and a method of his own". Nescient comes from Latin nescire, to be ignorant, from scire, to know. This is the same Latin stem that bequeathed us nice, a word which has gone through more shifts of sense than almost any other, but which started out meaning "foolish" or "stupid".

LOL

The train has failed

A large two-engine train was crossing America. After they had gone some distance one of the engines broke down. "No problem," the engineer thought, and carried on at half power. Further on down the line, the other engine broke down, and the train came to a standstill.



The engineer decided he should inform the passengers about why the train had stopped, and made the following announcement: "Ladies and gentlemen, I have some good news and some bad news. The bad news is that both engines have failed, and we will be stuck here for some time. The good news is that you decided to take the train and not fly."

IN JEST THIS

Keep running: Age is just a number



Melvin Durai

WHEN YOU'RE ONLY 50, YOU DON'T REALLY WANT TO BE THINKING ABOUT RETIREMENT OR BEING CONSIDERED AN OLD-TIMER

Professional golfer Phil Mickelson made history on Sunday when he became the oldest person to win a major golf tournament. Mickelson, who will turn 51 in less than a month, won the PGA Championship by two strokes, the sixth major title of his Hall of Fame career. He won the championship 11 months after he became eligible to join the AARP (American Association of Retired Persons).

I'm sure Mickelson has already received membership offers from the AARP and done what many people his age do: toss them in the garbage bin. "I'm not that old," they tell themselves. "All the different parts of my body are still working, even if I haven't tested some of them in years."

When you're only 50, you don't really want to be thinking about retirement or being considered an old-timer. But back in 1984, the AARP decided to drop its membership age from 55 to 50, hoping

to gain more members, more money and more clout for its lobbying efforts on behalf of seniors.

"You may not think you're old," the AARP tells potential members, "but just take a look in the mirror. Do you see those strands of white hair? Don't pull them out—they make you look distinguished. And we invite you to be a distinguished member of the AARP."

It's never too early to start preparing for retirement, of course, but I like the message I'm hearing from Mickelson and other older athletes: Don't take your foot off the accelerator too soon.

When you get to a certain age, physical decline is inevitable. You will lose a little strength, a little speed, but if you work harder than before, you can minimise this. You can use your experience and wisdom to your advantage.

That's how tennis star Leander Paes, who will turn 48 next month, has managed to represent India at seven Olympic Games and win 18

Grand Slam doubles titles, the last one when he was 43. "Age is just a number to look at and smile," he said in 2013, when he won the men's doubles title at the US Open.

I'm pretty certain that Fauja Singh is able to look at his age and smile. The British citizen of Indian origin is 110 years old, but he probably doesn't consider himself old enough to join the British Association of Retired Persons.

Few older athletes are as inspiring as Fauja, who became a serious runner at age 89, an age when most people aren't even serious about walking.

I can just imagine the conversation that Fauja had with his son, Harwinder. Fauja: "Where can I buy a good pair of running shoes?" Harwinder: "Running shoes? Don't you mean walking shoes?" Fauja: "No, running shoes. I want to train for the London Marathon."

Harwinder: "London Marathon?"

Dad, don't be crazy. The marathon is 26 miles long. People who are half your age go to the London Marathon to watch others run it."

Fauja probably faced a lot of skepticism, but he didn't let it deter him from making history. On Oct. 16, 2011, he became the first 100-year-old to complete a marathon when he reached the finish line at the Toronto Waterfront Marathon in 8 hours, 11 minutes and 6 seconds.

Fauja inspired many people through his feats, including Sikh activist Simran Jeet Singh, who wrote a children's book called "Fauja Singh Keeps Going."

"The day that he became the first 100-year-old to complete a 26.2-mile marathon is the same day I signed up to run my first marathon," Simran writes on his website. "And, like Fauja, I haven't stopped running since."

Like Fauja, we should all keep running, no matter our age—if not literally, then at least figuratively. After all, age is just a number.

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

Readers of Orissa POST are most welcome to contribute letters (200 words), articles and columns (between 750-1250 words). Contributors are requested to send their contact numbers and full postal address/email ID. They may also send in their valuable comments, opinion and suggestions, preferably by email, to: edit@orissapost.com

OrissaPOST
B-15, Rasulgarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

Vaccine crunch

Sir, Our nation is facing a scarcity of vaccines. Recently some states floated global tenders to procure vaccines from around the world. Now some states have revealed that vaccines firms like Pfizer and Moderna have abstained from making deals with the state governments. They made it clear that they will only deal with the Government of India. Here a major question comes up as to why did not the Government of India initiate any negotiations with those firms before which could have helped us immunise a few more millions. It might have helped us to resist the very severe second wave. This is utter negligence and carelessness from the Central government which let the denizens die. Vaccines are the only way to make this infection less severe. Despite knowing this the government has not ensured adequate vaccines yet.

Deba Prasad Nayak, CUTTACK

Unreal reality shows

Sir, It is not without reason that singing reality shows are popular among the masses. Though a far cry from ingenuity and objectivity, these shows have stormed an average Indian's drawing rooms. One such show 'Indian Idol' has managed to entertain the country's music connoisseurs since 2004. Not merely the winners, but participants who were unable to make the final cut have also carved a niche for themselves due to their supreme skills in singing. The reality show is blessed to have some big names from the film industry as judges. So far so good. But along the way, the show has been found wanting. Nonsensical stuff and unwanted theatrics have given a disheveled appearance to the talent hunting show. It has gone horribly wrong in its efforts to pay tributes to past masters of India's music and singing industry. The Kishore Kumar special, that was telecast recently, shell shocked the viewers. The show has failed to makeover; learning from past mistakes. Except for a few refreshingly different and energetic episodes the present edition has failed to tie up the loose ends. Rumours of 'fixing' have affected the show. Reality shows' decline set-in when they transgress from their definition: unscripted, real-life situations. "Indian Idol" may or may not be stage-managed or rigged but excessive melodrama has taken the genuine stuff out of it. Some stories about contestants' socioeconomic backgrounds are hyped to provide a fillip to the TRP. Generally, the aptitude of participants should be uppermost on the minds of the show directors. Before it slips beyond redemption, the 'Idol' must recoup.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

No home isolation in 18 Maha districts

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, May 25: The Maharashtra government has decided to stop home quarantining of Covid-19 patients in 18 districts where the positivity rate is high and all active patients in these areas would be admitted to Covid Care Centers, Health Minister Rajesh Tope said here Tuesday.

Of 36 districts in the state, Satara, Sindhudurg, Ratnagiri, Osmanabad, Beed, Raigad, Pune, Hingoli, Akola, Amravati, Kolhapur, Thane, Sangli, Gadchiroli, Wardha, Nashik, Ahmednagar and Latur have above-average positivity rates, as per the health department data.

Ordinarily, asymptomatic patients or those who have mild symptoms of coronavirus infection are advised home isolation.

The state has 3,27,000 active Covid-19 cases and the recovery rate has improved to 93 per cent. The case positivity rate - proportion of positive cases in tested samples -



is around 12 per cent while the case fatality rate is 1.5 per cent, Tope told reporters here.

But the positivity rate in 18 districts is higher than the state average, he said.

The state government has decided to stop home isolation com-

Satara, Sindhudurg, Ratnagiri, Osmanabad, Beed, Raigad, Pune, Hingoli, Akola, Amravati, Kolhapur, Thane, Sangli, Gadchiroli, Wardha, Nashik, Ahmednagar and Latur have high positivity rates

The state government has decided to stop home isolation completely in all of these 18 districts

The district collectors have been asked to set up more Covid Care Centers (CCCs) and admit all active patients there

of minor minerals for setting up CCCs in villages, he added.

Testing has to be done in a focused manner. Once a person tests positive for coronavirus, all high- and low- risks persons (who may have come in contact with the patient) should be tested. The collectors of the 18 districts (with

high positivity rate) have been instructed to avoid random testing in large numbers to artificially bring down the positivity rate, the health minister said.

All district collectors have also been directed to complete fire safety audits of hospitals in their areas, he informed.

Asha (Accredited Social Health Activist) workers will be trained to conduct Rapid Antigen Tests and use self-testing kits, Tope said, adding they will be asked to encourage villagers to undergo testing and also to spread awareness about the importance of vaccination.

On the global tender issued by the state for coronavirus vaccines, the minister said, "There has been no response from any vaccine producer. We have sent emails for Sputnik-V vaccine (to the Russian manufacturing firm) but are yet to hear from them. The Centre should float a tender on behalf of the states."

TN ropes in health experts to research on Mucormycosis



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, May 25: Tamil Nadu Health Minister Ma Subramaniam has said that the government has roped in multi-specialty experts and doctors to carry out a detailed study on Mucormycosis or Black Fungus. He said further action of the government will be based on their inputs.

He also said that around 70 lakh vaccines out of the 80 lakh vaccines allocated have reached the state and added that for those vaccinated in the age group of 18-44, over 12 lakh vaccines were bought for an amount of Rs 46 crore.

The minister said that these vaccines were being administered on priority basis to newspaper boys, vegetable vendors, destitutes and differently abled people.

Subramaniam told IANS from Thoothukudi, where he was inspecting the Covid-19 measures, "I am on a visit to rural Tamil Nadu including Thoothukudi to get direct information regarding the working of Covid-19 care centres. The health department is taking the advice of a team of multi-specialty doctors regarding black fungus and will take further action based on their reports."

The minister said, "A section of experts are of the opinion that those undergoing dialysis and taking steroids are affected by black fungus, however in places like Europe where steroids are given for treatment, the disease is not seen."

The minister said that there are suspicions on inhalation of industrial oxygen and the poor qual-

A section of experts are of the opinion that those undergoing dialysis and taking steroids are affected by black fungus, however in places like Europe where steroids are given for treatment, the disease is not seen

MA SUBRAMANIAM | TAMIL NADU HEALTH MINISTER

ity oxygen made using contaminated water leads to such infections and hence a detailed research is required.

He said that the government has constituted a team of 10 multi-specialty experts to research the cases.

"In fact the Covid-19 positivity has started reducing," he said comparing 33,800 cases Monday with the 36,000 cases a day 10 days ago. He also said that in Chennai the positive cases have come down to 4,900 a day from the 7,000 positive cases a day ten days back.

The minister also said that the oxygen situation in the state is much better compared to the precarious position a few weeks ago. He said that the state has recovered following the arrival of oxygen from Rourkela and Jamshedpur after the steps taken by the Chief Minister MK Stalin.

Subramaniam said, "The Chief minister is taking feedback on the infrastructure required to upgrade the production of oxygen in the state so as to overcome the crisis if a third wave of the pandemic takes place."

HC refuses to stay govt order scrapping quota in promotions

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, May 25: The Bombay High Court Tuesday refused to give a temporary stay to the Maharashtra government's decision to scrap 33 per cent reservation in promotions of government employees.

The General Administration Department issued an interim government resolution (GR) or order removing the reservation in promotions for public servants belonging to the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Vimukta Jati and Nomadic Tribes and Special Backward Classes categories May 7.

The decision came in the wake of the Supreme Court judgment holding quota for the Maratha community in Maharashtra invalid.

Following strong protests, the state government on May 10 issued a circular staying the interim GR of May 7. A final decision on the issue of quota in promotions is yet to be taken by the government.

Hearing a bunch of petitions on the issue, a vacation bench refused to stay the GR as demanded by some petitioners' lawyers, but said promotions would be subject to the court's order.

PAINTING FOR PRECAUTION



Artists paint a road for awareness against coronavirus in Krishnagiri

PTI PHOTO

Cong, BJP MP seek ban on journalist's book on 'making of Maharashtra'

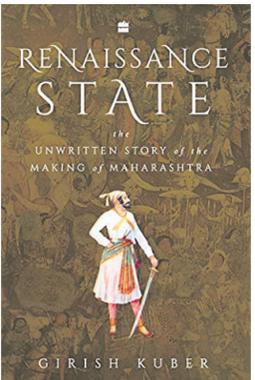
State Congress president Nana Patole said Kuber, the editor of Marathi daily Loksatta, should apologise over the contents of his new book titled

'Renaissance State: The Unwritten Story of the Making of Maharashtra'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, May 25: The Congress and a BJP MP in Maharashtra Tuesday separately demanded a ban on a new book written by senior journalist Girish Kuber alleging that it contains objectionable passages against the 17th Century king Chhatrapati Sambhaji, son of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, and his stepmother Soyrabai.

State Congress president Nana Patole said Kuber should apologise over the contents of his new book titled 'Renaissance State The



Unwritten Story of the Making of Maharashtra'.

"Kuber's book contains some objectionable remarks against Chhatrapati Sambhaji and his stepmother Soyrabai. It is another attempt at character assassination. The book should be banned in the state and the entire country, and Kuber should apologise for his remarks," Patole told reporters.

Calling it a serious issue, Patole wondered whether Kuber wanted to increase the sale of his book by making controversial statements against the highly revered icons of Marathi people. The government should take cognizance and immediately ban the book," he said.

The Congress is one of the constituents in the Shiv Sena-led Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government. Kuber is editor of Marathi daily Loksatta.

Speaking to reporters in Nanded, BJP Rajya Sabha MP Sambhaji Chhatrapati said, "The book should be banned by the state government in Maharashtra and the entire country."

Speaking on the Maratha quota, which was recently struck down by the Supreme Court, the BJP MP said the community should know about the government's future course of action.

He said the ruling and Opposition parties should keep their rivalry aside in the larger interest of Marathas and announce their next plan of action.

Lockdown-like curbs hit betel leaves cultivators

According to farmers from hilly areas in Soyegaon, they are hit by the double whammy of the disruption in the production and supply of betel leaves and the demand slump

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Aurangabad, May 25: Lockdown-like restrictions currently in force in Maharashtra have adversely affected the betel leaf farmers from Aurangabad district with many of them being forced to sell their produce at a loss due to disruption of the demand-supply chain.

According to farmers from hilly areas in Soyegaon, they are hit by the double whammy of the disruption in the production and supply of betel leaves and the demand slump.

"The sale of betel leaves generally starts in the month of April every year when good quality leaves



are in abundance. However, due to the curbs traders are unable to approach us. The number of cus-

tomers has also gone down," said Vinod Misal, a farmer who has cultivated the betel leaf on a one-

acre area, Tuesday.

Betel leaves cultivated in Soyegaon taluka are high in demand in various parts of Maharashtra and in neighboring Madhya Pradesh.

"I spent almost Rs 3.5 lakh for the cultivation of betel leaves. Due to the lack of demand, the leaves are turning yellow. There was a time when we had sold a bunch of 5,000 betel leaves at the rate of Rs 3,000 two years ago. This rate has now come down to Rs 500 this year. Traders from Surat used to hand over at least Rs 2 lakh to us to finalise a deal, but this year no trader approached us," lamented Arjun Katole who owns a farm of 1.75 acres.

Close factories or treat us as Covid warriors: Auto workers

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, May 25: With hundreds of them in many automobile units getting infected with coronavirus in the second wave, workers want factories to shut down to break the Covid-19 chain spread.

With the Tamil Nadu government classifying automobile units as Public Utility Service, workers want the companies to treat them as Covid-19 frontline workers and pay a compensation of Rs.50 lakh to the family of the workers who die due to coronavirus.

Terming the classification of automobile units as a continuous process industry as illogical, workers want the Tamil Nadu government to change it.

Some units like India Yamaha Motor and Hyundai Motors India Ltd have already started shutting down their operations and others have also started to shut down their shutters.

The Franco-Japanese joint ven-

ture Renault Nissan Automotive India Private Ltd Tuesday told its worker union that it would close the operations May 26 - May 30 and restart the factory May 31.

The Renault Nissan India Thozhilalar Sangam (RNITS) Monday put the Renault Nissan Automotive India management on notice saying that the workers will boycott duty from May 26 onwards.

RNITS' Joint Secretary T Tamizh Kumaran, in a letter to the management, said that unless their safety is ensured at the plant, workers will not come to work.

Two wheeler maker Eicher Motors that rolls out Bullet and other bikes has decided to close down its plants near here for three days between May 27-29 and restart production May 31 which is a Monday.

Eicher Motors told its workers that the short break will help to tame the Covid-19 curve to some extent.

About 600 workers tested positive



for Covid-19 out of 1,480 workers at Oragadam factory, a worker told IANS on condition of anonymity.

According to worker, production at the factory has halved due to issues with component supplies. Normally the production per shift will be about 450-500 units and has come down to about 250 per shift.

As regards covering health care expenses, the worker said the company provides medical insurance for Rs.250,000 for the family.

Normally a two minute silence will be observed if any company employee dies. Two employees have died due to Covid-19, but no such silence was observed as the com-

pany did not officially announce the deaths, the worker said.

With the Tamil Nadu government stipulating that industries have to ferry their workers in buses, the company has not made any arrangement for the workers who come to work in their two wheelers, the worker said.

At Ford India Private Ltd's car plant near here over 200 workers out of about 2,700 workers have been infected with coronavirus and two persons died, a worker preferring anonymity told IANS.

According to workers, the factory started operations May 24 after being closed from May 11.

Prior to that the plant was closed between May 1 and 5 to break the infection chain, the worker said.

A Ford India worker said, requests have been made to the management to implement social distancing norms like 50 per cent occupancy in factory buses, four metre gap between tables in canteen, sensor based taps and others.

of the day quote

The government should try to find a respectful solution after considering the demand of the farmers in broader national interest

We should harness the potential of quantum technology and its applications to keep the country in league with the ones that we compete with and also cooperate with

Cyclone Yaas is moving towards Bengal and Odisha from the Bay of Bengal. I appeal to Congress workers to provide all assistance ensuring safety of those affected

SHORT TAKES

Tejpal acquittal: Goa gov't moves HC

Panaji: Days after a trial court in the state acquitted former Tehelka Editor-in-chief Tarun Tejpal of all charges, including rape, in a 2013 case, the Goa government has filed an appeal in the Bombay High Court challenging the verdict.

Buddhadeb hospitalised

Kolkata: Former West Bengal Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee was rushed to a private hospital here Tuesday after his oxygen level suddenly started to fall.

1971 war hero passes away

New Delhi: Col Panjab Singh, a hero of the Battle of Poonch during the 1971 India-Pak war, died at a military hospital in Chandimandir Monday due to post-Covid complications.

Assam, Tripura extend curbs

Guwahati/Agartala: With no let up in the Covid surge, the Assam and Tripura governments Tuesday extended the corona curfew till June 5.

3 Naxals held

Raipur: Three Naxals, who were allegedly involved in triggering an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) blast in February, have been arrested from Chhattisgarh's Narayanpur district, police said Tuesday.



Vaccinating people should be the top priority of the CM (Amarinder Singh) at this moment

MP CM ANNOUNCES UNLOCK FROM JUNE 1

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said the process of unlocking will start in the state from June 1 for which a team of ministers will be formed



AHEAD OF FARMERS' PROTEST

Delhi cops warn against gatherings

Action will be taken against those who try to take the law into their hands, Delhi Police PRO Chinmoy Biswal said, adding that the force is already present at all borders points, including the protest sites of Singhu, Tikri and Ghazipur, and will not allow any illegal activity or entry



unnecessarily due to the ongoing coronavirus situation in the national capital.

"In last over one month, we have witnessed a severe situation in the national capital due to the coronavirus in which several people lost their lives. Police and administration took several steps to control the situation."

Biswal said, "We urge people not to gather as the virus could spread and the cases escalate. We appeal to the citizens to observe Covid-appropriate behaviour and lockdown which is still imposed in the city. There is no permission of gathering and demonstration due to the ongoing situation."

In a statement issued Tuesday, the NHRC said that India is reeling under a "scary" second wave of the coronavirus pandemic and these protesters are not only putting their lives in danger but also posing a risk to the others in rural areas as "potential carriers" of the virus.

strong place back in our community, at a time when attempts are being made to erode these basic values in our society," the statement said. Meanwhile, the National Human Rights Commission has issued notices to the Delhi, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh governments over allegations of flouting of COVID safety norms by farmers protesting at the borders against the farm laws. It has asked them to file within four weeks action taken reports regarding the steps taken to control the spread of Covid-19 infection at the protest sites.

In a statement issued Tuesday, the NHRC said that India is reeling under a "scary" second wave of the coronavirus pandemic and these protesters are not only putting their lives in danger but also posing a risk to the others in rural areas as "potential carriers" of the virus. On Tuesday, SKM also appealed to all citizens to mark the 'black day' by hoisting black flags from their homes, vehicles and other places. Farmer leaders said that farmers should wear black turbans and black chunni on this day. Kulwant Singh, a farmer leader, said that they will fix black flags at every border.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 25: With farmer unions observing 'black day' Wednesday on completion of six months of their stir against the Centre's agri laws, the Delhi Police has urged people not to hold gatherings due to the Covid situation and the ongoing lockdown and said it is keeping a tight vigil to deal with any situation at the protest sites on the city's borders.

Samkyukt Kisan Morcha, an umbrella body of protesting unions, had announced that farmers will observe May 26 as 'Black Day' to mark the completion of six months.

Last week, twelve major opposition parties, including the Congress, Trinamool Congress, Left parties, SP, NCP and DMK had extended their support to the protest. In the wake of the SKM's announcement, the Delhi Police Tuesday urged the people to follow Covid guidelines and not to come out of their houses and gather

BLACK FUNGUS SURGE

Maha to get 60K injections in June

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, May 25: With the number of Mucormycosis or Black Fungus cases on the rise in Maharashtra, the state will get 60,000 vials of the Amphotericin B injection early June, Health Minister Rajesh Tope said here on Tuesday.

The government has issued a global tender for this injection and it is expected to be available by June first week, said Tope after a review meeting of the Covid-19 and Mucormycosis situation in the state presided over by Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar.

He said that presently, the state has recorded 2,245 patients with the Black Fungus and there are over 100 deaths till date.

The cost of the Amphotericin-B injection used to treat this disease is very high and its distribution is controlled by the Centre. However, the state government has issued a global tender to make these injections widely available in

Maharashtra, and the batch of 60,000 vials will reach here within a few more days. Presently, Amphotericin B injection is being supplied by the Central Government and is being distributed to the districts according to the number of Black Fungus patients.

Accordingly, all district collectors have been directed to ensure that he updated information of the Black Fungus patients is provided on the IDSP portal, Tope said.

He pointed out that Mycormycosis has been declared as a notifiable disease by the Maharashtra government last week and now each patient would be recorded.

The state has announced it will cover the treatment costs of all Black Fungus patients under the central and state schemes at designated hospitals in all districts, while the government plans to impose a cap on the treatment costs by private hospitals, the minister said.

Moderna's vax in India likely next yr

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

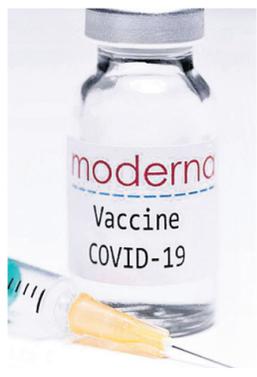
New Delhi, May 25: Moderna is expecting to launch a single-dose COVID-19 vaccine in India next year and is in talks with Cipla among other Indian firms, while another US giant Pfizer is ready to offer 5 crore shots in 2021 itself but it wants significant regulatory relaxations including indemnification, sources said Tuesday.

While Moderna has conveyed to Indian authorities that it does not have surplus vaccines to share in 2021, there are limited prospects of Johnson & Johnson exporting its jabs from the US to other countries in the near future, the sources privy to discussions added.

Two rounds of high-level meetings chaired by the Cabinet Secretary were held last week on the availability of vaccines in the global as well as domestic markets as it was felt that there is an urgent need to procure the jabs at a time the country is reeling under an unprecedented second wave of Covid-19 and a widening gap between supply and requirement.

Currently, the country is using two 'made-in-India' jabs - Covishield and Covaxin - to inoculate its billion-plus population and has administered 20 crore doses since launching the world's largest vaccination drive in mid-January. A third vaccine, Russian-made Sputnik V, has been approved by the government and is being used on a smaller scale at present. In the high-level meeting officials from the Ministry of External Affairs, NITI Aayog, Department of Biotechnology, Law Ministry and Health Ministry were present.

It was discussed that Moderna doesn't have surplus vaccines to share in 2021 and that it plans to launch its single-dose vaccine for the Indian market only in 2022, for which, they are in discussion with



Cipla and other Indian companies, a source said.

It is learnt that Cipla has already evinced interest in procuring 5 crore doses from Moderna for 2022 and has requested confirmation from the central government in respect of stability in regulatory requirements/policy regime. The Health Ministry has also been asked to take an early decision on Cipla's request regarding support required by them for procurement of Moderna vaccines.

In the case of Pfizer, the US pharma giant has indicated availability of 5 crore vaccine doses - 1 crore in July, 1 crore in August, 2 crore in September and 1 crore in October - for supply to India in 2021 and that it will deal only with Government of India and payment for vaccines will have to be made by GOI to Pfizer India.

The central government will make its own arrangement for further channelization of procured vaccines in the domestic market. According to another source, for the supply of vaccines to India, Pfizer has asked for indemnification from the Government of India and a document in this regard has been received from Pfizer Inc.

India to open new consulate in Maldives

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 25: The government Tuesday approved the opening of a new consulate in the Maldivian city of Addu this year to boost India's diplomatic presence in the strategically-located island nation.

The decision to set up the first consulate in the Maldives came amid China's consistent efforts to increase its influence in the country. "The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the opening of a new consulate general of India in Addu City, Maldives in 2021," an official statement said, adding the country occupies an important place in India's 'Neighbourhood First Policy'.

It said the opening of the consulate will help augment India's diplomatic presence in the Maldives and make it commensurate with the "existing and aspired level" of engagement. The government described the decision to open the new consulate as a "forward-looking step" in pursuit of India's national priority of growth and development for all.

Maldives is one of India's key maritime neighbour in the Indian Ocean Region and occupies a central and special place in the prime minister's vision of 'SAGAR' - 'Security and Growth for All in the Region'. Currently, India is developing projects worth USD 2 billion covering a large number of areas like ports, roads, bridges, water and sanitation systems as well as socio-economic development. The government said the momentum and energy in the bilateral relationship reached "unprecedented levels" under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi and President Ibrahim Solih. The ties between India and Maldives came under strain during the Abdullah Yameen regime. Yameen was perceived to be close to China.

RISKY ATTEMPT



Boys play at the Hooghly River near the Howrah Bridge in Howrah

PTI PHOTO

Bharat Biotech expects WHO approval for Covaxin by July-Sep

WITH COUNTRIES GEARING UP TO RESUME TRAVEL AND TOURISM, INTENDING TRAVELLERS FROM INDIA WHO HAVE TAKEN COVAXIN JABS WILL BE ANXIOUSLY WAITING FOR COVAXIN'S APPROVAL BY WHO

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Hyderabad, May 25: Bharat Biotech has said Tuesday that it is expecting regulatory approvals from the World Health Organisation (WHO) for its Covid-19 vaccine Covaxin by July-September 2021.

The Hyderabad-based company stated that application for Emergency Use Listing (EUL) has been submitted to WHO, Geneva and regulatory approvals are expected by July-September 2021.

It also said regulatory approvals for Covaxin are in process in more than 60 countries including the United States, Brazil and Hungary. "Emergency use authorisations have been obtained in 13 countries

with more to follow," it said. Most countries recommend vaccinations against Covid-19. Unvaccinated travellers can travel with negative RT-PCR tests prior to travel, in the absence of any other country specific travel restrictions, it added.

Bharat Biotech's statement came out amid reports that people who have taken Covaxin and plan to travel abroad were nervous as it is not in the list of WHO approved vaccines.

With countries gearing up to resume travel and tourism, intending travellers from India who have taken Covaxin jabs will be anxiously waiting for Covaxin's approval by WHO. Pfizer, Moderna and Covishield



are on WHO's approved list and people who have taken these vac-

cines may not face any restrictions while travelling. Those who have

Bharat Biotech is reported to have submitted 90 per cent of the documentation to the WHO for EUL

taken vaccines which are not on the approved list of WHO may have to undergo quarantine on landing in the destination countries.

Bharat Biotech is reported to have submitted 90 per cent of the documentation to the WHO for EUL.

WHO's EUL is expected to open the doors for Covaxin to be accepted by countries around the

world. Covaxin and Covishield are the two vaccines which are currently included in the Covid vaccination programme in India. Russia's Sputnik is soon likely to join the vaccination drive.

In January, India's drug regulator had approved Covaxin for emergency use but the move came under criticism as the full data from its clinical trials was not available. This was believed to be one of the reasons for vaccine hesitancy among the target groups in the initial stages of the vaccine drive.

Bharat Biotech and the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) claimed last month that Covaxin had shown overall interim effectiveness of 78 per cent.

of the day quote

Farmers of the country are continuously agitating even in the extreme calamity of corona to demand the withdrawal of the three new agriculture laws. BSP supports the nationwide protest day May 26 to mark the completion of six months of the movement

MAYAWATI | BSP PRESIDENT

The internal issues in Rajasthan will be resolved amicably and the state unit is in touch with all the leaders

AJAY MAKEN | CONG GENERAL SECY IN-CHARGE RAJ

Farmers have been lied to, and now these new black laws have proved to be the last nail in the coffin

NAVJOT SINGH SIDHU | PUNJAB CONGRESS LEGISLATOR

SHORT TAKES

Chaudhary to be new RLD president

New Delhi: Jayant Chaudhary was Tuesday appointed as the new national president of the Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD), according to a party statement. His elevation to the post comes following the demise of party president and his father Ajit Singh, who had succumbed to Covid-19 May 6. The decision to elevate the 42-year-old Chaudhary, who was till now the party vice president, was taken during a virtual meeting of the party's national executive, the RLD statement read.

2 held for raping girl

Srinagar: Police in Kulgam district of Jammu and Kashmir Tuesday arrested two people for allegedly raping a girl within half-an-hour of receiving the complaint. Police Post Mirbazar received a written complaint from the victim stating she was wrongfully restrained and forcibly raped by Mudasir Ahmad Ganie, a resident of Banimulla with the assistance of Manzoor Ahmad Naik, who lives in Gadool, inside a truck near a petrol pump at Nipora, a police spokesperson said. He said, a case was registered and investigation was initiated.

Fire breaks out at HPCL refinery

Visakhapatnam: Panic ensued after a fire broke out at the refinery of Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL) here Tuesday. Dense plumes of smoke and flames were seen rising from the refinery. On getting news about the incident, the police rushed to the spot and evacuated the people from there. According to sources, the fire broke out at the newly-constructed block in the HPCL premises. Fire tenders have been rushed to the spot.

80 shanties gutted

Ahmedabad: More than 80 shanties at a slum colony in Ahmedabad were destroyed after a massive fire broke out there Tuesday morning, a fire official said. There was no report of any casualty, he said, adding that police evacuated people living in the area as the fire raged. The blaze erupted in the slum colony located in Anandnagar area around 9 am and spread fast due to the wind, the official said. Around four cylinders exploded in the area after catching the fire, deputy chief fire officer Jayesh Khadia said. "More than 80 shanties were gutted in the fire. No injury was reported," he said.



Now shrouds are being ripped off their bodies. What kind of a cleanliness drive is this in UP? This is showing disrespect to the dead, to the religion and to humanity

PRIYANKA GANDHI VADRA | CONGRESS GENERAL SECRETARY

COVID RATE IN KERALA DROPS

The Covid test positivity rate (TPR) in Kerala continued to fall, touching 20.84 per cent Tuesday, while 177 deaths were reported



For women farmers, its black flags instead of masks

BLACK FLAGS AND NOT MASKS ARE GOING VIRAL IN PUNJAB!

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chandigarh, May 25: Women protesters have been stitching thousands of black flags for a nationwide protest on May 26 organised by farmers' union Samyukta Kisan Morcha to mark six months of the agitation against the three controversial farm laws enacted by the Central government.

They say the coronavirus pandemic is not a threat to them, so they don't need masks. The real threat is from Centre's three farm laws as they favour corporate interests and will destroy their livelihoods.



When Jaswinder Kaur and her friends living in a remote village in Bathinda district started stitching black flags to protest against the contentious farm laws, little did they realise that other would catch the bug and the practice would turn viral.

Jaswinder Kaur concedes that

she and her friends are not the pioneers, but also insist many like them believe the real danger is not from Covid-19 but the farm laws. For them, it's stitching of flags instead of the masks.

"For the last 10 months we are sitting here to lodge our protest against the three black agricultural laws.

Every morning after finishing our household chores, we come at the protest site. We spend our day by taking to each other. I have not heard that anyone from us to get infected with Covid-19," said octogenarian Nirmal Kaur, a professor in Bathinda town.

She said stitched 120 black flags in the past two days that are to be distributed free for the May 26 rally on the Delhi borders.

Also the flags carry names of the respective farmer union with slogans like Kisan Ekta Zindabad.

The Bhartiya Kisan Union (Ekta-Ugrahan) on Tuesday said: "After months of protesting against anti-farm laws, determination is same as it was first day when we arrived at borders. The country and farmers have to battle not only with pandemic but the government. The farmers are risking their lives to

save future and waiting for justice."

It added, "Women activists of its farm organization are making black flags to put on top of houses on May 26. A total of 1,000 flags have sent to the Tikri border and preparing 800 for own villages".

The Samyukta Kisan Morcha, an umbrella body of over 40 farmer unions, has announced it will observe May 26 as 'black day' to mark six months of their protest at Delhi's borders against the farm laws.

Farmer leader Balbir Singh Rajewal has appealed to people to raise black flags at their houses, vehicles and shops May 26 to ledge their protest.

Meanwhile, thousands of farmers belonging to Punjab and Haryana have set out for Delhi in cavalcades, some stretches for 20 km, for the May 26 rally.

RLYS SUSPENDS SUSHIL KUMAR



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, May 25: Two-time Olympian Sushil Kumar, who was arrested by the Delhi Police on Sunday in connection with the death of wrestler Sagar Dhankar, has been suspended by the Indian Railways until further orders, officials said Tuesday.

Northern Railway spokesperson Deepak Kumar said, "A case against Sushil Kumar, (Adhoc)JAG/IRTS, on premature repatriation to Northern Railway from NDMC, in respect of a criminal offence, is under investigation. He was detained in police custody on May 23 for a period exceeding forty-eight hours."

"Now, therefore Sushil Kumar JAG/ (Adhoc) IRTS is deemed to have been suspended with effect from the date of detention i.e. May 23, 2021 in terms of Rule 5 (2) of (D&A) Rules, 1968 and shall remain under suspension until further orders," he said.

Kumar was arrested after staying on the run for 18 days after the death of wrestler Dhankar.

According to Delhi Police officials, Kumar had travelled to Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Haryana during the 18-day-long cat and mouse chase game.

He was finally arrested from Delhi's Mundka area on Sunday morning, when he had come to collect some cash and also borrowed a scooter from a national level player. The Delhi Police had also announced a reward of Rs 1 lakh on Kumar and Rs 50,000 on his aide Ajay. Kumar was sent to six days' custody by a Delhi court.

Toolkit row: Delhi Police notice to Congress leaders

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 25: The Delhi Police has issued notices to Congress social media head Rohan Gupta and party spokesperson MV Rajeev Gowda asking them to join the probe into their complaint which had accused BJP leaders including Sambit Patra of posting a forged 'toolkit' attributed to the opposition party.

The row over the purported 'Covid toolkit' escalated after the Delhi Police's Special Cell visited two Twitter India offices on Monday and served a notice, asking it to share information based on which it had classified a related tweet by Patra as "manipulated media".

The police action drew sharp criticism from the opposition Congress and Left which accused the government of trying to stifle free speech and indulge in intimidation. Using the hashtag 'Toolkit', Congress leader Rahul Gandhi Tuesday tweeted, "Truth remains unafraid". Upping the ante, his party demanded that the microblogging site affix the 'manipulated media' tag to similar tweets of union ministers as it did to the post by Patra.

FUNGUS COLOUR SHOULD NOT LEAD TO PANIC: EXPERTS

Besides Black fungus cases, White and Yellow fungus infections too were reported from different parts of the country recently, which scientists say are also mucormycosis

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

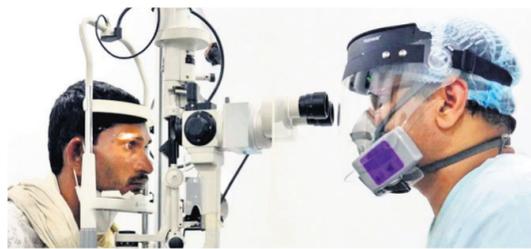
New Delhi, May 25: Seeking to quell the alarm over rising cases of mucormycosis in Covid patients, epidemiologists Tuesday underlined the importance of analysing the kind of fungal infection, its causes and risk factors and said the colour of the fungus should not lead to panic.

Health Minister Harsh Vardhan on Monday said 18 states have reported 5,424 cases of mucormycosis, a life-threatening infection, among COVID-19 patients and those who recovered from it.

Beside black fungus cases, instances of white and yellow fungus infections have also been reported from different parts of the country recently, which scientists say are also mucormycosis.

Dr Samiran Panda, head of the Epidemiology and Communicable Diseases at the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), said the use of "terms like black, green or yellow fungus" is making people scared and apprehensive.

Also, black fungus getting synonymous with the existing mucormycosis is complicating matters, he said. "For common people," he



told PTI, "I will say not to be driven by panic by colour - black, yellow, white. Let us find what kind of fungal infection is the person infected with as most fungal infections that cause fatal or severe disease are invasive fungal infections... that can occur when there is reduction or compromise in immunity. "So basic underlying phenomenon is immunity or the ability to fight the fungal infection," he said. In Ghaziabad, a person was detected with three variants of the fungus - black, white and yellow - on May 24, claimed a doctor of a private hospital who is treating the 59-year-old patient in the NCR city in Uttar Pradesh. Yellow fungus has been observed in reptiles, such as lizards, but not in human

beings, claimed Dr B P Tyagi, an ENT (ear, nose, throat) specialist at Harsh Hospital in the town's Raj Nagar area.

Dr Giridhara R Babu, the head of Life-course Epidemiology, Indian Institute of Public Health, said it is important to identify the cause and risk-factors associated with fungal infections.

Babu also said it needs to be understood why some people are more prone to the fungal infection and what is the reason behind rising cases. "In the second wave, there are some unusual things happening which were not there in the first wave such as the use of industrial oxygen. There are also variants of coronavirus in the second wave," he said.

Take care of Covid-19 victims' kids: Centre

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 25: As many as 577 Covid orphans have been reported by states so far and all of them are with their immediate families, sources have said.

Clarifying that these children are not abandoned and are under the watch and protection of district authorities, the sources said that if such children need counselling a team at NIMHANS is ready.

"There are 577 orphan kids due to Covid-19 identified by states. They are not abandoned and under the watch and protection of district authorities," a source said, adding that all the 577 children are with their families. The source further said that there is no shortage of funds for ensuring the welfare of

these children.

"The Centre is in constant touch with states and districts about these kids. There is no shortage of funds for their welfare. The Women and Child Development Ministry has held meetings with all stakeholders, including the UNICEF," the source added.

They said it is "unfortunate and painful" that when the Women and Child Development Ministry approached renowned activists who were talking about Covid orphans, they gave no details till date about the children orphaned due to the pandemic. WCD Secretary Ram Mohan Mishra said India is going to open 10 one stop centres in 10 missions across nine countries. One stop centres (OSCs) tackle cases of violence against women.

BEATING THE HEAT



Chinkaras quench their thirst as they, along with an emu bird, sit in the shade of a tree near Ramanreti Ashram on a hot summer day, in Mathura, Tuesday

SC stays HC order on pre-arrest bail over fear of Covid

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, May 25: The Supreme Court Tuesday stayed the Allahabad High Court's directions, issued while granting anticipatory bail to an accused, that apprehension of death due to Covid-19 is valid for granting such relief.

A bench of Justices Vineet Saran and BR Gavai, holding that the High Court had passed "sweeping directions" in the matter, said: "We direct the same to be stayed and the courts shall not consider the directions to grant anticipatory bail to accused in other cases." Courts should, instead, consider merits of

each case for anticipatory bail, it said.

The top court was hearing an appeal filed by the Uttar Pradesh government challenging the High Court's May 10 order. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, representing the Uttar Pradesh government, said the accused who was granted anticipatory bail till January 2022, has 130 cases pending against him. He added that the High Court order was relied on in many other states in matters connected with anticipatory bail.

The bench told Mehta: "We understand, you are aggrieved with the sweeping directions we will



issue notice."

The top court sought reply from the accused Prateek Jain and stressed, if he does not appear on the next date, it may consider cancelling his bail, and posted the matter for hearing in first week of July.

The top court also appointed senior advocate V. Giri as amicus curiae in the matter to assist it on deciding whether Covid can be considered a ground for grant of anticipatory bail.

Citing top court's direction to decongest jails amid the pandemic, the High Court had said: "The observations and directions of the

apex court show concern about the overcrowding of jails, and in case this court, ignoring the same, passes an order which will result in overcrowding of jails again, it would be quite paradoxical."

Imposing conditions on the accused, it had directed that the petitioner shall not obstruct or hamper police investigation and shall not leave the country without prior permission from the trial court concerned.

The High Court said that in case of his arrest, the petitioner shall be enlarged on anticipatory bail for the limited period till January 3, 2022.

international



We estimate that at least 1,15,000 health and care workers have paid the ultimate price. Health and care workers do heroic things, but they are not superheroes
TEDROS ADHANOM GHEBREYESUS | DIRECTOR-GENERAL, WHO

BIDEN TO MEET PUTIN JUNE 16

President Biden will hold a summit with Putin next month in Geneva, a face-to-face meeting between the two leaders that comes amid escalating tensions



of the day quote

This is a total violation of international law and order, a serious desecration of the victims of real genocide, and a serious provocation to the 25 million people of all ethnic groups in Xinjiang

XU GUIXIANG | SPOKESMAN, CHINA

Many attempts on our side over many, many years, almost decades to improve [the] relationship with Russia did not have [the] success they deserved. Economic cooperation over time has gotten more and more difficult

URSULA VON DER LEYEN | PRESIDENT, EUROPEAN COMMISSION

The Palestinians seek a process that ends the Israeli occupation and leads to the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital, on the basis of international legitimacy decisions

MAHMOUD ABBAS | PRESIDENT, PALESTINA

EU imposes sanctions on Belarus

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Brussels, May 25: The European Union agreed Monday to impose sanctions on Belarus, including banning its airlines from using the airspace and airports of the 27-nation bloc, amid fury over the forced diversion of a passenger jet to arrest an opposition journalist.

Reacting to what EU leaders called a brazen "hijacking" of the Ryanair jetliner flying from Greece to Lithuania Sunday, they also demanded the immediate release of the journalist, Roman Protasevich, a key foe of authoritarian Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko. "We won't tolerate that one can try to play Russian roulette with the lives of innocent civilians," said EU Council chief Charles Michel, who presided over the EU meeting.

A brief video clip of Protasevich, who ran a popular messaging app that played a key role in helping organize huge protests against Lukashenko, was shown on Belarusian state television Monday night, a day after he was removed from the Ryanair flight.

Sitting at a table with his hands folded in front of him and speaking rapidly, Protasevich said he



We won't tolerate that one can try to play Russian roulette with the lives of innocent civilians

CHARLES MICHEL | EU COUNCIL CHIEF

was in satisfactory health and said his treatment in custody was "maximally correct and according to law." He added that he was giving evidence to investigators about organizing mass disturbances.

The text was endorsed quickly by the leaders who were deter-

mined to respond with a "strong reaction" to the incident because of the "serious endangering of aviation safety and passengers on board by Belarusian authorities," said an EU official with direct knowledge of the discussions who was not authorized to speak publicly about the private talks.

Ryanair said Belarusian flight controllers told the crew there was a bomb threat against the plane as it was crossing through Belarus airspace Sunday and ordered it to land. A Belarusian MiG-29 fighter jet was scrambled to escort the

'Girlfriend held on suspicion of crimes'

The Russian girlfriend of a Belarusian dissident arrested with him when their plane was diverted to Minsk on suspicion of crimes at the time of protests last year, Moscow said Tuesday. Sofia Sapega, a 23-year-old law student at the European Humanities University (EHU) in Lithuania, was detained along with opposition journalist Roman Protasevich, 26, when their Athens-to-Vilnius flight was diverted to Minsk Sunday. The diversion, prompted by a supposed bomb scare, provoked a global outcry and Western leaders have been calling for both to be released. Russian foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said in a statement Tuesday that Sapega was being held on suspicion of "committing crimes" between August and September 2020.

plane in a brazen show of force by Lukashenko, who has ruled the country with an iron fist for over a quarter-century.

'UK surveillance broke European rights Law'

AGENCIES

London, May 25: Britain's GCHQ eavesdropping agency breached fundamental human rights by intercepting and harvesting vast amounts of communications, the European Court of Human Rights ruled Tuesday.

Civil liberties campaigners brought the case as they contended that so-called bulk interception was neither necessary nor proportionate, and that the system lacked clear definition and lacked judicial oversight.

The British government argued that bulk interception was critical for national security and had enabled it to uncover threats. Essentially, London argued that it had to harvest vast amounts of data to find threats.

The Strasbourg-based court ruled in a case known as "Big Brother Watch and Others v. the United Kingdom" that the United Kingdom had breached the right to respect for private and family life communications, and the right to freedom of expression with its bulk intercept regime.

The regime for obtaining com-



Revelations by former National Security Agency contractor Edward Snowden showed that British and US spy agencies, GCHQ and the NSA, were sucking up vast amounts of communications from across the world

munications data from service providers also violated human rights, the court said, though it said bulk interception in itself was not illegal.

SHORT TAKES

2 cases of Black Fungus in B'desh

Dhaka: Bangladesh Tuesday confirmed first two cases of black fungus in a hospital here, amid a surge in the number of Covid-19 infections and deaths in the country. Birdem General Hospital in Dhaka confirmed that two of their Covid-19 patients were found infected with black fungus and one of them has died. Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) said 40 people died in the past one day, highest in the past two weeks, taking the total number of fatalities to 12,441. The number of deaths May 9 was 56.

Navalny facing 3 criminal probes

Moscow: Jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny said Tuesday that he had been told by investigators that three new criminal probes have been launched against him. "My influential criminal syndicate is growing," President Vladimir Putin's top domestic opponent quipped in a new post on Instagram. "I am a genius and puppet master of the criminal underworld," said the 44-year-old, adding that more than 20 investigators were involved in the new probes. Navalny said he was accused of "stealing" donations to his Anti-Corruption Foundation and insulting a judge.

Coup dismisses Prez, PM in Mali

Bamako: Mali's former coup leader Assimi Goita took control of the country again Tuesday after firing the president and prime minister of the transitional government following their announcement of a cabinet reshuffle without his permission. While Goita pledged to go ahead with holding new elections in 2022 as promised, his display of force casts doubt on whether the vote will go ahead without significant interference by the junta that overthrew the last democratically elected president.

Toll reaches 32

Kinshasa: The death toll from the eruption of Mount Nyiragongo volcano located on the outskirts of Goma city in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), has increased to 32 and it likely to further rise, authorities said. Among the victims, nine were burned to death when the lava hit their homes, and five died from inhaling smoke or toxic gas when walking across the cooling lava.

Train collision injures more than 200 people

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kuala Lumpur, May 25: Two light rail trains collided in a tunnel in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, injuring more than 200 people, in the first major crash for the 23-year-old metro system.

Pictures on social media after the Monday night collision showed bloodied passengers, some lying on the floor of the carriage strewn with blood and shattered glass.

Transport Minister Wee Ka Siong told local media that a metro train carrying 213 passengers collided with a vacant carriage on a test-run in a tunnel near the Petronas Towers, one of the world's tallest twin towers.

"One carriage was travelling at 20 kilometers per hour and another at around 40 kilometers per hour when the collision happened. This caused a significant jolt that threw some passengers out of their seats," he was quoted as saying. Federal Territory Minister Annuar Musa tweeted Tuesday that three passengers were in critical condition and have been intubated. More than 40 had serious injuries and another 160 had minor injuries. Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin pledged a full investigation into the cause. Police said they suspected a miscommunication from the trains' operation control center. The vacant carriage had a driver while the train with passengers

Human error

Malaysia's transport minister said that the accident, which injured more than 200 people, was caused by a train driver's negligence, according to a preliminary investigation. Transport Minister Wee Ka Siong said the driver of the vacant train was going the wrong way. "Preliminary investigations found that the accident was caused by the negligence and carelessness of the train driver... Who was driving in the wrong direction," he said.

was a fully-automated and controlled by the operation center.

The crash affected one of three light rail lines connecting Kuala Lumpur and surrounding suburbs. Prasarana Malaysia Berhad, a government-owned company that owns the metro system, said train services resumed Tuesday morning. The metro system reportedly carries over 350,000 passengers daily, although ridership has been reduced to ensure social distancing amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Some passengers were left in shock. Afiq Luqman Mohamad Baharudin, 27, told national Bernama news agency that many people were flung from their seats or fell on the floor. He said the train had stopped for 15 minutes just before the mishap.



Mother and daughter Brittany and Brooklyn Elmore pose for a portrait in front of a mural of George Floyd ahead of the anniversary of Floyd's death in Houston, Texas

Data published on Russian, US strategic offensive arms

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Moscow, May 25: Russia has published a document listing the number of aggregative strategic offensive arms in its possession and that of the US under the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) as of March 1.

According to the latest figures provided by the Foreign Ministry here Monday, Russia possessed 517 deployed intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM's), deployed submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBM's) and deployed heavy bombers, while the US possessed 651, reports Xinhua news agency.

Additionally, the US had 1,357 warheads on deployed ICBM's and deployed SLBM's, and nuclear warheads counted for deployed heavy bombers, while Russia had 1,456, the



Ministry said. It added that while Russia possessed 767 deployed and non-deployed launchers of ICBM's and SLBM's, and deployed and non-deployed heavy bombers, the US had 800. The New START treaty, signed in April 2010 by the two countries, limits the number of deployed

strategic nuclear warheads to 1,550 and deployed missiles and bombers to 700 for each country.

It entered into force February 5, 2011, and would have expired February 5, 2021.

February 3, the two countries announced a five-year extension of the treaty.

The former administration of US President Donald Trump tried to conclude a shorter extension of the treaty last year after rounds of negotiation with Russia, but the two sides failed to finalise a formal agreement.

Immediately after taking office, President Joe Biden proposed a full five-year extension of the treaty, a move welcomed by the Kremlin.

Russian President Vladimir Putin January 29 signed a bill into law ratifying the extension.

National Guard exits Capitol first time after riots

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Washington, May 25: The US Capitol stood unprotected by National Guard troops for the first time in nearly five months Monday as concerns about right-wing extremist threats have diminished since the January 6 attacks.

The last 2,149 of what had been nearly 26,000 troops in an extraordinary deployment in Washington departed over the weekend as their mission to protect Congress formally ended.

Some broke into lawmakers' offices, and called for the killing of lawmakers and vice president Mike Pence, who was presiding over the session.

Amid fears of more threats



around and following the January 20 inauguration of Biden, thousands of Guard troops were mobilized, patrolling the Capitol area day and night while a large fence

encircled the grounds, making it appear a building under siege.

The troops remained in Washington for months after the inauguration as what many dubbed

The troops were mobilised after hundreds of supporters of then-president Donald Trump entered the Capitol, halting the joint session to confirm Trump's rival Joe Biden as winner of the presidential election

an insurrection was investigated.

Trump, who was impeached for encouraging the assault, later claimed the attackers were "zero threat" to

lawmakers and downplayed the episode. Since January 6 the FBI has arrested and charged some 440 people involved in attacking the legislature, dozens of them associated with armed militia groups.

"These airmen and soldiers protected not only the grounds, but the lawmakers working on those grounds, ensuring the people's business could continue unabated," Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin said in a statement.

"From the bottom of my heart, thank you to the thousands of National Guard members who left their homes and families to stand guard at the Capitol for the last four months following the Jan 6th attacks," tweeted Democratic Representative Brad Schneider.

COAL MINE DISPUTE

Polish, Czech leaders seek to resolve issues

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Warsaw, May 25: The government leaders of Poland and the neighboring Czech Republic held intensive talks Tuesday in an attempt to solve a years-long dispute that resurfaced recently over a Polish coal mine.

The Czech government says the brown coal Turów mine, located in southwestern Poland, near the Czech and German borders, is draining groundwater from communities and causing other environmental harm to Czech citizens.

It took the case to the top European Union court, which last week issued a temporary injunction ordering Poland to immediately halt coal extraction at the site pending the court's full ruling.

But Polish authorities are defying the order, saying they cannot close the mine because doing so would lead to power cuts for millions of Poles, suspend the operation of industrial plants and eliminate tens of thousands of jobs.

of the day quote

The central government's direction to states to procure vaccines directly from manufacturers abroad was a "cynical move"

P CHIDAMBARAM
FORMER UNION FINANCE MINISTER

The incentive for growing paddy has to come down and the same for alternate crops, for which India is import-dependent, has to increase

SIRAJ HUSSAIN
FORMER AGRICULTURE SECRETARY

After the tulip bubble burst, there were still some beautiful flowers left. But when the virtual currency bubble bursts, what would be left are merely some computer codes

CHEN JIAHE | CIO, NOVEM ARCAE TECHNOLOGIES

SHORT TAKES

Samsung tops global TV market

Seoul: Samsung Electronics maintained its status as the world's leading TV vendor with a record market share in the first quarter, a report showed Tuesday, as the tech giant posted robust growth on the back of its QLED and large TVs. Samsung represented 32.9 percent of the global TV market in terms of sales revenue in the January-March period, its largest share for a first quarter, according to data from industry researcher Omdia. Samsung was followed by its South Korean rival LG Electronics with 19.2 percent and Japan's Sony Corp. with 8 percent.

States' borrowing cost begins to fall

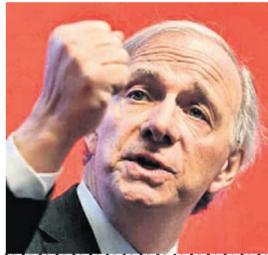
Mumbai: With large borrowing states not coming to the market or drawing down less than indicated amounts, states are seeing the cost of their debt falling finally, with the weighted average interest rate declining by 18 basis points to 6.74 at the auction of state government securities Monday. Last week, the rate stood at 6.92 per cent. At Monday's level, the rate difference between the G-Sec (Government Securities) and state development loans are still at a high of 77 bps. While the weighted average interest rate is 6.74 per cent for the states.

Indian shares end flat

Mumbai: Indian shares gave up early gains to close flat Tuesday as heavyweight financials negated support from IT and metal stocks, while the country reported its lowest daily rise in Covid-19 infections in more than a month. The blue-chip NSE Nifty 50 index gained 0.07% to 15,208.45, while the benchmark S&P BSE Sensex was 0.03% lower at 50,637.53. Both the indexes touched their highest in more than two months earlier in the day. The Nifty PSU Bank Index and the Nifty Bank Index ended 1.34% and 0.81% lower, respectively.

PharmEasy now largest e-pharma

Bangalore: In the largest consolidation in the domestic online pharmacy sector, unicorn PharmEasy has acquired Medlife for an undisclosed amount. According to the deal, Medlife users will become Pharmeasy customers with Medlife discontinuing operations from now on. The consolidated entity will be serving around 2 million customers every month, said the company.



China is now threatening the dollar's status as a global currency, which makes Bitcoin an attractive option as a savings vehicle

RAY DALIO
FOUNDER OF BRIDGEWATER ASSOCIATES

INDIA'S GDP TO GROW AT 1.3 PC IN MAR QUARTER: SBI REPORT

The country's GDP is likely to grow at 1.3 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2020-21 and may see a contraction of around 7.3 per cent for the full financial year, according to an SBI research report 'Ecowrap'



Another Covid stimulus package soon

The Finance Ministry is working on proposals to bolster the tourism, aviation and hospitality industries, along with small and medium-sized companies

AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 25: India is preparing an economic stimulus package for the sectors worst affected by Covid-19, Bloomberg reported Tuesday, citing people familiar with the matter.

The Finance Ministry is working on proposals to bolster the tourism, aviation and hospitality industries, along with small and medium-sized companies, Bloomberg reported.

The discussions were at an early stage and no timeline for an announcement was decided, the report said, adding, no timeline for an announcement has been decided.

According to the report, the latest wave of Covid-19 infections has made India the global hotspot for the pandemic and has decimated travel since the second wave picked up in March even though Prime Minister Narendra Modi has refused to implement a strict nationwide lockdown. With nearly 200,000 daily cases daily many local governments, including India's most industrialised states - have imposed curbs against the spread of the virus.

That has prompted many econ-

BOOST TO ECONOMY

- The proposals are being drawn up at time when the rupee has emerged as Asia's top-performing currency from its worst on signs that India's virus crisis may be easing

- Prime Minister Modi's administration doesn't have enough fiscal room to maneuver even though it received about \$14 billion from the Reserve Bank of India as dividend

- That will mean, stimulus will most likely be in the form of tax breaks, according to Teresa John, economist at Nirmal Bang Equities Pvt



omists to cut their forecasts for the financial year that began April 1, as rising unemployment and dwindling savings among consumers dim the chances for double-

digit growth. While the International Monetary Fund expects India's economy to expand 12.5% this year to March - and will be revisiting the forecast in July -

the country's central bank projects 10.5% growth.

Modi's administration doesn't have enough fiscal room to maneuver even though it received about \$14 billion from the Reserve Bank of India as dividend. That will mean, stimulus will most likely be in the form of tax breaks, according to Teresa John, economist at Nirmal Bang Equities Pvt.

"The government doesn't have too much leeway, although the recent RBI dividend provides some cushion," said John. "The stimulus may be mostly additional guarantees and tax concessions, maybe demand boosting measures once opening up starts. All these may not involve a large government spending."

Flagging growth prospects put the onus on policy makers to support activity, especially once the virus caseload eases. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, who said last month she's monitoring the economy in a "very detailed fashion," has held discussions with economists in recent days about a stimulus package, the people said.

"We expect the government to stick to its overall budgeted spend-

ing, while shifting its expenditure composition more in favor of health services and food subsidies," said Bloomberg Economics' Abhishek Gupta.

The proposals are being drawn up at time when the rupee has emerged as Asia's top-performing currency from its worst on signs that India's virus crisis may be easing after infection numbers hit a record 414,118 May 7 due to localised lockdowns. India's stock benchmark is also approaching a record-high close reached in February.

In April, the Finance Ministry eased rules for capital expenditure by government departments to try to boost spending in the economy. It also decided to allocate five kilograms of free food to the poor per month as the lockdowns saw millions of migrant laborers flee urban areas and back to their rural homes.

But Sitharaman's hands are restrained given India aims to lower its budget gap to 6.8% of gross domestic product in the financial year to March 2022, from an estimated 9.5% last year, signaling little legroom for New Delhi to ease purse strings in a significant manner.

Barclays cuts India's FY22 GDP growth to 9.2%

AGENCIES

Mumbai, May 25: As India battles the severe second wave of Covid-19 and the states undergo lockdowns, Barclays has cut its growth estimate for India for the current financial year to 9.2 per cent.

Its earlier estimate was 10 per cent. "We reduce our baseline FY2021-22 GDP growth forecast again, lowering it to 9.2 per cent y/y from 10 per cent earlier, and 11 per cent before the outbreak of the second wave," it said in a report.

It noted that although India's second Covid-19 wave has started to recede, the related economic costs have been larger owing to the more stringent lockdowns implemented to contain the outbreak.

Parts of the country are still experiencing an increase in new cases. However, the overall situation appears to be coming under control, reducing burden on the country's healthcare infrastructure, it said.

"In our view, this bodes well for a gradual reopening, but only with a lag," it said.

According to the brokerage the economic costs of the recent surge in cases are rising rapidly. After a reasonably stable April, the economy experienced a sharp decline in activity in May, as is evident in high frequency data.

"While we continue to believe the lockdowns will last only until end of June 2021, in our new base case, we now estimate economic losses of \$74 billion, all of it contained in Q2 21 (April-June)."

At the same time, it observed that India's vaccination programme has slowed significantly, given persistent supply constraints and logistical challenges. Although the government has provided greater flexibility for states to set their own vaccine strategies, problems persist and supply is only expected to improve in Q3 21.

The slow vaccination drive may pose medium-term risks to growth, especially if the country experiences a third wave of Covid-19 cases, said the brokerage report.

In a more pessimistic scenario in which the country is hit by a third wave of Covid-19, Barclays estimates that the economic costs could rise by at least a further \$42.6 billion, assuming another round of similarly stringent lockdowns are imposed for eight weeks.

BPCL may sell some stake in IGL, Petronet

BPCL is the promoter of the two companies and since there is a change in ownership of the promoter firm, an open offer is triggered under Sebi Regulations

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 25: Privatisation-bound Bharat Petroleum Corporation (BPCL) may sell a part of its stake in Petronet LNG and Indraprastha Gas (IGL) to shed its promoter status to obviate the need for its new owner to make open offers for the two gas companies, sources said.

BPCL holds 12.5 per cent of shareholding in India's largest liquefied natural gas importer, Petronet, and a 22.5 per cent stake in city gas retailer, IGL. It is a promoter of both the listed companies and holds board positions.

As per the legal position evaluated by Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) - the department running the process for sale of government's entire 52.98 per cent stake in BPCL - the acquirer of BPCL will have to make an open offer to the minority shareholders of Petronet and IGL for acquisition of 26 per cent shares, three sources with knowledge of the matter said.

This is because BPCL is a promoter of the two companies and since there is a change in ownership of the promoter firm, an open offer is triggered under Sebi (Substantial Acquisition of Shares and Takeovers) Regulations, 2011.

A way out could be for BPCL to sell a part of its shareholding in the two firms and shed promoter status, thereby obviating the need for open offers, sources said.

BPCL, however, is not in favour of selling the stake and giving up



promoter status and directorships will result in substantial value erosion for the company.

But the thinking in the government is that the open offers for Petronet and IGL may deter bidders who are mostly eyeing BPCL's oil refining assets and 22 per cent share of the fuel marketing business it commands, sources said.

BPCL spokesperson refused comments for the story.

The government's 52.98 per cent stake in BPCL is valued at about ₹54,000 crore at the current share trading price. The requirement for making an open offer for additional 26 per cent to minority shareholders of the company will cost an additional ₹26,700 crore.

On top of it, an open offer for 26 per cent stake in IGL would cost the acquirer an additional ₹9,400 crore and a similar offer for Petronet would cost over ₹9,300 crore.

Bidders, sources said, may not find BPCL holding stake in Petronet and IGL a value proposition as such a stake does not give them any special rights such as getting preference in importing of LNG at terminals of Petronet or a say in gas retailing by IGL.

FLIPKART HIRES 23K TO BOLSTER ITS SUPPLY CHAIN AMID PANDEMIC

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bangalore, May 25: Flipkart Tuesday said it has hired 23,000 people across its supply chain, including delivery executives, in the last three months as the e-commerce marketplace strengthens the supply chain to fast deliver products while creating additional employment.

The hiring was done keeping the growing demand for e-commerce services across the country, as people continue to remain indoors to fight the pandemic, which has necessitated a ramp-up of supply chain, the company said in a statement.

"All new hires will be covered with our healthcare and wellness



initiatives to ensure their safety during these testing times," said Hemant Badri, Senior Vice-President, Supply Chain at Flipkart.

From safety regulations and protocols across its warehouses to driving awareness on Covid safety behaviour, the company is also undertaking training programmes for its direct hires in various aspects of the supply chain. The new hires are being trained virtually via a mix of classroom and digital training

to enhance their understanding of the supply chain management.

Flipkart this month announced to boost its grocery supply chain infrastructure to provide its customers safe and seamless access to ordering daily essentials through quick and contactless doorstep delivery.

As part of the plan, Flipkart will add over 8 lakh square feet of space through five new fulfilment centres over the next three months.

With this additional infrastructure, the marketplace will bring the ease of online grocery shopping to more users across Delhi, Kolkata, Chennai, Coimbatore, and Hyderabad. This will also help Flipkart cater to over 73,000 grocery orders per day.

Urban unemployment rate rises 270 bps

URBAN UNEMPLOYMENT RATE HAS SOARED NEARLY 1.5 TIMES SINCE THE SECOND WAVE OF THE PANDEMIC STARTED RAVAGING THE COUNTRY IN APRIL

AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 25: Unemployment in urban areas is rising relentlessly. Joblessness in cities grew a sharp 270 basis points to 17.41% in the week ended May 23, signalling that the worse is yet to come. However, the jury is still out on whether the rate will rise to the highest level ever of 27.1% seen in the aftermath of last year's lockdown.

Urban unemployment rate has soared nearly 1.5 times since the second wave of the pandemic started ravaging the country in April.

The economy's inability to create jobs amidst lockdowns and



restrictions on mobility has contributed to the rise in urban joblessness.

Overall unemployment rate has also significantly increased since the beginning of the second Covid

wave to stand at near one-year high of 14.73% for the week ended May 23 against 8.16% on April 4. During the same period, rural unemployment rate rose to 13.52% from 8.58%, even though it softened

a bit from 14.34% recorded in the week ended May 16.

"Urban regions face a double whammy of a fall in the labour participation rate and rise in unemployment rate. There seems to be a serious job crunch in the cities," CMEI's MD & CEO Mahesh Vyas said.

Ashwini Deshpande, director, Centre for Economic Data and Analysis (CEDA) at Ashoka University, said in recent times, virtually all of sectors have seen job losses in urban areas - daily wagers engaged in construction activities, small hawkers and traders, small enterprises, services like hospitality and entertainment etc. are among the worst affected.

Covid sparked innovation across consumer industries: Survey

AFTER A YEAR OF LOCKDOWNS, 98% OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS IN INDIA SAID THEY MADE AT LEAST ONE CHANGE TO THEIR LIFESTYLE THAT THEY EXPECT WILL BE PERMANENT

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, May 25: The Covid-19 pandemic has changed the way people live, work and socialise, accelerating demand for innovation, as retailers, consumer goods, and travel companies shift from reacting to the crisis to reinventing products and services, according to findings of a new global survey from Accenture.

After a year of lockdowns, 98% of survey respondents in India said they made at least one change to their lifestyle that they expect will be permanent. Working from home, changing travel patterns, and a growing desire to shop locally are challenging industries to fundamentally rethink how they cater to



the pandemic-adapted consumer. The latest survey of more than 9,650 people in 19 countries including more than 500 people in India, supports Accenture's previous findings that many changes in behaviour will likely be long-term.

"The past year has been a tough

one for consumers and consumer-facing industries. Evolving consumer preferences and behaviours have led to huge demand fluctuation, making it imperative for consumer goods and retail companies to stay agile and resilient. As companies shift from reaction to rein-

vention, they need to harness digital's full potential across the value chain at speed and scale," said Anurag Gupta, managing director and lead - Strategy & Consulting, Accenture in India.

Covid-19 has led to compressed transformation, with companies simultaneously transforming multiple parts of the enterprise and reskilling people in what previously would have been longer-term step-by-step programmes. Many consumer-facing companies have re-platformed their businesses in the cloud, addressed cost pressures, and continued to build resilience and security, putting the infrastructure in place to enable innovation and position them for future success.

Manish Gupta, managing direc-

tor and lead for Products practice, Accenture in India, said, "To succeed in a post-pandemic economy, companies need to digitally reinvent themselves and strategically invest in technology, people and supply chains. Adoption of digital technologies such as cloud, artificial intelligence, advanced analytics, combined with a well-defined purpose, can help companies to not only reach out to consumers in innovative ways but also adapt faster to the evolving market demands."

The pandemic forced a rapid shift to employees working from home, with many expressing that they want flexibility in how and where they work moving forward. More than 87% of respondents in India said they would like to oc-

asionally work from a "third space" - a location other than their home or place of employment. This highlights a potential opportunity to grow revenue for the hospitality and retail industries.

The desire to work from a "third space" is accompanied by a shift in attitudes towards business travel. Nearly 57% of respondents in India said they have no business travel plans post-pandemic, or they intend to cut previous business travel by half. How long this view will hold firm remains to be seen, but the current outlook indicates that the return to travel will resume principally within the leisure market, pushing the industry to adapt and become even more efficient to make up for lost income.

Hockey stadium renamed

India teams begin 8-day quarantine

MOHALI INTERNATIONAL HOCKEY STADIUM OFFICIALLY RENAMED AFTER BALBIR SINGH SR TO MARK HIS DEATH ANNIVERSARY



(From R): Mithali Raj, Ravichandran Ashwin and Mayank Agarwal along with few others on their way to Mumbai

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, May 25: India captain Virat Kohli, his white-ball deputy Rohit Sharma and head coach Ravi Shastri joined the England-bound squad's bio-bubble Tuesday as it began their eight-day hard quarantine along with the women's team here.

The Indian women's team members also entered their eight-day hard quarantine at the Grand Hyatt in Mumbai located near the international airport.

The teams are expected to fly out June 2 after all the playing and non-playing members return three negative RT-PCR results.

The men's team will first take on New Zealand in the World Test Championship final against New Zealand from June 18 before a full series against England. The women are scheduled to take on the hosts in one Test, three ODIs and as many T20 Internationals starting June 16.

"Wriddhiman and Prasad Krishna joined the bubble two days back after recovering fully from COVID-19. Mumbaiers like Virat, Rohit and coach Shastri have all now joined the bubble," a BCCI source confirmed.

It is learnt that approval for allowing the players' families is still awaited but the BCCI is hopeful that it would be done soon.

"We can't have our players being away from their families for three months and that too in a bubble. That's never great for mental health," the source said.

The negotiation on quarantine duration once the side reaches England is still on and the hard quarantine (confined to hotel rooms) could be shortened.

The agency has already reported that no change in the five-Test itinerary can happen after the England Cricket Board, during informal discussions, intimated to BCCI that shift of dates is not possible.

Hockey Stadium has been dedicated to the memory of Padma Shri Balbir Singh Sr in a formal ceremony at the hockey stadium on Tuesday on the first death anniversary of the legendary sportsman. Punjab Sports Minister Rana Gurmit Singh Sodhi said.

Sodhi said from now on the stadium would be known as "Olympian Balbir Singh Senior International Hockey Stadium".

He further said that once the COVID situation eases, the government has plans to conduct an international hockey tournament at the stadium to commemorate the all-time great's sporting journey. Kabir Singh, the maternal grandson of late Balbir Singh Sr, was also present on the occasion.

The minister also said that the sports department would start a scholarship in the name of Balbir Singh Sr to be given to outstanding sports persons of the state.

Sodhi said a statue of the hockey great would also be installed at the stadium entrance. Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh also fondly remembered the legend.

"Fondly remember legendary hockey player Padma Shri Balbir Singh Senior. On his first death anniversary today, Mohali International Hockey stadium is being dedicated to him," Singh tweeted.

"Balbir ji was a triple Olympic Gold Medallist and Manager & Chief Coach of the 1975 World Cup winning team."

Balbir Singh Sr's world record for most goals scored by an individual in the men's hockey final of the Olympics still remains unbeaten.

He had scored five goals in India's 6-1 victory over the Netherlands in the gold medal match of the 1952 Helsinki Games. He was conferred with the Padma Shri in 1957.

Balbir Singh Sr's three Olympic gold medals came in London (1948), Helsinki (1952) as vice-captain, and Melbourne (1956) as captain.

He was also the manager of India's only World Cup-winning side in 1975. He also served as the Director, Sports Department, Punjab. The Punjab government had honoured the legend with Maharaja Ranjit Singh Award in 2019.



143 Khelo India centres to be opened across 7 states

Contract renewal unlikely for Sushil, Dhanda

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 25: The Sports Ministry has decided to set up 143 Khelo India centres across seven states with a total budget of ₹14.30 crore in its bid to nurture talent at the grassroots level.

These centres will be set up in Maharashtra, Mizoram, Goa, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur. Each centre will be entrusted with one sports discipline.

The Khelo India centres have been launched by the Sports Ministry in partnership with state governments to ensure the availability of grassroots-level infrastructure across the country.

"It is our endeavour to make India one among the top 10 countries in the 2028 Olympics. To fulfil this goal we need to identify and nurture a large number of talented sports persons from an early age," Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju said in a statement.

"With the availability of good coaches and equipments at the district level Khelo India centers, I am confident that we will be able to find the right children for the right sport and at the right time."



STATE-WISE KHELO INDIA CENTRES:

- MAHARASHTRA:** 36 Khelo India centres in 30 districts with a budget estimate of ₹3.60 crore.
- MIZORAM:** 2 Khelo India centres in Kolasib district with a budget estimate of ₹20 lakh.
- ARUNACHAL PRADESH:** 52 Khelo India centres in 26 districts with a budget estimate of ₹4.12 crore.
- MADHYA PRADESH:** 4 Khelo India centres with a budget estimate of ₹40 lakh.
- KARNATAKA:** 31 Khelo India centres with a budget estimate of ₹3.10 crore.
- MANIPUR:** 16 Khelo India centres with a budget estimate of ₹1.60 crore.
- GOA:** 2 Khelo India centres with a budget estimate of ₹20 lakhs.

In June 2020, the ministry had planned to open up as many as 1,000 new Khelo India centres over a period of four years, with at least one centre in each district of the country.

While 217 such centres are already in place across several states, the ministry had decided to open two centres each in every district of the North-East, Jammu & Kashmir, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep and Ladakh.

The responsibility of hiring coaches for these centres lies with the respective state governments, the ministry said.

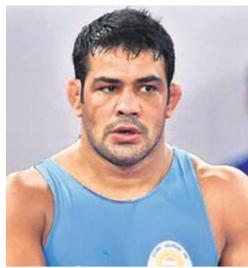
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 25: Arrested in a murder case, double Olympic-medallist Sushil Kumar is set to be dropped from the Wrestling Federation of India's annual contracts list along with Pooja Dhanda on account of non-performance when the body holds a review meeting next month.

The meeting between the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) and sponsors Tata Motors was to be held in 2020 but was put on hold due to the coronavirus pandemic.

A WFI source said the decision to drop Sushil is purely based on performance and has nothing to do with his arrest for his alleged involvement in the murder of a fellow wrestler, Sagar Dhankad, at the Chhatrasal stadium.

"It is clear that Sushil and Pooja have not done anything notable since they were offered contracts. They will not make the cut when the review meeting is held next month," a WFI source told this



agency.

The WFI had taken a leaf out of BCCI's book to offer central contracts to its players in 2019. About 150 wrestlers had got one-year contracts which are subject to review.

Sushil was promoted to ₹30 lakh Grade A contract after initially being placed in Grade B that gave the wrestlers an annual remuneration of ₹20 lakh. Pooja was also placed in Grade A.

Sushil could not win any medal in the 2018 Asian Games in Jakarta and also bowed out of the 2019

World Championship with a close first-round defeat. He has not competed since then.

The 2018 World Championship bronze-medallist Pooja too has lost her place in the 57kg category. She did not compete in 2020 and her last medal-winning performance came in July 2019 when she won a silver at the Grand Prix of Spain.

When contacted, WFI Assistant Secretary Vinod Tomar did not confirm exclusion of the two wrestlers but hinted such a step cannot be ruled out either.

Much before Sushil got embroiled in the shocking case, there were questions as to why WFI was keeping him in the contracted list given his lack of participation at the international level. To this, Tomar explained that, "Sushil was not paid his full contract amount in 2020."

"See, we did not give fresh contract to any wrestlers in 2020 because there was no review. We paid Sushil a sum only for one quarter in 2020 and he got nothing after that because he was not competing," he said.

A decision on Olympic bronze-medallist Sakshi Malik, who has been beaten by the young Sonam Malik four times in the last 15 months in the 62kg category, will also be keenly watched.

Sakshi, who has a Grade A contract, was forced to compete in the non-Olympic 65kg division, where she won a silver medal at the Asian Championships in Almaty last month.

Tomar said there are good chances that Seema Bisla, who qualified for the Tokyo Games in 50kg, will be given a contract.

Flick to replace Loew post Euro



HANSI FLICK



JOACHIM LOEW

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Berlin, May 25: Hansi Flick will take over as Germany coach after the European Championship, replacing Joachim Loew.

Flick signed a three-year contract effective from July 1 to succeed his former boss, who is ending his 15-year tenure after the tournament, the German soccer federation said Tuesday.

The Euro 2020 quarterfinals start July 2, so Flick's team could still be under the control of Loew if Germany gets that far.

Flick's last game in charge of Bayern Munich was on Saturday. He led Bayern to two Bundesliga titles, a Champions League victory and German Cup success.

director through 2017, and then took over at Hoffenheim. He was assistant to Niko Kovac at Bayern but took over the top job, initially on an interim basis, when the Croat was fired in November 2019. Flick then won every title he could win.

"It's a wonderful thing that Hansi Flick is returning to the federation as national team coach," German federation vice president Peter Peters said.

"He has developed as a person and as a coach since his already successful time here — not only shown by his fantastic success with FC Bayern."

Flick inherits a team still trying to adjust after an unsuccessful shakeup following Germany's disappointing World Cup in 2018. The team was routed by Spain 0-6 in the Nations League in November. Loew went back on a decision to drop experienced players Thomas Muller and Mats Hummels by recalling them after announcing his intention to cut his tenure short.

Loew's contract was to run through the 2022 World Cup, but instead Flick will guide the team through qualifying for what would be his first major tournament in charge.

"It all went surprisingly quickly for me with the signature, but I'm very happy to be able to work as the national team coach from autumn onward," said Flick, who wished Loew success at Euro 2020. "Jogi Loew more than deserves a great end to his career as national coach."

ON THIS DAY THAT YEAR

1983: LA Lakers set NBA play-off game record of fewest free throws (5) during their 93-103 loss against Philadelphia 76ers

1993: French club Marseille edged past Italian giants AC Milan 1-0 at Munich in the first UEFA Champions League final

2013: Kieron Pollard's unbeaten 32-ball 60-run knock helped Mumbai Indians beat rivals Chennai Super Kings by 23 runs in IPL final at the Eden Gardens, Kolkata

2018: French football great Zinedine Zidane became first manager to win 3 consecutive UEFA Champions League titles after his side - Real Madrid - defeated Liverpool 3-1 in the final in Kiev

BIRTHDAY



1977
LUCA TONI
(former Italian footballer)

FRENCH OPEN QUALIFIERS

Ramkumar sails on, Prajnesh out

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Paris, May 25: India's Ramkumar Ramanathan advanced to the men's singles second round of the French Open Qualifiers but Prajnesh Gunneswaran crashed out following his first-round defeat, here Tuesday.

Ramkumar erased a one-set deficit to beat American Michael Mmoh 2-6, 7-6(7-4), 6-3 in his opening round that lasted one hour and 54 minutes.

He will next take on Uzbekistan's veteran Denis Istomin, who also recorded a three-set win against Bosnia's Damir Dzumhur.

However, left-handed Prajnesh, seeded 32nd, suffered a rather tame 2-6, 2-6 loss to Germany's Oscar Otte.

India's top singles player Sumit Nagal, seeded 27th, will open his campaign against Roberto Marcora.

IPL will tentatively start in September 3rd week

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 25: The postponed IPL will resume tentatively September 18 or 19 in the UAE with as many as 10 double-headers expected to be played during a three-week window, a senior BCCI official told this agency, Tuesday.

The final might be played October 9 or 10. The three-week window will be enough for the league to complete its remaining 31 games for the season, a win-win scenario for all the primary stakeholders including the BCCI, franchisees and broadcasters. The IPL was postponed May 4 after multiple COVID-19 cases inside its bio-bubble came to light.

"The BCCI has spoken to all the stakeholders and the likely start could be between September 18th to 20th. Since September 18 is a Saturday and 19 a Sunday, it is more likely that you would want to re-start it on a weekend date," the official told this agency on conditions of anonymity.

"Similarly, October 9th or 10th will be the final as it's a weekend. We are finalising the itinerary and there will be 10 double headers and seven evening matches along with four main games (two qualifiers, one eliminator and the final), which completes the list of 31 matches," the official added.

The Indian team's last Test match against England is set to finish September 14 at Manchester and on the next day, the whole team (save Hanuma Vihari and Abhimanyu Easwaran) will be flown to UAE in a chartered flight for a 'bubble to bubble' transfer.

A franchise official confirmed that a communication from BCCI has come on the matter. The BCCI, thus, has decided to cancel India's T20 series against South Africa scheduled in September.

The India home season also had a two Test series against New Zealand in November and the dates of which could be shifted depending upon when the World T20 ends.