



## BIG SHOES TO FILL

Actor Kangana Ranaut has shared that she is set to play 'Indira Gandhi' in her next film 'Emergency'

LEISURE P2



## FORCED SHUTDOWN

Hong Kong's pro-democracy newspaper Apple will publish its last edition Thursday after arrest of editors

INTERNATIONAL P10



## ENGLAND THROUGH

Raheem Sterling's header helps England overcome the Czech Republic and enter Euro 2020 knockouts

SPORTS P12

**IRREGULAR** by MANJUL

Not the third wave, what bothers him is the third front!

## 40 DELTA PLUS CASES IDENTIFIED IN INDIA

NEW DELHI: Around 40 cases of the Delta plus variant, classified as a variant of concern (VOC), have been detected in Maharashtra, Kerala, Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh, the Union Health Ministry said Wednesday. "As of now among the samples sequenced (45000+) in India, Delta plus variant - AY.1 has been observed sporadically in Maharashtra, Kerala, Karnataka and MP, with around 40 cases identified so far and no significant increase in prevalence," the ministry said in its statement. These four states have been advised to strengthen surveillance and take appropriate public health measures. **MORE P9**

## KIWIS WIN TEST TITLE

SOUTHAMPTON: New Zealand defeated India by eight wickets to win the inaugural ICC Test championships here Wednesday at the Rose Bowl stadium. India were bowled out in their second innings for 170 leaving New Zealand to get 139 for victory which they did. Kane Williamson (52 n o) and Ross Taylor (47 n o) took the Kiwis home as Virat Kohli's men once more failed miserably with the bat. Except for Rishabh Pant (41) none failed to come good when India batted. Tim Southee (4/48) and Trent Boult (3/39) bowled well for the victors. **MORE P12**

MARKET WATCH		
INDEX		VIATION
SENSEX	52306.08	↓ 282.63
NIFTY	15687.00	↓ 85.80
DOLLAR	74.55	↓ ₹0.05
EURO	88.56	↓ ₹0.17
GOLD	₹47,201	↑ ₹190
SILVER	₹68,294	↑ ₹779

WEATHER		
	BHUB	CTK
TEMP		
MAX	27.6°C	28.6°C
MIN	22.9°C	23.0°C
Humidity	98%	91%
Rainfall	7.6mm	24mm
		Forecast
		Generally cloudy sky



LET THE CAR FESTIVAL BEGIN: Artisans at Raghav Das mutt in Puri give finishing touches to the elephant attire ahead of the Snana Yatra and Gajanan Besha rituals of Lord Jagannath scheduled to be conducted Thursday

# Mission recovery on

40% of amount defrauded by 'Terrible Trio' from various banks recovered, says ED

AGENCIES

New Delhi, June 23: About 40 per cent of the money lost by banks in alleged frauds perpetrated by fugitive businessmen Nirav Modi, Mehul Choksi and Vijay Mallya has been recovered so far, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) said after the sale of attached shares worth over ₹5,800 crore Wednesday. According to the agency, the latest sale proceeds take the total value of recovery to ₹9,041.5 crore, or 40 per cent of the over ₹22,000 crore allegedly defrauded by the trio.

Commenting on the development, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman tweeted, "Fugitives & economic offenders will be actively pursued; their properties attached & dues recovered."

The three are alleged to have cheated banks to the tune of ₹22,585.83 crore (in definite numbers) and these frauds have been categorised as among India's biggest criminal loan heist till date. All the three are being investigated by the ED and CBI.

The central agency gave the low-down on these two cases - the estimated ₹13,000 crore fraud allegedly carried out by diamond trader Nirav Modi, his uncle Mehul Choksi and others in the Brady House branch of PNB in Mumbai and the about ₹9,000 crore Kingfisher Airlines fraud triggered by Mallya - in a statement issued here.

The ED said the three 'defrauded' banks by siphoning off the funds. The ED, empowered to probe such cases under criminal sections of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), went on to attach and seize total assets worth ₹18,170.02



- Over ₹13,000 crore defrauded by the Choksi-Nirav combo
- Mallya's Kingfisher Airlines allegedly 'stole' ₹9,000 crore
- All three are presently fighting extradition to India

crore in these two cases that included ₹969 crore worth of properties 'located' abroad. "The quantum of the attached and seized assets represents 80.45 per cent of the total bank loss of ₹22,585.83 crore," the ED said.

Out of these attached assets, the Debts Recovery Tribunal (DRT) on behalf of an SBI-led consortium that lent money to Mallya sold Wednesday fresh shares worth ₹5,824.50 crore of United Breweries Limited (UBL), the agency informed. "Further realisation of ₹800 crore by sale of these shares is expected by June 25," the ED added.

The banks have earlier 'recovered' ₹1,357 crore by a similar sale of shares in the case against Mallya and his

## ABDUCTION STORY SURFACES AGAIN

NEW DELHI: Antigua and Barbuda Prime Minister Gaston Browne has said he is not aware of 'any conclusive evidence' but there is information in public domain that diamond trader Mehul Choksi was abducted and law enforcement agencies may be having some 'persons of interest' after their research. Choksi had gone missing May 23 from Antigua. He was later found in Dominica and is currently behind bars as an 'illegal entrant'. "This information is in public domain that Mehul Choksi was abducted. Law enforcement here have done some research and perhaps may have some individuals of interest but as far as evidence is concerned I am not aware that there is any such conclusive evidence," Browne said according to the 'Antigua News Room'.

now defunct Kingfisher Airlines, the ED said. Another ₹1,060 crore worth of assets were 'restituted' to the banks earlier in the probe against Nirav Modi, the ED informed.

## State to vaccinate Nepali nationals

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, June 23: The Odisha government has decided to vaccinate all Nepali nationals working in the state, even if they don't have the required ID proof.

Following the recommendations of the National Expert Group on Vaccine Administration for Covid-19 (NEGVAC), the Health and Family Welfare, Additional Chief Secretary, PK Mohapatra has asked all collectors, municipal commissioners and CDMOs to vaccinate such persons. This will be done to prevent the third wave of Covid-19 in the state.

The Nepali nationals, who are working as labourer and workers may not have any prescribed ID card for registration on the CoWIN portal. Therefore, the government has decided to vaccinate the Nepalis in accordance with the SOP prepared for vaccination of persons without prescribed identity cards.

The concerned officials have been directed to include such persons in the ongoing vaccination drives and to prepare the list accordingly.

Earlier, the government had directed all the district administrations to vaccinate vulnerable people including nomads, sadhus, beggars, senior citizens and inmates of mental health institutions even if they did not have proper ID proof.

The government Wednesday administered 3,24,947 doses of Covid-19 vaccines at 1,598 centres. So far, over 1.06 crore doses of the vaccines have been administered to people in Odisha. The government will conduct 1,194 vaccination sessions Thursday. Odisha currently has 3,59,340 doses of Covishield and 5,24,360 doses of Covaxin available, officials said.

## Bande Utkala Janani in Class IX, X course

SYLLABUS REDUCED BY 30%

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, June 23: The Board of Secondary Education (BSE) notified Wednesday that State song 'Bande Utkala Janani' will be included in the curriculum of Class IX and X students from the ongoing session itself. In a letter dated June 23, to all schools, the BSE announced that the poem written by Kantakabi Laxmikanta Mohapatra in 1912 will be included in the first language Odia (FLO) syllabus for both the classes.

The song 'Bande Utkala Janani' had been accorded the 'State Song' status in Odisha June 7, 2020. "The study and recitation of Bande Utkala Janani will instill a sense of belongingness to Odisha and patriotism in the hearts of young students," Chief Minister had then said.

'Bande Utkala Janani' is sung on the concluding day of every session of the State Assembly. It should be stated here that Odias all over the world had performed the song at 5.30pm May 30, 2020 to express their gratitude to the frontline workers spearheading the fight against Covid-19.

In a separate development, Odisha School and Mass Education Minister Samir Ranjan Dash said Wednesday that the annual syllabuses for Class IX and Class X will be reduced by 30 per cent this year. The minister also said that no decision has

- Online classes for students of Classes IX, X to continue till July 31
- Experts feel reduction of syllabuses will harm students

been taken regarding the physical resumption of classes in the state.

"Elaborate measures have been taken already to ensure that studies are not hampered. Students are being taught online. However, it has not been possible to reach out to every student in the state," Dash said. "Due to such lacunae and other factors, we have decided to reduce the syllabuses of Class IX and Class X by at least 30 per cent in the first phase," the minister informed. Online classes will continue till July 31, the minister added.

For those failing to attend online classes on YouTube due to lack of internet facilities, the state government is mulling an alternative teaching programme to be implemented in offline mode, he said.

Experts however, opined that reducing the syllabi of Classes IX and X will harm students. Education expert Pritish Acharya said Classes IX and X are formative years for students. So they need to learn and gain as much knowledge as they can which will help them in future. Reducing the syllabi will not do any good to them. Their focus should be to learn and not just pass examinations.

## Govt worried at slow lifting pace

FOODGRAINS FOR COVID-HIT FAMILIES

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, June 23: In an aim to provide help to those hit hard due to the Covid-19 pandemic, both the Centre and state government have announced supply of free foodgrains like wheat and rice. However, due to carelessness of government officials the beneficiaries may not get the supplies on time.

Civil supply officers (CSOs) are yet to collect foodgrains allotted under PMGKAY and State Food Security Scheme (SFSS) for the months of July and August. A letter to this effect was written Wednesday by the Odisha State Civil Supplies Corporation (OSCS) MD Biswajit Keshari Das to the CSOs. "On review of the lifting position as on 21.06.2021 against allotment month of July-August, it is found that it is extremely poor," Das said in his letter. He asked the CSOs to complete the lifting and delivery of the foodgrains to fair price shops (FPS) by June 30.

- CSOs will be held responsible if beneficiaries do not get supplies on time
- Foodgrain distribution will start from July according to an Odisha government official

The state government has instructed that lifting of allotted foodgrains from FCI godowns and delivery to the FPS should be completed by end-June. Sources said that the lifting is happening at a very slow pace and has not even started in the districts of Bargarh, Gajapati, Khurda, Nayagarh, Puri and Rayagada. It is very likely that collection of wheat and rice from FCI depots may not be completed by June 30. So officials have been asked to monitor the lifting/issue of wheat and rice stocks on daily basis to expedite the same order. The respective CSO will be held responsible for any lapse of supply of quota, the MD warned. The distribution of foodgrains (at the rate of ₹5/kg per head) will start in July.

# Discounts galore for inoculated persons

VARIOUS COMPANIES ARE OFFERING SOPS TO BREAK VACCINE HESITANCY AMONG PEOPLE

AGENCIES

Bangalore, June 23: Discounts on items ranging from fast food to flight tickets are being offered by Indian firms keen to lure people to get vaccinated against the coronavirus, as the economy re-opens gradually from weeks of lockdown. Businesses in the West are making similar offers to dispel vaccine hesitancy. However, India is badly short of doses for its population of nearly 1.4 billion, and the incentives could serve to attract more recipients.

IndiGo airline is offering a discount of up to 10 per cent on base fares to customers who have been vaccinated against Covid-19 (both single and double doses), the company said

in a press release Wednesday. India's largest domestic carrier thus becomes the first airline to make such an offer to its customers at a time when the Ministry of Civil Aviation has set a fare cap on seat pricing.

"Being the largest airline in the country, we feel it is our responsibility to contribute to the national vaccination drive, by encouraging more people towards this common goal. This offer will not only strengthen their resolve towards vaccination but also ensure that they can travel safely at affordable fares with IndiGo," the airline said in a press release.

"We feel it is our responsibility to contribute to the national vaccination drive by encouraging more peo-



ple," Sanjay Kumar, a senior official of the company said.

The Indian arm of fast food giant McDonald's is also offering a 20 per cent discount on meals. This move comes about as the fast food company wants to ensure the safety of persons visiting its eating joints. Similarly home appliances maker Godrej has said that vaccinated customers will

## NEW VAX TO FIGHT ALL VARIANTS

WASHINGTON: Scientists have developed a universal vaccine that protected mice not just against Covid-19, but also other coronaviruses while triggering the immune system to fight off a dangerous variant. To prevent a future coronavirus pandemic, the team designed the vaccine to provide protection from the current SARS-CoV-2 and a group of coronaviruses known to make the jump from animals to humans. The study, published in the journal 'Science', looked at a second-generation vaccine: one that targets 'sarbecoviruses'. "The vaccine has the potential to prevent outbreaks when used as a new variant is detected," said study lead author Ralph Baric, an epidemiologist at UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health.

have extended product warranties. To claim the discounts, people must show their vaccination certificates issued by the government.

State-run Central Bank of India Ltd, on the other hand is offering higher interest on deposits from re-

ipients of at least one dose.

However, the rate of vaccination in India remains very slow compared to other countries. Against a population of over 1.4 billion, India has so far administered a little over 29 crore vaccine doses.



## ANYA TAYLOR-JOY THOUGHT SHE'D NEVER WORK AGAIN

Actress Anya Taylor-Joy, who made her feature film debut with *The Witch* six years ago, says she thought her career was over with the role, despite getting praised for her performance as Thomasin in the horror film.

## EMMY AWARDS ANNOUNCE GENDER-NEUTRAL OPTION

The Television Academy's Board of Governors confirmed that nominees in the Best Actress or Best Actor honours can choose to be called a 'performer' rather than an actor or an actress when the 73rd Primetime Emmy Awards take place in September this year, reports *aceshowbiz.com*.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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**ARIES**  
Today, things may just not turn out to be as you expected. Your investments may seem all wrong, your returns too low. But Ganesh says that life is full of surprises. The stars indicate that you may meet an old friend who will bring much cheer into your life!

**TAURUS**  
It is very likely that you will be poignant and passionate today, predicts Ganesh. You may have a care-free attitude in the afternoon. Those with government jobs will experience satisfactory results for all the hard work they put in. Your professional proficiency will come to the fore at the workplace.

**GEMINI**  
You will need to curb your tendency to pay attention to the professional demands and needs of other people over your own. Your work-load today will demand creative solutions and will require some amount of brain-storming with your colleagues.

**CANCER**  
You will be attracted to the opposite sex and a love affair may ensue. You will turn more open and generous. You will have a realisation and handle issues with understanding. Ganesh is with you.

**LEO**  
You will need to curb down on your aggressive nature today. You will face a lot of situations today where you may lose your temper owing to minor issues and will later feel depressed. Calm and peace is required to progress in life, along with courage. Even if your personal life starts out today on a tense note, by evening things will be back to normal, says Ganesh.

**VIRGO**  
Ganesh warns that there may be a lot of problems brewing for you today. You will need to put in a lot of extra efforts in order to complete a lot of work that is pending because you have been procrastinating for a long time. You will feel inclined to share your most intimate secrets with your partner.

**LIBRA**  
Ganesh says you will try to maintain a place of pride and your status quo in society. You will be able to impress people with your speech and your wit. You will gain popularity amongst people because of your personality and your external appearance.

**SCORPIO**  
An eventful day lies ahead of you, says Ganesh. The first half of the day would be packed with routine activities, fighting cut-throat competition on field. However, you become a fashionista in the second half as you plan to attend a social function and take the centre stage.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
If you see people fainting when you pass by, blame it on that thousand watts, sparkling smile of yours. At work, your colleagues will benefit from your expertise and skills. In the evening, your heart may be thumping faster as your plan a special date with your sweetheart!

**CAPRICORN**  
Love is in the air for you, today. You will take your sweetheart out for a romantic dinner, shopping or anything of that sort and pamper him/her to the hilt. But, don't spend like a sailor as you have limited sources of income, advises Ganesh. Busy in social gatherings and parties, you will make a mark on everyone's mind with your wit and humour.

**AQUARIUS**  
Be appreciative of the achievements of others as it will inspire them to continue and put their best foot forward. Your amicable approach at work will create friendly environment and motivate your colleagues to perform better. You will be in the good books of everyone, says Ganesh.

**PISCES**  
It is a great day to be social and catch up with friends and make travel plans with near and dear ones. You find peace, comfort and pleasure in any travel that you undertake today. There might be some reasons that might result in mild mental stress but if you are cautious and prepared than nothing will be able to usher you in harm's way. Do not fuss too much over little things and enjoy your journey, says Ganesh.

## Kangana to play ex-PM Indira in *Emergency*

**Mumbai:** Actress Kangana Ranaut took to social media Wednesday to share the news with fans that she is undergoing body scan to play Indira Gandhi in her next film titled *Emergency*. Kangana will essay the role of former Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in the upcoming political drama that she will also produce. The film will reportedly feature *Emergency* and *Operation Blue Star*. Kangana shared a couple of videos Wednesday on Instagram Story where she is seen going through a body scan process as part of her preparation for the role in the office of her production house, Manikarnika Films. "Guess what is going on in Manikarnika Films? Body scan for film *Emergency*, time to get into Madam Prime Minister Indira Gandhi Ji's skin," the actress shared on her Instagram story. The film is being written and directed by Sai Kabir, who helmed Kangana's 2014 release *Revolver Rani*.



## Ayushmann turns Insta poet

**Mumbai:** Actor Ayushmann Khurrana Wednesday donned the poet's hat on Instagram, and went down memory lane recalling his college days. Ayushmann posted a picture of his younger self from his student days and wrote in Hindi: "(Circa 2006) *Baat hai Panjab University ke hut number fourteen ki. Muskaan hai befikr everyday routine ki. Mass comm dept ki purani building ke peeche. Samosa aur chai. University ka most famous guy, fir bhi quite shy* (This is about hut number 14 of Panjab University. Life was all about carefree everyday routine and smiles. Behind the old building of the mass comm department. Samosas and tea. The most famous guy of the university still shy) #throwback." Speaking about his upcoming slate of work, Ayushmann has his bag full. He currently has three films lined up. He will be seen in *Chandigarh Kare Aashiqui*, *Anek* and *Doctor G*.



## Yet another Google goof up

**Bangalore:** Tech giant Google has courted a fresh controversy over wrongly inserting late Kannada thespian Dr Rajkumar's photograph for a character named 'Half Boil' in Vijay Sethupathi Tamil star-rer *Vikram Vedha*. Earlier, the tech giant was forced to tender a public apology on June 4, after its search engine produced results on Kannada as one of the ugliest languages in the world. Many Kannada film stars and several fans took serious objection to the goof up by Google



as Rajkumar, who died in 2016, is considered to be a Kannada cultural icon and is still remembered by millions of fans. Highlighting this anomaly, Kannada film director, actor and writer Rishab Shetty took to his Twitter account and appealed to his followers on the microblogging site to report the error. Even after his tweet, Google has not changed the photo yet. Rajkumar earned his demigod as well as Kannada cultural icon status for his performances in several genres - romantic, action, drama, thriller and mythological.

## Girl power in digital spotlight

Mainstream Hindi movies reduced its women characters to props whereas the streaming platforms have ushered in a change, says actress Shefali Shah who worked in Emmy Award winning drama series *'Delhi Crime'*

The world of OTT is reimagining female protagonists with a different perspective. As the spotlight shifts on woman power in the digital space, characteristics of the heroine that was hitherto untapped have come to the fore.

to watch it at 12am. I wasn't expecting to receive feedback instantly," said the actress.

### Delhi Crime



One of the most powerful and unusually imagined female roles on OTT has been Shefali Shah as the fierce cop DCP Vartika Chaturvedi in web series *Delhi Crime*, which won the Best Drama Series award at the 48th International Emmy Awards. Shefali recalled how, back in the day, mainstream movies reduced its women characters to props, noting how the OTT space have ushered change.

the second season of *The Family Man 2*, as the antagonist Raji, a Sri Lankan Tamil terrorist. The role is complex, and Samantha has very few lines to speak. Her character balances her vulnerability as a person who knows nothing beyond her movement and what she perceives is her idealism, and is at the same time she is a ruthless person who will go to any extent to get what she wants.

### Mirzapur



Rasika Dugal has been one of the biggest success stories in the OTT era. She wowed the audience with her role in season one and two of the web series *Mirzapur* as Beena Tripathi. Rasika broke the taboo of talking about female desires with her character Beena, and she eventually metamorphosed from a demure bahu to a fierce woman.

### The Family Man 2



Samantha Akkineni made an impactful digital debut with

Below are a few movies that celebrate the woman power:

### Sherni

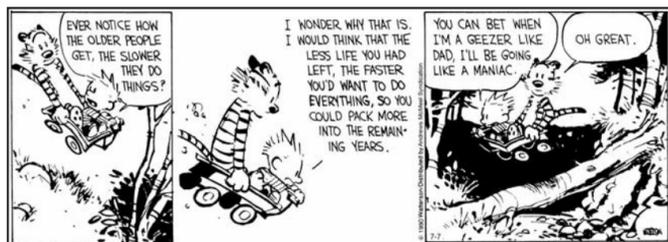


In this movie Vidya Balan is seen playing a forest officer caught in the quagmire of the sexism-laden 'sarkari' workplace, even as she fights to protect wildlife. For Vidya, *Sherni* refers to all women who derive their identities from the work they do. She agrees the digital platforms get instant reactions. "In case of a theatrical release the box office matters the most. Whereas with *Shakuntala Devi*, the film was released at midnight and when I woke up the next morning, I had a barrage of messages from people who stayed up the night before

### PEANUTS



### CALVIN AND HOBBS

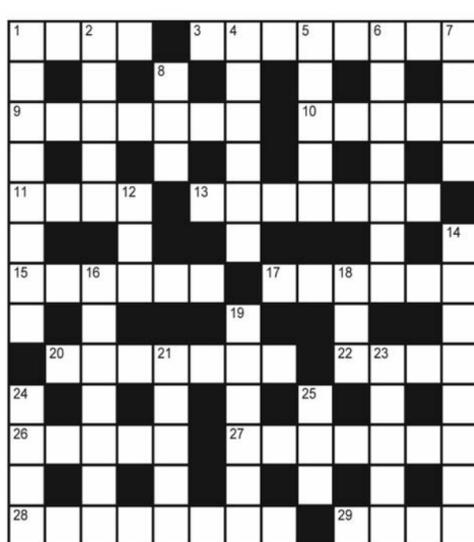


### BREVITY



## FUN post

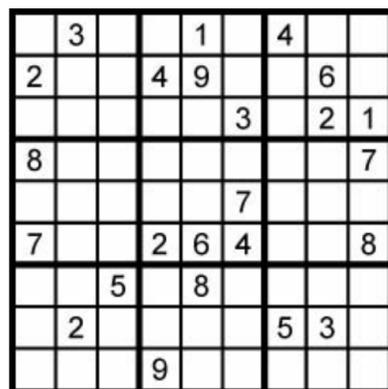
### CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 1 Davenport
  - 3 Renovated
  - 9 Employ
  - 10 Mode of transportation
  - 11 Subterfuge
  - 13 Chinese dish (4,3)
  - 15 Be that as it may (4,2)
  - 17 Assert without proof
  - 20 Instruct
  - 22 Short run
  - 26 Vogue
  - 27 Puppy producer
  - 28 Bugged
  - 29 Wagon part
  - 6 Grassland
  - 7 Unit of force
  - 8 Auction action
  - 12 Sea eagle
  - 14 Aquarium denizen (3,5)
  - 16 Infinite
  - 18 Young fellow
  - 19 Farm building
  - 21 Inner circle
  - 23 African antelope
  - 24 Desist
  - 25 Wager
- Down**
- 1 Chipmunk relative
  - 2 Flunks
  - 4 Chooses
  - 5 Thespian

### SUDOKU

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



### SOLUTIONS



CROSSWORD

SUDOKU

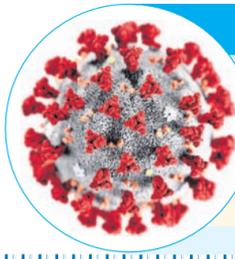
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

# downtown



## MONSOON BLUES

Unit-I vegetable market in Bhubaneswar turns muddy due to incessant rain, Wednesday



## COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	18,00,81,090	16,48,23,479	39,00,993
India	3,00,28,709	2,89,94,855	3,90,660
Odisha	8,86,946	8,53,012	3,717

# Brace for disasters, CM tells officials

Terming the period from June to October as crucial, the Chief Minister directed all the departments and functionaries to ensure full preparedness to tackle any natural calamities including cyclone, flood and others



Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik chairs the State-level Natural Disaster Committee meeting, Wednesday

POST NEWS NETWORK

## CALAMITY PREPAREDNESS

Due to climate change, the intensity and occurrence of natural disasters have increased

Odisha is prone to multiple and recurring natural disasters like floods and cyclones

Odisha is prone to multiple and recurring natural disasters like floods and cyclones. Due to climate change, the intensity and occurrence of natural disasters have increased, he said, adding, the state had witnessed cyclones—Amphan and Yaas during the recent past.

(ODRAF) and fire service units to remain prepared and keep the control rooms open 24x7 in all the districts and related departments for mitigation of possible natural disasters.

He said that it is the right of disaster-affected people to get help on humanitarian ground. He urged the officials to give special attention

to pregnant women, differently-abled and mentally-retarded persons, children, widows and elderly people during the relief and rescue operations.

Stating that community participation is imperative in disaster management, Patnaik said that state government has decided to impart education to students and training to government employees along with representatives on management of natural disaster.

Despite Covid-19 situation, the state is able to manage natural disasters successfully for which it has received appreciation at international level, he said.

'Every life is precious' and 'whole of government approach' is the policy of the state in management of any disaster. Due to such an approach, the best possible measures can be taken and the impact of disasters can be reduced, he said.

Stating that development of disaster-resilient infrastructure requires huge amount of funds, Patnaik said in the meeting that the state has informed the Centre about this.

Members of the Council of Ministers, MPs, MLAs, Chief Secretary and secretaries and senior officials of different departments attended the meeting.

## WOODEN WONDER



Chariot construction in progress at Puri Rath Yard, Wednesday

OP PHOTO

# Car fest only in Puri as HC refuses to interfere in state govt's order

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Cuttack, June 23:** The Orissa High Court Wednesday refused to intervene in the state government's order permitting Rath Yatra only in Puri in view of Covid-19 pandemic.

A bench of Chief Justice S Muralidhar and Justice SK Panigrahi rejected at least five petitions seeking the HC intervention for organisation of Rath Yatra at Kendrapara and Bhatli with strict adherence to Covid-19 protocol.

The state government had earlier issued an order allowing Rath Yatra only in Puri while putting restrictions on the organisation of the annual chariot festival at other places in Odisha.

The order had created resentment among locals of Kendrapara and a few other places in the state. The locals and the priests of Baladev temple had urged the state government to allow Rath Yatra at Kendrapara.

BJP workers also staged dharna at Kendrapara Collector's office and all tehsil offices in the district seeking permission for the chariot festival of Lord Baladev with strict adherence to the Covid-19 protocol.

The locals and BJP workers claimed that there is a close link between the chariot festivals of Puri Srimandir and Lord Baladev temple. Besides, the Rath Yatra of Baladev is associated with the



File photo of Rath Yatra in Puri

THE STATE GOVT HAD EARLIER ISSUED AN ORDER ALLOWING RATH YATRA ONLY IN PURI WHILE PUTTING RESTRICTIONS ON THE CONDUCT OF THE ANNUAL FESTIVAL AT OTHER PLACES

THE ORDER HAD SPARKED RESENTMENT AMONG LOCALS OF KENDRAPARA AND A FEW OTHER PLACES IN THE STATE. THE LOCALS AND THE PRIESTS OF BALADEV TEMPLE HAD URGED THE STATE GOVERNMENT TO ALLOW RATH YATRA AT KENDRAPARA

religious sentiment of the people, they argued. A few priests of Baladev temple had also sought the help of Puri Shankaracharya Nischalananda Saraswati in conduct of Rath Yatra at Kendrapara. Subsequently, the temple priests

and a few others had filed four petitions in the HC seeking the court intervention into the issue.

"We will soon move the Supreme Court on the issue," said petitioners' lawyer Akhaya Kumar Pandey.

# Spar continues over Modi's photo missing at vax sites

PNN/ AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, June 23:** The opposition BJP Wednesday continued to protest against the absence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's photo in the hoardings and posters which are displaying only the picture of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik at the inoculation sites in Odisha.

They demanded the state government to include picture of Modi on all means of advertisements put up at the vaccination centres.

Union Minister Pratap Sarangi, who visited the vaccination centre at the Gandhi Smriti Bhavan in Balasore to oversee the inoculation process, stressed that Modi "deserves universal acclaim for rolling out such a massive inoculation drive." Sarangi represents Balasore in Lok Sabha. The two parties had crossed words on the matter two days back also.

BJP MP Aparajita Sarangi said that the Odisha government sought the Union government's support after it "failed" to procure coronavirus vaccines

BJD leader Sasmit Patra accused Aparajita of doing "shameful" and "petty" politics as Modi's photo is there on every Covid vaccination certificate given to the beneficiaries in the state

has come to the rescue of @CMO\_Odisha," she tweeted.

"Basic courtesy demands that PM Modi's photo with (the) CM's photo be put up at all vaccination points by the state government," the BJP leader posted, along with pictures of her visit to a vaccination centre here.

Aparajita said that not putting up posters of the PM was "height of insecurity and narrow-mindedness" of the state government.

BJD leader Sasmit Patra rebutted Aparajita, and accused her of doing "shameful" and "petty" politics as Modi's photo is there on every Covid vaccination certificate given to the

beneficiaries in the state.

"While every party is trying to make an issue out of it, (the) BJD never played politics over this," Patra tweeted, tagging Aparajita Sarangi.

Patra underscored that Patnaik's message that had been put out across the state called for using masks and ensure Covid-appropriate behaviour; adding that it was nothing about vaccination.

"It is petty and shameful to do politics out of this. I am afraid you (Aparajita Sarangi) may be insecure about your political relevance and doing this narrow-minded politics," the BJD spokesperson said.

The Rajya Sabha MP also took a jibe at the Bhubaneswar MP, thanking her "for wearing masks off late".

BJP which replaced Congress as the main opposition in Odisha after 2019 state election is not missing any chance to confront the ruling Biju Janata Dal politically.

The saffron party workers had Monday staged strong protest on display of lone picture of Patnaik at vaccination centres in Balasore, Koraput and Angul districts.

## Beverages Corporation donates ₹5Cr to CMRF



PNN/ AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, June 23:** The Odisha State Beverages Corporation Ltd (OSBCL) has donated ₹5 crore to the Chief Minister's Relief Fund (CMRF) as its contribution to the state's fight against novel coronavirus pandemic, an official release said Wednesday.

Chief Secretary SC Mohapatra and Development Commissioner PK Jena received the cheque from OSBCL chairperson SK Lohani at the Lok Seva Bhawan here, the statement said.

The public sector unit contributed ₹15 crore to the CMRF last year and paid a dividend of ₹7.58 crore to the state government for 2019-20 financial year, Lohani said.

The OSBCL also contributed ₹1.43 crore to the Health department for purchasing advanced life-support ambulances, the official added.

## WAIT FOR VAX



People queuing up for anti-Covid vaccine at Chandrasekharpur Kalyan Mandap in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday

## COVID: MUSEUM: CHALLENGES

# 'Explore digital tools to entice museum audiences'

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, June 23:** At a time when museums are facing unprecedented challenges due to Covid-19 scourge, museum authorities and professionals associated with the industry felt the need for exploring advanced digital tools to keep their audiences engaged.

Odisha State Museum in association with The Heritage Consortium, Patna Wednesday started a webinar series titled 'Rainbow: The hope'. They invited all museum professionals to come forward and participate in this webinar and share their views.

On the inaugural day of the webinar on the theme Covid: Museum: challenges, Tourism, Odia Language, Literature and Culture Minister Jyoti Prakash Panigrahi said, "A museum is a mirror of a state. The museums showcase the history of a state and its rich tradition and culture which is very important for the learning of our students and future generation."

Unfortunately, the museums are out of bounds for the public owing to the pandemic, he stated.

"At this juncture, it is essential to explore the digital tools for capturing the attention of the audiences. We had already started this



Odisha State Museum in association with Heritage Consortium, Patna Wednesday started a webinar series titled 'Rainbow: The hope'

The museums are out of bounds for the public owing to the pandemic. At this juncture, the tourism minister said, it is essential to explore the digital tools for capturing the attention of the audiences

in our state. As of now, this is the only way for continue the museum activities and public interaction," said the minister.

Principal Secretary to Odia Language, Literature and Culture department Bishnupada Sethi said that the pandemic has stopped the plans of collaboration with other state museums in Chennai and Bihar.

Sethi said that very soon the government will launch Kalinga Gallery of contemporary art in the State Museum which is fully ready. This apart, a Mahatma Gandhi gallery will also be launched soon to celebrate the

150th Birth Centenary of Mahatma Gandhi. Sethi said, "The current



## Bandita Parida new Mahila Cong chief

**Bhubaneswar:** Senior leader Bandita Parida has been appointed as the new president of Pradesh Mahila Congress. In a press statement, All India Congress Committee (AICC) General Secretary KC Venugopal said Congress president Sonia Gandhi has approved a proposal for appointment of Parida as state president of Odisha Mahila Congress with immediate effect. Parida has been working in the party for a long time with various capacities.

# Cuttack pharma co dir among 3 held in fake Covid drug case

**BJP: Enough fertiliser supplied to Odisha**

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, June 23:** The Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) Wednesday attacked the state government on the latter's allegation regarding fertiliser crunch in Odisha.

BJP leader Golak Mohapatra hit out at the state government on the issue at a press conference here. BJP attacked the state government a few days after Agriculture Minister Arun Sahoo wrote to the Centre highlighting the shortage of fertilisers in Odisha.

Mohapatra, however, claimed that the Centre has supplied adequate amount of fertilisers to Odisha. The Centre has already clarified that Odisha has received more amount of fertilizers than its requirement, he claimed. Mohapatra claimed that the state has received 6.66 tonne urea from the Centre in 2020-21 against its requirement of 5.65 tonne.

BJD leader Lenin Mohanty however, said Mohapatra was not well aware of the facts on the fertilizer issue.

**NOBLE GESTURE**



Members of AITUC and All Orissa Bank Employees' Union distribute dry food among the coolies at Bhagabati Bhawan in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday

**FACING ACTION**



Police officials take the trio into custody in Cuttack, Wednesday

MMPL has allegedly been procuring spurious Favipiravir tablets manufactured by Max Relief Health Care

The STF froze multiple bank accounts linked to those arrested and that of the company's. The accounts contained more than ₹50 lakh

The Cuttack-based firm had conspired to procure Favimax tablets from Max Relief Health Care, a non-existent company, at ₹65 per strip of 10 tablets and sell them at ₹1,290 per strip

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Cuttack, June 23:** The Special Task Force (STF) of the Crime Branch (CB) Wednesday arrested three officials of Medilloyd Medicament Private Limited (MMPL), including its director, in connection with the alleged spurious drug trade in the coastal state, an official said.

According to CB ADG YK Jethwa, the STF has arrested the dubious pharma company's director Subhalaxmi Jena, godown in-charge Satyaprakash Mohanty and the manager of the firm Pritranjan Parida.

"The STF froze multiple bank accounts linked to those arrested and that of the company's. The accounts contained more than ₹50 lakh. The Cuttack-based firm had conspired to procure Favimax tablets from Max Relief Health Care, a non-existent company, at ₹65 per strip of 10 tablets and sell them at ₹1,290 per strip," Jethwa said.

MMPL has allegedly been procuring spurious Favipiravir tablets manufactured by Max Relief Health Care, which was claiming to be manufacturing drugs at Solan in Himachal Pradesh, was being operated by two people. "Both of them were arrested by the Mumbai Police earlier this month. It was also learnt that cases were registered against these two persons in other states as well," the senior IPS officer added.

The trio has been booked under Sections 275, 276, 420, 467, 468, 471 and 12B of the IPC as well as

27C of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act 1940 in STF case (22/2021), Jethwa said.

According to sources, the state government had received a tip-off from the Food and Drug Administration of Maharashtra that spurious Favipiravir tablets (Favimax-400) allegedly manufactured by Max Relief Health Care was being purchased by MMPL.

Following a raid on the premises of the dubious Cuttack-based firm June 11, the drug officials claimed to have found a huge stock of 'spurious' Favipiravir tablets.

On June 11, drug officials from

different districts seized fake Covid drugs in Bolangir, Jharsuguda, Sambalpur, Rourkela and Bhubaneswar as well, prompting the state government to order a CB probe into the dishonest trade in Odisha.

Multiple STF teams were formed to investigate the matter, including the network in other states, said an official, adding at present, three teams are investigating the matter in Odisha, Maharashtra and West Bengal.

MMPL managing director Siba Prasanna Jena Tuesday moved a court seeking anticipatory bail in the case.

# TPR crosses 5% as state logs 3,456 more cases

46 new deaths take Odisha's death toll to 3,717, while fresh infections push the coastal state's virus caseload to 8,86,946

PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, June 23:** The daily test positivity rate (TPR) crossed 5 per cent again after 3,456 more people tested positive for the infection during the last 24 hours.

Odisha's Covid-19 tally rose to 8,86,946 Wednesday as 3,456 more people tested positive for the infection, while 46 fresh fatalities pushed the state's coronavirus death toll to 3,717, a Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) department official said.

As many as 1,973 new cases were



The state has so far tested over 1.32 crore samples for the highly infectious virus, including 65,845 Tuesday

reported in quarantine centres, while the remaining 1,483 new infections were detected during contract tracing. The daily TPR rose to 5.24 from 4.79 per cent Tuesday. Khurda district, of which

Bhubaneswar is a part, recorded the highest number of new cases at 499, followed by Cuttack (480) and Puri (289), he said.

Khurda registered the highest number of fresh fatalities at seven,

followed by five each in Bargarh, Cuttack and Puri, and four each in Jharsuguda and Sambalpur. Fifty-three other coronavirus patients have died due to comorbidities to date.

Odisha now has 34,216 active cases, while 8,48,960 people have recovered from the disease thus far, including 4,159 Tuesday.

The state has so far tested over 1.32 crore samples for the highly infectious virus, including 65,845 Tuesday.

Odisha's cumulative positivity rate stands at 6.67 per cent.

# MORE DATA ON DELTA PLUS VARIANT NEEDED: DMET

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, June 23:** Director of Medical Education and Training (DMET) CBK Mohanty Wednesday said that there are ambiguities and less data available to come to any conclusion on Delta Plus variant of Covid-19.

Addressing the media, Mohanty said, "The Delta Plus strain was detected in October in India and there are only around 20 such cases of the strain detected in the country. The strain was also found sporadically in other parts of the world. There are ambiguities on its efficacy,

transmission power, its impact on severity of the disease on human beings," he said.

Mohanty also talked about the natural process of the virus mutations. "Most viruses mutate to survive and replicate which is what is happening with Covid-19 too. There are several mutations of the virus in the past and it would undergo more changes in the coming days too," he said.

He, however, appealed to the people of the state not to lower guards and keep on following Covid-appropriate behaviour to ward off threat from the deadly virus in the future.

# Waterlogging as it buckets down in City

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, June 23:** With the Capital city witnessing torrential rains for two consecutive days, several locations here reported waterlogging and flooding which affected regular traffic and other routine activities.

As per the India Meteorological Department (IMD), the city received 113.2 mm rainfall during the two days. As a result, several areas like Laxmisagar, Rasulgarh, Gajapati Nagar, Jagamohan Nagar, Badagada and other low-lying locations were inundated. "This is a perennial problem and every year the water remains stagnant in the area for a



long time. I had my appointment set for morning Tuesday. While I had my car I failed to reach the vaccination centre as my vehicle couldn't move due to excessive water. I had to reschedule my appointment," Jayant Jena, a resident of Nayapalli, rued. Bhubaneswar Municipal

Corporation (BMC) Commissioner Sanjay Kumar Singh ordered to remove encroachments over drains. The civic authority reportedly cleared drains and made temporary diversion near Maa Santoshi Temple at Chharichkh Road in

Badagada. Similarly, the drain encroachments were removed at Bomikhal. Excavators were also engaged in removing blockage of water flow in Chakeisiani area, near Mahavir Basti behind Sainik School and Johala area.

Moreover, the BMC along with Odisha Fire Service jointly deployed 18 pumps across the city. Major places like New Forest Park Colony, Sriram City near GGP Colony, Mallick Complex Jagamara and Malianta Tank Lane Laxmisagar saw dewatering by the pumps. It can be mentioned here that the civic authority has till now identified 27 vulnerable locations across the city.

# IMD predicts heavy rains for a week

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, June 23:** The regional office of the India Meteorological Department (IMD) Wednesday said that heavy rains would lash different parts of the state throughout the week.

The department has now issued Yellow Warning till June 28. The IMD while issuing the warning for Thursday said, "Heavy rainfall is very likely to occur at one or two places in Nuapada, Bolangir, Sonepur, Boudh, Sambalpur, Angul, Dhenkanal, Cuttack, Keonjhar, Kalahandi. Thunderstorm along with lightning is very likely to occur at one or two places over the districts of Nabarangpur, Nuapada, Bolangir, Kandhamal, Sonepur, Boudh, Angul, Dhenkanal, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj, Cuttack, Balasore."

Similarly, light to moderate rains are likely to occur at many places Thursday. The IMD, however, issued the warning of heavy to very heavy rainfall Friday: "Heavy to very heavy rainfall is very likely to occur at one or two places in Mayurbhanj, Balasore, Bhadrak, Jajpur, Keonjhar, Kendrapara and Cuttack. Likewise, heavy rainfall is very likely to occur at one or two places in Sundargarh, Deogarh, Sambalpur, Angul, Dhenkanal, Jagatsinghpur, Puri, Khurda and Ganjam," it said.

# CMC ambulance runs sans fitness certificate

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Cuttack, June 23:** An ambulance being operated by the Cuttack Municipal Corporation (CMC) has been providing service to locals for over last nine years sans a fitness certificate.

The vehicle even does not have pollution under control (PUC) certificate, according to sources.

The ambulance, a Tata Winger bearing registration number OR 05 AL 7420, was registered September 25, 2010, as per information obtained from mParivahan app. The fitness certificate of the vehicle had expired way back September 23, 2012.

Interestingly, the vehicle wears an inscription 'Swarga Rath' (hearse) on its front while 'Ambulance' on its rear.

**The vehicle, which carries bodies of Covid patients, even does not have pollution under control certificate**

On being contacted, CMC assistant engineer Sravan Kumar Mohanty said, "The ambulance



is being used in emergencies for carrying bodies of Covid-19 patients to local cemeteries. As there has been acute shortage of vehicles for carrying the bodies of Covid victims, the ambulance is being put to use by the civic body."

Cuttack regional transport officer (RTO) Sanjay Behera said, "We will soon write to the CMC authorities asking them to update requisite documents of all their vehicles including fitness, PUC and insurance certificates."

Many intellectuals questioned as to why the civic body is spared when the RTO officials are imposing heavy penalties on people flouting motor vehicle norms.

# OREAT launches website virtually

**Bhubaneswar:** The Odisha Real Estate Appellate Tribunal (OREAT) Wednesday launched its newly-designed website in a bid to give a user-friendly experience to litigants, advocates, builders, promoters, and home buyers. The website was launched on virtual mode by Justice SC Parija of Orissa High Court who is also the chairman of OREAT, Bhubaneswar. The state government through Odisha Urban Housing Mission has provided all kinds of logistic support for development, hosting and maintenance of the website in public interest. "We're hopeful that the website will be helpful to litigants, lawyers and public at large as it aims to provide better access to all the useful and crucial information relating to OREAT," said the chairman of the tribunal.

## DELUGE IN SILVER CITY



Tulasipur TV Centre Road



Barapathar Canal Road



Stewart Patna



Patapola

Several localities of Cuttack witness extensive waterlogging as heavy rain lashed the city, Wednesday

OP PHOTOS

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TRIBUTE TO ACTOR



An artist applying colours to a wall painting of 'Sala Budha' fame late film actor Atal Bihari Panda at Kacheri Road in Sambalpur, Wednesday.

# Sambalpuri handloom cooperative suffers ₹6cr loss due to pandemic

AGENCIES

**Sambalpur, June 23:** Sambalpuri Bastralaya Handloom Cooperative Society Limited saw a business loss of around ₹6 crore during the ongoing second wave of Covid-19 pandemic due to the closure of its outlets for around one and a half months during the lockdown, an official said.

Though the lockdown has been partially relaxed and the outlets have opened now, the business is yet to gain pace, the official said. Sambalpuri Bastralaya Handloom Cooperative Society Limited is one of the largest and oldest weavers cooperative society of India.

Marketing Officer, Hemanta Kumar Mishra said: "There are 42 outlets of Sambalpuri Bastralaya Handloom Cooperative Society, including 40 in Odisha and one in Mumbai besides one in Kolkata. The lockdown began in the state from May 5 this year and the outlets were not allowed to operate till June 17, causing huge business loss."

While the Sambalpuri Bastralaya



Representative pic

**FACT FILE**

**S**ambalpuri Bastralaya Handloom Cooperative Society Limited is one of the largest and oldest weavers cooperative society of India

**W**hile the society generally makes a business of ₹50 to ₹55 crore per annum, it makes a business of around ₹6 crore during the month of May and June every year

**A**round 15,000 weavers work for the cooperative Society

the marriage season besides for family functions and many marriages are held during May and June but the outlets remained closed during the main marketing season this year.

Moreover, many marriages were cancelled and family functions deferred due to the pandemic, he said, adding that online marketing of the Sambalpuri fabric was also poor and saree worth around

**T**here are 42 outlets of Sambalpuri Bastralaya Handloom Cooperative Society, including 40 in Odisha and one in Mumbai besides one in Kolkata. The lockdown began in the state from May 5 this year and the outlets were not allowed to operate till June 17, causing huge business loss

HEMANTA KUMAR MISHRA | MARKETING OFFICER

₹4 lakh could only be sold online during the lockdown period.

Though the outlets were closed, "We had given order for production to the weavers, who work for Sambalpuri Bastralaya Handloom Cooperative Society Limited. And hence, the closure failed to affect the income of those weavers," he said.

Around 15,000 weavers work for the cooperative society. The weavers, who work independently and depend on the open markets to sell their products, faced a very hard time due to the lockdown, Mishra added.

## Data mismatch delays PMKY benefits to farmers

*In the absence of a foolproof yardstick to identify farmers, benefits of KALIA and PMKY are not reaching maximum number of farmers in the state*



FILE PHOTO

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Rasulpur, June 23:** There is mismatch of data between KALIA and Pradhan Mantri Kisan Yojana (PMKY) lists of beneficiaries in Rasulpur block. It is said that more people are benefitting from KALIA scheme than that of the Centre's PMKY. As many as 2,503 farmers in the block are yet to benefit from the PMKY because of the faults in farmer records such as Aadhaar cards and other identity proofs they had shared while registering for the PMKY.

The block agriculture department has shown promptness in fixing these faults. The authorities are collecting proper records from farmers and coordinating with the state government to ensure that the left-out farmers get the PMKY benefits at the earliest, said assistant agriculture officer Bhagyadhar Sahu.

In the absence of a foolproof yardstick to identify farmers, benefits of KALIA and PMKY are not reaching maximum number of farmers in the state. Up till now, 25,000 farmers in the block are benefitting from the KALIA scheme. But there are fewer beneficiaries of the PMKY in the block.

A preliminary report of the agriculture department has revealed

that there are 5,000 eligible farmers in the block who are yet to get the PMKY benefits. This is because there are faults in records with regard to 2,503 families. Out of this, the names of 1,406 farmer families are not in the PMKY list while there are problems in the proofs provided by the remaining 1,097 farmer families.

There are no difficulties for KALIA beneficiaries, as the state government scheme uses the Aadhaar cards of the beneficiaries to transfer the money, which does not happen in case of PMKY where people get the benefits based on their savings bank account records. The recent merger of PSU banks has compounded the problems of these beneficiaries as in many cases the old passbook numbers are no longer valid, especially farmers having accounts with cooperative banks are the worst sufferers.

Even as the state government has been following with the Centre to streamline the PMKY payments, the beneficiaries have started receiving the payments, even if late. The Centre has transferred ₹16,000 to farmers' accounts in eight installments. Beneficiaries of both the KALIA and the PMKY are seeking expeditious transfer of money to their accounts to help them survive the pandemic times.

## Govt land racket involved in illegal murram lifting

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bolangir, June 23:** Mineral mafia has a free hand on the outskirts of Bolangir town lifting murram worth crores of rupees. The minerals are being transported in night using trucks, tractors and other heavy vehicles. It was alleged that there is a well-oiled racket involved in these illegal activities.

Even as such massive smuggling of murram takes place from areas not far from the district headquarters and the tehsil office, causing enormous losses to the state exchequer, the authorities have failed to take note of this. This reeks of involvement of some officials of the tehsil office. The minerals are excavated from acres of government land between Kamakhyanager in Khujenpali and new Bolangir.



The mafia is found looting the minerals using heavy vehicles even during the day. Excavation of murram has resulted in formation of huge craters. Surprisingly, the tehsil office has no information about the illegal activities and the people involved in the racket.

Middlemen and contractors are

actively involved in the smuggling. The excuse given is the murram is excavated for its use in levelling of roads and land. Nevertheless, lifting of murram in such a large scale has raised questions on the sincerity of the tehsil officials and the higher authorities.

Even though these are gov-

ernment land, wire-fencing is done around these areas—indicating the involvement of land mafia. They sell these precious government lands and earn crores of rupees. The land mafia allegedly gets open support from the tehsil office, sub-register office and local police. Significantly, the land from where the murram mining is taking place was identified for District Collector's office. The land mafia became more active after it was announced that the Collector's office would come up at this place.

The government would have to spend crores of rupees on filling of these craters created by excavation of murram. Tehsildar Maghaban Bag said a team has been formed to visit these areas and submit a report. He assured that action would be taken against the wrongdoers.

## Massive graft by SHGs in paddy procurement in state

*Women self-help groups have allegedly issued vendor receipts without procuring paddy from the farmers*

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Jajpur, June 23:** Massive irregularities in procurement of paddy by the self-help groups (SHGs) during the Kharif Marketing Season 2020-21 have come to the fore in many districts including in Jajpur, Bargarh, Bhadrak, Ganjam, Nuapada, Sambalpur and Subarnapur. Thirty-three women self-help groups (WSHGs) in these districts have siphoned off a total of 4661.22 quintals of paddy.

It was alleged that these WSHGs have issued vendor receipts without procuring paddy from the farmers. Managing Director (MD) of the Odisha State Civil Supplies Corporation, Biswajit Dash, has written to the Collectors and the Civil Supplies Officers (CSOs) of these districts June 18, 2021 to take necessary action against the errant WSHGs.

The MD's letter was sent after Additional Secretary, Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare (FS&CW) Department, Bijay Kumar Prusty had sent a letter to the Commissioner of the Mission Shakti June 23, 2021 seeking dis-

ciplinary action against the members of these WSHGs.

Failure to procure paddy from the farmers even after vendor receipts had been issued to them brought the irregularities to the fore. It was alleged that money worth lakhs of quintals of paddy has been misappropriated by using bogus farmer papers. An impartial inquiry of the procurement of paddy by the WSHGs in the state has been sought by the people. About 11.42 lakh quintals of kharif paddy was procured in Jajpur district by 145 Primary Agriculture Cooperatives (PACs) including 23 SHGs.

As many as 43,811 farmers including 14,048 new farmers had enlisted for the programme last year. However, it was then alleged that over a lakh quintal of paddy was procured through bogus papers. Paddy was bought from families of relations of PACs and SHGs and to make up the shortage in the target given paddy was bought from traders from other states at prices less than MSP. It was even alleged that PDS rice was recycled with the help of local rice millers.

It may be mentioned here that

in 2019 KMS, ₹19 lakh had been misappropriated by bogus buying of paddy from four farmers by Markandpur PACs in Jajpur district. Action was taken against four members of the PACs. Investigations are still in progress against some other PACs of this district. However, this time around it was alleged that some local influential people have tried to benefit from procurement by using the SHGs as a front. Baba Akhandalamani SHG of Jajpur district has bought 103.03 quintals of paddy by using false farmer papers.

A report by the FS&CW department has shown that three SHGs in Bargarh district, five in Bhadrak, seven in Ganjam, one in Nuapada, 12 in Sambalpur, and four in Subarnapur districts have bought paddy by using bogus farmer papers. Kechhuapani Bisab

SHG has bought the largest 1287.43 quintals of paddy. The hand of PACs in this massive rig-off in the paddy procurement by SHGs may not be ruled out.



Customers buying wild mushrooms sold by tribal women at Daily Market in Sundargarh, Wednesday.

OP PHOTO

**EAST COAST RAILWAY**  
File No. DRM/Engg/KUR/21-22/E-Tender/28 Dt. 18.06.2021

(1) Tender Notice No. e-Tender - HQ-KUR-78-2021, Dt. 16.06.2021  
**DESCRIPTION :** UP-GRADATION OF PIT LINE NO.20(OLD LINE NO.14) AND IMPROVEMENT OF I.P.L.NO.23,24 & 25 AT COACHING DEPOT/PURI.  
Approx Cost of the Work (₹) : 569.93 Lakhs

(2) Tender Notice No. e-Tender - HQ-KUR-77-2021, Dt. 16.06.2021  
**DESCRIPTION :** REPAIRS OF ROADS AT ACCOUNTS COLONY, TRAFFIC COLONY, LOCO COLONY AND RETANG COLONY, KHURDA ROAD UNDER JURISDICTION OF SENIOR DIVISIONAL ENGINEER (HEADQUARTERS)/KHURDA.  
Approx Cost of the Work (₹) : 184.20 Lakhs

(3) Tender Notice No. e-Tender - South-KUR-78-2021, Dt. 16.06.2021  
**DESCRIPTION :** NEW WORKS, ADDITIONS AND ALTERATIONS TO THE EXISTING STRUCTURES, ALL ORDINARY REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE WORKS OF MISCELLANEOUS NATURE AND SUPPLIES EACH COSTING RS.5,00,000/- OR LESS IN THE SECTION KHURDA (EX) TO BALUGAON (IN) FOR THE PERIOD UPTO 30/06/2022.  
Approx Cost of the Work (₹) : 112.52 Lakhs

Completion Period : 18 (Eighteen) Months (for Sl.1), 06 (Six) Months (for Sl.2) & 12 (Twelve) Months (for Sl.3).

Tender Closing Date and Time : At 1500 Hrs. of 07.07.2021 (For all the Tenders)

No manual offers sent by Post / Courier / Fax or in person shall be accepted against such e-tenders even if these are submitted on firm's letter head and received in time. All such manual offers shall be rejected summarily without any consideration.

Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-tender is available on website: <https://www.ireps.gov.in>

Note : The prospective tenderers are advised to revisit the website 10 (Ten) days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes / Corrigendum issued for this tender.

Divisional Railway Manager (Engg) / PR-162/M/21-22 Khurda Road

**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER** No. B-166  
**DEOGARH (R&B) DIVISION, DEOGARH**  
E-mail ID - eepw@deogarh@gmail.com

**INVITATIONS FOR BIDS (IFB)**  
Lr. No.-2327 Dtd. 18.06.2021

**INVITATION FOR BIDS**  
**BID IDENTIFICATION NO. EE PWD DGR No. 03 of 2021-22**

- The Executive Engineer, Deogarh (R&B) Division, Deogarh on behalf of Governor of Odisha, invites percentage rate bids in single/double cover system in ONLINE MODE only, for Construction of Building & Road works as detailed below.
- Nature of work :- Building works
- No. of works :- Building 03 Nos.
- Bid Cost. :- Rs.10,000/-
- Class of Contractor :- "B" & "A" Class
- Availability of Bid documents in the website. :- From dt.25.06.2021 to 17.00 hours of dt.09.07.2021
- Date of opening of Technical bid :- Dt. 13.07.2021 at 11.30 AM.
- The Bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website : <https://tendersodisha.gov.in>. Any addendum / corrigendum / cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said website only.

Sd./Executive Engineer, Deogarh (R&B) Division  
OIPR-34061/11/0002/2122

**OFFICE OF THE NOTIFIED AREA COUNCIL, BOUDHGARH**  
Letter No. 2491 Dated: 21.06.2021

**QUOTATION CALL NOTICE**

No. C-440: Sealed quotations in plain paper are invited from the interested party/contractors/suppliers for "Cleaning of water hyacinth, garbage with construction of haul road of the water body at Jarikhandi (Gadakhai) in Ward No. 07". The quotationer should inspect the proposed site before quoting the rate on any day from 10.00 A.M. to 11.30 A.M. during the time schedule for quotation. The quotation paper can be obtained from NAC Office, Boudhgarh from dated 23.06.21 to dated 30.06.21 upto 3.30 P.M. during office working hour on payment of Rs.6000.00 (Rupees Six thousand) only (Non-refundable) towards cost of quotation paper. The quotation should be reached at Office of the NAC, Boudhgarh through Speed Post/Regd. Post or in person on or before Dt.30.06.21 by 3.30 P.M. and same will be opened on same day at 4.00 P.M. in presence of quotationers or their authorized agent who may wish to attend. The quotationer should quote their rate including all cost as and when required. The authority reserves the right to accept or reject any or all quotation without assigning any reason thereof.

Sd./Executive Officer  
Boudhgarh N.A.C.  
OIPR-13155/11/0002/2122

FOCUS IRAN

# END OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC



**This election was not just about the presidency, but also about the selection of the next Supreme Leader. Ayatollah Ali Khamenei is 82, and has long been battling prostate cancer. Some believe the plan is to anoint Khamenei's son, Mojtaba, as the next Supreme Leader, making the post hereditary (and moving Iran closer to becoming a caliphate)**

regime. If human rights are not a crucial part of any new deal with Iran, then the gains from an end to sanctions will strengthen the regime's most strident elements. For the US, negotiating with a roguish regime is prudent policy, but normalising such regimes is to the detriment of America's long-term interests.

The debate about Iran in the US has often devolved into a false binary between advocates of "regime change" and "appeasers." In conducting its negotiations, President Joe Biden's administration must avoid both sides. But while Iran has rightly criticised the US for unilaterally renouncing a binding agreement, the US should demand that Khamenei take direct responsibility for negotiating with the US. According to both Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and outgoing President Hassan Rouhani, Khamenei was involved in every step of the JCPOA negotiations, but remained in the shadows, and even allowed his minions to attack the deal long before Trump walked away from it.

The US neither can nor should accept the responsibility of changing Iran's regime. Only the people of Iran can and should make that decision. But any US negotiations with the Islamic Republic must recognise that America's long-term interests, and those of the people of Iran, can be realised only with a modern democracy, not an Islamic caliphate. The country's grave structural challenges can be solved only by a national concordance that includes all strata of Iranian society, particularly women, as well as the Iranian diaspora.

The election of Raisi indicates that Khamenei and his allies are moving in the exact opposite direction, which all but guarantees domestic turmoil in the coming months and years. A prudent and effective US strategy toward Iran must place this reality at the center of its calculations.

*The writer is Director of the Iranian Studies Programme at Stanford University and a research fellow at the Hoover Institution.*

PROJECT SYNDICATE

Iran's presidential election June 18 was the most farcical in the history of the Islamic regime – even more so than the 2009 election, often called an "electoral coup." It was less an election than a chronicle of a death foretold – the death of what little remained of the constitution's republican principles. But, in addition to being the most farcical, the election may be the Islamic Republic's most consequential.

The winner, Sayyid Ebrahim Raisi, is credibly accused of crimes against humanity for his role in killing some 4,000 dissidents three decades ago. Amnesty International has already called for him to be investigated for these crimes. Asked about the accusation, the new president-elect replied in a way that would have made even George Orwell blush, insisting that he should be praised for his defense of human rights in those murders.

Never has such a motley crew been chosen to act as a foil for its favoured candidate. The regime mobilised all of its forces to ensure a big turnout for Raisi, who until the election was Iran's chief justice. Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei decreed voting a religious duty, and casting a blank ballot a sin, while his clerical allies condemned advocates of a boycott as heretics. But even according to the official results, 51 per cent of eligible voters did not vote, and of those who did, more than four million cast a blank ballot. There are already allegations that the announced numbers were doctored, and a powerful movement to boycott the election has already declared the outcome a virtual referendum against the status quo.

Despite the constitution's republican elements, real power has always been in the hands of the Supreme Leader. Since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, virtually all elections – except those in the first couple of years – were to varying degrees engineered. The Islamic Republic has always been closer to a traditional Islamic state than a modern republic. But after Raisi's election, it will be a stretch to call Iran even a competitive authoritarian regime where factions com-

pete in managed elections to divide power.

This election was not just about the presidency, but also about the selection of the next Supreme Leader. Khamenei is 82, and has long been battling prostate cancer. Some believe the plan is to anoint Khamenei's son, Mojtaba, as the next Supreme Leader, making the post hereditary (and moving Iran closer to becoming a caliphate). In this scenario, Raisi is to be the pliant president who enables Mojtaba's rise. But others think that Raisi himself is Khamenei's designated successor.

Despite this important ambiguity, two things seem clear: First, both candidates are bad news for Iran and the region. Mojtaba is a shadowy figure who for many years has been his father's de facto chief of staff, and, more important, has close ties to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' brutal intelligence forces. And Raisi's bloody record in the judiciary speaks for itself. Second, the IRGC – a political, economic, cultural, military, and intelligence juggernaut – will be calling the shots in se-

lecting Khamenei's successor.

More broadly, it is also clear that the regime, enfeebled by structural challenges – including a drought, COVID-19, a collapsing financial system, a determined women's movement demanding an end to gender apartheid, and rising discontent among young people – has been flexing its muscles at home and abroad. Its response to these challenges has been continued brutality against its citizens, abduction of dual nationals to use as bargaining chips, a rapid increase in uranium enrichment, and more attacks on US forces in Iraq by regime proxies.

Raisi will be in office when and if the ongoing negotiations with the United States resurrect some version of the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. A revived JCPOA would bring an end to some of the sanctions re-imposed by former US President Donald Trump when he withdrew from the deal in 2018. While the Trump administration's policy of "maximum pressure" hurt ordinary Iranians, it also weakened the



Abbas Milani

**IN ADDITION TO BEING THE MOST FARFICAL, THE ELECTION MAY BE THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC'S MOST CONSEQUENTIAL**



James K. Galbraith

**The G7 commitments are only promises, and the G7's track record on meeting its promises is not especially good**

Never grumble. All sorts of forces enter you when you grumble and they pull you down.

THE MOTHER



## G7 Vaccine Charade

In a recent essay on Samantha Power, President Joe Biden's new administrator of the United States Agency for International Development, Michelle Goldberg of The New York Times writes – correctly – that Power's "first big test ... lies in what America does to help vaccinate the rest of the world against COVID-19." And Power herself is quoted as saying that, "It's about a very, very tangible, results-oriented agenda."

Results seemed to follow. At the G7 summit, Goldberg duly reports, Biden announced that the US would contribute 500 million vaccine doses for use in "low- and middle-income countries." According to Goldberg, this "spurred other countries to step up their contributions," ensuring "a billion doses by 2022."

Except that it didn't. According to the World Health Organisation, the actual new commitment was for 870 million additional doses, not a billion, "with the aim to deliver at least half by the end of 2021." In other words, the 'aim' would be to get 'at least' 435 million additional vaccine doses to the COVAX facility (the international mechanism established to ensure vaccine access in poorer countries) 'by 2022.' Even if all billion come in over the course of 2022, Agnès Callamard, the Secretary-General of Amnesty International, has called it a "drop in the ocean," made of "paltry half-measures and insufficient gestures." As Gavin Yamey of Duke University summed up the outcome for a Lancet working group, the "rich countries behaved worse than anyone's worst nightmares."

And there is a further problem: the G7 commitments are only promises, and the G7's track record on meeting its promises is not especially good. Here the language of the G7 communiqué is telling: "aim to deliver." Even if one believes that those words were chosen in good faith, they are not exactly precise or categorical.

Today, Africa and India have vaccinated barely 3 per cent of their combined populations of about 2.5 billion people. Why is that? The US alone is reputed to have the capacity to produce 4.7 billion doses by the end of 2021 – four billion more than America needs. Again, according to Amnesty International, the G7 will have "three billion doses surplus to requirement by the end [of 2021]."

Where are those doses going? Apparently to wealthy customers. This includes 1.8 billion doses committed to the EU for "booster shots," as reported by Varsha Gandikota-Nellutla of Progressive International. Meanwhile, outside the rich-country bubble, the virus can spread, mutate, sicken, and kill.

This is not merely a humanitarian issue. If viruses are not eradicated, they evolve. Already, multiple variants of the coronavirus have appeared. As far as we know, none can overcome the available vaccines. But no one can say for sure that such a variant will not emerge, and the more time lost, the greater the risk – and not merely for the world's poor.

One obvious solution is to get the hoarded stockpile into arms all around the world. A second would be to waive patent protection and supply restrictions on the Western vaccines, so that they can be produced more rapidly in other countries. If India alone – the world's largest vaccine producer – could overcome current production difficulties, it could resume exports and start supplying doses to the rest of Asia and to Africa, while meeting its own requirements by the end of this year. And enough doses could be produced to end the pandemic, for practical purposes, by the end of 2022.

In early May, the Biden administration announced its support for a proposal, advanced by India and South Africa, to waive Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) enforcement on COVID-19 supplies, including vaccines. But what does this amount to? So far, just support for negotiations. With whom? Over what?

It was government, not the big drug companies, that underwrote the basic research used to invent these vaccines. The companies have patents only because they were granted as an 'incentive' to produce them. The claim that otherwise they would not do so is absurd: the US government has the power of compulsion under the Defense Production Act, which it has already used to get vaccine production ramped up – including in a way that briefly disrupted Indian production.

Meanwhile, there's China, and at a smaller scale, Russia. China currently is vaccinating more than ten million people per day – an accelerating pace that will cover their entire population this year. In 2022, China could produce up to five billion doses for the world – enough for India and Africa combined. Meanwhile, Chinese producers are determined to build production sites worldwide, beginning recently in Egypt. And Russia has plans to produce over 850 million doses of Sputnik V in India alone this year. That's just about the same as the entire G7 commitment – and it will happen sooner.

Not everything we read on these matters is necessarily reliable. Not every projection will work out. It may be true, as reported, that the Chinese vaccines are less effective than those produced by Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, AstraZeneca, Johnson & Johnson, and Sputnik V.

But for now, where this is heading is obvious. The US and Europe are offering crumbs, protecting their billionaires, their pharmaceutical lobbies, and their politicians' campaign contributions. Meanwhile, China and Russia have other ideas – and the capacity to realize them. So, before too long, when the back of this pandemic is finally broken, the world will have fresh evidence about who is reliable and who is not.

I would say that all of this is unprecedented, but it's not. In the cold and hungry European winter of 1947-48, Jan Masaryk, the Czechoslovak foreign minister, pleaded with the US for food shipments. The US dithered, imposing conditions. Klement Gottwald, head of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, appealed to Joseph Stalin, who put 300,000 tonnes of wheat onto trains. Czechoslovakia fell under full communist control in February 1948.

Samantha Power is right. It is all about tangible results.

*The writer holds the Lloyd M. Bentsen, Jr. Chair in Government/Business Relations at the LBJ School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas, Austin.*

PROJECT SYNDICATE

SPECTRUM EDUCATION

## Strengthening open & distance learning



Bhaskar Nath Biswal

**THERE IS EVERY NEED TO SET UP OPEN UNIVERSITIES IN EVERY STATE TO TAKE HIGHER EDUCATION TO THE DOORSTEPS OF STUDENTS**

India has one of the largest open and distance learning (ODL) systems in the world, second only to China. To increase the gross enrolment ratio (GER) there is every need to increase the number of Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) and ODL comes in to help students fulfil their dreams of higher education. It has become a useful and popular mode of obtaining degrees for a large number of students who are staying in far off and remote corners and for whom accessing HEIs on regular basis is still a dream.

Launched in 1962 by the Delhi University, ODL was introduced in India as an academic solution to reach out to more students and further democratise the education system. The establishment of the Andhra Pradesh Open University (now Dr. BR Ambedkar Open University) in 1982 and the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) in 1985 popularised ODL in the country. Thereafter, state open universities, state universities and other organisations introduced education in ODL mode.

In India there are six types of institutions allowed to offer ODL – national open university, state open universities, distance education in-

stitutions (DEIs) at institutions of national importance, Central universities, state universities, deemed to be universities and state private universities, DEIs at standalone institutions like professional associations, government institutions and private institutions.

The responsibility of coordinating and promotion of ODL was bestowed by the Parliament on the IGNOU and the Distance Education Council (DEC) was formed in 1991. In 2013, the DEC was dissolved and soon after the UGC was directed to act as the regulator for ODL under the Distance Education Bureau.

As per the All India Survey of Higher Education, 2019-20, distance enrolment constitutes 11.1 per cent of the total enrolment in higher education, of which 44.5 per cent are female students. Of the total students pursuing education in ODL mode, six states where it is popular account for 60.5 per cent of the total enrolment. Delhi accounts for 15.9 per cent, Maharashtra 15.5 per cent, Tamil Nadu 12.5 per cent, Andhra Pradesh 6.2 per cent, Kerala 6 per cent and West Bengal 4.4 per cent. The rest of the country contributes 39.5 per cent of the ODL enrolment. In fact, the objective of ODL is to serve the purpose of the

students of remote and backward areas, but the developed states are ahead in reaping its benefits. Efforts are to be made to make it popular in other states to provide equity and access to higher education to disadvantaged students.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 rightly pointed out that adverse circumstances and realities like rise in epidemics and pandemics necessitates new initiatives. We must be ready with alternative modes of imparting quality education whenever and wherever traditional and offline modes of education are not feasible. It stressed on the use of online and digital education which are to be optimised and expanded to meet the future demands and challenges of the society. However, the constraint of digital divide in the country is to be taken care of for a healthy growth of online and digital education.

The NEP 2020 recognises the importance of leveraging the advantages of technology while acknowledging its potential risks and dangers. It calls for carefully designed and appropriately scaled pilot studies to determine how the benefits of online/digital education can be reaped while address-

ing or mitigating the downsides. In the meantime, the existing digital platforms and ongoing ICT-based educational initiatives must be optimised and expanded to meet the current and future challenges in providing quality education for all.

The pandemic further reminded us the need to popularise ODL in the country which can be of much help to the students. As offline classes are not compulsory in ODL, it will emerge as a safe and suitable mode of education. The traditional ODL is to be transformed substantially to meet the present day demand. The NEP clarified that the ODL programmes are equivalent to regular on campus programmes, and stressed on online programmes but was silent about the establishment of open universities. There is every need to set up open universities in every state to take higher education to the doorsteps of students. The government has to recognise the importance of open universities and take appropriate steps in order to achieve the ambitious target of achieving 50 per cent GER by 2035.

*The writer is Head, Department of Commerce, Nourangpur College, Nabarangpur.*

WISDOM CORNER

- If I had to choose a religion, the sun as the universal giver of life would be my god. NAPOLEON BONAPARTE
- To find out what one is fitted to do, and to secure an opportunity to do it, is the key to happiness. JOHN DEWEY
- Do the thing you fear most and the death of fear is certain. MARK TWAIN

WORDSWORTH

Nordic walking

This term dates from about 1997, though an American firm claims to have been promoting the technique under a different name since the 1980s. However, it has only started to become at all widely known in the last few years and is fairly new in the UK. It is from a Finnish method of training cross-country skiers during the summer months. The idea is that you use poles to walk with an action much like that of skiing. This is said to increase upper arm movement, exercise the main muscle groups and burn more calories than walking by itself. Nordic walking has been taken up as a way for people to get slim and fit even if they're never likely to strap on skis.

Achievable target

**Sir,** India's current population is 139 crore, 58.9 per cent of which is above 18 years of age. Assuming 20 per cent of population will not take vaccine doses, the requirement works out to be 130 crore doses. Subtracting 29.5 crore doses already administered, daily vaccination required is 52 lakh doses, while the average of the last two days is 73 lakh doses daily. If this trend continues, we can achieve this target in November itself.

**Gopal Mittal,** BHUBANESWAR

Sad spectacle

**Sir,** The sad spectacle of Siddipet Collector Venkatram Reddy, bending down to touch the Telangana Chief Minister's feet does not come as a surprise in the present day climate of crass servility of the bureaucracy towards its political masters. It is no secret that the unholy bureaucracy-politician nexus has been thriving in this country for long years now and has come to stay with devastating effect. While touching the feet of an elder is a noble gesture, per se, in Indian culture, doing so at an official function in full public view where the recipient of the honour is the Chief Minister, certainly lowers the dignity and independence of administrative officers who are expected to steer clear of perceived political hobnobbing at all times. In this case, was it a thanksgiving for the luxury cars so generously allotted to the 32 collectors at a total cost of Rs 10 crore, especially during the pandemic when the state was in huge debt?

**Bhaskar Roy,** NEW DELHI

Third front

**Sir,** Regional parties have fared well in the recently concluded Assembly elections in five states - barring Assam and Puducherry where BJP did well. These results have instantly triggered political ambitions among regional satraps presuming bright prospects in 2024 general elections. It is in this context, NCP chief Sharad Pawar held back-to-back meetings with poll strategist Prashant Kishor. Perhaps, Pawar has called for a meeting of the opposition leaders to explore the possibilities of a third front to take on an aggressive BJP, but, significantly the Congress kept away. BJP, presumably, stares at a political challenge because of the alleged mismanagement of the second wave of Covid-19. But it would be premature, on the basis of specific state elections in 2021, to speak of possibilities in 2024.

**N Sadhasiva Reddy,** BANGALORE

## 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](mailto:edit@orissapost.com)

**OrissaPOST**  
B-15, Rasulgari Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

# WFP, govt join hands to improve nutritional security

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, June 23:** The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) and the state government will work on improving household food and nutritional security by strengthening livelihood initiatives.

An agreement was signed Wednesday between Bishow Parajuli, WFP Country Director in India, and Sujata R Karthikeyan, Commissioner-cum-Secretary, Department of Mission Shakti of the state government, at a virtual ceremony.

"This is a significant partnership for achieving nutritional security in Odisha focused on empowerment, livelihood and incomes of women," said Parajuli. Such focused initiatives are important to address and reduce vulnerabilities around food security as highlighted by the Covid-19 pandemic, he added.

"Sustainable livelihoods lead to improved household food and nu-



tritional security and ultimately result in holistic empowerment of women. This collaboration will support women self-help groups (WSHGs) by providing technical assistance and capacity development, directly contributing to long-term food security and developing a replicable model," said

Karthikeyan.

"Working with SHGs to create livelihood opportunities, improving household nutritional security and increasing women's participation in decision making are some of the core objectives for the Department of Mission Shakti," she added.

An agreement was signed Wednesday between United Nation World Food Programme and department of Mission Shakti for achieving nutritional security among women

This collaboration will support women self-help groups (WSHGs) by providing technical assistance and capacity development, directly contributing to long-term food security and developing a replicable model, said Sujata R Karthikeyan, Commissioner-cum-Secretary, Department of Mission Shakti

The partnership, effective till December 2023, will also be focusing on improving the linkage of women groups with government procurement systems, increasing awareness on entitlements, building capacity of women's groups, and developing monitoring tools and undertaking evaluations to improve function of the groups.

## LIVELIHOOD MATTERS



Members of a tribal family separating mahua seeds from shells in Gania of Nayagarh district

OP PHOTO

# Woman PEO held for siphoning off ₹10 lakh

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Rajkanika, June 23:** A woman panchayat executive officer (PEO) of Akhulipada gram panchayat under this block in Kendrapara district was arrested for allegedly siphoning off ₹10 lakh by forging the signature of the sarpanch, police said Wednesday.

The accused was identified as Minati Baske, 28, a panchayat executive officer at the Akhulipada gram panchayat under Rajkanika police limits. She allegedly embezzled the money meant for various developmental works. She was arrested after an FIR was lodged by Rajkanika block development officer (BDO) Ashok Kumar Mohanty in the police station.

According to sources, Baske withdrew ₹10 lakh from the bank by forging the signature of the sarpanch. The sarpanch lodged a complaint with Rajkanika BDO after the fraud came to light.

A departmental inquiry was initiated and the allegations against the PEO were found to be true. Later, Rajkanika BDO lodged a po-



lice complaint.

On the basis of the complaint, the PEO has been arrested and produced in the court. The BDO had asked Baske to return the amount out of which she had returned only ₹2 lakh within a period of two months and failed to pay the rest amount. Later, the BDO lodged a complaint against her.

Dilip Kumar Parida, project director of district rural development agency (DRDA), Kendrapara said, "When the sarpanch lodged a complaint with the BDO, an inquiry was conducted and the PEO was found guilty of siphoning off the money. The misappropriated money will be recovered from her. If needed, her property will be seized to recover the government money."

# Trafficked woman rescued from Jaipur

AGENCIES

**Jaipur, June 23:** A woman, who was allegedly forced into prostitution in Kolkata, has been rescued from Jaipur district, police said.

Jaipur Superintendent of Police Rahul PR said the 22-year-old woman claims to be a citizen of Bangladesh.

"The rescued woman's creden-

**The rescued woman's credentials are being verified. If it is proved that she is from Bangladesh, then steps will be taken to send her back to her homeland as per diplomatic procedure**

RAHUL PR | JAIPUR SP



her from Bangladesh to work as a domestic help at his house two years back.

During the woman's short stay at the man's house, his son fell in love with her.

Later, the businessman took her to Kolkata and forced her into prostitution there, the victim alleged.

When his son came to know that the woman was in Kolkata, he went there and then took her to Bangalore where they were living together for the last one year.

The duo returned to Jaipur district and stayed in a rented house

**The businessman took her to Kolkata and forced her into prostitution there, the victim alleged**

in Jaraka bazaar last year during the first wave of the pandemic as the private company where they were working had shuttered operations due to the lockdown.

When the person's father came to know that his son was staying

# Chandbali seized of waterlogging

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Chandbali, June 23:** Even as it is over four years since Chandbali was declared a Notified Area Council (NAC) and large-scale constructions are taking place in most wards, the town is still seized of the water-logging problem. The main problem of the town is lack of water evacuation which is yet to be addressed. A small drizzle results in massive water-logging in the town.

NAC executive officer Bhagirathi Pradhan said even as drains are being constructed in many wards, there is the need for a master plan and an increase in the budget. Most of the drains in the town have silted and lost their water carrying capacity. This is compounded during the monsoon. Even though the PWD and the NAC are separately carrying out constructions, there

is no coordination between the two resulting in wastage of government money and hardship for local people.

There is the need for a deep and wide drain along the Bhadrak-Chandbali road and around the Chandbali town, said Gyanendra Kumar Rout, assistant engineer of NAC. As the old water evacuation line of the town is illegal, it has been heavily encroached upon at many places. Buildings have come up in the evacuation path of water from the town to the farmlands leading to huge water-logging in the town. The permission by the revenue department for conversion of land from agriculture type to homestead land, instead of looking at the need for release of water from the town, has compounded the problems for the townspeople. The conversion has led to fast construction of buildings.

## GREAT EXPECTATIONS



A man selling brooms awaits customers on a deserted road in Rambha of Ganjam district.

OP PHOTO

# Bizman arrested for misappropriating ₹3.5cr

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bargarh, June 23:** In a crackdown Wednesday, the Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of the State Crime Branch arrested a businessman on the charge of misappropriation of a whopping ₹3.50 crore government subsidy on agricultural implements.

The accused was identified as Kamaljeet Singh of Bargarh. Singh was booked under Sections 419, 420, 406, 467, 468, 471, 20-B of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and Section 66 of the IT Act. He was produced in court and remanded to judicial custody in Bargarh sub-jail. Further investigation is underway the official said.

Singh was arrested based on a complaint by Rigin Bennet, Manager (Public Relations) of M/s Redlands Ashlyn Motors PLC at Thrissur in Kerala.

The complainant Bennet had alleged that Singh and another accused Harpal Singh as well as others managed to obtain registration from the state agriculture department for selling branded agricultural implements by preparing forged documents in the name of the company.

Singh fraudulently uploaded in the direct benefit transfer (DBT) benefits portal, stating that he has supplied 281 rice transplanter machines to farmers of Sambalpur, Subarnapur, Bargarh districts and misappropriated ₹3.5 crore. The misappropriated amount is the subsidy amount meant for the farmers. He committed the fraud by mentioning fake engine/chassis numbers of rice transplanter machines, the FIR mentioned.

Notably, accused Harpal Singh, who is the dealer of the company, along with his brother Kamaljeet Singh and others had uploaded fake engine/chassis numbers along with photographs of the beneficiaries and machines in DBT portal of the state government during 2018-20.

The accused duo showed to have sold rice transplanter machines of M/s Redlands Ashlyn Motors PLC



to 278 farmers of Bolangir, Sambalpur, Bargarh and Subarnapur districts without purchasing the same from the manufacturing firm.

During investigation, it was found that the machines were never sold, but only shown as sold in papers. Harpal Singh had uploaded his photographs along with the beneficiaries and fake machines in DBT portals with a view to hoodwinking the government.

Soon after uploading of the photographs, subsidy amount ranging from ₹1 lakh to ₹1.5 lakh was credited to the account of 278 beneficiary farmers which is nearly ₹3.49 crore.

The photographs were taken by Kamaljeet Singh, a release by the EOW said. The EOW team comprised DSP Debendra Narayan Dash, his counterpart Ashis Kumar Mishra and other senior officials of the agency.

Later, after the subsidy amount was credited to the bank account of beneficiaries, Kamaljeet Singh and his brother Harpal Singh lured the former to withdraw the total subsidy amount. The siblings took away total subsidy amount in cash from them in lieu of ₹3,000 to ₹5,000 paid as token money to the farmers. They committed the fraud by taking advantage of their gullibility and illiteracy.

An amount of ₹1.92 crore has already been frozen in different accounts of the accused and their firms, the release added.

# Agri-mall to come up at Kuchinda to help farmers

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Sambalpur, June 23:** As part of an initiative of the Mission Shakti department, the district administration has prepared a special plan to make the women and farmers of the district self-reliant, a report said.

The matter came to the fore at a meeting which was attended by senior officials of the district administration and 21 producer groups at the DRDA conference hall, Tuesday.

Sukant Tripathy, project director, DRDA, Tanmaya Kumar Darwan, assistant project director, DRDA, Srimit Hota, district coordinator of ORMAS, Bikash Mohanty, Priyambada Guru and delegates of 21 producer groups attended the meeting.

Talking to mediapersons, Hota, said that as part of this initiative the district administration has formed a company Sameswari Sambalpur Non-timber Forest

## Livelihood boost

In this mall, farmers will have cold storage facility which will help them in conserving their crops

Paddy seeds, fertilizers and agricultural implements will also be available in this mall to help farmers save time and concentrate on his cultivation

Farmers can also sell their harvest in this mall and earn their livelihood

The mall will offer processing facilities for varieties of fruits like mango, chilli and litchi

Produce and Farmer Producers Company Ltd (SSNFPCL) comprising the producer groups in various blocks of the district. The producer groups comprise women self-help groups (WSHGs).

As part of this initiative, an agri-



mall will be constructed at Kuchinda where farmers will get marketing and conservation facilities for their produce. In this mall, farmers will have cold storage facility which will help them in conserving their crops.

Paddy seeds, fertilizers and agricultural implements will also be available in this mall to help farmers save time and concentrate on his cultivation. Farmers can also sell their harvest in this mall and

earn their livelihood.

The mall will offer processing facilities for varieties of fruits like mango, chilli and litchi.

Hota said there is already a fruit processing plant in Sambalpur district but the new initiative will provide benefits to farmers, consumers and all other stakeholders under one roof. Moreover, efforts are on for establishment of more fruit processing plants in the district.

Similarly, arrangements will be

made to provide modern equipment to bamboo artisans in Laumal village under Rengali block to help them produce more and earn more from their work.

Moreover, the women and their family members engaged in collection of minor forest produce will be benefited as the company will directly purchase the raw materials from them.

He said over 21 producer groups are actively working in the district. This year, over 1000 new members have been added to the producer groups which the district administration plans to increase to 10,000 in future.

A woman member of self-help groups interested to become a member of a producer group has to deposit ₹1,000 as security money. However, due to Covid restrictions, the security money has been reduced to ₹200 while the rest of the amount has to be paid by the members in easy installments.



## 'Assam's growth lowest in NITI Aayog's SDG index'

IN CONTRAST, THE HIGHEST GROWTH OF A STATE WAS 12 POINTS, FAR FROM ASSAM'S GROWTH RATE, GOGOI SAID, ADDING THAT ASSAM'S OVERALL RANK ALSO DROPPED FROM 23RD TO 26TH

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Guwahati, June 23:** Assam's progress from 2019 to 2020 was barely two points (55 to 57), with the state seeing the slowest overall progress among all states in India in the recent NITI Aayog Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) index 2020-21. Congress Deputy Leader in the Lok Sabha, Gaurav Gogoi claimed Wednesday. In contrast, the highest growth of a state was 12 points, far from Assam's growth rate, Gogoi said, adding that Assam's overall rank also dropped from 23rd to 26th.

In the field of health, Assam has the lowest score of 59 among all states. It also dropped by 3 ranks from 25th to 28th place. Percentage of adolescents aged 10-19 years who are anaemic is 36.9, higher than India's score.

States like Punjab, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Himachal have much better scores. Assam also has the highest maternal mortality rate among all states with a score of 215, almost double of India's score, the Congress leader said. Claiming that Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has misled the people of the state in the field of education, Gogoi



said that Assam ranked 24 out of 28 states and its score has actually dropped this year from 44 to 43 in the NITI Aayog's SDG index.

Assam's dropout rates for classes 9 and 10 are the second highest among all states. It also has one of the lowest pupil teacher ratios of 11 among all states and almost half of India's score of 21.

He said that economically, Assam has a score lowest in the north-east region. Assam's rank dropped

from 17 in 2019 to 22 in 2020. In fact, states like Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur, who were lower than Assam in 2019, have surpassed Assam in 2020.

Gogoi, son of three-time late Assam Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi, said that Chief Minister Sarma also tried to justify Assam's poor performance because the data was based on NFHS 4 and not the recent NFHS survey 5.

Quoting the SDG index, the

Congress Lok Sabha member said that Assam ranked lowest, 28th for women empowerment i.e. in the category of gender parity and equality. Firstly, the indicator of gender parity is based on access to healthcare, education, nutrition, employment and asset ownership.

He said that the Chief Minister, however, stated that the high rate of crimes against women in Assam was due to the fact that more cases are registered by women for crimes against them.

But, according to the NFHS survey of 2018, states such as Rajasthan, Kerala, Maharashtra and Himachal Pradesh also show women approaching the police station and having access to filing a case. However, their crime rates against women were much lesser than that of Assam in the SDG report, Gogoi claimed.

He said that overall, Assam is in the bottom rankings of all the essential categories of economy, healthcare, education and gender equality and there hasn't been any significant growth since 2018.

The BJP government should be honest about its shortcomings instead of misleading the people, the Congress MP said.

## BJP complains against decision to hold monsoon session for 2 days

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, June 23:** The opposition BJP Wednesday met Maharashtra Governor Bhagat Singh Koshiyari to complain against the state government's decision to hold the monsoon session of the legislature for two days next month, which he said was taken with the sole intention to avoid uncomfortable questions from the Opposition on various issues.

Speaking to reporters, Leader of Opposition Devendra Fadnis also said the BJP also requested the governor to postpone the next month's elections to five Zilla Parishads and bypolls to the seats in 33 Panchayat Samitis that were rendered vacant and converted into general category following the Supreme Court's verdict of quashing OBC reservation in local bodies.

He alleged the state government was purposely delaying the election to the post of the state Assembly Speaker in the violation of norms. Fadnis alleged the Maha Vikas Aghadi government is selectively using Covid-19 pandemic to save its skin.

By keeping the duration of the session too short, the government is running away from democratic procedures where it will have to



face questions from Opposition parties. At the same time, this government has decided to hold bye-elections in several local governing bodies. If the Covid-19 situation is still serious then how can political parties hold its rallies and campaign for candidates. It is absolutely wrong for the state government to hold the monsoon session for such a short period. We requested the governor to look into it, he said.

In the same vein, Fadnis said the post of the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly Speaker has been lying vacant since February. Not holding the election for this post is against the constitutional norms. The governor had already written a letter to the state gov-

ernment asking it to hold the speaker's election. It is obligatory for the state to hold the election, the former chief minister said. Fadnis said many MLAs in the Maha Vikas Aghadi are not happy with the performance of the state government.

"Not holding the Speaker's election amounts to the breakdown of the constitutional mechanism, this is not acceptable to us. We requested the Governor to point out this crisis to President as the state is not fulfilling its constitutional responsibilities," he said, adding, it seems the government fears that if it holds the election for the Speaker's post it might suffer embarrassment from its own MLAs and is thus delaying the election.

## Complaint against ex-NRC chief over data manipulation



AGENCIES

**Guwahati, June 23:** The Assam Public Works (APW), an NGO whose petition in the Supreme Court led to updation of the National Register of Citizens, has filed a complaint with the CID against former NRC state coordinator Prateek Hajela and others, accusing them of manipulating the exercise to include names of illegal migrants in the document.

The NRC, an official record of bonafide Indian citizens living in Assam, was updated under the supervision of the Supreme Court and released August 31, 2019, leaving out more than 19 lakh applicants. However, it has not been notified by the Registrar General of India.

Hajela, a 1995 batch IAS officer of Assam-Meghalaya cadre, had been appointed by the apex court as the NRC state coordinator in 2013. Hajela and his close associates manipulated the Family Tree Verification process in collaboration with some officers of migrant background, data entry operators, some minority leaders and also with some anti-national elements to insert the names of the illegal migrants in the updated NRC, according to the complaint. APW President Aabhiheet Sarma lodged the complaint with the CID Additional Director General of the state bordering Bangladesh. The Supreme Court ordered Hajela's transfer from Assam to his home state Madhya Pradesh and he was released from the charge of NRC State Coordinator November 12, 2019. Sarma Wednesday said that the present NRC Coordinator had filed an affidavit both in the apex court and the Gauhati High Court highlighting anomalies in the NRC as names of about 40 per cent illegal and doubtful persons were inserted in the list.

The inclusion of a very high percentage of illegal and doubtful persons' names in the NRC, leads to the suspicion that there have been manipulations in the family tree verification, he said.

Proper verification of the family tree would have been a fool-proof method to establish the legacy data and the citizenship of the applicants, the APW president said. However, it did not work as data entry operators and other officers working in the immigrant dominated areas were from the migrant community whose citizenships were not verified though there was some police verification regarding criminal activities, Sarma alleged.

The software for 'Family Tree Matching' was prepared by the then NRC State Coordinator in such a way that no superior officers could make any quality check, he said.

He also claimed that 40 per cent wrong uploading of results of family tree matching cannot be treated as a normal human error but it was a well-planned, well-coordinated effort to include the names of undeserving persons in the NRC. If the call records of the Officers and Data Entry Operators working in the immigrant dominated areas are analyzed, the nexus between Hajela, some officers with immigrant background, DEOs and some minority leaders will come into light enabling the law enforcing agencies to take action against such anti national activities, said Sarma who lodged the complaint with the CID on Monday.

The APW president urged Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, who also holds the home portfolio, to keep an eye on those officials in the home department who have protected Hajela in the past and ensure that the guilty persons are brought to book or else a correct updated NRC will remain a dream for the people of Assam.

## Deshmukh says allegations against him caused 'heartburn' in Maha police force

The CBI is probing a case of corruption and misconduct on part of Deshmukh in the aftermath of allegations levelled against him by former Mumbai police commissioner Param Bir Singh in a letter to CM Uddhav Thackeray

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, June 23:** Former Maharashtra home minister Anil Deshmukh, who is facing a CBI probe over charges of corruption and misconduct, told the Bombay High Court Wednesday that the allegations against him had caused heartburn in the entire state police machinery.

Deshmukh's counsel, senior advocate Amit Desai, told a bench of Justices SS Shinde and NJ Jamadar that Deshmukh had been publicly shamed because of being subjected to the probe, even though there did not exist any adverse material against him in the CBI's FIR.

Desai was making submissions in support of a plea filed by Deshmukh, seeking that the FIR registered against him by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) be quashed.

The CBI is probing a case of corruption and misconduct on part of Deshmukh in the aftermath of such allegations levelled against him by former Mumbai police commissioner Param Bir Singh in a letter to Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray. Not a single person has come to say he was asked for money. There is no victim in the case, Desai claimed.

He said contents of Singh's letter could at the most generate some suspicion, or whispers in the corridors of the police commissioner's office. The same certainly did not warrant an inquiry, he said.



Deshmukh is definitely the devil here without anything in the FIR against him. He has been shamed, but without any proper material. There is nothing against him in the FIR, Desai said.

Transfers and postings are policy issues. They (CBI) are getting into the whole process. The allegations have created heartburn within the entire police force, he said.

The HC will continue hearing Deshmukh's plea next week.

The probe was initiated after a high court bench led by Chief Justice Dipankar Datta directed the CBI to initiate a preliminary enquiry against Deshmukh, based on a criminal complaint lodged at a local police station by lawyer Jaishri Patil. The lawyer had moved a PIL in the HC, seeking action on the complaint filed by her.

She had referred to the allegations made by Singh against Deshmukh in her plea, and also attached a copy of a letter written

by the IPS officer to Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, wherein he had made the allegations against the NCP leader.

Among other things, the CBI's FIR says Deshmukh had knowledge of the reinstatement of former assistant police inspector Sachin Waze, and the then minister exercised undue influence on the transfers and postings of state police officials.

The Maharashtra government had also filed a plea in the HC, seeking that two paragraphs from the said FIR be deleted. These paragraphs, numbered 4 and 5, deal with Waze's reinstatement and Deshmukh's influence on the transfers and postings.

Waze, arrested by the NIA in the case of an explosives-laden SUV found near industrialist Mukesh Ambani's house in February and the subsequent murder of businessman Mansukh Hiran, was dismissed from police service last month.

## World's 1st GM rubber plant planted in Assam

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Guwahati, June 23:** In a historic step, the world's first genetically modified (GM) rubber plant was planted Tuesday on the outskirts of Guwahati by the Chairman and Executive Director of the Rubber Board, KN Raghavan.

The GM rubber plant, which was planted at the Rubber Board's Sarutari research farm near Guwahati, was developed at the Kerala-based Rubber Research Institute of India (RIII) through long years of research at its biotechnology laboratory.

Raghavan said that the GM rubber plant, the first of its kind developed exclusively for this region, is expected to grow well under the climatic conditions of the mountainous northeast region.

The Rubber Board Chairman said that the GM rubber plant would be a game-changer in natural rubber cultivation in India, with additional copies of the gene MnSOD (manganese-containing superoxide dismutase) inserted in it.

The GM rubber plant is expected to tide over the severe cold conditions during winter, which is a major factor affecting the growth of young rubber plants. Natural rubber is a native of warm humid Amazon forests and it is not naturally suited for the cold conditions in this part of the country, he said.

Raghavan said that through breeding and selection, RRII, a Rubber Board research body, had earlier developed two high yielding hybrid clones of rubber that are adapted to the climatic conditions of the northeast region.



According to the physician-turned-Indian Revenue Service officer, the growth of young rubber remains suspended during the winter months, which are also characterised by progressive drying of the soil.

This is the reason for the long immaturity period of this crop in the region. The MnSOD gene has the ability to protect the plants from the adverse effects of severe environmental stresses such as cold, drought etc.

Laboratory studies conducted at the RRII in Kerala's Kottayam showed that GM rubber plants over-expressed the MnSOD gene as expected, offering protection to the cells. Therefore, it is expected that the GM rubber plants will grow fast here, Raghavan said. He further explained that what is planted now is not on a commercial basis, but on an experimental level following all mandatory bio-safety measures applicable to field trials involving GM crops.

## Programme to breed pygmy hogs in Manas NP gets a fillip

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Guwahati, June 23:** Amidst the tall elephant grass of the Manas National Park, pygmy hogs, the world's smallest and rarest wild pigs, may get a new lease of life as an experiment to breed them in captivity for release in the wild got a fillip Tuesday.

Under the programme started last year, eight captive-bred pygmy hogs were released in Manas Park Tuesday. Four more are slated to be introduced on June 25 under the Pygmy Hog Conservation Programme (PHCP), said foresters.

At one time common in Nepal, sub-Himalayan India and Bhutan, they now number just around 250 and the programme in association with United Kingdom's Durrell Wildlife Conservation hopes to bring new life to the threatened species whose piglets can fit into a trouser pocket.

The first batch of 14 of this rare species was successfully released last year, PHCP Project Director Dr Parag Jyoti Deka said Wednesday.

The PHCP was initiated in 1995 and since then the pygmy hog has



been 'brought back from extinction by this partnership effort and now we are moving towards the establishment of a population across the entire range', Deka said.

Manas has one of the largest remaining grassland habitats in the sub-Himalayan grassland ecosystem and the pygmy hogs, standing about 25 cm or 10 inch from the ground and weighing six to nine kg, are found only in these tall dense alluvial grasslands.

The pygmy hogs (Porcula salvania) are incredibly shy and are almost never seen. With this release in the Bhuyanpara range of the Park, the total number of pygmy hogs reintroduced into the wild by the PHCP has reached 142, including 67 males and 75 females, which is more than their current global wild population, he said.

The release is a landmark achievement and is the key step on the road to the establishment of a

new sub-population of pygmy hogs in Manas National Park and this batch of 12 hogs include five male and seven females with eight released Tuesday', he said.

By 2025, the PHCP plans to release 60 more pygmy hogs in Manas and with this "the iconic species returns to their home where their last original population still survives", he said.

In 1996, six hogs, two males and four females were captured from the

Bansbari range of Manas National Park to start the highly successful breeding programme and later, a young male rescued in 2001, and another male and two females captured in 2013 from the same range, joined the captive breeding stock.

Reintroduction of captive hogs in the wild began in 2008, initially in three Protected Areas. Over the next decade, 35 hogs were released in Sonai-Rupai Wildlife Sanctuary; 59 hogs in Orang National Park, and 22 in Bornadi Wildlife Sanctuary.

The reintroductions in Orang have been particularly successful as they have multiplied almost two and a half times in number, and have spread to areas far from release locations, he said. As part of its rewilding strategy, the PHCP will continue to maintain about 70 captive hogs at its two centres in Assam and breed more hogs for release.

The Park's Field Director Amal Chandra Sarma said that in recent years, Manas is really doing well in conservation and with the release of these hogs in Bhuyanpara range, the hog population will increase which will attract more visitors.

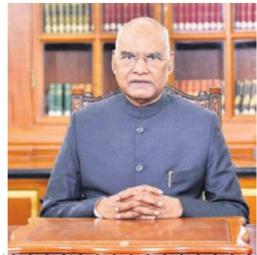
# national



I want to ask the prime minister why he is always in the mood to quarrel. The country has never seen such a quarrelsome prime minister in the last 75 years  
MANISH SISODIA | DELHI DY CM

## PRESIDENT TO VISIT BIRTHPLACE BY TRAIN

President Ram Nath Kovind will undertake a train journey Friday to visit his birthplace in Uttar Pradesh, where he will interact with his old acquaintances from school days and the early days of his social service. It would be after a gap of 15 years that an incumbent president will travel by train



## of the day quote

The truth is that under the BJP only the ease of looting India has flourished and not the ease of doing business. BJP is a travel agency for willful defaulters and fraudsters who scoot from India with ease after looting the public money  
JAIVEER SHERGILL | CONG SPOKESPERSON

If we keep following containment and Covid appropriate behavior, then the third wave, even if it comes, will not have the number of cases that will put the health system under strain  
LAV AGARWAL | JOINT SECY, MOHFW

Opposition parties are becoming a hindrance in the fight against Covid. First they did politics over the lockdown, then raised questions about the vaccine. Congress leaders made statements misleading the people but got themselves secretly vaccinated  
JP NADDA | BJP CHIEF

## SHORT TAKES

### Terrorist killed in encounter

**Srinagar:** One unidentified terrorist was killed in an ongoing gunfight between terrorists and security forces at Shirmal area in South Kashmir's Shopian district Wednesday, officials said. "One unidentified terrorist killed. Operation is in progress," police said. The firefight between the terrorists and security forces took place after a joint team of the police and the army cordoned off the area and launched a search operation on the basis of specific information about the presence of terrorists.

### Dawood's brother detained by NCB

**Mumbai:** The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) has detained Iqbal Ibrahim Kaskar - the Mumbai-based sibling of absconding mafia don Dawood Ibrahim Kaskar - in connection with a drugs-related case. "He has been taken under a production remand," NCB Zonal Director Sameer Wankhede told IANS, but declined to comment further. Currently, Iqbal, who is lodged in Thane Jail for extortion cases, is being interrogated at the NCB Mumbai office, after his name allegedly cropped up during investigations into various drugs cases.

### NSA attends SCO meeting

**New Delhi:** National Security Advisor Ajit Doval Wednesday attended a meeting of the top security officials from the member nations of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in Tajikistan capital Dushanbe. Tajikistan, the current president of the SCO, is hosting the meeting of the top national security officials of the eight-nation grouping June 23 and 24.

### NDMC, DU plan oxygen plant

**New Delhi:** North Delhi Mayor Raja Iqbal Singh held a meeting with the director of the Delhi University's (DU) South Campus Wednesday and discussed various civics issues as well the installation of a medical oxygen plant collaboratively between the NDMC and the university. Singh, who assumed charge as the mayor a week ago, had said health and sanitation would be among his priorities during his year-long tenure.

# India, US kick off mega wargame with eyes on China

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, June 23:** India and the US Wednesday kicked off a two-day multi-domain wargame in the Indian Ocean involving an array of air defence platforms to further consolidate their operational synergy in the face of China's increasing military presence in the region.

The US has deployed its naval carrier strike group, led by the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan, as well as a fleet of F-18 fighter jets and E-2C Hawkeye



all-weather aircraft for the exercise, officials said.

The Indian assets at the exercise included Jaguar and Sukhoi-30MKI fighter jets, IL-78 air-to-air refuelling tanker aircraft, AWACS (Airborne Warning and Control System) aircraft and warships

Kochi and Teg. The Indian Navy has also deployed a fleet of P8I maritime surveillance aircraft and MiG 29K jets, apart from other platforms.

The US Carrier Strike Group (CSG) is currently deployed in the Indian Ocean region.

A carrier battle group or car-

rier strike group is a mega naval fleet comprising an aircraft carrier, accompanied by a large number of destroyers, frigates and other ships.

The Indian naval warships, along with aircraft from the Indian Navy and the Indian Air Force will be engaged in the joint multi-domain operations with the carrier strike group comprising Nimitz-class aircraft carrier Ronald Reagan, Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Halsey and Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser USS Shiloh, Indian Navy's

spokesperson Commander Vivek Madhwal said Tuesday.

He said the two-day exercise aims to strengthen the bilateral relationship and cooperation by demonstrating the ability to integrate and coordinate comprehensively in maritime operations.

Officials said the high-tempo exercise will include advanced air-defence drills, cross-deck helicopter operations and anti-submarine manoeuvres with an aim to hone the war-fighting skills and enhance interoperability between the two sides.

# Ramdev moves SC against FIRs by IMA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, June 23:** Baba Ramdev has moved the Supreme Court seeking stay on the proceedings in connection with multiple FIRs lodged against him by Indian Medical Association (IMA) in Bihar and Chhattisgarh over his remarks against use of allopathic medicine during Covid-19 pandemic.

The Patna and Raipur chapters of the IMA have lodged complaints against the yoga guru alleging that his remarks are likely to cause prejudice to the Covid control mechanism and may dissuade people from availing proper treatment against the pandemic.

The Yoga guru, in his plea, has sought transfer of the FIRs lodged in Patna and Raipur to Delhi. He has been booked under various provisions of the IPC and the Disaster Management Act, 2005.

Sections 188 (disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant), 269 (negligent act likely to a infection of disease dangerous to life) and 504 (intentional insult with intent to provoke breach of the peace) of the IPC have been invoked against him.

Ramdev, whose alleged statements created a nation-wide debate over Allopathy versus Ayurveda issue, however, had withdrawn his statements May 23 after receiving a letter from Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan who had called his remarks as inappropriate.

# India records 40 cases of Delta plus variant

DELTA VARIANT AS WELL AS ALL DELTA SUB-LINEAGES INCLUDING DELTA PLUS ARE CLASSIFIED AS VOC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, June 23:** Around 40 cases of the Delta plus variant, classified as a variant of concern (VOC), have been detected sporadically in Maharashtra, Kerala and Madhya Pradesh, the Union Health Ministry said Wednesday. Delta variant as well as all Delta sub-lineages including Delta plus are classified as VOC, it said.

As of now among the samples sequenced (45000+) in India, Delta plus variant - AY.1 - has been observed sporadically in Maharashtra, Kerala and Madhya Pradesh, with around 40 cases identified so far and no significant increase in prevalence, the ministry said in its statement.

These three states have been advised to strengthen surveillance and take appropriate public health measures.

After the report of AY.1 by the Public Health England (PHE) June 11, retrospective analysis of samples revealed the first occurrence of this lineage from a sample collected from Maharashtra. The sam-

ple was collected on April 5.

As of June 18, 205 sequences of AY1 lineage was detected worldwide, with the USA and the UK having over half of the known cases, the statement said.

INSACOG had recently identified a viral variant (delta, B.1.617.2). This viral variant has also been seen in nine other countries of the world.

INSACOG is an Indian consortium of 28 labs, established by the Government of India to carry out genome sequencing of the virus causing the COVID-19 pandemic.

The World Health Organisation has introduced a classification as VOC (variant of concern) and VOI (variant of interest), with the evolution of several variants around the globe. Delta variant as well as all Delta sub-lineages including Delta Plus are classified as VOC, the statement said.

The Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomic Consortia (INSACOG) reported the evolution of Delta plus variant (B.1.617.2) + K417N lineage of SARS-CoV2 called as B.1.617.2.1 AY.1.

The Delta plus variant B.1.617.2.1 (AY.1) is characterized by the K417N mutation in spike protein, the statement said.

The spike protein aids the virus to gain receptor-mediated entry into human cells. K417N corresponds to the change of amino acid lysine (K) to asparagine (N) at the 417th position of spike protein. There are other Delta plus variants with other mutations.

# PLANTING HOPES



Farmers cultivate a field at Thondamuthur on the outskirts of Coimbatore, Wednesday

PTI PHOTO

# Kishor, Pawar meet for 3rd time in a fortnight

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, June 23:** Poll strategist Prashant Kishor Wednesday met Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) supremo Sharad Pawar at his residence, for the third time in a fortnight, and a day after members of eight political parties met there.

According to sources, the meeting of Pawar and Kishor lasted for over an hour. The frequent Kishor-Pawar meetings have been fuelling speculations on the creation of a third front to combat the BJP.

Earlier Kishor, whose latest success has been the victory of the Trinamool Congress in the recently-concluded West Bengal Assembly polls, had met Pawar at his Mumbai residence on June 11



and once again Monday in Delhi at the NCP leader's residence.

After members of the eight political parties had met at Pawar's residence for over two and a half hours Tuesday, the NCP, however, sought to clarify that the meeting was not called by the party supremo

but the Rashtra Manch of former Union Minister Yashwant Sinha.

NCP's former Rajya Sabha member Majeed Memon said that "speculation is in media that Sharad Pawar has called the meet, which is not correct". He said this meeting was called by the Rashtra

Manch and was only organised at the residence of Pawar.

Memon also dismissed as a "wrong perception" that it was an opposition meet, excluding the Congress, or a 'third front' meet.

Leaders of several parties including Trinamool Congress' Sinha, Samajwadi Party's Ghanshyam Tiwari, Rashtriya Lok Dal President Jayant Chaudhary, Aam Aadmi Party's Sushil Gupta, CPI-M's Nilotpal Basu, CPI's Binoy Viswam, National Conference's Farooq Abdullah, former Congress leader Sanjay Jha and former JD-U leader Pawan Verma were present.

Other prominent personalities like Justice AP Shah, Javed Akhtar and former diplomat KC Singh also attended.

## WHATSAPP PRIVACY POLICY

# HC refuses stay on notice by CCI

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, June 23:** The Delhi High Court has refused to stay a notice issued by the Competition Commission of India (CCI), asking WhatsApp to furnish certain information in connection with the probe, ordered in March, on the instant messaging app's new updated privacy policy.

A vacation bench of Justices Anup J Bhamhani and Jasmeet Singh said, "We do not consider it appropriate to stay the operation of impugned notice dated June 4, 2021 at this stage."

The bench noted that Additional



Solicitor General Aman Lekhi has fairly stated June 4, notice was perfectly in line with the procedure contemplated under the statute for taking forward an on-going investigation.

The bench said "The notice has not been stayed by the division bench, and it would take substan-

tial time for preparation of a report pursuant to the receipt of the information called-for by way of the impugned notice; which report would thereafter be forwarded to the Competition Commission of India (CCI)."

In January, the CCI had on its own decided to look into WhatsApp's

new privacy policy on the basis of news reports.

Lekhi submitted that preparation of the report would not be completed at least before the next date of hearing before the roster division bench July 9.

Taking note of Lekhi's statement we would only urge the DG (Director General, Competition Commission of India) to bear in mind that investigation against the appellant is under judicial consideration before a Division Bench of this court; and we direct that the matter be listed before the Roster Division Bench 09.07.2021, said the court.

# Chandrayaan gives outstanding results on solar corona, heliophysics

THOUGH WE HAVE A FAIRLY GOOD UNDERSTANDING OF THE ORIGIN OF ENERGY AND OTHER VARIOUS ASPECTS OF THE SUN, SEVERAL POTENTIALLY LIFE-CHANGING PHENOMENA STILL REMAIN A MYSTERY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bangalore, June 23:** An instrument on board India's Chandrayaan-2 mission has provided outstanding science results on the solar corona and heliophysics, the Indian Space Research Organisation said.

Though we have a fairly good understanding of the origin of energy and other various aspects of the Sun, several potentially life-changing phenomena still remain a mystery, notes the Bangalore-headquartered space agency.

Some of these mysteries are related to the hot outer atmosphere of the Sun, known as corona, which emits profusely in ultra-violet and X-ray wavelengths of the electromagnetic spectrum.

It is known that the corona consists of ionised gas at tempera-

tures exceeding one million Kelvin, which is much higher than photospheric temperature of 6000 K, the visible surface temperature of the Sun.

However, this observation is against the natural expectation that the temperatures should reduce as we go away from the source of energy, and this is known as the 'coronal heating problem.'

From observations, such as the presence of even hotter corona, called active regions above the Sunspots (dark patches seen in visible images of the Sun) where the magnetic fields are known to be stronger, it is suggested that the magnetic fields have an important role in the coronal heating, according to ISRO.

While there are different theories regarding the actual mechanism,



one of these relies on the occurrence of a large number of small solar flares called nanoflares.

Another puzzling observation about the corona is that certain elements are found to have abundances three to four times higher

in active regions than in the photosphere. This happens for elements which are easier to ionise, or require lesser energy to ionise.

In more technical terms, these elements have their First Ionisation Potential (FIP) lower than 10 eV, and

hence this phenomenon is generally termed as FIP bias.

The exact reason behind the FIP bias and its origin remains an open question.

A team of scientists from Ahmedabad-based Physical Research Laboratory (PRL), a unit of Department of Space, used observations of the Sun in soft X-rays with Solar X-ray Monitor (XSM) on board ISRO's Chandrayaan-2 mission during the deepest solar minimum of the past hundred years to learn exciting details about the solar corona, an update on the ISRO website said.

For the first time, absolute abundances of elemental Mg, Al, Si in the quiet solar corona are derived.

The team discovered and characterised around 100 sub-A class microflares in the quiet corona pro-

viding new insight into coronal heating puzzle, it said.

At present, XSM is the only instrument that provides soft X-ray spectral measurements of the Sun, i.E., measures the intensity of X-ray in different energies over the 1 to 15 keV.

These outstanding science results on the solar corona and heliophysics obtained during a unique solar extremely quiet period using a sensitive instrument XSM aboard Chandrayaan-2 observations are published in two companion papers in the May issue of the 'Astrophysical Journal Letters'.

Both the Chandrayaan-2 orbiter and the XSM instrument are performing extremely well, and expected to provide many more exciting and new results, the update added.

# international



About 1,040 Trump-era sanctions will be lifted under the agreement. It was also agreed to lift some sanctions on individuals and members of the supreme leader's inner circle  
MAHMOUD VAEZI | PRESIDENTIAL CHIEF OF STAFF, IRAN

**BRITAIN WON'T EXTEND DEADLINE FOR EU CITIZENS**  
The British government won't extend the June 30 deadline for European Union citizens in the UK to apply for permanent residency or risk losing their right to live and work in the UK



## of the day quote

We advocate that we should address the boundary issue through peaceful negotiations and we don't think that the border issue should be linked up to our bilateral ties

ZHAO LIJIAN | FOREIGN MINISTRY SPOKESMAN, CHINA

This Hungarian bill is a shame. This bill clearly discriminates against people based on their sexual orientation. It goes against the fundamental values of the European Union: Human dignity, equality and respect for human rights

URSULA VON DER LEYEN | EUROPEAN COMMISSION PRESIDENT

Today's financing milestone marks a historic opportunity for Sudan to move toward comprehensive debt relief. The Fund will continue to support Sudan in its recovery from a long period of instability and economic hardship

KRISTALINA GEORGIEVA | MANAGING DIRECTOR, IMF

## SHORT TAKES

### US seizes 33 Iran news websites

Washington: The US Tuesday seized dozens of websites used by the Iranian news outlets for "violation of sanctions." "Today, pursuant to court orders, the United States seized 33 websites used by the Iranian Islamic Radio and Television Union (IRTVU) and three websites operated by Kata'ib Hizballah (KH), in violation of US sanctions," said the Justice Department in a statement. The statement said that both IRTVU and KH, a Shia militia group operating in Iraq, had been designated by the US government and prohibited from obtaining website and domain services in the US without a license.

### Attack on Iran nuke plant foiled

Tehran: Iranian authorities have thwarted what they called a "sabotage attack" targeting a civilian nuclear facility near the country's capital, state TV reported Wednesday, as details about the incident remained scarce. The attempted attack against a building belonging to Iran's Atomic Energy Organization "left no casualties or damages and was unable to disrupt the Iranian nuclear program," Iranian state television reported.

### Bomb blast near Hafiz Saeed's house

Lahore: A powerful car bomb went off outside Mumbai terror attack mastermind and banned Jamat-ud-Dawa (JuD) chief Hafiz Saeed's house here Wednesday, killing at least three people and injuring 20 others, police said. The blast took place at the BOR Society in Jauhar Town at the police picket outside Saeed's residence. The Punjab police chief Inam Ghani said there could have been a "major loss" had there been no police picket outside the house.

### Airstrike kills dozens in Ethiopia's Tigray

Nairobi: An airstrike hit a busy market in Ethiopia's northern Tigray village of Togoga Tuesday, according to health workers who said soldiers blocked medical teams from travelling to the scene. Dozens of people were killed, they and a former resident said, citing witnesses. Two doctors and a nurse in Tigray's regional capital, Mekele, told The Associated Press they were unable to confirm how many people were killed.

# Last pro-democracy HK newspaper, Apple Daily to close

Hong Kong, June 23: Hong Kong's sole remaining pro-democracy newspaper will publish its last edition Thursday, forced to shut down after five editors and executives were arrested and millions of dollars in its assets were frozen as part of China's increasing crackdown on dissent in the semi-autonomous city.

The silencing of a prominent pro-democracy voice is the latest sign of China's determination to exert greater control over the city long known for its freedoms after huge anti-government protests

there in 2019 shook the government. Since then, Beijing has imposed a strict national security law - used in the arrests of the newspaper employees - and revamped Hong Kong's election laws to keep opposition voices out of the legislature.

Apple Daily was founded by tycoon Jimmy Lai in 1995 - just two years before Britain handed Hong Kong back to China - and initially was a tabloid known for its celebrity gossip. But Lai had also always portrayed the paper as an advocate of Western values and said it should "shine a light on snakes, insects, mice and ants in the dark,"



according to the paper. It grew into an outspoken voice

for defending Hong Kong's freedoms not found on mainland China,

The silencing of a prominent pro-democracy voice is the latest sign of China's determination to exert greater control over the city

and in recent years has often criticised the Chinese and Hong Kong governments for limiting those freedoms and renege on a promise to protect them for 50 years after the city's handover to China.

The editors and executives were detained on suspicion of collud-

ing with foreigners to endanger national security. Police cited more than 30 articles published by the paper as evidence of an alleged conspiracy to encourage foreign nations to impose sanctions on Hong Kong and China.

The national security law imposed last year criminalises subversion, secession, terrorism and foreign collusion. Chinese and Hong Kong officials have said the media must abide by the law, and that press freedom cannot be used as a "shield" for illegal activities.

The move against Apple Daily drew criticism from the US, the EU and Britain.

# Delta variant to account for 90% of new infections in Europe: EU

The ECDC estimates that the Delta variant (B.1.617.2), is 40 to 60 percent more contagious than the Alpha variant (B.1.1.7), first discovered in the UK

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Stockholm, June 23: The Delta variant, identified for the first time in India, could account for 90 percent of new Covid cases in the European Union in the coming months, the bloc's disease control agency said Wednesday.

"It is very likely that the Delta variant will circulate extensively during the summer, particularly among younger individuals that are not targeted for vaccination," Andrea Ammon, director of the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), said in a statement.

"The Delta variant is more transmissible than other circulating variants and we estimate that by the end of August it will represent 90 percent" of new cases in the EU, she added.

The ECDC estimates that the Delta variant (B.1.617.2), is 40 to 60 percent more contagious than the Alpha variant (B.1.1.7), first discovered in the UK, which is currently the predominant variant of the novel coronavirus circulating in the EU.



The agency said that "70 percent of new SARS-CoV-2 infections are projected to be due to this variant in the EU/EEA by early August and 90 percent of infections by the end of August."

To counter the spread of the variant and mitigate the health impact, the ECDC said "it is very important to progress with the vaccine roll-out at a very high pace."

To date, about 30 percent of the over-80's and some 40 percent of the over-60's in the EU are still not fully vaccinated, according to the ECDC.

"At this stage it becomes crucial that the second vaccination dose is administered within the minimum authorised interval from

## 'Delta greatest threat to US'

The highly contagious Delta variant of the Coronavirus is the greatest threat to America's attempt to eradicate the Covid-19 pandemic, the country's leading infectious disease expert and White House Chief Medical Advisor Dr Anthony Fauci has warned. Fauci said the Delta variant now makes up more than 20 per cent of all new cases in the US, nearly doubling from nearly 10 per cent two weeks ago. "Similar to the situation in the UK, the Delta variant is currently the greatest threat in the US to our attempt to eliminate COVID-19," Fauci told reporters during a virtual news conference here.

the first dose, to speed up the rate at which vulnerable individuals become protected," Ammon said.

The ECDC is also urging countries to be cautious about relaxing curbs aimed at limiting the spread.

## PNB SCAM CASE

# HC rejects Nirav Modi's extradition petition

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, June 23: Wanted diamond merchant Nirav Modi, whose extradition to India was ordered in April by UK Home Secretary Priti Patel in the estimated USD 2-billion Punjab National Bank (PNB) scam case, has lost the first stage of his extradition appeal in the High Court here.

The appeal was before a High Court judge for a decision "on the papers" submitted for the appeal to determine if there are any grounds for an appeal against the Home Secretary's decision or the Westminster Magistrates Court February ruling in favour of Nirav Modi's extradition to India to face charges of fraud and money laundering.

A High Court official confirmed that the permission to appeal was "rejected on paper" Tuesday, which leaves the 50-year-old jeweller with a chance to make his case at a brief oral hearing in the High Court with a renewed "leave to appeal" application for a judge to determine if it can proceed to a full appeal hearing.

If a renewal application is made, it will be listed before a High Court judge for a hearing. It is under-



Under the legal guidelines, Nirav Modi as an appellant has five business days to apply for an oral consideration, giving him time until next week

stood that Nirav Modi plans to make such an application.

"We are waiting to see if they do apply for permission to appeal. If they are allowed to appeal then we would contest any appeal proceedings on behalf of the GOI (government of India)," the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), which appears in court on behalf of the Indian authorities, said last month.

## 'IGN on UNSC reforms can no longer be used as a smokescreen'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

United Nations, June 23: India has asserted that the Intergovernmental Negotiations on UN Security Council reforms can no longer be used as a "smokescreen", as the General Assembly decided to roll over the IG work to the next UNGA session and agreed to include an amendment proposed by the G4 nations comprising Brazil, Germany, India and Japan.

The General Assembly Tuesday adopted by consensus a decision on UN Security Council reform, rolling over the work of the Intergovernmental Negotiations to the 76th session of the UN General Assembly that will commence in September.

President of the 75th session of the General Assembly, Volkan Bozkir, in a tweet thanked the Permanent Representative of Qatar and Co-Chair of the IG Ambassador Alya al-Thani "for her facilitation of this result and all delegations for their constructive engagement".

India, along with Brazil, Japan and Germany are pressing for urgent reform of the UN Security Council and for a permanent seat in the reformed 15-member top organ of the world body. It also advocates African representation at a reformed United Nations Security Council.

## China prepares for Communist Party centenary in secret

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Beijing, June 23: Chinese authorities have closed Beijing's central Tiananmen Square to the public, eight days ahead of a major celebration being planned to mark the 100th anniversary of the founding of the ruling Communist Party.

The square, which normally attracts tourists from around the country, was barricaded Wednesday and will remain closed until July 2. Rows of yellow seats and heavy machinery could be seen on the open plaza that also houses the mausoleum of Mao Zedong, the founding leader of Communist China.

The party will showcase the country's rise from civil war and disastrous political campaigns in the early years of Communist rule to market reforms that have created the world's second largest economy, with a superpower status rivalled only by the United States.



Around Beijing and throughout the country, signboards have been erected and commemorative activities held, accompanied by the deployment of additional police and paramilitary forces.

The ruling party was established in secrecy in 1921, following the collapse of the Qing dynasty in 1912. It held its first session at a girl's school in Shanghai, and later moved to a lake boat to evade agents of the local warlord.

Under Xi's leadership, the party will "embark on a new, splendid journey in the next century," Xinhua reported.

## MOTHERLAND CALLS



People carry candles during a ceremony to mark the 80th anniversary of German invasion into Soviet Union at the Mamayev Kurgan World War Two memorial complex in Volgograd, Russia

## RUSSIAN JETS, SHIPS TARGET UK WARSHIP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Moscow, June 23: The Russian military said one of its warships in the Black Sea fired warning shots and a warplane dropped bombs Wednesday to force a British destroyer away from an area near Crimea that Moscow claims as its territorial waters, but Britain denied that account and insisted its ship wasn't fired upon.

The Russian Defense Ministry said a patrol ship fired warning shots after the British destroyer HMS Defender had ignored a notice against intrusion and sailed 3 kilometers (1.6 nautical miles) into Russia's territorial waters near Sevastopol, the main Russian naval base in Crimea. It said a Russian Su-24 bomber also dropped four bombs ahead of the British ship's path to persuade it to change course. Minutes later, the British



warship left Russian waters, the ministry said.

Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova denounced Defender's maneuver as a "rude British provocation that defies international law."

The Defense Ministry said it summoned the UK military attaché in Moscow to protest the destroyer's "dangerous move." It urged British authorities to investigate the crew's actions.

Britain's Ministry of Defense denied the Defender had been fired on or was in Russian waters.

# Researchers flag more deadly mutation in Gamma variant

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New York, June 23: A mutation in the Gamma variant (P1) of Coronavirus disease is linked to increased mortality, Harvard TH Chan School of Public Health and MIT researchers said Wednesday.

The mutation also carries greater transmissibility, higher infection rates, and increased pathogenicity, showed the study detailed in the journal Genetic Epidemiology.

The findings were based on genome-wide association studies (GWAS) methodology which analysed whole-genome sequencing data of SARS-CoV-2 mutations and Covid-19 mortality data. In September 2020, the team looked for links between each mutation of the SARS-CoV-2 virus's single-stranded RNA and mortality in 7,548 Covid-19 patients in Brazil. The researchers found one mu-



tation -- at locus 25,088bp in the virus's genome -- that alters the spike protein and was linked to a significant increase in mortality in Covid-19 patients. The team flagged the variant with this mutation, which was later identified as part of P1.

Based on our experience, GWAS methodology might provide suitable tools that could be used to analyse potential links between mutations

at specific locations in viral genomes and disease outcome, said Christoph Lange, Professor of biostatistics at Harvard Chan School.

This could enable better real-time detection of novel, deleterious variants, new viral strains in pandemics, Lange added.

The first patients in Brazil with the P1 variant were documented in January 2021 and within a few

weeks the variant caused a spike in cases in Manaus, Brazil. The city had already been hard hit by the pandemic in May 2020, and researchers thought that the city's residents had achieved population immunity because so many people in the area had developed antibodies for the virus during that initial wave.

Instead, P1, which has several mutations in the spike protein the virus uses to attach to and invade a host cell, caused a second wave of infections and seemed to have higher transmissibility and be more likely to cause death than the earlier variants seen in the area.

Brazil has recently surpassed half a million Covid-19 deaths. With the national death toll reaching 5,00,800, Brazil has become the second country in the world to record more than half a million pandemic deaths, after the US.

# business

## of the day quote

Businesses (in UK) are reporting an ongoing surge in demand in June as the economy reopens, led by the hospitality sector, meaning the second quarter looks to have seen economic growth rebound very sharply from the first quarter's decline

CHRIS WILLIAMSON | CHIEF BUSINESS ECONOMIST, IHS MARKIT

As per our estimates, the recent amendment by the Department of Heavy Industries (DHI) as well as incentive by GoG (government of Gujarat) could result in a price reduction of about ₹30,000 on an e2W

ASHISH MODANI | VP AND SECTOR HEAD (CORPORATE RATINGS), ICRA

With states beginning to ease restrictions, we see domestic travel picking up slowly from the second quarter. However, segments such as international holidays and inbound travel may see recovery only in H2, and that too only if travel restrictions are eased in foreign countries

MANISH GUPTA | SENIOR DIRECTOR, CRISIL RATINGS

## SHORT TAKES

### Govt eases norms for voice BPOs

New Delhi: To cement India's position as a preferred global outsourcing hub, the government Wednesday liberalised guidelines for voice-based BPOs removing the distinction between domestic and international units, permitting interconnectivity between all types of OSP centres, reducing compliance burden and increasing operational flexibility for players. Among other aspects, the rules would allow companies, to now serve global and domestic customers with common telecom resources, something that required dedicated, separate infrastructure previously.

### FMCG cos log sales growth

New Delhi: FMCG companies are witnessing an increase in sales after Unlock 2.0 with easing of curbs on trading and movement by state governments and local authorities due to falling number of Covid cases. States began lifting restriction in the first week of June. Companies are witnessing a tailwind in sales, particularly in their health & hygiene portfolio - both in urban and rural markets. Unlock 2.0 has also increased the convenience of business for companies as earlier distribution was limited to certain hours in a day in several states.

### Tata Motors' MD to step down

Mumbai: Tata Motors has announced that Guenter Butschek will step down from his role as the CEO and MD from June 30. He, however, will continue as a consultant to the company till the end of this fiscal year. Butschek had earlier informed the company of his desire to relocate to Germany at the end of the contract for personal reasons.

### Infosys' share buyback to open

New Delhi: Infosys will commence its up to ₹9,200 crore buyback from June 25, wherein the IT major intends to buy back shares at a maximum price of ₹1,750 apiece. The Board approval for the buyback was granted on April 14, 2021, and the shareholders' nod was received on June 19, 2021, at the company's 40th annual general meeting.



Keeping in line with the changing customer habits, we will continue to make Prime more accessible to our customers so they can discover and enjoy Primes many entertainment and shopping benefits

SUBBU PALANIAPPAN | DIRECTOR (PRIME), AMAZON INDIA

## BOLO INDYA REMOVED

Google has removed indigenous social media app Bolo Indya from Playstore on a copyright complaint made by music company T-Series. Super Cassettes Industries Pvt Ltd, which operates under the brand name T-Series, has served an infringement notice to social media and video sharing platforms last year to pay around ₹3.5cr in damages



# Moody's cuts India's growth forecast for 2021 to 9.6 pc

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, June 23: Moody's Investors Service Wednesday slashed India's growth projection to 9.6 per cent for 2021 calendar year from its earlier estimate of 13.9 per cent, and said faster Covid vaccination will be paramount in restricting economic losses to June quarter.

The US-based rating agency said high-frequency economic indicators show that the second wave of Covid infections hit India's economy in April and May. With states now easing restrictions, economic activity in May is likely to signify the trough, it said in a report on India.

"The virus resurgence adds uncertainty to India's growth forecast for 2021; however, it is likely that the economic damage will remain restricted to the April-June quarter. We currently expect India's real GDP to grow at 9.6 per cent in 2021 and 7 per cent in 2022," Moody's said in a report titled "Macroeconomics India: Economic shocks from second Covid wave will not be as severe as last year's".

Flagging low inoculation rate, it said faster vaccination progress will be paramount in restricting economic losses to the current quarter. As of the third week in June, only about 16 per cent of the population had received one vaccine dose; of those, only about 3.6 per cent had been fully vaccinated.

"While infection rates have been declining and restrictions relaxed in many regions, vaccination rates remain low. As a result, the risk of



Earlier this month, US-based rating agency had projected India to clock a 9.3 per cent growth in the current fiscal ending March 2022, but a severe second Covid wave has increased risks to India's credit profile and rated entities

subsequent waves that could require further lockdowns cannot be ruled out. Thus, we expect a more gradual recovery in economic growth for fiscal year ending March 2022," Moody's said in a separate report on India's infrastructure sector.

Earlier this month, Moody's had projected India to clock a 9.3 per cent growth in the current fiscal ending March 2022, but a severe second Covid wave has increased risks to India's credit profile and rated entities.

The Indian economy contracted by 7.3 per cent in fiscal 2020-21 as the country battled the first wave of COVID, as against a 4 per cent growth in 2019-20.

Stating that stringent lockdowns in economically significant states will mar April-June quarter economic activity, Moody's said the 10 states that have been hardest hit by the second wave collectively account for more than 60 per cent of the pre-pandemic level of India's GDP. Four states - Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka - contributed the largest shares among all states in financial year 2019-20.

# Microsoft second US firm to pass \$2tn market cap

AGENCIES

San Francisco, June 23: Tech giant Microsoft reached a \$2 trillion market capitalisation in trading, joining a small group of global companies that have crossed that threshold - including Apple. Apple reached its own \$2 trillion market cap back in August 2020.

Despite hitting \$2 trillion in intraday trading Tuesday, Microsoft's valuation was about \$300 million shy of the high-water mark by the time markets closed, AppleInsider reported. Like Apple, Microsoft has benefitted from the work-from-home and remote education boom created as a result of the pandemic. Since March 2020, when lockdowns began, Microsoft's stock has surged 64 per cent.



Despite hitting \$2 trillion in intraday trading Tuesday, Microsoft's valuation was about \$300 million shy of the high-water mark by the time markets closed

Back in April, the company reported that its sales had risen 19 per cent year-over-year to \$41.7 billion in the first quarter of 2020. As of writing, Apple's market valuation standards at \$2.24 trillion, the report said. Some analysts believe the Cupertino tech giant could become the first to hit a \$3 trillion market cap within a few years.

Along with the technology giants, oil company Saudi Aramco also once surpassed the \$2 trillion mark.

# FDI in April up 60 pc to USD 4.44bn: Govt data



AGENCIES

New Delhi, June 23: In a sign that investors remain confident about the prospects of the Indian economy despite the pandemic, the country attracted FDI inflows of \$6.24 billion in April, a 38 per cent growth over the inflows received in the corresponding month of the previous year.

In April last year, total FDI inflows stood at \$4.53 billion. Though lower base of last year has helped push up FDI growth this year, in overall terms, the numbers reflect return to the pre-pandemic levels of overseas investment in India.

According to government data, in April this year, FDI equity inflows amounting to \$4.44 billion were reported in the country, which is also an increase of 60 per cent over the FDI equity inflows of April 2020 (\$2.77 billion).

Equity inflows bring in the necessary capital to boost industrialisation. Mauritius has regained the top spot among the countries investing in India, accounting for 24 per cent of FDI equity inflows, followed by Singapore (21 per cent) and Japan (11 per cent).

Computer software and hardware emerged as the top sector in April with around 24 per cent share of the total FDI equity inflows, followed by the services sector (23 per cent) and the education sector (8 per cent).

Karnataka emerged as the top recipient state in April with 31 per cent

## DESPITE THE PANDEMIC

The country attracted FDI inflows of \$6.24bn in April, a 38 per cent growth over the inflows received in the corresponding month of the previous year

According to government data, in April this year, FDI equity inflows amounting to \$4.44bn were reported in the country, which is also an increase of 60 per cent over the FDI equity inflows of April 2020 (\$2.77bn)

Computer software and hardware emerged as the top sector in April with around 24 per cent share of the total FDI equity inflows, followed by the services sector (23 per cent) and the education sector (8 per cent)

share of the total FDI equity inflows, followed by Maharashtra (19 per cent) and Delhi (15 per cent).

An official statement said that the measures taken by the government on Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) policy reforms, investment facilitation and ease of doing business have resulted in increased FDI inflows into the country.

The FDI trends are an endorsement of its status as a preferred investment destination among the global investors, the statement said.

# Buffett steps down as trustee of Gates Foundation

REUTERS

New York, June 23: Warren Buffett Wednesday resigned as trustee of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, one of the world's largest private charitable organizations, as he delivered another \$4.1 billion worth of Berkshire Hathaway stock to philanthropy.

Buffett has been making annual contributions to five charitable foundations since 2006 as part of a plan to distribute about 99 per cent of his net worth to philanthropy. "With today's \$4.1 billion distribution, I'm halfway there," Buffett said in a statement.

He did not clearly state why he was leaving the Gates foundation board at this time, and expressed his support for the foundation's current CEO and its direction. Bill Gates and his wife Melinda, co-founders of the foundation, filed for divorce in May after 27 years of marriage but have pledged to continue their philanthropic work together.

# Heineken acquires 14.98 pc additional stake in UBL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, June 23: Dutch brewing major Heineken Wednesday said it has acquired 14.98 per cent more stake in United Breweries Ltd, taking its total shareholding to 61.50 per cent.

"Heineken N.V. today (Wednesday) announces that it has acquired an additional 39,644,346 ordinary shares in United Breweries Ltd (UBL) taking its shareholding in UBL from 46.5 per cent to 61.5 per cent," Heineken said in a statement.

UBL, with its flagship brand 'Kingfisher', is the leading player in the beer market in India.

The move comes a day after markets regulator Sebi had exempted Heineken International B.V. from the obligation of making an open offer, following its proposed acquisition of shares in UBL.

Heineken International B.V., promoter of United Breweries Ltd, on Wednesday acquired shares worth over ₹5,832 crore of the firm,



through an open market transaction.

Over 3.96 crore scrips were bought at the rate of ₹1,471.25 apiece, as per block deal data on BSE. The total deal value was pegged at ₹5,832.67 crore. As per shareholding data for March 2021 quarter, Heineken International B.V held 9.28 per cent stake in the firm.

# FM for changing development priorities

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, June 23: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman Wednesday made a case for re-thinking financing and development priorities for inclusive, sustainable and resilient infrastructure aligned with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Adopted in 2015, SDGs are the world's shared plan to end extreme poverty, reduce inequality, and protect the planet by 2030.

Participating in Asia Infrastructure Forum co-organised by Enterprise Singapore, Ministry of Finance of Singapore and Monetary Authority of Singapore, Sitharaman spelt out various measures taken by the gov-



ernment to boost infrastructure spending by the government.

"FM emphasised India's policy-led approach of open, rule-based and transparent economic environment; encouragement to private investment and foreign capital; enhanced public expenditure and robust institutional structure for funding infrastructure development for #ResilientRecovery," the

Finance Ministry said in a series of tweets.

The Finance Minister highlighted setting up of National Bank for Financing Infrastructure and Development, National Infrastructure Pipeline, National Monetisation Pipeline, liberalised FDI, development of GIFT City to promote Infrastructure Development, incentivise private partners and innovation.

"FM Smt. @nsitharaman called for re-thinking financing and development priorities for inclusive, sustainable and resilient #infrastructure, prioritising healthcare and education, ensuring resilience of global supply chains and creating infrastructure aligned with #SDGs," another tweet said.

# Digital, physical banking will grow hand-in-hand: SBI CGM

During the tough time of Covid-19, State Bank of India (SBI), Bhubaneswar Circle has stepped forward to help the needy. In a tête-à-tête with Orissa POST, SBI Chief General Manager (CGM) Ruma Dey highlighted the initiatives taken by the bank and also explained its Annual Credit Plan. Excerpts:

What are the steps taken by SBI branches in Odisha during the second wave of Covid? During the lockdown since April 2021, all the 878 branches and 4,800 SBI CSPs have remained open for the customers from 10 am to 2 pm as per the instructions of the state government. The Corporate Centre

has allocated ₹50 lakh to Bhubaneswar Circle for relief support for the second wave of Covid in the state. We have ensured that these funds are utilised across the state. As on date, we have received proposals worth ₹47 lakh from the RBOs. Our Regional Business Offices (RBOs) have donated oxygen cylinders, oxygen concentrators, oxygen flow meters, hospital beds and others equipments to the local administration and hospitals.

To ease Covid-related stress on MSME units, RBI and government of India has announced certain relief measures. What are the initiatives taken by SBI in Odisha to execute the plan? SBI Bhubaneswar Circle has identified the MSME units eligible for restructuring and our offices are contacting the eligible units with offer letters for passing the benefits announced by RBI to these MSME units. RBI also has announced rehabilitation of eligible MSME units under Resolution Framework 2.0. All MSME units having aggregate fund based & non-fund based exposure up to ₹50 crore from all institutions and classified as standard asset as on March 31, 2021 are eligible. Also, relief from payment of interest and installment in the moratorium pe-

riod of two years has been announced.

Our bank has also come up with "Sanjeevani" scheme for financing captive oxygen generation plants at hospitals. We are contacting the hospitals/diagnostic centers across Odisha to avail the Sanjeevani scheme. We also have a scheme "Arogyam" for Health Care Business Loan. Our offices are contacting the customers/business units identified eligible under ECLGS-3.0 for extending financial assistance under the scheme.

During the recent super cyclone Yaas were there any special initiatives by the bank to help the cyclone affected people? The bank was fully prepared to tackle the disruption expected during Yaas. Business continuity plans were in place and teams

were formed to ensure quick restoration of services after the cyclone. As a result, all our branches and ATMs in the affected areas were operational on the next day



morning following the cyclone. Our two mobile ATMs were stationed in different affected areas of Balasore, Bhadrak and Kendrapara, which enabled the customers to do their transactions soon after the cyclone.

During the super cyclone, SBI Bhubaneswar has provided cooked food to 800 frontline workers/ Covid warriors engaged by the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) for four days. We have also supplied lunch packets for 600 destitute in the slum areas of Bhubaneswar for four days. Relief camps were also organised by some of the branches in Balasore district for supply of cooked food to the people affected by Yaas.

What about Retail Loan? Is there any special scheme for Covid-affected people? SBI has launched a new product 'Kavach', a special

personal loan for Covid-affected customers and their family members. Customers who have been affected with Covid themselves or have family members who are affected can avail the Kavach loan, where the loan amount is up to ₹5 lakh with 8.5% interest and no processing fees and a five-year repayment period.

Please elucidate on SBI's Annual Credit Plan (ACP) strategy.

Last year, we achieved 95% of our ACP target, but this year we are hopeful to surpass our ACP target. We achieved about 113% of ACP target in lending to Self Help Groups. MSME sector is a very important component of our ACP, and we had achieved 116% of our ACP target in this sector. We have disbursed about ₹13,000 crore to the MSME sector last year; this year's target is even more.

Which is the more preferred banking service - digital or physical banking?

The world is gradually adopting digitalisation, but people still feel comfortable and secure, coming into the branches for banking services. I think both will grow together. It will be like combination of both physical and digital or 'phygital'.

Ruma Dey



# Czech checked by Sterling goal



ASSOCIATED PRESS

London, June 23: At least England now knows they can rely on Raheem Sterling for goals. The scoring touch missing at his last three tournaments has been rediscovered on home territory, and it gave his team first place in their group.

It was Sterling's second goal at Euro 2020 and it secured a 1-0 victory over the Czech Republic Tuesday in a match at Wembley Stadium between two teams that were already assured of their places in the round of 16.

The header at the far-post from Jack Grealish's cross in the 12th minute moved England onto a path where its only game away from Wembley will be a potential quarter-final match in Rome.

Home comforts should certainly help Sterling, who grew up in the shadow of the Wembley arch and is proving to be England's game-changer.

How unlike the 2014 and 2018 World Cups, and Euro 2016, when Sterling was unable to find the net. This time, it was his goal that also

clinched the opening win over Croatia.

The Manchester City player is stepping up as Kane, the 2018 World Cup Golden Boot winner, endures a barren run in front of goal. Kane at least managed his first shot on target of Euro 2020 against the Czechs after failing to do so against Croatia and in the 0-0 draw with Scotland.

Beyond Sterling's goal, there wasn't much for the pandemic-restricted crowd of about 20,000 to celebrate. What did get them cheering were goal updates being flashed on the big screens as Scotland lost to Croatia 3-1 and was eliminated as the last-place team.

The goals in Glasgow had big implications for the Czechs, who dropped from first place to third and are uncertain about where their last-16 game will be.

England now have a week off playing before hosting the runner-up from Group F Tuesday. That opponent could be World Cup champion France, defending champion Portugal, Germany or Hungary, and the permitted crowd will be rising to 45,000.

Finishing at the top also allows time for backup left back Ben Chilwell and midfielder Mason Mount to complete their self-isolation Monday after being deemed close contacts at last week's game with Scotland midfielder Billy Gilmour, who tested positive for the coronavirus.

The absence of Mount opened up new opportunities in the lineup with Grealish handed his first start of the tournament. Bukayo Saka made his first appearance and helped to inject some of the attacking impetus missing against Scotland.

There was also the return from injury for Harry Maguire after six weeks. And it was the central defender's long throughball that created the openings so-needed for Kane. But the captain's shot went straight at Vaclik.

Despite the lack of goals from the English, the three clean sheets are encouraging. The latest was protected by the only real moment of danger goalkeeper Jordan Pickford faced when he stretched to block a rising shot from Tomas Holes in the 28th minute.

# KIWIS HAVE LAST LAUGH

Williamson-led New Zealand produce a complete performance to claim the inaugural World Test Championship comfortably beating India by eight wickets in the final at Hampshire Bowl

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Southampton, June 23: India's revered superstars failed to dazzle on the 'D-Day' as New Zealand's canny operators and their classy skipper Kane Williamson deservedly walked away with the inaugural World Test Championship title after a composed eight-wicket win in the final that exposed multiple frailties in Virat Kohli's team.

Just like that overcast morning at the Old Trafford two years back, India's batsmen fluffed their morning lines against a familiar opposition, albeit with the red Dukes, and were skittled out for 170 on the best day for batting in a game marred by inclement weather.

A target of 139 wasn't going to be difficult and Williamson (52 n o), after a brilliant match as captain, played sublime drives in a short chase on a balmy reserve day which was used to compensate for two days of cricket being lost to rain.

There was the trademark serene smile on his face which widened following a hug from his mate Ross Taylor (47 n o) in a very low-key celebration for a team that is high-profile in its own right.

Senior off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin's two early wickets raised hopes of a twist in the tale but Williamson and Taylor doused them one patient stroke at a time.

Perhaps the cricket Gods wanted a course correction for Williamson and his men, who were left high and dry during that evening at the Lord's where twist of cruel fate and horrible rules robbed them off deserving glory in the 2019 World Cup.

That was not to be the case Wednesday when their bowlers choked India, who seemed to be in pursuit of a draw to lay their



MILLION DOLLAR SMILE: Ross Taylor (L) and Kane Williamson share a laugh after completing the win over India

hands on the glittering mace.

Williamson's pacers completely rejected their idea and ensured that a World Cup had one winner and the deserving one at that.

For Kohli, this is the third failure in big ICC events after the 2017 Champions Trophy and the 2019 World Cup. He might just have one more shot, which is the T20 World

**BRIEF SCORES**  
**INDIA 217 & 170**  
(Rishabh Pant 41; Tim Southee 4/48, Trent Boult 3/39, Kyle Jamieson 2/30);  
**NEW ZEALAND 249 & 140/2**  
(Kane Williamson 52 n o, Ross Taylor 47 n o; R Ashwin 2/17) **by 8 wickets.**

Cup this year, and failing to win that could warrant some changes in the team hierarchy.

MS Dhoni is worshipped because of three ICC trophies and it was ironic that India's abject surrender happened on the same date on which the revered former skipper won the Champions Trophy in the same country eight summers back.

When India batted, it was only Rishabh Pant (41), who was ready to live and die by the sword while his seniors found it difficult to play the game of survival.

By tea, India had another batting disaster with only 170 runs in their second innings leaving New Zealand with a target that they were expected to chase. It was one of the worst batting performances on a good track with sun beating down.

Williamson is probably one of the few captains who have now got the Indian team out for less than 250 in six consecutive innings, a testimony to his brilliant cricketing acumen and near the perfect execution of plans by his bowlers.

Tim Southee (4/48) did the early damage with his swing bowling, Neil Wagner (1/44) bowled those hard 'rib cage' overs coming round the stumps and Trent Boult (3/44), with his ability to bring it back into the left-hander, made for a brilliant few hours of Test cricket.

And then there was India's nemesis Kyle Jamieson (2/30), who got his 'bunny' Kohli third time in three Tests and twice in one to put the icing on the cake.

It was a day when everything went haywire for India and poor captaincy made matters worse.



Indian players react after a decision against Williamson was overturned

# Spectators ejected for abusing Kiwi players

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Southampton, June 23: Two spectators were removed from the Ageas Bowl for abusing some New Zealand players on day five of the ongoing World Test Championship final against India here.

"We received reports of abuse directed at the New Zealand players. Our security team were able to identify the culprits and they were ejected from the ground," the ICC said in a statement. "We will not tolerate any sort of abusive behaviour in cricket."

According to an 'ESPNcricinfo' report, the "two fans were in Block M, which is just below the on-site hotel where both teams are staying."

"It is understood that the abuse was both general and racist in nature. The ground security was triggered into action after the ICC was alerted by some fans through social media about the two persons who allegedly carried out the abuse."

It is understood that most of the abuse was directed towards Kiwi batsman Ross Taylor. However, Tim Southee said none of the players are aware of any such incident.

"No, it's the first (time) I've heard of it. The game is always played in a good spirit on the field. We're not sure obviously what's happening off the field," Southee said during the virtual press conference.

In January this year, a group of fans were removed from the Sydney Cricket Ground stands after India pacer Mohammed Siraj was on the receiving end of racial abuse during a Test against Australia.

# Modric lifts Croatia



Leading from front: Croatia captain Luka Modric celebrates with a couple of teammates after scoring against Scotland in Glasgow, Tuesday

Glasgow, June 23: Luka Modric lurked on the edge of the area, waiting for the ball to come to him before perfectly stroking it into the top corner with the outside of his boot. At 35, this may well be the Croatia captain's last European Championship, and he doesn't want to go home just yet.

Modric's majestic goal in the 62nd minute helped Croatia beat Scotland 3-1 on Tuesday and give

the team a spot in the round of 16 at Euro 2020 by finishing second in Group D. Croatia will face the runner-up from Group E Monday in Copenhagen.

Modric, who also picked up an assist on Croatia's third goal, had a quiet first two group matches, with the midfielder forced into deeper positions and Croatia facing criticism for lacking spark in attack. But the playmaker showed his class and why he won the Ballon d'Or in 2018 — the same year

he helped his team reach the World Cup final.

He fell to his knees at the final whistle for about a minute before rising to his feet and pumping his fists in celebration. He then went over with a big smile on his face to hug Croatia coach Zlatko Dalic.

Modric is now the youngest and oldest player to score for Croatia at the European Championship. He scored when he was 22 years, 273 days against Austria in 2008. Tuesday, he was 35 years, 286 days.

Croatia's two other goals came from winger Nikola Vlasic's low shot from close range in the 17th minute and Ivan Perisic's flicked header in the 77th from a corner taken by Modric.

Vlasic's took two touches for his goal and fired a low shot past Scotland goalkeeper David Marshall. It was Croatia's first real attack of the match after Scotland dominated the opening stages.

It was poor defending by wing-back Stephen O'Donnell, who let Perisic jump above him unchallenged. Scotland sat back on occasions after the goal, inviting Croatia to push forward in dangerous positions.

Callum McGregor equalised for Scotland just before halftime, drilling the ball from just outside the penalty area into the left corner. Scotland's first goal of the tournament — and their first in a major men's competition since the 1998 World Cup — electrified the atmosphere at Hampden Park.

# TVESA TO HAVE LONG SHOT AT TOKYO SPOT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Beroun (Czech Republic), June 23: Indian golfer Tvesa Malik, who has been having a good run on the Ladies European Tour, will get one final chance to qualify for Tokyo Olympics when she tees up at the Tipsport Czech Ladies Open this week.

Nothing less than a win will give her a chance to join Aditi Ashok in the Tokyo Olympics. Aditi is assured of a berth as she is 44th in the current list of qualifiers.

Tvesa, who has had two Top-10s in her last three starts, will also need some luck in the form of withdrawals from among the qualified players to get into the Top-60.

Tvesa, who opened the season with T-23 in South Africa, was T-10 in Italy and then T-6 at Jabra Ladies Open in France. She then missed the cut at Scandinavian Mixed.

Apart from Tvesa, the other Indians in the fray in the tournament are Diksha Dagar and Astha Madan.

The top stars in the field include Lee Ann Pace, Carly Booth, Annabel Dimmock, Pia Babnik, Felicity Johnson, Nuria Iturriz, Sanna Nuutinen, Liz Young, Emily Pedersen, Becky Morgan, Camille Chevalier and Christine Wolf.

The world's top-15 players are eligible for the Olympics, with a limit of four players from a country. Beyond the top-15, players are eligible based on the world rankings, with a maximum of two from each country that does not already have two or more players among the top-15.

The host country is guaranteed a spot, as is each of the five continents. Only Korea and the United States, who have more than four players in the top-15 of the world, are allowed four players.



# Jadeja displaces Holder as No.1 Test all-rounder



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dubai, June 23: India's Ravindra Jadeja Wednesday dislodged West Indian Jason Holder as the world's top all-rounder in the latest ICC Test rankings. Jadeja is two points ahead of Holder (384) while England all-rounder Ben Stokes is third on 377 points.

Another Indian, Ravichandran Ashwin is at fourth with 353 points, followed by Shakib Al Hasan of Bangladesh (338). Ashwin remained at second spot in the bowlers' rankings on 850 points, below Pat Cummins (908) of Australia. Tim Southee (830) of New Zealand is third.

Among the batsmen, there was no change in top-five with Indian captain Virat Kohli static at fourth on 814. Steve Smith of Australia continued to be the top batsman on 891 points, followed by Kane Williamson (886) of New Zealand and Marnus Labuschagne (878) of Australia.

England captain Joe Root (797) is at number five, followed by the Indian pair of Rishabh Pant and Rohit Sharma at joint at sixth on 747 points.