



TRAVEL ENTHUSIAST

Actor Kirti Kulhari says she is blessed to spend time on the mountains of Himachal Pradesh during the pandemic

LEISURE P2



ADAPTING TO COVID

Chennai star hotels are welcoming guests with new health safety standards like contactless check-in

TWO STATES P7



KREMLIN'S DENIAL

The Kremlin rejected accusations that Russia was responsible for poisoning Navalny

INTERNATIONAL P10

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Queue outside is getting longer since the govt banned PUBG

Loan recast scheme by Sept 15

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Sept 3: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman Thursday told banks in a meeting to put in place a loan restructuring scheme for rescuing all viable business units affected by the Covid-19 pandemic by September 15.

"During her interaction, the Finance Minister focused on lenders immediately putting in place board-approved policy for resolution, identifying eligible borrowers and reaching out to them and quick implementation of a sustained resolution plan by lenders for revival of every viable business," the Finance Ministry said in a statement.

The meeting was held with the chief executives of all scheduled commercial banks and non-banking financial companies to "review their state of preparedness for implementation of the loans resolution framework for Covid-19 related stress."

The FM stressed that banks should keep in mind the Covid-19 related distress of borrowers which should not come in the way of assessing their creditworthiness at the time of giving loans.

"During the meeting, Sitharaman impressed upon the lenders that as and when moratorium on loan repayments is lifted, borrowers must be given support and Covid-19 related dis-

RELIEF TO BORROWERS



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Sitharaman impressed upon the lenders that as and when moratorium on loan repayments is lifted, borrowers must be given support and Covid-19 related distress must not impact their credit worthiness

stress must not impact the lenders' assessment of their creditworthiness," the Finance Ministry said.

The banks were told to put in place FAQs on the debt restructuring on their websites in multiple languages.

"The lenders assured that they are ready with their resolution policies, have started the process of identifying and reaching out to eligible borrowers, and that they will comply with the time-

lines stipulated by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI)," the ministry added.

The finance ministry is also in touch with the RBI to ensure that the regulator provides assistance to lenders in the resolution process.

"The Finance Minister also exhorted the lenders to proactively respond to needs of companies and businesses, as well as those of individual borrowers, and to spearhead the efforts for

rebuilding businesses desperate for help owing to Covid-19 related distress," the Finance Ministry said.

On August 6, the RBI had announced a loan restructuring scheme for all types of borrowers - corporate, MSME and personal loan segments.

For non-MSME account holders, such restructuring can be sought till December 31 this year; provided that the borrower should not be in default for more than 30 days as of March 1, 2020. The banks have to implement the resolution framework within 180 days of agreeing upon the restructuring proposal.

For MSMEs, the RBI has allowed all the three types of stressed assets to avail restructuring, provided their total exposure is not more than ₹25 crore. But for others, including MSMEs with loan of more than ₹25 crore, restructuring window will not be available if they fall under SMA-1 or SMA-2 categories.

There are three types of stress assets, technically known as Special Mention Accounts, before an account becomes an NPA: SMA-0 are those in which loan repayments have been overdue for a period of up to 30 days, SMA-1 are the ones that have been overdue for a period between 31 and 60 days, while SMA-2 accounts are those with a delay of 61-90 days.

JSW Neosteel Pure steel, Pure mazbooti. Consistent quality across the bar, Highest level of purity, Best bonding with cement.

Khurda beats Ganjam in Covid caseload

DISTRICT	NEW CASES	TOTAL	DEATHS
KHURDA	722	18,881	70
GANJAM	107	18,345	197

POST NEWS NETWORK

Reinforce Covid mgmt, says CM

Bhubaneswar, Sept 3: Khurda district has surpassed Ganjam district in reporting the highest number of COVID-19 cases. While the infections are rising alarmingly in the state capital, Ganjam is currently seeing a decline in the number of cases.

Latest data released by the state Health department showed that with the addition of 722 new COVID-19 cases Thursday, Khurda is now the hotbed of the disease in the state. As of date, the district has reported 18,881 COVID-19 cases. On the other hand, Ganjam reported 18,345 cases till Thursday.

However, in terms of fatalities owing to the infection, Ganjam is still at the top of the chart. A total of 197 patients died in Ganjam so far against 70 deaths in Khurda district.

As far as recoveries are concerned, Ganjam has seen 17,162 recoveries, while 12,445 patients recovered from the disease in Khurda in the last one month.

In August, there has been a paradigm shift in terms of districts reporting highest cases. Ganjam, which was the worst-hit district till re-

cently, moved towards stabilisation in August.

At the same time, Mayurbhanj and Rayagada districts too have started seeing a spike in the number of COVID-19 cases.

Meanwhile, the COVID-19 tally in the state rose to 1,13,411 on Thursday as 3,631 more people tested positive for the disease, while eight fresh fatalities pushed the state's coronavirus death toll to 522, a health department official said.

Of the fresh cases, 2,214 were detected in quarantine centres, while 1,417 tested positive for COVID-19 during contact tracing.

SHORT TAKES

CHSE Plus II Arts results tomorrow

Bhubaneswar: The Council of Higher Secondary Education (CHSE) in Odisha will announce the results of Plus II arts stream for 2019-20 at 4 p.m. September 5, informed the State School and Mass Education Minister Samir Ranjan Dash Thursday. The results will be available online on www.chseodisha.nic.in and www.orissaresults.nic.in. A total of 2.18 lakh students had appeared the Plus II arts examination this year which was held in March. However, a few papers could not be held due to nationwide lockdown amid the Covid-19 outbreak forcing the state government to come up with a new process of evaluation.

Another minister tests Covid +ve

Bhubaneswar: Odisha Minister of Textile and handicrafts, Padmini Dian, Thursday said she has tested positive for COVID-19, and was undergoing home isolation. Dian is the third minister in the state to have contracted the disease. Meanwhile, Basudevur BJD MLA Bishnubrata Routray also tested Covid positive Thursday. Earlier, Higher Education Minister Arun Kumar Sahoo, and Labour Minister Susant Singh were diagnosed with the infection. "I undertook sample tests after developing mild fever and came to know that I have contracted COVID-19," she said.

Diesel price cut by 17 paise

Bhubaneswar: In a marginal relief to the common man, diesel prices were slashed by 15-17 paise across the metros and Bhubaneswar Thursday but petrol prices remain unchanged. The price of diesel in the state capital was slashed to ₹79.92 per litre from ₹80.19 per litre, while petrol prices remained constant at ₹82.70. As per the notification from Indian Oil Corporation, in the national capital diesel price was cut to ₹73.40 per litre from ₹73.56 per litre, while the petrol price remained steady at ₹88.73.

Twitter a/c of PM Modi's personal website hacked



AGENCIES

New Delhi, Sept 3: Twitter Thursday said it has fixed the account of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's personal website that was briefly hacked in the wee hours and tweets asking people to donate Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies were posted on it.

Twitter said it has secured the compromised account known as @narendramodi_in.

The affected account is linked to PM Modi's personal website and has more than 2.5 million followers.

"We are actively investigating the situation. At this time, we are not aware of additional accounts being impacted," a Twitter spokesperson said in a statement.

According to Twitter, this breach was not due to a compromise of its systems or service. "There is no indication or evidence of any correlation between this account compromise and the incident that took place in July," the company said in a statement.

Twitter faced a mega crypto hack in July that spread a Bitcoin scam by hijacking accounts of high-profile celebrities, politicians and businesses as a result of a phone spear phishing attack.

China funds anti-India protests

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Sept 3: China has paid ₹2.5 crore (in Nepali currency) to various organisations based in Nepal to carry out demonstrations against India along the Indo-Nepal border that stretches to over 1,700 km, intelligence agencies said.

"Chinese Embassy in Nepal has provided financial support to the tune of ₹2.5 crore (NPR) for organising anti-India protests/demonstrations along India-Nepal border areas highlighting the recent border disputes and interferences of India in Nepal's internal/political matters," the agencies stated. NPR stands for Nepalese Rupee.

The India-Nepal relation has been strained after China increased its influence on the Himalayan nation.

It was India's road construction to the Lipulekh at 17,000 feet that had sparked a diplomatic row between India and Nepal as Kathmandu claimed the area to be its territory. Lipulekh is a tri-junction between India, Nepal and



China situated atop the Kalapani Valley in Uttarakhand. The road construction was aimed at shortening travel time for pilgrims visiting the Kailash Mansarovar. After this, Nepal brought out a new political map showing the contested area as its own.

India rejected the new map saying it was not based on historical facts or evidence. The new political map of Nepal features parts of Lipulekh, Kalapani and Limpiyadhura areas which are in Indian territory. Nepal also increased its force deployment across the Indo-Nepal border. It has also planned to increase the number of border posts (BOPs) from 120 to 500 along the 1,751-km border.

"Taking the strained relationship of

China deploys five militia squads in Eastern Ladakh

NEW DELHI: China has deployed five militia squads for rapid response at the disputed Line of Actual Control in Eastern Ladakh. It has done so to "consolidate the border" and "stabilise Tibet region", sources said. "Militia is basically a reserve force of the Chinese's People Liberation Army. They are deployed during war time situations and help the PLA in its military operations," said a senior government officer. The officer also explained that Chinese militia conducts independent operations and provides combat support and manpower to replenish the PLA. "It is an irregular mix of mountaineers, boxers, members of local fight clubs and others. Most of the members are raised from the local population," said the officer.

India-Nepal as an opportunity, China, which is already having a border dispute with India in Eastern Ladakh, increased its troop deployment at Lipulekh," said a senior government officer.

Ganjam sand mining under SEIAA lens

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Sept 3: The 'illegal' sand mining activities along the Ghodahad river near Maulabhanja in Ganjam district have come under the lens of the State Environmental Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA).

Villagers from the affected areas have approached the SEIAA seeking an enquiry into the alleged illegal sand mining in the area and also pass orders putting a stop to all sand mining activities in the area.

A petition filed before the authority alleged that the lease holders in the area started mining sand, thereby damaging various structures and bridges lying in close proximity without obtaining requisite approvals, including environmental clearance for the same.

It also alleged that there have been several clashes between the villagers and those operating the sand mining activities in the region. The villagers said that in the process, a former Sarpanch of the area was abducted by the

sand mining mafia. The Sarpanch was, however, rescued following police intervention. "The present Tahasildar has clamped Section 144 CrP in the sand mining area stopping the sand mining for a while. However, no damages or compensation was collected from the 'so called' lease holder," the petition before the SEIAA said.

It has been alleged that due to the 'illegal' sand mining in the area, sand was deposited in around 10 hectares of agricultural land, including vegetable fields - mak-

ing the agricultural lands unfit for cropping. Moreover, vehicles engaged in the mining are causing air and land pollution as they are not covered while transporting the mined sand.

"It is pertinent to mention that the Application for Environmental Clearance for Ghodahad sand mining, Maulabhanja, has been rejected by the State Environment Impact Assessment Authority Odisha in pursuant to the SEAC Meeting minutes dated 27/02/2017," the petition said.

Unable to pay bills, couple 'sells' newborn to hosp

AGENCIES

Agra, Sept 3: In a shocking incident, a hospital in Agra has been accused of buying a newborn baby in exchange for waiving off hospital bills of a rickshaw puller's wife.

Acting swiftly on the report, the Agra administration sealed the hospital and registered a complaint against the management. The rickshaw-puller has also been reunited with his baby.

According to information, Shiv Charan, who works as a rickshaw-puller in the Trans Yamuna area of Agra, had taken his pregnant wife to the JP Hospital for delivery a few days back. His wife was subjected to a Covid-19 test and then the delivery was performed upon which a baby boy was born.

After the delivery of the baby, Shiv Charan's wife had to stay at the hospital for several days. On being discharged some days later, Shiv Charan was handed over a bill of ₹35,000. He had then said that he won't be able to pay the amount.

Shiv Charan alleged that the manager of the hospital took this matter to the doctor who runs the hospital. The doctor demanded that either Shiv Charan makes the entire payment, or sell the baby to him, the rickshaw puller said.

Unable to pay the bill, the couple agreed to sell the baby. The doctor bought the newborn baby for ₹1 lakh, out of which, he adjusted the ₹35,000 hospital bills and returned the remaining amount of ₹65,000 to Shiv Charan.

When the district administra-



tion came to know about this incident, a team of health department officials raided the hospital.

The team found that the hospital was running in just four rooms on the first floor of a four-story building - one room was for the man-

ager, one for the doctor, one large room was serving as the delivery room and the remaining room was the 'ward'.

According to sources, the license of this hospital has not been renewed for 5 years.

Assistant Chief Medical Officer Dr RK Agnihotri said that the hospital was being sealed and inquiry will be set up against the hospital.

Agra District Magistrate Prabh N Singh has also set up a magisterial inquiry into the buying and selling of a newborn. N Singh said that the child has been returned to the rickshaw-puller and his wife and the accused doctor will face criminal action for human trafficking and other crimes.

The statements of Shiv Charan and his wife were recorded Wednesday in which they claimed that they were forced to sell their baby. Shiv Charan said that his wife was not checked up by the ASHA workers during her pregnancy which is why they had to go to a private hospital.

Twelve teachers caught with fake B.Ed certificates

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar/Joda, Sept 3: The Keonjhar district administration Wednesday issued show-cause notices to 12 teachers of various government schools of the district for allegedly submitting fake B.Ed certificates to get jobs.

The matter came to the light when the candidates, who had received appointments as junior teachers under Sarba Siksha Abhiyan in 2019, submitted their fake B.Ed certificates for scrutiny.

Keonjhar District Programme Coordinator Purna Chandra Sethi said, "The department has identified 12 teachers of eight blocks of Odisha who have furnished fake B.Ed certificates to get the government jobs."

"For this we have issued show-cause notices and asked the concerned officials to file FIR against them within seven days," added Sethi.

Notably, a few weeks ago Aska Police had busted a major B.Ed certificate issuing racket and arrested the kingpin and two fake teachers. The racket was busted by police while investigating a complaint filed by Aska Block Education Officer (BEO) Krutibash Barik who had alleged that two assistant teachers - Gaurishankar Jena and Dayanidhi Parida - got government jobs by submitting fake certificates.

MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VAIATION
SENSEX	38990.94 ↓ 95.09
NIFTY	11527.50 ↓ 7.50
DOLLAR	73.66 ↑ ₹0.66
EURO	87.01 ↑ ₹0.03
GOLD	₹50,599 ↓ ₹222
SILVER	₹64,466 ↓ ₹1318

WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK
MAX	34.9°C	35.0°C
MIN	25.6°C	24.5°C
Humidity	97%	79%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
Forecast	Partly cloudy sky	



THE ROCK, FAMILY HAD TESTED COVID +VE; HAVE RECOVERED

Action superstar Dwayne Johnson, aka The Rock, has revealed that he along with his wife and their two children tested positive for Covid-19 a few weeks ago, and have recovered now. Johnson took to Instagram Thursday to give the update, reports *variety.com*.

STAR TREK: DISCOVERY-III TO INTRODUCE TRANS CHARACTERS

The upcoming third season of *Star Trek: Discovery* will feature the first non-binary and transgender characters in the long-running franchise. The show has cast actor Blu del Barrio and Ian Alexander in supporting roles, reported *Deadline*.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
Today people will actually drag you into altercations, so flash the peace sign if you must. You may face some sort of legal troubles from peace-loving groups. Therefore, Ganesh advises you to meditate, take a walk or just seek out the company of your near and dear ones.

TAURUS
You need to be very practical and realistic in all that you do today, urges Ganesh. You are known to be pretty emotional and sensitive and generally go by your feelings. Your mind, your reason do not normally feature in your decision making. Even minor problems, complications get you worked up.

GEMINI
Maintaining the image you have created in the minds of people, as well as upholding your reputation in society will give you some anxious moments today. You will work hard to improve your social standing, and will get results by the end of the day. It is an auspicious and lucky day for you, says Ganesh.

CANCER
You will secure your place with hard work in your job or business. Ties with partners will improve. Closeness with spouse is indicated. Melody and joy will mark domestic bliss. You will spend the evening with your beloved. Ganesh's blessings are with you.

LEO
The friends we make go a long way in making us who we are, says Ganesh. Over the years, with your natural instinct to be a social charmer, you have built a fine circle of dedicated friends on whom you can bank with confidence under any circumstance.

VIRGO
Today, your soul mate will both give and demand pleasant surprises, says Ganesh. Your business partners may bring in some good news. Take responsibility of your past mistakes and make plans for the days to come. Do not be shy of the advice of loved ones, as it will help you more than hinder.

LIBRA
Today, you will be in a mishmash of emotions and feelings. Also, there are chances of accumulated feelings finding an outlet. Your capacity for emotional display may take people by surprise. However, you will also enjoy the higher responsibilities reposed on you, predicts Ganesh.

SCORPIO
You will see every colour of the kaleidoscope today — people with different temperaments and different attitudes, many of whom will surprise you with their reactions. You may be shocked at the way your colleagues or close friends react to your strategies or success.

SAGITTARIUS
Today will be a day for introspection, says Ganesh, as you try and find the root causes of your problems. But the job is only half-done: the rest will depend on the initiatives you may take to implement possible solutions to your problems.

CAPRICORN
Planning strategic moves will be done with, and all that will remain is execution. But Ganesh says there may be delays in implementing ideas that are crucial to the success of your project, and this may leave you disappointed and dismayed.

AQUARIUS
Set any target, take up any activity or accept any challenge; you will succeed in any of them with flying colours, foresees Ganesh. Your well-wishers will shower praises upon you for those hard earned achievements.

PISCES
Take one cautious step at a time today, says Ganesh. You will discuss intimate matters at home and official matters at work but be careful about whom you trust and deception from someone close might lead to worry and stress in the future.

Tips to buy art for your home

Placing one big piece of a sculpture or a wall-hanging can make even a small room feel more spacious, says eminent designer Hemil Parikh



Representational image

New Delhi: Works of art can be inspiring, there is no wonder why beautiful art makes it to home interiors and personal spaces. Striking and meaningful art like sculptures, paintings, figurines and wall art live things up and facilitate in creating a home's soul, reflecting one's personality in their surrounding space.

Therefore, it makes sense to dedicate some time in considering which pieces you would want to display, and which really bring forth your interests as an art collector. Popular designer and architect Hemil Parikh shares a few useful tips to consider when choosing art for your home:

Setting the tone

Prior to selecting your preferred art, you must first decide whether you want your home to feature a casual or formal vibe. While light and bright hues lend off a casual feel, predominantly on

unframed canvas; a framed piece with imageries that feature diverse lines and structure in darker shades will lend the space a formal tone.

Never rush into a decision

There is no doubt on the fact that whatever you pick to embellish your home or walls, it's an individual choice, nevertheless, you must never rush into it. Always take into consideration what actually appeals to you about a particular piece, whether it is the shade, the subject or anything else about the artwork that charms you. An immediate impulse buy can be a mistake since it may ruin the look by going against your decor.

Colour selection

The colour of an art creation has an ability to inspire the look and feel of the entire

space. If you desire the art to show off a chief colour, then everything around it must support it. For instance, if the artwork has a warm tone, ensure the pieces placed around it are in cool hues since it will make the art work stand out more.

Size of art

By and large, if you have a small room, placing one big piece of art like a sculpture or a wall-hanging can make a room feel more spacious. Incorporating multiple smaller pieces can make a small room feel muddled. Hence, considering the rooms dimension prior to selecting an art is of prime significance. Give yourself the chance to fall in love with art and to truly appreciate the pieces you bring into your personal space.

KIRTI feels blessed to travel amid pandemic

Mumbai: Actress Kirti Kulhari is currently spending time amidst mountains in Himachal Pradesh, and she truly feels blessed.

"And finally the actual morning... all the way from #kharota #himachalpradesh In the current times, I actually feel so blessed that I can travel and experience this," she wrote on her Instagram account, adding pictures of herself enjoying the scenic background. Kirti also asked

people not to be scared to travel amid pandemic. "And those of you who wish to do the same, just some precautions and you could do it too... #besafe #dontbescareed," she added. Fans were mesmerised seeing Kirti's pictures of her stay at Kharota. "Such beautiful clicks," a user commented.

"Wanna travel too," another one wrote. On the work front, Kirti was recently seen in the second season of the web show *Four More Shots Please!*. She will also be seen sharing screen space with Parineeti Chopra in the Hindi adaptation of *The Girl On The Train*.

IAN S

Priyanka enjoys last few days of summer

Los Angeles: Actress Priyanka Chopra Jonas is in the mood to soak in the last few days of summer.

The *Mary Kom* actress shared a picture on Instagram where she is seen standing in the sun. She wears a floral dress and completes the look with a messy bun, big sunglasses and hoop earrings.

"The last few days of summer," she captioned the image. Priyanka recently officially confirmed that her memoir, *Unfinished*, is ready. The actress will next be seen in the digital film *The White Tiger* where she features with Adarsh Gourav and Rajkummar Rao. The film is based on Aravind Adiga's Man Booker Prize-winning novel of the same name, and is directed by Iranian filmmaker Ramin Bahrani.



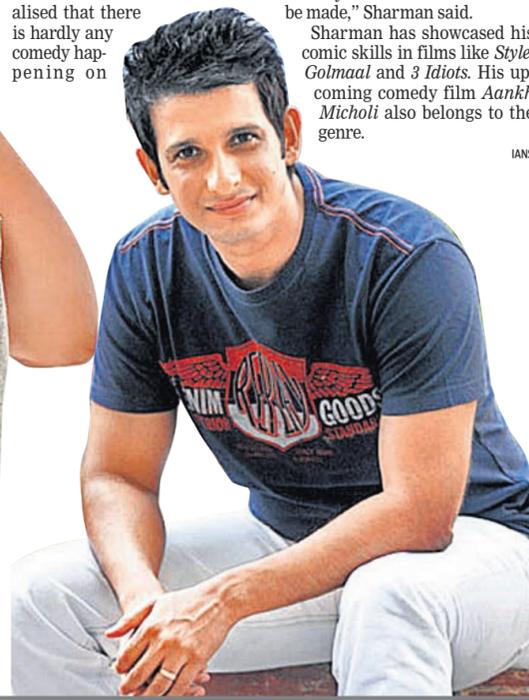
Sharman wants more comedy films, shows in OTT space

New Delhi: Actor Sharman Joshi feels there is less comic content available on OTT platforms.

"Comedy is on top of my mind right now. I want to make people laugh with my films. Also, during lockdown I have realised that there is hardly any comedy happening on

OTT platforms. There's only a stock of old comedy movies and shows. I tried to find out comedy projects to watch, but hardly got anything new and exciting. So I started watching *Friends* again. I really feel more comedy films and shows should be made," Sharman said.

Sharman has showcased his comic skills in films like *Style*, *Golmaal* and *3 Idiots*. His upcoming comedy film *Aankh Micholi* also belongs to the genre.



PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

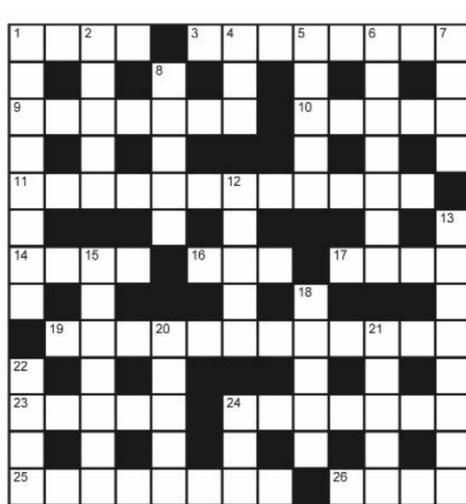


BREVITY



FUN post

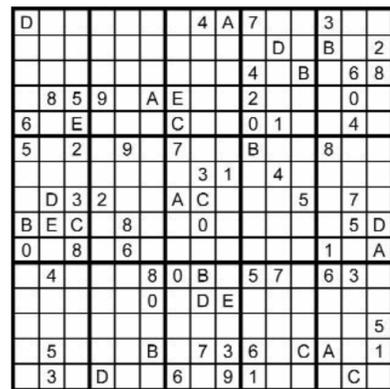
CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 1 Pinnae
 - 3 16th century small vessels
 - 9 Hot-air liner
 - 10 Comet's path
 - 11 Sweet liqueur (5,2,5)
 - 14 Poison ivy woe
 - 16 Spending limit
 - 17 Greek salad cheese
 - 19 Appetisers (4,8)
 - 23 Bohemian dance
 - 24 Corpulence
 - 25 Beta follower
 - 26 River of Flanders
 - Down**
 - 1 Large pelagic tuna
 - 2 Free-for-all
 - 4 Barley bristle
 - 5 Odour
 - 6 Fond squeeze
 - 7 Fill to the gills
 - 8 Tiny openings
 - 12 Muse with a lyre
 - 13 Negative Nellie
 - 15 Movie preview alert
 - 18 Stubborn sorts
 - 20 Mine passage
 - 21 Archaeological site
 - 22 "Beowulf," c.g.
 - 24 Possess

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

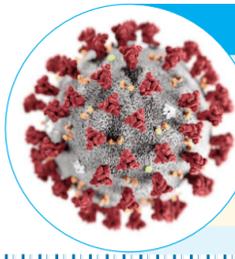


CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



IDOL MAKING

An artisan giving finishing touches to the clay idols of Lord Vishwakarma in Kumbharsahi area of Cuttack, Thursday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	2,62,89,334	1,85,32,250	8,69,248
India	38,53,406	29,70,492	67,376
Odisha	1,13,411	87,351	522

Man sells off son; wife moves NHRC

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Sept 3: A man has sold off his baby son for just Rs 50,000. Shocking, but this has happened. It happened in the state capital a few months back and has come to the light only recently.

The accused did not want to have a baby and asked his wife to undergo abortion. However, the wife went ahead with her pregnancy and gave birth to a baby boy. Since the husband did not want a baby at that particular juncture, he decided to sell the baby for Rs 50,000. The matter came to the fore when the distraught mother knocked the doors of National Human Rights Commission (NHRC). She had approached the police initially, but did not get any help from them, she said.

As per the complaint, the woman,



The matter came to the fore when the distraught mother knocked the doors of National Human Rights Commission

When confronted, Tapan told the woman that he had sold their son for Rs 50,000 to settle the nursing home dues

a resident of Ranpur area in Nayagarh fell in love with Tapan Palai of Nayagarh town. In 2018, they eloped to Bangalore and got married in a temple there.

Last year, the couple returned to Odisha. However, Tapan asked his wife to stay with her parents and went back to his native village. He used to frequently drop into his in-laws place to meet his wife.

In the meantime, his wife con-

ceived. When Tapan came to know about this development, he gave her some medicines to terminate the pregnancy. But it did not work.

The couple moved to a rented house in Salia Sahi. The woman delivered a baby boy at a nursing home in Jaydev Vihar area, March 26.

A few days later, the woman did not find her son even after searching for him everywhere. When she confronted Tapan she came to know

that her son had been sold off. Tapan told her that he had sold their son for Rs 50,000 to settle the nursing home dues. He even warned her against disclosing the matter to anyone, not even to his parents and threatened to kill her, if she does so.

Then he simply disappeared and also did not call her back in spite of numerous messages from the woman.

The woman then lodged an FIR with the Nayapalli police station about her missing son as well as husband. But that did not yield any result. She even met the DCP, but to no avail.

Eventually, the woman moved the NHRC. She sought action against the IIC of Nayapalli police station who did not register her case. She also in her complaint has demanded a compensation of Rs 7,00,000 from Tapan and his family.

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



Online classes for spl kids since July: Govt

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Sept 3: The Social Security and Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (SSEPD) department Thursday said that it has taken steps to ensure that children with special needs are not left behind and have access to all educational benefits.

The department said it has been reaching out to differently-abled students by providing study material through e-platforms since March 2020.

"We have produced audio and video study material which has been uploaded on the department website," said Ambika Prasad Pattnaik, deputy secretary of SSEPD department.

The video library has two units meant for hearing-impaired students and intellectual disability/autism spectrum disorder/cerebral palsy students. The study materials for Class X students have been uploaded and process is on for the remaining classes. The audio library carries study material for the visually-impaired students of Classes VIII, IX and X.

The e-book library is also in the process of collecting and uploading quality books for the students with special needs.

The online classes have been initiated by the department since July 2020 for all classes of special schools. To continue the educational activities due to closure of the schools on account of Covid-19, an SOP has been issued for reference and guidance of the concerned staffers of special schools. Further, class-wise WhatsApp groups of teachers and students have been advised to collect the feedback of the students and pass the same to the department through district Collectors for quality monitoring and upgradation.

Besides, online classes for teacher trainees of State Institute of Special Education and Research (SISER) including 37 visually-challenged and other disabilities are also being taken up by the experts of the state institute with the help of Google Meet app.

Home dept's one-time relief plan for fire safety violation

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Sept 3: The state government has made a one-time relaxation scheme for issuance of fire safety certificates to buildings operating prior to the implementation of Odisha Fire Prevention and Fire Safety Rules, 2017.

The Home department has recently issued a notification in this regard. Deviation in height, built-up area and occupancy area will be taken into consideration under the scheme.

In case of buildings having no approved plan, the owner will have to submit the building plan as per actual construction being signed by himself/herself and a registered architect.

The fire service officials will inspect the building and if the building or occupancy fulfills the other requirements of relaxation scheme, his case will be considered for issuance of fire safety certificate.

In case of government buildings, if the plan is prepared by a technical person of any department, it will be accepted for issuance of certificate. If the adjoining road is of minimum 6-metre



width and there is accessibility to fire tenders, such buildings can also avail the benefit.

In case of high-rises, if public road of 6-metre width is available in front and 6-metre open space/public road is available at any of the adjoining sides of the building then setback norm will be relaxed.

Similarly, the low-rise buildings having public road of 6-metre width in front and 6-metre open space at any of the adjoining sides of the building then also setback is not required.

If there is no setback available on left and right side of any building, then the owners of the adjoining plots can remove the common boundary wall to provide open space and get the certificate.

Compliance period for submitting wanting documents will be two weeks and compliance for safety requirements will be three months, extending up to 6 months

In all such cases of relaxation, after obtaining the fire safety certificate, the owner or occupier is required to regularise the deviation by the plan approving authority of jurisdiction as per guideline issued by Urban Development department from time to time.

In all cases, the period for compliance to submit wanting documents will be two weeks and compliance for safety requirements will be three months, which can exceed maximum upto six months.

If the applicant fails to meet the compliance within the specified time his application shall be rejected and in such cases the applicant needs to apply afresh, the notification said.

Factories & Boilers dy dir under Vig lens

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Sept 3: Vigilance sleuths raided the houses of deputy director of Factories and Boilers Directorate, Ramesh Chandra Behera, Thursday morning on charge of accumulating assets disproportionate to his known sources of income.

Acting on allegations against Behera, separate teams of the anti-corruption wing conducted simultaneous raids at six places including his office and residences at Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, Jajpur and Puducherry. The officials are conducting raids on strength of a search warrant issued by Special Judge Vigilance, Bhubaneswar.

As per sources, allegations of availing 70 trips to foreign countries along with his family had surfaced a few days back. The Vigilance officials examined his bank pass-books, land records and other important documents during the raids.

A detailed report of the assets recovered is awaited, as raids are still under way. The exact amount of disproportionate assets possessed by the accused officer will be ascertained after completion of



Allegations of availing 70 foreign trips along with his family had surfaced a few days back

the search operation, Vigilance officials said.

Raids are being conducted on his residential house located at Vipul Garden, Ghatikia Bhubaneswar; house of a relative at Pilgrim Road Cuttack; house at the native place at Pampalo, Korei Jajpur; one plot located at CDA with a room on it; offices at Bhubaneswar and Cuttack; including a residential house located at Puducherry.

Afternoon 'Mo Bus' service suspended for poor footfall

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Sept 3: The Capital Region Urban Transport (CRUT) Thursday decided to reschedule the timing of Mo Bus service citing poor footfall.

The CRUT authority has suspended Mo Bus service for more than three hours during the afternoon every day.

"Mo Bus service is not available between 12pm-3:30pm due to less footfall," tweeted the CRUT.

CRUT also said that the bus services will resume operation on more routes and increase frequency in the future.

The Mo Bus service is available on various routes throughout the week following Unlock 4 guidelines.

The eight routes in which the Mo Buses are plying are: 11 (Nandan Vihar to Lingipur), 16 (Master Canteen to Biju Patnaik Park, Cuttack), 18 (Baramunda to Jagatpur), 20 (Master Canteen to Khurda via Vani Vihar), 23 (Master Canteen to SUM Hospital), 24 (Sai Temple to Kalinga Vihar), 25 (Dumduma to Mancheswar) and 33 (Master Canteen to Pipli), according to sources at CRUT.

Criminal hacked to death in Cuttack

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, Sept 3: A hardcore criminal was allegedly killed by two unknown miscreants Wednesday late night on Bidanasi road near Ipsar Gada in Cuttack city. The attack also left one of his associates severely injured.

The deceased was identified as Prakash Behera alias Hadia, 45, who hailed from Dagarapada area. Notably, Prakash was involved in illegal liquor trade and had over 22 criminal cases lodged against him at several police stations in the city, police



Police probing the incident, Thursday

OP PHOTO

sources said. According to the sources, Hadia was intercepted by

two bike-borne miscreants while he was with one of his associates when the as-

sailants attacked both of them with sword-like sharp weapons.

The miscreants ran them down and hacked Prakash to death, leaving his aide's right arm severely injured.

On being informed, Bidanasi police reached the spot and rushed both injured to SCB Medical College and Hospital where doctors declared Hadia brought dead.

Meanwhile, local police have launched investigations into the murder case. The police suspect previous rivalry behind this brutal attack.

BAGALA LAND ROW

BJP LAUNCHES DIGITAL SIGNATURE CAMPAIGN



BJP leaders Sambit Patra and Samir Mohanty launch the mobile app

POST NEWS NETWORK

Puri, Sept 3: The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Thursday launched a digital signature campaign to intensify its agitation against the alleged sale of Bagala Dharmashala land in the Holy City here.

The saffron party also launched a mobile app to accept online petitions on the alleged land sale from public. BJP state unit president Samir Mohanty launched the app in the

presence of senior party leaders.

The newly-launched app has detailed information on Bagala Dharmashala in three languages—Odia, Hindi and English.

As per the information provided in the app, thousands of devotees had faced difficulties in getting shelter facility during Rath Yatra in 1899. Then many pilgrims had died in an epidemic. Considering the plight of devotees, Kanheiyalal Bagala, a

benevolent person, had donated Rs 35,000 to then Health Commissioner for setting up of a shelter for devotees. Bagala Dharmashala was then constructed on around three acre land. The saffron party has asked the state government to cancel the land sale deeds with six persons and renovate the shelter by utilising the money sanctioned by the Centre.

BJP national spokesperson Sambit Patra said that his party would use social media to intensify its stir over Bagala Dharmashala.

Puri Collector Balwant Singh, however, said the administration has rehabilitated some evicted persons of the heritage corridor project on 12 per cent of Bagala Dharmashala land. "Henceforth, no one would be rehabilitated on the land," said the Puri Collector.

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Virus test must before remand

Bhubaneswar, Sept 3: The state government has made coronavirus test mandatory for any person to be produced before a magistrate for remand as over 500 inmates and 30 officials of different Odisha jails have been tested positive for COVID-19.

In a modification of the COVID management in the state prisons, the Home department has issued an eight-point Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to be implemented by different arresting agencies like police, excise, forest and vigilance departments.

"We have already circulated the SOP to authorities of different jails across the state," Director General (Prisons) Santosh Kumar Upadhyay said.

Since the RT-PCR test is time consuming, the Home department's SOP suggested Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) which indicates COVID status of a person within an hour, the official said.

"Any person to be produced before a magistrate for remand by the Police/ Excise/Forest/Vigilance authorities shall first be screened or tested by medical officers for COVID-19 along with the mandatory medical examination in a designated hospital," it said.

The medical officer of the designated hospital will conduct thorough examination of those persons proposed to be remanded to jails and shall record that the person is asymptomatic or symptomatic to the novel coronavirus.

Anybody found positive in the process, should be sent to the dedicated COVID Care Centre/ dedicated Covid Health Centre/ dedicated COVID Hospital by the concerned remanding agencies, the SOP mentioned, adding that as

NUGGETS FROM HOME DEPT'S 8-POINT SOP



The accused may be shifted to jails after being recovered in dedicated COVID Care Centre/dedicated Covid Health Centre/dedicated Covid Hospital

Newly remanded persons having COVID-19 negative reports will be kept in prisons in isolation wards or quarantine wards in concerned jails

Any person to be produced before a magistrate for remand by the authorities shall first be screened or tested for COVID-19 in a designated hospital

The medical officer of the designated hospital will examine the persons to be remanded to jails and shall record that the person is asymptomatic or symptomatic

Anybody found positive in the process, should be sent to the dedicated COVID Care Centre/dedicated Covid Health Centre/dedicated COVID Hospital by the concerned remanding agencies

the case may be for treatment with the permission of remanding courts. The accused may be shifted to the jails after being recovered in 'dedicated Covid Care Centre/ dedicated Covid Health Centre / dedicated Covid Hospital,' the SOP said.

Only those asymptomatic accused persons (to be declared by the medical officer of the designated hospital), shall be remanded to jails after being tested with Rapid Antigen Test and found negative, it said.

All newly remanded persons having COVID-19 negative reports will be kept in prisons in isolation wards or quarantine wards in concerned district jails or sub jails within same revenue district (in case of overcrowding of any particular

jail), it said. The Chief District Medical Officers (CDMOs) of concerned districts will depute medical staff for random tests of prisoners at designated places (to be decided by district administration) for which SPs or DCPs shall provide police escort.

In case any prisoner is detected as COVID positive, the same prisoner shall be shifted to dedicated COVID Care Centre/ dedicated Covid Health Centre/ dedicated Covid Hospital forthwith for which local police shall provide police escort.

To avoid infection due to physical production, technology-based virtual production from jails may be considered with concerned courts.

If a COVID positive patient is

required to be admitted in the COVID facility, one escort shall be allowed to remain in the COVID facility for safe custody of the prisoner as is done for non COVID prisoners.

"Such escort may be allowed to use PPE. After the discharge of the prisoner, the escort shall be quarantined for 14 days, either in home isolation (if a separate room with attached toilet and a caregiver is available) or may be kept in a COVID Care Centre. Covid-19 Test shall be done on the 14th day of isolation or quarantine," the SOP said.

Official sources said that the state prison authorities have so far released as many as 16,789 inmates on bail in order to decongest jails. Still, there are 16,931 inmates in 90 odd jails.

Strengthen strategy in Khurda, Cuttack, Naveen tells officials

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Sept 3: With the continuous rise in Covid cases in Khurda and Cuttack, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Thursday directed concerned officials to strengthen the Covid management strategy for these two districts.

Though the state's Covid situation is much better than the national level, the management strategy for Khurda and Cuttack need to be revised as the cases are going up, he said while holding a high-level review meeting through video conferencing mode.

He said that 2 million people have been tested in the state so far. The testing rate in state is 42,404 per million people, which is much higher than the national average.



The recovery rate was also 76.78 per cent and the death rate was 0.46 per cent in the state.

The monsoon rains, floods and resumption of public transport has created challenges for the management of the Covid in the state. "In view of these challenges, we need to implement a cohesive strategy," he said.

In view of the possibility of diseases like colds and coughs dur-

ing the monsoon season, the Chief Minister has asked to keep a close eye on all these symptoms. He advised to keep all fever clinics alert in both public and private sectors.

The Health and Information & Public Relations departments asked to launch an awareness campaign on various Covid protocols immediately.

Naveen also suggested setting up ICU beds at a hospital at district-level for critically ill Covid patients and directed concerned officials to ensure that very serious patients get access to ICU facilities.

The CM directed all government officials to strictly abide by all the Covid rules as the number of Covid cases is on the rise among government employees, especially in Cuttack and Bhubaneswar.

Man jumps into Daya river; search ops on

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Sept 3: A man Thursday went missing after jumping into Daya river from a bridge near Nuagaon on the outskirts of Capital city.

The man has been identified as Madhusudan Khuntia alias Mantu of Khuntia Sahi of Kapileswar area here. The identification of the man was ascertained from his driving licence which the police found from his two-wheeler. Police have seized the vehicle. Khuntia is a servant in Kapileswar, Ananta Basudev and Lingaraj temples.

People gathered at the bridge to have a glimpse of the floodwater said that the person parked his scooter on the bridge before jumping into

the river. The incident took place at around 1pm, Thursday. Khuntia placed his helmet and mobile phone on the seat of the scooter before jumping into the river.

Meanwhile, police sources claimed that the family members of the man have lodged a missing complaint with Dhauli police. They reportedly informed the cops that Khuntia used to engage in heated exchanges with his family over his drug addiction. Dhauli police, however, failed to trace Khuntia.

Informed, fire personnel rushed to the spot and initiated a rescue operation. Similarly, local youths also searched immediately after Khuntia jumped into the river. However, the missing person was yet to be traced.

Madhusudan Khuntia parked his scooter on the bridge before jumping into the river

VP nominates Amar Patnaik as member of Viswa Bharati

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Sept 3: Vice President and Chairman of the Rajya Sabha Venkaiah Naidu has now nominated Biju Janata Dal (BJD) MP from Rajya Sabha Amar Patnaik as the member of Samsad of Viswa Bharati, Shantinetan and Sriniketan.

Viswa Bharati was founded in 1921 by the first non-European Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore. It was declared a central university and an institution of national importance by an act of Parliament in 1951. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is the Chancellor of the University.

Overwhelmed by the gesture, the Parliamentarian welcomed the move and said he would try his best to serve the responsibility. He said, "It's an honour and I look forward to the engagement."

Cabinet move will 'affect autonomy of state varsities'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Sept 3: The All India Democratic Students' Organisation Thursday objected to the state government's decision of bringing all universities under the Odisha Universities Act, 1989.

They also objected to the decision of increasing the tenure of VC to four years from three years and assigning the responsibility of selection of teachers for the university to Odisha Public Service Commission (OPSC).

Ganesh Tripathy, president, AIDS, said that the government decision will impact the autonomy of university and affect administration. "The decision of increasing VC's tenure will not bring any change in the university structure. The government interference in selection of the VC will be harmful for education as it can lead to favoritism," he added.

AIDS also alleged that the decision of giving responsibility to OPSC for teachers' selection will bring more irregularity.

Subash Nayak, secretary, AIDS, alleged that government is trying to privatise the education and break the autonomy of the state universities.

Bhub-Bolangir Inter City to run daily

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Sept 3: ECoR Thursday decided to increase the frequency of Bhubaneswar-Bolangir-Bhubaneswar Inter City Special Train from 5 days a week to daily with effect from 4th September, 2020. Bhubaneswar-Bolangir-Bhubaneswar Inter City Special leaving from Bhubaneswar at 0630hrs and from Bolangir at 1445hrs.

This train has stoppages at Mancheswar, Naraj Marthapur, Dhenkanal, Meramandali, Talcher Road, Angul, Boinda, Bamur, Rairakhol, Sambalpur, Hirakud, Barghar Road, Barapali and Loisinga between Bhubaneswar and Bolangir from both the directions.

POND CLEANING



Locals remove water hyacinths from 'Papanashini' pond in Old Town area of Bhubaneswar, Thursday. PIC: BIKASH NAYAK

STATE PLANS RIVER CRUISING TO BOOST TOURISM

PNN & AGENCIES

MITIGATING COVID IMPACT

Bhubaneswar, Sept 3: In a bid to offset the COVID impact and give a boost to the hospitality sector, the state government Thursday asked the Tourism department to start river cruises on select water bodies under Public-Private Partnership (PPP) mode.

Chief Secretary Asit Kumar Tripathy gave the directive while exploring the possibility of cruise tourism at a meeting with experts and stakeholders.

"River cruising is compatible with COVID-19 restrictions. There is a huge scope and latent market for world-class river cruising in Odisha," Tripathy said.

It can also be connected with many eco-spots and refill the economic activities in the labour-intensive sector.

Tourism secretary Vishal Kumar Dev said that three principal river cruise circuits can be developed on the Mahanadi river, Chilika lake and in waterways in Dangmala reserve forest.



Odisha has a long coastline of around 482 km, five major rivers, and water bodies including Chilika, the largest brackish water lake of Asia

River cruising is compatible with COVID-19 restrictions. There is a huge scope and latent market for world-class river cruising in Odisha
ASIT KUMAR TRIPATHY | CHIEF SECRETARY

Bhitarkanika circuit in the Dangmala reserve forest can connect destinations like Chandbali-Aradi-Dhamara-Khola to other spots in Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary

Chilika circuit can link Chilika, Kalijai-Nalabana-Honeymoon island, and Mangalajodi-Satapada-Rajhans island-Satapada and Puri

Chilika circuit can link Chilika, Kalijai-Nalabana-Honeymoon island, Mangalajodi-Satapada-Rajhans island-Satapada and Puri. It could be a three nights and four days cruise.

Issues relating to regulatory permissions, compliance to pollution norms and construction of river jetties were also discussed at the meeting. The state PPP cell was directed to work out details of the plan in con-

OTDC'S 41ST FOUNDATION DAY

BHUBANESWAR: At a time when COVID-19 has dealt a severe blow to tourism and hospitality sectors, Odisha Tourism Development Corporation (OTDC), through its 21 Panthanivas and two tourism units, has facilitated service like food, shelter and transport to people, especially to the COVID warriors, OTDC chairperson Shreemayee Mishra said on the corporation's 41st foundation day Thursday.

In a bid to revive the COVID-hit tourism sector, OTDC has recently introduced special tourist packages for domestic travellers. The corporation has also released a promotional video featuring major tourism destinations in Odisha and how precautionary measures were in place for tourists' safety.

In the last one year, OTDC in association with the state government has worked on various initiatives and programme related to tourism

sultation with the Tourism department and the Odisha Tourism Development Corporation (OTDC). The Chief Secretary also asked



On the occasion of the foundation day, OTDC has adopted melanistic tiger Spandan at Nandankanan Zoological Park. OP PHOTO

promotion in Odisha. This include successful organising of Eco Retreat festival at Konark, Khelo India programme, signing of MoU with online travel organisations like MakeMyTrip, Yatra and Goibibo for reservation of OTDC hotels and tour packages.

It also launched a cooking competition titled 'Ama Ghara, Ama Handishala' (Our Home, Our Kitchen) to give perfect opportu-

nity for people for showcasing the traditional and healthy Odia cuisine while staying at home. On the occasion, OTDC has adopted a melanistic tiger, Spandan, at Nandankanan Zoological Park (NZP). The corporation also launched an audio and video titled Atithi devo Bhava to attract tourists. Chief minister Naveen Patnaik also wished the OTDC on the occasion.

Odisha has a long coastline of around 482 km, five major rivers, and water bodies including Chilika, the largest brackish water lake of Asia.

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Falling Indravati water may hit irrigation, power production

Floodwater recedes, but woes continue

POST NEWS NETWORK

Chandbali/Dhamnagar, Sept 3: Flood situation in many parts of Bhadrak, including in Chandbali and Dhamnagar has improved as

water levels in local rivers have come down over last couple of days, but normalcy is yet to return to flood-affected areas, a report said. The report said that the administration has announced relief for

people of 16 panchayats under Chandbali block and a ward under the municipality.

On the instruction of the district administration, the BDO has apprised the decision to officials of the various departments. As per the 2011 census, each flood-hit families will be provided with 50 kg of rice and Rs 500 as assistance. The block requires 9,350 quintals of rice which will soon be transported to various panchayat godowns by the officials-in-charge. Rs 85 lakh will be distributed to the flood-hit families.

About 17,000 people in 74 villages in panchayats like Aradi, Nanadapur, Nalgunda, Kheranga, Sundarput, Jaleswarpur, Jashipur, Bhatapada, Olaga, Tentulidih,

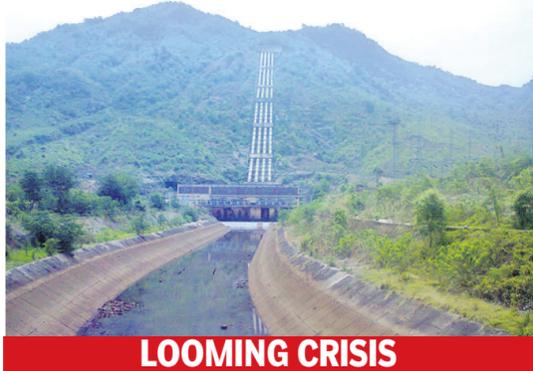
Bhainbruti, Ghatapur, Badaostia, Mato and Mousudha will be given assistance.

Local retailers will distribute the relief material in the presence of people's representatives.

The administration is trying its best to ramp up the measures to distribute relief among the victims with floodwater receding over last couple of days.

Many displaced people have started returning home in the wake of improvement in flood situation but they have to live in soaked houses.

Meanwhile, a 200-ft stretch of left embankment of Genguti river caved into river near Dalanga under Dhamnagar block leaving locals panicked.



LOOMING CRISIS

This has happened because the district experienced less than normal rainfall during this monsoon. Moreover, heavy siltation taking place in the reservoir has diminished its water retaining capacity. Indravati which is termed as the lifeline of Kalahandi district lacks adequate water reserve for irrigation

At present, 90 cusecs of water need to be discharged from the reservoir to its right and left canal daily to help irrigate the farmlands. The reservoir currently produces 300 megawatt of power

The water which is left over after power production is released into Hati barrage for discharge into right and left canals for irrigation

districts in the state.

The two back to back low-pressure triggered rainfall was less and helped in raising the water level in the reservoir from 632 meter to 636.85 meter—an increase of only four meters.

At present, 90 cusecs of water need to be discharged from the reservoir to its right and left canal daily to help irrigate the farmlands. The reservoir currently produces 300 megawatt of power.

The water which is left over after power production is released into Hati barrage for discharge into right and left canals for irrigation.

Indravati reservoir is placed at a height 613 meter above sea-level. The highest water retaining capacity of the reservoir is 642 meter. However, the reservoir is filled till 636.85 meter by August 31. At times water-level goes down below 625 meter due to heavy siltation hitting power production.

BANKI: 10K FAMILIES AWAIT AID

BANKI: Surging floodwater in the Mahanadi river and its distributaries have badly affected over 10,000 families of five villages of Bilipada panchayat under Banki-Dampara block in Cuttack district.

Twelve wards under Bilipada panchayat have been submerged under rising floodwater. About eight days have elapsed since villages were submerged. However, local villagers are yet to receive help from the district administration. People are struggling for basic needs like food and water, some flood-affected villagers fumed.

In addition, people in these villages are reeling under darkness due to power failure. The authorities have allegedly failed to provide proper medical facilities. Under these circumstances, the locals have urged the district administration to provide them



with flood relief.

An embankment on the Mahanadi river had caved in near Gayalbanka area under Banki-Dampara block in Cuttack district. Local villagers are in panic over this for past week.

Floodwater has entered nearby villages and farmlands in Bhagipur panchayat near the embankment. A road breach measuring around five-ft was initially formed on the embankment which later widened to around 60-feet causing heavy flood, the villagers said.



People collect drinking water from a submerged tubewell in Chandbali area of Bhadrak

Mafia strips reserve forest of precious timber in Keonjhar

POST NEWS NETWORK

Patana, Sept 3: Timber mafia has been on a plundering spree in some remote pockets of Keonjhar with the forest department allegedly failing to keep a watch on the plunderers.

According to reports, Aratei reserve forest under Patana range has now been on the target of the mafia, who have chopped off over 500 valuable trees like sal, dhala, mahua, kusma and jamun trees.

The reports said, about 70 per cent of the trees taken away are sal trees. The trees were spread over five acres of forest land. However, who looted them is not known, even though there is a forest beat house two km away at Tanda near Pichhulabada village.

It has raised concern of locals and social activists amid allegations that the reserve forest has been losing its valuable trees every day. They pointed out that how the for-



est department could get no clues about chopping of so many trees in the reserve forest

The matter came to light when some people were herding goats in the forest Thursday.

While locals are not aware of the men behind this illegal timber loot, Pratap Mahakud, a member of the villager forest protection committee, suspected that it might be the handiwork of some influential people. He demanded an investigation into the matter and punishment to the guilty.

Social activists and environ-

mentalists demanded that the forest department and the administration take effective steps to rein in illegal timber smuggling.

Expressing concern over the declining of the forest cover, Rajendra Mahakud, a local youth said, "Our livelihood solely depends on the reserve forest. We collect minor forest produce like sal leaves, mahua flowers, firewood, resin and tooth twigs."

Those who are damaging the forest should be arrested, he demanded. DFO Ajit Tripathy said he can make a comment only after an investigation into it.

LEOPARD SKIN SEIZED; 1 HELD

POST NEWS NETWORK

Baripada/Rairangpur, Sept 3: Forest officials along with police have seized a leopard skin and arrested a person in Rairangpur area of Mayurbhanj district. The big cat, aged about 4 years, was suspected to have been poached. The accused was identified as Lakhman Nayak (35) of Badbalichua village. The officials of Rairangpur Forest Division had received a tip-off about the illegal wildlife trade racket allegedly



being operated near Khejurikatas village. Following this, a team was formed and an operation was launched. While Nayak was arrested during the undercover operation, his associates managed to flee from the spot. An FIR was filed against the accused under relevant Sections of IPC and a manhunt was launched to nab him.

4 of kin ill after eating pesticide-laced puffed rice



POST NEWS NETWORK

Baripada, Sept 3: As many as four children of a family fell seriously ill after they consumed puffed rice mixed with pesticide. The shocking incident was reported from Barapada

village of Pratappur panchayat under Badasahi block in Mayurbhanj district Wednesday evening.

The children undergoing treatment at PRM Medical College and Hospital, Baripada, have been identified as Jagannath Naik's daugh-

ter Namita (8) and son Badal (6) and his brother Saroj Naik's daughter Rima (5) and Satyabrata (2). The health condition of the children is learnt to be still critical.

The children were alone at home Wednesday afternoon as the elderly members were away at farmland. The children unknowingly mixed some pesticide kept at home with puffed rice and consumed together. The family members, to their horror, were shocked to find all the children unconscious. After learning that they had consumed pesticide-laced puffed rice, the worried family members immediately rushed them to PRM Medical College and Hospital for treatment.

MP's signature forged for MPLAD funds

BARIPADA POLICE REVEAL 'MODUS OPERANDI'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Baripada, Sept 3: A day after the arrest of two persons for allegedly forging signature of Mayurbhanj MP Bishweswar Tudu, local police revealed the 'modus operandi' of the accused Wednesday.

One of the accused named Hemant Soren is the mastermind. Soren is a samiti member of Morada panchayat and is working in the BJP legislator's office at present, Baripada town police station IIC Birendra Senapati informed.

The other accused, Sailesh Giri, is a computer operator in the MP's office. While one accused happens to be a relative of the MP, the other is a member of the party's media cell, Senapati added. "Investigation has revealed that, Soren used to collect money from people with the promise to provide them work under various schemes financed by the MP Local Area Development (LAD) fund. Besides, he was not paying salaries of the MP's personal driver and

other staff in the office," Senapati expressed.

Complicity of both the accused came to the fore during implementation of two Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA) projects, one at Baripada town and another in Morada panchayat in the district.

The MP suspected foul play in the ongoing ITDA project in ward No 22 of Baripada town because the work was being carried out at a different location than the earmarked area.

Tudu also had misgivings about construction of a Chhau Pandal under Morada block. Following this, he lodged a complaint on the basis of reports by departmental engineers concerned.

Acting on the complaint, police launched a probe and found that Soren has forged the signature of the MP on a duplicate office pad and sent it along with project proposals to the PA, ITDA for approval. Police have seized the duplicate office letter pads which were used by Soren and Giri.

HELPING HAND



Collector Pramod Kumar Behera and ADM Sarat Chandra Panda flagging off a special bus from Rayagada Thursday carrying students appearing the second phase of JEE main examination in Berhampur and Bhubaneswar

Phulbani man plucks fortune from mushroom farming

DEBABRATA BEHERA OF DHADKI VILLAGE PRODUCES 8 TO 10 KG OF MUSHROOM EVERY DAY AND GETS 50 PER CENT PROFIT IN IT

POST NEWS NETWORK

Phulbani, Sept 3: Even as mushroom cultivation is gaining traction driven by its low input cost, a man from Phulbani of Kandhamal district has become self-sufficient.

Debabrata Behera of Dhadki village has set an example for others while many have spent major part of their life running after government jobs. His mushroom is popular in his area as Bullu Chhatu. "If you start this mushroom farming, there is no need to run after government or private jobs," he asserts.

He started this farming in a small way. As demand for mushroom increased in the area, he made it a full time job. "I now produce 8 to 10 kg of mushroom

every day. There is 50 per cent profit in the farming," he pointed out.

The demand for his mushroom is so high that he need not go out, people come to his farm to buy it. If anyone orders mushroom over phone, he delivers the mushroom packets in his auto rickshaw.

Debabrata spent his childhood in Daringbadi. While pursuing matriculation, he produced mushroom from paddy straw. After riots, he left for Bhubaneswar in search of job. Unable to get a job, he returned to Phulbani and stayed at a rented house with his wife and two children.

He started the mushroom farming and that clicked. He produces three varieties of mushroom depending on the seasons.

He has laid 20 beds and produces 10 kg of mushroom every day that fetches him Rs 1800 to Rs 2000. It has become a major source of his income. The youths can take this farming as a business, he added.

He pointed out that the best season to grow mushroom is between March and September.

As mushroom has a high demand in the market, this farming has a potential to create good job avenues for many in the state, he added.

He added that "The mushroom farming helps me to cover most of his expenses. The youths need to be provided with training to enhance its reach. Mushroom farming is gradually emerging as a thriving business for many educated unemployed youth."



All religions have some truth in them, but none has the whole truth.
SRI AUROBINDO



Centre can't renege

The Good Services Tax (GST), introduced with much fanfare in July 2017, is unraveling itself. The new tax regime, touted to be the biggest ever tax reform in independent India, has failed to meet the purposes it had promised to serve. Both the Centre, which had appropriated to itself a lion's share of power in the GST Council, and the state governments, who had been silenced by the carrot of annual compensations of a hefty 14 per cent, have found themselves at a loss. So much so that the Union government last week threw up its hands, saying it cannot pay the compensations to states as it had promised, and state governments are free to borrow funds from the RBI. Little did the Centre say who will finally foot the bill. Many state governments like Kerala have proposed that the Centre should borrow on its own account and pass it on to states. The Centre has declined it. Exacerbated, some states like Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh and Pondicherry have threatened to go back to the pre-GST regime. The Centre has been so helpless that Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has blamed it on God for the shortfall in revenue. The GST system was flawed from the word go. The BJP, in its hurry to gain political advantage, pushed through the indirect tax regime and got state governments to sign onto it by offering them juicy carrots. During negotiations prior to the formal rollout of the GST, the Centre had promised to compensate states by 14 per cent. The logic was based on a calculation that the state revenue would grow at a rate of 14 per cent year-on-year. 2015-16 was taken as the base year to calculate the state's annual revenue. Any gap between the 14 per cent growth projection and actual GST revenue would be met by the compensation. This would be financed by a special compensation cess levied over and above the GST on sin goods (for example tobacco and liquor) or luxury goods (for example SUVs). This promise had obviously silenced the most recalcitrant of the states opposed to the GST like Tamil Nadu. Then Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi himself had opposed the GST during the UPA regime. However, the windfall of 14 per cent compensation had silenced all the critics of the new tax regime. States had bartered away their powers of taxation for the short term promise of increased revenue. The promise of this massive windfall, in fact, had encouraged many state governments like Odisha to splurge on populist schemes and elections. The basic fault here was that the compensation for states should have been linked to actual economic growth instead of making the provision hard-wired. Now, state governments are not willing to climb back, nor the Union can renege on its promise. This is a real Gordian knot. The Centre cannot just wash its hands of its responsibility as it did in the GST Council meeting last Thursday. It was the Centre which had cajoled and forced state governments to sign on the GST and now when the chips are down it cannot just renege on its promise. The Covid-19 pandemic has ravaged the economy of every state government. Inasmuch as health is a state subject, the spending on this head due to the pandemic has skyrocketed in states. At this difficult time for them, the Centre cannot ask state governments to fend for themselves. The Centre may try to wriggle out of this mess by taking the plea that the compensation guarantee clause cannot be legally enforceable in courts. In January 2017, Karnataka had argued that the draft GST compensation be edited to guarantee that full compensation will be paid for full five years. To this the Centre had agreed that the compensation would be paid even if the cess falls short. The council had decided that the law should be amended. But this was not eventually done. When Telangana had asked why it was not being done, former Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley – the main driver of the Act, had assured the states that compensation was guaranteed and the central government could raise resources by other means for compensation payout to states. This being the assurance, the Centre can't leave it to state governments to meet revenue shortfall by way of loans from the RBI. The Union government, as a bigger partner of the federal system, should be forthcoming to underwrite the loans, and definitely not renege on its promise.



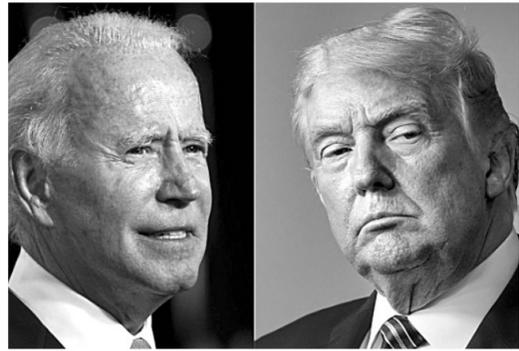
Jan-Werner Mueller

ACROSS THE WEST, TRADITIONAL PARTIES HAVE BEEN CHALLENGED BY UPSTARTS THAT TEND TO HOLD NO SERIOUS INTERNAL DEBATES, LET ALONE EMBRACE DEMOCRATIC DECISION-MAKING

FOCUS WORLD

PARTIES SANS PLATFORMS

The recent Republican National Convention was scandalous for many reasons – from the misuse of the White House as a campaign prop (in violation of the Hatch Act and longstanding norms) and the brazen mendacity of its speakers, to the parade of Trump family members. Amid the tawdry spectacle of the GOP being transformed into a subsidiary of the Trump Organisation, one shocking aspect stood out: the party offered no platform. The Republicans' only purpose, apparently, is "to enthusiastically support the President's America-first agenda."



Just as the GOP has outsourced its identity to culture warriors on far-right television networks and websites, so has it handed off intellectual work to think tanks, most of which are more committed to their donors than to crafting broadly popular and effective policy proposals

US President Lyndon Johnson once observed that, "What the man on the street wants is not a big debate on fundamental issues; he wants a little medical care, a rug on the floor; a picture on the wall." But as Johnson's Democratic Party learned the hard way, even "a little medical care" can become a matter of principled conflict. Such contests are best hashed out not just with one's partisan adversaries but also in open, pluralistic internal debate. When disputes are settled in this fashion, the losers are more likely to accept defeat and remain loyal to the party. By contrast, mass acclamations of the kind the GOP staged for Trump often send some party members heading toward the exits. The hallmark of a well-functioning party is its ability to attract people with stable partisan commitments over time. Paradoxically, the party that allows members to offer criticism without being tarred as traitors ultimately instills deeper loyalty. The point is not to idealize intra-party participatory democracy. Yet there is a reason why the constitutions of Germany, Spain, and Portugal, for instance, prescribe internal party pluralism. By habituating people to democratic debate and forcing them to consider that the other side might have a valid point, this model embodies what has been lost in an age of polarization. Parties that are internally authoritarian are more likely to govern accordingly. A system of properly functioning political parties is not sufficient for democracy, but it is necessary. Though the state cannot require parties to hold vigorous internal debates, laws can and should establish stronger guidelines for internal pluralism and accountability. Limited liability companies and family enterprises have their place in society; crafting public policy is not it.

Jan-Werner Mueller is Professor of Politics at Princeton and a fellow at the Institute of Advanced Study in Berlin.

WISDOM CORNER

- The reasonable man adapts himself to the world; the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore all progress depends on the unreasonable man. GEORGE BERNARD SHAW
- All our knowledge begins with the senses, proceeds then to the understanding, and ends with reason. IMMANUEL KANT
- When I say be creative I don't mean that you should all go and become great painters and great poets. I simply mean let your life be a painting, let your life be a poem. OSHO

WORDSWORTH

Through the grapevine

To hear something through the grapevine is to learn of something informally and unofficially by means of gossip and rumour. The usual implication is that the information was passed person to person by word of mouth, perhaps in a confidential manner among friends or colleagues. There are several expressions of this type, of which a well-known couple are bush telegraph and jungle telegraph. These are historically rather odd, because both were created well after the era of the telegraph. But that's because both are imitations of the first such expression, grapevine telegraph, which is where our term comes from. The phrase was invented in the USA sometime in the late 1840s or early 1850s. It provided a wry comparison between the twisted stems of the grapevine and the straight lines of the then new electric telegraph marching across America. The telegraph was the marvel of the 1840s (Samuel Morse's first line was opened between Washington and Baltimore on 24 May 1844 and rapidly expanded in the following decade), vastly improving the speed of communication between communities. In comparison, the grapevine telegraph was by individual to individual, often garbling the facts or reporting untruths (so reflecting the gnarled and contorted stems of the grapevine), but likewise capable of transmitting vital messages quickly over distances. The first recorded usage, according to Jonathan Lighter in The Random House Historical Dictionary of American Slang, was in a political dictionary of 1852, which included the sentence "By the Grape Vine Telegraph Line... we have received the following". Various early references suggest that it was associated with clandestine communication among Southern blacks, especially slaves. For example, a writer named Samuel Bowles wrote a book in 1865 called Across the Continent in which he remarked that Colorado ladies seemed to have some secret method of learning about the latest fashions from the East: "How it is done I do not understand – there must be a subtle telegraph by crinoline wires; as the southern negroes have what they call a grape-vine telegraph". The term became widely known during the American Civil War period, so much so that the phrase permanently entered the standard language. Soldiers used it in the sense of gossip or unreliable rumour, as was made very clear in a diary note of 1862 reproduced in Major James Connolly's Three Years in the Army of the Cumberland: "We get such 'news' in the army by what we call 'grape vine,' that is, 'grape vine telegraph.' It is not at all reliable". However, it was widely acknowledged that the Blacks' communications network was extremely useful to the Union cause, as John G. Nicolay and John Hay reported in Abraham Lincoln: A History in 1888, calling it "one of the most important and reliable sources of knowledge to the Union commanders in the various fields."

LOL MONKS

Every ten years, the monks in a monastery are allowed to break their vow of silence to speak two words. Ten years go by and it's one monk's first chance. He thinks for a second before saying, "Food bad." Ten years later, he says, "Bed hard." It's the big day, a decade later. He gives the head monk a long stare and says, "I quit." "I'm not surprised," the head monk says. "You've been complaining ever since you got here."

SPECTRUM SC-ST WELFARE

Too much of talk, too little of action



Manas Jana

THE NCRB REPORT FOR THE YEAR 2018 SAYS THAT 10,000 CASES OF ATROCITIES HAVE BEEN PENDING FOR TRIAL IN DIFFERENT COURTS IN THE STATE, WHEREAS THE CONVICTION RATE WAS ONLY 3 PER CENT

The idea of India is envisaged in the preamble of the Constitution, which has visualized building a society of democracy, equality and justice for all its citizens. There are special provisions for SCs and STs to ensure realization of their fundamental rights through participation in governance in matters relating to their protection, participation and development. Since the days of Constitutional governance, a number of statutory bodies are being constituted to look after the protection and wellbeing of these sections. Unfortunately, it is observed that the successive governments of Odisha and other states too, have paid less attention to such aspects. The three important bodies – the state Tribal Advisory Council (TAC), the state Scheduled Castes Welfare Board (SCWB), and the state Vigilance and Monitoring Committee (SVMC) constituted under the chairmanship of the chief minister to review and monitor the protection and welfare of SCs and STs – are almost defunct. Mostly, the elected leaders and higher-level government officials are members of these bodies, which are supposed to meet regularly to review implementation of various

protective laws and developmental programmes for the SCs and STs. Article 164 of the Constitution says that in Odisha, there shall be a minister in charge of welfare of STs, SCs and BCs; and Article 244(4) speaks about TAC in states having 5th Schedule areas. Similarly, as per provision of SCs and STs under the POA Act 1989, there shall be a state vigilance and monitoring committee under the chairmanship of the CM. There is also provision for a standing committee under the chairmanship of minister for SC-ST development under Odisha Reservation of Vacancies Act, 1975. But, it has been observed that, for the last so many years, there have been no regular meetings of these bodies. The SCs and STs constitute almost 40 per cent of the population. Even the elected members from these communities are not much concerned about this. The government reports itself reveal that the socio-economic situations of a majority of the SCs and STs in Odisha have not changed substantially in terms of social transformation and economic development. Every day, caste-based atrocities are occurring. The protective legislations against practices of untouchabil-

ity and atrocities are not being reviewed. In 2018, the state registered 1,810 cases of atrocities against SCs and STs. The NCRB report 2018 says that 10,000 cases of atrocities have been pending for trial in different courts in the state, whereas the conviction rate was only 3 per cent. The survey revealed that hundreds of caste and ethnicity-based untouchability practices, as also social segregations, have been existing in villages. Students and employees from these communities have been facing institutional discrimination. These people are not being treated with dignity in local government offices. Very often they face extortion, humiliation and negligence in dealings, while they make any claim for their rightful dues and entitlements under different government schemes, laws, and provisions. Most SC and ST hamlets are deprived of basic amenities such as safe drinking water, toilet, electricity, housing and connectivity which are linked to health and hygiene during this Covid-19 pandemic situation. The structural poverty and distress migration issues are more visible among these communities. The incidence of poverty is very high as reported in

the Odisha Economic Survey 2018, which said some 42 per cent of the SC and 64 per cent of the ST households are under BPL. This is extremely higher than the national average of 33 per cent (2011-12). Agriculture Census and the SECC 2011 established the fact that a vast majority of the SC population is landless and without Record of Rights over their homestead land in possession. This, though almost 85 per cent of the SC rural households depend on agriculture for livelihood as share croppers and agricultural workers. The state has witnessed ineffective implementation of the system of reservation in education and services sectors. The jobs available in the social sector are many, but there is social exclusion for SC-STs in recruitment of rural service providers such as Aganwadi, MDM cooks and contractual appointments. There are 1.45 lakh cooks-cum-helpers; and 29,900 women self-help groups are engaged in MDM scheme operational in the state since 1995. There are thousands of contractual jobs being created in rural areas to facilitate effective service delivery systems, where too, the SCs and STs have insignificant presence.

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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Floods, the selfie-crowds

Sir, Recently, there was news, with photos, in the media on the floods in the Mahanadi. When 46 sluice gates were opened at Hirakud for discharge of water, some people found it to be an occasion for enjoyment. They gathered near Hirakud in so large numbers that the police had to impose Section 144 to disperse them. The National Highways and bridges over different distributaries of Mahanadi became over-crowded with such congregations. When hundreds of villages in the mouth of Mahanadi were marooned and lakhs were put to serious trouble, there were also those turned themselves into 'tourists' clicking pictures. The embankments at Munduli, Netaji Subhas Bridge, Jobra Bridge, Kuakhai Bridge, Daya Bridge etc were swarmed with these 'tourists' and pleasure-seekers. Significantly, they could spare time and money for transport to watch the floods, but would not pay even a rupee by way of a contribution to the CM's Relief Fund to support the lakhs of the waterlogged and hungry people. Instead, they form into crowds at the sight of any devastation or accident and enjoy the day with a flood of mobile selfies, to be distributed via their facebook page or other social media sites. It's a matter of grief that people are untouched by the sad plight of others. This should be discouraged.



Sudhanshu Sekhar Dhada, KHANDAGIRI

Drug-peddling, Odisha

Sir, It's quite shocking to know that the roots of drug mafias are spreading fast. Bhubaneswar is not spared either. We are under the impression that Odisha is quite safe; but wrong. Recent news on this has shocked the capital. Mainly youngsters are influenced into drug-taking. The student community is falling prey to this. Mumbai is a city of film stars. They are habituated with this drug. There are drug peddlers who are supplying the stuff via door delivery. Police need be more alert.

Naresh Mandal, BHADRAK

FB bans BJP MLA for 'promoting' violence

THE ACTION COMES AMID MOUNTING PRESSURE ON FACEBOOK OVER ITS HANDLING OF HATE CONTENT BEING CIRCULATED BY MEMBERS OF THE RULING BJP

AGENCIES

Hyderabad, Sept 3: Facebook Thursday banned BJP MLA from Hyderabad, T Raja Singh, who is at the centre of a controversy that erupted after a report in 'Wall Street Journal' that Facebook's content policies favoured the BJP.

The social media giant banned the legislator from its platform and Instagram for violating its policy that prohibits content promoting violence and hate.

"We have banned Raja Singh from Facebook for violating our policy prohibiting those that promote or engage in violence and hate from having a presence on our platform," a Facebook spokesperson said.

The process for evaluating potential violators is extensive and it is what led us to Facebook's decision to remove his account, it added.

The action came amid mounting pressure on Facebook over its handling of hate content being circulated by members of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Facebook, which has over 300 million users in India, came under criticism after the 'Wall Street Journal', published a report last month that Facebook deliberately ignored disruptive content from members of the ruling BJP as well as right-wing voices and groups who have been 'flagged internally'.

The report quoted unnamed Facebook insiders that one of the India policy executives intervened in an internal communication to stop a permanent ban on Raja Singh after he allegedly posted communal, divisive content.

The WSJ report triggered a political controversy with the Congress and the BJP trading barbs over Facebook's alleged bias.



Singh, who is known for making controversial comments and was also booked by police on various occasions, claimed that his official Facebook account was hacked and blocked in 2018

The BJP leader, who represents Goshamahal constituency in Hyderabad, also stated that there were several Facebook accounts being run in the country in his name

Facebook representatives Wednesday appeared before a Parliamentary panel led by Congress MP Shashi Tharoor after they were summoned to discuss the issue of alleged misuse of the social media platform.

Earlier Tuesday, IT Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad had written to Facebook chief Mark Zuckerberg, alleging that some Facebook employees were abusing the Prime Minister and senior cabinet ministers.

After the WSJ report, Raja Singh had denied making any social media posts which have the potential to whip up communal passions.

The member of the Telangana Legislative Assembly posted a video on his Twitter account to claim

that he never posted any inflammatory content on social media.

Singh, who is known for making controversial comments and was also booked by police on various occasions, claimed that his official Facebook account was hacked and blocked in 2018.

The BJP leader, who represents Goshamahal constituency in Hyderabad, also stated that there were several Facebook accounts being run in the country in his name and that he cannot be held responsible for the comments posted on these pages.

"I am being projected as if I am the most dangerous in the entire world and whenever I post something on social media, something or the other happens. I work in the

Not on FB, where is question of ban, asks MLA T Raja Singh

HYDERABAD: Meanwhile, the MLA T Raja Singh claimed he had no account with the networking site for over a year and wondered if the social media giant was working under Congress "pressure."

He also accused former Congress president Rahul Gandhi of making false statements against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the BJP using social media platforms, even as he wanted to exercise his right to be on Facebook.

Singh, the lone Saffron party legislator from the southern state, claimed he did not have a Facebook account since April 2019 and that the pages the social networking site now banned might have been created by his followers.

Reacting to the ban, Singh wanted to know whether the social networking site was working under the Congress party's pressure.

He said he had written a letter to Hyderabad Police Cyber Crime department October 8, 2018 that his official Facebook verified page was hacked. He again started a

new page which "was unpublished/ deleted in April 2019."

"So, Since April 2019, I'm not on Facebook itself, so no question of banning (me). Is Facebook working under the pressure of Congress," Singh said in a brief statement.

In a separate video message the legislator said leaders like Rahul Gandhi made "false" statements against the BJP and Modi, using social media platforms and demanded that after thorough research, accounts of Congress and AIMIM parties should be deleted from social networking sites.

Singh said he will write to Facebook to open an account for him, adding that all rules and regulations will be adhered to.

"I will write to Facebook to open my official account. I will follow all rules and regulations to use it. I should be given the right to use Facebook account and I will seek their permission," he said. Stating that Facebook is a neutral platform, Singh said linking it with BJP is not fair.

interest of the nation and dharma. Cite at least one instance where there was a riot because of my statement," he asked.

"There are many Facebook accounts in my name. I can't be held responsible for what they post. I can't stop them from posting something. If they like or share something, I can't be blamed for that," he said.

Stating that he has only one official YouTube account and Twitter, Singh said he never posted anything provocative on these platforms.

The BJP leader said he had only one official Facebook account but it was hacked and blocked in 2018. "I lodged a complaint with Cyberabad police commissioner but there was no response," he said.

T'gana police gun down 'suspected' 25-yr-old Maoist

AGENCIES

Hyderabad, Sept 3: A suspected Maoist was killed in an alleged exchange of fire with the police Thursday in Telangana's Bhadrachalam district bordering Chhattisgarh, police said.

The incident occurred in the forest near Devalagudem village of Gundala Mandal in the early hours of the day.

District Superintendent of Police (SP) Sunil Dutt said the exchange of fire occurred when a police team was conducting vehicle check-up following information about the presence of Maoists in the area.

"When two persons who were on a motor-bike were asked to stop, they tried to escape by opening fire on police. The police team returned the fire. A suspected Maoist was killed while the other managed to escape," the SP said after a visit to the scene of the encounter.

The police official said the search was on for the man who escaped into the forest. The slain person, aged about 25 years, is yet to be identified. Police recovered a weapon from his possession.

Sunil Dutt said the police had intensified combing operations in the area in the wake of reports about the presence of Maoist action teams.

The district had also witnessed an exchange of fire between the

police and Maoists in July and since then the police had stepped up search operations.

Meanwhile, Director General of Police Mahender Reddy continued his visit to Komaram Bheem Asifabad district for the second day Thursday.

The police chief, who rushed to the united Adilabad district in a helicopter from Hyderabad Wednesday, had a night halt at Asifabad and had

a meeting with district police officials. The DGP Wednesday conducted aerial survey of the forests in Adilabad and Asifabad districts bordering Maharashtra. He also flew over the area on the banks of the Pranahita river.

The police chief's visit to the region assumed significance in view of reports of the presence of some top Maoists in the area. This is his second visit to the district in less than two months.

He is believed to have discussed with top officials the strategy to counter the Maoists, who are trying to revive their activities in the state.

Telangana police have successfully thwarted the attempts by Maoists to revive their activity during the last six years. However, in the areas bordering Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra, the banned outfit has been continuing efforts to regain the lost ground.

THE INCIDENT OCCURRED IN THE FOREST NEAR DEVALAGUDEM VILLAGE OF GUNDALA MANDAL IN THE EARLY HOURS OF THURSDAY

PREP WITH POOCH



Tamil Nadu Fire and Rescue Services department officials take part in a flood evacuation drill demonstration at Paruthipattu lake and Eco-park, in Chennai, Thursday. The drill showcased response to any disaster in the wake of heavy rainfall during the North-East monsoon

Covid recoveries cross 1L-mark in T'gana

AGENCIES

Hyderabad, Sept 3: The number of people recovered from Covid-19 in Telangana crossed one lakh mark and the number of tests crossed 15 lakh Thursday even as the state reported 2,817 new positive cases and 10 deaths.

The health officials said 2,611 people recovered during the last 24 hours, taking the total number of recoveries to 1,00,013. The state's recovery rate improved further to 74.9 while the national average is 77.09 per cent.

The new cases pushed the state's tally to 1,33,406. Of them, 92,050 (69 per cent) were asymptomatic and 41,356 (31 per cent) symptomatic.

Ten more people succumbed to the virus during the last 24 hours, taking the death toll to 856.

The health officials said the case fatality rate of the state is low at 0.64 per cent against the national average of 1.75 per cent. Out of the total fatalities, 53.87 per cent had co-morbidities. The number of active cases in the state stands at 32,537 including 25,293 in home/institutional isolation.

The authorities conducted 59,71 tests during the last 24 hours but there was no information as to how



many of these were rapid antigen tests. The number of tests conducted in the state so far rose to 15,42,978. According to a media bulletin issued from the office of the director of public health and family welfare, 26,869 primary contacts and 8,359 secondary contacts were tested during the last 24 hours. The results of 2,537 samples are awaited.

A total of 17 government and 35 private laboratories are conducting these tests while the state has 1,076 rapid antigen tests centres.

The samples tested per million population rose to 41,560. Officials say this is much higher than the

daily testing target of 5,600 per day as per the World Health Organisation (WHO) benchmark of 140 per million per day.

Of the fresh cases recorded in the state, Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) accounted for 452, down from 477 the previous day.

The number of cases also dropped in the state capital's neighbouring Rangareddy and Medchal Malkajgiri districts to 216 and 129 respectively. Sangareddy, another district bordering the state capital, recorded 76 cases.

However, the cases in other dis-

Ten more people succumbed to the virus during the last 24 hours, taking the death toll to 856

Fatality rate of the state is low at 0.64 per cent against the national average of 1.75 per cent

districts continued to surge. Karimnagar recorded 164 new cases, Khammam 157, Nalgonda 157, Siddipet 120, Suryapet 116 and Warangal Urban 114.

Age-wise Covid positive details show that 65.3 per cent of those tested positive were in the age group of 21-50 years. Officials said that 24.71 per cent are above 51 years of age. About 10 per cent were aged below 20 years.

Officials said 64.41 per cent of those tested positive were male while the remaining 35.59 per cent were female.

According to the media bulletin, out of 20,396 beds under government, 17,622 beds are vacant including 1,563 ICU beds.

The government added four more private hospitals to the list of hospitals treating Covid-19 in the state. Now a total of 191 private hospitals treating Covid-19 patients have 10,063 beds, out of which 5,593 are vacant.

How TN reached out to 50K TB patients amid lockdown

AGENCIES

Chennai, Sept 3: In a move to ensure that Tuberculosis (TB) patients remain safe in the comfort of their homes during the Covid-19 lockdown, the Tamil Nadu government helped reach vital drugs to over 52,000 affected people at their doorstep.

In addition to providing them drugs, the government was continuously monitoring their health condition, Chief Minister K Palaniswami said Thursday.

Palaniswami, who took to Twitter to inform his government's initiative, said it provided the medicines throughout the treatment period for 52,489 TB patients. Health Minister C Vijayabaskar said on Twitter, "TN Health has done a commendable job in taking care of TB Pts across the state

during Covid. ATT drugs were stocked & distributed promptly for 52,489 TB pts since March'20." (sic) "Sputum collection, mobile X-Ray were done at the doorsteps of patients who required continuous monitoring," he added.

District-level officers ensured nutritious food was supplied by various non-governmental organisations (NGOs), he said and appreciated the district level officers and field workers for their committed service. In a statement, Vijayabaskar said as part of the government's special measures to contain the spread of coronavirus infection throughout Tamil Nadu, the government ensured regular supply of the medicines to the TB patients. "Our efforts on providing better treatment to the TB patients without any hassles during the lockdown received appreciation from various quarters," he said.

DISTRICT-LEVEL OFFICERS ENSURED NUTRITIOUS FOOD WAS SUPPLIED BY VARIOUS NGOS

Chennai hotels are adapting to Covid-19

CONTACTLESS CHECK-IN, IMMUNITY BOOSTER DRINKS, WELCOME KIT WITH SANITISERS, MASKS AND OTHER SUCH ITEMS, SANITISING CARS AND BAGS ARE SOME OF THE NEW SERVICES BEING PROVIDED BY THE STAR HOTELS

AGENCIES

Chennai, Sept 3: Star hotels in the city are welcoming guests with new health safety standards like touchless check-in, offering immunity booster drinks, welcome kit containing sanitiser, mask and other such items, sanitising cars, bags and asking the restaurants to maintain social distancing, said industry officials.

They said that handling Vande Bharat Mission (VBM) guests was a great learning experience. "The guest cars, bags are sanitised when they come in at Days Hotel OMR Chennai. Our modified software enables touchless check-in. The guests are given a welcome kit containing mask, sanitiser and liquid handwash. The welcome drink is now an immunity booster which can be had in the lobby or in the room. Room service orders can be placed from mobile phones," Yangya

Prakash Chandran, Founder and CEO, Crossway Hotels and Resorts said. Crossway Hotels manages the Days Hotel OMR Chennai and several hotel and resort properties in and around Chennai, Andamans and Sri Lanka.

He said the staff have also been trained in health safety aspects and are given masks, gloves and other such items.

"The restaurant is also open but the number of covers has been cut by half to 30. Guests can also order food from their room with QR code enabled menu," he added.

Chandran said it is only Days Hotel that is accepting guests now and other properties in its fold will open soon.

"Our safe practices start with pre-arrival check-in, safe car ride, security personnel in PPE, hand sanitisers at touchpoints, luggage sanitisation, remodelled receptions with Welcome Separators, deep-



cleaned and sanitised room allotment," said Zubin Songadwala, General Manager, ITC Grand Chola, Area Manager - ITC Hotels, South.

ITC Grand Chola has 600 guest rooms, suites and luxury service apartments. An official said all high touch-points like elevators, knobs, taps etc are disinfected every hour while floor markings enable social distancing. The ITC Grand Chola of-

terval of 30 minutes between guests for deep cleaning of stations.

"It will take at least two/three years to return to normal operations. The industry has been set back by five years," Chandran said.

Industry officials said there are not many enquiries for booking rooms. "Pricing is also under pressure while the Covid-19 safety precautions add to our costs. Rates are being renegotiated with institutional clients with new rates going down by about 30 per cent," Chandran said.

"There may be some negative reviews of some properties by VBM guests," Chandran said.

Hoteliers said the VBM guest tariff ranging between Rs 1,500 to Rs 2,500 inclusive of breakfast, lunch and dinner is a government fixed rate and properties accepted the same in order to meet the minimum running costs.



Chinese are surreptitiously encircling the Indian sub-continent, and India must keep a close watch on developments in Sri Lanka and Nepal

SHARAD PAWAR | NCP PRESIDENT

JAISHANKAR TO VISIT MOSCOW

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar will travel to Moscow to attend a meeting of foreign ministers of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) September 10, it was officially announced Thursday



of the day quote

I thank the Maharashtra government for its decision to reserve 600-acre Aarey land near Sanjay Gandhi National Park in suburban Mumbai as forest

Small industrialists have not got any financial support. I am very worried. Everyone knows that the economy is going down, but I worry that the central government does not have any roadmap ready to revive an economy after the decline

It can't be said that Delhi is witnessing a second wave of COVID-19

'LAC row result of Chinese actions'



AGENCIES

New Delhi, Sept 3: India Thursday said the situation witnessed in the border areas in eastern Ladakh over the past four months is a "direct result" of actions taken by China aimed at effecting unilateral change in the status quo of the region.

External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said India is committed to resolve

all issues through dialogue, noting the way ahead to address the issue is negotiations. "It is clear that the situation we witnessed (in eastern Ladakh) over the past four months is a direct result of actions by Chinese side aimed at effecting unilateral change in status quo. "We strongly urge China to sincerely engage with the Indian side with the objective of expeditiously restoring peace in border areas through complete dis-

agement," he said at an online media briefing.

On Monday, the Indian Army said the Chinese military carried out "provocative military movements" to "unilaterally" change the status quo on the southern bank of Pangong lake in eastern Ladakh on the intervening night of August 29 and 30 but the attempt was thwarted by the Indian troops.

Srivastava Tuesday said the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) was engaged in "provocative action" again a day earlier when the ground commanders

of the two sides were holding talks to ease the situation.

Following the Chinese attempts, the Indian Army has strengthened its presence in at least three strategic heights in the southern bank of Pangong lake. Replying to a question on whether External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar will travel to Moscow to attend a meeting of the SCO foreign ministers on September 10, Srivastava said "yes". The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) is an eight-nation regional grouping that includes China and India.

ARMY CHIEF BEGINS TWO-DAY VISIT TO LADAKH

New Delhi: Army Chief Gen MM Naravane began a two-day visit to Ladakh Thursday to carry out a comprehensive review of the security situation in the region in view of China's fresh attempts to change status quo along the southern bank of Pangong lake, official sources said. Gen Naravane will be briefed about the evolving situation by top Army commanders overseeing deployment of troops as well as India's combat readiness in the region, they said. "The Chief of Army Staff is on a two-day visit to Leh to review operational preparedness in Ladakh region," said a source.

India can counter China, says Rawat

In a warning to Pakistan, he said the country will suffer "heavy losses" if it attempts any misadventure against India taking advantage of the border row with China

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Sept 3: India's armed forces are capable of handling aggressive Chinese actions in "best suitable ways", Chief of Defence Staff Gen Bipin Rawat said Thursday, remarks that came against the backdrop of China's attempts to change the status quo in certain areas in eastern Ladakh.

In an interactive session at the US-India Strategic Partnership Forum, Gen Rawat said India's policy of engagement, if not backed by credible military power and regional influence, would imply acknowledging China's preeminence in the region.

The former Chief of Army Staff said India faces the most complex threats and challenges spanning a full spectrum of possible conflict -- from nuclear to sub-conventional -- but asserted that the armed forces are ready to deal with them. "Of late, India has been seeing some aggressive actions by China but we are capable of handling these in the best suitable ways," Gen Rawat said.

In a warning to Pakistan, he said the country will suffer "heavy losses"



if it attempts any misadventure against India taking advantage of the border row with China.

The Chief of Defence Staff spoke extensively about how Pakistan has been engaged in a proxy war against India and pushing terrorists into Jammu and Kashmir, attempted to spread terrorism in other parts of the country.

He also touched upon a host of other issues including India's vision for the Indo-Pacific region, importance of defence and security ties with the US and the government's focus on self-reliance in defence manufacturing.

SHORT TAKES

Girl found dead

Lakhimpur Kheri (UP): A three-year-old girl was found dead in a sugarcane field in Uttar Pradesh's Lakhimpur Kheri Thursday morning, police said. Having injury marks on the head, the toddler's body was recovered from the vicinity of her village in the Singahi area. She has been missing since Wednesday, police said. In his complaint to police, the girl's father alleged that one Lekhram, a resident of their village, had abducted and killed her due to an old enmity with his family. Lakhimpur Kheri Superintendent of Police (SP) Satendra Kumar Singh said a case of murder has been lodged against the accused.

Woman held

New Delhi: A 33-year-old woman was arrested for allegedly supplying drugs in the national capital and heroin valued at over Rs 30 lakh in the international market was seized, police said Thursday. The accused has been identified as Sandhya, a resident of Madipur, they said. Police got a tip-off that a woman, involved in drug trafficking, would come to the west Delhi's Nihal Vihar area to supply heroin, a senior police officer said.

Probe ordered

Indore: Prison authorities in Madhya Pradesh have initiated a probe after photos of a jailer talking to a woman inmate at the Indore jail went viral on social media, an official said Thursday. The woman in the photos is an accused in a honey trap case, in which politicians and bureaucrats were allegedly trapped. In September 2019, five women and a man were arrested from Indore and Bhopal for allegedly running the racket. The photos show jailer K K Kulshreshtha sitting on a chair outside the video-conference room in the women's wing of the district jail, talking to Shweta Vijay Jain, who has been lodged at the jail here after her arrest in the case.

Cop arrested

Ahmedabad: An assistant sub-inspector of police in Rajkot city of Gujarat was caught for allegedly demanding and accepting Rs 5,000 bribe from a fellow policeman, the state Anti Corruption Bureau (ACB) said Thursday. ASI Balwantsinh Jadeja, currently posted at Rajkot city control room, was caught accepting the bribe from a traffic constable on Wednesday, the ACB said in a statement. The complainant serves as a constable with the Rajkot city traffic police department.

FINAL TOUCH



Artisans give a finishing touch to an idol of Goddess Durga ahead of Durga Puja in Kumartuli, Kolkata, Thursday

JEE, NEET ROW

Top court to hear review plea today

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Sept 3: The Supreme Court is scheduled to consider Friday a plea of ministers of six opposition-ruled states seeking review of its August 17 order allowing holding of NEET and JEE exams physically.

The ministers had claimed that the top court order failed to secure students "right to life" and ignored "teething logistical difficulties" to be faced in conducting the exams during the pandemic. National Testing Agency which conducts both the exams is holding JEE Main Exams from September 1 to September 6, while NEET exams will be held September 13. A bench of Justices Ashok Bhushan, B R Gavai and Krishna Murari will consider the review plea in chambers.

These states account for India's 62 pc active cases

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Sept 3: Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Delhi and Tamil Nadu account for 70 per cent of the total COVID-19 deaths in the country, the Health Ministry said Thursday.

The ministry further said that the five states of Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu account for 62 per cent of the active cases in the country. Addressing a press conference, Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan said if deaths are tracked in these states and UTs across weeks then a different picture emerges. "If we track deaths in these five states across weeks, then out of 5 only 2 states i.e Karnataka and Delhi have shown an increase in Case Fatality



Trajectory. However, in Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu there is decrease in daily deaths," he said.

"On a week to week basis, there has been 4.5 per cent decrease in average daily deaths reported in Andhra Pradesh, 11.5 per cent decline in Maharashtra and 18.2 per cent decline in Tamil Nadu. On the other hand, Delhi has seen 50 per cent and Karnataka has seen 9.6 per cent increase in average daily fatalities," he said.

Blast in factory kills man, son

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Vijayawada, Sept 3: Two persons were killed in a massive explosion at a plywood factory on the outskirts of Vijayawada on Thursday, police said.

The incident occurred in an industrial estate in Surampalli in Gannavaram mandal of Krishna district. The explosion occurred when a scrap dealer and his son were shifting empty chemical cans into an auto-rickshaw. The victims were identified as Koteswar Rao and his son Chhinna Rao, residents of Raja Rajeswaripet in Vijayawada.

Such was the impact of the explosion that the victims were flung into air and their bodies fell 50 meters away. Police and personnel from the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) rushed to the scene for rescue and relief work. The explosion was suspected to have been caused by some chemical left in the cans.

MAN'S BEST FRIEND

ITBP raises fresh unit of assault dogs



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Sept 3: The Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) has raised a new unit of assault dogs, which have been trained to work in packs of four to pin down enemy troopers if the force's patrol teams are attacked, officials said Thursday.

The first batch of about half-a-dozen dogs completed successful training recently at an ITBP academy in Bhanu near Chandigarh, and the canines are now being sent to various "important and sensitive" bases of the paramilitary force, including those along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China, they said. The about 90,000-personnel strong ITBP is primarily tasked with guarding the 3,488-km-long LAC and it was raised in 1962. The new team of canine soldiers includes the ferocious

Belgian Malinois and the German Shepherd breeds, and the force proposes to train a total of 30 dogs in the first go.

"These assault dogs have been trained to attack in a team of quartets, which means that four dogs will act in tandem to bring down the target be it a terrorist or any element that may harm the troops during patrolling," a senior ITBP officer said.

"This canine strategy has never been used in the world. Even the Israeli K9 (canine) Oketz have never trained dogs to attack in a quartet arrow-head fashion," he said.

The officer claimed that the mountain-warfare trained ITBP is the first force in the world to have such a canine unit.

"The dogs of this new unit are trained to seek, track, chase, pin down and hold the target, till commanded to let go," he said.

BENGAL POLLS

AGE AND IMAGE: KEY FACTORS FOR MAMATA

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kolkata, Sept 3: As the Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress government in West Bengal gears up for a high-voltage Assembly polls scheduled in 2021, the party leadership is focusing on the young brigade at the grassroots primarily with a clean and clear track record in politics.

The state's incumbent formation is already plagued with corruption charges in various districts, especially after the Cyclone Amphan that ravaged a large part of south Bengal districts. Be it distribution of food grains and tarpaulin in cyclone-ravaged pockets of Sunderbans or inclusion of ghost names in the list of beneficiaries - Trinamool Congress' name cropped up almost everywhere.

Hundreds of people had staged sit-in demonstrations in districts protesting against the irregularities over distribution of Amphan relief packages. They also agitated over the irregularities of Cyclone Amphan relief funds that went to various fake accounts of local Trinamool leaders depriving those who were actually affected due to the cyclone.

According to party sources, the key responsibilities are now being given to those who are aged below 40-years and have a reasonably clean image in their respective localities. There is a clear instruction from the party's top leadership to give importance to young people in the organisation. All district committees will have to follow the directive.

The instruction was sent out from the senior state leadership



to every booth level across West Bengal that people over the age group of 40 will not be entertained in the district committees. "The size of the district committees will also likely shrink in the coming

days," said a senior Trinamool leader.

Keeping in mind the age factor and a considerably clean image of her party workers, the Trinamool supremo has reshuffled the party's

organisational structures in July. To troubleshoot the party's image in run up to the next year's elections, Mamata Banerjee had made a number of changes in the Trinamool Congress - from its core committee members to district presidents.

Announcing a major rejig, the West Bengal CM gave more priorities to younger and new faces in the party's forefront with a relatively clean political image. She had announced a new state committee with 21 members in it and a seven-member core panel of Trinamool Congress that included names of Abhishek Banerjee, Subhendu Adhikari, Partha Chatterjee, Subrata Bakshi, Firdah Hakim, Kalyan Banerjee and Shanta Chetri.

Besides this, the presidents of several districts, including Howrah, Coochbehar, Purulia, Nadia,

Jhargram and South Dinajpur had also been removed. New and younger faces like cricketer-turned-politician Laxmi Ratan Shukla in Howrah, Mahua Moitra in Nadia, Dulal Murmu in Jhargram, Gurupad Tudu in Purulia and Shyamal Santra in Bankura had been given charge of the districts.

Party insiders said that Team Prashant Kishor (popularly known as Team PK within Trinamool Congress) is working closely with the party's top leadership to find many critical areas. "Various steps like preparing a unique database of localities, fights between internal factions, performance record of local leaders etc. are being taken into account to chalk out a campaign strategy ahead of the next year's poll," a Trinamool Congress insider said.

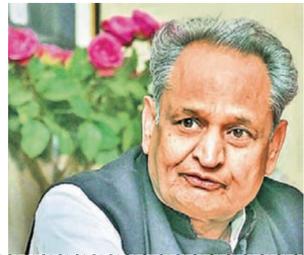


The government and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman should not stay in office for any longer as they have inflicted a big blow and damage to the country's economy, seen never before in the country's history since independence

RANDEEP SURJEWALA | CONGRESS LEADER

COVID EFFECT

The Rajasthan government has decided to deduct a part of the salary of the Chief Minister, state ministers, MLAs, All India State Service Officers and other state employees every month



of the day quote

Even though there have been demands to reopen temples and other places of worship as part of the 'Unlock' process, the government is exercising caution on the issue



UDDHAV THACKERAY | MAHARASHTRA CM

The central government has completely failed in management of the Covid pandemic as well as the economy of the country. Despite the warnings from our leader Rahul Gandhi of a tsunami hitting the nation if timely action is not initiated to boost the economy, the BJP government preferred to continue with its ignorant approach and chose to celebrate with banging of thalis and lighting of diyas, which has now resulted in crashing of economy



DIGAMBAR KAMAT | GOA LEADER OF OPPOSITION

Demonetisation did not erase the black money as it was claimed by the Prime Minister and it did not benefit the poor. The advantage was given to India's biggest billionaires



RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

SHORT TAKES

Couple ends life

Kanpur: A Kanpur man and his wife were found hanging Thursday in their room while apparently their children were asleep with the grandmother, police said. Rakesh Kumar, 39, who was working in a mobile accessories shop had lost his job during the Covid lockdown.

Boy killed

Malda (WB): A class 9 student was killed after he was hit by a running goods train while taking a selfie video in Malda district of West Bengal, police said Wednesday. Manoj Mondal, who was accompanied by a friend, was taking the selfie video on a railway track at Madhughat locality in Englishbazar area. When he was taken to Malda Medical College and Hospital, doctors declared him brought dead, the officer said.

Couple arrested

Shillong: A couple was arrested and over 46 gm heroin seized from their possession in Meghalaya's East Khasi Hills district Thursday, police said. Acting on a tip-off, anti-narcotics task force personnel intercepted a vehicle on Umshyri Bridge and seized the drugs worth Rs 3.60 lakh, district Superintendent of Police S Nongtynger said in a statement.

Five held

Shillong: Five persons, all residents of a Punjabi locality here, were arrested for assaulting a local man, police said Thursday. The five allegedly attacked and assaulted Arnell Steward Nongdhar on August 25 while they were returning from the warehouse of a multinational e-commerce company located in the area, East Khasi Hills superintendent of police Sylvester Nongtynger said.

Himachal minister corona positive

Shimla: Himachal Pradesh Jal Shakti Minister Mahender Singh Thakur said he tested positive for COVID-19 on Thursday, four days ahead of the monsoon session of the assembly. Singh, 70, in a Facebook post urged people who came in his contact recently to quarantine themselves and get tested for the dreaded disease.

RAGING CONTROVERSY

FACEBOOK RESPONDS TO CONG

Responding to concerns raised by the Congress, Facebook's Public Policy, Trust and Safety Director Neil Potts has said that it has taken the party's allegation of bias very seriously and will ensure that it remains non-partisan and is committed to maintaining the highest levels of integrity

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Sept 3: Amid a raging controversy over Facebook's alleged political bias and interference in India's democratic process, the social media giant has told the Congress that it is non-partisan, denounces hate and bigotry in all forms and strives to ensure that its platforms remain a space where people can express themselves freely. Responding to concerns raised by the opposition Congress, Facebook's Public Policy, Trust and Safety Director Neil Potts has said that it has taken the party's allegation of bias very seriously and will ensure that it remains non-partisan and is committed to maintaining the highest levels of integrity.

The Congress accused Facebook of interfering in India's democratic process and social harmony and being soft on members of the ruling BJP while applying its hate-speech rules.

The Congress had written to Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg after a report by the Wall Street Journal about the conduct of



Facebook and WhatsApp India's leadership team flagged bias and proximity with the ruling BJP.

"We take seriously the concerns and recommendations you raised on behalf of the Indian National Congress... First and foremost, we want to take this opportunity to state that we are non-partisan and strive to ensure that our platforms remain a space where people can express themselves freely. We take allegations of bias seriously and want to make clear that we denounce hate and bigotry in all forms," Potts said in the letter, dated September 1.

In his letter to AICC general secretary (organisation) K C Venugopal, who had written to Zuckerberg twice, Potts said, "On

the question of hateful content by public figures, we want to assure you that our Community Standards prohibit attacks against people based on their protected characteristics, including religion, caste, ethnicity, and national origin. In line with our hate speech policy, we have removed and will continue to remove hateful content by public figures in India on our platforms."

Facebook is at the centre of a raging political debate in the country with both the ruling BJP and the opposition Congress accusing it of colluding and influencing opinion. The BJP has accused the social media giant's employees of supporting people from a political predisposition that lost successive elections, and "abusing" Prime Minister and senior cabinet ministers. In a three-page letter to Zuckerberg, IT Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad flagged the social media platform's alleged "bias and inaction" by individuals in the Facebook India team on complaints by people supportive of right-of-centre ideology.

PRECAUTIONARY MEASURE



A Delhi Metro employee sanitises a coach as part of preparations ahead of the resumption of metro services from September 7 with restrictions in New Delhi, Thursday

PTI PHOTO

BORDER TENSION Bhadauria reviews situation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Sept 3: Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal RKS Bhadauria reviewed the IAF's operational preparedness along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim in view of the escalating border tensions with China, officials said Thursday.

"Air Chief Marshal Bhadauria visited frontline air bases in Eastern Air Command (EAC) on Wednesday," an IAF spokesperson said without mentioning the names of the air bases. The Eastern Air Command, headquartered in Shillong, looks after the aerial defence of sensitive areas along the LAC in Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh as well as various other parts of the region. The Army and the Indian Air



The IAF chief has been regularly visiting key air bases along the LAC since the border row broke out between Indian and Chinese troops in eastern Ladakh in early May

Force have increased their alert levels in all key bases along the nearly 3,400 km-long LAC following China's fresh attempts to change the status quo in the Southern Bank of Pangong lake in eastern Ladakh.

The IAF spokesperson said the Chief of Air Staff was apprised about the "state of readiness" and operational preparedness of the combat units under the command.

"Air Chief Marshal Bhadauria also met and interacted with air warriors serving in these units during the course of his visit. He lauded the focussed efforts by the station personnel towards maintaining proficiency in all roles envisaged and urged them to con-

tinue performing their duty with due diligence," the official said.

The IAF chief has been regularly visiting key air bases along the LAC since the border row broke out between Indian and Chinese troops in eastern Ladakh in early May. In June, Air Chief Marshal Bhadauria made a quiet visit to Ladakh and Srinagar air bases to review the IAF's overall preparedness.

In the last two months, the IAF deployed almost all its frontline fighter jets like Sukhoi 30 MKI, Jaguar and Mirage 2000 aircraft in the key frontier air bases in eastern Ladakh and elsewhere along the LAC.

The IAF has also deployed Apache attack choppers as well as Chinook heavy-lift helicopters to transport troops to various forward locations in the region.

PDP meet foiled, leaders stopped

The meeting was called by the party General Secretary G. N. Lone Hanjura at the party headquarters in Srinagar. It was supposed to be the first meeting of the party leadership after the abrogation of Article 370 on August 5 last year

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Srinagar, Sept 3: A meeting of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) here Thursday was disallowed by the police, which stopped some of its leaders from moving out of their houses.

The meeting was called by the party General Secretary G. N. Lone Hanjura at the party headquarters in Srinagar. It was supposed to be the first meeting of the party leadership after the abrogation of Article 370 on August 5 last year.

Senior party leader and former PDP Minister Naeem Akhtar posted

a video on Twitter of him being stopped by the police. Akhtar tweeted: "Despite being free on paper and in government submissions in High Court and Supreme Court, PDP leadership continues to be under illegal detention, without any official orders. Video from today - I wasn't allowed to attend the PDP meeting nor were any of my colleagues."

Party leader Waheed Ur Rehman Parra also tweeted: "Our story: A year of unfreedom & many claims later we were told we are free now. But when we try to attend the first

party meet post August 5 they told us we are under detention. "Question now is how choking our space in the name of law & order is contributing to the so called 'peace'."

Ilitija Mufti, who operates her mother former Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti's Twitter account tweeted: "Shameful that J&K admin along with police physically prevented PDP leaders from leaving their homes in Srinagar today. They shamelessly lie to courts that these people are free to move and then have the audacity to detain them illegally at home."

UNBELIEVABLE!

Youths steal mobile, rob cab to enjoy 'parathas'



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Sept 3: In a daring robbery, a group of youths first stole a mobile phone and then made a call for an Ola cab and robbed it. Their motive was to go to Murthal and have 'parathas' for dinner.

The Delhi Police has arrested the three accused and apprehended two juveniles in this connection. One of the accused is a BBA student in a Noida-based college.

Police station Nangloi, received a complaint where the complainant reported that his cab was booked through Ola from Krishna Mandir, Najafgarh Road, Nangloi. When the cab reached the pick-up point, 4 to 5 boys were present there who confirmed OTP of the booking to the driver.

"After that when they reached near Rajdhani Park, all the accused riding in the car started beating the driver and over-

powered him. They robbed his two mobile phones, wallet and threw him out of the car. Accordingly a robbery case was registered at Nangloi and investigation taken up," said DCP (Outer) A. Koan.

During the course of investigation on the basis of intelligence, accused Sagar and Pankaj, both residents of Nangloi were arrested. During sustained interrogation both accused confessed to the crime and disclosed the names of three of their associates. Two juveniles were apprehended and one co-accused Abhijeet, also a resident of Nangloi, was arrested as well. Abhijeet is a BBA student in a Noida-based college.

"They planned to go to Murthal to have dinner and hence robbed the Ola cab by overpowering the driver. One of the juveniles apprehended is also involved in a murder case," said a senior police officer.

Minor abducted, gangraped

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bareilly (UP), Sept 3: A minor girl, who was on her way to a photo studio, was allegedly abducted and gangraped by four boys Wednesday in Sarvodaya Nagar under CB Ganj police circle.

Two of the accused have been arrested and the police is searching for the remaining two. According to reports, the girl was going to a photo studio to get her photograph clicked for school form when she was picked up by four boys and taken to a secluded place where they raped her by turns.

The girl, a student of class 11, has identified the four accused as her neighbours. The girl was also beaten with an iron rod as the boys filmed the act on their mobile phones.

She was threatened with dire consequences if she informed any-



one of the incident. However, when the girl returned home, she informed her father and he took her to the police station to lodge a complaint.

SP (City) said that a case has been registered under relevant sections of IPC and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act and the two remaining accused would be arrested at the earliest. The girl will be sent for medical examination, he said.

WORKOUT AMID PANDEMIC

Cycling gaining popularity as gyms remain off the radar

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Sept 3: As gyms remain off the radar for most people due to safety concerns amid the Covid-19 pandemic, people are moving to free-weight and cardiovascular exercises to build endurance and stay in shape. Cycling is gaining popularity as the preferred mode of workout in these times.

Children and the youth are loving it, and now even the doctors are advocating it, especially to the patients with lifestyle ailments.

Doctors said that people having lifestyle ailments and non-communicable diseases (NCD) such as diabetes, hypertension, cardiovas-

cular diseases, and arthritis need at least 30-50 minutes of daily exercise to manage their chronic conditions.

Dr Maninder Shah Singh, Orthopaedic and Joint Replacement Surgeon, Indian Spinal Injuries Center, New Delhi, said that lack of adequate physical activity can worsen the disease condition of such patients and can make them vulnerable to further complications. "Cycling can prevent it in a great way," he added.

"A worrying by-product of the Covid induced social isolation regime has been a further reduction in physical activity levels of the people. Even as gyms have started



reopening, not many people are comfortable sharing space during workouts with growing disease prevalence. Yoga clubs, group exercise sessions such as pilates,

Zumba classes, etc., have also been suspended.

"As doctors, we advise patients to ensure they get at least 30 minutes of exercise through any means.

Cycling is one of the safest and the best forms of exercise during this time and is very effective for diabetes, heart disease, hypertension, etc. It can also help keep weight under check without compromising social distancing norms," Singh added.

Cycling is a non-impact cardiovascular exercise that not only imparts strength to the bone structure, but can rejuvenate the entire body, including abs, lumbar muscles, and arms. At the same time, it also helps lower blood sugar and cholesterol levels while keeping a lid on your blood pressure.

A largely sedentary lifestyle of many urban Indians is a major health concern. The lockdown has

further compounded this problem. A study published in the Lancet journal had revealed that cardiovascular diseases contributed 28.1 per cent to the total deaths in India in 2016, compared with 15.2 per cent in 1990.

Dr R R Dutta (Internal Medicine), Paras Hospital, Gurugram, said that urban authorities should use people's growing liking of cycling as an opportunity. "In the current Covid era, when people are scared of going to gyms and yoga studios, and any group workouts are nearly impossible due to obvious safety issues, cycling is the best way to a healthier body and management of chronic diseases.

international



Clean energy delivers more jobs, cleaner air, better health and stronger economic growth
ANTONIO GUTERRES | UN SECRETARY-GENERAL

SAVE MOTHER EARTH

Climate change protests by environmental activists from the Extinction Rebellion group resumed for a second day in London



of the day quote

Thousands of London families still live in unsafe buildings
SADIQ KHAN | LONDON MAYOR

The coronavirus will not be Singapore's last public health crisis, and the country should apply lessons it has learnt in managing this disease to prepare for future pandemics
LEE HSIEN LOONG | SINGAPORE PRIME MINISTER

There is unequivocal proof that Russian opposition politician Alexei Navalny was poisoned with a Novichok nerve agent
ANGELA MERKEL | CHANCELLOR OF GERMANY

JADHAV WAS SENTENCED TO DEATH ON CHARGES OF 'ESPIONAGE AND TERRORISM' GIVE INDIA ANOTHER CHANCE TO APPOINT LAWYER: PAK COURT

JADHAV CASE
PAKISTAN HAS INTRODUCED A SPECIAL LAW TO ALLOW KULBHUSHAN JADHAV TO GET HIS SENTENCE REVIEWED AS ASKED BY THE ICJ
IN JULY 2019, THE ICJ DIRECTED PAKISTAN TO ALLOW CONSULAR ACCESS TO JADHAV
LAST MONTH, INDIA SAID THAT ISLAMABAD HAD 'BLOCKED ALL THE AVENUES' FOR AN EFFECTIVE JUDICIAL REMEDY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Islamabad, Sept 3: A high court in Pakistan Thursday directed the federal government to give India "another opportunity" to appoint a lawyer to represent death-row prisoner Kulbhushan Jadhav as it adjourned hearing for a month.

Jadhav has reiterated his earlier stance and has preferred to pursue the remedy of clemency instead of invoking his right under the Ordinance of 2020.

Khan told the court that India was duly informed of the proceedings of the court held on August 3, but its response is awaited, according to the order. The court raised questions about the efficacy of the case and judgment if India or Jadhav were not ready to avail the opportunity of review. The court observed that "in order to remove any further doubt, India should be given another opportunity to appoint a lawyer".

The Islamabad High Court (IHC) took up the case of appointment of lawyer for Jadhav to hear the review of the death sentence given to him by a Pakistani military court.

Jadhav, the 50-year-old retired Indian Navy officer, was sentenced to death by a Pakistani military court on charges of "espionage and terrorism" in April 2017. Attorney General Khalid Javed Khan told the court that to comply with the orders of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), Pakistan granted consular access to India, however, it has not replied to Pakistan's offer to appoint a lawyer for him. According to the short order issued after the hearing, Khan told the court that Jadhav was informed about the judgment of the ICJ and his rights under Article 36 of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations as well as IHC orders on the appointment of his defence counsel. The Attorney General told the court that he was informed by the officials of the Government of Pakistan that

On August 4, the IHC named three senior lawyers as amici curiae in the case of Jadhav as it had ordered the Pakistan government to give "another chance" to India to appoint a counsel for the death-row prisoner. Amicus Curiae is a lawyer appointed by a court to assist in any matter or case.

OIL TANKER WITH 2MN BARREL CATCHES FIRE OFF LANKA COAST

AGENCIES

Colombo, Sept 3: Fire broke out on a supertanker carrying about 2 million barrels of oil in the Indian Ocean off the east coast of Sri Lanka, spokesmen for the country's navy said Thursday, adding that one of its 23 crew was missing and another injured.

The Indian Coast Guard pressed into action three of its ships and a Dornier aircraft after the Sri Lankan Navy sought assistance to control the fire onboard the Panamanian-registered oil tanker New Diamond. According to media reports, the fire started in the engine room of the oil tanker, which was carrying crude oil from Kuwait to India, and then spread.

In a swift sea and air coordi-



nated Search and Rescue (SAR) operation, the Coast Guard said it immediately diverted ICG Ships Shaurya, Sarang and Samudra Paheredar, besides a Dornier aircraft for the firefight on oil tanker New Diamond.

Two Russian anti-submarine warfare ships anchored at Hambantota Port also joined the operation by the Sri Lanka Navy to douse the fire, the Daily Mirror reported. The tanker New Diamond was sailing from Kuwait to India. It is currently staying 180 miles off the coast of Sri Lanka.

The team, except for two crew members, has left the tanker and is staying on rescue craft at sea, according to Russia's official Tass news agency. At the time the fire broke out, the Panamanian-registered ship was about 38 nautical miles (70 kilometres) east of Sri Lanka.

UK public tribunal to probe Uighur 'genocide' claims

ASSOCIATED PRESS

London, Sept 3: A prominent British human rights lawyer is convening an independent tribunal in London to investigate whether the Chinese government's alleged rights abuses against Uighur Muslims in the far western Xinjiang region constitute genocide or crimes against humanity.

The tribunal is expected to reveal new evidence and testimony over several days' hearings next year. While the tribunal does not have government backing, it is the latest attempt to hold China accountable for its treatment of the Uighurs and ethnic Turkic minorities, who have been subject to an unprecedented crackdown since 2017. Allegations against China about potential geno-



cide are "questions that should be asked and answered" but such claims have never been legally scrutinized in public, Nice told The Associated Press. Organisers are in the initial stages of gathering evidence, and expect to receive a substantial number of submissions from Uighurs exiled abroad over the next few months. New evidence that may emerge includes testi-

mony from several former security guards who were involved in the Xinjiang detention camps. "At the moment, the strongest evidence would appear to be evidence of incarceration and possibly evidence of enforced sterilisation," Nice said. China has long suspected the Uighurs, who are mostly Muslim, of harbouring separatist tendencies because of their distinct culture, language and religion.

In July, the Trump administration imposed sanctions on three senior Chinese Communist Party officials for alleged human rights abuses targeting Uighurs, ethnic Kazakhs and other minorities in Xinjiang, including mass detentions and forced population control.

EVERY ODD IS A STYLE



Actress Tilda Swinton poses at the 77th Venice Film Festival

REUTERS PHOTO

Kremlin rejects Navalny poisoning accusations

REUTERS

Moscow, Sept 3: The Kremlin Thursday rejected accusations that Russia had been responsible for the poisoning of opposition politician Alexei Navalny and said it saw no grounds for sanctions to be imposed against Moscow over the case.

The Kremlin was speaking a day after German Chancellor Angela Merkel said Navalny had been poisoned with a Soviet-style Novichok nerve agent in an attempt to murder him. Navalny, 44, is an outspoken opponent of Russian President Vladimir Putin and has specialised in high-impact investigations into official corruption.

He was airlifted to Germany last month after collapsing on a domestic Russian flight after drinking a cup of tea that his allies said was poisoned. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Moscow rejected any suggestion that Russia had been behind the

attack on Navalny and warned other countries against jumping to hasty conclusions. The Kremlin was speaking a day after German Chancellor Angela Merkel said Navalny had been poisoned with a Soviet-style Novichok nerve agent in an attempt to murder him. Navalny, 44, is an outspoken opponent of Russian President Vladimir Putin and has specialised in high-impact investigations into official corruption.

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attack on Navalny and warned other countries against jumping to hasty conclusions.

She faced growing pressure on Thursday to reconsider the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, which will take gas from Russia to Germany, after her statement on Navalny, who is being treated in a Berlin hospital.

Nord Stream 2 is set to double the capacity of the existing Nord Stream 1 pipeline in carrying gas directly from Russia to Germany. It is more than 90% finished and due to operate from early 2021. Peskov said the Kremlin regarded talk of taking action against the pipeline as being based on emotions.

SHORT TAKES

Unarmed Black man killed in US

New York: An unarmed African-American died in New York state after the police held him down on the road for two minutes and also put a "spit hood" on his head, designed to protect officers from a detainee's saliva, according to body camera footage. Although the incident took place in March, it came to light only Wednesday, the BBC reported. In a news conference Wednesday, the brother of the victim, Daniel Prude, 41, said he called police in Rochester, New York, March 23 as the latter was suffering from acute mental health problems.

NBW issued against Sharif

Lahore: A Pakistani court Thursday directed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to execute a non-bailable arrest warrant against former prime minister Nawaz Sharif in a 34-year land allotment case, according to media reports. During the plot allotment hearing, Model Town Police Inspector Bashir Ahmed told Lahore Accountability Court's Judge Asad Ali that Sharif was not at his residence.

Hurricane hits Belize

Punta Gorda: Hurricane Nana made landfall in Belize, pelting a relatively sparsely populated stretch of the country's coast with heavy rain and wind before weakening to a tropical storm while pushing across Guatemala Thursday.

FB's new rules

San Francisco: Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg said Thursday that the platform will not accept new political ads in the week before the November 3 US presidential elections. The social networking giant has announced a slew of other measures to help secure the integrity of the US elections by encouraging voting, connecting people to authoritative information, and reducing the risks of post-election confusion. Facebook said that it will remove posts that claim that people will get Covid-19 if they take part in voting. A link to authoritative information about coronavirus will be provided to posts that might use Covid-19 to discourage voting, Zuckerberg said. Facebook said it will attach an informational label to content that seeks to delegitimise the outcome of the elections or discuss the legitimacy of voting methods.

FIGHT AGAINST COVID-19

Steroids cut death rates: WHO

REUTERS

London, Sept 3: Treating critically ill COVID-19 patients with corticosteroid drugs reduces the risk of death by 20%, an analysis of seven international trials found Wednesday, prompting the World Health Organisation to update its advice on treatment.

The analysis - which pooled data from separate trials of low dose hydrocortisone, dexamethasone and methylprednisolone - found that steroids improve survival rates of COVID-19 patients sick enough to be in intensive care in hospital. "This is equivalent to around 68% of (the sickest COVID-19) patients surviving after treatment with corticosteroids, compared to around 60% surviving in the absence of corticosteroids," the researchers said in a statement.



Major development: The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has asked state public health officials to prepare to distribute a potential coronavirus vaccine to high-risk groups as soon as late October; documents published by the agency showed.

The timing of a vaccine has taken on political importance as US President Donald Trump seeks re-election in November, after committing billions of federal dollars to develop a vaccine to prevent COVID-19, which has killed more than 180,000 Americans.

PANDEMIC'S HIDDEN THREAT

Female poverty rate in South Asia projected to rise: UN

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

United Nations, Sept 3: The female poverty rate in South Asia will increase in 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and more women than men in the 25-34 age group will be poorer in the next decade, according to new data released by the UN.

The UN Women and the UN Development Programme (UNDP) said that the COVID-19 pandemic will disproportionately affect women and push 47 million more women and girls into extreme poverty by 2021, reversing decades of progress to lift this demographic above the poverty line.

Central and Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, home to 87 per cent of the world's extreme poor, will see the largest increases in extreme poverty, with an additional 54 mil-

MATTER OF CONCERN

THE REPORT, 'FROM INSIGHTS TO ACTION: GENDER EQUALITY IN THE WAKE OF COVID-19', SAID THAT THE GENDER POVERTY GAP WILL WORSEN FURTHER STILL IN SOUTH ASIA

GLOBALLY, THE POVERTY RATE FOR WOMEN WAS EXPECTED TO DECREASE BY 2.7% BETWEEN 2019 AND 2021, BUT PROJECTIONS NOW POINT TO AN INCREASE OF 9.1%

"nCoV WILL PUSH 96MN PEOPLE INTO EXTREME POVERTY BY 2021, 47MN OF WHOM ARE WOMEN AND GIRLS," THE UN SAID



lion and 24 million people, respectively, living below the international poverty line as a result of the pandemic. "The expected rise of poverty in South Asia as a result of the economic fallout of the pandemic showcases the vulnerability of women and girls living in households that have only recently been able to escape poverty, the re-

port released on Wednesday said. The pre-pandemic female poverty rate in South Asia was projected to be 10 per cent in 2021 but is now expected to reach 13 per cent.

"Moreover, before the pandemic, projections for the region suggested that by 2030 only 15.8 per cent of the world's poor women and girls would be living in South Asia. The

revised projections now put that figure at 18.6 per cent," the report said. The report pointed out that the resurgence of poverty due to the pandemic threatens to deepen gender poverty gaps, especially for people aged 25 to 34, which is a key productive and family formation period for both women and men. In 2021, it is expected there will be 118 women in poverty for every 100 poor men for every 100 poor men by 2030.

While sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia will be the most impacted, "significantly more women than men in South Asia will be affected. In the 25-34 age group, there will be 118 poor women for every 100 poor men in South Asia, and that ratio will increase to 129 women for every 100 men by 2030. The

"pandemic will push 96 million people into extreme poverty by 2021, 47 million of whom are women and girls. This will increase the total number of women and girls living in extreme poverty to 435 million, with projections showing that this number will not revert to pre-pandemic levels until 2030," the UN agencies said.

While the pandemic has posed a serious threat to the prospects of eradicating extreme poverty by the end of this decade, the reality is even grimmer as these projections of increased poverty rates for women and girls only account for the downward revision of the gross domestic product (GDP), excluding other factors such as women leaving the workforce due to childcare responsibilities that may also affect the sex distribution of poverty.

business



Even as things are improving (post-lockdown) the washout of the first quarter will have a cascading effect on the entire financial year. The next two quarters will continue to be challenging due to manufacturing restrictions

COLIN SHAH | CHAIRMAN, GJEP

WHITEHAT Jr TO HIRE 13,000 TEACHERS

Edtech startup WhiteHat Jr is ramping up its women-only teacher base in India, adding about 220 teachers a day and plans to have about 20,000 educators on its platform by year end. The company, which was recently acquired by Byju's, has over 7,000 teachers on its platform at present



of the day quote

Consumers have become more conscious about food safety, safe and hygienic handling and use of sustainable farming methods such as drip irrigation. The traceability feature is the transparent mechanism to share sustainable and ethical agriculture practices of our farmers

PANKAJ KHANDELWAL | CHAIRMAN AND MD, INI FARMS

The coronavirus pandemic has brought a sea change in demand dynamics, with consumers increasingly seeking Ayurvedic products that build immunity and the company is well positioned to address this trend

AMIT BURMAN | CHAIRMAN, DABUR INDIA

We are working with a target to achieve a 40% increase in apparel exports this financial year with major focus on new medical textiles

A SAKTHIVEL | CHAIRMAN, AEPC

Private banks likely to gain more market share: Fitch

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Sept 3: Fitch Ratings Thursday said private sector banks, with stronger loss-absorption buffers, are likely to gain market share from their state-owned peers in the medium term.

Private banks' loss-absorption buffers, in particular enhanced capital bases, strengthen their ability to recognise losses up-front with less disruption in their efforts to accelerate market-share gains, Fitch said. However, it does not expect immediate gains as the sector's credit growth is likely to remain subdued, and will only resume meaningfully once a sustained recovery from the pandemic gets underway. "Indian private banks, which



IT SAID SOME INDIAN BANKS HAVE RAISED CAPITAL AFTER THE RBI IMPORED THEM TO RAISE FRESH EQUITY

have stronger loss-absorption buffers than the public sector banks (PSBs), are likely to gain market share from their state-owned peers in the

Fitch does not expect immediate gains as the sector's credit growth is likely to remain subdued

Indian private banks have had a decade of strong growth, backed by better capitalisation and fewer asset quality problems

Fitch said the government-led merger of state-owned banks helped them to consolidate their market positions in the last few years

asset quality problems.

It said private banks increased their market shares by 14.4 pp (percentage points) and 18.5 pp by assets and loans, respectively, at the expense of state-owned counterparts during this time.

Most of the gains occurred in the five years preceding the coronavirus pandemic as state banks were hamstrung by ballooning impaired loans, larger losses and weaker capitalisation.

Fitch said the government-led merger of state-owned banks helped them to consolidate their market positions in the last few years, but the state-owned banks' market shares will continue to erode if they do not raise adequate capital to absorb future stress and

support growth.

It said some Indian banks have raised capital after the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) implored them to raise fresh equity. However, the capital raising has been limited thus far to private banks, which collectively raised USD 6.3 billion in the past three months.

"While state banks have announced their intentions to raise fresh equity, they have not gone further than routine board approvals nor given clear indications on the timelines, except for a few banks." This is despite the need to expedite improvement in the state banks' capital positions, which we believe remain vulnerable to varying degrees to future stress and unexpected losses," Fitch said.

RLY MIN MEETS LOGISTICS COs, JOINT WORKING GROUP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Sept 3: Railway Minister Piyush Goyal met industry leaders of the logistics sector, including representatives of courier companies, as part of efforts to boost freight revenue, amid huge losses in the passenger segment due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

EASE OF DOING BUSINESS

During the meeting, logistics and courier companies were assured that the Railways would provide reliable, fast, affordable and easy to handle parcel services, according to a statement from the railway ministry. To quickly work out the best guidelines for ease of doing business, a joint working group is going to be formed. This group will comprise Railway officials and representatives of logistics and courier providers.

Companies like DHL, Blue Dart, DTDC and FedEx were among the companies that participated in the meeting, which was called late Wednesday night, to discuss and explore possibilities of expanding business of private parcel services through the Indian Railways. The minister said that win-win solutions were needed to ensure sustainable business development for all. The Indian Railways ran 5,292 parcel trains between March 22 and September 2, and out of these, 5,139 were time-tabled trains.

In total, 3,18,453 tonnes of consignments were loaded on these trains and ₹116.19 crore was earned. The Railways' freight loading for August was 94.33 million tonnes, which was more than the loading for the same month last year.

Apparel exports to register 40% growth in FY21: AEPC



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Sept 3: Apparel Export Promotion Council (AEPC) Chairman A. Sakthivel, Thursday said the apparel exports from the country is likely to expand by about 40% in the current financial year.

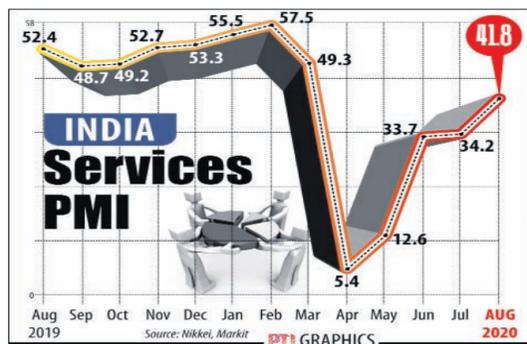
Addressing the 41st Annual General Meeting of the industry body through a video conference, the Chairman said: "We are working with a target to achieve a 40 per cent increase in apparel exports this financial year with major focus on new medical textiles. This will take our total apparel exports up from \$15.4 billion last fiscal to about \$22 billion in 2020-21."

Sakthivel was of the view that although Covid-19 is the most disruptive health crisis in modern human history, India and the world will achieve faster progress and new quality of development post-Covid as "every adversity presents multiple new opportunities".

During the address, he thanked Union Minister of Textiles, Smriti Zubin Irani for taking several initiatives to help the industry.

Services activity shrinks for sixth month in August

According to a poll the Indian economy is likely to suffer its worst 12-month performance since 1979 for the fiscal year that ends March 2021, contracting 6%



AGENCIES

Bangalore, Sept 3: Activity in India's crippled services industry fell for a sixth straight month in August as coronavirus restrictions continued to hurt business operations and demand, causing the longest streak of job losses on record, an industry survey showed.

Thursday's survey adds to the gloom in the service sector, an engine of economic growth and jobs, suggesting a long and painful road to recovery after the economy shrank nearly a quarter in April-June.

Although the Nikkei/IHS Markit Services Purchasing Managers' Index increased to 41.8 in August from July's 34.2, it remained well below the 50-mark separating growth from contraction.

August was the sixth straight month the index was sub-50, the longest such stretch since a 10-month run to April 2014.

"August highlights another month of challenging operating conditions in the Indian services sector," Shreeya Patel, an economist at IHS Markit, said in a release. "Sustained periods of closure and ongoing lockdown restrictions in both domestic and foreign markets have weighed heavily on the health of the industry."

Hoping to avert more serious economic damage, the government has said it planned to reopen underground train networks and allow sports and religious events in a limited manner despite coronavirus cases growing at the fastest rate in the world's second-most populous country.

'US economy grows modestly amid pandemic'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Washington, Sept 3: The US economy grew modestly over the summer amid continued uncertainty about the Covid-19 pandemic and its negative effect on consumer and business activity, according to a Federal Reserve survey.

"Economic activity increased among most districts, but gains were generally modest and activity remained well below levels prior to the Covid-19 pandemic," Xinhua news agency quoted the Fed as saying in its latest survey on economic conditions, known as the Beige Book, Wednesday.

"Continued uncertainty and

navirus cases growing at the fastest rate in the world's second-most populous country.

Amid the raging pandemic, even if restrictions are eased, economic activity is unlikely to quickly return to pre-COVID-19 levels as fear of getting infected will keep millions of people indoors, avoiding shopping malls, cinemas, restaurants and hotels.

A Reuters poll showed the Indian economy is likely to suffer its worst 12-month performance since 1979 for the fiscal year that ends March 2021, contracting 6.0%, pushing millions more into poverty.

Although improved from July, sub-indices tracking domestic and foreign demand remained firmly in contraction territory, leading firms to reduce their workforce for the sixth straight month, the longest streak on record.

Expectations for future business activity gave little hope for an imminent turnaround as service firms gave a neutral outlook for the next 12 months.

A composite index, which measures both services and factory activity, improved to 46.0 in August from July's 37.2, cushioned by a better manufacturing performance, but remained well below the neutral 50.0 level.

On the price front, both input costs and prices charged rose in August, suggesting Asia's third-largest economy could enter a period of stagflation - a phase with lofty inflation, high unemployment and stagnant demand.

Infosys to acquire Kaleidoscope Innovation

New Delhi: India's second largest IT services firm

Infosys Thursday said it will acquire US-based product design and development firm Kaleidoscope Innovation for up to \$42 million (about ₹308 crore). Kaleidoscope Innovation is a full-spectrum product design, development and insights firm innovating across medical, consumer and industrial markets. It designs microsurgical instruments, devices used in minimally invasive surgery, drug delivery devices for ophthalmic therapies and user-centric wearables. It also offers usability testing in support of regulatory submissions, including the delivery mechanism for aortic stents. In a regulatory filing, Infosys said the cost of acquisition is "up to \$42 million including earn-out, management incentives and bonuses". The acquisition by Infosys Nova Holdings, LLC (a wholly owned subsidiary of Infosys) is expected to close during the second quarter of FY 2021, subject to customary closing conditions, it added.

Amazon, Verizon likely to invest \$4 bn in Voda-Idea

REUTERS

Bangalore, Sept 3: US wireless carrier Verizon Communications Inc and Amazon may invest more than \$4 billion for a stake in India's Vodafone Idea Ltd, as reported by a private newspaper Thursday. The struggling Indian telecom firm's shares rose as much as 30%.

The news comes days after India's top court ruled that mobile carriers must settle government dues within 10 years, giving Vodafone Idea some reprieve in a case it had said could affect its ability to continue as a going concern.

Vodafone Idea, a joint venture between Britain's Vodafone Group and India's Idea Cellular, still owes roughly \$6.8 billion to the Indian government.

Vodafone Idea's stake-sale talks had been paused pending the court ruling, but Amazon and Verizon are now set to resume them, reported the newspaper, citing two people aware of the negotiations.

Amazon and Verizon did not respond to Reuters requests for comment outside regular US business hours.

The Tuesday ruling gives



Vodafone Idea — India's third largest telecom firm by subscribers — some respite but analysts say the loss-making company's financial pressures persist.

Shares in Vodafone Idea hit a more than one-year high before closing up 26.77% amid a flurry of news about its fundraising plans.

CNBC-TV18 reported Vodafone Idea could "take stock" of a sale of its optic fibre business at a Friday board meeting scheduled to discuss fundraising plans.

Canada's Brookfield Asset Management Inc and private equity group KKR & Co Inc were contenders for the business, CNBC-TV18 said.

Vodafone Idea was planning to raise about \$1.5 billion and was working with advisers as it seeks investors, Bloomberg News reported. Vodafone Idea and KKR declined to comment, while a representative for Brookfield did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Continued uncertainty and volatility related to Covid-19 and its negative effect on consumer and business activity, was a theme echoed across the US



volatility related to the pandemic, and its negative effect on consumer and business activity, was a theme echoed across the country." The survey also showed that the labour market remained volatile, while

employment increased overall among districts. "Some districts also reported slowing job growth and increased hiring volatility, particularly in service industries, with rising in-

stances of furloughed workers being laid off permanently as demand remained soft," it said.

US private companies added fewer-than-expected 428,000 jobs in August, indicating a slow recovery in a labour market ravaged by the Covid-19 crisis, payroll data company Automatic Data Processing (ADP) reported earlier on Wednesday.

Amid fragile economic recovery from the pandemic, Fed Chairman Jerome Powell announced last week that the central bank will seek to achieve inflation that averages 2% over time, a new policy strategy that will likely keep interest rates near zero for years.

'ALL DISCOMS LIKELY TO BE PRIVATISED BY DECEMBER'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Sept 3: Principal Secretary of Energy Department Nikunja Bihari Dhal expected that all the discoms will be privatised by December, 2020. Speaking at ICC National Energy e-Conclave, Dhal said, "If all goes well, then by December, all the discoms will be privatised." He also informed that Covid-19 has hit hard the collection part.

"The technical & commercial losses have gone up from 20% to 30% during Q1 of the current fiscal due to the lockdowns and for TPCODL it was 46%. Though smart meter-

ing could be a good solution in such pandemics but on the other hand it needs additional investments too," Dhal said.

State Energy Minister Divya Shankar Mishra urged all to give importance to renewable energy. Mishra also told that cyclone resistant electrical infrastructure must be looked at as it will be very helpful for states like Odisha. He advised that energy sector should be IT & Electronic friendly to make it more sustainable. MD & CEO of Fluentgrid Ltd, G Murali Krishna explained about the Smart Grid solutions in the power sector and the road ahead that lies ahead.

DJOKO OPTS FOR HOME

Serb marches into US Open 3rd round as he sees off Edmund

ASSOCIATED PRESS

New York, Sept 3: Novak Djokovic has earned more than USD 140 million in prize money over his accomplished career, plus plenty of other millions in endorsement deals, so there wasn't much of a question in his mind when the possibility was offered to rent a private home during the US Open.

The cost is USD 40,000. The convenience is Priceless. "As soon as there was a chance for us to choose to be in a house, we took it right away - without thinking. I'm glad we did," the top-ranked Djokovic said after improving to 25-0 this season and reaching the US Open's third round with a 6-7(5-7), 6-3, 6-4, 6-2 victory over Kyle Edmund Wednesday.

"Any player had that opportunity. It's not the privilege of the top guys or girls. Anyone that wanted to spend money and stay in the house, he or she could have done that," Djokovic said. "I know there's very few players that have chosen to stay in a house, but it is a personal choice."

Most players competing at Flushing Meadows amid the coronavirus pandemic this year opted for the official tournament hotel options. The US Tennis Association paid for one room for each player, who then would need to pony up if they wanted a second for members of their entourage.

Serena Williams and Milos Raonic were among the eight players who, like Djokovic, opted for one of the Long Island homes the USTA made available instead.

Why did Djokovic go that route? "Well, I think it's obvious. Being in a hotel, you're unable to open the window in the room. You constantly have to be with a mask indoors, outdoors, everywhere. You can't really go out, spend time in

the garden, maybe, outdoors," he said. "I saw the hotel. The hotel is not in a best position in terms of having nature around. It's very close to the highway."

6-1, 5-1 & COLLAPSE

Well, this

was quite a comeback ... or quite a collapse. Depends on the point of view.

Kristina Mladenovic, seeded 30th, served for the victory while leading 6-1, 5-1 against Varvara Gracheva in the second round of the US Open - and not only couldn't close the deal there or when she held four match points soon thereafter, but also somehow, some way, she lost the match.

Eventually, Gracheva - a Russian who is ranked 102nd and is a month past her 20th birthday - came all the way back to win 1-6, 7-6 (7-2), 6-0. "Definitely," Mladenovic said, "the most painful match and loss I've had in my career."

Her match points came while ahead 5-2 in the second set as Gracheva served. Three came at love-40, and another came at Ad-Out. Mladenovic never got that close again. Gracheva will move on to meet No. 8 seed Petra Martic for a berth in the fourth round.

"She was brave and she went for it," Mladenovic said about her opponent, who is participating in her first Grand Slam tournament. "From 5-2, slowly I started feeling like I was crashing down,"

Mladenovic said. "I just collapsed. I had

nothing left in the tank."

Mladenovic was one of the players who were allowed to remain in the tournament but were placed under stricter COVID-19 protocols after they came in contact with Benoit Paire, the 17th-seeded Frenchman who tested positive for the coronavirus.

After her first-round win, Mladenovic said the whole episode was hard to deal with. After what happened Wednesday, she said: "Physically and mentally, I'm completely drained. It's just worse and worse."

ANYBODY'S GAME

Shelby Rogers pulled off an upset, even though she doubts there is such a thing these days in women's tennis.

Rogers defeated 11th-seeded Elena Rybakina in the second round of the US Open Wednesday, 7-5, 6-1. Two other unseeded Americans, Ann Li and Madison Brengle, also beat seeded opponents. By advancing to the third round, Rogers matched her best showing at the US Open. She's ranked 93rd.

The 20-year-old Li defeated 13th-seeded Alison Riske 6-0, 6-3. Li, who is ranked 128th, now has two career victories over players ranked in the top 75, and the wins have come in her two matches this week. Brengle, ranked 84th, eliminated 19th-seeded Dayana Yastremska 6-2, 6-3. Brengle first played at the Open in 2007, and matched her best showing by reaching the third round.

PLISKOVA won't dissect loss

New York: Under normal circumstances,

Karolina Pliskova would not have been seeded No. 1 at the US Open and so, while a second-round loss certainly would have been disappointing to her, and noticed by others, it wouldn't have been as newsworthy.

But what's normal in 2020? With the women who are 1-2 in the rankings choosing to skip the trip to Flushing Meadows because of the pandemic, No. 3 Pliskova ascended to the top spot in the draw - and by Day 3, she was gone.

Pliskova, the 2016 runner-up at the US Open, made her mood clear during a 1-6, 6-7(2-7) loss to 50th-ranked Caroline Garcia Wednesday by throwing a racket, then again afterward with a series of clipped responses at her news conference.

Pliskova fidgeted with the microphone. Sighed. Shrugged her shoulders. Rolled her eyes. When a reporter offered possible explanations for the defeat - a new, faster surface on the courts, a lack of atmosphere because there are no spectators, the pressure of her high seeding - Pliskova replied: "Nothing from what you said."

Her reasoning for the result? "I didn't play good," Pliskova said, "so that's it."

When another member of the media said this back-and-forth must be boring to Pliskova, she said, "Yeah, a little bit."

Did you see the match or no?" and soon after remarked, "I don't

know if you understand tennis well enough."

After a first round that went more to form than ever - 29 of 32 seeded women won their opening matches, a US Open record since the number of seeds was doubled from 16 in 2001 - the surprises started in the second round.

Pliskova had chances to take the second set against Garcia, who had been 0-8 against top-five opponents at Grand Slam tournaments. Garcia trailed 5-4 in that set while serving at 15-40. Two break points that also were set points.

On the first, Pliskova got a look at an 89 mph second serve, but she pushed a forehand return wide. On the second, Garcia smacked a quick-strike forehand to a corner and Pliskova's running reply found the net.

Garcia grabbed the next two points with a service winner followed by a gutsy second-serve ace to take that game and then was superior in the tie-breaker.

Although much has been expected of her, the 26-year-old Garcia only once reached a Grand Slam quarterfinal and never has been past the US Open's third round. To do so this time, she'll need to beat 28th-seeded American Jennifer Brady.

As a teen, Garcia built, albeit lost, a big lead against Maria Sharapova at the 2011 French Open, inspiring Andy Murray to write on Twitter that the Frenchwoman 'is going to be No. 1 in the world one day'. Never happened, although she did get as high as No. 4. Pliskova, meanwhile, did get to No. 1 briefly.

Other winners Wednesday included No. 4 Stefanos Tsitsipas, No. 5 Alexander Zverev and No. 7 Davis Goffin. Tsitsipas made it to the US Open's third round for the first time by withstanding the so-rare-these-days serve-and-volley style of his 168th-ranked American opponent, Maxime Cressy 7-6(7-2), 6-3, 6-4 after two-time Grand Slam champion Naomi Osaka's 6-1, 6-2 win against Camila Giorgi.



DIVIJ-CACIC BOWS OUT

NEW YORK: India's Divij Sharan and his Serbian partner Nikola Cacic fought hard before going down in three sets to eighth seeds Nikola Mektic and Wesley Koolhof in the first round of the US Open men's doubles event here. Sharan and Cacic lost 4-6, 6-3, 3-6 against Croatia's Mektic and Koolhof of the Netherlands in a tough contest that lasted one hour and 46 minutes Wednesday. The winners will next play Italy's Simone Bolelli and Maximo Gonzalez of Argentina.



Iniyar wins World Open online chess

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, Sept 3: Indian Grandmaster P Iniyar won the prestigious Annual World Open online chess tournament held recently, having practiced at night to get used to the American time zone.

The Tamil Nadu player scored seven and half points out of a possible nine with six victories and three draws to finish on top, ahead of many higher rated Grandmasters, a press release said Thursday.

On the way to his title, Iniyar defeated Grandmasters Baadur Jobava of Georgia, Sam Sevian, Sergey Erenburg of USA and Nyzhnyk Illia of Ukraine.

Iniyar and Sjugiro Sanan finished with 7.5 points, but the Tamil Nadu player emerged winner because of a better tie-break score. Interestingly, the event was held

in American time zone, meaning that Iniyar was playing from 9:30 pm till 6 am every day. The 17-year old Indian had prepared specifically for this event by practicing at night before the tournament.

He said the preparation helped and rated the win over Baadur Jobava as his best game of the tournament. The 48th edition of the annual event, which ran from August 7-9, was held online due to the COVID-19 pandemic following classical time control.

The results of the event were officially announced a few days ago after Fair Play Analysis. A total number of 120 players from 16 countries participated in the event which included more than 30 Grandmasters.

Iniyar had recently defeated World No. 2 Fabiano Caruana in an online blitz event.



Akhtar slams critics after being trolled

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Sept 3: Former Pakistan pacer Shoaib Akhtar has lashed out at the critics who trolled him for praising Indian cricketers Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma.

While reviewing the performance of both Pakistan and Indian cricket teams, Akhtar recently

praised Kohli and Rohit, something that has not gone down well with Pakistani cricket fans.

The former fast bowler asked his critics why he shouldn't laud Indian players as they were the best in the business in the current era.

"Why should I not praise Indian players and Virat Kohli? Is there any player in Pakistan, or all over the

world, which comes close to Kohli? I don't know why people are angry; they should go look at the stats first before criticising me," Akhtar was quoted as saying by Cricket Pakistan.

He further said people should check the statistics if they have any doubts about Kohli's abilities. "Kohli has 70 international hun-

dreds right now. Who else has this many hundred right now in international cricket? How many series has he won for India? Should I not praise him then?" Akhtar added.

"This is very strange. We all can see clearly he is the biggest batsmen in the world. He and Rohit Sharma are performing all the time. Why shouldn't we praise them?"

NEWS IN BRIEF

CSK squad undergoes second COVID-19 test

Dubai: The Chennai Super Kings (CSK) squad, barring the two players who tested positive for coronavirus last week, is likely to train from Friday subject to clearance after a second round of testing was conducted Thursday. Deepak Chahar was among the two players to have tested positive last week and overall 13 members of CSK contingent were infected with the deadly virus, raising safety concerns ahead of the IPL beginning here September 19. "Tests were done today. Results will come late night or tomorrow morning," a CSK official told PTI. Earlier, CSK CEO Kasi Viswanathan had said that the team will start training from Friday after the second round of testing.

5-sub rule stands for new Bundesliga season

Frankfurt: The German Bundesliga will keep five substitutions for the 2020-21 season because of the coronavirus pandemic. The 36 clubs in the top two German men's football leagues voted at a German Football League meeting Thursday to continue the rule for next season. That comes after the English Premier League moved back to three substitutions after using five to finish the 2019-20 campaign during the pandemic. FIFA allowed leagues to use up to five substitutions in May as a way to reduce fatigue for players in a busy run of rescheduled games. That measure was extended in July to allow competitions to use the rule until the end of 2021. The French league has started its 2020-21 season with five substitutions.

Tour de France: Van Aert wins Stage 5

Privas (France): Wout van Aert made it two-from-two for his purring Jumbo-Visma team with victory in Stage 5 of the Tour de France here as Julian Alaphilippe lost the yellow jersey in controversial circumstances to Adam Yates after incurring a time penalty for an illegal feed. No sooner had the in-form Belgian Van Aert finished celebrating his team's second win in as many days as the race jury announced that a 20-second penalty had been imposed on Frenchman Alaphilippe for taking on an illegal water bottle from his Deceuninck-QuickStep team car with 17km remaining, contrary to the regulations. Yates now leads the race by three seconds on van Aert's Jumbo-Visma teammate Primoz Roglic of Slovenia, the Stage 4 winner. The Tour continues Thursday with the 191km Stage 6 from Le Teil to Mont Aigoual.



Punia, 2 other wrestlers test COVID-19 +ve



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Sept 3: Three Indian wrestlers - Deepak Punia (86kg), Navin (65kg) and Krishan (125kg) - have been tested positive for Coronavirus, the Sports Authority of India (SAI) said Thursday.

All wrestlers were tested, upon arrival for national camp at the SAI Centre in Sonapat, as per the SAI SOP for resumption of sports activities. As per the protocol, wrestlers along with the coaches and support staff were made to undergo mandatory RTPCR test for COVID-19, SAI said.

"Three senior men's wrestlers, who had reported to the national wrestling camp at SAI Centre in Sonapat, have tested positive for COVID-19 virus," reads the statement.

"During the test wrestlers, Deepak Punia (86kg), Navin (65kg) and Krishan (125kg) were found positive and have been moved to a SAI empanelled hospital as a precautionary measure and for further monitoring," it added.