



TAPSEE PRAISES VIDYA

Actor Tapsee Pannu praises Vidya Balan's 'marvellous' acting in a new flick *Shakuntala Devi*

LEISURE P2



FIRE SAFETY CERTIFICATES

CM Naveen Patnaik launches 'Odisha Agnishama Seva' portal for issuance of fire safety certificates

DOWNTOWN P3



HK DELAYS POLLS

Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam says the govt will defer the highly-anticipated elections by a year

INTERNATIONAL P10

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



I love this education policy; now I too can switch subjects the way you switch parties!

SHORT TAKES

FinMin working on loan restructuring

New Delhi: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman Friday said the government is working with the RBI on need for restructuring of loans to help industry tide over the impact of COVID-19. The focus is on restructuring. Finance ministry is actively engaged with RBI on this. In principle, the idea that there may be a restructuring required, is well taken, Sitharaman said while addressing Ficci's National Executive Committee Meeting. The Finance minister also said that the decision on reducing GST rates on the healthcare and other products will be taken by the GST Council. **P11**

3rd plasma bank comes up in state

Bhubaneswar: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik inaugurated a plasma bank in Rourkela, third of the state Friday, saying the state has collected 70 units of plasma in a fortnight for the treatment of critically ill COVID-19 patients. Patnaik, who inaugurated the plasma bank at Ispat General Hospital in Rourkela through videoconferencing, said eight patients have so far been discharged from hospitals after being cured of coronavirus through plasma therapy. **P4**

MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VAIATION
SENSEX	37606.89 ↓ 129.18
NIFTY	11073.50 ↓ 28.70
DOLLAR	75.00 ↓ ₹0.09
EURO	88.56 ↓ ₹0.11
GOLD	₹53,799 ↑ ₹661
SILVER	₹65,190 ↑ ₹2520

WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK
TEMP. MAX	37.2°C	35.6°C
TEMP. MIN	26.5°C	25.5°C
Humidity	94%	75%
Rainfall	2.2mm	Nil
Forecast	Partly cloudy sky	

SSR death: ED files money laundering case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 31: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) Friday filed a money laundering case on the basis of a Bihar Police FIR in which Sushant Singh Rajput's father has accused actress Rhea Chakraborty and her family of abetting the Bollywood actor's suicide. The central probe agency had recently called for the Bihar police first investigation report (FIR) and after studying it, the ED decided to slap charges under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), officials said. They said an Enforcement Case Information Report (ECIR) has been filed against the accused named in the Bihar Police FIR that includes Chakraborty, her family and six others. Chakraborty and some others are expected to be called for



questioning in the case soon, official sources said. Rajput, 34, was found hanging in his apartment in Mumbai's Bandra area June 14. The ED is understood to have taken up the case after it analysed the contents of the FIR and gathered some independent information about Rajput's income, bank accounts and companies. More such details and another FIR filed by the Mumbai Police to probe Rajput's death will be part of

FRESH TWIST

Rhea Chakraborty and some others are expected to be called for questioning in the case soon, official sources said. The ED is understood to have taken up the case after it analysed the contents of the FIR and gathered some independent information about Rajput's income, bank accounts and companies. More such details and another FIR filed by the Mumbai Police to probe Rajput's death will be part of

In his complaint, Rajput's father also sought to invoke the provisions of the Mental Health Care Act, alleging that the "machinations" of Chakraborty and her family members had caused his son to crack up, despite a successful career in films, and ultimately drove him to commit suicide. He also alleged that the actress was aided by her family members, including parents, since they all were looking to purloin the assets of his son worth crores of rupees and started interfering in all aspects of his life. He also alleged that June 6, less than a week before Rajput was found hanging from a ceiling of his house, Chakraborty came to his place and decamped with many of his belongings, including cash, his laptop, ATM card and other important documents.

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 31: The National Green Tribunal (NGT) banned sand mining along the Subarnarekha river in the disputed areas of Jaleswar. The development comes after a report submitted by a joint inspection committee which cited several violations of mining and environmental laws by sand miners of the area. "With regard to the adverse finding of the joint Inspection Committee contained in the report, we direct that there shall be no mining of sand until further orders," the order said. It also added, "In any case, the Sustainable Sand Mining Management Policy Guidelines, 2016 and the notifications issued by the Ministry of Environment



and Forest pursuant thereto prohibits sand mining during the monsoons." The NGT said that the inspection report hinted flouting of several rules by the miners. "The report of the committee has been placed before us for consideration. On perusal of the said report, we find that gross infractions are being committed by the Respondents." The inspection report claimed that machines were used in sand

mining against the rules while trucks carrying the sand were also not covered as per rules. It was also discovered that the amount of mining was more than prescribed. The petitioners in the case alleged that villagers of Panchughanta in the district were adversely affected by rampant and illegal sand mining in the areas. The petition said that truckloads of sand were transported through the village roads, thereby polluting the area. It was also stated that excavators and other heavy machines were used in mining. The report also cited lack of monitoring by local administration in the case besides several other violations of rules. Earlier, the NGT had directed the State Pollution Control Board, Balasore Collector and others to visit the site and submit an inspection report to the tribunal.

ODISHA UNLOCK 3

Cautious economic reboot

■ Night curfew from 9pm to 5am ■ Weekend shutdown in 4 districts & Rourkela

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 31: Citing the complexity to balance between re-opening the economy and preventing COVID-19 spread, the state government Friday came up with detailed norms for reopening of activities following Centre's Unlock 3 guidelines. Chief Secretary Asit Tripathy said, "We have to reopen further to normalise economic activity & livelihoods. The situation in our state is better than many other states. We have to reopen industries and other economic activities and for this, we have to issue more relaxations." The relaxations are in compliance with orders and guidelines issued by Ministry of Health, Ministry of Home Affairs, disaster management authorities and state health department, he said. Special Relief Commissioner (SRC) PK Jena said all commercial establishments and offices will be allowed to function with minimal staff. Construction activities will continue

HEFTY FINE FOR VIOLATORS

BHUBANESWAR: With an aim to ensure stricter implementation of Covid-19 norms, the state government has increased fines for violation of the guidelines. The fine for not wearing a mask or face cover in public places and offices has been increased to ₹1,000 for the first two offences and ₹5,000 fine for further violation. Violation of social distancing norms in marriages and commercial establishments is to attract ₹10,000 fine. Moreover, the venue will be sealed for 7 days for first offence and for a month for more violations. Besides, not more than 10 people will be allowed to congregate in any place and a fine of ₹10,000 will be imposed for its violation.

FRESH GUIDELINES

- ALL COMMERCIAL ESTABLISHMENTS TO REOPEN
- SCHOOLS, COLLEGES TO REMAIN SHUT TILL AUGUST 31
- NO PUBLIC, POLITICAL, RELIGIOUS CONGREGATION
- NO RESTRICTIONS ON INTER-STATE AND INTRA-STATE MOVEMENT OF PUBLIC
- MARRIAGE FUNCTIONS, FUNERALS ALLOWED WITH MINIMUM PEOPLE



in August. Yoga institutes/centres and gymnasiums will be allowed to function from August 5, subject to SOPs which are to be issued by Centre. All religious places/venues of worship will remain closed for public. There will be no international air travel of passengers, except as permitted by MHA. Cinema halls, swimming pools, entertainment complexes, theatres,

auditoriums, assembly halls and similar places will remain shut during this month. Similarly, there will be no social, political, sports, entertainment, academic, cultural & religious functions and other large congregations. All schools, colleges, other educational/training/coaching institutions, anganwadi centres, etc will remain closed for the purpose of teaching. However, conduct of examinations, evaluation and other administrative activities will be allowed, Jena said. Night curfew will continue in the state from 9 pm to 5 am. This restriction will not apply to emergency service providers including district and municipal administration and government officials on duty. Weekend shutdowns will remain in force in Ganjam, Khurda, Gajapati & Cuttack districts and Rourkela Municipal Corporation. However, there are relaxations for the first weekend (August 1&2). The shutdown will be applicable after 1 pm in the first two days of August.

GMR KAMALANGA ENERGY ACQUISITION

JSW terminates ₹5,321-crore deal



Both parties have mutually agreed to terminate the transaction given continued uncertainty

AGENCIES

New Delhi, July 31: Sajjan Jindal-backed JSW Energy Friday said it has terminated its ₹5,321 crore deal to acquire GMR Kamalanga Energy due to COVID-19 related uncertainties. With elapsing of long stop date, both parties have mutually agreed to terminate the transaction given continued uncertainty due to COVID-19 pandemic, JSW Energy said in BSE filing Friday. In May, the sale of GMR Energy's entire stake in GMR Kamalanga Energy Ltd to JSW Energy was put on hold due to COVID-19 outbreak. In February, JSW Energy had signed a share purchase agreement to acquire 100 per cent of GMR Kamalanga Energy, which owns and operates a 1,050 MW (3x350 MW) thermal power plant in Odisha, for ₹5,321 crore (subject

to working capital and other adjustments). The transaction has been put on hold given the ongoing uncertainty and will be revisited once the situation normalises, JSW Energy had said in a BSE filing in May. The JSW Energy, in October, had announced the acquisition of GMR Kamalanga Energy Ltd for ₹5,321 crore. GMR Kamalanga is a subsidiary of GMR Energy Ltd and operates a 1,050-MW thermal power plant in Odisha. The acquisition was meant to be an all-cash deal and included three plants with 350 MW capacity each, located in Odisha's Dhenkanal district, with revenues of ₹2,195 crore. The GMR Kamalanga Energy, a subsidiary of GMR Energy, owns and operates three units of 350 MW capacity at Dhenkanal in Odisha.

DEVOTION IN THE AIR



Muslims gather for the Eid al-Adha prayer inside the Byzantine-era Hagia Sophia in the historic Sultanahmet district of Istanbul, Friday. PTI PHOTO

Gehlot camp MLAs on way to Jaisalmer

AGENCIES

Jaisalmer, July 31: Fearing "horse-trading" ahead of the assembly session, the Rajasthan Congress Friday shifted the party MLAs to Jaisalmer from Jaipur where they had been staying at a hotel for over a fortnight. Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot and other senior party leaders, including AICC general secretary Avinash Pande and spokesperson Randeep Surjewala, also moved to Jaisalmer along with the MLAs in five chartered flights. Gehlot alleged that the MLAs, their family members and acquaintances were getting threat

calls and pressure was being build on them after the announcement of the assembly session from August 14. He said the "rate for horse-trading has increased after the governor announced the assembly session date". Gehlot said his party has undertaken a campaign to save the democracy in the country. Targeting Home Minister Amit Shah, the chief minister said he took the BJP leader's name as he comes (on the forefront) "where the government is toppled". "What has happened to you...you think how to topple elected governments. How will democracy in the country be saved if elected gov-



ernments are toppled," he asked. Talking to reporters at the Jaipur airport before leaving for Jaisalmer, the chief minister said there will be no compromise with the governance as he and his ministers will remain in Jaipur most of the time. "The state government has performed well in the coronavirus management. Our efforts have been

appreciated all over. We have maintained law and order situation as well but saving the government is also important. When the Government of India and home ministry is (running) after, public is supporting us," he said. AICC general secretary Avinash Pande said it is the "effort to protect the democracy". "The victory will be of the Constitution and democracy," he said. State Transport Minister Pratap Singh Khachariyawas said the MLAs were shifted to Jaisalmer so that they can be kept united. He said the chief minister's strategy is that not a single MLA should be poached.

No sand mining on Subarnarekha

POST NEWS NETWORK



Bhubaneswar, July 31: The National Green Tribunal (NGT) banned sand mining along the Subarnarekha river in the disputed areas of Jaleswar. The development comes after a report submitted by a joint inspection committee which cited several violations of mining and environmental laws by sand miners of the area. "With regard to the adverse finding of the joint Inspection Committee contained in the report, we direct that there shall be no mining of sand until further orders," the order said. It also added, "In any case, the Sustainable Sand Mining Management Policy Guidelines, 2016 and the notifications issued by the Ministry of Environment

and Forest pursuant thereto prohibits sand mining during the monsoons." The NGT said that the inspection report hinted flouting of several rules by the miners. "The report of the committee has been placed before us for consideration. On perusal of the said report, we find that gross infractions are being committed by the Respondents." The inspection report claimed that machines were used in sand



LEARNING TO LOVE MYSELF: DEMI

Actress Demi Moore says she spent too long changing herself for other people, and is now learning to love herself. The actress has been married three times previously, to Freddy Moore, Bruce Willis, and Ashton Kutcher.

SELENA BACK ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Pop star Selena Gomez took a break from social media because she felt insensitive while posting anything too joyful. After a week-long hiatus post her 28th birthday last week, Gomez has returned to Instagram with a message to her fans.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
Your work and family will vie with each other for your attention. Merry-making will seem a good idea in the evening. Your desire for name and fame will meet with success shortly, maybe even today! Ganesh shows his blessings on you.

TAURUS
As a manager, you may be able to outclass your colleagues by a great margin, predicts Ganesh. You will soften your approach with time and move towards a more democratic style of decision-making rather than the arbitrary protocol that you are used to.

GEMINI
Your business rivals may compete with you in sales and deals today, warns Ganesh. Care and concern must be the two watchwords in all your dealings. Hostility may come in the way of love. Those spurned in previous romantic liaisons may get a chance to pen a new love story, says Ganesh.

CANCER
Today, you may have to do a lot of multi-tasking at work, predicts Ganesh. And you are likely to do it with the dexterity of a juggler. You will finish your pending tasks with ease. You will make seemingly impossible tasks look as simple as blinking.

LEO
Get ready to bask in applause. Well, not literally, but Ganesh does foresee you getting that long due recognition today for all the hard work you've put at your workplace. This goes hand-in-hand with the support of your colleagues and the good wishes of your seniors, especially if it is some new project that you are undertaking.

VIRGO
A single-headed mission to be the master of your destiny will drive you ahead. Your management skills will be immaculate, and the fire to succeed will get you up and running. Your skill in the managerial post will be accentuated by your quick decision-making and superior analytical ability, says Ganesh.

LIBRA
All things passionate seem to enliven you today. It is one of those moments when chance dictates every possibility of a new romantic love episode in your life. The last time a moment like this came by, Romeo met Juliet.

SCORPIO
Friends in influential positions will be of much help today. You may plunge into a new business venture without much ado. Appreciation for your abilities and efforts will fly in thick and fast.

SAGITTARIUS
A paradigm shift in your temperament and your looks is on the cards today. Your personality will get better as you don some chic attire, jewellery and a rather loud perfume today.

CAPRICORN
Impulsiveness, which is not really your trait, will be very evident in whatever work you do today, says Ganesh. Money matters will keep you preoccupied for major part of the day, but ironically, your otherwise methodical approach to everything will go for a toss.

AQUARIUS
Your dream house or car may well be on its way! The stars proclaim that it's a good time to acquire new assets. So bring out those attractive brochures and check out your loan prospects.

PISCES
There are indications you will be in hot pursuit of leisure today, says Ganesh. This will probably be in the form of a short trip to recharge your batteries, and is probably fuelled by your satisfaction in the realisation that the role you play within your organisation is consequential, satisfying as well as rewarding.

TAPSEE is all praise for Shakuntala Devi

Mumbai: Only a day to go till the film *Shakuntala Devi* is made available for everyone to stream on Amazon Prime Video. The biographical drama film stars Vidya Balan as Shakuntala Devi, the mathematician and the world-class who astounded the world with her arithmetic abilities to calculate complex math equations in a matter of seconds.

The audience looks forward to watching the much-anticipated biographical film about *Shakuntala Devi* who was also known as 'the human-computer' for her astonishing calculation skills. However, through a digital screening, a few got the chance to watch the film recently.

Actress Tapsee Pannu was one of the few to be a part of this special screening and she ab-

Sanya Malhotra, and Amit Sadh in prominent roles. AGENCIES

solutely loved the film and Vidya Balan's marvelous acting in it. She posted: "Vidya kasam bohoh pyaari picture banayi hai @anumenon1805 @NayanikaMahtani @ishita_moitra @vidya_balan @sanyamalhotra07 @Jisshusengupta @TheAmitSadh @vikramix @SnehaRajani @vivekkrishnani @PrimeVideoIN @sonypicsprods #ShakuntalaDeviOnPrime."

The upcoming film *Shakuntala Devi* is directed by Anu Menon and produced by Sony Pictures Networks Productions and Vikram Malhotra. The film also stars Jisshu Sengupta,



Abhishek takes a late night walk in hospital

Mumbai: Bollywood actor Abhishek Bachchan, who is currently undergoing Covid treatment, took a late night walk in the hospital.

Sharing the fact on Instagram, Abhishek posted a photograph from an empty corridor in the hospital.

"Light at the end of the tunnel! #latenightwalks," he captioned the image.

Abhishek received several messages from his friends and colleagues from the industry, wishing him good health.

Reacting to the post, Abhishek's sister Shweta Bachchan Nanda wrote: "Soon". Filmmaker and choreographer Farah Khan Kunder commented: "Get well soon junior."

Abhishek is in the hospital along with his father, veteran actor Amitabh Bachchan, who is also battling the coronavirus. Abhishek's actress wife Aishwarya Rai Bachchan and their daughter Aaradhya were discharged from hospital after testing negative for Covid-19 July 27.

"Thank you all for your continued prayers and good wishes. Indebted forever. Aishwarya and Aaradhya have thankfully tested negative and have been discharged from the hospital." Abhishek had tweeted after Aishwarya and Aaradhya's discharge.

"They will now be at home. My father and I remain in hospital under the care of the medical staff," he had added. IANS



Bobby to make digital debut in August

Mumbai: Actor Bobby Deol is all set to enter the digital world in August with his upcoming film, *Class of 83*.

Class of 83 is backed by superstar Shah Rukh Khan's banner Red Chillies Entertainment. It was announced Friday that the film will release on Netflix next month. The film is directed by Atul Sabharwal.

That apart, *Masaba Masaba* is also slated to release in

August. The scripted series is based on real-life moments from fashion designer Masaba Gupta's life. It follows her background, her fashion world, family and her foray back into the dating world. It will also feature her mother, actress Neena Gupta. The series is written and directed by Sonam Nair.

Meanwhile, the Janhvi Kapoor-starrer *Gunjan Saxena: The Kargil Girl* is also slated to premiere on Netflix August 12. IANS



Deepika marks 11 years of Love Aaj Kal

Mumbai: Deepika Padukone as Meera won our hearts with her remarkable performance in *Love Aaj Kal*. The actress played the role of Meera Pandit, the girl who celebrates modernity, but yet is deeply rooted to her culture. As the movie clocks 11 years, Deepika changed her profile picture and Instagram handle to celebrate Meera.

As Meera, Deepika was absolutely endearing. She played a regular girl who goes through the various phases of life. Back then, *Love aaj Kal* was the kind of movie that showed a free-spirited, independent girl who is career-oriented and follows her heart. To mark the movie's 11th anniversary, the actress took to her social media handle and shared a BTS photo of her with Imtiaz Ali, the director of *Love Aaj Kal*, and captioned it as, "The eyes say it all..."

Deepika brought out emotional vulnerability and at the same time practicality through her portrayal of Meera with the utmost ease.

Meera remains one of Deepika's strongest and most memorable characters. It was a straight-from-the-heart performance, a character that inspired us and continues to do so. AGENCIES



PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

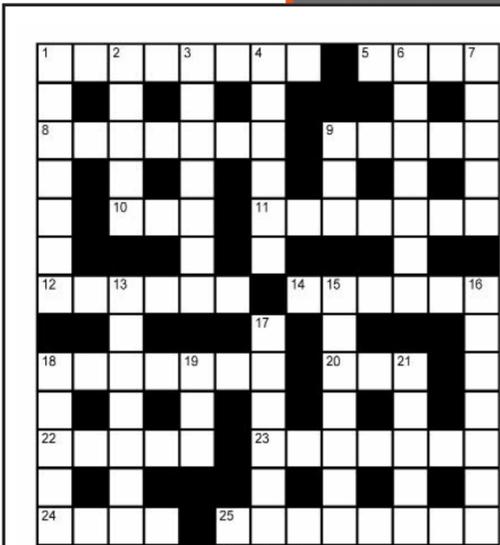


BREVITY



FUN post

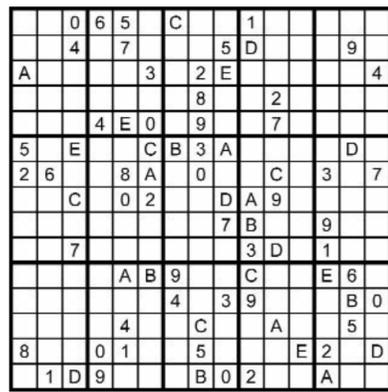
CROSSWORD



- Across
- 1 Illnesses
 - 5 Sign of healing
 - 8 To the point
 - 9 Chip dip
 - 10 Sombrero, e.g.
 - 11 Brass instrument
 - 12 Withstand
 - 14 Act of gracious kindness
 - 18 Circus performer
 - 20 Reel's partner
 - 22 Bargain-basement
 - 23 Seasoned sailor (3,4)
 - 24 Window part
 - 25 Chinese restaurant offering (5,3)
 - 3 Vagrant
 - 4 Kicks out
 - 6 Music genre
 - 7 Crow
 - 9 Pittance
 - 13 Deviate
 - 15 Condense cheese
 - 16 Soft Italian
 - 17 Fervour
 - 18 Trunk items
 - 19 Napkin's place
 - 21 Passed out
- Down
- 1 Gruesome
 - 2 Recast

SUDOKU

To solve the Sudoku puzzle, each row, column and box must contain the numbers 0 to 9 and the letters A to E.



SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD



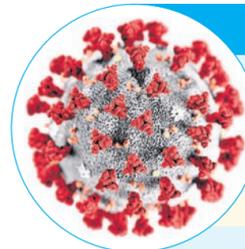
SUDOKU

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



BAMBOO CRAFTS

Artisans prepare baskets using bamboo flakes near Rajmahal Square in Bhubaneswar, Friday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	1,75,74,145	1,10,00,401	6,78,591
India	16,43,686	10,60,016	35,817
Odisha	31,877	20,518	177

Fire safety certificates a click away

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 31: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, Friday, launched 'Odisha Agnishama Seva' portal of the Fire Services department to facilitate issuance of fire safety certificates to different categories of buildings in the state.

The online system has been evolved to allow the users to prevent their physical visits to the offices to get the required approvals. Now,

5T INITIATIVE

The online system has been evolved to allow the users to prevent their physical visits to the offices to get the required approvals. Now, the users can log onto the website and seek their certification on a real time basis. **Eight services could be availed by the citizens online including Fire Safety Certificates for high-rise buildings, multiplexes, shopping malls and clinical establishments and others**

the users can log onto the website and seek their certification on a real time basis.

"This is a priority area of my



CM Naveen Patnaik launches online portal for issuance of fire safety certificates, Friday. 5T Secretary VK Pandian is also seen

government under 5T Initiatives that aim at bringing Transformation in governance through parameters of Technology, Teamwork, Transparency and Time," Patnaik said. The CM said that eight important services would be available to the people through the portal and it is likely to aid different segments of buildings.

"Eight services could be availed by the citizens online including Fire Safety Certificates for high-rise buildings, multiplexes, shopping malls and clinical establishments and others," he said.

The government claims that while eight important services are made available through the portal in the initial phase, other services will be added in the next phase

October 2, 2020 to allow the people to get most of the Fire Services department related works accomplished online. Chief Secretary Asit Tripathy said that providing online approval to the general public is a significant step forward in providing hassle-free services to the public.

State Energy Minister Dibya Shankar Mishra, meanwhile, applauded the works of the State Fire Service department for rendering their services during disasters.

He said that the Fire Services personnel recently worked well in the cyclone Amphan and also helped the neighbouring states. He also said that it will be developed into a multi-sectoral response force in the days to come.

OHPC pays ₹30Cr dividend to govt

Bhubaneswar: Odisha Hydro Power Corporation (OHPC) has paid an interim dividend of Rs 30 crore to the state for the 2019-20 financial year. OHPC chairman Bishnupada Sethi handed over the cheque to Chief Secretary Asit Tripathy here Friday. Tripathy complimented the efforts of OHPC team in power sector and advised them to further sharpen their capacity through adoption of latest technology and business reform. Sethi said the balance amount for the year would be paid after finalisation of the accounts.

CB grills Aditya's kin

Bhubaneswar: A Crime Branch team Friday interrogated deceased social activist Aditya Dash's wife Bidyashree and other family members at his residence at Trilochan Vihar in Sundarapada area in connection with his mysterious death. Dash's body was found on the railway tracks near Lingaraj Temple Road station here July 7. Later, the CB sleuths also visited the old-age home set up by Dash for enquiry. They interrogated the staff and inmates there.

BEAUTIFYING HOLY CITY



Artists draw a mural portraying Sri Jagannath Express at the VIP Road in Puri as part of a beautification drive by the civic authorities, Friday

Govt offices to work with 50% workforce

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 31: Revising its 'work from home' order, the state government Friday said the government offices would function with 50 per cent staff strength in the month of August.

As per an order issued by the General Administration & Public Grievance department, "It has been decided that all the departments and

sub-ordinate offices shall perform official work with 50 per cent of the employees' strength (all staff including Group-A officers) in the month of August 2020 and ensure that the government work does not suffer." The departments/heads of offices have been given the liberty to decide the manner of selection of employees who will attend office on roster basis. However, the offices providing essential serv-

ices such as Special Relief Commissioner (SRC) and Odisha State Disaster Management Authority (OSDMA), police, fire services, health services, municipal services etc will function in full strength, read the order.

Further, the officers/staff who have been provided with VPN facility will continue to work from home, when not assigned roster duty. "They must be available to

attend to any office work of urgent nature, at short notice and be available on telephone at all times."

The government has also announced that all of its offices will remain closed on Saturdays in August.

All government employees have been directed to abide by the instructions and guidelines issued from time to time to prevent the spread of Covid-19 in the state.

₹1L for each BMC ward to fight Covid

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 31: In a bid to contain spread of Covid-19, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC), Friday, planned an array of activities for each ward under its premises as part of its annual ward budget and action plan.

Christened as 'COVID-19 Annual Ward Budget and Action Plan', it will ensure that each ward gets Rs 1 lakh per year. This will include expenditure for slum com-

mittee for Covid-19. The Zonal Deputy Commissioners (ZDCs) shall prepare action plan for their wards for approval through the Deputy Commissioner.

In order to prepare the plan, the ZDCs will be assisted by ward supervisors, community organisers, Anganwadi workers, ASHA karmis and ANMs. "We have planned to conduct meetings to be undertaken with the ward committees, former corporators, religious leaders to gather baseline information data re-

lated to number of households, family members, ward migrants, elderly persons, differently-abled, widowers, children below the age of 10, economically weaker sections who are having high risk of infection due to the community transmission," a senior BMC official.

The activities to be carried out will include information education communication and behavioural change communication, knowledge dissemination, capacity building among others.

SC seeks compliance report on migrant labour crisis

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, July 31: The Supreme Court Friday directed Odisha and other state governments to file affidavits detailing the steps taken by them to maintain database of migrant workers and provide them livelihood opportunities.

A three-judge bench of the apex court comprising Justices Ashok Bhushan, R Subhash Reddy and MR Shah also observed that registration of migrant workers as directed by the court has not been made by respective states. Owing to this, a large number of migrant workers and unorganised labourers are unable to reap benefits, the bench said.

"None of the states or Union Territories has filed any affidavit giving details of the compliance of the directions issued by the court June 9. The states are required to bring on record the mode and manner in which records of migrant labourers who have



KEY OBSERVATIONS

The SC bench observed that registration of migrant workers as directed by the court has not been made by the states/UTs

Owing to this, a large number of migrant workers and unorganised labourers are unable to reap benefits, the bench observed

reached their native places are being maintained with their skill, nature of employment and other details. Let states/UTs may also file affidavits in the above regard within a period of three weeks," the bench said.

Significantly the SC had June 9 asked the state governments to conduct the registration of migrant workers under three enactments namely - Interstate Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1979, Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment and

Conditions of Service) Act, 1996 and Unorganised workers' Social Security Act, 2008. The apex court observed that several states have made rules under the above enactments but all necessary details regarding the steps taken by concerned states have not been brought on record. "Let affidavits be filed by all the states/UTs indicating the steps taken by them with respect to above mentioned enactments within a period of three months," the bench said.

The court has adjourned the hearing on the issue for four weeks.

Sambalpuri saree gets a 'Shakuntala' spin



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 31: Ace actress Vidya Balan was seen wearing a Sambalpuri Bandha saree during the promotion of her new movie on mathematical genius Shakuntala Devi which was released on Amazon Prime video platform, Friday.

The actress shared some images for the film promotion where she is seen wearing a 'Sambalpur Bandha saree'.

The saree has been woven by Sambalpur weavers which took them one month.

Amrita Sabat of Utkalamrita, who promoted the design, said mathematical equations are printed on the outfit designed originally by Bhagwan Meher and Hari Shankar Meher of Bargarh and the symbols and formulae are created using tie and dye method. Later, the design was replicated by several other artists.

"Last year, when we got the information that Vidya Balan is playing the role of Shakuntala Devi we contacted her team for making her wear this particular saree. We felt it would

be perfect for her in Shakuntala Devi where she is essaying the role of the mathematical genius," said Sabat.

In the video shared officially by Utkalamrita, Vidya Balan is praising the Sambalpuri weavers who work so hard. However, they are now suffering due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The actress has expressed hope that situation will get better for the Odisha weavers and also told them to take care of themselves and keep producing masterpiece.

Amrita said Utkalamrita has been working as brand for last five years. The aim is to get global recognition for Odisha weavers and this is just one step towards achieving that.

It should be stated here that in the movie Sui Dhaaga starring Varun Dhawan and Anushka Sharma the work of Pipli handicraft artists received widespread appreciation. A couple of Pipli origin designs were also used in the trailer of Sui Dhaaga.

BIOPIC ON SHAKUNTALA DEVI

Mathematical equations are printed on the outfit designed first by Bhagwan Meher and Hari Shankar Meher of Bargarh

The symbols and formulae are created using tie and dye method

In the video shared officially by Utkalamrita, Vidya Balan is praising the Sambalpuri weavers who work so hard

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 SANSKRITI PATTNAIK STATE RANK 1 98.8% HUMANITIES	 RICH A ROY CHOUDHURY STATE RANK 1 98.6% COMMERCE	 ASHUTOSH PANIGRAHY STATE RANK 2 98.4% SCIENCE
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CBSE X Board Results 2020

 SUTIRTH RATH SCHOOL RANK 1 98.4%	 SNEHAL SUJAL MOHANTY SCHOOL RANK 2 98.2%	 ANKAN MOHAPATRA SCHOOL RANK 3 98.0%
--	--	---

CBSE XII Board 2020 Results	Above 75%	First Class
98% students scored above 75%	Science	99%
	Commerce	97%
	Humanities	94%

CBSE X Board 2020 Results	Above 60%	100%
229 students scored above 75%	Above 60%	100%
	Above 75%	99%
	Above 90%	60%

* percentage calculation is based as per CBSE examination bye-laws for Class XII

SAI INTERNATIONAL RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL - SIRS

CBSE X Board 2020 Results		
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100%	89%	51%

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Vidya Balan dons a Sambalpuri saree to promote her new movie

OPCC chief seeks urgent steps to avert community transmission

State's nCoV tally nears 32K-mark

Friday's spike in the daily caseload is the third highest since the outbreak of the pandemic in Odisha

POST NEWS NETWORK/AGENCIES

CM inaugurates 3rd plasma bank

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik inaugurated a plasma bank in Rourkela, third of its kind in the state Friday, saying the state has collected 70 units of plasma in a fortnight for the treatment of critically ill COVID-19 patients.



A person donating plasma

Patnaik, who inaugurated the plasma bank at Ispat General Hospital in Rourkela through videoconferencing, said eight patients have so far been discharged from hospitals after being cured of coronavirus through plasma therapy.

Seventeen other patients are improving after undergoing the new medical procedure, he said.

Of the 29 of the state's 30 districts, "Ganjam district reported the highest number of fresh cases (368), followed by Khurda (214), Keonjhar (81) and Sundargarh (75), the official said. Of the 177 fatalities, Ganjam

It is heartening to know that 70 units of plasma have been prepared in 15 days, the Chief Minister said adding the plasma bank at Rourkela will serve the COVID-19 patients in western Odisha.

Two other such facilities will district accounted for the highest number of 94 deaths.

A 12 year-old girl of Keonjhar district, who had tested positive for COVID-19, died of acute peritonitis. With this, the number of

soon come up at MKCG Medical College Hospital at Berhampur and VIMSAR, Burla, he said.

With this, all the regions of the state will have access to plasma therapy, he said.

The two other plasma banks already in operation are at SCB Medical College Hospital in Cuttack and Capital Hospital in Bhubaneswar. Patnaik urged patients cured of COVID-19 to voluntarily donate plasma and make it a movement as plasma therapy is the only one that has proved effective against the deadly virus.

A person, who had recovered from the contagion in the first week of July, donated his plasma during the inauguration programme.

COVID-19 patients dying of other ailments rose to 37 in the state, the official pointed out. Meanwhile, 772 persons who had earlier tested positive for the infection recovered from the disease Friday.

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 31: Terming the overall COVID-19 situation in Odisha as 'grim', the state Congress chief Niranjana Patnaik Friday expressed fears of community transmission of novel coronavirus if the government does not take immediate measures like ramping up of testing facilities and conducting door-to-door surveys.

In a letter to Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, the Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) president said, the state government should ensure testing of at least 25,000 samples per day.

The PCC chief said, steps should be taken to carry out 100 per cent testing in areas from where a high number of positive cases are being reported.

COVID-19 tests should be made

If the government fails to take quick steps to tackle the situation, there is a likelihood of the state witnessing community transmission of novel coronavirus. The COVID-19 situation is really grim in the state

NIRANJANA PATNAIK | OPCC PRESIDENT

mandatory for people before they are discharged from quarantine centres and dedicated hospitals, he said.

"If the government fails to take quick steps to tackle the situation, there is a likelihood of the state witnessing community transmission of novel coronavirus. The COVID-19 situation is really grim in the state," the PCC chief said.

The government should take steps in consultation with different political parties instead of handing over COVID-19 management to a handful of officers, he said.

"Discussions should be held with political parties, social organisations and experts to strengthen the battle against the pandemic," he said.

Advocating the necessity of carrying out a massive house-to-house survey to identify symptomatic patients, the PCC chief said, the drive should also cover all commercial and business establishments. Immediate steps should be taken to provide all the frontline COVID Warriors with adequate number of personal protective equipment (PPE), he said.

Mentioning that the number of COVID-19 hospitals should be increased, he said, adding that adequate stock of medical equipment and life-saving medicines should be made available in the facilities.

Maritime heritage gallery unveiled

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 31: A maritime heritage gallery was unveiled at Sanskruti Bhawan here by minister of tourism, Odia language, literature and culture Jyotiprakash Panigrahi Friday.

The gallery is equipped with rare photographs, art and artefacts, antiquities, ports, ports sites, ancient currencies, sea routes, ships, sea vessels, among others. On this occasion, the minister said the maritime gallery, which is first of its kind in the state, will provide a lot of information to students, scholars and enthusiastic people.

On this occasion, principal secretary Manoranjan Panigrahi talked about the glorious maritime heritage of Odisha, especially how it had added feather to the South-East Asian economic scenario. A small booklet "The Intimate Encounters: Early Odisha and South East Asia prepared by Odisha Institute of Maritime and South East Asian Studies was also unveiled by the minister along with Odia book Lock Down written by Manoranjan Panigrahi. The gallery will be kept open for public once the pandemic returns to normalcy.

Ration distributed to servitors

Bhubaneswar: The months long lockdown due to COVID-19 outbreak has rendered the lives of priests at religious places miserable since Dakshina is the only source of their income. To support them, the So Am I Foundation Trust has distributed one month dry rations to 40 Pujaris of Puri under its Hunger Free Odisha initiative. Earlier, the foundation had distributed ration to around 1,000 priest families of Puri as well as in Bhubaneswar.

Jail staff instructed to not take mobile, money inside prison

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 31: Following the viral of a video clip of gangster Tito who is inside the jail, an embarrassed prison department has issued an advisory barring prison officials and staff to take their mobile phones inside the jail. Superintendents of jails have been asked to direct staff to deposit their mobile phones near the entry and exit gate of the jail.

A few days back, an un-dated video of the Jharpada special jail went viral showing gangster Tito staging a durbar inside the jail. Similarly, another video showing contraband inside Khurda jail brought embarrassment to the department.

Critics alleged that the advisory is an attempt to shoot the messengers who are trying to unearth massive illegal activities inside the jail. Director General of Prisons and



Correctional Services, Santosh Upadhyaya, ordered that if staff engaged in guarding duty at prisons detect contrabands inside jails they will be rewarded and appreciated with entry in service books and personal files for consideration of selection of medals at later stages. The superintendents have been asked to register FIR with the local police whenever any objectionable video clippings are shot inside the jail. DG, Prisons has asked for the clippings to the state forensic laboratory here so that the actual date, time and mobile phone through which the video has been shot can be ascertained.

"Prisoners who are found in possession of contraband articles should be isolated and kept in separate wards and they are checked on a daily basis by the jail staff and during the day time the jail staff be more vigilant towards such prisoners," the DG, Prisons, said.

Superintendents of jails were directed to ensure that existing CCTV cameras are made functional and are in operation. As per instructions, officials should check the entire premises of the barracks everyday.

Jail staff have been instructed to not carry money, mobile or any other prohibited articles inside the jail. The DG, Prisons warned that strict action will be taken against jail officials if they are found violating the instructions.

BMC cremates 161 suspected and COVID bodies

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 31: Owing to spread of misinformation, fear and social stigma around COVID-19, more than 100 cases of family members of abandoning bodies by their kith and kin have come to the fore. While a few of these deceased were COVID positive, others were only suspected cases.

As per the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC), the civic authorities have helped in cremating 161 bodies. As COVID protocol could not be followed, these bodies which include cases from local and nearby hospitals from different districts and even from other states have been cremated by the BMC as per the Standard

Operating Procedure (SOP). "These deaths also include sus-

pected cases in which people have died even prior to any tests as they arrive at city hospitals or other district-level health-care facilities very late. While in certain cases the families weren't able to collect bodies owing to movement restrictions, others denied taking back the bodies fearing spread of COVID," a BMC official stated.

Following the death of a patient in COVID hospital or other health-care facility, it is learned that the

BMC is intimated through official mail. Following the mail, the relatives of the deceased are informed to give consent for cremation. If the person can be contacted over phone, it can be collected directly or if the person is not traceable then the consent is obtained through the district administration.

The BMC Commissioner then issues an office order to form a team in which a doctor, administrative officers, police representatives and engineer as members are included to oversee the operation. After this step, a hearse arrives

from Capital Hospital to the place where the body is kept. In case a contact is made, the body is kept inside the morgue of the Capital Hospital, which is then taken to Satyanagar cremation ground so that the family members could show the last respects.

"A team including a medical officer from Capital Hospital, an engineer from the BMC, and representatives from other police stations is dedicatedly doing their jobs to receive, transport and conduct cremation of the bodies in conformity with the COVID-19 Dead Body Management Guidelines issued by the Centre," said Purandar Nanda, Deputy Commissioner of BMC who is leading the cremation team.

Resonance's students shine at CBSE board examination

Ankita Mondal and Shreya Mohapatra, students of Resonance Bhubaneswar, have secured 99.2%

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 31: Resonance's Bhubaneswar study centres have produced highest quality results in CBSE 2020, Class - X Board Examination. The examination was conducted by the CBSE. The institute claimed that Ankita Mondal and Shreya Mohapatra, students of Resonance Bhubaneswar, have secured 99.2%

and are declared second state toppers. Splendid performances of seven more students who have scored more than 98% have added more feathers to its success. 36 students have secured more than 95% and 65 students have secured more than 90% from both campuses of Resonance Bhubaneswar.

Centre Head of Resonance Bhubaneswar Alok Saxena said, "The keys behind the success are to educate and motivate the students on how early start of entrance preparation will be beneficial to beat competition, balancing board preparation with other competitive level examination preparation."

CLOUDY SKY



Clouds hover over Kathajodi river in Cuttack, Friday, signaling the possibility of rain

OP PHOTO

SJTA urged to build sheds for Mahaprasad sale

POST NEWS NETWORK

Puri, July 31: The Suar and Mahasuar Niyog of Srimandir has urged the Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) to set up a few temporary sheds near the shrine for facilitating Mahaprasad sale.

The Suar and Mahasuar Niyog has proposed that the temporary sheds should be built at the south and north gates of the shrine for sale of Mahaprasad to the devotees.

According to the Niyog, the 12th century shrine has been shut for devotees in the wake of Covid-19 pandemic. However, the rituals of the presiding deities are being performed by the servitors.

In this scenario, many devotees often gather at the south gate of Srimandir to buy Mahaprasad. The devotees usually pay no heed



to the social distancing norms in place to curb spread of the viral infection, said the Niyog.

In a press statement, the Suar and Mahasuar Niyog claimed that the SJTA had set up a temporary shed near the Srigundicha temple for the sale of Mahaprasad to devotees during this year's Rath Yatra. "Many devotees had bought

SAFETY FIRST

The Suar and Mahasuar Niyog has proposed that the temporary sheds should be built at the south and north gates of the shrine for sale of Mahaprasad to devotees

Srimandir has been shut for devotees in the wake of Covid-19 pandemic. However, the rituals of the presiding deities are being performed by the servitors

In this scenario, many devotees often gather at the south gate of the 12th century shrine to buy Mahaprasad without paying heed to the social distancing norms

Mahaprasad from the temporary counter by maintaining the social distance," claimed the Niyog.

According to sources, the temple administration had written to the Suar and Mahasuar Niyog asking it to sell Mahaprasad outside Srimandir in accordance with the Covid-19 guidelines. "Srimandir tradition does not

permit us to sell Mahaprasad outside the shrine. We have urged the SJTA to set up temporary sheds at the south and north gates of Srimandir for Mahaprasad sale. We will open a few temporary counters at the two gates and sell the delicacies to devotees by adhering to the Covid-19 guidelines," said the Niyog.

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Beneficiaries lose out to 'fake' ration cards



JAIPUR PDS SCAM

SOME RETAILERS, IT HAS BEEN ALLEGED, HAVE OBTAINED RATION CARDS IN THE NAME OF DECEASED PERSONS

A DEALER OF ANTIA PANCHAYAT HAS FOUR 'ANTYODAYA' CARDS-- TWO OF THEM BELONGING TO HIS DAUGHTERS-IN LAW AND ONE EACH TO HIS WIFE AND DAUGHTER

SOME GENUINE BENEFICIARIES HAVE BROUGHT THE SCAM TO THE NOTICE OF JAJPUR DISTRICT COLLECTOR, SUB-COLLECTOR AND THE PROJECT DIRECTOR OF DRDA

Jajpur, July 31: Public distribution system (PDS) ration dealers in different panchayats under Dharmasala block in Jajpur district have obtained hundreds of 'Antyodaya' (ration) cards by showing their family members as genuine beneficiaries.

Some retailers, it has been alleged, have obtained ration cards in the name of deceased persons. In the process, a large number of genuine beneficiaries are being deprived of the benefits provided by the state government.

A plea against this alleged fake distribution of ration cards was filed in the Orissa High Court a few days back. Since then it has been alleged that a number of 'corrupt' dealers have approached the complainants. They are coercing them to withdraw the plea with affidavits stating that the complaints are false.

Sarbeswar Behura, one of the complainants, said the plea will not be withdrawn. "We do not understand what evidence is required by the district administration to initiate disciplinary measures against the nexus of dishonest block development officers (BDOs),

PDS dealers and some staff of the Jajpur Civil Supplies Department," stated Sarbeswar. "If we do not get justice we will seek interference of the court again," he added.

Sources said that among PDS dealers, Chakradhar Bal of Antia panchayat has four 'Antyodaya' cards. Two of them belong to his daughters-in law and one each to his wife and daughter. Jayaram Sahu, another PDS ration dealer of Uttarapratap panchayat, has got cards issued in the name of his mother, wife and two brothers.

Similarly Rabindra Das, a dealer of Khetrapal panchayat, has cards in the names of his wife and four brothers. Allegations have also come up against the dealer in Aruha panchayat. Sources said he has managed to obtain ration cards under the name of Parbati Sahani and Rama Behera, both of whom are dead.

The issuances of these fake ration cards have been brought to the notice of Jajpur District Collector, Sub-Collector and the project director of DRDA by genuine beneficiaries who are yet

to avail of the PDS scheme. However, till date steps have not been initiated to prevent such fake practices.

Jajpur civil supplies officer (CSO) Surendra Kumar Hota said action will only be initiated if he gets orders from his superiors. "Investigation will be conducted as per the direction of the Collector. However, I have not received any complaints on dealers obtaining fake ration cards," said Hota. He assured that proper steps will be implemented if complaints are lodged and found to be true.

Maoist opponents run drive against Martyrs' Week in Swabhiman Anchal

ULTRAS HOLD PRAJA MELI AT ANDAPALLI AMID SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Malkangiri, July 31: Even as Maoists have been observing Martyrs' Week since July 28 in Malkangiri district, hundreds of tribals supporting the ultras organized a massive Praja Meli at Andapalli area in Swabhiman Region and paid tribute to the martyrs. However, a group of people have opposed the Martyrs' Week and started observing Ninda Saptah since July 30.

This has reportedly taken place even though security has been tightened in the area. They had earlier set up a temporary Smruti Stamba (memorial pillars).

At the Praja Meli, ultra supporters were told that many Maoists had fallen to police bullets last year while the ultras had been fighting for Jal, Jami and Jungle for tribals.

The tribals were convinced about the ideals and aims of the Maoists. The leaders of the Maoist supporters urged people to fight for their rights and entitlements. They made a scathing attack on the gov-



ernment and the democratic system. They said in the name of democracy, poor people are exploited while capitalists are promoted.

Significantly, a group of people in the Swabhiman Anchal has been strongly opposing Maoist activities.

The Maoists opponents have pasted posters at different places, condemning the observance of the Martyrs' Week. Countering the Martyrs' Week, the opponents have started observing Ninda Saptah since July 30.

In the posters, they said, "The killed Maoists are not martyrs. They have killed many of our innocent tribals branding them as police informers."

The Maoist opponents pointed out that Maoists have indulged in disruptive activities and destroyed schools, colleges, roads, health centres and panchayat buildings in this area.

The posters said, "When the whole country is struggling to fight against Covid, Maoists with help from our enemy country are observing Martyrs' Week. Such act of Maoists is highly condemnable. This Martyrs' Week should be opposed."

INPPF, Koraput district, claimed to have pasted these posters.

Ganjam tally breaks 10K mark

BATTLE AGAINST COVID



POST NEWS NETWORK

Ganjam, July 31: The total number of COVID-19 cases in Ganjam district breached the 10,000-mark Friday with 368 fresh infections while the toll climbed to 94 as four more people succumbed to the disease, informed health department.

The total number of cases in the district now stands at 10,364. While the total number of active cases in the district stands at 3,134, the number of recoveries has shot up to 7,130. However, there is good news for Ganjam district that Gopalpur NAC was declared free from COVID-19.

Gopalpur NAC did not report any COVID-19 positive case between July 15 and 29. Hence the NAC shall no longer be considered a 'Red Zone'.

"The mission of Ganjam district administration is to convert 'Red Zones' to 'Green Zones' has become successful in Gopalpur. Gopalpur NAC has CO-RONA +ve free ULB of Ganjam district. Monitoring of comorbid, symptomatic, isolation and community involvement are key to achieve this feat (sic)," a tweet by Ganjam Collector Vijay Amruta Kulange said in a tweet.

No OPD at LNMCH for 5 days

Koraput: After several employees and patients tested positive for COVID-19, the Out Patient Service (OPD) at Laxman Nayak Medical College and Hospital was suspended for five days, informed District Collector Madhusudan Mishra.

The doctors and hospital staff who had come in contact with COVID-19 infected patients have been asked to undergo 14-day home quarantine. Their swab samples will be sent for testing, informed authorities.

The infected patients and staff of the hospital have been sent to a COVID-19 facility for treatment. Sanitisation of the hospital by the fire brigade is also being done. The doctors and employees who are in charge of emergency serv-

ice are asked not to take any leave till further orders. Wearing of masks in the hospital has been made mandatory.

81 new positive cases were reported Friday from Koraput district. It took the district's tally to 771. Currently, there are 550 active cases while 221 patients have recovered from the disease. So far no deaths have been reported from the district.



WEEKEND SHUTDOWNS IN DHENKANAL

Dhenkanal: The district administration will implement weekend shutdowns till August 30 to prevent a spread in Covid-19 cases in Dhenkanal. The weekend shutdown will come into effect from August 1. The shutdown will be implemented under the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897, Disaster Management Act, 2005 and Covid-19 Regulations 2020, said District Collector Bhumesh Chandra Behera.

The restrictions will be imposed

on intra-district movement of both public and private transportations. Opening of shops and commercial establishments will not be allowed. The administration also instructed private and government organisations to remain closed during the weekends. Movement and gathering of people during the shutdown were banned. Active surveillance, contact tracing and implementation of social distancing will be carried out, Behera added.

Sukinda valley: Mineral transport raises hackles

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kaliapani, July 31: Tamaka-Mangalpur road in mineral bearing Sukinda valley is considered a life line for people and mineral transportation, but it has been left in a deplorable condition. Nothing is being done to repair the road for years.

Local leaders, businessmen and residents have threatened to stop chromite transportation through the road if no immediate steps are taken to repair it.

The road is riddled with potholes and puddles formed due to accumulation of water. The road has virtually turned to be a death trap. Everyday minor to major accidents occur on this patch and it has become a cause of headache for the local residents.

For transportation of chromite, every day thousands of trucks ply on this road. However, it has been alleged that the district administration does not undertake any measures for the maintenance of the Tamaka-Mangalpur road. So the condition of the road is deteriorating from bad to worse on a daily basis.

Accidents take place on this road on a regular basis. Negotiating the road has become a nightmare for passenger vehicles, especially for patients in ambulances.

There is a District Mineral Fund



(DMF) for carrying out developmental activities in mining areas. Money from this fund is normally used for providing drinking water facilities, education and communication facilities to people living in mining areas. But here the case is different.

Local residents, members of business houses and truck owners association said they have taken up the issue with the district administration a number of times, but to no avail. They urged officials to get the road repaired immediately. They threatened if that doesn't happen they will be forced to resort to agitation and in the process they will stop chromite transportation.

Notably, the foundation stone for converting the Tamaka-Mangalpur road a four-layer one was laid in the month of February, 2017. Tenders have since been called for twice, but work has not progressed. When asked about this issue, SDO, Road and Building Department of Jajpur district, Manoj Mahapatra said he has no idea as to what has dogged the project.

Police sniffer dog buried with honours

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nabarangpur, July 31: Tara, the sniffer dog of Nabarangpur Police, was laid to rest with full police honours at the reserve police ground here a couple of days ago. Tara, a female Labrador, was ailing for past few days before her death. She was 13 and served the state police for 12 long years.

"Police Tracker Dog (Tara) of Nabarangpur unit has passed away today. We paid our tearful respects to her. She gave a very long and illustrious service to police," said Kusalkar in a tweet from his official handle.

In recognition of her illustrious service, she was accorded guard of honour at her burial at the reserve police ground in the town in the presence of Nabarangpur SP Nitin Kusalkar. Police personnel laid wreaths on Tara's body and saluted her while police band played the bugler before she was buried.

Advertisement for EAST COAST RAILWAY tenders, including details for double distant signals and crossing gates.

Sans power, LI points remain unused

POST NEWS NETWORK

Champua, July 31: Even as the district faces a drought-like situation, farming activities were badly affected in over 35 acres of Rajia panchayat under Champua block in Keonjhar after the power department disconnected supply to a lift irrigation point.

Keonjhar farmers have been facing acute irrigation problems over past three months as there has been sporadic rainfall in the district. Most farm-lands have become dry and paddy seedlings have died out.

"Even as local farmers have already started farming activities, they apprehend drought-like conditions in the days ahead. There has been no rain over past three months," some vegetable farm-



FARM CRISIS LOOMS

ers of Maheswarpur village of this panchayat said.

Power supply to a lift irrigation point located at Maheswarpur area was disconnected on the pretext of safety reasons. After being affected, local vegetable farmers in this area had resorted to Champua Sub-Collector Pratap

Pritimaya for immediate redressal.

Seeking anonymity, an engineer of the electricity department said, "Power supply was disconnected as a live electric wire hangs there at a lower level."

Notably, local farmers have been cultivating vegetables over ten years under the Biju Krushak Kalyan Yojana. They depend on deep wells for irrigation of farmlands this Kharif season. The live wire is said to have been hanging for over ten years and power supply was disconnected July 21 this year.

On being contacted, Champua Sub-Collector said, "Immediate steps will be taken in this regard keeping in mind safety of farmers. Lift irrigation engineer and Champua tehsildar have been informed accordingly and assigned the task of restoring supply."

Balasore man has close bond with bees

POST NEWS NETWORK

Balasore, July 31: Bees can frighten the living daylights of anyone. But for this 34-year-old beekeeper, Tukaram, bees are far more than just insects. Bees are his best friends. In fact, he even lets 10,000 of them touch his face.

Born and raised in Tartua village under Oupada block in Balasore district, Tukaram has close companionship with bees growing up. At a young age, he had a few cool tricks up his sleeve to impress his friends with honeybees.

Tukaram was introduced to the bee world by his grandfather, who was a professional beekeeper during his time. Aware of the fatal bee stings, Tukaram



has held a special bond with his buddies, while remaining calm and showing no nervousness as he dealt with them, something he learnt from his grandpa. "Bees are my best friends and I wished others too can love my friends as I do. I

try my best to protect the bees and raise awareness among people across Odisha about the importance of beekeeping," Tukaram said.

Tukaram is a professional beekeeper. He earns a very good amount from this business. At a time when a number of young men from his village lost their jobs owing to COVID-19 induced lockdown, Tukaram gave them training on beekeeping. The effort to train more and more people continues.

Vocation apart, beekeeping has made him famous in the locality. A huge crowd gathers at his farm every time he showcases cool tricks with his best friends. The villagers enjoy the 'Bee Man' show while maintaining social distancing.

Government of Odisha Office of the Executive Engineer Rural Works Division, Dhenkanal. e-procurement Notice No.05/Road Work/2020-21. Details of road works including name of work, total no. of works, estimated cost, class of contractor, period of completion, and last date of seeking tender clarification.

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, L.I. DIVISION, BERHAMPUR. e-Procurement Notice Bid Identification No.03 / 2020-21 OLIC (BAM) / Dt. 30/07/2020. Details of lift irrigation works including name of work, estimated cost, tender cost, class of contractor, date and time of publication, date and time of closing, date and time of opening of bid, and last date and time of seeking tender clarification.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER PANIKOILI (R&B) DIVISION, PANIKOILI. EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FOR EMPANELMENT NOTICE INVITING REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL. EOI Identification No. EOI-03/2020-21. Dated: 22.07.2020. Details of architectural consultant services and technical evaluation process.

FOCUS AYODHYA

OF RAM & ABRAHAM



The making of the Ram Temple presents an opportunity to reinstate the teaching of Sage Vasishtha, which is in essence parallel to the teachings of the Abrahamic religions, at the centre of the global religious movement; and to raise Lord Ram from a Hindu Avatar to the Global Lord

Hindu Brahman, it would be surmised, is the same as the God of the Bible and Allah of the Quran.

Hinduism was the global spiritual leader till about a thousand years ago. Till then, it appears, Hindu society adhered to the path of action told by Sage Vasishtha and followed by Lord Ram. The situation changed dramatically after Adi Shankaracharya came with his teachings. Sage Vasishtha had taught people that "Brahman is truth and the world is His manifestation." In distinction, Shankaracharya taught that "Brahman is truth and the world is unreal." The material world became "unreal." Shankaracharya, it appears, made this teaching only to create a detached mode of action. He lived actively in the 32 short years of his life. Like Vasishtha, he wanted people to engage actively in the world but with a sense of detachment. However, it appears, his teachings got perverted and later Hindu teachers taught that the world was actually unreal and there was no benefit to be derived from engaging in action within it. The result was that the best minds of India became inert and we lost to the Lodhi, Mughals and the British, and Hinduism has been declining since then.

The making of the Ram Temple presents an opportunity to reinstate the teaching of Sage Vasishtha, which is in essence parallel to the teachings of the Abrahamic religions, at the centre of the global religious movement; and to raise Lord Ram from a Hindu Avatar to the Global Lord. Ram and Ibrahim could be the same person. Teachings of Sage Vasishtha are parallel to the teachings of the Bible and Quran. Therefore, we can promote the Ram Temple as a Temple of Ibrahim as well and promote the teachings of Sage Vasishtha. In this way we can make Ayodhya the Global Spiritual Capital that the Prime Minister had promised to do for Varanasi in 2014; and also, as the global pilgrim destination along the lines of Jerusalem and Mecca.

The writer is a former Professor of Economics at IIM Bangalore.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had promised to make Varanasi the Global Spiritual Capital, during his 2014 electoral campaign. The same can be done better for Ayodhya which is now at the centre of global attention with the construction of the Ram Temple.

The case for Ayodhya stands on the fact that there are remarkable similarities between the lives of Lord Ram and Ibrahim of the Abrahamic religions, namely Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Syed Tariq Abdulla of Rampur has established that Abrahamic Prophets Adam and Nuh lived in India. Might it be that Abraham too lived in India and is known as Ram to the Hindus? If so, Ram is not merely the Lord of the Hindus but the Father of the Abrahamic religions as well.

Ayodhya can be developed as not only the Global Spiritual Capital but also as a centre of pilgrimage for Hindus, Jews, Christians and Muslims at par with Jerusalem and Mecca. The government has developed the Pilgrimage Circuit covering Bodhi Gaya, Lumbini and Varanasi. Ayodhya can similarly be developed as a global pilgrim destination.

Saudi Arabia is today earning an income of around \$10 billion or Rs 75,000 crore every year from pilgrimage to Mecca. We could earn four times this money if we can establish Ayodhya as the pilgrim centre for the Hindu and Abrahamic religions.

A large number of parallels are seen in the life trajectory of Lord Ram and Prophet Abraham or Ibrahim. The original name of Ibrahim, written as Abraham in the Bible was Abram, or Ab-Ram, which means "father Ram." Thus, the name "Ram" is embedded in the name Ibrahim. Similarly, the names Dasaratha and Terah, Sita and Sarah; and Lakshmana and Lot are similar: Ram went to the south with his wife Sita and brother Lakshmana. Abraham went south with his wife Sarah and nephew Lot. Ram's wife Sita was abducted and taken to Ravana's palace, Ram killed Ravana and retrieved Sita and

returned to Ayodhya. Similarly, Abraham's wife Sarah was forcibly taken to Pharaoh's palace, the Lord stuck the Pharaoh with troubles and Abraham retrieved Sarah and returned to Ai where he was living.

The names Ravana and Pharaoh; and Ayodhya and Ai are also similar: Ram broke his relations with Lakshmana sometime after their return to Ayodhya because the latter violated his order of not allowing anyone to intrude upon his secret consultations. Abraham also broke his relations with Lot after their return to Ai because herdsmen of the two fought with each other. These and many other parallels in their lives open the possibility that Ram and Abraham could be the same person.

Indeed, the Holy Bible says that Abraham's father Terah lived at a place called "Ur Chaldea." Abrahamic religions believe this was a place named "Ur" in Iraq. But we have not one but many places with the name "Ur"—Kanpur, Nagpur, Rampur and so on across India. It is possible that Abraham may have lived in a place by name Ur in India. The Holy Quran says that Ibrahim and his son Ishmael made a House of Worship which is believed to be the one at Mecca. Ibrahim may have

travelled from Ur in India rather than from Ur in Iraq to make the House of Worship at Mecca as believed by our Muslim brothers.

The major difference between Hindu and Abrahamic religions is that the Hindus undertake idol worship while the Abrahamic religions reject the same. They worship the unseen God or Allah. The situation of Hindu religion at the time of Lord Ram may have been similar: Yoga Vasishtha says that young Ram once returned from a pilgrimage to Ayodhya and developed disinterest in matters of the world. He asked what would be the benefit of engaging in worldly works when the entire universe was a mirage and did not actually exist at all.

At that time, Sage Vasishtha explained to Ram that this entire universe was pervaded by the same Supreme Power called Brahman and this universe was as real as Brahman. Thus, he advised Ram to engage in his worldly duties, seeing Brahman in everything—the earth, the trees and the relatives. Thereafter, Ram abandoned his idea of giving up the material world and engaged in actions such as killing Ravana. The core message of the Sage was that there is only one Brahman and no other. The



Bharat Jhunjhunwala

THE CASE FOR AYODHYA STANDS ON THE FACT THAT THERE ARE REMARKABLE SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE LIVES OF LORD RAM AND IBRAHIM OF THE ABRAHAMIC RELIGIONS, NAMELY, JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM

In sincerity is the certitude of victory. Sincerity! Sincerity! How sweet is the purity of thy presence?

THE MOTHER



New face at PMO

Any appointment in the all-powerful Prime Minister's Office (PMO) is viewed with great interest. So, when P. Amudha, who belongs to the 1994 batch IAS from Tamil Nadu cadre, was appointed to the PMO as Joint Secretary on a lateral shift basis for the remainder of her five-year central deputation period, observers are speculating about her talent that can meet the high standards of the PMO. Before this appointment, Amudha was serving as a professor at the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration in Mussoorie.

Interestingly, minutes after the news of her appointment emerged, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Palaniswami congratulated the IAS officer in a tweet and said that she had earned the goodwill of the state government as well as the affection of the people through her honesty and efficiency. Amudha has earned her reputation as an effective field officer and for her ability to take swift decisions. Her peers recall her work during the Chennai floods in 2015 when she was Special Officer for monsoon relief in the state. It's these qualities that may have impressed the PMO to bring her in for what could be the most rewarding and challenging of the assignments for an IAS officer.

New RBI deputy governor

A search committee headed by Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba will interview candidates for the post of deputy governor of RBI on August 7. It was meant to be held on July 23 but was put off without any explanation. The post had fallen vacant after senior-most deputy governor NS Vishwanathan demitted office three months before the end of his tenure in March due to health reasons. Besides Gauba, the committee includes RBI Governor Shaktikant Das, financial services secretary Debasish Panda and two independent members.



BABUDOM BYTES

Dilip Cherian

The selected name from the interview will be sent to the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet headed by the Prime Minister for final approval. Sources say the panel has shortlisted eight candidates for the posts.

The RBI Act mandates that the central bank should have four deputy governors – two from within the ranks, one commercial banker and another an economist to head the monetary policy department. At present, the RBI has three deputy governors – BP Kanungo, MK Jain and Michael Debabrata Patra.

J&K cadre change

The Centre stopped inducting new officers in the J&K cadre of the All India Services after the recategorisation of Jammu & Kashmir into two Union Territories, J&K and Ladakh, in August last. The process was recently reinitiated, but sources say it has been put on hold again after receiving feedback from officers that it would lead to confusion.

The J&K cadre of IAS, IPS and IoFS officers was to be merged into the AGMUT cadre. However, according to the regulations, officers already serving in the J&K cadre at the time would continue in the existing cadre. The cadre controlling authority for AGMUT is the Ministry of Home Affairs while the other cadres are controlled by the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT).

Apparently, some officers approached the Centre saying that two officers of the same batch would end up under different controlling authorities which would lead to "confusion" and "create differences" between the officers. Seeing the resistance from the babus, the Centre has decided, for now, not to proceed with the proposed cadre merger. Some officers believe that any key decision on the merger will likely happen only after August 15.

Share a babu experience! Follow [@dilipthecherian](https://twitter.com/dilipthecherian) on twitter.com. Let's multiply the effect

WISDOM CORNER

Reach high, for stars lie hidden in you. Dream deep, for every dream precedes the goal. **RAVINDRANATH TAGORE**

Sometimes good things fall apart, so better things can fall together. **MARILYN MONROE**

The person who tries to live alone will not succeed as a human being. His heart withers if it does not answer another heart. His mind shrinks away if he hears only the echoes of his own thoughts and finds no other inspiration. **PEARL S BUCK**

WORDSWORTH

Tabloid

For a period, British dailies the Times and the Independent were experimenting with smaller formats and it looked as though their success may lead other newspapers to emulate them. There has long been a cultural divide in the British press. To paraphrase the view of the culturalist around: the big-format broadsheet ones, like the Telegraph, Times and Guardian, are serious and responsible papers that appeal to an intelligent and cultured audience, while the smaller-format tabloid ones, especially the Sun and Daily Star, are for people who move their lips while reading and who are only interested in sex and sensationalism. The distaste of many opinion-formers for the tabloids may in part be ill-informed and misguided, but it's a potent force. So when the Independent brought out a tabloid-sized version, the Times followed suit, what were they to call the format? The Independent came up with compact, which might have had the disadvantage of confusing the paper with something in a woman's handbag or a disc you listened to, but which avoided the dreaded T-word. Objections to tabloid started a century ago. It's a rare example of an invented word that made it big, rather too much so for its inventor, Henry Wellcome. He went into partnership in 1878 with his fellow American Silas Burroughs to set up a pharmaceutical business in London. They needed a word for the highly compressed pills that his firm produced. Tablet wouldn't serve, as it was a much older term (literally a little table) that had been used since the 16th Century to mean any kind of solid dry medicine made up in small flat rectangles. Wellcome created tabloid from tablet plus the ending -oid that meant "having the form or likeness of"; this was registered as a trademark in 1884. As well as drugs, the company used the brand name for other products, such as photographic chemicals and tea (though presumably not sold in tablet form). The problem came near the end of the century when people started to use the word for anything of compressed compass, for example for the Daily Mail, a newspaper in half-pint format that had been first published in May 1896 under the slogan "The penny newspaper for one halfpenny." This was the precursor of all modern tabloids, with an emphasis on short stories simply told, on sport and human interest topics, and with the innovation of a women's page. The first recorded use of tabloid for this style of journalism is from the very beginning of the 20th Century, from the Westminster Gazette of 1 January 1901.

LOL

SECRET

A woman walked up to a little old man rocking in a chair on his porch. "I couldn't help noticing how happy you look," she said. "What's your secret for a long happy life?"



"I smoke three packs of cigarettes a day," he said. "I also drink a case of whiskey a week, eat fatty foods, and never exercise." "That's amazing," said the woman, "how old are you?" "Twenty-six," he said.

SPECTRUM BANKING

Digital finance: New normal & beyond

Moin Qazi

WITH STRENGTHENING OF UPI BY RBI, DIGITAL PAYMENTS HAVE BEEN MADE SECURE, COMPARED TO THE PAST

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
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Digital finance finds itself at an inflection point as the world continues to tackle the socio-economic fallout of the Covid-19 crisis. The pandemic could be a game changer for digital financial services. It seems as if digital financial services may become and remain the new normal. For financial services providers, digital systems promise to enhance customer acquisition growth, deepen engagement, and lower costs. For customers, they make transactions more affordable, accessible and efficient. There has been an uptick in digital payments in areas which have traditionally been slow to embrace it. We should harness this momentum to accelerate the pace of digital finance adoption.

Payment systems have demonstrated these are dependable, durable, and continue to command a high level of confidence from general population. These have eased age-old pain points in delivering financial services to underserved customers. Money sits in a virtual account on a server where it can be transferred with the touch of a button. In the physical banking set-up, maintenance fees, minimum balance requirements, and high indirect access costs (trans-

portation, time) keep low-income individuals away from saving with financial institutions.

New technologies are rapidly changing the face of finance. Digitisation is dramatically changing financial services landscape, which are being made available where you need, when you need and how you need these.

Through its financial inclusion journey, India has developed its financial ecosystem to increase the last-mile connectivity of financial services to its people. Low-income households and small firms can benefit greatly from advances in mobile money, fintech services and online banking. Strategic initiatives like creating technology rails that facilitate various innovations (including targeted initiatives such as the Unified Payments Interface (UPI), GST, TrEDS, Account Aggregator framework to name a few) have further facilitated this growth.

With strengthening of UPI by RBI, digital payments have been made secure, compared to the past. To this end, many payment gateways have come up to further improve digital transfer. This has made it possible for low-income populations to participate in the dig-

ital ecosystem.

Financial institutions are leveraging technology to revolutionise product development, distribution, risk management, and a deepening of understanding of lower-income customers to create flexible, sustainable and adaptive operating models that meet the unique needs of the poor. Technological advances are improving data transmission, collection, and analysis, enabling organisations to develop low-cost distribution models and scalable risk-management practices. By delving deep into data available from mobile usage and other sources and using algorithms, we can get insightful findings and variables that can help build surrogate financial histories of individuals who do not have formal financial documentation.

The technology-development process is one that in general is better left to the private sector, where entrepreneurship and innovation naturally happen. The challenge is that new technologies have to afford the same degrees of consumer protection and prudential security that traditional tools have. While taking technological leaps, we must understand that most people still crave for sim-

licity. With that in mind, several of them who had gone digital renounced it to revert to cash because they found old-fashioned methods a better and more reliable and effective solution.

Traditional banks will continue to be the most-trusted financial allies of people despite the fact that stringent regulation is effectively hamstringing them in remote areas which are being mostly served by banks. Tech companies may be disrupting financial services, but they lack the solid relationships built up by traditional banks over generations.

India is a country that has one foot in future and the other in Stone Age – almost literally. It had the most vibrant and innovative high-tech ecosystems in the world; but alongside it's a planet of hundreds of millions of people living in vil-

lages who are happy with a technology that's hardly more sophisticated than a bullock cart. Thus, moving to a digital and cashless way of life involves a shift in cultural pattern, and these are often hard to break. But once broken and new ways emerge, new patterns become solidified as societies update the way they function. **INFA**

Ram Mandir, religions

Sir, The Bhumi Poojan of the Lord Sri Ram Mandir on August 5 is a momentous occasion and a watershed in the history of religious faiths. It will be a red-letter day for millions of Indians after a long wait of 492 years and a protracted legal battle. Lord Ram, we believe, is a perfect role model for mankind. It will be wrong to confine Lord Ram only to Hindus. God is beyond caste, creed and religion. He is the supreme personality of Godhead and the mankind's eternal well-wisher. Confusion should not be spread at this auspicious occasion as to who must attend and who must not. People of all faiths should be invited. Saint Kabir said, "Call Him Ram or Rahim, God is One." That should be the spirit.

Prabhudutt Dash, BHUBANESWAR

Rafale, weapons industry

Sir, French fighter jet Rafale will give us an edge over the neighbours for now. At the same, this will set in motion a weapons race in the region. Pakistan will also look for better fighter jets that will be superior to Rafale. China already has a large stock of fighter jets. Standing on the neutral ground, it has been a gala time for the global weapons industry based in the West. Taxpayers' money is spent on such obsessions. But, for peace in the region, weapons purchase is a must. War, insecurity and conflicts are of help to the growth of the weapons industry.

Sunil Pradhan, Khariar, NUA PADA

Education policy

Sir, The new education policy is a good step forward. Hope is that a good pan-India policy has been evolved in ways as to ensure equal opportunity to all students. Yet, this may not achieve the goal of accessibility in terms of "education for all". It will be a monumental task for all the stakeholders. The present problem of education in India is beyond changing the pattern alone. It should help achieve the goal of accessibility and equality with justice as the guiding principle. The new policy has not given much weightage to environmental study and climate crisis. We need more accurate planning and investment in a proper framework, with suggestions drawn from the academia and intellectuals for successful implementation of the education new policy.

Biswajit Bhoi, CUO, KORAPUT

Ayodhya gears up for Aug 5

REUTERS

Lucknow, July 31: Police have been ordered onto the streets of Ayodhya where Hindu groups will next week begin building a temple on a site contested by Muslims for decades in a dispute that has sparked some of the country's most bloody communal violence.

The Supreme Court ruled last year that Hindus, who believe the site in the northern town is the birthplace of Lord Ram, a physical incarnation of Lord Vishnu, be allowed to build a temple there.

Hindus say the site was holy for them long before the Mughals, India's most prominent Islamic rulers, built the Babri Mosque there in 1528. The court said Muslims be given another plot of land for a mosque.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, whose ruling Bharatiya Janata Party campaigned for more than three decades for the temple, has been invited to lay the temple's foundation stone August 5, officials said.

"But his visit depends on the pandemic situation and security concerns around it," said a senior official in Modi's office in New Delhi, referring to the novel coronavirus.

"Social distancing rules will be



Shops that fall on the way to the Ram Janmabhoomi site being given a fresh coat of paint as part of preparations ahead of the ground-breaking ceremony for the construction of the Ram Temple, in Ayodhya, Friday.

followed," said the official, who declined to be identified as he is not an authorised spokesman.

In 1992, a Hindu mob destroyed the 16th-century mosque on the site, triggering riots in which about 2,000 people, most of them Muslims, were killed across the country.

Court battles over the ownership of the site followed.

Since the court ruling last year, tension has eased and Muslims,

who make up about 12 per cent in India, have largely accepted the decision. "We've accepted that Hindu temple will be built and there's no point in creating tension," said Shakib Nour, a member of a Muslim religious board in Ayodhya.

Nevertheless, authorities in Ayodhya have ordered police to patrol the streets and for barricades to be set up to prevent big crowds gathering next week.

While India has ended its most coronavirus restrictions, it has maintained a ban on religious gatherings.

Donations for the temple have poured in from Hindus in India and abroad. The temple should be finished by 2022, its supporters say.

"This is a great moment for the entire Hindu community," said Sharad Sharma, a senior member of Vishwa Hindu Parishad.

Somen Mitra's death leaves Bengal Congress rudderless

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, July 31: The death of West Bengal Congress president Somen Mitra has left a deep leadership void in the party in decline, as it seeks a successor to the veteran who could revive the party ahead of the assembly elections due next year.

Mitra, who headed the state Congress thrice, died in a Kolkata hospital Thursday.

According to party sources, the lack of young leaders with promise in its ranks has presented a situation where the Congress will have to depend on the old guard.

The three leaders in the reckoning for the post are Rajya Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, and Abdul Mannan, the Leader of Opposition in the state assembly. Both Bhattacharya and Chowdhury have served as state Congress president.

"It is unlikely that Adhir Chowdhury will take charge as the state unit chief as he already holds a very important position in the Lok Sabha. Abdul Mannan and Pradipta Bhattacharya are the two possible options with the Rajya Sabha MP having an edge as he has served as the PCC chief in the past. Let's

PARTY IN QUANDARY

Under Somen Mitra, the Congress in West Bengal aligned with the CPI(M)-led Left Front to take on the ruling TMC and a resurgent BJP

Mitra's loss came at a time when the party was trying to forge a third alternative in the state against the TMC and the BJP



ACCORDING TO PARTY SOURCES, THE LACK OF YOUNG LEADERS WITH PROMISE IN ITS RANKS HAS PRESENTED A SITUATION WHERE THE CONGRESS WILL HAVE TO DEPEND ON THE OLD GUARD

see what happens," a senior Congress leader told PTI.

AICC West Bengal in-charge Gaurav Gogoi, who arrived here Thursday night, is likely to hold a meeting with the state leaders on the matter.

"The Bengal unit of the party never had any dearth of good leaders in the past. However, there is no such promising young leader in the organisation who could helm the state unit now," the Congress leader said, insisting that his identity not be disclosed.

Most Congress leaders known for their organisational or oratorical skills have switched over to the TMC in the last two decades, leaving a leadership vacuum in the state, he said.

Under Mitra, the Congress in West Bengal aligned with the CPI(M)-led Left Front to take on the ruling TMC and a resurgent BJP.

Mitra's loss came at a time when the party was trying to forge a third alternative in the state against the TMC and the BJP.

BJP leaders seek CBI probe into party workers' death

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, July 31: State BJP leaders met Union Home Minister Amit Shah Friday and demanded a CBI probe into the deaths of its two members who were found hanging in West Bengal's East Midnapore and South 24 Parganas districts this week.

Lok Sabha MPs Soumitra Khan and Nishith Pramanik met Shah in New Delhi and urged for an investigation by the CBI into the deaths of 52-year-old Gautam Patra in Ghoramara area of South 24 Parganas Thursday and Purnachandra Das (44) in the Ramnagar area of the East Midnapore district Wednesday.

"The law and order situation in West Bengal has completely broken down. Regularly BJP workers are being murdered and are hanged by the tree to project it as a suicide," they said in a statement.

"In the last two days, two of our party workers have been found hanging from a tree. We demand CBI inquiry into the killing of our two BJP workers. We have requested Amit Shah Ji to order CBI inquiry into both the incident," they said.

Das was found hanging from a tree near his home by locals on Wednesday evening, police said. The district BJP alleged that he was killed by Trinamool Congress workers as he had refused to change sides. The TMC rubbished the allegation as "politically motivated", and said a police investigation would bring out the truth.

The BJP claimed that Patra was its booth-level worker and was killed by the TMC, an allegation dubbed as baseless by the ruling



party. Meanwhile, police said Patra reportedly ended his life after being ridiculed for allegedly having sex with a cow. His body was found hanging from a tree Thursday.

Preliminary investigation suggested that the deceased was accused of having "unnatural physical activities with a cow in the village last week over which he was being subjected to public ridicule. A handwritten note has been recovered from his pocket", a senior police officer said. A village court was held Wednesday over his alleged bestiality but no punishment was given, the officer said.

Earlier this month, senior BJP leader and MLA Debendra Nath Roy was found dead under mysterious circumstances near his house in North Dinajpur district.

Roy was found hanging from a ceiling, outside a closed shop near his home in the Hemtabad area of the district, police said.

His family and the party alleged that it was a "cold-blooded murder by TMC". The police, however, quoting the post-mortem report had said that Roy died due to hanging, and no other injury mark was found on the body.

105-yr-old Afghan woman beats Covid-19 in UP hospital

The woman, who hails from Kabul, had come to visit her grandchildren in Uttar Pradesh earlier this year but eventually got stuck in the lockdown

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Noida, July 31: A 105-year-old woman from Afghanistan was discharged from a hospital in Greater Noida Friday after recovering from COVID-19 in a fortnight, officials said.

Rabia Ahmed was admitted to the private Sharda Hospital July 16 in a "life-threatening condition" after getting infected with the novel coronavirus and spent a week on ventilator, they said.

She had tested positive for the infection at a private hospital in Noida after which she was brought to Sharda Hospital, a dedicated COVID-19 facility.

She was tested again Thursday and the result came out to be negative, paving the way for her discharge Friday ahead of the Islamic festival of Bakrid, hospital officials said. Ahmed, who hails from Kabul in Afghanistan, had come to visit her grandchildren who are living in Noida earlier this year but eventually got stuck in the lockdown, they said.

"When the patient was brought, she had fever, severe breathlessness and pneumonia. She was also suffering from Alzheimer's. She was unable to identify any relatives also when she was admitted here," Dr Ashutosh Niranjan, the medical superintendent of Sharda Hospital, said.

"She had urinal infection and her ECG was also abnormal. The patient was in a critical state and immediately shifted on ventilator



support. She was suffering from acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS)," Niranjan said.

The treatment started in compliance with the protocols laid by the Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR) and the hospital's own norms for COVID-19, he said. "Her condition started improving after ventilator support for seven days. She was given a diet with high-level protein. After this, she was taken off ventilator support and the woman even started recognizing the health care staff who were attending her in the ICU," Niranjan said.

"Now her condition is much better. She is also eating properly. She was discharged from the hospital on Friday after the report of her COVID-19 test done Thursday came negative," the senior doctor said. The woman's grandson Ahmad

Fawad, who came to take her back from the hospital on Friday, said, "Before Bakrid, the hospital has given my family a gift for a lifetime."

"Everyone in the family will recite the festival prayer together and celebrate Eid," Fawad said, as his eyes welled up with joy.

Hospital spokesperson Ajit Kumar said Gautam Buddh Nagar's Additional Chief Medical Officer V K Singh and Additional District Magistrate Diwakar Singh were present during the woman's discharge and gave her gifts, wishing her well. "The hospital staff also presented flowers to the 105-year-old woman as she left the hospital defeating coronavirus after a 15-day fight," Kumar added.

He said 21 other COVID-19 patients were discharged from the hospital after recovery Friday.

Guv invokes Satyajit Ray in fresh salvo at Mamata govt

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, July 31: Alleging that violence and corruption have become a part of the governance in West Bengal, Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar hit out at Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's dispensation with a reference to Satyajit Ray's political satire 'Hirak Rajar Deshe' as he completed a year in office.

Dhankhar, whose first year in office has been marked by frequent face-offs between Raj Bhavan and state secretariat 'Nabanna', said Ray would never have imagined that similar state of affairs would prevail in his own state West Bengal as is evident now.

"Violence, corruption and hegemony goondaism under police protection have become a part of the governance; what do we call it, Hirak Rajar Deshe?" Dhankhar said.

'Hirak Rajar Deshe' (In The Land of Diamond King), which is a part of the popular 'Goopy Gyne Bagha Byne' trilogy, is a 1980 Ray classic on the decaying state of the administration and public welfare that is relevant even in the present times.

Stating that there have been memorable and inspiring experiences during the one year as the governor of West Bengal, Dhankhar held that there also have been painful aberrations.

"There is a very serious dilution of democratic values... Human rights compromise is virtually wholesale," he said in a video message on completion of a year in office Thursday, adding that "freedom that goes with democracy is missing". Corruption has marred and tainted the democratic fabric, he said, holding that all these have



Violence, corruption and hegemony goondaism under police protection have become a part of the governance; what do we call it, Hirak Rajar Deshe?

JAGDEEP DHANKHAR | WEST BENGAL GOVERNOR

led to a steep decline in growth, be it in trade or industry.

The governor held that free and fair elections are key to a healthy democracy, which he said is not possible if voting does not take place fairly and with the police playing a partisan role.

Dhankhar said that he expects the present government to follow the Constitution, restore rule of law, end police raj, make governance accountable and transparent, avoid constitutional distancing from the governor and end corruption.

Emphatic in his praise for the state over the simplicity of its people, rich culture, heritage, he said that Kolkata is a unique city in the world for having given several Nobel laureates.

He said the present government has distanced itself from what Rabindranath Tagore had written - "Where the head is held high and the mind is without fear."

SIT report on Dubey likely to be delayed

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, July 31: The report of the Special Investigation Team (SIT), set up to probe the Bikru massacre in which eight policemen were ambushed and killed July 3, is likely to be delayed.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath had asked the SIT to submit the report by July 31.

According to official sources, the SIT has not been able to get certain documents needed for the investigation.

These documents are related to the 2001 case in which gangster Vikas Dubey was acquitted in the murder of the then state minister Santosh Shukla inside the Shivli police station in Kanpur.

Documents related to the bail granted to the slain gangster in other cases have also been sought but not yet received.

The SIT has been asked to probe



the role of the police, his relations with police personnel and the factors which led Vikas' emergence as a gangster.

A member of the SIT said that documents related to the gangster's call records had also not been provided as yet.

"We will need another month to compile the report. We will ask the government for time," the member said.

Sisters of this village stay clear of Raksha Bandhan

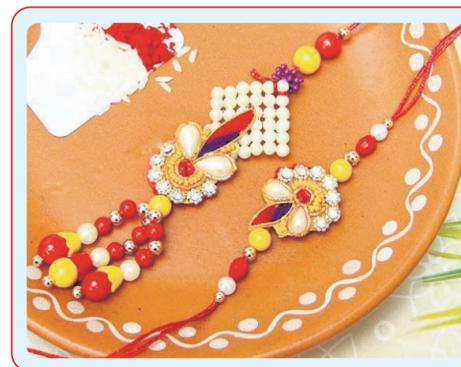
INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Gonda (Uttar Pradesh), July 31: Raksha Bandhan is the festival that celebrates love between brothers and sisters and protection of the latter by the former from any evil. But in a village in Gonda district no one likes the festival.

No one in the Bikhampur Jagat Purwa village of Dumariadih gets excited about Rakhi or even utters the festival's name.

They believe, if Raksha Bandhan is celebrated, evil might befall them. Many untoward events have occurred in the past warning them to stay away from this festival. Everyone awaits the birth of a child on Raksha Bandhan, which they believe will end the deadly cycle.

There are 20 homes in Jagat Purwa, where nearly 200 children are scared of 'rakhi' (sacred protective thread). Even the older generation shares this emotion. More than five decades have passed in this village in Wazirganj panchayat that sisters have tied a 'rakhi' on their brothers' wrists. Even in nearby villages, the mere



NO ONE IN THE BIKHAMPUR JAGAT PURWA VILLAGE OF DUMARIADIH GETS EXCITED ABOUT RAKSHA BANDHAN OR EVEN UTTERS THE FESTIVAL'S NAME

PEOPLE OF THE VILLAGE BELIEVE, IF RAKSHA BANDHAN IS CELEBRATED, EVIL MIGHT BEFALL THEM. MANY UNTOWARD EVENTS HAVE OCCURRED IN THE PAST WARNING THEM TO STAY AWAY FROM THIS FESTIVAL

EVERYONE AWAITS THE BIRTH OF A CHILD ON RAKSHA BANDHAN, WHICH THEY BELIEVE WILL END THE DEADLY CYCLE

mention of the word Raksha Bandhan scares people and the sisters there refuse to tie rakhis on the day. They do not want to break the tradition set by their ancestors. Jagat Purwa villagers Suryanarayan Mishra, Satyanarayan Mishra, Sidhanarayan Mishra, Ayodhya Prasad, Deep Narayan Mishra, Bal Govind Mishra, Santosh Mishra,

Devnarayan Mishra, Dhruv Narayan Mishra and Swaminath Mishra -- all have the same story.

"Whenever sisters tied a thread on their brothers' wrists in our houses, untoward incidents occurred in this village."

Suryanarayan Mishra said, "In 1955, after eight years of Independence, a young man was killed one fine morning of Raksha

Bandhan in our family. Since then, sisters in the village do not tie a rakhi on their brothers' wrists."

"A decade ago, on the day of Raksha Bandhan, it was decided to tie rakhi on the request of the sisters, but something untoward happened that day, too. After this, no one dared celebrate rakhi. Even today, this fear prevents the sisters from tying rakhi on their

brothers' wrist."

Suryanarayan added, "On the day of Raksha Bandhan, if a child is born in the family, then only the festival will be celebrated. The wait has been going on for almost three generations. This opportunity has not come yet." All the siblings in this village will continue to miss the most loved festival till then.

Though the festival of Raksha Bandhan is not celebrated in Jagat Purwa, the sisters of the surrounding villages tie the rakhi on the wrists of their brothers.

"We will follow what our elders have told us. We will not break the tradition started by our ancestors and will continue following the tradition," Suryanarayan opined.

Suryanarayan said that they only listen to the stories of Raksha Bandhan, but cannot experience the festivity.

Villagers said that most people of the village do not move out on the day of Raksha Bandhan. Jagat Purwa remains silent on the day even as every other sister ties a rakhi on her brother's hand throughout the country.



The Congress got an opportunity to rule in favour of the Muslim sisters in the 1980s. But votes were more important for the party than the lives of these women

SMRITI IRANI | UNION WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT MINISTER

SECURITY TIGHTENED

The Delhi Police has banned flying of sub-conventional aerial platforms starting from Friday till August 15 as part of security measure



of the day quote

The Centre has approved the Meghalaya government's proposal for setting up an AYUSH directorate in the state



A L HEK | MEGHALAYA HEALTH MINISTER

The BJP is like flow of the river Ganga. Those who join the BJP see improvement in their work culture



PRAKASH JAVADEKAR | UNION MINISTER

Felt saddened on learning about the death of former Union Home Secretary and Maharashtra's Chief Secretary Ram Pradhan



SHARAD PAWAR | NCP CHIEF

SHORT TAKES

71 booked in triple talaq cases

Muzaffarnagar: Seventy-one people have been booked and 62 arrested in triple talaq cases in Shamli district in the last one year, police said Friday. Shamli SP Vinit Jaiswal said 19 cases of triple talaq were registered against 71 people and charge sheets were filed in 16 cases against 62 people in courts. During investigation, nine out of 71 people were found innocent, the SP added.

Sonia's condition improving: Hosp

New Delhi: Congress president Sonia Gandhi, who has been admitted to a private facility here, is showing improvement in her condition, hospital authorities said Friday. Gandhi was admitted to the Sir Ganga Ram Hospital on Thursday evening for routine tests, according to a health bulletin.

CISF personnel dies of Covid

New Delhi: A Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) personnel has succumbed to COVID-19, officials said Friday. Sub Inspector R K Soloman, posted at the Farakka Super Thermal Power Plant in West Bengal, died during treatment. He was a member of the fire wing of the force, they said. This is the 13th death due to the pandemic in the force and the second death in the Farakka CISF unit as Wednesday Assistant Sub Inspector S K Poddar had succumbed to the virus.

Prez, VP warn of nCoV on Id-ul-Zuha

New Delhi: President Ram Nath Kovind and Vice President M. Venkaiah Naidu wished the people Friday on the occasion of Id-ul-Zuha while reminding them to be mindful of the ongoing pandemic.

Three nabbed

Bangalore: Three middlemen have been arrested in the city for attempting to sell deer antlers or horns procured from unknown forest sources at Rs 5 lakh, an official said Friday. "We have arrested Sundaresh, Manjunath and Raghavendra for attempting to sell two deer antlers," said Central Crime Branch (CCB) Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Kuldeep Jain to IANS. A case has been registered against all the three under the Wildlife Act and the accused will be handed over to the forest department.

STRICT ACTION

Def Ministry NOC must for broadcasting military content

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, July 31: Any content on the military will have to obtain a no objection certificate (NOC) or clearance from the Ministry of Defence from now onwards. The decision was taken after a few web series allegedly presented a distorted image of the armed forces.

The Defence Ministry has written a letter to the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC), the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology and the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting to advise production



houses to obtain NOC from them before telecasting any film/documentary/web series on army theme in public domain. The letter was sent by the Ministry of Defence July 27.

Sources said the ministry had received complaints raising strong objections about portrayal of Indian Army personnel and military uniform

in an insulting manner. "In some of the web series like 'Code M' on Zee 5 and 'XXX Uncensored (season-2)' on ALT Balaji, the scenes related to the Army are far from reality and present a distorted image of the Armed Forces," said a senior government official.

Some concerned citizens and ex-servicemen associations have even lodged a case against ALT Balaji seeking legal action against the producer and the OTT platform. The over-the-top (OTT) media service is a streaming media service offered directly to the viewers via internet. The step to make obtaining NOC mandatory has been taken

after much deliberation. Sources further pointed out that this has been done "to curtail the incidents which distort the image of the defence forces and hurt the sentiments of the defence personnel and veterans".

The military has been very particular about its image and the content projected in different web series or documentaries or movies. Bollywood films on military go through a mandatory clearance process.

However, with increased OTT platforms, the military feels that it needs to moderate any possible alleged negative depiction of the uniform.

Toxic liquor claims 21 lives in Punjab

AGENCIES

Chandigarh, July 31: Twenty-one people have died in Punjab's three districts allegedly after drinking spurious liquor, prompting Chief Minister Amarinder Singh to order a magisterial probe, officials said Friday.

The deaths took place in Punjab's Amritsar, Batala and Tarn Taran districts since Wednesday night, an official statement said. Punjab DGP Dinkar Gupta said the first five fatalities were reported from Muchhal and Tangra villages in Amritsar's Tarsikka on July 29 night.

On Thursday evening, two more people died under suspicious circumstances at Amritsar's Muchhal village. One person died at Sri Guru Ram Das Hospital in Amritsar after being shifted from Tangra. Later, two more deaths were reported from Muchhal village while another two people died in Batala, also due to the consumption of spurious liquor. On Friday, five people died in Batala, taking the death toll in the city to seven, the DGP said, adding that four fatalities were reported from Tarn Taran.

Chief Minister Amarinder Singh has ordered a magisterial inquiry by the Divisional Commissioner,



Jalandhar, into the deaths of 21 people allegedly due to the consumption of spurious liquor, the official statement said. The inquiry will look into the facts and circumstances leading to the incidents, it said.

It will be conducted by the Divisional Commissioner, Jalandhar, along with the Punjab Joint Excise and Taxation Commissioner and the SP (Investigation) in districts concerned.

The CM has given the Divisional Commissioner the liberty to co-opt any civil/police officer or any expert to facilitate the expeditious conduct of the probe.

Meanwhile, police have arrested Balwinder Kaur, a resident of Muchhal village, under Section 304

10 die after drinking sanitiser

Amaravati: At least ten alcohol addicts, including three beggars, died after allegedly consuming sanitiser as an alternative to liquor in a village under COVID-19 lockdown in Prakasam district of Andhra Pradesh, police said Friday. The victims of Kurichedu village had been drinking sanitiser for the past few days, mixing it with water and soft drinks, Prakasam district Superintendent of Police Siddharth Kaushal said in a statement. "We are investigating whether the sanitiser had any other toxic content. We have sent the stocks for chemical analysis, Kaushal said. The deceased were highly addicted to alcohol and its non-availability due to extended Covid-19 lockdown in Kurichedu forced them to go for sanitiser that had alcoholic content, police said. Apart from the beggars, the other deceased were poor rickshaw pullers and hamalis, who had a hand-to-mouth existence. Two beggars near a temple were the first to fall victim Thursday night. A couple of other persons, who also complained of some health problems after drinking sanitiser, were undergoing treatment and out of danger, the police added.

of the IPC (punishment for culpable homicide not amounting to murder) and under provisions of the Excise Act, the DGP said. The CM has promised strict action against anyone found complicit in the case and directed police to launch a search operation to crack down on any spurious liquor manufacturing unit operating in the state.

The post-mortem of four people—Jaswinder Singh, Kashmir Singh, Kirpal Singh and Jaswant Singh—will be conducted Friday to ascertain the exact cause of their

death, the statement said. According to it, the victims have been identified as Mangal Singh, Balwinder Singh, Dalbir Singh, Gurpreet Singh, Kashmir Singh, Kaka Singh, Kirpal Singh, Jaswant Singh and Joga Singh, all residents of Muchhal village; and Baldev Singh of Tangra; Those who died in Batala have been identified as Buta Ram, Bhinda, Riku Singh, Kala, Kalu, Billa and Jatinder. Those who died in Tarn Taran are Sahib Singh, Harban Singh, Sukhdev Singh and Dharam Singh.

CHINESE PRODUCTS' BAN

Govt puts imports of TV sets on restricted list

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, July 31: Government has put further squeeze on imports of items coming from countries such as China by putting imports of colour television sets of different sizes in the restricted list.

Accordingly, a notification issued by Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) has put television sets of different types with screen sizes ranging from 36cm to 105cm and above in the restricted list of items for imports from existing free import category.

The restrictions mean that import of all listed items would have to follow a process of verification and scrutiny by the Commerce Ministry before any permission is given to bring restricted list items into the country. The latest checks on imports follows the government's earlier decision to make its approval mandatory for foreign investments from countries that share land border with India, a move which largely restricts FDI from China. Restrictions on imports of TV sets is expected to boost



governments Atmanirbhar Bharat mission that focuses on making the country self sufficient by developing domestic manufacturing capabilities. The TV industry in India is about Rs 15,000 crore of which more than 36 per cent is coming as imports primarily from China and South East Asia.

Government has gone for changing the export import policy for TV sets as under the existing ASEAN India FTA many of these imports are coming at reduced/zero duty which cannot be controlled through increased duty. Hence, actions like import restrictions are one of the main actions available to Government by which it could bring about the necessary checks.

Normal rain likely in Aug and Sept: IMD

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 31: Monsoon is likely to be normal in the second half of the four-month rainfall season, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said Friday.

In its Long Range Forecast for rainfall in the second half (August-September) of the 2020 Southwest Monsoon, the IMD said August is likely to receive rainfall that is 97 per cent of the Long Period Average (LPA). "Quantitatively, the rainfall over the country as a whole during the second half of the season is likely to be 104 per cent of the LPA with a model error of plus/minus 8 per cent," the IMD said.

The LPA rainfall over the country for the 1961-2010 period is 88 centimetres. Monsoon in the range of 96-104 per cent of the LPA is considered normal. The official rainfall season in the country is from

June 1 to September 30. The onset of monsoon over Kerala was on June 1 and until July 30, the country had received one per cent more rainfall than normal.

The northwest division of the IMD has a 19-per cent deficiency. It comprises Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Haryana and the Union territories of Chandigarh, Delhi, Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh. The deficiency in Jammu and

Kashmir and Ladakh is 50 and 59 per cent respectively. Delhi has also recorded a deficiency. The central India division has a three-per cent deficiency. The division comprises Goa, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha and the Union territories of Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu. The two Union territories have recorded deficient rainfall.



DAILY GRIND



A delivery man carrying gas cylinder during rain in Lucknow, Friday

UNI PHOTO

UGC EXAMS

SC adjourns matter to Aug 10

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 31: The Supreme Court Friday refused to pass any interim order on a batch of petitions seeking cancellation of final year/semester examinations in September amid the COVID-19 pandemic and asked the Centre to clear the stand of Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) on the issue.

The UGC told the top court that nobody should remain under the impression that since the Supreme Court is examining this issue, the final year/semester examination will be stayed.

A bench head by Justice Ashok Bhushan, which conducted the hearing through video conferencing, said that it is not passing any orders on the issue and posted the matters for further hearing August 10. The bench, also comprising Justices R Subhash Reddy and M R Shah, was informed by Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre and the UGC, that he would apprise the court about MHA's stand on the issue.

Mehta said they are only concerned with final year exams and out of over 800 universities in the country, 209 have completed the examinations. "Let nobody remain under the impression that since this court is examining this, it will be stayed. Let students continue with their studies," Mehta said. To this, the bench said, "We are not passing any such order." The bench also asked counsel for Maharashtra to place before it the June 19 order of the state disaster management committee passed in this regard.

"Let the decision (of state disaster management committee of Maharashtra) be brought on record," the bench said. The top court said all the affidavits be filed by August 7. At the end of the hearing, advocate Alakh Alok Srivastava, appearing for some of the petitioners, raised the issue of plight of students in the flood affected areas of Assam and Bihar.

On Thursday, the UGC justified its decision directing all universities and institutions to hold final year/semester examinations in September saying it was done to protect the academic future of students across the country.

Bollywood's daily wage workers battle for survival

Despite generating billions of dollars, world's most prolific film industry has no established scheme to protect its most vulnerable members

AGENCIES

Mumbai, July 31: India's coronavirus lockdown made little difference to Hindi film industry's superstars but for industry's vast army of low-paid, unskilled workers it meant unemployment, hunger and homelessness—with no end in sight even as shoots gradually resume.

Fahim Shaikh used to earn 800 rupees (\$11) a day as a "spot boy" on sets, doing odd jobs such as making tea. When Bollywood hit pause on productions in March, the 23-year-old could no longer pay rent.

"I just wandered up and down, asking strangers for help and sleeping outside cafes," he told AFP. Like many starry-eyed newcomers, he came to Mumbai in pursuit of an acting career before his dreams gave way to the pressures of the



daily grind in India's most expensive city. The hugely successful Hindi film industry is tentatively coming back to life but with strict rules including curbs on the number of people allowed on set.

This means that jobs for people like Shaikh are now few and far between. "I am ready to do anything, I desperately need work," he said. "The littlest players"

The lockdown cast a spotlight on India's extreme inequality with well-heeled citizens able to hibernate safely at home while watching shocking scenes of a huge migrant worker exodus play out on their television and smartphone screens.

That chasm between the haves and have-nots is perhaps even more pronounced in Bollywood, where jet-setting megastars rub shoulders with tens of thousands of extras, spot boys and other junior crew members who exist on the margins of the glamorous industry.

"The spot boys are considered the littlest players, till food arrives late on a set," actress Richa Chadha wrote on her blog highlighting the "disastrous" effects of the lockdown.

During her half-century-long stint as an extra, Sayeda Mumani

has worked alongside virtually every major actor; from 1970s matinee idol Rajesh Khanna to superstar Shah Rukh Khan.

In a good month, the 68-year-old scraped together around 14,000 rupees. But her income dried up after shoots came to a standstill, and she has not worked for months.

Unlike the younger Shaikh who has few industry contacts Mumani's long association with leading studios meant that she could count on at least a little help, with top actors such as Amitabh Bachchan and Salman Khan sending her grocery vouchers and cash.

But relying on the piecemeal generosity of individuals has severe limitations, as Mumani found out, when mounting medical and household expenses left her with a debt of 100,000 rupees. "I feel so useless and helpless," she told AFP.



The MVA (Maha Vikas Aghadi) government of Shiv Sena, NCP and Congress is not a family, but the three parties are in a live-in relationship DEVENDRA FADNAVIS | BJP LEADER

BJP SENDS LEGAL NOTICE TO SIDDARAMAIAH & SHIVAKUMAR

The BJP's Karnataka unit Friday said it has sent legal notice to the leader of opposition Siddaramaiah and state Congress chief D K Shivakumar for their 'baseless' allegations of corruption in the procurement of Covid-19 equipment and supplies



of the day quote

In view of the complaint of Dalit Mahamandeshwar Swami Kanhaiya Prabhunandan Giri, it would have been better if he was also invited to the bhoomi puja ceremony in Ayodhya August 5 along with 200 other saints

The MVA government of Shiv Sena, NCP and Congress will not last long as there is lack of unity among the ruling allies

The Indian National Congress welcomes the Supreme Court decision which has paved way for the construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya

'Only 0.28% nCoV patients on ventilator'

New Delhi, July 31: India's COVID-19 case fatality rate is progressively declining and now stands at 2.18 per cent, one of the lowest globally, while just 0.28 per cent of the total active patients are on ventilator; Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said Friday. He also said of the total 5,45,318 active cases, 1.61 per cent patients need ICU care and 2.32 per cent are on oxygen support. Chairing the 19th meeting of the Group of Ministers (GoM) on COVID-19 through video-conference on Friday, Vardhan said India has achieved the milestone of more than 10 lakh recoveries, a recovery rate to 64.54 per cent.



Shipping (Independent Charge) Mansukh Lal Mandaviya, MoS Health Ashwini Kumar Choubey and MoS Home Nityanand Rai joined the meeting. Speaking on the severity of the disease, Vardhan said, "Out of the total active cases, only 0.28 pc patients are on ventilators, 1.61 pc patients needed ICU support and 2.32 pc are on oxygen support."

On the country's testing capacity, he said 6,42,588 tests were conducted in a span of 24 hours through a network of 1,331 labs - 911 government and 420 private - which has taken the cumulative number to more than 1.88 crore tests so far. The GoM was briefed on the current status of COVID-19 in India and was apprised about the ramping up of the domestic production capacities of various sectors for manufacturing PPEs, masks, ventilators and drugs such as hydroxy-

LG REJECTS DELHI GOVT'S DECISION

Delhi Lt Governor Anil Bajaj Friday rejected the AAP government's decision to allow hotels and weekly markets under Unlock 3, official sources said. As the COVID-19 situation continues to be "fragile" and the threat is still "far from over", the lieutenant governor has taken this decision, they said. Reacting to the LG's move, the Aam Aadmi Party said the Centre must stop interfering in decisions of the Delhi government and stop undermining its authority.

chloroquine, the statement said. In terms of healthcare logistics, cumulatively 268.25 lakh N-95 masks, 120.40 lakh PPEs and 1,083.77 lakh HCQ tablets have been distributed to states/UTs and Central institutions, it said. During the meeting, National Centre for Disease Control Director Dr Sujeet K Singh presented a comparison on daily cases, deaths and growth rate in 10 countries with the highest caseload, it stated.

Scheduled int'l flights suspended till Aug 31

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 31: Aviation regulator DGCA on Friday said the suspension of scheduled international flights to and from the country has been extended till August 31 amid the coronavirus pandemic.



The suspension of scheduled international commercial services was till July 31. In the wake of the pandemic, overseas flights were suspended in late March, while cargo flights and those approved by the DGCA have been permitted to operate. In a statement, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) said the government has decided to "extend the suspension on the Scheduled International Commercial Passenger Services to/from India up to 2359 hours IST of 31st August". However, this restriction would not be applicable for international all-cargo operations and flights specifically approved by the DGCA. During the suspension period, more than 2,500 repatriation flights by foreign carriers to uplift stranded passengers to/ from India have

been approved, the statement said. Under the Vande Bharat Mission, Air India and Air India Express have uplifted 2,67,436 stranded passengers, and other charters have uplifted 4,86,811 stranded passengers during May 6 to July 30 period, it added. As part of allowing gradual movement of passenger traffic amid the pandemic situation, "Transport Bubble" agreements have been signed with the US, France, and Germany. "Recently, "Transport Bubble" agreement has also been signed with Kuwait to uplift stranded passenger both to/ from India. More similar arrangements are likely to fructify and ease passenger movements from different countries," the statement said.

SHORT TAKES

Mehbooba Mufti's detention extended

Srinagar: The Jammu and Kashmir government on Friday extended the detention of former Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti under the Public Safety Act (PSA) for another three months. An order issued by Principal Secretary, Home, Shaleen Kabra, said that in order to prevent her from acting in any manner prejudicial to maintenance of public order, the government directs that the period of detention of Mehbooba Mufti under the PSA be extended for a further period of three months and she may be lodged in subsidiary jail, Fairview, on Gupkar Road here.

Sajad Gani Lone released

Srinagar: Jammu and Kashmir Peoples Conference (JKPC) chairman Sajad Gani Lone was Friday released from nearly a year-long detention, officials said. Lone was released days ahead of the first anniversary of the Centre's move to revoke Article 370 of the Constitution in August last year, the officials said. Lone also confirmed his release by taking to Twitter.

Khushbu denies move to BJP

Chennai: Actor and Tamil Nadu Congress spokesperson Khushbu Sundar has categorically refuted all speculation about her joining the BJP after she welcomed the New Education Policy 2020. Her view was contrary to the party's official stance on the policy.

HC DISMISSES ISH RAT JAHAN'S PLEA

NEW DELHI: The Delhi High Court Friday dismissed a petition filed by Congress ex-councillor Ishrat Jahan, challenging an order of the trial court granting more time to the Delhi Police to file a chargesheet against her in a case related to the Delhi riots, after finding "no merits" in the plea. "Accordingly, finding no merit in the present petition, the same is accordingly, dismissed with no order as to costs. The trial court shall not get influenced by the observations made by this Court while passing the order," said a single judge bench of the high court presided by Justice Suresh Kumar Kait. The bench while passing the order observed that there was "no illegality or perversity" in the order passed by the trial court. "I am of the view that Public Prosecutor had moved an application, for extension of time to file chargesheet, after going through the whole matrix of the case and after satisfying himself as per the law. Learned Judge also after going through the facts and circumstances and mandate of provisions of law of the Act mentioned above and after recording his satisfaction had passed impugned order," the order said.

LJP asks EC not to hold Bihar polls in Oct-Nov

NEW DELHI: BJP ally Lok Janshakti Party wrote to the Election Commission Friday against holding the Bihar assembly polls in October-November, when they are due, saying it will otherwise amount to deliberately "pushing people towards death". The party has said resources should now be focussed on curbing the COVID-19 crisis and tackling floods in the state and not holding the polls. The LJP has said that the coronavirus pandemic has already acquired dangerous proportions and experts believe that it is likely to be more severe by October-November, as it argued that the priority now should be saving people's lives and not holding the elections. The LJP's stand on the elections is opposite to that of the JD(U), which also is a BJP ally, as the Chief Minister Nitish Kumar-led party has spoken in favour of holding them on time and has been holding organisational meetings in preparation. The BJP has maintained that any decision on the poll schedule is the EC's prerogative, while the main opposition RJD has in past called for postponing the elections, citing the coronavirus threat. The EC had sought views of all parties on the elections. The LJP said endangering lives of a big population would be absolutely "improper" for holding the elections and noted that over 35,000 people in the country, including 280 in Bihar, have died of COVID-19 so far.

BOND OF LOVE AND TRUST



People buying rakhi for the upcoming Raksha bandhan festival at a market in Jabalpur, Friday

'Ensure timely payments to health workers, docs'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, July 31: The Supreme Court Friday said the Centre is not powerless to ensure that state governments obey its directive in connection with the release of salaries of doctors and healthcare workers, and also asked why quarantine period of doctors and health workers is treated as leave. The Centre informed the apex court that some state governments have not paid salaries to doctors and health workers regularly despite the Centre's directive. A bench headed by Justice Ashok Bhushan said that the Centre is not



powerless to ensure states obeyed its directive, and asked the Centre's counsel to ensure that doctors and health care workers are paid their salaries. The top court has listed the matter for further hearing August 10. On the non-payment of salaries, the apex

court told the Centre's counsel. "You are not helpless. You have to see to it that your order is implemented. You have powers under the DM Act. You can take steps also." The apex court also asked the Centre why the quarantine period

for doctors and health workers is being treated as period of leave. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, representing the Centre, contended before the bench that it should be treated as on duty. The bench asked Mehta to provide necessary clarification. The apex court said the Centre should apprise its stand on this issue on the next date of hearing. The observations were made by the bench during hearing of a petition seeking timely payment of salaries to frontline Covid-19 warriors and doctors. The Centre had informed the top court that it has written to states but all haven't replied.

51-yr-old man passes Class 10 after 33 years

Mohammed Nooruddin, 51, is elated at clearing Class 10 as the T'gana govt has promoted all the students without conducting the exams due to the pandemic

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Hyderabad, July 31: While the coronavirus pandemic has caused immense suffering and pain across the world, it has come as a "blessing" for a Hyderabad resident who finally passed his Class 10 examination after failing in repeated attempts during the last 33 years. It was in 1987 that Nooruddin, a student of the Anjuman Boys High School in Musheerabad area, had first appeared in Secondary School Certificate (SSC) exam. While he cleared all the papers, English proved to be a hurdle. "Since I studied in the Urdu medium, English was the biggest weakness. I wrote the exam every year but could not secure 35 marks (out of 100) required to pass the paper. I was narrowly missing

this as I was scoring 32 or 33 marks but I decided not to give up," Nooruddin told IANS. This year the going was tougher for him as he had missed the last date to pay the fee to appear in the exams as a regular candidate and had to apply in the open category. This time, he had to write all six papers again. "I was working hard. My daughter who has done B. Com with English as a medium of instruction, was helping me," said Nooruddin, a father of four including a mentally challenged son. However, the exams could not be conducted due to the Covid-19 situation and the government decided to treat all the candidates as passed. He is happy that he has finally passed the SSC but feels that this should have happened long ago.

JeM, LeT militants trained in Afghan to attack India

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, July 31: Pakistan Army's Special Service Group (SSG) has trained around 20 Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) and Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) terrorists in Afghanistan to carry out attacks in India ahead of August 5, the first anniversary of the constitutional reorganization of Jammu and Kashmir and August 15, the Independence Day. Intelligence sources told IANS Pakistan Army's SSG, a special force which is skilled in unconventional warfare (cross-border terrorism), has trained batches of four to five terrorists who are being pushed to infiltrate into Jammu and Kashmir from the Line of Control (LoC) and International Border (IB). "The attacks are to be carried out by JeM or LeT terrorists trained in Afghanistan," a top official source



As per credible inputs, sources said, there has been heightened activity of LeT and JeM ahead of August 5, the day on which J&K was reorganised last year, resulting in nullification of Article 370

A group of three terrorists, including a local youth, as per intelligence sources, are planning to attack a BSF camp in Kashmir

The report had said that around 6,500 Pakistani terrorists, including 1,000 from Jaish and Lashkar, are present in Afghanistan

Incidentally, Pakistan-based chief of another Kashmir-centric banned terror outfit Hizbul Mujahideen, Syed Salahuddin in his latest audio tape attempted to instigate people of Kashmir in the name of Islam, to pick up arms and declare war against India. Pakistan-banned terror outfit JeM, which runs its terror activi-

ties in Kashmir, has become active in Afghanistan too. In the last one week, 31 terrorists, including 13 Pakistani nationals belonging to JeM were killed in an operation by Afghan security forces in Mirza Khel in Khogyani district of Afghanistan. In June, a UN Security Council report had said that not only do the Taliban and the Al Qaida continue to cooperate with each other, but Kashmir-specific Pakistani terror groups, JeM and Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), are sending their trainers to Afghanistan to carry out target assassinations. This was followed by a Pentagon report, which said the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region remains a sanctuary for LeT, Al-Qaida (AQ), al-Qaida in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS), Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and ISIS-Khorasan (ISIS-K).



international

of the day quote

Disinfect face masks with petrol. I am not joking
RODRIGO DUTERTE | PHILIPPINES' PRESIDENT

We are keeping German and European interests in view. The truth is that a good life in Germany and Europe depends more and more on how we ensure our security ourselves
ANNEGRET KRAMP-KARRENBÄUER | GERMAN DEFENCE MINISTER

There are those in power doing their damndest to discourage people from voting by closing polling locations and targeting minorities and students with restrictive ID laws ... even undermining the Postal Service in an election that's going to be dependent on mail-in ballots
BARACK OBAMA | FORMER US PRESIDENT

SHORT TAKES

5 militants killed

Lahore: Pakistan's security forces Friday shot dead five militants of the outlawed Balochistan Republican Army and claimed to have thwarted a terrorist attack in the country's Punjab province. The terrorists were also involved in the killing of five personnel of the law enforcement agencies. The intelligence-based operation, jointly conducted by the counter-terrorism department of Punjab and intelligence agency ISI in Rajanpur, some 400 kms from Lahore, led to the killing of five terrorists of the Balochistan Republican Army, counter-terrorism officials said in a statement.

Eight missing

San Diego (US): A seafaring tank with 15 Marines and a Navy sailor aboard sank near a military-owned island off the coast of Southern California, leaving one of the Marines dead and eight missing, authorities said Friday. They were travelling in the amphibious assault vehicle from the shores of San Clemente Island to a Navy ship Thursday evening when they reported that the vehicle was taking on water, said Lt. Cameron H. Edinburgh, a Marine Corps spokesman for Camp Pendleton.

Lanka's top cop arrested

Colombo: Sri Lanka's top police officer was Friday arrested for allegedly concealing evidence in a weapons case, police said. Shani Abeysekera, former director of the Criminal Investigations Department (CID), is accused of concealing evidence in a weapons case involving former deputy inspector general of police Vas Gunawardena, who is currently in jail. Gunawardena was jailed for five years by the Colombo High Court in 2018 after he was found guilty of threatening Abeysekera, who was investigating a murder case against him.

Vietnam reports first virus death

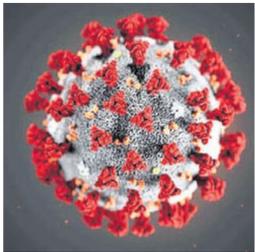
Hanoi: Vietnamese state media reported Friday the country's first ever death of a person with the coronavirus as it struggles with a renewed outbreak after 99 days without any cases. The *Thanh Nien* newspaper said a 70-year-old man died after contracting the disease while being treated for a kidney illness at a hospital in Da Nang where more than 90 cases have been reported over the past week.



China is testing the world with its incursions into Indian territory but the tide is turning against Beijing
MIKE POMPEO | US SECRETARY OF STATE

STUDY INFO

Children younger than five years with mild to moderate Covid-19 have much higher levels of the novel coronavirus genetic material in the nose compared to older children and adults, according to a new study



VIRUS FEAR

HK delays polls

A GROUP OF 22 LAWMAKERS ISSUED A STATEMENT AHEAD OF THE ANNOUNCEMENT ACCUSING THE GOVERNMENT OF USING THE OUTBREAK AS AN EXCUSE TO DELAY THE VOTE

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Hong Kong, July 31: Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam announced Friday that the government will postpone highly anticipated legislative elections by one year, citing a worsening coronavirus outbreak in the semi-autonomous Chinese city.

The Hong Kong government is invoking an emergency ordinance in delaying the elections. Lam said the government has the support of the Chinese government in making the decision. "The announcement I have to make today is the most difficult decision I've had to make in the past seven months," Lam said at a news conference.

"We want to ensure fairness and public safety and health, and need to make sure the election is held in an open, fair and impartial manner. This decision is therefore essential," she said. The postponement is a setback for the pro-democracy opposition, which was hoping to capitalize on disenchantment with the current pro-Beijing majority to make gains.

A group of 22 lawmakers issued a statement ahead of the announcement accusing the government of using the outbreak as an excuse to delay the vote.

"Incumbent pro-democracy legislators, who represent 60% of the public's opinion, collectively oppose the postponement and emphasize the responsibility of the SAR government to make every effort to arrange adequate anti-epidemic measures to hold elections in September as scheduled," the



statement said, referring to the territory's official name, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. "Otherwise, it is tantamount to uprooting the foundation of the establishment of the SAR." The city of 7.5 million people has had a surge in coronavirus infections since the beginning of July: Hong Kong has recorded 3,273 infections as of Friday, more than double the tally on July 1.

The government has tightened social distancing restrictions, limiting public gatherings to two people, and banned dining-in at restaurants after 6 p.m. The lead-up to the elections has been closely watched, after a national security law that took effect in late June stipulated that candidates who violated the law would be barred from running.

The new law is seen as Beijing's attempt to curb dissent in the city, after months of pro-democracy and anti-government protests in Hong Kong last year.

Thursday, 12 pro-democracy candidates including prominent pro-democracy activist Joshua Wong were disqualified from running for not complying with the city's mini-constitution or pledging allegiance to the local and national governments.

US URGES PAK TO TAKE ACTION

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, July 31: Expressing shock and outrage at the killing of American citizen Tahir Naseem inside a courtroom in Pakistan, the US has urged Islamabad to immediately reform its "often-abused" blasphemy laws and bring the culprit to justice.

Naseem, 57, accused of blasphemy, was shot multiple times at close range inside Peshawar's Judicial Complex on Wednesday as he awaited to be shifted to prison. He died on the spot.

The attacker was arrested on the spot and the pistol used in the killing was seized.

"We are shocked, saddened, and outraged that American citizen Tahir Naseem was killed yesterday inside a Pakistani courtroom. Mr Naseem had been lured to Pakistan from his home in Illinois by individuals who then used Pakistan's blasphemy laws to entrap him," said Cale Brown, Principal Deputy Spokesperson of the US State Department.

LOADS OF HAPPINESS



A man carries balloons on a motorbike at a market in Sanaa, Yemen

REUTERS

TRUMP DROPS ELECTION DELAY IDEA

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New York, July 31: US President Donald Trump is using the impossible suggestion of delaying elections as a tool to scuttle plans by many states to allow all voters to cast their ballots by mail and to lay the basis for questioning the validity of the results.

After asking in a Thursday morning tweet, "delay the Election until people can properly, securely and safely vote???", he said at an evening news conference: "I don't want a delay. I want to have the election."

"But I also don't want to have to wait for three months and then find out that the ballots are all miss-



The President does not have the authority to delay the polls and the Constitution gives only the Congress the power to set the election day

ing and the election doesn't mean anything," he said.

The President does not have the authority to delay the polls and the Constitution gives only the Congress the power to set the election day and the Democrats hold the

majority in the House of Representatives.

The election day is fixed by an 1845 law as the first Tuesday in November, unless it falls on the first day of the month in which case it will be the next one.

Even in the Senate, which his Republican Party controls, Trump's suggestion was promptly shot down.

"We'll find a way to do that again this November 3" as scheduled, the leader of the Republican Majority in the Senate, Mitch McConnell, told a TV interview.

"Never in the history of the country through wars, depressions and the Civil War, have we ever not had a federally scheduled election on time," he said.

Senator Kamala Harris, a front-runner to be the Democratic Party's vice-presidential candidate tweeted: "Donald Trump is terrified because he knows he's going to lose to @JoeBiden."

Iran won't negotiate with US

ASSOCIATED PRESS

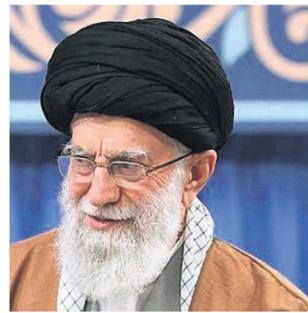
Tehran, July 31: Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said Friday his country will not negotiate with the United States because America would only use talks for propaganda purposes.

The Trump administration has said it is willing to talk with Iran "with no preconditions," but that the U.S. will continue its campaign of pressure against the Islamic Republic.

In a televised speech marking the Eid al-Adha holiday, Khamenei said President Donald Trump would benefit from talks, saying Trump wants to "use negotiations with us for propaganda like negotiations with North Korea." Khamenei was referring to talks between Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong un.

Trump unilaterally withdrew America from the nuclear accord between Iran and Western powers in May 2018. Iran later responded by slowly abandoning nearly every aspect of the agreement, though it still allows UN inspectors access to its nuclear sites.

Trump has maintained that the deal needs to be renegotiated because it didn't address Iran's ballistic



The Trump administration has said it is willing to talk with Iran "with no preconditions," but that the US will continue its campaign of pressure against the Islamic Republic

missile programme or its involvement in regional conflicts. The other signatories to the nuclear deal — Germany, France, Britain, China and Russia — have been struggling to keep it alive.

Khamenei said the US wants Iran to give up its nuclear programme, defence facilities and regional authority at the negotiating table. He said economic sanctions imposed on Iran by the US are a crime against Iran. "The sanctions are apparently against Iran's ruling system, but (in fact) they are against the Iranian people inside."

He said Iranians suffering under

the sanctions affecting the economy inevitably would stand up against the ruling system. A sharp rise in subsidised gasoline prices led to four days of unrest in cities and towns across Iran in November, in which Amnesty International said more than 300 people were killed in clashes with police and security forces.

Tehran has yet to release any official statistics about the scale of the unrest, though in June the government acknowledged that security forces shot and killed protesters. A lawmaker said 230 people were killed in the anti-government protests.

FIRST COVID POSITIVE PET DOG IN US DIES

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New York, July 31: A German shepherd, 'Buddy', which was the first confirmed case of the novel coronavirus infection in a pet dog in the US has died here, according to a report.

In June, the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NVSL) had announced the dog being the first pet in the US testing positive for the virus SARS-CoV-2 behind the COVID-19 pandemic.

Prior to the dog showing signs, one of its owners, Robert Mahoney, had tested positive for COVID-19, and another had symptoms consistent with the virus. The owners told National Geographic that Buddy developed breathing problems in mid-April after Mahoney had been sick with the

novel coronavirus for several weeks. According to the report, Buddy's health declined steadily after he developed breathing problems and thick nasal mucus in April, and he was euthanised on July 11 after he started vomiting clotted blood.

While it is unknown whether the SARS-CoV-2 virus played a role in Buddy's death, blood tests indicated the dog may have had lymphoma, a cancer of the immune system. According to the USDA, there is currently no evidence that animals play a significant role in spreading the coronavirus.

However, the novel coronavirus may spread from people to animals in some situations. The evidence for this was reported in a study of two dogs in Hong Kong, published in May in the journal *Nature*, showing evidence of infection with the virus.



AFGHAN PRESIDENT DASHES HOPES

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Kabul, July 31: Afghan President Ashraf Ghani dashed hopes Friday for a start to negotiations with Taliban insurgents, announcing the final 400 Taliban prisoners whose release is a prerequisite to start talks, will remain jailed. The announcement frustrates US efforts to find an end to Afghanistan's years of relentless war.

Addressing the nation on the Muslim holy day of Eid ul Adha, Ghani said the 400 Taliban are convicted of crimes he has no authority to forgive. Instead, he will call a loya jirga — or traditional grand council of elders — to decide whether they should go free.



He said the council would meet "shortly." Ghani's announcement was certain to delay the start of negotiations between the warring sides and frustrate Washington's efforts to bring an early end to hostilities, even as they scale down their presence in Afghanistan. It also comes at the start of a three-day cease-fire announced by the Taliban for the Eid holidays.

The prisoner releases were part of a deal the United States signed in February with the Taliban aimed at ending Afghanistan's endless wars and sending U.S. troops home after nearly 20 years in Afghanistan, ending America's longest war.

That deal, touted at the time as Afghanistan's best chance at peace in four decades, called for the Afghan government to free 5,000 Taliban held in jails across the country and the Taliban to free 1,000 government and military personnel. The releases were to be a sign of good will and a prerequisite to the start of negotiations between the warring sides.

Thursday, the Taliban concluded the release of the 1,000 they were holding, according to Taliban's political spokesman Suhail Shaheen.

Muslims celebrate Eid al-Adha with precautions

In Indonesia, worshippers were advised to maintain social distancing during the prayers as the world's biggest Muslim-majority country struggles to contain the spread of the virus

REUTERS

Jakarta/Kolkata/ Cairo, July 31: Masked and socially distanced to fight the coronavirus, Muslims around the world held prayers Friday to mark the festival of Eid al-Adha, with mosques at reduced capacity and some praying in the open air.

Saudi Arabia's King Salman bin Abdulaziz, 84, whose country is home to two of Islam's holiest sites, tweeted holiday congratulations a day after leaving hospital in Riyadh. The Haj pilgrimage is being held in the country with attendance drastically reduced.

In Istanbul, Muslims held Eid al-Adha prayers at Hagia Sophia for the first time since the historic building was reconverted to a

mosque this month following a court ruling revoking its status as a museum that drew criticism from Western countries.

In Lebanon, devastated by economic crisis, many found it hard to afford traditional Eid customs. In Tripoli, the country's second city, there were no decorations or twinkling lights, and no electricity to power them. Instead, a large billboard read: "We're broke."

Around the world, the festival had to fit in with the realities of the coronavirus. In Indonesia, the religious ministry asked mosques to shorten ceremonies, while many cancelled the ritual of slaughtering livestock and distributing meat to the community.

Instead sheep, goats and cows were being killed in abattoirs to

FEST AMID PANDEMIC



mark the 'Feast of the Sacrifice', celebrated by Muslims to commemorate Prophet Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son Ismail at God's command.

"This year's Eid al-Adha is very

different from previous years because we need to follow health protocols as we perform prayers, like maintaining social distancing," said Devita Ilhami, 30, who was at the Sunda Kelapa mosque

in Jakarta. Elsewhere in Asia, Muslims including in Thailand and Malaysia prayed in or outside mosques wearing masks. In Malaysia, while some mosques cancelled the ritual of slaughtering livestock, 13 cows were killed in the traditional way, but under rules limiting the number of animals and people at the Tengku Abdul Aziz Shah Jamek mosque in Kuala Lumpur.

In India, where Eid will be celebrated mostly from Saturday, several states have eased coronavirus restrictions to allow worshippers to gather in mosques in limited numbers. "Only small groups of worshippers will be allowed into mosques," said Shafique Qasim, a senior cleric at the Nakhoda mosque in the eastern city of Kolkata.



Financial systems are designed in wrong ways. Covid has revealed the weaknesses now. Poor people are all over but the economy does not recognise them. If we can finance them they will move up the ladder. We are engaged with the formal sector

MUHAMMAD YUNUS | FOUNDER, GRAMEEN BANK

REAL ESTATE BODIES GET DIGITAL PLATFORMS

Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Hardeep Singh Puri has launched digital platforms of real estate bodies CREDAI and NAREDCO to market residential properties, besides releasing a guide book for affordable rental housing scheme for migrants



of the day quote

Taxes have generally been very high on the telecom industry. It is important that this is reviewed thoroughly and resources like spectrum, levies should not become a source for the exchequer, but should become a force multiplier in ensuring economic momentum

SUNIL BHARTI MITTAL | CHAIRMAN, BHARTI AIRTEL

To promote agri firms, the government will fund 112 startups in the 1st phase with a sum of ₹11.85 crore in FY21. The funds will be given to the startups selected by different knowledge partners and agri-business incubators in the area of agro-processing, food technology and value addition

NARENDRA SINGH TOMAR | AGRICULTURE MINISTER

Big corporates with turnover of over ₹500 crores now have only 2 months to implement E-invoice digital module across various technology platforms, which would change the rules of game in B2B transactions

RAJAT MOHAN | SENIOR PARTNER, AMRG & ASSOCIATES

SHORT TAKES

Cognizant's headcount falls

San Francisco: As global software major Cognizant implements a programme to improve cost structure amid COVID-19 and optimises its team, the headcount of the company reduced by 10,500 in the second quarter of this year as compared to the previous quarter. As of June 30, the total headcount of the company stood at 2,81,200, from 2,91,700 employees on March 31.

HP appoints new India MD

New Delhi: Tech major HP Friday said it has appointed Ketan Patel as the managing director of its Greater India operations. In this role, he will be responsible for the company's business in India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, a statement said. He replaces Vinay Awasthi who is moving to a new role as head of Print Operations for Supply Chain.

Kia Motors crosses 1L sales

New Delhi: Auto major Kia Motors has crossed the 1-lakh cumulative sales milestone in India within 11 months since it started selling vehicles here. The company entered the Indian market with the launch of SUV Seltos in August, 2019 and later on launched multipurpose vehicle Carnival. "Today marks a proud moment for Kia Motors India and after the immense success of Seltos and Carnival, we are confident to keep up the positive momentum and lead the Indian automobile industry," India MD and CEO Kookhyun Shim said.

Airtel, Voda-Idea lose subscribers

Bhubaneswar: Private telecom operators Airtel and Vodafone-Idea have constantly been losing trust in Odisha as they failed to add new subscribers in the state for last couple of months. Recently, a TRAI report claimed that the service providers have lost significant subscribers in April, 2020. It says, "Bharti Airtel lost a whopping 2.25 lakh subscribers in April, whereas Vodafone Idea also lost over 75,000 subscribers in April in the state."

JIO PACT FB, Google to tap into biz opportunities in India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 31: Tech giants Facebook and Google - which have invested in Mukesh Ambani's Jio Platforms - are keen on leveraging the partnership to cash in on the fast growing business opportunity in India and expand the learnings to other countries as well.

During their investor calls, the US-based companies highlighted the importance of the Indian market which is home to one of the world's largest Internet consumer bases.

Referring to the investment in Jio Platforms, Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg said the partnership "will

be to wire up and get thousands of kiranas, small businesses across India, onboarded onto WhatsApp to do commerce there" and that the company is excited about the opportunity in India.

"And once we prove that out with Jio in India, we're planning on expanding it to more folks in India and to other countries as well. But there's no doubt that India is a huge opportunity," he emphasised.

Zuckerberg noted that India "should be one of the faster-growing business opportunities" for the company.

He said a lot of people use WhatsApp, especially in India. "There's a huge opportunity to enable small businesses and individuals in India to buy and



sell things through WhatsApp. We want to enable that. That starts with enabling payments," he added.

In April, Facebook had announced an investment of \$5.7 billion (₹43,574 crore) for 9.9% stake in Jio Platforms.

Since then, the Reliance Industries' technology unit has raised money from a clutch of marquee investors.

Earlier this month, Google said it will pump in ₹33,737 crore to buy a 7.7% stake in the venture, taking the latter's fund raiser since April to over ₹1.52 lakh crore.

In the investor call of Alphabet (Google's parent firm), its chief Sundar Pichai said the company has announced a 'Google for India' Digitisation Fund to help Indian Internet users.

Through this effort, Google will invest approximately \$10 billion over the next five to seven years to accelerate and participate in India's burgeoning digital economy, he added.

Oz to make Google, FB pay for news content

Canberra: The Australian government said Friday it plans to give Google and Facebook three months to negotiate with Australian media businesses fair pay for news content. In releasing a draft of a mandatory code of conduct, the government aims to succeed where other countries have failed in making the global digital giants pay for news siphoned from commercial media companies. Google said Australia's draft code was a heavy-handed step that could impede the digital economy. Treasurer Josh Frydenberg said Google and Facebook would be the first digital platforms targeted by the proposed legislation but others could follow. "It's about a fair go for Australian news media businesses, it's about ensuring that we have increased competition, increased consumer protection and a sustainable media landscape," Frydenberg said.

FinMin working with RBI on need for loan restructuring

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 31: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman Friday said the government is working with the RBI on need for restructuring of loans to help industry tide over the impact of COVID-19. "The focus is on restructuring. Finance ministry is actively engaged with RBI on this. In principle, the idea that there may be a restructuring required, is well taken," Sitharaman said while addressing Ficci's National Executive Committee Meeting.

The Finance minister also said that the decision on reducing GST rates on the healthcare and other products will be taken by the GST Council. Sitharaman said the Finance Ministry is working with RBI on the demand of the hospitality sector for extension of moratorium, or restructuring.

"I fully understand the requirements of the hospitality sector on extension of the moratorium, or restructuring. We are working with RBI on this," she said.

To help borrowers deal with liquidity crunch during the pandemic, the Reserve Bank had announced a three-month loan moratorium in March, which was later extended by another three months till August 31. Borrowers opting for loan moratorium can defer payment of the interest and principal component of the loan during this period.



To help borrowers deal with liquidity crunch during the pandemic, RBI had announced a 3-month loan moratorium in March, which was later extended by another 3 months till August 31

Sitharaman said every step which the government took, has been done after exhaustive consultations with the stakeholders and within the government. "We have taken these steps to ensure that the impact is felt on the ground," she said.

Addressing the concerns over the difficulties faced by the MSMEs in taking loans under the Emergency Credit Guarantee Scheme announced by the government, she said, "Banks cannot refuse credit to MSMEs covered under emergency credit facility. If refused, such instances must be reported. I will look into it."

As of July 23, 2020, the total amount sanctioned under the 100 per cent Emergency Credit Line

Guarantee Scheme by public sector banks and private banks stands at ₹1,30,491.79 crore, of which ₹82,065.01 crore has already been disbursed.

As part of the Aatmanirbhar Bharat Package, the government had announced ₹3 lakh crore Collateral-free Automatic Loans for businesses, including MSMEs.

On the suggestion for creation of a Development Finance Institution to handle the emerging credit requirements of the industry, she said, "The work is going on the Development Finance Institution. What shape it will take, we will know shortly."

The minister also said that India is asking for reciprocal arrangements are being asked with the countries with which we have opened up our markets.

FOCUSSED ON DIGITISING MSMEs IN INDIA: AMAZON

AGENCIES

New Delhi, July 31: E-commerce giant Amazon is focused on digitising micro, small and medium-sized businesses in India and is working on getting more sellers on board and hiring more people, a top company executive said.



"We've talked about India many times, but a lot of focus on building that out... what's great about a place - all geographies with a place like India is we're really focused on digitising the Indian sellers. A lot of micro, small and medium-sized businesses there," Amazon Director Investor Relations David Fildes said during an investor call.

He further said, "We launched new features there to help support the digitisation efforts with some of those brands and just a lot of work, great work being done by that team. They have some goals there around getting more sellers on board and hiring many more people as well. So, a lot of focus there."

Core industrial output contracts 15% in June

On a sequential basis, the Index of Eight Core Industries for June declined by 15% compared to decline of 22% during May

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

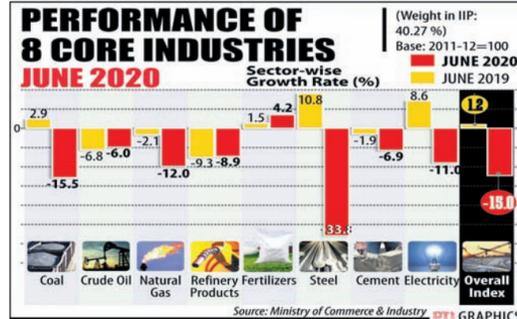
New Delhi, July 31: The production rate of India's eight major industries remained deep in the red in June 2020, official data showed Friday. However, the rate of fall in the Index of Eight Core Industries decelerated on a sequential basis on account of opening up of economic activities.

On a sequential basis, the Index of Eight Core Industries for June declined by 15% (provisional) compared to decline of 22% (revised) during the previous month (May). Though not comparable, the ECI

index had shown a growth of 1.2% in June 2019. In a statement, the Office of Economic Adviser, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, said: "Its cumulative growth during April to June 2020-21 was (-) 24.6%."

"Final growth rate of Index of Eight Core Industries for March 2020 is revised at (-) 8.6%."

The eight core industries comprise coal, crude oil, natural gas, refinery products, fertilisers, steel, cement, and electricity. The ECI comprises over 40% of the weight of items included in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP).



Vedanta's 'Nand Ghar' gets ISO certification in state

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 31: Nand Ghar, Vedanta Group's flagship corporate social responsibility (CSR) project, announced that three of its centres in Kalahandi district of Odisha, have received ISO certification.

The Nand Ghars have been awarded the 'ISO 9001 2015' certification for providing a wide range of services including improving quality of services in early childhood education, improved maternal and child healthcare at doorsteps, improved nutrition outcomes and sustainable skill livelihood for women.

The Nand Ghars that were recognised are located at Basantapada, Kansari and Kendubardi villages in Lanjigarh block. The ISO certification has been issued for a period

of three years. "Five Anganwadi centres (3 Nand Ghars) of Kalahandi district got ISO certification. The process of trans-formation has begun. Planning to do 100% ISO certification, credit to W&CD Block, Vedanta, Nand Ghar team and KPMG," Parag Harshad Gavali, District Collector of Kalahandi, said in a tweet.

CEO Nand Ghar Ritu Jhingon said, "We are very proud as a team to come out with the ISO certification for Nand Ghars and Anganwadis. We look forward to many more milestones for the Nand Ghar project contributing to inclusive development of our communities."

Vedanta's 1,400 plus 'Nand Ghars' aims to touch lives of 40 lakh people, directly impacting 2,00,000 children and 1,80,000 women, annually.

BIZ BUZZ

Ambani calls for policy measures to scrap 2G

New Delhi: Reliance Industries Chairman Mukesh Ambani has called for urgent policy measures to move away from 2G services, which started 25 years ago, and make it a "part of history". On the silver jubilee of the 1st mobile phone call made in India, Ambani said that 2G era feature phones have kept around 30 crore subscribers away from basic internet services. "India still has 300 mn mobile subscribers trapped in the 2G era. Their feature phones keep them excluded even from the basic usage of the internet at a time when the world is standing at the doorsteps of 5G telephony. I think necessary policy steps should be taken to make 2G a part of history," Ambani said.



Flipkart announces benefits for 6L Samarth sellers

Bangalore: Flipkart has announced more benefits for over 6 lakh sellers who are artisans, weavers, craftsmen and owners of other small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) from the underserved communities in the country. Earlier, the Samarth sellers enjoyed a commission waiver of zero per cent for the first 6 months of their onboarding the platform and then, the commission varied. Now, after the completion of six months at zero commission, the sellers will be charged a standard 5% commission, at par with the industry standards, giving them more scope to grow their business online, Flipkart said in a statement.

MCL sets new record in coal dispatch

Bhubaneswar: Mahanadi Coalfields Limited (MCL), a subsidiary of Coal India Limited, scripted a history after dispatching highest ever 5,17,448 tonne coal to consumers in a single day. The day witnessed MCL dispatching to consumers 92 rakes: Ib Valley (42) and Talcher (50); a record in the company's history. The series of new milestones were achieved by various units of the company, like highest 22 rakes despatched by Lakhanpur Area, dispatch of 31,106 tonnes (10 MGR rakes) to OPGC with a single platform of lower capacity; record dispatch of 1,00,796 tonne by Basundhara Area and highest-ever dispatch of 11 rakes from Hingula Area. MCL CMD BN Shukla congratulated all team leaders for their work with great sense of responsibly amid the spread of COVID-19 pandemic. "Records are created to be broken and there are many milestones waiting for Team MCL," said Shukla.

OIL SET FOR FRAGILE RECOVERY, REVEALS POLL

REUTERS

Mumbai, July 31: Oil prices are set for a slow crawl upwards this year as the gradual easing of coronavirus-led restrictions buoy demand, although a second COVID-19 wave could slow the pace of recovery, a Reuters poll showed Friday.

The survey of 43 analysts and economists forecast benchmark Brent crude to average \$41.50 a barrel in 2020, up slightly from the \$40.41 consensus in last month's survey and compared with around \$42 average for the benchmark thus far this year. It is expected to average \$49.85 in 2021.

The 2020 outlook for West Texas Intermediate rose to \$37.51 per barrel from June's \$36.10.

Oil is "caught-up in a step-wise re-balancing process" with the



"pieces moving in the right direction" on the supply side, said Harry Tchilinguirian, head of commodity research at BNP Paribas.

"It's in demand recovery where the uncertainty lies, with COVID-

related developments generating concerns that the pace of re-opening may be impeded."

The poll projected global demand to contract by between 7.2 and 8.5 million barrels per day (bpd) this

TOWARDS NORMALCY

Oil is "caught-up in a step-wise re-balancing process" with the "pieces moving in the right direction" on the supply side

The poll projected global demand to contract by between 7.2 and 8.5 million barrels per day this year

Brent prices have rebounded sharply since plunging to an over 20-year low in April

"A breakthrough of the \$40-\$45 range is possible if the comeback of the global economy will be faster and stronger than expected," LBBW analyst Frank Schallenger said.

The International Energy Agency raised its 2020 demand forecast earlier this month to 92.1 million bpd.

Brent prices have rebounded sharply since plunging to an over 20-year low in April, helped by production cuts by OPEC and its allies starting in May, apart from the gradual lifting of lockdowns, prompting the producer group to decide on easing the record supply reductions from August.

"The decision to ease curbs provides them (OPEC) with an easy solution to reverse them if the demand recovery suddenly stalls," said OANDA senior market analyst Edward Moya.



Consequently, holding of the public sector bank in SBI Life has come down to 55.60% from 57.70%. Standalone total income increased to ₹74,457.86 crore in the first quarter of 2020-21, from ₹70,633.23 crore in the same period a year ago, SBI said in a regulatory filing.

Operating profit of the bank increased by 36 per cent to ₹18,061 crore, against ₹13,246 crores in the April-June quarter previous fiscal.

Interest income of the bank rose to ₹62,638 crore, compared to ₹66,500 crore at the end of June 2019, registering a growth of 6%.

However, net interest margin of the bank declined to 3.01% against 3.24% at the end of first quarter of last year.

WILLEY, BILLINGS SHINE AS MORGAN & CO. CRUISE TO WIN AGAINST IRELAND IN THE FIRST ODI POST PANDEMIC

ENGLAND DRAW FIRST BLOOD

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Southampton, July 31: David Willey (5/30) celebrated his return to the England team with a maiden ODI five-wicket haul as the World Champions drew first blood in the Royal London series against Ireland at the Ageas Bowl.

Willey was dropped from England's World Cup squad last year to make room for Jofra Archer, but with several regulars absent due to their Test commitments the left-armer took centre stage on his international return.

In England's first home ODI since winning their first 50-over World Cup, Willey's spell restricted Ireland to 172 all out in 44.4 overs, a total the hosts overhauled with six wickets to spare.

England had lurched to 78/4 but Sam Billings (67 n o, 54b, 11x4), included after Joe Denly's withdrawal due to a back injury, settled the team's nerves with an unbeaten half century in an unbroken 96-run stand with skipper Eoin Morgan (36 n o, 40b, 4x4, 2x6).

England got over the line with 22.1 overs still remaining at the start of a three-ODI series that marks the start of the ICC Cricket World Cup Super League, forming part of the qualification process for India 2023.

But, on a surface where timing proved troublesome for a number of batsmen, the day belonged to Willey, who was chiefly responsible for Ireland teetering on 28/5 after being invited to bat first under sunny skies.

After the players took a knee to support Black Lives Matter, Ireland were saved from free fall by international debutant Curtis Campher (59 n o, 118b, 4x4), a South African-born all-rounder who qualifies through his mother's passport.

The 21-year-old showed no lack of patience and fortitude in his 59 not out in front of the vast swathes of empty seats, before Willey returned to the attack and ended the innings.

Willey's prowess with the new ball is well-known and despite little evidence of significant movement, he was still effective as Paul Stirling clipped to midwicket before Ireland captain Andrew Balbirnie was tempted into an expansive drive, only succeeding in nicking through to Jonny Bairstow.

Saqib Mahmood (2/36) cramped Harry Tector for room and the ODI



Sam Billings plays on the off-side during his innings, Thursday

BRIEF SCORES
Ireland 172 in 44.4 overs (Curtis Campher 59 n o, Andy McBrine 40; David Willey 5/30) lost to England 174/4 in 27.5 overs (Sam Billings 67 n o, Eoin Morgan 36 n o; Craig Young 2/56) by six wickets.

debutant chopped on while Willey struck twice in two balls as Gareth Delany sliced to backward point to end a counter-attacking 22 from 16 deliveries, before Lorcan Tucker

was trapped in front - a decision overturned on review.

Campher survived the hat-trick ball and showed maturity beyond his years in steadying the ship

alongside Kevin O'Brien (22) and then Andy McBrine (40, 48b, 3x4, 1x6), partnerships of 51 and 66 that helped Ireland avoid abject humiliation.

O'Brien holed out as he went in

search of his first boundary on 22, while McBrine's 40 featured a towering six over midwicket off Moeen Ali, but his patience also ran out as he was caught in the deep. Either side of those dismissals Simi Singh was run out after being sent back attempting a quick single.

Campher ran out of partners before he had the chance to counter-attack, Willey fittingly ending Ireland's innings when last man Craig Young toe-ended to mid-off.

Campher's watchful innings ensured England would not have a perfunctory chase in the late evening sunshine and that was underlined when Bairstow was trapped in front by off-spinner McBrine after seamer Barry McCarthy had limped off in the first over.

Jason Roy and James Vince both flickered briefly before succumbing to Young (2/56), lbw and caught behind for 24 and 25, respectively, and England were in some strife when Campher struck four balls into his international career.

Campher (1/26) had accounted for Tom Banton for South Africa's U-19 side a couple of years ago and history repeated itself when the Somerset batsman top-edged a pull, with Ireland wicketkeeper Tucker taking a challenging catch.

Morgan had demoted himself to six but came to the crease to join Billings, who twice reverse swept Singh for four and seemed more confident on a surface that had given his top order teammates trouble.

Best is still to come: Willey

SOUTHAMPTON: David Willey had 'fallen out of love for the game' following his last-minute ouster from England's World Cup squad but after announcing his comeback with a maiden five-wicket haul against Ireland, he said his best is still to come.

The 30-year-old pacer, who has taken 57 wickets in 47 ODIs, was ignored for the World Cup last year with England preferring Jofra Archer over him. He was also left out of the limited-overs tours of New Zealand and South Africa last winter.

Willey said he was at his lowest during his stint at Abu Dhabi T10. "I just didn't want to be there. I

didn't want to go to the ground. When I was at the ground, I didn't want to be there, and I wanted to get back to the hotel. I'd fallen out of love with the game, I think," he was quoted as saying by ESPNcricinfo.

Willey said the coronavirus-forced break actually helped him as he made a successful return to guide England to a six-wicket win over Ireland in the first ODI Thursday.

"It was just special to be out there playing for England again. I've gone away and worked quite hard to get back near my best. It's been a rollercoaster, but I was just out there enjoying my cricket today. I'm

moving in the right direction and I feel like my best cricket is still to come," he said.

"Circumstances have given me this opportunity. I didn't get a look in over the winter, I missed out there. The extended break has been really good for me. The timing for all of this has worked out perfectly for me and it was the icing on the cake."

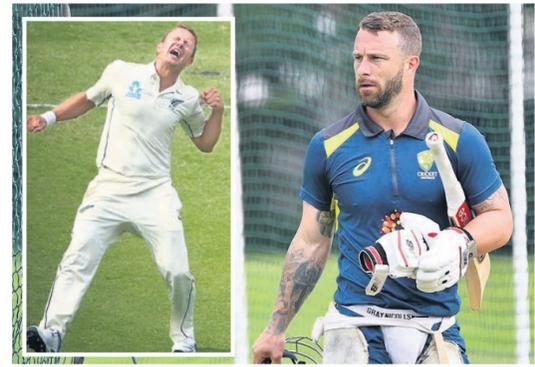
Willey said he tasted success for pitching the ball up. "My success has come when I've pitched the ball up previously and really that was what I tried to do today. I kept the ball full which kept me in the game and I reaped the rewards of that."

Talking about the depth in



England's white-ball team, he said: "It's an unbelievable squad. You look at the players that still aren't getting a look-in and the guys that went home from this camp: there are some brilliant cricketers sat on the sidelines that are still trying to find a way in."

Indians' not effective as Wagner's bouncers



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Melbourne, July 31: India's formidable pace attack will not be as effective as New Zealand speedster Neil Wagner in bowling bouncers during their upcoming tour of Australia, feels wicketkeeper Matthew Wade.

Wagner bowling a barrage of bouncers and dismissing Australia's three leading batsmen - Steve Smith, David Warner and Marnus Labuschagne - a combined 10 times was one of the rare positives for New Zealand in an otherwise one-sided Test series last season.

India are now preparing for a four-Test tour of Australia this summer. "Teams may try it but I don't think it will be as successful," Wade told cricket.com.au.

"I don't think anyone in the game has bowled bouncers the way he bowled and been so consistent, and not gotten scored off while also picking up wickets."

"I think we'll see it a bit (from India) but I don't think it will be as effective as Wagner. He's done it for a long time now ... to be honest I've never faced a bowler who is so accurate at bowling bouncers."

Wade said the series against

Virat Kohli's men is going to be one of the toughest challenges for 'Tim Paine's side since they got together as a group.

"Everyone, although they might not admit it, is looking towards that Indian series. It's going to be hard work. They (India) are a fierce team. They're as hard a team as I've ever played in terms of the way they compete."

"Led by Virat, you can see the way he goes about it on the field, you can see what it means to him and he drives all those guys, they jump on the back of him. It's going to be as big a challenge as this team has faced for the 12 months we've been together."

Though they achieved their maiden Test series win Down Under in 2018-19, India will be facing a sterner challenge when they return to face an Australian side bolstered by the presence of Smith and Warner alongside an in-form Labuschagne.

Australia have since then won the Ashes after a drawn series in England and crushed New Zealand 3-0 at home earlier this year. Both Warner and Smith were serving their one-year ban for ball-tampering during India's last tour of Australia.

NATIONAL SPORTS AWARDS

Sehwag, Sardar in selection committee



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 31: Former India cricketer Virender Sehwag and hockey stalwart Sardar Singh were Friday included in a 12-member committee constituted by the sports ministry to select this year's National Sports Awards winners.

Just like last year, the ministry opted for a single selection committee to pick the awardees among both athletes and coaches and it will be headed by Retired Supreme Court Justice, Mukundakam Sharma.

Also there in the panel is Paralympic silver-medallist Deepa Malik. "This year too we are continuing with the idea of one selection committee for all the awards as we feel too many committees will only make things difficult and create controversies," a Sports Ministry source told this agency.

The other members of the committee include former table tennis player Monalisa Baruah Mehta,



boxer Venkatesan Devarajan as well as sports commentator Manish Batavia and journalists Alok Sinha and Neeru Bhatia.

The national sports awards are given away every year August 29, the birth anniversary of hockey icon Dhyan Chand.

The panel will also have representation from the Sports Ministry, including Sports Authority of India Director General Sandip Pradhan Joint Secretary (Sports Development) LS Singh and Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS) CEO Rajesh Rajagopalan.

"Two additional members who have been Dronacharya Awardees may be invited by the Chairperson while considering the nomination for Dronacharya Award," a sports ministry release stated.

This year the awards function might be delayed by a month or two because of the COVID-19 pandemic but a final decision on the matter is still awaited.

Pandemic pause spurs Lewis to race for 2-3 yrs



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Silverstone, July 31: The pandemic-enforced break from Formula One could prolong Lewis Hamilton's career: "The COVID-19 lockdown, whilst it was a negative, in some ways it gave a lot of life, a lot of energy to focus on some other things," Hamilton said Thursday, "and that time off was a bit of breathing space, and provided a bit of energy to perhaps go longer."

How much longer for the 35-year-old world champion in his 14th season? "Ultimately I want to be able to perform at the level I am right now but there is a point at which the physicality and the mental side can tail off," he said. "I've no divine right to be here. My goal is to continue to deliver for as long as I can. So I do see myself going for at least another two or three years."

Hamilton's Mercedes contract is due to expire in five months. "I want to earn my position here," Hamilton said, "and I feel like every year that is not a given just because I've World Championships under my belt."

He heads into the British Grand Prix Sunday as the favorite to win

at his home circuit of Silverstone for a seventh time but for the first time without any fans there to cheer him on due to the pandemic.

The race is the fourth in a championship that should have begun in March. The coronavirus has hit the Silverstone race with Sergio Perez forced out after testing positive Thursday.

Verstappen fastest in British GP practice

Silverstone: Max Verstappen set the fastest time in the first practice session for the British Grand Prix Friday and Ferrari driver Sebastian Vettel sat out most of the session with a car problem. Verstappen set a time of one minute, 27.422 seconds in his Red Bull to finish ahead of championship leader Lewis Hamilton of Mercedes by 0.474 seconds. Lance Stroll was a surprise third for Racing Point, ahead of Alexander Albon in the second Red Bull and Charles Leclerc in a Ferrari. Mercedes driver Valtteri Bottas only managed sixth-fastest. Vettel only completed two laps and didn't set a time. Ferrari said the team found "something wrong with the intercooler system" of his car and had to examine it.

Focus on grassroots: Bhutia

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 31: Former football captain Bhaichung Bhutia once again stressed on the need to focus on grassroots development in order to make a India a force to reckon with at the Asian level.

Bhutia explained that by focussing on the long term goal of strengthening the grass roots, Indian football will be able reap its benefits at the Asian level and the world stage.

"We need to produce good quality players. That's very important, when I say that I don't mean we don't have good players now. But in order to compete in Asia and at the world level we need to produce bigger better players from the grassroots," Bhutia said during an Instagram live session with the All Indian Football Federation (AIFF).

Hosting U-17 World Cup for boys was a step in right direction. "Hosting the U-17 World Cup was a starting point for us. It is important for our age group players to participate in



"At the same time with the ISL coming in the infrastructure the training ground, the quality of the grounds is also become of a much higher standard now - BHAICHUNG BHUTIA

competitions, have good training facilities and coaches," he added.

"These are things that will help in the long run. We still need to be strong in the grass root for the national team to make progress. We should be qualifying for the Asia Cup in U-17 and U-15 quite regularly," he added.

Women's football in India has gathered momentum in recent times with the country set to host the FIFA U-17 World Cup next year and Bhutia feels it will help unearth talent. "For us, it's important to host under 17s, 19s, 21s because that is where we focus more on the grassroots."

Smith praises 'every captain's dream' Stokes

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 31: Ben Stokes' intent of wanting to be in the midst of tough situations makes him a player that every captain wants in his team, said Rajasthan Royals skipper Steve Smith about his team's premier all-rounder.

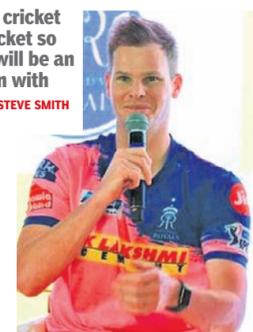
While Smith is sincerely hoping that Stokes doesn't bring in his A game during Australia's white ball series in England, he wouldn't mind one bit if Stokes saves his best in the Royals jersey during upcoming IPL in the UAE.

"It will be great to be able to play some competitive cricket against a quality England side which has few of my Royals teammates (Jofra Archer, Ben Stokes and Jos Buttler)."

"People haven't played any cricket or for that matter little cricket so from that perspective, it (IPL) will be an even contest. Everyone going in with same sort of preparation - STEVE SMITH

"Hope they don't score too many runs or take too many wickets and can save that for the IPL," Smith told this agency during the screening three-part docu-series, Inside Story: A Season with Rajasthan Royals. The series has been produced by Red Bull Media House and would be aired on Jio TV and Jio Cinemas.

Smith was all praise for Stokes who has been in dream form across formats in the past year. "I have seen Stokes go from strength to strength. He had an incredible World Cup



and recently played in Test matches. He bowled beautifully and got some wickets as well," Smith said.

"He is a player who wants to be



involved whether he is batting, bowling or fielding. He wants to be in hotspots. You want these players in team as they want to deliver in

tough situations." Australia will resume their international calendar with a white-ball series against England and Smith said that nothing better than getting to play some quality cricket after nearly seven months.

"It will be great being back to playing some cricket. We haven't played a game since February and like most of the world, our country was also shutdown, had to find way to get through this Covid experience which has been incredibly different for everyone."

Smith admitted that staying in a bio-secure environment away from 'loved ones' for extended periods is difficult but people try to make relationships work as it's the way of life for elite cricketers.