



PROMOTING SELF LOVE

Actor Ileana D'Cruz, on Instagram, has urged everyone to make themselves their priority number one

LEISURE P2



TMC'S 'SOFT HINDUTVA'

TMC spends big to extend help to Hindu priests as it seeks to debunk accusations of minority appeasement

TWO STATES P7



UK TO SEE 50K CASES

UK gov't chief scientific advisor mulls there could be 50,000 Covid cases per day by mid-October

INTERNATIONAL P10

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Don't bother about them flouting the rules. Rules mentioned in farm Bills will never be flouted.

Farm Bills a recipe for disaster

The Centre is trying to steamroll 3 farm Bills without taking the state governments on board. Analysts fear the new Bills may face the fate of the GST which has completely failed to protect the states' financial interests

PNN & AGENCIES

New Delhi, Sept 21: The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020, and the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, 2020 passed the muster in the Rajya Sabha in a voice vote Sunday, replacing the respective ordinances. However, the Bills have created an avalanche of protests from the opposition including the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) and the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) and farmers in several states, but the loudest protests have come from Punjab and Haryana. The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill, 2020 is yet to be taken up in the Upper House. Last week, these Bills were passed in the Lok Sabha. The three Bills claim to increase the availability of buyers for farmers' produce thereby creating more competition and better prices for them.

The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, 2020 will provide a legal cover to contract farming. It enables farmer(s) to enter into an agreement for production of a crop for up to five years. In the poultry and seed production sectors, contract farming has already gained ground and even small and marginal farmers have been signing contracts with aggregators to set up poultry units. Cane farmers also enter into a kind of contract farming with sugar mills. However, the contract farming will be voluntary.

In states like Odisha, such practices are already in vogue, though in an informal manner. Here, moneylenders and middlemen in villages extend ad-



The Congress, driven by protests by farmers in Punjab, is leading the nationwide campaign against the three farm Bills in Parliament

vances to farmers taking advantage of their financial difficulties to grow crops, only to buy them back upon harvest. After adjusting the advance money with interest, they return the remaining amounts, if any, to farmers. This is one type of contract farming which keeps small and marginal farmers perennially poor. After this Bills become law, such unwanted practices may get legal sanctity.

In the Agricultural Produce Market Committees (APMCs) system, marketing committees could not do 100 per cent procurement of the produce, resulting in distress sale by farmers. The so called freedom to farmers to access such formal markets does not make sense unless the farmers have the money to access them. We have heard of large scale farmers' suicides in states like Maharashtra where there is

a well-oiled APMC system. Under the Essential Services Maintenance Act, the state governments exercised power to raid hoarders who created artificial shortages of commodities during their short supply because of poor production and jacked up prices. Under the new Bills, this power has been taken over by the Centre. The farm Bills aim at enabling farmers to enter into contracts with modern retailers, wholesalers, processors and exporters. However, small and marginal farmers can't enter into contracts with big businesses as they are too fearful of the clout of corporates. This will only encourage middlemen and rich traders to exploit the farmers.

In 2017, the Union government rolled out the Goods and Services Tax (GST) under which it forced states to barter away their financial powers to Centre

Congress to launch nationwide protests

NEW DELHI: The Congress party Monday said it will launch a nationwide agitation against the farm Bills passed by Parliament and also initiate a campaign for collecting two crore signatures of farmers and the poor people against these proposed legislations. After a meeting of the party's senior leaders, KC Venugopal said the Congress will also launch a massive signature campaign in which it aims to collect two crore signatures from farmers and the poor people against farm bills. A memorandum would be subsequently submitted to President, the Congress leader said. Another Congress leader Randeep Surjewala said a series of pressers will also be organised against the Bills.

which promised to compensate them for their tax shortfalls. Now we have seen a complete failure of the GST. The Centre is not in a position to give funds to state governments. It was still thinkable in the context of GST that transferred financial powers from states to the Centre. But the GST's possible replication in agriculture and food will be a pure recipe for catastrophe.

The Union government should abstain from rushing through these three Bills. It should prepare a road map of the future of MSP PDS and procurement for the next 10 years. For this, a consensus is required between the Centre and the states. There is a need to reduce the procurement, especially of rice from water-stressed blocks in Punjab, Haryana and Western Uttar Pradesh so as to save the wastage on carrying excessive stocks.

1800 266 266 1 (tollfree)

Fire at Covid hosp, 127 patients rescued

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, Sept 21: Over 125 patients, including pregnant women and newborns, were evacuated after a fire broke out at a COVID-19 hospital in Jagatpur town of Cuttack district Monday, officials said. No loss of life has been reported so far, DG (Fire Service) Satyajit Mohanty said.

"All the patients were rescued safely and immediately taken to nearby COVID facilities," Cuttack Collector Bhabani Shankar Chayani said. Central RDC Anil Samal has ordered an administrative probe into the incident. Health and Family Welfare Minister Naba Das has asked the fire service department to submit a report on the cause of the mishap.

The blaze erupted in one of the ICU wards - where six critical patients were on ventilators - on the third floor of the hospital. "The smoke was so dense that we had to use the flashlights on mobile phones to come



out of the building," said a patient. Hospital sources said there were at least 10 pregnant women and six others, who had come under the scalpel for Caesarian section in the last one week.

"All the critical patients in the ICU were first rescued by the hospital staff and subsequently, the remaining wards located in other floors were vacated," Chayani said, adding, a bus and 12 ambulances were pressed into operation to shift the patients to six other COVID facilities located in Cuttack and Bhubaneswar.

Chief Fire Officer Sukant Sethy said the blaze was brought under control within 10 minutes with the help of five fire tenders.

SHORT TAKES

Diesel cheaper by over ₹2/l this month

New Delhi: Diesel prices continued to decline for the fifth consecutive day Monday even though globally crude prices remained steady. Diesel sold ₹77.78 per litre in Bhubaneswar, down 16 paise while petrol sold ₹81.74 p/l. In the national capital diesel was priced at ₹71.43 per litre, down from ₹71.58 Sunday. Similarly in the other metros of Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata the fuel was sold for ₹77.87, ₹76.85 and ₹74.94 on Monday, respectively, against the previous levels of ₹78.02, ₹76.99 and ₹75.09 per litre.

Trainee pilot killed in UP copter crash

Lucknow: A rookie pilot was killed after a helicopter carrying four people crashed in Uttar Pradesh's Azamgarh district Monday. Police and local authorities are the spot and rescue operations are underway. The incident took place in Sarai Meer in an agricultural field, according to details available, the aircraft crashed at nearly 11.20 a.m. One person died and another was injured in the crash, while two others jumped out of the aircraft with the help of parachutes.

Babus to pay ₹50K fine for delay in SLP submissions

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Sept 21: Following a Supreme Court order, the state government has asked officials of the law, finance and water resources departments, responsible for delay in submission of special leave petition (SLP) in the apex court, to pay a fine of ₹50,000.

The SC, in its order July 27, 2020, had said, "There is an inordinate delay as set out in the application of 531 days. The application for condonation of delay reflects a saga of movement of files from one department to the other with no cogent explanation why for months together files have been detained in the department."

"There is something to be said on the merits of the matter, that is why we are inclined to issue notice on the application for condonation of delay as well as on the special leave petition but subject to deposit of cost of ₹50,000 with the Supreme Court Advocates on Record Welfare Fund," it said.



The court asked the concerned department to hold an inquiry, fix responsibility and recover the cost from the delinquent officers and file the certificates of recovery within four weeks.

Following this order, the water resources department has asked the law, finance and engineer-in-charge (EIC) of water resources departments to recover the amount from the officer responsible for the delay.

As per government records, the law department has delayed the file for 141 days while the finance department put it on hold for 233 days and EIC for 73 days. Accordingly, the officers will pay the fine imposed by the SC.

BJD seeks classical tag to Odissi music

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, Sept 21: Biju Janata Dal (BJD) MP Amar Patnaik Monday urged the Union government to confer classical status on Odissi music.

The BJD MP said the Odisha Heritage Cabinet, chaired by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, passed a resolution September 2 requesting the Centre to confer 'classical status' on Odissi music.

"Odissi dance and music were inspired and enriched by the Jagannath culture. More than a religious deity for the people of Odisha, Lord Jagannath is the fountainhead of our cultural, intellectual and emotional sustenance. Bharat Muni's Natya Shastra referred to Odra Magadhi style of music and dance which belongs to Odisha. Similarly, Matangi Muni also mentioned Udra Magadhi Prabriti known as 'Kalinga music' or 'Utkal music'," Patnaik said. The Centre had recognized Odissi dance as a classical dance form in 1964.

Markets tank; investors lose ₹4.23 lakh crore



AGENCIES

Mumbai, Sept 21: The Sensex dived 812 points while the Nifty closed below the 11,300-mark Monday in tandem with a global sell-off after a resurgence of coronavirus cases in Europe stoked fears of another round of lockdowns.

Denmark, Greece and Spain have imposed fresh restrictions on activities to tackle a surge in COVID-19 infections. Britain too is considering a second nationwide lockdown, prompting investors in Europe to offload travel, consumption and banking stocks. Falling for the third straight session, the BSE Sensex ended 811.68 points

or 2.09 per cent lower at 38,034.14. Similarly, the NSE Nifty tumbled 254.40 points or 2.21 per cent to finish at 11,250.55. IndusInd Bank was the top loser in the Sensex pack, tanking 8.67 per cent, followed by Bharti Airtel, Tata Steel, ICICI Bank, M&M, Maruti, Axis Bank and Bajaj Finance. Only three index components ended in the green - Kotak Bank, Infosys and TCS, rising up to 0.86 per cent.

The market capitalisation of all BSE-listed companies fell to ₹1,54,76,979.16 crore, wiping off ₹4.23 lakh crore of investor wealth. "Indian benchmark indices succumbed to profit booking in the second half of the trading day and ended more than 2 per cent down. It was in sync with global cues.

"Extra curbs were being considered in Europe following an increase in infections. With high valuations and worries that earnings may not justify such valuations anytime soon, markets may trade uncertain for the time being," said an expert.

Maha: 11 killed in Bhiwandi building crash



AGENCIES

Thane, Sept 21: Seven children and four others were killed and 13, including a four-year-old boy, rescued after a three-storeyed building collapsed in Maharashtra's Bhiwandi town on Monday, police said.

The 43-year-old Jhilani building caved in at 3.40 am, police said, adding the dead children include a two-year-old. Personnel of the Thane Disaster Response Force (TDRF) were seen pulling out the boy Ubed Quraishi, from the debris and feeding him water. Bhiwandi is a powerloom town around 10 km from Thane. The building had 40 flats and around 150 persons lived in it, an official said.

A civic official told PTI that the building, located at Narpoli's Patel Compound near Dhamankar Naka, collapsed while the residents were asleep. Teams of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) are at the spot. NDRF DG S N Pradhan said they were using a canine squad to search persons trapped in the debris.

A portion of the building collapsed and many occupants were trapped in the debris, a Thane Municipal Corporation official said. The building was not in the list of dilapidated structures of the Bhiwandi-Nizampur Municipal Corporation, he said.

An eyewitness said local residents rushed to the spot immediately after the collapse and helped pull out some persons from the debris. The power supply to the locality was snapped as a precautionary measure, the official said.

In a first, Indian Navy women officers to join warships crew

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Sept 21: Heralding yet another first in the history of Indian naval aviation, two women officers have been selected to join as "Observers" (Airborne Tacticians) in the helicopter stream. Lieutenant Kumudini Tyagi and Sub Lieutenant Riti Singh will be the first women officers in the Indian Navy to embark on Navy warships as part of ship's crew.

"They would in effect, be the first set of women airborne combatants who would be operating from warships. Earlier, entry of women was restricted to the fixed wing aircraft that took off and landed ashore," Indian Navy spokesperson Commander Vivek Madhwal said. They are to be part of Multi-Role Helicopters (MRH) crew. These officers, Sub Lieutenant

Kumudini Tyagi and Sub Lieutenant Riti Singh, are a part of a group of 17 officers of the Indian Navy, including four women officers and three officers of the Indian Coast Guard (13 officers of Regular batch and 4 woman officers of Short Service Commission batch) who were awarded "Wings" on graduating as "Observers" at a ceremony held on Monday at INS Garuda, Kochi.

"The ceremony was presided by Rear Admiral Antony George NM, VSM, Chief Staff Officer (Training) who presented the awards and coveted wings to the graduating officers," Commander Vivek Madhwal said.

In addition, the chief guest also awarded the Instructor Badge to six other officers, (five from the Indian Navy including a woman and another from Indian Coast Guard) who had successfully graduated as Qualified Navigation Instructors (QNI)



on the occasion. Speaking on the occasion, complementing the graduating officers, Rear Admiral Antony George highlighted the fact that it is a landmark occasion wherein for the first-time women will be trained in helicopter operations which would ultimately pave way for the deployment of women in front-line warships of Indian Navy.

The officers of the 91st Regular course and 22nd SSC Observer course were trained in air navigation, flying proce-

dures, tactics employed in air warfare, anti-submarine warfare and exploitation of airborne avionic systems. These officers would serve on-board Maritime Reconnaissance and Anti-Submarine Warfare aircraft of the Indian Navy and Indian Coast Guard.

From the 91st Regular Observer Course, Lieutenant Hitesh Singh was awarded the Uttar Pradesh Trophy on being adjudged 'First in the Overall Order of Merit' while Lt Anuj Kumar was awarded the Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern Naval Command Trophy for being adjudged 'Best in Flying'.

Li Hitesh Singh was also awarded the Sub Lieutenant RV Kunte memorial Book Prize on being adjudged 'Best in Ground Subjects'. From 22nd SSC Observer Course Sub Lieutenant Kreeshma R was awarded the Book Prize for being adjudged 'Best in Overall Order of Merit'.

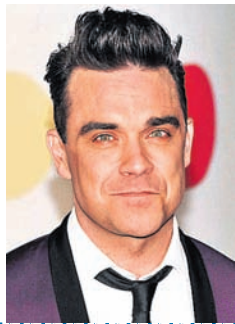
Woman pilot in Rafale fleet

A woman fighter pilot of the Indian Air Force will soon join the newly-inducted Rafale fighter fleet as one of its crew flying the multi-role aircraft, official sources said Monday. The woman pilot has been flying



MiG-21 fighters and was selected to join the Ambala-based Golden Arrows squadron operating the Rafale jets, they said. In 2018, flying officer Avani Chaturvedi scripted history by becoming the first Indian woman to fly a fighter aircraft solo. She flew a MiG-21 bison in her first solo flight. Chaturvedi was part of a three-member women team commissioned as flying officers in July 2016, less than a year after the government decided to open the fighter stream for women on an experimental basis.

leisure



HE IS NUMERICALLY DYSLEXIC, SAYS ROBBIE WILLIAMS

Singer Robbie Williams has revealed that he is dyslexic when it comes to digits. "I'm numerically dyslexic. I always get in trouble because I don't know my kids' birth dates and I don't know my wife's birthday," he said, reports *thesun.co.uk*.

MINDY KALING WOULD LOVE TO WORK WITH DEEPIKA, SONAM

Indian origin American actress Mindy Kaling counts Deepika Padukone and Sonam Kapoor as Indian stars she would love to work with. "I would love to work with as they're so talented," Mindy said, when asked if she is willing to work in a Hindi movie.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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accuracy • reliability • trust
FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181

ARIES
Today, the stars put you on high alert... and not for nothing. You will save yourself from being swindled. Though you will easily manage to stay ahead of others, you may make a few enemies on your way.

TAURUS
Your enthusiasm will be as contagious as your smile today, predicts Ganesha. People will stand charmed by your high spirits. There will be stressful moments, but things will look up later in the day.

GEMINI
Bosses will assign new responsibilities as your smile today, predicts Ganesha. Your daytime distress, however, will transform into jubilation by the end of the day's work, as you will be able to produce brilliant results. Ganesha advises you to delay bidding for tenders by a few days.

CANCER
You may be in one of your more frivolous moods today, foresees Ganesha. Gossip, fun, laughter and some harmless flirting shall make your day interesting, yet these are not the pastimes you usually enjoy.

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

VIRGO
The booster rockets of your ambitions and spirit to work will kick in at the maximum today. Seek recreation after a hard day's work and look to relax at private parties, social-dos and even weddings, says Ganesha.

LIBRA
You may not have been crowned 'Employee Of The Month', but do not let that distract you from the fact that today, you are the brightest star in office. Be prepared to get some special treatment at work, as your bosses shower praise on you. Apart from that, a lot of tangible and intangible benefits await you.

SCORPIO
You shall probably realise the fact that seeing is believing. Learn to trust your own eyes more than what you hear. Don't get lost in the crowd, warns Ganesha. Strive to stand out and be in the spotlight, advises Ganesha.

SAGITTARIUS
Round and round they tumble, the wheels of life, smoothly gliding into a routine. You may spend your day in discontent due to the rut of regular activities. Sadly, there is little hope or adventure Ganesha foresees that might make this day worthwhile for you.

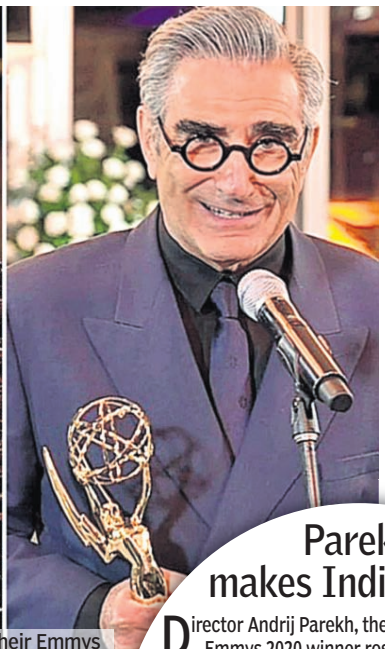
CAPRICORN
Duping the wisest with your extraordinary power of convincing may have been your forte, but you may have to prove yourself all over again, for Ganesha says you will be tested today. This apart, you are likely to find answers to questions lingering in your subconscious mind for long.

AQUARIUS
For a moment, it seems that you're swamped with problems. But you are brave enough to deal with any ugly issue that crops up suddenly. Ganesha hints at a romantic evening, which may just be time together in a jacuzzi, or simply preparing a meal together. Pure ecstasy!

PISCES
All the dieting that you have been undergoing will finally begin to show results, with compliments galore coming your way from your friends. Your energy and enthusiasm levels are likely to be high.

Schitt's Creek sweeps Emmys 2020

THE EVENT WAS A LOW-KEY AFFAIR DUE TO THE VIRUS CRISIS, WITH MOST WINNERS DIALLING IN TO MAKE THEIR ACCEPTANCE SPEECHES FROM HOME.



Catherine O'Hara and Eugene Levy with their Emmys

Los Angeles: Canadian family comedy, *Schitt's Creek*, made history at the 72nd Annual Primetime Emmy Awards as it took home the majority of awards at the ceremony, which was held virtually amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Brian Cox's *Succession* and the superhero series *Watchmen* also emerged big winners. *Schitt's Creek* won nine awards, going on to break the Emmys record for most wins in a single season for a comedy.

It won the Best Comedy Series, with its stars Catherine O'Hara and Eugene Levy

being named as the Best Comedy Actress and Actor respectively. Daniel Levy and Annie Murphy won the Best Supporting Actor and Actress trophies.

The show also won a trophy for Outstanding Directing for a Comedy Series for Andrew Cividino and Daniel Levy, with the latter

also winning outstanding writing for the finale episode *Happy Ending*.

"Our show, at its core, is about the transformational effects of love and acceptance, and that is something we need more of now than we've ever needed before," said Dan Levy as he accepted the prize, reports *bbc.com*.

Succession, which follows the lives of the Roy family as they contemplate their future once their aging father (essayed by Cox) begins to step back from his media and en-

tertainment conglomerate, took home the top award - Best Drama Series as well as Best Actor for Jeremy Strong.

The series also won awards in the Drama categories for Best Writing and Best Directing during the virtual ceremony. "This is such a very nice moment. But it's sad not to be with the cast and crew," said the show's British creator Jesse Armstrong.

The series *Watchmen* won Best Limited Series, as well as acting awards for its stars Regina King and Yahya Abdul-Mateen II. In her acceptance speech, King paid tribute to US Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

Zendaya, 24, became the youngest ever winner of Best Drama Actress for her performance in *Euphoria*.

Ozark star Julia Garner won Best Supporting Drama actress while Billy Crudup won in the male category for his portrayal of a network executive in *The Morning Show*.

Actor Mark Ruffalo won Best Actor in a Limited Series for *I Know This Much Is True*.

This year, the Emmy gala was a low-key affair due to the virus crisis, with most winners dialling in to make their acceptance speeches from home.



A poster of Schitt's Creek

Director Andrij Parekh, the Indian connect in the Emmys 2020 winner roster, has dedicated his award to all people of colour. Parekh, who is of Indian-Ukrainian descent, won an Emmy for directing the Hunting episode of drama series *Succession*, is one of the big winners at the annual gala this year. An acclaimed cinematographer for 20 years, the *Succession* job incidentally marked his directorial debut. "I am deeply honoured and humbled by this award. This distinction has been bestowed upon me on my birthday. So, thank you for the gift," Parekh said while starting his acceptance speech, going on to thank the cast and crew of the show.

Parekh makes India proud

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John's Satyameva Jayate 2 gets release date

Mumbai: The John Abraham-starrer *Satyameva Jayate 2* will release May 12, 2021 on the occasion of Eid.

While the first film, which had released in 2018, dealt with corruption, the sequel goes deeper exploring corruption across the worlds of police, politicians, industrialists and the common man.

Changing his story setting from Mumbai to Lucknow for the sequel, director Milap Zaveri said: "Creatively we changed the script to

Lucknow as it gave us a chance to make it more massy and also make the canvas larger. Visually also, Lucknow adds to the scale and grandeur."

John took to Twitter Monday to share a poster of the film. Flaunting his abs in the poster, one can see the tricolour bleeding from his chest.

He captioned the poster: "Jis desh ki maiyya Ganga hai, wahan khoon bhi Tiranga hai! (a country where Ganga is the mother, there even the blood



is tricolour) #Satyameva Jayate2 in cinemas 12th May, EID 2021." IANS



Ileana professes self love

Mumbai: Actress Ileana DCruz has urged everyone to make themselves their priority number one.

On Instagram, Ileana has posted a black and white picture of herself. "How about making yourself priority number 1? As one of my favourite poets @ventumonce told me, 'How about admiring yourself like you admire poetry? Cause you are a walking poem,'" she wrote.

"So many times, it's just so much easier to look at your flaws and focus on them and you end up just fixating on that. You are so much more! You're made of so much more!"

"You're different. You're unique. You're your own kind of beautiful. And no one can take that away from you. How about celebrating that?" she wrote, tagging her post with #learningeveryday, #workinprogress, #youarebeautiful and #bekind#bekindtoyou.

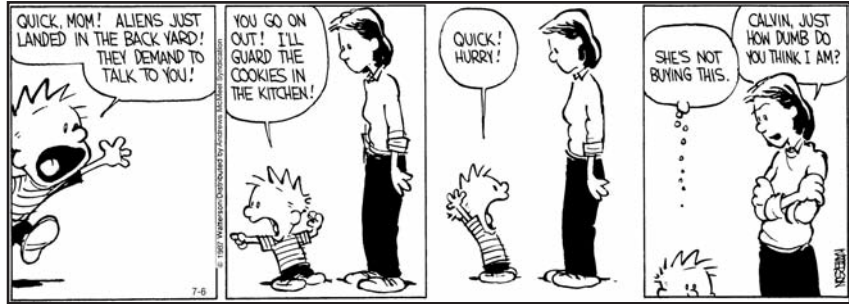
Ileana was last seen on screen in the 2019 multi-starrer *Pagalpanti*, directed by Anees Bazmee.

She will next be seen in Ajay Devgn's production, *The Big Bull*, a film reportedly based on India's biggest securities scam of 1992. The film also stars Abhishek Bachchan.

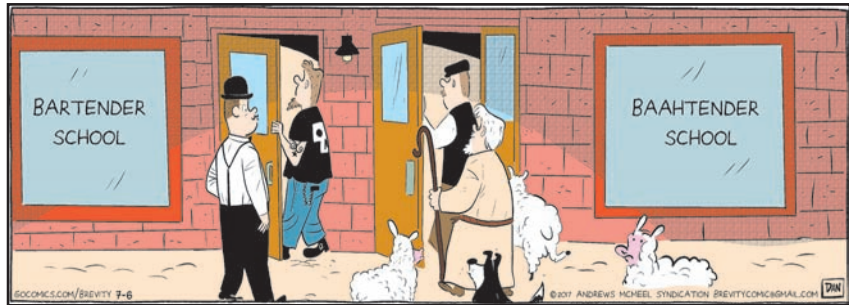
PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

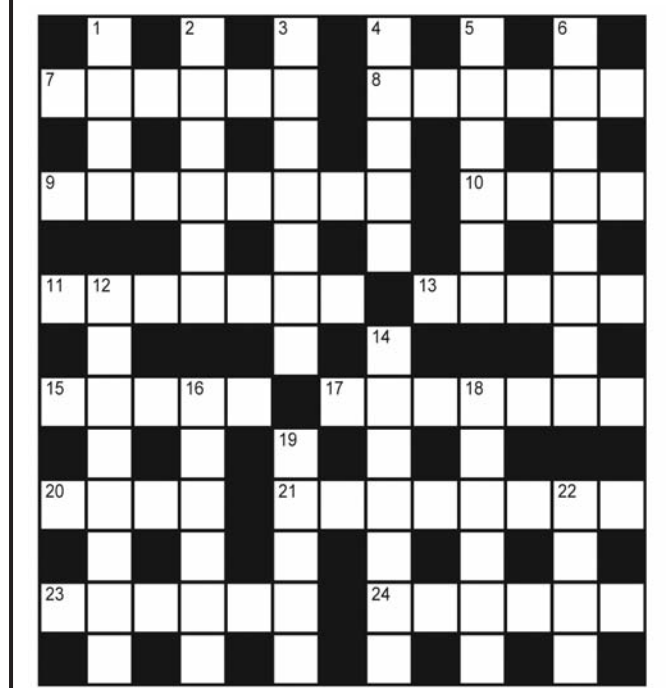


BREVITY



FUN post

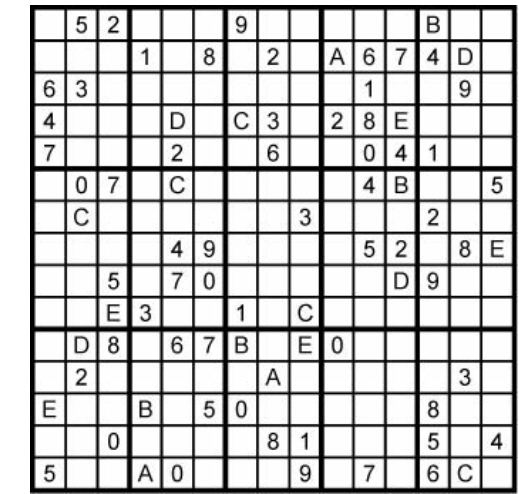
CROSSWORD



- Across
- 7 Breakfast food
 - 8 Sot's state
 - 9 Snake killer
 - 10 Light beige
 - 11 English blue cheese
 - 13 Pathfinder
 - 15 Historical period
 - 17 Black magic
 - 20 Roman robe
 - 21 Fortifications
 - 23 Spotted wildcat
 - 24 Bookstore section
 - 5 Chest of drawers
 - 6 Hallway
 - 12 A-one
 - 14 Crooked
 - 16 Baby's bed
 - 18 Code
 - 19 Leopard's trademark
 - 22 Cousin of a gull
- Down
- 1 Medal recipient
 - 2 Tiger type
 - 3 Spirits
 - 4 Enquired

SUDOKU

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

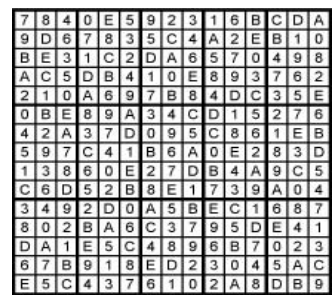


SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD



SUDOKU

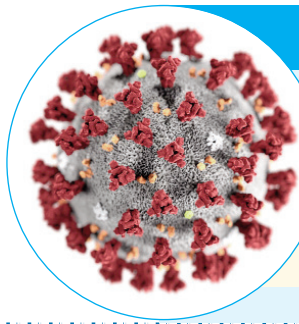


CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



LEISURELY HOURS

Children enjoy a bath in Taladanda Canal near Ranihaat in Cuttack, Monday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	3,13,38,514	2,29,21,263	9,66,456
India	54,87,164	43,95,534	87,924
Odisha	1,84,122	1,49,379	710

State gears up to better ease of doing biz ranking

THE DEVELOPMENT COMES AFTER ODISHA RANKED 29TH IN THE COUNTRY IN TERMS OF IMPLEMENTING BUSINESS REFORMS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Sept 21: Perturbed at a poor ranking in implementing business reforms, the state machinery is now on its toes for furthering the 'ease of doing business' reforms through implementation of Business Reform Action Plan (BRAP) for the year 2020-21.

Odisha was ranked as one of the worst performing states in implementing the 'State Business Reform Action Plan 2019'. As per the ranking of states released recently, Odisha has secured 29th position in terms of implementing business reforms.

Reviewing the progress in business reforms introduced by different departments at Lok Seva Bhawan here, Monday, Chief Secretary Asit Tripathy directed the officials to enhance the user base of online government-to-business (G2B) services.

He directed the departments to make all BRAP scheduled G2B services online with payment gateways. The departments were asked to stop offline delivery of such G2B services and deliver online services within specified time frame.

The Chief Secretary also directed the departments concerned to put all online services in the framework of Odisha Right to Public Services Delivery Act and define the time limit for actual delivery of services like NOCs, licences, permissions, certificates, clearances, conversion of land category, processing of forest diversion proposals and others.

Speaker convenes all-party meet

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Sept 21: In an attempt to ensure smooth functioning of the upcoming monsoon session of Odisha Assembly, Speaker Surya Narayan Patro has convened an all-party meeting September 25.

The meeting will be held to discuss the modalities and challenges for conducting business in the House during COVID-19 pandemic, Patro said. "It will be discussed in the meeting whether there will be Question Hour and Zero Hour," he added.

The Speaker has inspected the Assembly Hall and took stock of the arrangements made for the session beginning September 29. The session will continue till October 7 in strict adherence to all COVID-19 guidelines. This session will have eight business days spread over nine days. The Assembly will remain closed on account of Gandhi Jayanti (October 2) - a national holiday.

However, the House will hold session October 4 despite it being a Sunday. All MLAs will undergo COVID tests twice during the session.

SK Nath new IG, BSF

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Sept 21: The Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has approved the appointment of 1993-batch Odisha Cadre IPS officer Susant Kumar Nath as the Inspector General (IG) in Border Security Force (BSF). Nath's appointment will be on the basis of Central deputation for a period of five years since the date of his assuming charge. The MHA has also requested the state government to relieve Nath from his current posting of Additional Director General of Police-Cum-Director, State Forensic Science Laboratory (SFSL), Bhubaneswar.



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ACTION PLAN



Dist authorities were directed to stop offline delivery of those services which have completely been made online

Depts were asked to link their G2B online service portals with Go-Swift system of IPICOL so as to make it easier for prospective investors and business enterprises

About 301 state-level action points have been enlisted for implementation for the current year evaluation post news network

Various departments were asked to reduce compliance burden on business enterprises and industries by simplifying the norms and providing for online compliances like filing of reports and returns.

About 301 state-level action points have been enlisted for implementation for the current year evaluation. During August, there has been substantial progress in implementation of these points. Around 136 points have already been completed by various departments, said Industry secretary Hemant Kumar Sharma.

It was decided at the meeting that remaining 165 action points will be accomplished before November 25 and 303 the district level reform points would be rolled out before October 25.

Further, Sharma said, "Mo Sarkar and 5-T doctrines of state government have been helpful in making many a services online."

He advised all the departments to link all their G2B online service

portals with Go-Swift system of IPICOL so as to make it easier for prospective investors and business enterprises.

It was also decided that the online system would enable the users to submit applications, make payment, track status of the application and download the final approval online.

As way forward, the Chief Secretary asked the departments concerned to provide evidences of ground-level implementation of each reform point with user feedback to IPICOL. The departments were also asked to provide the list of users of online service delivery system.

District authorities were instructed to stop offline delivery of those services which have completely been made online.

The administrative departments were asked to nominate a well conversant senior officer as nodal officer to liaison with IPICOL for taking forward the ease of doing business.

WHEN ROAD TURNS RIVER



Low pressure-triggered rains inundate many low-lying areas in Bhubaneswar, including the service road in front of ISKCON temple in the city, Monday OP PHOTO

RAINFALL ACTIVITY TO COME DOWN: IMD

Bhubaneswar: The Bhubaneswar centre of India Meteorological Department (IMD) Monday said heavy rainfall activity will come down in state from Tuesday onwards. The low pressure area formed over northwest Bay of Bengal and neighborhood is moving southwestwards. It is likely to move west-northwestwards during next two/three days, it said, adding the impact of the system will become less. A few places of Jharsuguda and Sundargarh districts will receive heavy rainfall Tuesday. However, the Met Centre said, light to moderate rain or thundershower would continue to occur at some places across the state.

Acharya wants Paradip port named after Biju

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, Sept 21: Biju Janata Dal (BJD) MP Prasanna Acharya Monday urged the Union government to dedicate Paradip Port Trust in Jagatsinghpur district to former chief minister late Biju Patnaik and rechristen it as Biju Patnaik Port Trust.

Speaking during Zero Hour in the Upper House, the BJD Parliamentary Party Leader said the Union government has taken a very good decision to rename important ports of the country in the memory of great sons of India. "Biju Patnaik, the legendary leader, was known for his outstanding leadership and his contribution to freedom struggle is known to everyone. He is one of the builders of modern Odisha. He was a pilot who rescued the freedom fighters of Indonesia from the clutches of Dutch on the instructions of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in 1948. He was the Founding Father of Paradip Port Trust in Odisha, which is now one of the major ports of the country," Acharya said.

Acharya also cited the renaming of Tuticorin port in Tamil Nadu as Chidambaram Port Trust, and Egmore Port Limited in Tamil Nadu as Kamarajar Port Limited in 2014. The Kandla Port in Gujarat is named after Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Port in 2017. The Kolkata Port has been named as Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Port Trust.

"I, therefore, request the Central

BJD backs FCRA Amendment Bill

NEW DELHI: The BJD Monday supported Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill 2020 passed by Lok Sabha to enhance transparency and accountability in the receipt and utilisation of foreign contributions.

Speaking on the Bill in Lok Sabha, BJD MP Bhartruhari Mahtab welcomed the amendments introduced by the government. He said people bring money for philanthropic activities and never give information regarding the spending of the money.

Mahtab also said that the state government had brought Anti-Conversion Bill in 1959 to stop religious conversion activities in Odisha. He said there are many organisations which never share the report of utilising the money received under foreign contribution.

Significantly, the Bill proposes to include 'public servant' and 'corporation owned or controlled by the government' among the list of entities who are not eligible to receive foreign donations.

"Amendment of Clause (c) of sub-section (1) of section 3 to include public servant also within its ambit, to provide that no foreign contribution shall be accepted by any public servant," the Bill says.

government to dedicate this port in the memory of late Biju Patnaik and name it as Biju Patnaik Port Trust," said Acharya.

Registration for Kharif procurement up 21 per cent

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Sept 21: The state has witnessed 21 per cent growth in farmers' registration for procurement of paddy for 2020-21 Kharif season. About 14.97 lakh farmers have registered their names through online portal for upcoming Kharif paddy procurement season.



About 12.35 lakh farmers had registered their names for sale of Kharif paddy during 2019-20

Notably, about 12.35 lakh farmers had registered their names for sale of Kharif paddy during 2019-20. Hence, nearly 2.61 lakh more farmers have registered for this season as compared to the previous year's.

Online registration of farmers has been executed smoothly by the Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare department in adherence to COVID-19 guidelines issued by the government.

Altogether 2,854 designated primary agricultural cooperative societies (PACS) and large area multiple purpose cooperative societies (LAMPS) participated in the farmers' registration process in the 30 districts. Last year, 2,818 PACS/LAMPS had participated in the process.

Plus II, degree admissions begin; second cut-off Oct 3

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Sept 21: Admission for Plus II courses in Higher Secondary schools across Odisha began Monday.

The students who have been selected as per the first merit list can attend the admission process till September 26.

The second cut-off list will be announced October 3. Students can check the merit list from 11am onwards on the website of Student Academic Management System (SAMS), said sources at S&ME department.

The admission will be conducted from October 5 to October 7.

The School and Mass Education (S&ME) department released the first merit list for Plus II admission September 18.

The first phase merit list of spot



selection will be published October 13. Students can complete their admission process from October 13 to October 15.

The final merit list for spot admissions will be out at 5pm October 15. Selected students can get their last chance to get admitted in Plus II courses between 10am and 4pm,

October 16. For any information regarding the admission process, candidates can contact the authorities at toll-free number - 1800-345-6770 and 155335.

The colleges and universities in the state started both Plus II and Plus III admissions in Arts, Science and Commerce streams from Monday.

BJD'S OPPOSITION TO FARM BILLS SPARKS DEBATE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Sept 21: Opposition to farm Bills by Biju Janata Dal (BJD), which has backed the Narendra Modi government on many issues in the past, has triggered sharp reactions in Odisha's political circles with BJD leaders claiming that the regional party fears the measures will end its control over regulated market committees.

Ruling BJD leaders, however, maintained that their opposition was not guided by any political considerations and the party wanted the Bills to be put to more scrutiny to do away with certain inadequacies for effective protection of small and marginal farmers as well as sharecroppers.

Out of 10 Rajya Sabha seats in Odisha, BJD has nine members while the BJP has one.

Hitting out at BJD for opposing Farm Bills, which were passed in Rajya Sabha Sunday, senior BJP leader and Lok Sabha member Suresh Pujari said the measures aimed at abolishing the role of middlemen and agents during paddy procurement at mandis.

The passage of the Bills will enable farmers to get the actual minimum support price (MSP) for their produce which they can sell at the nearest mandi, he told PTI over

phone. Pujari alleged that the BJD was opposed to the Bills as all the regulated market committees (RMCs) in the state are now being controlled by the ruling party in Odisha.

The RMCs have been preventing farmers from getting actual MSP in collusion with different government departments, he claimed, and alleged that the BJD leaders are against the Bills as collection of money from farmers will now come to an end.

Party's Chief Whip in Rajya Sabha, Sasmit Patra, said the regional outfit has consistently raised its concerns over some inadequacies in the Bills and pleaded for steps to put the measures to greater scrutiny to ensure that the interests of farmers are safeguarded.

Therefore, the BJD, which has extended issue-based support to the Centre on several occasions, had in Lok Sabha sought steps to send the Bills to the standing committee, while in the Upper House it pressed for sending these to the Select Committee for wider consultations, Patra said.



phone. Senior BJD MP Prasanna Acharya said the party was keen to protect the interests of farmers, but the farm Bills lacked some clarity. Therefore, the BJD pressed for referring the Bills to the select committee for scrutiny.

The two Bills, which the central government says will change the ecosystem of agricultural marketing, are largely good in intent but probably ignore the implementation aspects, said another senior BJD leader, while expressing apprehension about possible dilution of MSP.

The BJD's opposition to the Bills came close on the heels of its support to NDAs Harivansh for election to the post of Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha.

The Naveen Patnaik-led party has been backing the BJP-led gov-

ernment on many occasions during the last few years. It supported the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill as well as the Triple Talaq Bill last year.

The party was in favour of empowerment of women and therefore supported the Triple Talaq measure, a senior BJD leader said. Earlier, the BJD had supported the Modi government on demonetisa-

tion and GST. It had even backed BJP's Ashwini Vaishnav in Rajya Sabha election last year.

BJP MP Pujari attacked BJD for its demand to refer the farm Bills to the select committee for wider scrutiny and said the regional party had perhaps not gone through the provisions of the Bills meticulously.

Pujari asserted that the measures will immensely benefit the entire farming community including the small and marginal farmers.

"BJD's opposition to the Bills is not due to any love for the farmers but because their own income is now going to dwindle with the new legislation," he claimed, adding that the BJD is never bothered about the welfare of farmers.

The BJP MP further alleged that the BJD move was perhaps a reflection of the search operations carried out by the CBI on the prem-

ises of some of its leaders in the multi-crore rupees chit fund scam cases.

"BJD probably wanted to strike a deal with the Centre for backing the farm bills in lieu of protection against CBI raids on its leaders," he claimed.

Rubbishing the allegation, Acharya said the party had never opposed any CBI investigation. Terming BJD's opposition to the farm Bills as a drama, Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) President Niranjan Patnaik said people of the state know it quite well that both BJD and BJP are together.

"The drama was enacted simply to mislead the people. But, BJD should not consider the people of the state as fools," he said adding people have been keeping track of BJD's support to the BJP-led government on a number of measures.



BJD's opposition to the Bills is not due to any love for farmers but because their own income is now going to dwindle with the new legislation

SURESH PUJARI | BJP MP

Our party has consistently raised its concerns over some inadequacies in Farm Bills and pleaded for steps to put the measures to greater scrutiny to ensure that the interests of farmers are safeguarded

SASMIT PATRA | BJD MP



4,242 fresh nCoV cases, 9 deaths

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Sept 21: State's COVID-19 tally rose to 1,84,122 Monday as 4,242 more people tested positive for the infection, while nine fresh fatalities pushed Odisha's coronavirus death toll to 710, an official of Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) department said.

As many as 2,503 new cases were reported in quarantine centres, while 1,739 people tested positive for the infection during contact tracing, said the official.

Khurda district, under which Bhubaneswar falls, reported the highest number of new cases at 652, followed by Cuttack (595), Jharsuguda (205) and Puri (182), the official pointed out.

Two fresh fatalities were reported in tribal-dominated Keonjhar district, and one each in Balasore, Jagatsinghpur, Kandhamal, Khurda, Mayurbhanj, Nabarangpur and Nayagarh districts, said the official, adding that as many as 53 coronavirus patients have so far died due to other ailments.

Meanwhile, 3,704 patients recovered from the disease, taking the total recoveries in Odisha to 1,49,379, the H&FW department official said, adding that the state



Senior officials of Dhenkanal administration, including the district Collector, at a review meeting on COVID-19 situation

has so far tested over 28.14 lakh samples for COVID-19, including 47,758 Sunday.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has stated, "Our fight against COVID shall be easier if we fight it unitedly."

Patnaik further said, "Our good behaviour and some pleasant words with COVID patients shall ease their pain and called upon to endure these people and fight the pandemic boldly."

The CM said despite the economic downturn caused by COVID-

19, Odisha is on its way in achieving fiscal prudence.

The focus on careful management of resources and strict adherence to fiscal discipline has helped the state prepare itself for growth post-COVID, he pointed out.

The state government has asked the people under home isolation to follow the guidelines and take the medicines regularly provided to them in home isolation kit.

The people in home isolation have been advised to drink sufficient

OF INFECTIONS & DEATHS

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Two fresh fatalities were reported in Keonjhar, and one each in Balasore, Jagatsinghpur, Kandhamal, Khurda, Mayurbhanj, Nabarangpur and Nayagarh districts

water and ORS.

Pregnant women and persons with comorbidities were asked to maintain strict distance from the COVID patients.

Official sources said that since 80 per cent of COVID patients are asymptomatic, they should prefer home isolation and the children should be counseled to remain in home isolation as it provides comfortable environment, psychological wellbeing and homely care.

COMBINED EFFORT



Locals and Fire Services personnel unstuck an ambulance from mud on the premises of a private COVID hospital in Cuttack after a fire broke out at the healthcare facility, Monday

Ex-ADG of Prasar Bharati Abhay dies of COVID-19

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Sept 21: Former Additional Director General (ADG) of Prasar Bharati Abhay Kumar Padhi passed away Monday due to COVID-19. He had tested positive for the virus a few days ago.

A native of Sambalpur, he had been undergoing treatment at a COVID-19 hospital there.

He had joined Prasar Bharati in the year 1976. He had also served as the Senior Executive Officer of All India Radio (AIR) and Doordarshan.

Padhi had completed his graduation from Gangadhar Meher University (GM University) in the year 1970. He was a student of Ancient Indian History and European History. He had also completed his Post Graduation from the same university. He had done specialization in linguistics and phonetics. Padhi was also a former visiting faculty member at IIMC, Dhenkanal.

Notably, Prasar Bharati is India's largest public broadcasting agency. It is a statutory autonomous body set up by an Act of Parliament and comprises the Doordarshan Television Network and All India Radio, which were earlier media units of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.

Prompt action saves primate's life in Capital

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Sept 21: While on duty Officer B K Bal, ASI RPF PURI was engaged in Station Patrolling by using Segway to prevent Criminal activities against Railway Properties, noticed one monkey fallen down on the middle portion of Railway track from OHE as resulted some body part of the above wildlife annihilated by fire & got major injuries.

On seeing this the above named RPF Officer shifted to injured monkey at the safe Place by the side of Railway track with the assistance of on duty RPF Staff namely P K Ojha and informed the matter to IIC RPF PURI. Further he contacted & made Co-operation with forest Dept. & Veterinary Hospital PUI for providing medical assistance to save life of above injured wildlife.

After getting information from RPF PUI a team of forest Dept attend PURI Railway Station at 10.10 hrs of date and the injured wildlife shifted to veterinary Hospital PUI with the assistance of forest Dept & others. Now the above wildlife is under medical treatment and the condition is stable.

Huge cannabis cache seized in Capital city, six arrested

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Sept 21: Commissionerate Police Monday seized huge quantity of cannabis worth around ₹15 lakhs being transported in luxurious cars from a spot on the outskirts of the city here. The cops also arrested six drug peddlers and seized three vehicles during the raid here Monday.

The accused were identified as Siba Sambu Digal, 33, Kunu Pardhan, 25, Madhyam Behera, 35, Dipak Behera, 34, Sangram Nayak, 32, Parikhita Sahoo, 36. All the arrested drug peddlers hail

from different areas of Kandhamal district.

Following a tip-off, a Quick Action Team of Commissionerate Police and Tamando Police carried out a raid at Bhagabanpur in Kalinga Vihar area under Tamando police limits. During search, the sleuths found 135 Kg ganja concealed in the cars. Police also seized the cash of ₹55000 and four mobile phones apart from three Toyota cars from their possession. Police registered a case (122/20) under NDPS Act and arrested the six drug peddlers.

All the accused persons were later produced before the court that sent them to judicial custody.

'75% of MCC work to be over by year end'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Sept 21: The civic authority here, Monday, stated that the city's alternative to rising garbage collection in Micro Composting Centres (MCCs) will see about 75 per cent of work completion by end of December this year.

The Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) last year had floated tenders for construction of proposed 43 MCC in the city. Presently, only 11 MCCs have been made ready and functional. However the BMC, Monday, said that it will complete construction of 32 MCCs by end of December this year to ensure proper management of wet waste in capital city.



"The COVID-19 pandemic had slowed down the pace of construction works of MCCs, but we have resumed the work in full-swing. Our target is to complete at least 32 MCCs by end this year. At present, 11 MCCs are ready, and one of these at the Temporary Transit Station (TTS), near Sainik School, in the city, has been processing has been processing more

than 3 tonnes of wet waste daily since July," said BMC's City Engineer, Debasundar Mohapatra. The eleven completed MCCs include three at NICCO Park for Ward Nos - 28, 29, 35 and 36. Two at Laxmisagar Sewerage Treatment Plant for Ward- 32, 33, 42 and 43, one at Baragarh crematorium for Ward - 44 and two at Gopabandhu Nagar for Ward - 47, 48 and 51. Also one

each at Pandara, Prasanti Vihar and one at TSS near Sainik School have been made operational.

However, out of the total 43 proposed MCCs, work on 11 sites has not started due to land related disputes and public protest. Sources at the BMC said that the issue will be resolved soon, and construction works on these MCCs will start shortly. "We will start operating all the MCCs soon after their completion," said BMC Deputy Commissioner (Sanitation), Suvendu Kumar Sahu.

Meanwhile, allaying rumours of putrid stench and hygiene issues that may arise of composting Sahu said that the waste is segregated as bio-degradable and non-biodegradable at source.

HITTING THE STREETS



Youth Congress leaders demonstrate near Master Canteen Square in Bhubaneswar, Monday, protesting the 'anti-farmer' bills passed in the Parliament recently

DEAD FISH AFLOAT

CIFA team collects samples from Narendra pond, Musa river

POST NEWS NETWORK

Puri, Sept 21: A few days after hundreds of dead fish were found floating in Narendra pond, a team from Central Institute of Freshwater Aquaculture (CIFA) took stock of the situation at the ground zero here Monday.

"The team comprising two scientists, a pathologist and a few senior officials of CIFA has collected water samples from several points of Narendra pond as well as its adjoining Musa river. The team has also collected a few live fish from Narendra pond for investigations," said a source present at the ground zero.

According to sources, hundreds of dead fish were found floating in Narendra pond much to the sur-



prise of the visitors and devotees September 18. The district administration took note of the incident as locals attributed it to the 'uncontrolled' inflow of wastewater from Musa river to Narendra pond, resulting in depletion of oxygen levels in the holy pond.

The district Fisheries department had sent water sample from Narendra pond to CIFA. Researchers of the institute, however, preferred collecting water samples from both

Narendra pond and Musa river as, according to them, it would go a long way in landing any conclusion.

Asked, district Fisheries officer Debendra Behera said, "We have earlier sent water samples from a particular point of Narendra pond. However, CIFA team preferred collecting water samples from several points of the pond as well as Musa river."

Apart from Behera, Puri sub-collector Bhabataran Sahu, assistant Fisheries officer Bijay Kumar Sahu and other senior officials of the district administration were also present on the occasion.

Notably, Narendra pond holds a key position in the Jagannath Culture. The annual Chandan Yatra ritual of Srimandir deities are performed in the holy pond.

CSOs urge inclusion of dal, edible oil under food security scheme

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Sept 21: As part of COVID elevation measure, a meagre amount of 1 kg of chana dal has been provided to BPL/PDS beneficiaries every month and the state government is planning to stop its allocation from November.

As it has been a key arsenal in rural Odisha's pandemic fight and will be crucial to address malnutrition in the long run, civil society groups have urged the Odisha government to continue the supply of one kg of dal, free of cost for at least 12 months and provide an additional quantity of 2 kgs dal per family at ₹10/-kg and add 1 kg of cooking oil @10/- per litre and 1 kg of

Iodized Salt at free of cost to keep hunger and malnutrition at bay.

Following COVID-19 lockdown, people witnessed a spill in prices compared to 2019 and high prices of pulses may affect nutrition security, claim civil society groups, according to a study they had recently conducted to know the consumption practices of Dal and its impact on nutritional food security in rural Odisha during COVID-19.

Following COVID-19 lockdown, people witnessed a spill in prices compared to 2019 and high prices of pulses may affect nutrition security, claim the CSOs of the state, according to a study they had recently conducted to know the consumption practices of Dal and its



impact on nutritional food security in rural Odisha during COVID-19. The online survey titled "Consumption of Dal and its impact

on nutritional food security in Odisha" which was undertaken with more than 10769 families in the state in 16 districts covering 405

villages of 371 Gram Panchayats in 83 blocks reveal the emerging need of Dal and Edible oil in Public Distribution System to ensure nutritional food security among people in rural Odisha.

According to the study report, 99.9% of surveyed families said that the Dal provided under the Public Distribution System is benefiting them. It emphasizes that people need Dal from the government as a nutrition supplement looking at their consumption trend. The survey report also revealed that 46.6% of the families have to spend between Rs. 81 to Rs. 100 for 1 KG of Dal and around 2% of families have also said that they have to pay more than Rs.110 for 1KG

dal. The enhanced price of Dal will most likely distort spending and consumption decisions and this may affect nutrition security, especially for low-income families.

Odisha is one of Empowered Action Group (EAG) states declared by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. Though the state has improved on the proportion of malnourished children under-5 in the state shrunk to 34.4% (NFHS-4) from 40.7% (NFHS-3), the tribal communities still suffer the most. Almost 50% of the under-5 children from tribal communities in Odisha are underweight, and 46% are stunted. Another defiance for Odisha is its outreach to remote and particularly tribal populations.

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Ganjam's battle against microbial forces

AS LAKHS OF MIGRANTS RETURNED, THE DISTRICT TURNED A COVID HOTSPOT. THEN HOW DID IT BATTLE THE CORONAVIRUS AND BRING THE DAILY SPIKE DOWN?

POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, Sept 21: The district of Ganjam gained notoriety a few months back for two reasons. One was due to the number of migrant workers returning to the district, the second one was for it emerging as a hotspot for Covid-19; an induced effect.

However, the district administration by taking prompt measures has now managed the Covid-19 situation. There was a time when the district was reporting close to 650 Covid cases daily. Now because of the preventive measures taken the numbers have come down to 50-60 cases a day.

Active surveillance, strict penalty collection for violation of Covid-19 guidelines, setting up of control rooms for monitoring, capacity-building of frontline health workers, better communication and strong community engagement are some of the strategies that have helped in restricting the spread of the disease.

On the other hand in a bid to manage the Covid situation in the district properly the state government had also appointed IAS rank officers to monitor, coordinate and guide actions in the field.

However, early release of technical guidelines on contact tracing, quarantine, isolation, hospitalisation, infection prevention and control, and extensive capacity-building by the district Health department also played a critical role in managing the situation.

Here are some of the key points which helped the Ganjam district to reduce the tally from 800 to 80:

Early preparation: The Ganjam district administration had re-

District	Confirmed	Active	Recovered	Deceased	Oth. Death
Ganjam	19,675 [+57]	269 [+57]	19,182	216	8



stricted various festivals like Chaitra Mangalbar Yatra and Danda Yatra in the district in the month of March. However, the Covid hit the district with the coming of the migrant workers from different states.

Except the public transport carrying migrant workers and essential good vehicles, the district administration had not allowed any vehicle to enter the district. For this, the admin had sealed various borders like Ganjam-Andhra Pradesh and intra state borders like at Khurda, Nayagarh, Puri and Kandhamal. All these helped the district administration in the fight against this pandemic.

Systemic investment in strengthening health infrastructure: The district administration has systematically invested in health sector in order to strengthen the infrastructure. During the pandemic, the district administration had set up at least four Covid-19 dedicated hospitals and several COVID Care

centres both in urban and panchayat levels to treat the positive cases with well-trained staff and team from all specialties. Introduction of 'Plasma Therapy' also helped the district for the speedy recovery of Covid patients.

Early screening of all migrant workers: During the month of April, the migrant workers had started coming to the district in lakhs with no job opportunities and food left at the states like Gujarat and Tamil Nadu. However, the district administration had put up temporary medical camps at bus terminals and seaports for the health screening of the migrants.

Testing and containment strategy: Considering the increase in the number of cases, the district Collector Vijay Amruta Kulange strengthened the surveillance and control measures against the disease. Intense contact tracing and increased number of coronavirus testing at the containment zones

in the district are the mainstay of the district's Covid-19 response.

Kulange also instructed all the medical stores in the district to keep the details of each and every person with flu like symptoms coming to their stores to purchase medicines. The district administration had also adopted sero-survey to check the developed anti-bodies for the Covid-19 infection.

Isolation of high-risk contacts: The government instituted a longer quarantine from 14 to 28 days initially and built thousands of shelters for migrant workers stranded by the nationwide shutdown. Further, COVID Care Centers had been established in all blocks to accommodate non-residents such as tourists and people in transit among others. Adequate infrastructure had been provided at all designated isolation facilities for accommodating residents returning from other states. Though the district administration had to face several criticisms from various quarters for the same but it never stepped back from the Covid-19 rules.

Providing psychosocial support: To provide psychological support to the migrant workers at the isolation or quarantine centres the district administration had made arrangements like exercises and yogas at the morning time, listening of music during the evening time and gardening works. The district administration also educated the migrant workers on Covid management at the quarantine centres.

TOTAL ACTIVE CASES NOW STAND AT 269

POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, Sept 21: Ganjam district's number of active Covid-19 cases has been constantly decreasing. Currently, the number of active cases in Ganjam district stands at 269.

The district reported 57 fresh cases Monday. With this, the number of COVID-19 infected persons in the district went up to 19,675. So far, 19,182 patients have recovered from the pandemic disease.

The deadly virus has so far claimed 216 lives in the district. The number of patients who have died due to reasons other than COVID-19 is eight.

There was a time when the dist was reporting close to 650 Covid cases daily. Now because of the preventive measures taken the numbers have come down to 50-60 cases a day

The district administration however, has still urged people not to become complacent. In a tweet, district Collector Vijay Amruta Kulange has asked people to wear masks properly and also follow social distancing as the vaccine against the disease is yet to hit the markets.

In the tweet, Kulange also asked people not to go out of their houses unless absolutely necessary. Notably, there was a time when the district was reporting the highest number of cases in Odisha on a daily basis.

However, now Khurda district has emerged as the hotspot for Covid-19. The district reported 651 cases Monday, followed by Cuttack district with 595 cases.

Bureaucratic 'apathy' is delaying elderly their old-age pension

While some don't find their names in the Voters' list, some are told that the paperwork is incomplete. The question remains - in their twilight years how long would they be able to run from pillar to post?



POST NEWS NETWORK

Dasmantpur, Sept 21: Although both the state and Central governments have been implementing various schemes for the poor and elderly, it is the apathy of the officials that scores of elderly persons residing in Dasmantpur block in Koraput remain deprived of the old-age pension.

Factors like unavailability of voter identity card, Aadhar Card and incomplete paper works are responsible for their plight.

Locals alleged that the process of preparing the voters' list was done only on pen and paper as a result of which those eligible to exercise their franchise were deprived of their rights.

The delay in enrolling the names of senior citizens in the list of persons eligible for old-age pension shows the officials' disregard for government orders, residents said.

A case in point is of the 67-year-old Madhu's. Madhu and his wife Ralla of Dasmantpur in the district are yet to get the old-age pension which they should get under the state government scheme. The couple has no kids and they are also suffering from old-age related ailments and are forced to lead a miserable life. The couple had narrated their grievances be-

fore the district Collector many times but to no avail.

Another elderly woman Suki, a resident of the block for the last 30 years, earns her livelihood by selling dried fish. Following her old-age issues, she had shifted to an old-age home in the block. Though she had included her name in the voter-ID card, the officials denied issuing the old-age pension card to her as she has no Aadhar Card.

Other villagers also said that they on Kuni's behalf have also appealed to the government to provide her with the old-age pension.

When asked, an official of Dasmantpur block office said, "The applications of the elderly persons have already been submitted to the block office. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic it has been delayed. Once approved, they will start getting their pension regularly."

During this pandemic the elderly persons require the pension the most as they need money for various health related issues, locals said.

On the other hand, the state government March 24, 2020 has declared to provide old age pensions to 48 lakh beneficiaries of Odisha at their doorsteps, however the plight of the elderly persons in Dasmantpur block tells something different.

The applications (of the elderly persons) have already been submitted to the block office. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic it has been delayed. Once approved, they will start getting their pension regularly

OFFICIAL OF DASMANTPUR BLOCK OFFICE

He makes learning easy for students with teaching aids

POST NEWS NETWORK

Khaira, Sept 21: Meet this retired primary school teacher Raghunath Mohanty (61) of Sarugaon village under Khaira block in Balasore district. He is popularly called 'Raghu Sir' by the locals. He is popular because of the teaching aids he creates for the benefit of the students.

Raghunath had been worked as a mathematics teacher in various primary schools. All through his teaching career, Raghunath has tried to impart knowledge in a simple manner and make the subject matter easy for his students. For this he has used handmade teaching aids. Despite his limited earning as a primary school teacher, Raghunath spends a large chunk of his salary for making teaching aids every month. Even after his retirement,

he still continues to do so. Among the subjects for those he makes teaching aids are science, geography, history and mathematics. This is because he is aware of the tender minds of school-going kids.

The retired teacher has worked at primary schools in Sundarapur, Mahatipur, Bhogupur and Maharasahi villages under the block. Raghunath uses waste materials like newspaper, pitch board, foil wrapper, discarded cloth, coir and matchboxes. He has donated some of these teaching aids to the Khaira block education office, which have been kept there. Students, parents and teachers of different schools coming to the office often gain knowledge by using these aids. "During leisure times, every day, ideas creep into my mind inspiring me to make innovative teaching aids," the retired teacher said.



Raghunath spends a large chunk of his salary in making teaching aids

He uses waste materials like newspaper, pitch board, foil wrapper, discarded cloth, coir and matchboxes



Unhappy over the passage of Central government's contentious farm Bills, members of a farmers' association stage a demonstration in front of Bant block office, Monday

Kangaroo court makes couple wear garland of shoes, 6 held

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rajgangpur, Sept 21: Rajgangpur police detained six persons in connection with a case wherein a man and his sister-in-law were made to wear a garland of shoes and then paraded in the village.

According to a source, Jiten Barua, a resident of Fakarpada village under Rajgangpur police limits in Sundargarh had an extra marital affair with his sister-in-law. Both were married but had eloped some days ago.

Following the incident, the

woman's husband had lodged an FIR with the police and declared that he would not accept her as his wife. On the other hand, Jiten had taken her to his house, promising to take care of her and her three children.

The couple got ostracised. But before that, the Kangaroo court forced them to wear a garland of shoes and go around the village. Some had recorded the entire incident and uploaded it on social media platforms. As the video went viral, police interfered and rescued the couple who had since been staying outside the village.

Once upon a time it was a road, now a veggie market

Due to heavy flow of traffic and space crunch, two to three accidents are occurring on this— Nahaka Chowk to Bypass Chowk— stretch of the road daily

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur, Sept 21: A four-lane road built at a cost of Rs 1 crore in this town has been transformed into a vegetable market. The road constructed from Nahaka Chowk to Bypass Chowk here was meant to ease traffic congestion. But it has not happened.

In an effort to prevent the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic, the district administration has shifted the 'Green Market' on this road. Vegetable vendors are also now selling their produce sitting on this road only. With one side of the road completely taken over by the hawkers, traffic congestion problems continue to plague the commuters.

Vehicles entering this town are using the road that passes through Dhabaligiri Chowk, Nahaka

Chowk, Gopabandhu Chowk, Dala Chowk and Dakbungalow Chowk. One can always see a large number of heavy vehicles parked on the newly laid-out Nahaka Chowk-Bypass Chowk road.

Due to heavy flow of traffic and space crunch, two to three accidents are occurring on this stretch of road daily. Residents on this stretch of road are also irked because of the problems they are facing due to the shifting of the market. However, the district administration officials are not paying any heed to these problems. The residents have demanded that the market be shifted to its original location before the onset of the festive season.

When contacted, executive officer, Vyasagar Municipality, Subhendu Kumar Jena said, "We

have shifted the vegetable market only to stop the spread of coronavirus infection. There has been proposal for setting up vending zones at Chorda fish market and Kopand. Tender will be floated and finalised for developing these zones."

This stretch of NH-326 is a death trap

The NH stretch from Mohana to Paralakhemundi has been damaged following rains and is full of craters, posing a threat to the lives of hundreds of commuters

POST NEWS NETWORK

R.Udayagiri, Sept 21: A stretch of NH-326 connecting Mohana-Paralakhemundi in Gajapati district has turned to be a death trap.

For the tribal-dominated Mohana block, this road is the only way to connect with the district headquarters office, hospital and other government offices at Paralakhemundi.

However, the block denizens, school and college students and patients communicating on this road say that it is no surprise that accidents on the road are a common



For the tribal-dominated Mohana block, this road is the only way to connect with the district headquarters office, hospital and other government offices at Paralakhemundi

affair. Several factors are responsible for accidents here. Potholes, bad shape of road, stray bovines and absence of warning signs for the potholes have made the road accident prone.

Owing to traffic jams, buses and school vans are seen stuck for hours. Children often get late reaching schools and return home late. Though this year the students have not faced such problems, thank to

the COVID-19 pandemic. Worse, patients going in ambulances lay stranded for hours despite emergency. In dry seasons, the area remains polluted due to clouds of dust rising from the transport activities while in rainy season, commuting woes worsen with water puddles and craters.

Locals had submitted a memorandum to the Collector seeking repair of the road. As nothing was done, they took up the issue at the Collector's grievances hearing, but that also in vain.

Locals alleged that it is the good equation between the contractors and PWD department engineers, though the road has been repaired every year by spending lakhs of rupees, it again develops big potholes within one to two months of its re-pairing.

Though our correspondent tried to reach the senior executive engineer of the PWD department, he denied for the same on the pretext of COVID-19 pandemic.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, RURAL WORKS DIVISION, TITILAGARH
E-mail ID: eerw_titilagarh@yahoo.co.in
e-Procurement Notice

No.: O-367
IFB IDENTIFICATION No. EETIG-Online-01/2020-21

1	Name of Work	: Road Work
2	Total No. of Works	: 01 (One) No.
3	Approximate Estimated Cost	: Rs. 71.28 Lakhs
4	Time for Completion	: 03 (Three) Months
5	Mode of Submission of Tender	: Tender should be submitted online in www.tenders.ori.nic.in
6	Other details are as follow	: As per TCN No. EETIG-Online-01/2020-21

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of Tender Online for Bidding	Last date and time of seeking tender clarification	Date & time of opening of tender
Executive Engineer, R.W. Divn., Titilagarh	EETIG-Online-01/2020-21	25.09.2020 at 11.00 A.M. upto 5.00 P.M.	06.10.2020 upto 1.00 P.M.	05.10.2020 upto 07.10.2020 at 11.00 A.M.

• Further details can be seen from the website www.tenders.ori.nic.in.
• Any Corrigendum/Addendum will be displayed in the above e-tender website only.

Sd/- Executive Engineer, R.W. Division, Titilagarh
OIPR-25078/11/10001/2021

FOCUS NATION

SILENCING OF VOICES



Regimes, by the very nature of how they are constituted, will always find it convenient to use the law with a semantic twist. However, the Constitution, and the fundamental rights guaranteed by it are bound to get seriously corroded in the process

The contempt of court case against the Tamil actor Suriya was fortunately and wisely dropped by the Madras High Court. This, and the case of contempt against activist lawyer Prashant Bhushan, raise serious concerns about the judiciary's notions of its self-image. One wonders if merely raising questions is now being seen as an offence.

Going by the investigation in the Delhi riots, there should be little doubt that the days of citizens' protest against a government policy are a thing of the past. The CAA-related protests emerged due to the selective nature of the Act which sought to provide citizenship to 'persecuted minorities' from the neighbouring countries. The relief was not provided to all neighbouring countries; it was not provided to all minorities either. Nearly a dozen tribal communities in Bangladesh – such as the Bru and the Chakma—are much smaller in numbers than the religious communities that received relief by the amended act. It was the selective nature of the CAA that was being questioned by the protesting groups.

The Delhi riots were an entirely different issue. But in the investigation by the Delhi Police, the two were put together and many young protesters were picked up under the charge of a 'conspiracy'. On the other hand, the leaders from the ruling dispensation who made inflammatory speeches were not even mentioned in the three charge-sheets submitted to the court. It appears that the police department is working towards proving its theory of a large-scale conspiracy. The trend is worrisome for citizens who believe that the Constitution gives them the freedom for peaceful assembly and freedom of expression of their views.

What is even more worrisome is that the use of UAPA has become far too frequent. The latest disclosure by the National Investigation Agency is that the UAPA cases over the last few years were 922 (2016), 901 (2017) and 1182 (2018). These numbers are large for

the kind of the provisions that the UAPA contains. The UAPA, which stands for the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, in its original form, had good intentions and good international conduct. The United Nations, in response to the 9/11 (2001) attack by al-Qaeda, sensing the need to have legislative backing for the anti-terrorism drive initiated by the member states, had requested the community of nations in November 2001 to form suitable laws. After several related UN resolutions and particularly the UN Security Council Resolution 1822 (in 2008), India amended its UAPA (in 2008).

A further amendment to it in 2019, passed through the Parliament in August, altered Section 35 of the UAPA and made it applicable to 'individuals' who could be categorised as terrorists, while in the past it was applied to 'organisations' alone.

The results of this 'reinterpretation' are before us. In April, Masrat Zahra, a 26-year-old photojournalist from J&K was booked under it. In Delhi, Meeran Haider and Safoora Zargar, students from the Jamia Millia Islamia University, and Umar Khalid from JNU have been held using the provisions of UAPA. In Assam, the well-known RTI activist and human rights defender Akhil Gogoi has been in prison since December 2019. Several prominent intellectuals have been booked using the provisions of the draconian law by claiming that they had incited violence during a meeting held in Pune last year.

Among them have been Gautam Navalakha and Anand Teltumbde. Some weeks ago, Delhi University Professor Hany Babu Musaliyarveetil Tharayil was arrested under the same provisions of the UAPA. The All India Students' Association's (AISA) Delhi president Kawalpreet Kaur too has been brought under the scanner. This is not the complete list of the individuals arrested.

The use of UAPA against individuals who raise uncomfortable questions, coupled with pliant judiciary, has now become a deadly instrument for suppressing thought and ideas. Terrorist activities and sedition are terms that immediately place even a completely innocent individual under a heavy cloud

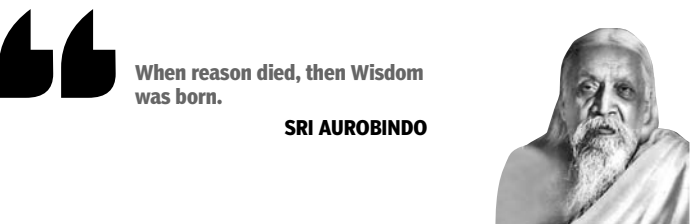
of public suspicion, once charged so by the state. However, in the process, the state is turning free-thinking, holding divergent views, dissent and disagreement on important public issues into 'a crime'. Interpretation of an act as a 'crime' too needs minimum discernment. Some time back, Jeyaraj and Benicks, a father and son duo, were allegedly beaten up, tortured and killed by two police sub-inspectors posted at the Sathankulam police station in Tuticorin. The Tamil Nadu CID arrested the cops, the Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court ordered a probe and the CBI was asked to take over the case. The victims killed had been late by half-an-hour in downing the shutters of their small shop. The police officers felt duty-bound to point out the violation of the corona-related business hour regulation. A great tragedy for all four—the killed and the killers— and their families took place.

As it happened in the colonial past with communities (now called the Denotified Tribes) that were perfectly innocent but were brought under the spectre of suspicion as 'being potentially criminal', dissent is at present brought under labels like 'sedition' and 'terrorism'. Regimes, by the very nature of how they are constituted, will always find it convenient to use the law with a semantic twist. However, the Constitution, and the fundamental rights guaranteed by it are bound to get seriously corroded in the process. Governments are creatures of the Constitution. When they wilfully ignore the need to deepen the spirit of the Constitution, they display an insufficient understanding of the relationship between the people, the Constitution and their joint creature, the government.

Allowing the democratic space for dissent ultimately is at the heart of democracy.

The writer is a literary scholar and a cultural activist. He is chairman of the People's Linguistic Survey and leads the Dakshinayan movement of writers.

THE BILLION PRESS



When reason died, then Wisdom was born.

SRI AUROBINDO

Trample the farmer

What is touted as a major agriculture reform legislation, when it came, is facing limited resistance from the unorganized farming community. The Union government, in passing the three agriculture related Bills, has tried to play a game similar to the earlier move it made in reforms in the tax system. It had claimed that the One Nation One Tax slogan would make the Goods & Services Tax (GST) the ultimate solution of easing up business and stopping pilferage. Today, barely three years later, the pitfalls created by the implementation of GST have hammered small and medium businesses and, at the same time, in this critical economic crisis period the GST collections have sharply declined and the Union government is unwilling or incapable to pay the states their due. Instead it has compelled the states to borrow at high rates of interest for keeping the wheels turning.

These agriculture Bills should not be compared to a financial or taxation regulation. These could cause immense hardships not only in the farm sector for marginal, small and medium farmers but also for those weaker sections of society who are in non-farming sectors and buy their food. The resignation of the lone Akali Union minister, Harsimrat Kaur Badal, from the Modi government is an indication of ground realities in states like Punjab and Haryana. Farmers in states like Orissa are not aware of the dangers of these new laws and how negatively these will impact them in the near future, unlike their counterparts in other agriculturally developed states. States like Maharashtra or Uttar Pradesh have not yet reacted since their major cash crop -sugarcane- is already in a loose contract farming set up.

The government's claim that the new farm Bills will help eliminate middlemen and the transactions will be directly between the farmer and the trader, and that this will largely benefit the farmers, sounds very good. However, there seems to have been no thought given as to who will fill in the vacuum that will be created by the supposed vanishing act to be put up by the middlemen. In a state like Orissa, it is these middlemen who offer advance payment to marginal or small farmers for the future produce. Once they are eliminated, the cash crunch will immediately affect the already debt-ridden farmer. The trader is probably expected to be the ambassador of a large corporate like Adani or Reliance. For these companies to enter the market and commence periodic or seasonal procurement at every panchayat of this vast nation will take considerable time. End result will be poorer procurement resulting in more distress sale. But there may be no one around to pitch in when the farmer goes in for such a desperate sale.

The devil is in the details. The farm legislation allows farmers to 'trade freely without any license or stock limit.' This could be painted as a positive turn but ground realities speak of farmers incapable to transport their produce to mandis located in adjoining panchayats. With poverty levels being so acute, it would be a matter of great wonder if marginal or small farmers who form the bulk of that community in a state like ours would have the economic holding power to remain afloat and sell their produce outside their district, let alone the state. Creating these vacuum spaces will bring in whole different systems into play that have not been thought through properly. Most likely, a parallel to the hurried implementation of the GST can be expected here too.

Setting up a grievance redressal machinery sounds good too but which poor farmer will have the capacity to go through a three-fold adjudication set up is also a matter to ponder over.

The Gramin Agricultural Markets scheme envisages a haat system for agriculturists in each panchayat and sponsored by the central government. Presently, agricultural markets are mostly regulated by the Agriculture Produce Marketing Committee (APMC) and this entity, no doubt, has its flaws. But will the central government, in spite of its greed to usurp powers of the state governments, be able to create the wherewithal to reach every panchayat across the length and breadth of this vast country and execute such a massive and, at the same time, equitable marketing facility for the immensely varied agricultural produce? Should it even be bothered with such a gigantic task in these times of economic distress?

It is claimed that APMC markets were set up with the objective of fair trade between the seller (farmer) and the buyer (trader), from whom the produce reached the consumers. There are problems in this, of a kind that only limited traders are involved in the operations, and this has led to cartelization. New players are not allowed in, and this has limited competition and worked to the disadvantage of the farmer. Now when the existing system is demolished, there is no clarity as to what and how soon a new system will be in place and function smoothly. A comparatively easier taxation system like the GST still seems to have teething problems even after three years of implementation.

Laws alone will not help. The APMC model act was introduced in 2017-18, and the idea of contract farming was to get a fillip. The aim was to allow restriction-free trade of farm products, promote competition by encouraging multiple marketing channels, and promote farming through pre-agreed contracts. In reality, most states shied away from implementing several provisions of the reforms suggested in the model law. The present legislation seeks to facilitate barrier-free trade of agricultural products outside the markets, define a framework for contract farming, and impose stock limit option only if and when there is a sharp increase in retail prices.

Exploitation of the farm sector has always been rampant. The Indian farmer, the true toiling class, has always been neglected and kept under subjugation. Not only in present modern day India but historically all past rulers have always made efforts to keep the farmer poor and impoverished. That has always suited the powers that be. It is not difficult to imagine where all these new legislations will take this country in the matter of food security. No one dares to speak up now as the money bags favor all sides of the political spectrum. The farmer is voiceless and therefore it is easy to trample him.

WISDOM CORNER

- Lawless are they that make their wills their law. **WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE**
- Morality is of the highest importance - but for us, not for God. **ALBERT EINSTEIN**
- Although the world is full of suffering, it is also full of the overcoming of it. **HELEN KELLER**

WORDSWORTH

Touch wood

To touch wood or knock on wood is a superstitious action to ward off any evil consequences or bad luck, perhaps because of some recent action you've taken or untimely boasting about your good fortune ("I've never been in danger of drowning, touch wood"); it can also be a charm to bring good luck. The origin is unknown, though some writers have pointed to pre-Christian rituals involving the spirits of sacred trees such as the oak, ash, holly or hawthorn. There is an old Irish belief that you should knock on wood to let the little people know that you are thanking them for a bit of good luck. There's also a belief that the knocking sound prevents the Devil from hearing your unwise comments. Others have sought a meaning in which the wood symbolises the timber of the cross, but this may be a Christianisation of an older ritual. It wasn't always wood that was lucky: in older days, iron was also thought to have magical properties, and to touch iron was an equivalent preventative against ill-fortune.



Ganesh Devy

THE USE OF UAPA AGAINST INDIVIDUALS WHO RAISE UNCOMFORTABLE QUESTIONS, COUPLED WITH A PLIANT JUDICIARY, HAS NOW BECOME A DEADLY INSTRUMENT FOR SUPPRESSING THOUGHT AND IDEAS

SPECTRUM GOVERNANCE

Days with the many defence ministers



Prof SN Misra

IT IS TO THE CREDIT OF PRANAB MUKHERJEE THAT THE DEFENCE MINISTRY BECAME THE PIONEER OF HAVING AN INTEGRITY PACT, WHICH WAS ADOPTED SUBSEQUENTLY BY THE ONGC AND THE POWER SECTOR

I have had the rare privilege of working with four defence ministers—beginning with Mulayam Singh Yadav during 1996-98, and later with George Fernandes for 1998-2004, Pranab Mukherjee during 2004-06 and AK Antony for 2006-2014. Each of these had their own unique styles. Mulayam shuffled between Lucknow and Delhi in IAF planes, and wanted all notings to be written in Hindi. He called Major Generals as Majors!

George Fernandes brought in enormous dynamism to the stiff-cold defence ministry, with his informality and easy accessibility. He was the most popular defence minister as he carried cakes to troops during Christmas. He once sent some defence wing finance officials to Siachen Glacier, for them to have a taste of what's what, after he found they were sitting over proposals for sanction of snow boots for the troops. Antony was the longest serving defence minister: He served for eight years, a time when he gave priority to keep up his clean image, starkly, over the need for timely procurement of weapon systems and platforms. Between the 'irrational exuberance' of Fernandes and the self-righteousness of Antony, Pranab Mukherjee was like a savant who brought gravitas and grace to

South Block.

When Mukherjee came in 2004, N.Vittal, the then Central Vigilance Commissioner, met him and harped on the need to usher in transparency in procurement process vis-a-vis defence deals. This sowed the seeds of Defence Procurement Manual 2005 which coincided with my baptism into the MoD as financial adviser and as chairperson to complete this document in consultation with all the stakeholders.

Mukherjee ensured that a Defence Procurement Manual for revenue items and a Defence Procurement Procedure for long-term capital acquisition of weapon systems and platforms were put in place by August, 2005. There was a debate in the defence ministry whether such a manual should have a restricted use in the ministry, or be put up as part of the MoD website. Mukherjee overruled all the conservative mandarins and ensured that India's MoD is a perceived as a transparent defence buyer globally. He stood for transparency and cleared the cobwebs of sleaze that shrouded defence deals.

Mukherjee also put in place a new procedure called the 'Offset Procedure' in 2005, as per which when a country goes for a big ticket acquisition, it can ask the exporting

country to transfer key technology, bring in FDI and bolster exports as an 'offset'. When this procedure was unveiled, the global companies welcomed the move as a pioneering effort on the part of MoD to bring in best global practice. The example of how Brazil built its Embraer aircraft, by getting technology from the US while buying F-16 aircraft, set the template for India.

The other very important provision that was incorporated in Defence Procurement Procedure in 2006 was the Integrity Pact. Admiral Tahliani (Retd. CNS) who was President of Transparency International, India chapter, brought to the notice of Mukherjee how India ranked very high in the corruption index. As per the Integrity Pact, which is widely practised globally, the purchaser and the buyer sign a commitment of 'no corruption'. Normally such a commitment is given only by the seller and not by the buyer.

We also included the 'Undue Influence clause', through which defence contracts can be cancelled if defence agents try to resort to venal methods to gain contracts. It is to the credit of Mukherjee that the MoD became the pioneer of having an Integrity Pact, which was adopted subsequently by the

ONGC and the power sector. Mukherjee ensured that the exigency of defence procurement does not cloud fair process, equal opportunity and criteria-based short-listing and evaluation of vendors. This has been his most enduring contribution in his three years' stay in the defence ministry, before he left for the MEA in 2006.

Mukherjee has written in his memoirs how Indira Gandhi was not aware of the nuances of the Emergency provisions. In his last memoirs, Mukherjee has written of how Sonia Gandhi expected him to be deferential towards her after he became the President. He loathed the idea of being a Gandhi lackey.

In government for long years, Mukherjee recalled precedents with rare ease. Nehru was his hero, as he discovered the Parliamentarian in him; Indira was his most-loved leader as she catapulted him to the position of PM when he was young; and he was not comfortable with Rajiv Gandhi and the concept of dynastic politics. He ended up as a friend, philosopher and guide of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who conferred on him the Bharat Rata. He was more than an archetypal Bhadrakal.

The writer teaches at KIIT University.

Judiciary & criticism

Sir, The origin of the dictum, life is not a bed of roses, is unclear: Quite a few scholars have mused on this. The other day, Justice NV Ramana of the Supreme Court was all pains when he made a related quote. The man in line to be the next chief justice of India hit out at the slander campaign against judiciary in the social media. "Juicy gossips" have taken a toll on judiciary, he lamented. Judges are proving to be soft targets for the social media. Make no mistake about it. Like any other field, judiciary has its own share of bad apples. Let's also be clear that the present situation of attacks on judiciary is the judges' own making. Instances of corruption and favouritism are slowly demolishing the aura built around the judiciary and judges. Such instances are one too many. This should sound alarm bells, but the government has little of interest in setting things right. Top judges are quick to accept post-retirement positions. Under the present situation, a habitual troll is bound to increase the vehemence of his attacks. Sadly, upright judges too are now seen in such a bad light. We have had, and have, outstanding judges who kept the reputation of the judiciary high. They were aloof, hardly mixed with the public, lived up to the high standards expected of a judge and consequently protected the aura that kept the judiciary as an institution of high values. Integrity was their mantra. We still have such judges around. It is time for the others to change for the better.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

UAPA & CAA

Sir, The UAPA has been invoked by the Delhi Police to arrest activists like JNU-fame Umar Khalid. They have been booked in a case relating to the anti-Citizenship Amendment Act protests and violence in Delhi in February. The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act is primarily an anti-terror law aimed at "more effective prevention of certain unlawful activities." It was first promulgated in 1967 to target secessionist outfits. The last amendment in 2019 stipulated that even an individual can be designated as terrorist, while in the past only organisations could be so designated. In UAPA cases, the police custody can be extended to 30 days unlike in ordinary criminal cases where the custody is only for 15 days for initial interrogations. While UAPA has relevance, the government is urged to ensure that its provisions are not misused.

Animesh Mishra, IIMC, DHENKANAL

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

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TMC peddles 'soft Hindutva' to stop BJP's forward march

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Sept 21: Faced with the prospect of a spirited challenge from the BJP in the assembly polls due next year, the TMC government in West Bengal has loosened its purse strings to extend help to Hindu priests, as it seeks to debunk accusations of minority appeasement.

The Mamata Banerjee government's move to grant Rs 1,000 monthly allowance and free housing to 8000 Brahmin priests is being seen by many as an attempt to shed its pro-Muslim image.

Banerjee, who has repeatedly been accused of "minority appeasement" by the BJP, had shown her government's benevolence towards the minority community, extending monetary benefits to the Muslim clergy.

The Imams of Mosques and Muzzeins, who call the devout Muslims for prayer, get a monthly allowance of Rs 2,500 and Rs 1,500 every month. The arrangement was made in 2012, a year after Banerjee stormed to power defeating the Left Front with the solid backing of Muslims, who constitute around 30 per cent of the state's population. The Calcutta high court had in 2013 dubbed the government's decision



THE RSS HAD RECENTLY SCOFFED AT THE MAMATA BANERJEE GOVERNMENT OVER EFFORTS TO COURT THE INFLUENTIAL BRAHMIN COMMUNITY

COMMUNAL POLITICS

West Bengal has been driven by communal strife over the last few years. Scores of incidents of communal clashes have been reported over the last decade, leading to polarisation of voters along religious lines.

The TMC and the BJP have been the beneficiaries of the communal strife that left the largely secular polity of the state in the dumps, with the CPI(M)-led Left front that ruled the state for over three decades, and the Congress, relegated to the margins

Some in the TMC said the party's overture to Brahmins was aimed at neutralising the alleged BJP campaign that the state's ruling party was against Hindus

on the Muslim clergy's emoluments as "unconstitutional and against public interest."

The Banerjee government, however, did not revoke its decision. With the minorities, particularly Muslims, reposing their unflinching support to her, the Bengal leader now wants to shed the image of being anti-Hindu.

Prashant Kishor, the poll strategist who once helmed the election campaign for Narendra Modi when the latter was the Gujarat chief

minister, and later when he made a successful bid for prime minister, is now advising Banerjee.

Close watchers of Bengal's political scene say Kishor's team advised Banerjee to hold a "Brahmin Sammelan" and provide sops to Hindu priests.

"Kishor and his team have diligently worked for spreading information about Mamata Banerjee's commitment to inclusive politics and policies," a senior TMC leader said. A BJP leader, speaking on con-

dition of anonymity, insisted the TMC government's support for Brahmin priests was aimed at denting the saffron party's Hindu support base, and not out of concern for the majority community.

The TMC, however, rubbished the allegation. "We don't believe in communal politics, unlike the BJP. We aim to help people and communities in distress. The party has no religious agenda," senior TMC leader and MP Saugato Roy told PTI.

Some in the TMC, however, said the party's overture to Brahmins was aimed at neutralising the alleged BJP campaign that the state's ruling party was against Hindus.

"The BJP has been trying to project us as an anti-Hindu force. Their members have been trying to pitch themselves as champions of Hindutva. So we wanted to reach out to the masses, especially the Hindu community, with the message that we believe in inclusive growth," a senior TMC leader said, wanting not to be named.

He acknowledged that the party had suffered as the BJP made deep inroads even in its strongholds in the Lok Sabha polls last year.

"The allegations that we are anti-Hindu have done a lot of damage to the party during the 2019 Lok Sabha polls. We need to change that impression but, at the same time, we can't alienate the minorities. We need to fix these gaps and regain the lost ground before the 2021 assembly polls," he said.

"I-PAC (Kishor's organisation) has assessed the situation in Bengal and provided inputs for restructuring our strategy. This attempt to reach out to the Brahmins is a part of the revised plan," a top TMC leader said.

Farm Bills will lead to famine: Mamata

AGENCIES

Kolkata, Sept 21: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee Monday alleged that the two farm Bills passed in Rajya Sabha would deprive farmers of minimum support price (MSP) and will lead to famine in the country.

All opposition parties should come together and fight these bills tooth and nail, said Banerjee who is also the Trinamool Congress supremo. "Even as the country is reeling under COVID-19 pandemic, the Centre is trying to create famine through these farm bills," she claimed while addressing a press conference. "The Centre has done nothing to control the price rise of essential commodities. It is bulldozing these two anti-farmer legislations. These Bills will lead to food crisis as farmers will not get MSP," Banerjee said.

Two key farm Bills, dubbed by the government as the biggest reform in agriculture, were Sunday passed by the Rajya Sabha by voice vote amid chaotic scenes by Opposition members who demanded that they be referred to a



House panel for greater scrutiny. The TMC Monday denounced the suspension of eight Rajya Sabha MPs, with Banerjee calling the action reflective of the "autocratic mindset" of the government.

Accusing the BJP of killing democracy, the Trinamool Congress chief declared she will fight the "fascist" government in Parliament and on streets. "Suspension of the 8 MPs who fought to protect farmers interests is unfortunate & reflective of this autocratic Govts mindset that doesn't respect democratic norms & principles. We won't bow down & we'll fight this fascist Govt in Parliament & on the streets. #BJPKilledDemocracy," she tweeted.

TN economy to revive to pre-Covid period in 2 months, says Rangarajan

The committee, which made several recommendations, suggested to the state government to launch an urban employment guarantee scheme on the lines of the rural one to address job loss and increase the employment opportunities in cities



IT IS DIFFICULT TO PREDICT EXACTLY, BUT INDICATORS LIKE GST COLLECTIONS, PETROL AND POWER USAGE INDICATE A RETURN TO GROWTH

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, Sept 21: Tamil Nadu's economy will rebound to the pre-COVID-19 period in two months, former Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor C Rangarajan said Monday.

There is likely to be a contraction due to the pandemic, Rangarajan, heading a high-level committee to advise the State government on the medium-term response and measures to be taken to boost the economy post the lockdown period, said.

The committee was tasked by the Tamil Nadu government to assess the impact of coronavirus crisis on the state's fiscal situation and the way forward to improve the position, including increasing the tax-GDP ratio, diversifying revenue sources and re-prioritising expenditure.

The panel, which submitted a 250-page report to Chief Minister K Palaniswami Monday, is optimistic the economy will revive in about two months' time.

The committee, which made several recommendations, suggested to the state government to launch an urban employment guarantee scheme on the lines of the rural one to address job loss and increase the employment opportunities in cities. It also favoured the immediate

utilisation of Rs 3,200 crore available with the construction workers welfare fund to generate employment opportunities.

"It is difficult to predict exactly, but indicators like GST collections, petrol and power usage indicate a return to growth," Rangarajan said while ruling out any suggestion for increasing the taxes this year.

"There is no scope for it. Everyone is demanding reduction in taxes," the former RBI Governor told reporters after presenting the report to the chief minister at the Secretariat here. "While one estimate says that in 2020-21, Tamil Nadu's growth rate will be 1.71 per cent, another predicts there could be a contraction due to the pandemic. At this juncture it is difficult to predict the exact growth rate," he said when asked on how the growth rate will be.

However, GST collections and petrol and electricity usage indicate the state is heading to the pre-COVID-19 period in the next two months, Rangarajan said.

The committee has also recommended that the free distribution of rice to ration cardholders should be extended beyond November, an additional Rs 5,000 crore should be allocated to the Revenue department, and increase capital expenditure by Rs 10,000 crore.

Stating that the lockdown to curb the spread of the coronavirus had affected the economic growth, Rangarajan said other measures should be taken to stop the virus spread. "The earlier we come out of the lockdown, the better it will be for Tamil Nadu's economy," he said. Palaniswami had May 9 constituted a high-level committee under the chairmanship of Rangarajan, currently Chairman of the Madras School of Economics. State Finance Secretary S Krishnan was the coordinator of the 24-member committee, which interacted and sought views from industry bodies, trade associations, stakeholders, economic and other experts in India and overseas.

The panel's members include N Narayanan, former Chief Secretary and industry titans like A Vellayan, N Srinivasan, Venu Srinivasan, bankers such as Padmaja Chunduru, MD, Indian Bank, M Suresh Babu of IIT Madras, Pinaki Chakraborty, Co-ordinator, UNICEF, Chennai, and senior officials from various state government departments, including finance.

More people in WB working for al-Qaeda: NIA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Sept 21: The National Investigation Agency (NIA), which has arrested six al-Qaeda terrorists from Murshidabad district of West Bengal, has found that more people in the state are working for the terror outfit, an official of the investigating agency said.

On interrogating the six arrested from Murshidabad Saturday, the NIA sleuths have unearthed the identities of two persons from Malda working in tandem with them, he said.

"There are more members spread in other districts of West Bengal as well as other states having links to al-Qaeda. In fact, the two from Malda were present at a meeting at the Murshidabad house Thursday night. They had left the place early Friday morning and the six were arrested by the NIA Saturday.

"The two are now on the run and a search for them has started," the



official told PTI Monday.

According to the NIA sources out of the six arrested, two are students having close links to some persons in Kashmir.

A few SIM cards which were seized from their possession, the laptop and the mobile phones used by these two students, revealed their link to "unknown" persons in Kashmir.

"One of the two is a second year undergraduate student of com-

puter science at Basantapur Engineering College in Domkal, while another is a first year student in a college in Karimpur. The laptop and the mobile phones which these two were using showed several contacts in Kashmir, Kerala and other states. They were using several SIM cards. Several WhatsApp chats and video conferences were held using these numbers. There are several groups created on WhatsApp (by them). Several

communicating apps were also used. We are questioning them," he said. The NIA sleuths Sunday night conducted a raid at the house of Abu Sufiyan, one of the six arrested from Murshidabad, and questioned his family members, the officer said.

They seized electrical circuits and other devices from a concrete bunker found inside Sufiyan's residence, he added.

The NIA had Saturday arrested nine terrorists associated with a Pakistan-sponsored module of al-Qaeda, the transnational terror outfit, after conducting simultaneous raids at several locations in Kerala and West Bengal.

The raids were conducted Saturday at Ernakulam in Kerala and Murshidabad in West Bengal.

The NIA has learnt about an inter-state module of al-Qaeda operatives at various locations in India, including West Bengal and Kerala.

One launch pad planned at India's second rocket port

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, Sept 21: The land survey has been completed for 431.87.74 hectares out of 961.66.90 hectares identified for the construction of India's second rocket launch port in Tamil Nadu's Thoothukudi district, the Parliament was informed Monday.

Minister of State for Space Jitendra Singh told the Lok Sabha, in a written reply, that the Tamil Nadu government has identified land in Kulasekarapattinam in Thoothukudi for setting up the country's second rocket launch port. One launch pad is proposed at the site at present. He said land survey is completed for 431.87.74 hectares and a preliminary notification has been issued.

Survey work for the balance area is in an advanced stage. The centre's policy decision of opening up the space sector for private players enables them to develop various space



qualified subsystems and systems, along with building of satellites and launch vehicles. They are also permitted to establish facilities and provide launch services and other space based services.

Many of these services and products will definitely find global customers, which will increase India's share in the global space sector market, Singh told Lok Sabha.

Currently India launches its rockets from its rocket port in Sriharikota in Andhra Pradesh. The port has two launch pads.

Preparations afoot for low-key Durga puja

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Sept 21: With just about a month to go for Durga puja - the biggest annual extravaganza in West Bengal - preparations have begun across the city, albeit at a lower scale this time, as organisers chalk out safety plans to avoid further spread of COVID-19.

Samajsebi Sangha in south Kolkata, known for its thought-provoking marquee themes every year, has decided to change its open-air pandal's direction towards Southern Avenue to enable people catch a glimpse of the deity from a distance without having to alight from their vehicles.

"There will be a canopy on top to guard the 10-foot-high deity, but all three sides of the pandal will remain open. Medical personnel would be stationed next to the marquee with emergency kit and equipment. Volunteers won't allow people to crowd at the pandal entrance. This year, things ought to be different... We have curtailed our budget from Rs 60 lakh to Rs 15 lakh. The amount saved will be distributed among 75 underprivileged families from Sunderbans," Arijit Moitra, the secretary of the puja association, said.



At Md Ali Park, another big-ticket puja, organisers are planning to give pomp and show a miss this year, while "sticking to the basics." "Lights will be fewer, and the pandal smaller. The height of the deity would not exceed eight feet," Ashok Ojha, the joint secretary of the puja committee, said. Preparations are also underway at

Bhawanipore 75 Pally, another crowd-puller in South Kolkata, with labourers there made to undergo the COVID-19 test before starting work. "We will have a sanitiser tunnel and proper measures in place to ensure revellers maintain physical distance. The road leading to the pandal won't have barricades on its two sides," Subir Das, an office-bearer of

Bhawanipore 75 Pally committee, said. Tridhara Sammilani, patronised by Kolkata Municipal Corporation official Debashis Kumar, however, is yet to devise its puja plan. Organisers said they were in two minds about going ahead with this year's festivities.

"We have booked the idol, but work to set up the pandal has not started yet. We don't appreciate the idea that only revellers who travel by cars would get to see the idol from a distance. What about others who walk several kilometres to visit pandals? A final call will be taken in the matter after Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's meeting with puja organisers September 25," Kumar said.

Artisans at Kumartuli, a traditional potters' quarter in north Kolkata, said business was not usual for them, as most puja committees have slashed their budgets this time.

Kanchi Paul, one of the artisans, said that he received 30 per cent less bookings compared to last year. "Almost all top puja organisers have placed orders for eight- or 10-foot-tall idols, at least 5 feet less than what has usually been the norm for them. This is the new normal. We have to adapt to the changing circumstances," he added.



The Modi government's blind arrogance sometimes blames God, sometimes people, but not its own misrule
RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

OVER 1,300 POSTS VACANT IN CBI

Over 1,300 posts are lying vacant in the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) against its total sanctioned strength of 7,273, the government told Parliament Monday



of the day quote

A total of 2,729 people of 44 nationalities were granted Indian citizenship from 2017 till September 17, 2020



NITYANAND RAI | UNION MINISTER OF STATE FOR HOME

Whatever happened in Rajya Sabha on Sunday was very wrong and the more it is condemned, the less it would be



NITISH KUMAR | BIHAR CM

Nearly 1,200 people across the country were detained under the stringent National Security Act by police in 2017 and 2018



G KISHAN REDDY | BJP LEADER

SHORT TAKES

Python rescued

Mumbai: A 10-foot-long python slithering across the Eastern Express Highway here caused a traffic jam Monday morning, a police official said. According to the official, the reptile was spotted by motorists on a stretch of the highway at suburban Chunarhatti. Car drivers and motorcyclists stopped to look at the nearly 10-foot-long snake's attempt to cross the road, causing a traffic jam on the busy highway, he said. After crossing the road, the python hid under a car. After an hour, a team of snake catchers arrived at the spot and rescued the python, the official said.

Doctor arrested

Shirdi: A doctor was arrested Monday for allegedly molesting a 12-year-old girl at a hospital in Shirdi in Maharashtra's Ahmednagar district, police said. Dr Vasant Tambe committed the offence in the early hours of September 19 when the girl was brought to the hospital with respiratory problems, said Deputy Superintendent of Police Somnath Wakchoure.

Indians return

Indore: An Air India flight carrying 91 Indians, who were stranded in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) for a long time due to the COVID-19 outbreak, arrived here in Madhya Pradesh early Monday morning, an official said. As part of the central government's Vande Bharat mission, the flight from Dubai landed at Devi Ahilyabai Holkar International Airport here at 4.15 am, said Amit Malakar, Indore district's nodal officer for COVID-19 prevention.

Five killed

Pune: Five people were killed when the car in which they were travelling rammed into a stationary container truck on Pune-Solapur highway in the early hours of Monday, police said. The accident took place near Yavat in Daund tehsil here in Maharashtra at 3.30 am, they said.

Man injured

Etah (UP): An elderly person was shot and critically injured in a village in Etah district after a fight with a neighbour over a pet dog, police said Monday. Victim Rajesh Mishra was referred to a medical facility in Agra. According to reports, Rajesh had taken out his dog for a walk in the village when his neighbour Deepak Mishra said that the black pet looked dirty. The two began arguing and Deepak allegedly took out a firearm and shot at Rakesh.

Maha's plan to 'ration' oxygen attracts flak

Doctors in the state have condemned the move as 'unprecedented in the world', 'terrible, horrible, abominable', something that could lead to 'a sharp spike in Covid fatalities'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, Sep 21: In a bizarre move, the Maharashtra government has abruptly decided to 'ration' medical oxygen for patients in Covid-19 public and private hospital wards/ICUs, kicking up a row between the state and the medical fraternity.

Doctors in the state have condemned the move as "unprecedented in the world", "terrible, horrible, abominable", something that could lead to "a sharp spike in Covid fatalities", with a veiled warning that they may be forced to abdicate the responsibility of treating Corona patients and "it will be better if the government runs all the private hospitals on its own".

As per a September 18 circular issued by Principal Secretary (Health) Pradeep Vyas, the order was triggered by a very high consumption of Oxygen - more than thrice the national average - in comparison to the number of patients in Covid oxygen wards or intensive care units.

Vyas said that the present consumption of medical oxygen is above 600 tonne per day and at the rapid rate of growth, there are fears



BIZARRE MOVE

that this may outstrip the manufacturing capacity in the state after a few days. "The Government of India has expressed serious concern about the quantum of oxygen being used in Maharashtra per day considering the number of patients who are on oxygen," Vyas said grimly.

Adding to the woes is the fact that a figure of around 1,08,000 patients - who have been discharged - has not been updated on the government records owing to a discrepancy in manual tabulation.

This implies that a lesser number of discharges and lower re-

covery rate is shown for Maharashtra, but if this figure was accounted for, then it would point to nearly 15 per cent of all patients getting oxygen treatment in the state - much higher than the national average of 5-6 per cent, he pointed out.

"So, it is clear that there is no judicious use of oxygen," said Vyas' unexpected rap, adding there was a tendency in private hospitals to put patients on oxygen for duration more than necessary for 'commercial reasons' and such activities need to be scrupulously monitored.

Ladakhis sending food for jawans

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Leh, Sep 21: For the last one week Namgyal Phunsung has been travelling to villages in Ladakh to collect ethnic food materials for jawans at the LAC.

In many remote areas of Ladakh people are keen to part a portion of the foods preserved by them for the harsh winter months when temperature drops from minus 20 to minus 30 degrees for the men guarding the borders. They are sending local ethnic foods including dried food and apricots. The food materials collected are loaded on the vans and handed to the local army units for men at the forward positions along the LAC.

"I am collecting food materials from different villages. People are telling me that they are busy harvesting right now and have asked me to return after a couple of weeks for more such food for the troops," Namgyal Phunsung said.

"We are very happy that people are coming forward with contributions for the Indian army, people from all the villages are chipping in for this cause purely out of love," he added. At Iglo village, 55 kilometres from Leh, most people say they have served in the armed forces and it is an honour for them to send the food for the men guarding the borders in inhospitable weather conditions amid the current standoff.

"It gives us great pleasure to send food for the Indian army, we will continue to do that," said one of the volunteers collecting the food materials. Whenever there has been a fight in the past, people of Ladakh have in the forefront to contribute their bit. And as the tension now escalates at the LAC and the borders are being beefed up with men and materials to prevent any misadventure by the Chinese PLA, this is clearly an expression of respect by the people in Ladakh for the men defending the borders.



Students maintain social distancing as they attend a class, after schools reopened partially in Andhra Pradesh as part of Unlock 4.0 guidelines in Vijayawada, Monday

Man refuses to allow mother into house

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Hyderabad, Sept 21: In a cruel act, a man refused to allow his mother into the house due to Covid scare, though she has already recovered from the virus.

The 65-year-old woman is lying in the open in front of her house for the last two days as her son and his family left after locking the house. The shocking incident occurred in Nizamabad town of Telangana, highlighting once again how the Covid scare has made some people insensitive towards their parents and near and dear ones.

Local residents said G. Balamani was sent to an old age home by her son sometime ago. She recently tested positive for Covid-19 and the caretaker of the old age home admitted her to a government hospital. Though she recovered from the virus and tested negative a

week ago, her son did not go to the hospital to bring her home.

As her son, said to be working as an assistant engineer in the electricity department, did not respond to phone calls, the hospital authorities dropped the woman outside her house. However, her

COVID FEAR

son refused to allow her into the house.

With the old age home also shut due to Covid pandemic and nowhere to go, the woman sat in front of the door. Showing no concern, the man locked the house from outside and left with his wife and children.

Seeing her plight, some neighbours gave her food and drinking water. However, the woman is suffering severe inconvenience due

to incessant rains and the cold. After learning about Balamani's misery, senior civil judge Kiranmayi Monday visited the house and called on her. She assured her all help.

In May, an 80-year-old woman was not allowed into the house by her sons out of Covid fear as she returned from Maharashtra. The incident had occurred in the Karimnagar town. The woman who had gone to Sholapur to meet her relatives was stranded there due to lockdown and returned only after relaxations in the lockdown norms. Though she was healthy and was not infected by Covid, her elder son and his wife did not allow her into the house.

The woman's younger son too had locked his house and gone away out of fear of the virus. Her elder son finally relented at the intervention of police and the local authorities.

SUSHANT CASE NCB to summon Sara, Shraddha

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, Sept 21: Widening its probe into the drugs angle in the death of Bollywood actor Sushant Singh Rajput, the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) will summon Bollywood actors Sara Ali Khan and Shraddha Kapoor for questioning.

A top NCB source related to the probe said: "This week, we will be sending summons to Sara, Shraddha and several others for questioning."

Besides them, the NCB will also summon actor Rakul Preet Singh and fashion designer Simone Kambhatta. He said that the agency will ask them to join the probe next week. Sara starred with Sushant in *Kedarnath* while Shraddha shared the screen with the late actor in *Chhichhore*.

Covid victim's body nibbled by rats

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Indore, Sept 21: The body of an 87-year-old Covid-19 victim was allegedly nibbled by rats at a private hospital here in Madhya Pradesh, his family claimed, prompting the district administration to order a probe Monday.

The shocking incident came to light when a video surfaced on social media.

In the video, injury marks on the face and legs of the corpse are visible, and a distraught person is seen complaining that the body handed over to them by the private hospital had bite marks made by rats.

Indore's COVID-19 nodal officer Amit Malakar said the elderly man, who was on oxygen support due to the severity of the infection, died in the hospital Sunday.

Pandemic, LAC tensions cast shadow on Ladakh tourism industry

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Leh, Sept 20: The hotels are unoccupied, the taxis unhired and the markets bereft of their usual hustle bustle. Ladakh is missing its guests.

As people step out of the Leh airport, Cherring Namgyal (32) waits for tourists he can ferry in his taxi to different exotic locations in Ladakh. But that's a futile wait. Those coming are either locals or people on official work. "The coronavirus has hit us hard and there are barely any tourists this season. The tourist season is coming to an end. To add to it, people are apprehensive about the ongoing tensions on the border," Cherring Namgyal said.

The tourism industry in India

as across the globe has been hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic, but the impact is felt harder in Ladakh because the tourism window here is squeezed to just a few months - mostly from April to mid-October - due to harsh winters.

"There has hardly been any business this year. There are simply no tourists due to coronavirus pandemic and lockdown," Noordin, the vice-president of the Ladakh Taxi Operator Cooperative Ltd who goes by his first name, said.

"Many taxi drivers are without work this year," he said. "This year, some of the taxis have been hired by the Army." The current tension with China at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) too has impacted tourism in a way, he added.



"Many tourists want to go to Pangong Tso. But routes to some places have been shut because of the ongoing tensions," he said. The Pangong Tso lake is one of the places in Ladakh where there is a built-up of troops on both sides.

Ladakh nearly has 4,000 private taxis, Noordin said. Ladakh still has much more to offer beyond the regular tourist spots such as the Pangong Tso lake, he said.

Ghulam Mohiuddin, the owner of Hotel Grand Dragon, a starred

hotel in Leh, said the room occupancy is very low this season. "The start of the tourist season coincided with the commencement of the pandemic. So there were no tourists this year and the room occupancy was also very low," Mohiuddin said, adding the economy of Ladakh largely depends on tourism.

"After the lockdown eased, there were tensions on the border. Actually, there is nothing to fear, but people are hesitant largely because of the pandemic and also due to the tension," Mohiuddin added.

The main market in the Leh city depicts the tale of how tourism has been hit this year. Sparsely crowded, many shops did not open this year. "Many Kashmiri businessmen rented shops in the market. But

due to the fear of contracting the coronavirus, they have not come back," said a garments shopkeeper.

Riyaz Ahmed (70), the president of the main market in the Leh city, said there has hardly been any business this year. Ahmed, who has seen the region changing, said the tourism industry took an upswing after the 3 Idiots Bollywood movie starring Aamir Khan.

"All wanted to go to Pangong Tso Lake. There are many such beautiful places across the Ladakh region, but tourists have not come here at all," Ahmed said. He said unlike the rest of the country, tourists visit Ladakh mostly from April to mid-October. After October the temperature drops to sub-zero levels.



Air India Express Ltd, Air India Engineering Services Limited and Hotel Corporation of India Limited (subsidiaries of Air India) have not implemented/introduced the LWP Scheme-2020
HARDEEP SINGH PURI | CIVIL AVIATION MINISTER

75 AIR-TURN-BACK INCIDENTS IN 2020

Seventy-five incidents of air turn back have occurred so far this year due to technical snags in the aircraft, Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said Monday. When pilots decide to return to the airport of departure due to any reason, it is termed an air turn back



of the day quote

The manner in which the RJD, the Congress and other opposition parties opposed the farm bills by attacking Rajya Sabha Deputy Chairman Harivansh Narayan Singh was shameful
SUSHIL KUMAR MODI | BIHAR DEPUTY CM

There are over 4,000 telephone attendant-cum-dak khalasis (TADKs) or bungalow peons working for the national transporter, and no complaints of abuse or ill-treatment have been reported
PIYUSH GOYAL | RAILWAY MINISTER

Anguished to learn about the tragic collapse of a building in Bhiwandi, Thane (Maharashtra). My deepest condolences are with the bereaved families, praying for the speedy recovery of those injured
AMIT SHAH | UNION HOME MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Pakistan violates ceasefire on LoC

Jammu: Pakistan resorted to unprovoked firing and intense shelling in three sectors on the Line of Control Monday in J&K's Poonch district. Defence Ministry spokesman Colonel Devender Anand said at about 2.30 p.m. Pakistan initiated unprovoked ceasefire violation by firing with small arms and intense shelling with mortars along the LoC in Shahpur, Kirni and Qasba sectors of Poonch district.

Retired navy man shot dead

New Delhi: A 55-year-old retired navy personnel was shot dead allegedly by a man during a scuffle in west Delhi's Dwarka area, police said Monday. The incident took place in the Sector 23 area of Dwarka Sunday night, they said. The victim has been identified Balraj Deshwal, a retired navy personnel, police said.

Schools reopen in Jammu & Kashmir

Jammu: Only a few students turned up to attend special classes in Jammu and Kashmir Monday as schools for higher classes reopened after a gap of over six months due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the union territory administration said. Principal Secretary, School Education and Skill Development, Asgar Hassan Samoon said the reopening of schools was not meant for regular classes. The decision of the government to reopen the schools came under sharp criticism from opposition parties, including the National Conference and the Congress.

TAJ AGAIN



Security personnel patrol the premises of Taj Mahal after it re-opened for public following being shut for over six months in Agra, Monday

PTI PHOTO

Maha govt moves SC over Maratha quota order



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Sept 21: The Maharashtra government has filed an application before a larger bench of the Supreme Court, seeking vacation of the apex court's stay on implementation of Maratha quota in jobs and education, an official statement said Monday.

Maharashtra PWD Minister Ashok Chavan Monday called on NCP president Sharad Pawar here to discuss the state government's efforts to vacate the Supreme Court's stay on implementing the Maratha quota in jobs and education. Chavan, who heads the Maharashtra cabinet sub-committee on Maratha quota, met Pawar at the Y B Chavan Centre here. "We had earlier discussed with Chief Minister (Uddhav Thackeray) the legal issues in connection with vacating the Supreme Courts stay on implementing Maratha quota. A three-judge bench headed by Justice L N Rao had referred to a larger constitution bench, to be set up by Chief Justice of India S A Bobde, the batch of pleas challenging the validity of the law granting reservation to Marathas in education and jobs. The Bombay High Court, while upholding the law in June last year, held that 16 per cent reservation was not justifiable, and said quota should not exceed 12 per cent in employment and 13 per cent in admissions.

The govt's move comes amidst protests by pro-quota organisations representing the community in parts of the state over the issue

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CBI raids in Delhi, UP, Raj, Haryana in ₹1,400 crore bank fraud case

The CBI has registered the case against Kwaliti Ltd and its directors Sanjay Dhingra, Siddhant Gupta, Arun Srivastava besides other unidentified persons

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Sept 21: The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) Monday carried out searches at eight locations in Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Haryana over alleged bank fraud to the tune of ₹1,400 crore by a private company.

A CBI spokesperson here said that the multiple agency team carried out searches in Delhi, Uttar Pradesh's Saharapur, Bulandshahr, Haryana's Palwal and Rajasthan's Ajmer on the premises of Delhi-based Kwaliti Ltd, Sanjay Dhingra, Siddhant Gupta, Arun Srivastava and other unknown persons.

The action comes after the CBI registered a case on a complaint from Bank of India against Kwaliti Ltd and others including its Directors, and other unknown persons for causing an alleged loss of ₹1,400.62 crore to Bank of India and other consortium of banks. "It was alleged in the complaint that the said accused had cheated the Bank of India-led consortium comprising BOI (lead bank), Canara Bank, BoB, Andhra Bank, Corporation Bank, IDBI, Central Bank of India, Dhanlaxmi Bank, Syndicate Bank to the tune of ₹1,400.62 crore by way of diversion of bank funds, sham transactions with related parties, fabricated documents/receipts, falsified books of accounts, created false assets and liabilities etc," the official said.



Kafeel Khan takes battle with Yogi to UN body

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, Sept 21: Gorakhpur's Dr Kafeel Khan, has taken his battle against the Yogi Adityanath government to an international level. Khan, who was recently absolved of charges under the stringent National Security Act (NSA) and is now living in Jaipur, has written a letter to the United Nations Human Rights Commission (UNHRC) informing them about "widespread violations of international human rights standards in India and misuse of draconian laws like NSA and UAPA to suppress voices of dissent".

In his letter, Khan thanked the UN rights body for urging the Indian government to protect human rights of activists arrested for "peacefully protesting

against CAA" and said that the government "has not listened to their appeal".

"Authorities continue to invoke counter-terrorism and national security legislations using procedural police powers against these human rights defenders for raising issues which would affect India's poorest and most marginalised community, violating international human rights standards," Khan wrote. It may be recalled that June 26, the UN body had written to the Indian government, mentioning 11 cases, among those that of Kafeel Khan and Sharjeel Imam, for "serious allegations of human rights violations, several relating to due process failings during arrest and detention, as well as allegations of torture and ill-treatment".

Raj changes govt schools' uniform

PURCHASING NEW DRESSES FOR THE NEXT ACADEMIC SESSION WOULD PUT AN EXTRA BURDEN ON THE PARENTS

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Jaipur, Sept 21: The Rajasthan government has suddenly decided on a new uniform for students in government schools even as these are shut due to COVID-19, just because the earlier one was similar to that of members of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS).

Education Minister Govind Singh Dotasara confirmed that the new uniform for government school students will be adopted by the start of the next academic session. He did not give any reason for the change in uniform, maintaining that these will be known soon. "Basically, we are changing the uniform on the recommendation of a six-member committee," he added.

The decision is likely to affect around 75 lakh students enrolled in government schools as many people are still struggling to cope up with the financial crisis due to the pandemic. State BJP President Satish Poonia said that the



Congress is "playing an agenda-based politics" to please one family in the country. "They have to present a report card to this family, which is running on a political legacy in India. The said initiative shall put additional financial burden on the parents, many of whom are struggling to find jobs," he said, adding that even those earlier donating uniforms to the poor kids have stopped doing so owing to financial constraints.

Former Education Minister Vasudev Devnani said that the BJP government had three years ago changed the uniform to instill confidence in government schools' students and help them be proud as their counterparts in private schools were.

Phase 3 human trial of Oxford vaccine begins

The phase-III human clinical trial of the COVID-19 vaccine being developed by Oxford University, and manufactured by the Serum Institute of India (SII), began at the state-run Sassoon General Hospital here in Maharashtra Monday, a senior official said. "We have started the phase-III trials of the vaccine (candidate Covishield). We will administer dose to 150 to 200 volunteers," said Dr Muralidhar Tambe, Dean, Sassoon General Hospital. Under phase-II, trials had been conducted at the Bharti Vidyapeeth Medical College and also KEM Hospital in the city.

The total coronavirus cases mounted to 54,87,580, while the death toll climbed to 87,882 with the infection claiming 1,130 lives in a span of 24 hours in the country, the data updated at 8 am showed. The home ministry Monday told the Rajya Sabha that the huge Tablighi Jamaat assembly in a closed premise in the national Capital in March, with no adherence to laid-down COVID-19 prevention and containment protocols, "also" caused the spread of coronavirus infection among many persons.

According to the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), a cumulative total of 6,43,92,594 samples have been tested up to September 20, with 7,31,534 samples being tested Sunday.



78% of people using clout to get ICU beds: Survey

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Sept 2: Only four per cent patients were able to get a COVID-19 ICU bed through the routine process, while 78 per cent had to use connections and clout, a survey revealed Monday.

The number of COVID-19 cases in India has mounted to 54 lakh and the country has been recording on average over 90,000 cases daily for the last two weeks. Hospitals now are seeing more critical patients than they did in May-June this year. With the rise in critical cases, the availability of the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) beds has drastically reduced. After receiving many complaints from citizens from across the country about their family



friends or associates not being able to find an ICU bed at a government or private hospital, 'LocalCircles' decided to conduct a survey to get citizen's pulse on the issue and received over 17,000 responses from citizens located in over 211 districts of the country. In the first question, LocalCircles asked citizens about the experiences of people in their social network in regard to getting a Covid-19 ICU bed. To ensure that the right feedback is sought, citizens were requested to

make calls to their contacts in case they were unaware themselves about the detailed experience of their contact in getting an ICU bed. In response, 55 per cent citizens said that they did not have any person in their network who needed a Covid ICU bed.

These respondents were taken out of the sample to only analyse experiences of citizens who had someone in their network needing a COVID-19 bed.

When this sample was analysed, 38 per cent respondents said they had to use clout to secure an ICU bed while seven per cent said they had to follow up extensively to secure the ICU bed. 40 per cent said they had to use their connections, follow up extensively. They also had to esca-

late via social media or complain to the government to secure the ICU bed. Seven per cent said they had to bribe (cash or kind) hospital or government officials to secure the ICU bed, while only four per cent said they got the ICU bed without any of the above.

Another four per cent said they did not get an ICU bed at all. In Delhi for instance, patients complained that the Delhi government's app, Delhi Corona, shows ICU beds available in some hospitals, however, when they call that hospital, they are told that the bed is not available. The Delhi government also recently asked 33 big private hospitals in the state to reserve 80 per cent of their total ICU beds for the COVID-19 patients.

Artisans stare at penury as no buyers for Ravana effigies

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Sept 21: With the festival of Dussehra still around a month away, artisans who earn their livelihood by making effigies of demon king Ravana, his brother Kumbhakarana, son Meghnada and others are staring at a bleak future as there are no buyers this time for their artefacts in the largest effigy market in Titarpur in Delhi.

Disappointment is writ large on the faces of both artisans and traders in the Titarpur market adjacent to Tagore Garden as buyers are few and far between, amid the uncertainties due to the coronavirus pandemic.

In normal times, one could see scores of artisans busy making effigies of the demon king and others many weeks ahead of

Dussehra year after year. The craftsmen could be seen toiling in the sun to give shapes to the effigies of different sizes and colours on the roadsides, parks, and even terraces of houses in Titarpur. But such scenes have vanished this year amid the pandemic.

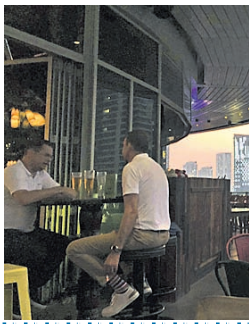
Traders rued that the pandemic played a spoilsport for their brisk business expectations this year since the sale was also lukewarm the previous year due to the ban on firecrackers at many places. As a result, the traders had suffered heavy losses. After Prime Minister Narendra Modi performed the 'bhoomi puja' of the new Ram temple at Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh, effigy traders were hopeful that people will celebrate Dussehra this year on a grand scale. But traders fear this is unlikely to happen in 2020.



(The environmental) crisis has been with us for far too many years - decried, denigrated and denied. It is now rapidly becoming a comprehensive catastrophe that will dwarf the impact of the coronavirus pandemic
PRINCE CHARLES | PRINCE OF WALES

ABU DHABI ENDS ALCOHOL LICENSES

Abu Dhabi, the conservative capital of the UAE, is eliminating its licensing system for alcohol purchases for drinkers after Dubai repeatedly loosened its own rules to boost sales and tourism amid the ongoing coronavirus pandemic



of the day quote

The biggest difference should be in Biden's preference for a return to multilateralism, versus Trump's emphasis on unilateralism
DOUGLAS PAAL | NON-RESIDENT SCHOLAR, CEIP

The COVAX Facility is a key part of our Covid-19 Vaccine Strategy to obtain safe and effective vaccines. It allows us to invest in a high-quality, diversified portfolio of Covid-19 vaccine candidates
WINSTON PETERS | DEPUTY PM, NEW ZEALAND

We are today facing a government formation crisis which should not have happened because the events that await Lebanon do not allow a minute to be wasted
MICHEL AOUN | PRESIDENT, LEBANON

'UK to see 50,000 cases a day by Oct without action'



AGENCIES

London, Sept 21: UK government's chief scientific advisor Patrick Vallance said on Monday that the UK could see 50,000 Covid-19 cases per day by mid-October and about 200 deaths per day a month after that without further action. His statement came at a time when Prime Minister Boris Johnson is considering whether to introduce further measures in England. On Sunday, 3,899 new cases and 18 deaths were reported in the UK. Speaking alongside the government's chief medical adviser Chris Whitty, Vallance said: "At the moment we think the epidemic is doubling roughly every seven days. If, and that's quite a big if, but if that

continues unabated, and this grows, doubling every seven days... if that continues you would end up with something like 50,000 cases in the middle of October per day. "Fifty-thousand cases per day would be expected to lead a month later, so the middle of November say, to 200-plus deaths per day. The challenge, therefore, is to make sure the doubling time does not stay at seven days. That requires speed, it requires action and it requires enough in order to be able to bring that down." Whitty added that if cases continued to double every seven days as Vallance had set out, then the UK could "quickly move from really quite small numbers to really very large numbers because of that ex-

Johnson ponders second lockdown

London: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson was Monday pondering a second national lockdown as an accelerating coronavirus outbreak threatened to destroy any shoots of economic recovery and send millions back into isolation. The UK already has the biggest official COVID-19 death toll in Europe - and the fifth largest in the world - while it is borrowing record amounts in an attempt to pump emergency money through the damaged economy. But new COVID-19 cases are rising by at least 6,000 per day in Britain, according to week-old data, hospital admissions are doubling every eight days, and the testing system is buckling. "The trend in the UK is heading in the wrong direction and we are at a critical point in the pandemic," Chris Whitty, the government's chief medical officer, will say at a briefing at 1000 GMT Monday. Johnson is due to speak Tuesday.

ponential process". "So we have, in a bad sense, literally turned a corner, although only relatively recently," he said.

Trump dismisses climate change role in wildfires

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Washington, Sept 21: US President Donald Trump has dismissed the role of climate change in the raging wildfires along the country's West Coast, saying the crisis was due to the poor management of state forests, the media reported. Trump made the remarks in a radio interview on Sunday when asked about his recent meeting with Governor Gavin Newsom of California, one of the hardest-hit states by the wildfires, reports The Hill news website. "Honestly, he's been very nice with the words which are good," Trump said of Newsom.



"But I said you've got to manage this. It's a management thing. He said, 'no it's global warming'. I said, 'when the leaves build up and you have a floor of leaves and the trees fall down and you don't remove them because the environmentalists don't want you to touch the tree, within 18 months that tree becomes like a matchstick'.

Pak oppn parties form alliance to oust govt

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Islamabad, Sept 21: Pakistan's major opposition parties announced that they have formed an alliance to demand the ousting of the incumbent Imran Khan-led government, it was reported Monday. After naming their alliance as the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM), the leaders Sunday also announced launching of a three-phased anti-government movement under an "action plan" starting from next month with country-wide public meetings, protest demonstrations and rallies in December and a "decisive long march" towards Islamabad in January 2021, reports Dawn news.



After naming their alliance as the PDM, the leaders also announced launching of a 3-phased anti-government movement under an "action plan"

were presented before the media by JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman in the presence of PML-N President Shahbaz Sharif and vice president Maryam Nawaz. PPP chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari and other prominent opposition leaders at a press briefing. Before announcing the "action plan" aimed at ousting the present government, the JUI-F chief also read out a 26-point declaration in the form of a resolution containing various demands.

SHORT TAKES

NZ to lift virus restrictions

Wellington: All remaining virus restrictions will be lifted across much of New Zealand from late Monday with the exception of the largest city, Auckland, which will continue to have some restrictions for at least another 16 days. Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern made the announcement Monday after meeting with top lawmakers. The nation of 5 million people reimposed some restrictions last month after the Auckland outbreak, which now appears to be under control.

Greece: Storm death toll rises

Athens: A third person has been found dead in central Greece following extensive damage caused by a tropical-like storm over the weekend. Authorities said the body of a missing 62-year-old man was found Monday outside the central city of Karditsa, while Fire Service drones were being used to try to find a woman still missing in a nearby area. The storm, named Ianos, swept across parts of western and central Greece flooding several thousand homes and damaging roads and crops.

Nepal death toll mounts

Kathmandu: Nepal Monday recorded its highest single-day death toll due to COVID-19 at 16, taking the total number of fatalities in the country to 427. With 1,154 fresh coronavirus cases recorded in various parts of the country in the past 24 hours, Nepal's coronavirus tally has increased to 65,276, according to the Health Ministry. Of the 16 deaths, 5 were from Kathmandu valley, the Health Ministry stated, adding that in the past 24 hours, 9,533 polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests were conducted.

Pfizer could win vaccine approval

Washington: US President Donald Trump on Monday suggested Pfizer Inc could secure the first US approval of a COVID-19 vaccine in coming weeks, saying a contender by Johnson & Johnson could come later. Asked which drugmaker could be approved, Trump told Fox News in an interview: "Pfizer's doing really well," adding "Johnson & Johnson...they'll probably be a little later." He also cited efforts by Moderna Inc and AstraZeneca Plc.

'Nuke deal with world powers worth preserving'

THE DEAL PROMISES IRAN ECONOMIC INCENTIVES IN EXCHANGE FOR LIMITS ON ITS NUCLEAR PROGRAMME



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Berlin, Sept 21: The head of Iran's nuclear agency said Monday that the landmark 2015 deal between Tehran and world powers on his country's atomic program is struggling since the unilateral US withdrawal, but is still worth preserving. Ali Akbar Salehi told delegates at a conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna that the so-called Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA, has been "caught in a quasi-stalemate situation" since President Donald Trump pulled the US out in 2018. The deal promises Iran economic incentives in exchange for limits on its nuclear programme. The remaining world powers in the deal — France, Germany, Britain, China and Russia — have been struggling to offset re-imposed American sanctions. Iran has been steadily breaking restrictions outlined in the deal on the amount of uranium it can enrich, the purity it can enrich it

to, and other limitations in order to pressure those countries to do more. Salehi, speaking in a video address, said it's of the "utmost importance" that those countries find a solution to resolve "the difficulties caused by the illegal withdrawal of the US from the deal." "There is still a broad agreement among the international community that the JCPOA should be preserved," he said. Speaking after Salehi, US Energy Secretary Dan Brouillette made no reference to the deal, saying only that the "United States remains committed to addressing the threats posed by the nuclear programs of both North Korea and Iran." "On top of its horrific record as the world's largest state sponsor of terrorism, Iran has a lamentable history of providing only grudging, dilatory, and incomplete cooperation, if at all, with the IAEA. Iran must do more, much more, to ensure both timely and complete compliance with the safeguards obligations," he said.

UN Secy Gen calls for improved governance

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New York, Sept 21: As the United Nations (UN) marks its 75th anniversary amidst the devastating COVID-19 pandemic, Secretary General Antonio Guterres Monday called for improved world governance, underlining that there is a surplus of multilateral challenges today but a deficit of solutions. Addressing the UN General Assembly ceremony, marking the world body's 75th anniversary Guterres said the coronavirus pandemic has laid bare the world's fragilities. "We can only address them together. Today we have a surplus of multilateral challenges and a deficit of multilateral solutions," he said. The special commemoration of

UN MARKS 75th ANNIV



the landmark 75 years of the world organisation will be largely virtual as world leaders did not travel to New York due to the COVID-19 pandemic raging across the world and that has in over six months infected more than 30 million people and will soon reach a grim milestone of over a million deaths.

The special UNGA event to mark the 75th anniversary of the UN kick-starts the high-level General Assembly session. For the week-long General Debate, Heads of State and Government and Ministers will deliver their speeches through pre-recorded video statements, a first in the 75-year

history of the world organisation. On this occasion, the 193 UN Member States adopted by consensus a political Declaration commemorating the 75th anniversary of the United Nations. Looking back, Guterres said the world has seen historic accomplishments including peace treaties and peacekeeping, decolonisation, human rights standards — and mechanisms to uphold them, triumph over apartheid, eradication of diseases, steady reduction of hunger and landmark agreements to protect the environment and the planet - most recently, unanimous agreement on the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change provide an inspiring vision for the 21st Century.

SUBDUED CELEBRATIONS



A server carries mugs during a barrel tapping at a beer garden near Theresienwiese where Oktoberfest would have started today, in Munich, Germany

Suga holds first talks with Trump as leader

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Tokyo, Sept 21: Japan's Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga held his first talks with US President Donald Trump since he took office, a diplomatic phone call that was one of his first as the country's leader and one that highlights the close tie between the two allies. Suga was elected as Japan's new prime minister last Wednesday, replacing Shinzo Abe, who forged close personal ties and regularly held meetings and phone calls with Trump. Abe stepped down due to ill health after nearly eight years in office. "I told him that the Japan-US alliance is the foundation of regional peace and stability, and we agreed to continue to coordinate closely," Suga told reporters late Sunday night after the call with Trump. Suga said Trump also said he wanted to further develop the alliance together.



Suga said the two leaders agreed to cooperate in the fight against the coronavirus and on North Korea's missile and nuclear threats. Japan's Foreign Ministry said in a statement early Monday that the during their 25-minute call the two leaders also pledged cooperation in the development of the coronavirus vaccines and treatment, as well as regional security concerns.

COMBATING COVID Singapore develops robot for swab tests

AGENCIES

Singapore, Sept 21: Singapore has developed a robot that carries out nasal swabbing to diagnose COVID-19, in a bid to reduce healthcare workers' risk of exposure to the deadly coronavirus. Clinicians from the National Cancer Centre Singapore (NCCS) and Singapore General Hospital (SGH) have partnered with Biobot Surgical, a firm specialising in medical robotics technology, to develop the SwabBot, reported a state-based channel. The self-administered robot, that automates the taking of COVID-19 swab tests, will help reduce healthcare workers' risk of exposure to the coronavirus, it said. The robot helps address the limitations of manual COVID-19 swab tests by reducing the need for trained



THE SELF-ADMINISTERED ROBOT, THAT AUTOMATES THE TAKING OF COVID-19 SWAB TESTS, WILL HELP REDUCE HEALTHCARE WORKERS' RISK OF EXPOSURE TO THE CORONAVIRUS

manpower, standardising the consistency of the swabs taken and "providing greater throughput" of swab tests as the robot does not suffer from fatigue, the three groups said in a statement. The SwabBot is a "self-adminis-

tered" robot, meaning patients can activate and terminate the process at will. When a patient is ready, they can use their chin to activate the robot and start the swabbing process. The robot then extends the swab

through the nose to the back of the nasal cavity, which is typically about 10cm from the nostrils. "Even after many swabs, it retains the same gentle touch and precision as surgeons who perform very delicate procedures," said Dr Luke Tay, a consultant with the Department of Vascular Surgery at SGH. "Furthermore, the sample quality remains consistent even though nose structures can vary in size and shapes," said Dr Tay. Meanwhile, Singapore recorded 31 new COVID-19 cases on Monday, including nine imported infections, taking the country's caseload to 57,607, the Ministry of Health said in its daily preliminary report. All imported cases had been placed on stay-home notice (SHN) upon their arrival in Singapore, it said, adding that rest of the cases

were migrant workers living in dormitories while there was no case from the community. The four imported cases, reported on Sunday, came from the Philippines, Iran and Germany between September 8-15. They have been put under a 14-day SHN. The Sunday's sole case from the community, a foreigner on work permit, was detected during the rostered routine testing of workers in the construction, marine and process sectors who are staying outside the dormitories, and was picked up even though he was asymptomatic. With 39 patients discharged from hospital on Sunday, 57,181 have fully recovered from the infection, said the health ministry. Currently, 30 patients are in hospital and 338 at community facilities.



India has the potential to achieve a high GDP growth rate of around 10% and be a \$10 trillion economy in the next 12 to 15 years
SANJIV MEHTA | CMD, HUL

EVs PENETRATION TO REMAIN LOW

Absence of strong direct and indirect financial stimulus from the government to encourage electric vehicles (EVs) adoption will restrict any meaningful domestic penetration of EVs in the key automotive commercial and PVs segments given their high prices, said ICRA Ratings



of the day quote

While the GST applicable for vehicles is pegged at 28%, the purchase taxes on cars in India have been historically high and given the fiscal compulsions, the government may not be in a position to reduce the taxation rates in the current scenario



SUMAN CHOWDHURY | CHIEF ANALYTICAL OFFICER, ACUTE RATINGS AND RESEARCH

The revenue generated till date through the (Direct Tax Vivad Se Vishwas) Act is ₹9,538 crore. This figure does not include the payments made by the taxpayers who are yet to file their declarations under the scheme



ANURAG SINGH THAKUR | MOS FOR FINANCE

Petrol and diesel sales have seen phenomenal improvement in the first half of September and if the trend continues demand will return to pre-COVID levels within a quarter



SHRIKANT MADHAV VAIDYA | CHAIRMAN, IOC

SHORT TAKES

BSNL raises ₹8,500 crore

New Delhi: State-run telecom firm BSNL raised more than ₹8,500 crore through sovereign guarantee bonds with government funds and PSU banks participating in the issue, a top official of the company said Monday. BSNL Chairman and MD PK Purwar said the company is also planning to monetise assets worth ₹18,000 crore within a year and expects the loss-making company to become operationally profitable in the financial year 2021.

'Simulus must for 7% growth'

New Delhi: India will need fiscal stimulus, lower interest rates, faster bank recapitalisation and privatisation of some PSUs to return to 7% growth rate, former Niti Aayog vice chairman Arvind Panagariya said Monday. Addressing a virtual event organised by AIMA, Panagariya further said the country lost nearly \$125 billion in the April-June period due to the COVID-19 pandemic. "Economy will return to a 7% plus growth rate (in post COVID -19 period). For that to happen, I will pitch for a lower interest rate by the RBI.

Snapdeal bets big

New Delhi: Snapdeal Monday said its app now supports eight vernacular languages including Tamil, Kannada, Gujarati and Marathi as it gears up for the upcoming festive season. "Snapdeal has seen 30% of its users prefer the vernacular language interface that it provides on the platform. The Snapdeal app and m-site were launched in vernacular languages to a select number of users about six months ago," a statement said.

Members to discuss proposals: WTO

New Delhi: The members of the World Trade Organization (WTO) will discuss September 23 proposals on enhancing special and differential treatment for developing countries. "At the meeting, members will discuss the latest version of ten agreement-specific proposals on special and differential treatment (S&D) tabled by the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States, the African Group and the WTO's group of least-developed countries (LDCs), which together comprise the G90," the WTO said.

Privatise selected PSBs, dilute role of DFS: Rajan

THE REFORMS ARE NECESSARY TO ENSURE GROWTH OF THE BANKING GOVERNMENT WITHOUT THE PERIODIC BOOM-BUST CYCLES

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Sept 21: Former RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan Monday suggested the government to privatise selected public sector banks (PSBs), set up a bad bank to deal with NPAs and dilute the role of Department of Financial Services (DFS).

The reforms are necessary to ensure growth of the banking government without the periodic boom-bust cycles, said a paper titled 'Indian Banks: A Time to Reform?', co-authored by Rajan and former Reserve Bank Deputy Governor Viral Acharya.

"Re-privatisation of select PSBs can then be undertaken as part of

a carefully calibrated strategy, bringing in private investors who have both financial expertise as well as technological expertise; corporate houses must be kept from acquiring significant stakes, given their natural conflicts of interest," the paper said.

Noting that the government obtains enormous power from directing bank lending, it said sometimes this power is exercised to advance public goals such as financial inclusion or infrastructure finance, sometimes it is used to offer patronage to, or exercise control over, industrialists.

"Winding down Department of Financial Services in the Ministry of Finance is essential, both as an



affirmative signal of the intent to grant bank boards and management independence and as a commitment not to engage in 'mission creep' when compulsions arise to use banks for serving costly social or political objectives," the paper noted.

According to the paper, private asset management and national

asset management 'bad banks' should be encouraged in parallel to the online platform for distressed loan sales.

"The national public sector 'bad bank' could serve as a vehicle to aggregate loans, create management teams for distressed firms, and possibly buy and hold distressed assets in a sector like power till demand returns.

"It could provide fall-back prices for loans sold by PSBs," the paper suggested.

It also argued that state-linked banks can be a first step in altering the ownership structure of some public sector banks (PSBs), where the government brings down its stakes to below 50%, creating distance

from operations of banks, and improving governance along the way.

"Apart from regulatory and market reforms, we propose reforms to bank governance and ownership, especially for public sector banks. With the current enormous strains on government finances, there may be a window of opportunity in which these reforms may be possible since the status quo is untenable," the paper said.

On dealing with bad loans, the paper said out-of-court restructuring frameworks can be designed for time-bound negotiations between creditors of a stressed firm, failing which the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) filing should apply.

Google Pay rolls out tap to pay feature for Axis, SBI card users

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Sept 21: Google Pay in collaboration with Visa and banking partners Monday rolled out tokenisation across its platform, enabling users to safely transact with their cards and use Tap-to-pay feature on near-field communication (NFC)-enabled point of sale (POS) terminals and online merchants.

The feature is now available to users of Axis and SBI Card, with Kotak and more banks expected to follow suit very soon.

With tokenisation, Google Pay Android users can use their debit or credit card to make payments through a secure digital token attached to their phone without having to physically share their credit or debit card details.

"We are hopeful that the tokenisation feature will further encourage users to transact securely and safely in the current times, and expand merchant transactions both online and offline," said Sajith Sivanandan, Business Head: Google Pay and NBU-India.

The feature also works with online merchants, delivering more native and seamless OTP experiences without any redirects to 3D



Secure sites. With tokenisation, Google Pay will enable NFC-capable Android devices to make contactless payments at over 2.5 million Visa merchant locations.

It will allow users to scan and pay at more than 1.5 million Bharat QR enabled merchants and the customers can pay bills and recharges from within their Google Pay app using their card.

"Visa recently crossed over 1 billion token credentials globally and with Google Pay live in India, we expect these numbers to rise significantly. We are excited to partner with Google to further accelerate digital payment innovations in times to come for the Indian market and beyond," said TR

Ramachandran, Group Country Manager, Visa, India & South Asia.

To enable the tap and pay feature using the smartphone phone, users will have to do a one-time set up by entering their card details and follow it by entering the OTP they get from the bank to add their card to the Google Pay app.

After the registration, the feature can be used to make payments at NFC-enabled terminals, the company said. "We are already live for Axis and SBI Card holders with Visa payments network and are working closely with Kotak and other banking partners to further expand the adoption of card-based payments with tokenisation in India," Sivanandan added.

Centre hikes MSP for wheat, 5 other rabi crops



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Sept 21: The government Monday hiked the minimum price for buying six rabi crops, including wheat, by up to 6%, as it sought to send a strong message to farmers on continuation of MSP-based procurement system.

The MSP (Minimum Support Price) of wheat, the biggest crop of rabi season, has been hiked by ₹50 to ₹1,975 per quintal, Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar said in Lok Sabha.

Besides, MSPs of lentil (masoor), gram, barley, safflower and mustard/rapeseed have been increased.

The move came a day after Parliament approved two agriculture sector-reform bills which have been bitterly opposed by the opposition parties like Congress and TMC as well as from within ruling NDA alliance over apprehension that the new legislations might virtually end MSP-based procurement by the government.

Farmer groups in Punjab, Haryana and some other states are also protesting the two bills - The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020 and The Farmers' (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, 2020 - have been passed by Parliament.

Tomar said the MSPs of six rabi crops were approved by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday, a move aimed at encouraging farmers ahead of the sowing operations of winter crops.

Announcing the increased MSPs for the six rabi crops for 2020-21 crop year (July-June) and 2021-22 marketing season, Tomar said MSP of gram has been increased by ₹225 to ₹5,100 per quintal.

The MSP of barley has been hiked by ₹75 to ₹1,600 per quintal. Lentil MSP has been hiked by ₹300 to ₹5,100 per quintal.

'IMPORTS FROM CHINA DIPS 27.63% DURING APRIL-AUG'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Sept 21: India's imports from China declined by 27.63% during April-August this fiscal to \$21.58 billion over the same period previous year, Parliament was informed Monday.

Value of imports from China stood at \$4.98 billion in August and \$5.58 in July, according to the data provided by Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal in his written reply to the Lok Sabha.

"India's imports from China have declined by 27.63% during April-August, 2020-21 over the corresponding period of the previous year," he said.

In a separate reply, the minister said there is no proposal under consideration on withdrawal of Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status to China.

"No such proposal is under consideration at this time," he said while replying to a question whether the government is planning for the withdrawal of MFN status to China to reduce the export-import business with that country.

Later in a media briefing, the minister informed that the country's export is reviving.

During the first half of September, exports have recorded a growth of 10 per cent over the same period last year, he added.

Dalmia-OCL launches new refractory line for MgO-C bricks production

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Sept 21: Dalmia-OCL Ltd, India's fastest-growing refractory company, Monday launched a new refractory line for production of Magnesia Carbon (MgO-C bricks) at its Rajgangpur plant in Odisha. Minister of State for Steel Faggan Singh Kulaste inaugurated the production line, which will have a capacity of 108,000 tonne and cater to the demand of domestic steel manufacturers.

Once fully commissioned, this will be India's largest refractory line for production of Magnesia Carbon Bricks and promises to cut nation's import dependence by up to 50%. The refractory line, which



has been set up under Dalmia-OCL's initiative of 'Bharat ki Refractory', will come up in 3 phases of 36,000 tonne each. This product is widely consumed by the steel industry and most of the current demand (ap-

proximately 300,000 tonne annually) is met through imports.

Dalmia-OCL is localising the production of most refractories to provide support to its key customers such as SAIL, Tata Steel, JSW Group, JSP Group and AMNS. The company aims to substitute imports with locally manufactured MgO-C bricks and expects to capture 25% market share.

Subsequently, the company plans to export these bricks to Europe and other key steel markets across the globe. The company has made a cumulative investment of ₹50 crore in the past 2 years and expects its total refractory business to grow by 50% in the next 5 years.

Amazon helps artisans double their sales in 10 weeks

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bangalore, Sept 21: Customers from more than 12,000 pincodes in India purchased a product from the 'Stand for Handmade' store front, helping artisans, weavers and women entrepreneurs double their sales in the 10-week period, Amazon India said Monday.

The 'Stand for Handmade' initiative, to help over 10 lakh artisans and weavers and women entrepreneurs, enabled sellers from Amazon Karigar (for weavers and artisans) and Amazon Saheli (for women entrepreneurs) to register 3.2 times and 2.1 times growth, respectively.

While 32 sellers crossed ₹1 lakh in sales during the 10-week period, two sellers crossed ₹1 crore in sales.

More than 200 new sellers joined the Karigar programme and benefited from 100% SoA (sell on



Amazon) fee waiver, impacting lives of over 35,000 artisans and weavers, the company said in a statement.

"We are humbled by the response to this initiative as customers from

more than 12,000 pin codes purchased a product from the specially-curated store front. With the festive season coming up, we remain focused on helping our sellers fur-

HELPING HAND

The 'Stand for Handmade' initiative, to help over 10 lakh artisans and weavers and women entrepreneurs, enabled sellers from Amazon Karigar and Amazon Saheli to register 3.2 times and 2.1 times growth

Nearly 508 Sambalpuri weaver families from Odisha were able to sell sarees than could span over 17,738 yards

ther accelerate and grow their business," said Pranav Bhasin, Director, MSME and Seller Experience at Amazon India.

Top categories that witnessed highest overall sales included apparel, grocery and home decor: Over 200 Karigar and Saheli sellers witnessed sales for the first time as

part of this initiative.

Nearly 508 Sambalpuri weaver families from Odisha were able to sell sarees than could span over 17,738 yards while more than 4,500 Pochampally weavers from 56 villages of Telangana have recovered and were able to resume their handloom weaving business, Amazon India informed.

"More than 5,200 weavers from Bengal are now back to weaving exquisite weaves on their looms and the lives of 200 Banarasi weavers were positively impacted through sales of

handloom Dupattas and Sarees," it added.

Amazon India's 'Stand for Handmade' initiative was aimed at helping over 10 lakh entrepreneurs including artisans, weavers and women entrepreneurs, rebound from the economic disruption caused by Covid-19. Under this initiative, more than 8 lakh artisans and weavers from Amazon Karigar programme and more than 2.8 lakh women entrepreneurs from Amazon Saheli programme benefited from a 100% SoA fee waiver for 10 weeks.

We are humbled by the response to this initiative as customers from more than 12,000 pin codes purchased a product from the specially-curated store front. With the festive season coming up, we remain focused on helping our sellers further accelerate and grow their business

PRANAV BHASIN | DIRECTOR, MSME AND SELLER EXPERIENCE, AMAZON INDIA

RCB CASH IN ON SRH COLLAPSE

Depleted Royals start campaign against CSK

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dubai, Sept 21: Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) rode on some wonderful performances from both bat and ball as the Virat Kohli-led side opened their season with a 10-run win over Sunrisers Hyderabad in their campaign opener here, Monday.

Chasing 164, SRH were slumped to 120/2 to 153 all out in 19.4 overs. It all began when Yuzvendra Chahal (3/18) dismissed well-set Jonny Bairstow (61, 43b, 6x4, 2x6) and Vijay Shankar in successive balls off his final over.

Even though an injured and struggling Mitchell Marsh walked into bat, only to be dismissed off the first ball he faced from Shivam Dube (2/15), they couldn't reach the target.

It was after a wonderful partnership between Bairstow and Manish Pandey (34, 33b, 3x4, 1x6) as the duo put together 71 runs for the second wicket after David Warner got out cheaply. Navdeep Saini (2/25) also bowled brilliantly for the winning team.

Earlier, Devdutt Padikkal (56, 42b, 8x4) displayed his highly rated talent with a half century on IPL debut before AB de Villiers (51, 30b, 4x4, 2x6) provided the much needed final flourish to take RCB to 163/5.



Devdutt Padikkal (L) lofts over the circle for a boundary; AB de Villiers plays a shot on the legside against SRH, Monday



AB de Villiers plays a shot on the legside against SRH, Monday

play second fiddle at the other end. SRH pulled things back in the middle overs following a 90-run

opening stand between Padikkal and Finch. De Villiers came up with crucial boundary hits towards the end to take the team score past 160. With the openers looking good, RCB cruised to 86 for no loss in 10

MARSH INJURED

DUBAI: Australian all-rounder Mitchell Marsh suffered an ankle injury while bowling during his side SRH's IPL opener against RCB here Monday. The 28-year-old Marsh twisted his ankle on the follow through during the fifth over of the RCB innings and he was seen hobbling out of the ground. Vijay Shankar completed the remaining two balls of the over. Marsh, who bowled only four deliveries, has had a history of injuries in the past due to which he has missed number of editions of IPL. Marsh didn't come back to field during the rest of the RCB innings, but came to bat after the SRH lost their eighth wicket, but got out shortly.

overs. However, both Padikkal and Finch fell off successive balls and that put the brakes on the scoring rate with RCB collecting only 30 runs from the next five overs. Skipper Virat Kohli departed after scoring 14 off 13 balls, leaving De Villiers to provide the final flourish. The South African star delivered once again, smashing his 200th six for RCB in the process.

BRIEF SCORES
Royal Challengers Bangalore 163/5 (Devdutt Padikkal 56, AB de Villiers 51; Vijay Shankar 1/14, Abhishek Sharma 1/16) beat Sunrisers Hyderabad 153 (Jonny Bairstow 61; Yuzvendra Chahal 3/18, Shivam Dube 2/15, Navdeep Saini 2/25) by 10 runs.



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Sharjah, Sept 21: A depleted Rajasthan Royals (RR) have an onerous task of stopping the mighty Chennai Super Kings (CSK) on a Sharjah belter with no Ben Stokes in their line-up but skipper Steve Smith's availability after recovering from a concussion injury has lifted some gloom ahead of their IPL match Tuesday.

The absence of Stokes would severely impact Royals' campaign at least in the first half of the tournament because of the balance he brings to the side but having Smith in the playing XI would mean that the contest will not be without a fight.

Smith, who missed the ODI series against England, has undergone various concussion test protocols and is ready to tee off. He was hit on the head during a net session prior to the first ODI in Manchester. "Been in Dubai for a couple of days now with some good rest and then got into a bit of running. Yesterday, I did a bit of zig-zag running, which is part of the protocols to pass to get back to play," Smith was quoted as saying in a press statement, issued by the franchise. "And today I will have a hit in the nets. Hopefully, pull up well from the hit and be good to play tomorrow," the Australian said. Stokes' father's illness has kept him out of action for some time now and his absence, certainly in the first half of the league, would disturb the balance of the Royals, perennial under-performers. Apart from premier all-rounder

Stokes, also absent from the first match will be Jos Buttler; their impact player at the top order. The England batsman will be missing the first game as he arrived separately with his family and need to undergo mandatory 36-hour quarantine in Dubai.

Last edition's runner-up, CSK exacted revenge on defending champions Mumbai Indians, beating them by five wickets in the tournament opener here Saturday. Jofra Archer's presence will be important along with seasoned T20 stars like South African batsman David Miller, Australian pacer Andrew Tye and England pacer Tom Curran.

The Royals' main problem lies in their Indian core, which hasn't exactly been consistent. The likes of Sanju Samson, Robin Uthappa, Jaydev Unadkat and Varun Aaron have failed to live up to the expectations over the years.

Sharjah pitch will be a different challenge for the bowlers both in terms of surface as well as the size of the ground. CSK have once again showed how to work around with resources and Sam Curran coming good with an all-round show means that Dwayne Bravo would not be missed even if he misses a few more games due to injury.

KXIP APPEAL AGAINST 'SHORT RUN' CALL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dubai, Sept 21: Kings XI Punjab (KXIP) have appealed against on-field umpire Nitin Menon's controversial 'short run' call at crunch time of their IPL game against Delhi Capitals as former players seek more technological intervention for the sake of fair results.

Before the match went into Super Over, the TV footage showed that square leg umpire Menon had erred in calling Chris Jordan for a 'short run' in the third ball of the 19th over, bowled by Kagiso Rabada. The TV replays showed that Jordan's bat was inside the crease when he completed the first run, starting from the non-striker's end. However to KXIP's horror, Menon gestured that Jordan has not completed the run and only one run was added to Mayank Agarwal and the Punjab team's total. The decision was not reversed despite technological evidence that it was a wrong call.

"We have appealed to the match referee. While a human error can happen and we understand that, there is no room for human errors like these in a world-class tournament like the IPL. This one run could cost us a play-off berth," KXIP CEO Satish Menon told PTL. "A loss of a game is a loss of a game. It is unfair. Hope the rules are reviewed so that there is no margin for human error." However the appeal is unlikely to yield any result since rule 2.12

(Umpire's decision) in the IPL rule book on playing conditions says that 'an umpire may alter any decision provided that such alteration is made promptly. This apart, an umpire's decision, once made, is final.' Aakash Chopra, the cricketer-turned-commentator, also criticised the umpiring and that technology wasn't used to enforce a fair result. "One short that wasn't. Technology must take over in these

cases but that's possible if only the third umpire spotted it in time. What if #KXIP don't make it to the final four by 2 points?? Tight," Chopra wondered. Former India batsman Virender Sehwag lashed out at Menon for his call. "I don't agree with the man of the match choice. The umpire who gave this short run should have been man of the match," Sehwag's sarcasm-laced tweet read. "Short Run nahin tha. And that was the difference," Sehwag wrote.

Foxes, Reds maintain winning starts in EPL



ON A ROLL: Sadio Mane wheels away in celebration after scoring against Chelsea; (inset) Andreas Christensen attempts to stop Mane from behind, which resulted the former's sending off, Sunday

fixtures to an astonishing 39. Burnley took the lead through Chris Wood but goals by Harvey Barnes, Erik Pieters, James Justin and Dennis Praet earned Leicester the win to put them top of the standings on goal difference.

Liverpool had made hard work of beating Leeds United 4-3 in their opener, but put Chelsea away with relative ease.

A dull match did turn, however, on the moment Christensen decided to wrestle Mane to the ground after the striker burst through on goal just before the break. Christensen was initially shown a yellow card but referee Paul Tierney upgraded that to a red after a VAR check and a look at the pitchside monitor.

When Mane headed Liverpool in front in the 50th minute and then Arrizabalaga's poor pass out allowed Mane a tap-in, Chelsea were in danger of complete capitulation. They did have a penalty lifeline when Liverpool's new signing Thiago Alcantara fouled striker Timo Werner in the second half but Jorginho's kick was saved by Alisson.

Leicester joined Liverpool, Arsenal and Everton on six points from two games as they beat Burnley 4-2 to take the goal tally for the weekend's eight Premier League

Real begin title defence with stalemate

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Madrid, Sept 21: It wasn't the best of starts for defending champion Real Madrid, who needed a good performance by goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois to salvage a 0-0 draw at Real Sociedad in the Spanish league (La Liga). With a squad mostly unchanged from last season, Madrid looked out of rhythm Sunday and couldn't get more than a point in a lackluster match at the Reale Arena in the Basque Country. Zinedine Zidane's team struggled in attack and saw Sociedad create some of the most dangerous chances, including one by forward Alexander Isak just before halftime that forced Courtois to make a superb save with his legs as he charged out on the goal. Madrid had won 10 of their last 11 league matches last season to clinch their first title in three years. They are trying to lift back-to-back league trophies for the first time since 2007-08.



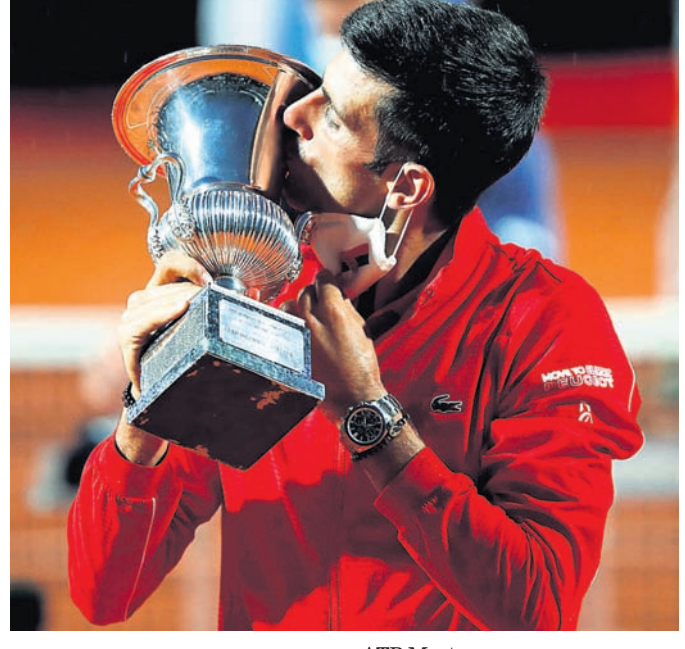
Madrid only opened this weekend because their first-round match against Getafe was postponed as they played later into last season after reaching the round of 16 of the Champions League. Barcelona and Atletico Madrid, who made it to the Champions League quarterfinals, had their first two games postponed and won't start until next weekend in the third round. It's the same for Sevilla, who won the Europa League. Madrid had only one preparation match before their opener, against Getafe last week. Sociedad, which finished in sixth place last season, had started their league campaign with a 1-1 draw at Valladolid. Madrid started their title defense

DeCHAMBEAU BAGS US OPEN GOLF C'SHIP

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Mamaroneck, Sept 21: What was supposed to be a typical US Open produced a most unconventional champion. Bryson DeChambeau was not the least bit concerned by the narrow fairways or the ankle-deep rough that shape Winged Foot into historically the toughest of all US Opens. With his extra 40 pounds of muscle and mass, he wanted to pound it into submission with his driver, even if his errant shots were buried in deep grass. That's how he plays the game. And for skeptics who said that wouldn't work in a US Open at Winged Foot, just look at that shiny silver trophy he kissed, and the record score he posted Sunday in a six-shot victory. This victory was as much about validating his out-of-the-box approach to the royal and ancient game.

Djokovic makes Masters history with triumph



ATP Masters crown. Playing his maiden ATP 1000 final, eighth seed Schwartzman raced out of the blocks to convert two break point opportunities for a 3-0 lead as Djokovic struggled to put a lid on his backhand errors.

Halep claims crown

Rome: Top seed Simona Halep gave her French Open preparations a boost when she claimed the Italian Open here Monday after second seed Karolina Pliskova retired from the final with injury when she was down 0-6, 1-2. Victory gave Halep her first title here and her third consecutive title of the year after wins in Dubai - before the COVID-19 hiatus - and Prague last month. Pliskova attempted to continue playing after receiving treatment on her lower back and leg between sets but eventually decided to retire, not willing to take any chances before the French Open which begins September 27.



An on-and-off drizzle at Foro Italico added to Djokovic's frustration but he still found a way past Schwartzman's serve to draw level at 3-3. Djokovic's relentless baseline hitting came to the fore when he broke Schwartzman in the 12th game to take the opening set, despite committing 18 unforced errors. Schwartzman, who outplayed defending champion Rafa Nadal in the quarter-finals, snatched another early break in the second set but this time Djokovic was quick to respond. The top seed stepped up the intensity to break Schwartzman's serve twice before serving out the match comfortably to seal victory. The result also comes as a relief for Djokovic, who was desperate to return to court this week following his U.S. Open disqualification for inadvertently striking a line judge with a ball. Heading into next week's French Open, Djokovic has now won 31 of his 32 matches this season, and will be one of the favourites in Paris

CONTRASTING LUCKS FOR PRAJNESH, NAGAL

PARIS: Indian tennis player Prajnesh Gunneswaran overcame a sluggish start to advance to the second round of the French Open men's singles qualifying event but country's top player Sumit Nagal bowed out after a close defeat, here Monday. Seeded 16th, Nagal - who became the first Indian in seven years to win a singles match at a Grand Slam with his opening round victory at the US Open - lost 6-7(4-7), 5-7 to Germany's seasoned player Dustin Brown in one hour and 47 minutes. Nagal had his chances in the second set as he was leading 3-0 but Brown did not let him continue with the momentum. Prajnesh, India's second-highest ranked singles player, got the better of Turkey's Cem Ilkel 6-3, 6-1 after losing his service early in his opening qualifier of the clay court Grand Slam.

alongside 12-times winner Rafa Nadal and newly-crowned US Open champion Dominic Thiem.