



NEW AVATAR

Actor Bhoomika Dash is set to catch the fans by surprise in her next film *Mana Mora Kagaja Gudi*

LEISURE P2



BJP HOLDS PROTEST

Maharashtra BJP held road blockades across the state demanding restoration of quota for OBC in local governing bodies

TWO STATES P8



PORTUGAL FACE BELGIUM

In a thrilling encounter, defending champions take on Belgium for a place in the quarterfinals at Euro 2020

SPORTS P12



EIGHT MONTHS ON: Farmers shout slogans during a protest against three farm reform laws, and over other issues at the Golden Gate in Amritsar, Saturday. Farmers are observing June 26 as 'Save Agriculture, Save Democracy Day' to mark seven months of their agitation (STORY ON P8)

BLACK LIVES MATTER

Cop who killed George Floyd gets 22½ yrs in prison

REUTERS

Washington, June 26: A judge sentenced former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin to 22½ years in prison Friday for the murder of George Floyd during an arrest in May 2020, video of which galvanised a national protest movement against racism. A jury found Chauvin, who is white, guilty April 20 of unintentional second-degree murder, third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter in the death of Floyd, a Black man. The verdict was widely seen as a landmark rebuke of the disproportionate use of police force against Black Americans. Chauvin's sentence was one of the longest given a former police officer for using unlawful deadly force in the United States, Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison, whose office



prosecuted the case, told reporters. Successful prosecutions of police officers in such cases have been rare. "Today's sentencing is not justice but it is another moment of real accountability on the road to justice," Ellison said outside the courtroom, calling on law enforcement leaders around the United States to see it as a moment for reform. At the White House, US President Joe Biden, who has spoken several times with the Floyd family, said the sentence seemed appropriate. Both Floyd's brother Rodney and his nephew Brandon Williams criticised the sentence as a "slap on the wrist." "We were served a life sentence," Williams said outside the courthouse.

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Delta Plus variant found in 12 states

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, June 26: Fifty-one cases of Delta Plus variant of the coronavirus have been detected across 12 states in the country, with Maharashtra reporting the highest number of 22, the Centre said Friday, stressing that there are still very limited cases of this mutation and it cannot be inferred that it is showing an upward trend. These 51 cases were detected from over 45,000 samples sequenced so far in the country. Sujet Singh, Director of the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), said 22 cases of Delta Plus variant have been found in Maharashtra, followed by nine in Tamil Nadu, seven in Madhya Pradesh, three in Kerala, two each in Punjab and Gujarat, and one case each in Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan, Jammu and Kashmir, Haryana and Karnataka. "There is very limited number of cases of this mutation (Delta Plus). In India, there are very limited cases (of Delta Plus). There are nearly 50 cases that are found in 12 districts and this has happened in the last three months. It cannot be said that in any district, state it is showing an increasing trend. Till the time we don't correlate this we will not say this is a rising trend because its mutations are the same as Delta variant," Sujet Singh told a media briefing of the health ministry. There was some variance in the figures in the slides presented at the briefing but officials confirmed later that the total cases of the Delta Plus variant detected so far stand at 51 across 12 states. So the transmission potential in the Delta variant can also found in the Delta Plus variant, he added. The NCDC is among the 10 institutes involved in genome sequencing of the coronavirus in the country. Sujet Singh said the Delta Plus variant signifies the Delta variant with an additional mutation - B.1.617.2.1. This specifically refers to the acquisition of the K417N genetic variant in the background of Variant of Concern (VoC) Delta (B.1.617.2).

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



There is absolute freedom of speech. See, one can join our party and say anything to anybody these days!

State spent ₹6.02cr on Mahanadi case: RTI

₹87.93 LAKH SPENT ON AIR TRAVELS OF OFFICIALS ALONE

GYAN RANJAN MOHAPATRA, OP

Bhubaneswar, June 26: The Odisha government spent more than ₹6.02 crore from the state exchequer to pay the lawyers contesting the contentious Mahanadi inter-state river water dispute in the Tribunal on behalf of the state and on government officials for their airfares to different places. A response from the Water Resources Department to an RTI application filed by this correspondent revealed startling fact on the state funding for the case. However, four years down the line and despite investment of ₹6.02 crore, no major breakthrough has been achieved in the case. In fact, the state even failed to get a stay from the Tribunal on the issue.

As per information available, the state government employed 14 lawyers, including former Attorney General of India and senior Supreme Court lawyer Mukul Rohatgi to present Odisha's side before the Tribunal. The lawyers' panel also included noted advocates like Harish N Salve, former Solicitor General of India, and Mohan V Katarki. The RTI query revealed that the state government paid ₹4,44,84,832, including taxes, to various reputed lawyers and law firms of the country during the period between March 1, 2018 and January 31, 2021. The RTI reply claimed that the state government paid ₹1,14,50,000 only for the services rendered by senior advocate Rohtagi who appeared before the tribunal on behalf of the state thrice between 2018 and 2019. Similarly, ₹1,80,90,000 was paid to another senior advocate Mohan V Kartaki who appeared before the tribunal for the state for ten times between 2018 and 2020. Meanwhile, the Odisha government also paid ₹41,73,664 to Sri Agarwal Law Associates, a New Delhi-based law firm, for the services rendered in the case. Similarly, the state government also employed non-legal technical experts to study various aspects of the Mahanadi water dispute in order to assist the state government in preparing its representations and spent around ₹1.59 crore on the visits of these officials and experts to New Delhi and other places between 2017 and 2021. The expert committee included engineers like ME Haque, Suresh

GOVT SPENDING ON MAHANADI TRIBUNAL	
PAYMENT MADE TO	FUNDS RELEASED
Mukul Rohtagi, SC Lawyer	₹1.14 crore
Mohan Katarki, SC Lawyer	₹1.80 crore
Sri Agrawal Law Associates	₹41.73 lakh
Visits of technical team	₹1.58 crore
Air travel of technical team	₹87.93 lakh (out of ₹1.58 crore)

Chandra, RC Tripathy, GN Yoganarasingham, Ramesh Kumar Gupta, Arun Kumar Padhi, GC Sahoo and BP Das. Interestingly, the government spent around ₹87.93 lakh on the air travels of these officials alone. Odisha had been at loggerheads with neighbouring Chhattisgarh over the 'illegal' construction of several barrages and pick-up weirs upstream of Mahanadi river and had sought the intervention of the Supreme Court in the case. Following the Supreme Court's intervention, the Central government constituted Mahanadi Inter-State River Water Disputes Tribunal to settle the dispute between Odisha and Chhattisgarh over the sharing of Mahanadi waters, March 12, 2018. However, the Tribunal has so far failed to address the concerns raised by Odisha. The state government appointed noted lawyers to present its side before the Tribunal but is yet to get the desired results. **MORE P3**

FUEL PRICES ON A ROLL

NEW DELHI: Global cues pushed fuel prices to increase again across the country Saturday, adding more misery for the common man already grappling with rising food prices amidst shrinking income. The retail prices of both petrol

CITY FUEL PRICES

PETROL	₹98.94 (+0.35)
DIESEL	₹96.68 (+0.39)

and diesel rose by a sharp 35 paise per litre Saturday to touch new high of ₹98.11 and ₹88.65 per litre respectively in Delhi. With the rise, petrol price has reached very close to hitting the century mark all across the country extending the scope of historic high prices that had already made the fuel rate cross the ₹100 per litre mark in certain cities and towns.

WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK
TEMP MAX	33.4°C	34.0°C
TEMP MIN	25.8°C	25.0°C
Humidity	83%	80%
Rainfall	2.5mm	Nil
Forecast	Generally cloudy sky	

27 new ministers tipped in Modi Cabinet

SINCE PM MODI CAME BACK TO POWER IN 2019, THIS WILL BE THE FIRST SUCH RESHUFFLE-CUM-EXPANSION

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, June 26: With the all-party meeting on J&K done and dusted, the impending Cabinet reshuffle has once again gathered pace. As many as 27 probables, including heavyweights Jyotiraditya Scindia, Sushil Modi, Sarbananda Sonowal, Narayan Rane and Bhupender Yadav, could be part of the massive reshuffle of the Union Cabinet reportedly imminent. The new ministers in the Narendra Modi government, who are likely to be sworn in include former Congress heavyweight from Madhya Pradesh, Scindia, who is now in the BJP; former Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Sushil Modi; senior BJP organisational heavyweights party general secretary Bhupender Yadav from Rajasthan and Kailash Vijayvargiya from Madhya Pradesh who was in charge of the BJP's campaign in West



Bengal. BJP spokesperson and minority face Syed Zafar Islam is also tipped for a Central government role. Also on the master list are former Assam CM Sarbananda Sonowal and former Maharashtra CM Narayan Rane, besides, Maharashtra Beed MP Pritam Munde and Gopinath Munde's daughter is on the reshuffle candidates list. From Uttar Pradesh which is headed for 'make or break' elec-

tions for the BJP next year, BJP UP chief Swatantra Dev Singh, a certainty; Pankaj Chaudhary, MP from Maharajganj, Varun Gandhi, and alliance partner, Anupriya Patel are among the probables. Rajya Sabha MP Anil Jain, Odisha MP Ashwini Vaishnav and former MP Baijayant Panda; former Railway Minister from Bengal Dinesh Trivedi are also on the list. Jain is also president of the All India Tennis Association. There is a sizeable contingent from Rajasthan, including former Union Minister in Modi government PP Choudhry, youngest MP from Rajasthan hailing from Churu, Rahul Kaswan and Sikar MP Sumedhanand Saraswati. The lone entrant from Delhi will be New Delhi MP Meenakshi Lekhi. Amid the significant churn in Bihar, Pasupati Paras who rebelled against Chirag Paswan is likely getting a

Central berth from LJP, as are JDU non-independents RCP Singh and Santosh Kumar. Karnataka may well be represented by Rajya Sabha MP Rajeev Chandrasekhar. Gujarat BJP president CR Patil is moving to the government along with Ahmedabad West MP Kirit Solaki. From Haryana, Sirsa MP Sunita Duggal, a former Income Tax officer is also among the probables. Ladakh MP Jamyang Tsering Namgyal who impressed with his Parliament speech is also being considered. The reshuffle is being necessitated by some vacancies caused due to untimely deaths like Ram Vilas Paswan and Suresh Angadi and exits of Akali Dal and Shiv Sena. Many ministers are saddled with multiple portfolios due to the deaths and exits of some members. Upcoming elections in UP are a factor in the reshuffle and also the need to add some heft to government with the entry of Bhupender Yadav.

In Loving Memory
on the occasion of 11th Day

Born: 26.07.1945 Demise: 17.06.2021

✓Nirmala Dhir
W/o: Nrusingha Charan Dhir
Plot No.: N-3/338, IRC Village, Nayapalli, Bhubaneswar

She is fondly remembered as **MAMA** by all and was instrumental in creation of a lot of Temples, Hospitals and Charitable Organisations. She was an epitome of simplicity and kind heartedness. Her goal of providing higher education to own children as well as other needy members of the society has transformed many lives. She had a flair for cooking a variety of cuisines and taking pleasure in serving all.

Her sudden demise has created a vacuum across all sections of the society and leaves behind an emptiness which can not be filled. She is survived by her husband, three sons, daughter-in-laws, two daughters, son-in-laws, grand-sons and grand-daughters. Her last rite was performed at Gada Khankira crematorium.

Deeply mourned by:
Dhir Family, Friends, Relatives and
Staffs & Management of
Trishna Group & Sparsh Hospital, Bhubaneswar

leisure

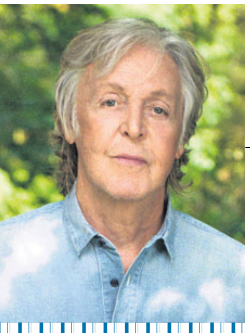


KRAVITZ'S DIRECTORIAL DEBUT PUSSY ISLAND LANDS AT MGM

Big Little Lies star Zoe Kravitz's directorial debut *Pussy Island* has been acquired by MGM. According to *Variety*, the studio has bought the global distribution rights for the film, which has *Magic Mike* star Channing Tatum on board as one of the leads.

WHY PAUL MCCARTNEY HAD TO CHOP ONIONS

The Beatles icon Paul McCartney shared why he would always chop the onions when he cooked with his late first wife Linda. "I would always volunteer to chop onions as I liked the idea of sparing Linda the tears," he said, reports *femalefirst.co.uk*.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES

Of late you have been very preoccupied with work and social life. It is about time you gave yourself a break to indulge in something for your own benefit. Your health could be a cause of concern. Ganesh advises you to put everything else on the back-burner if you are feeling stressed out.

TAURUS

There will be a positive surge in your career prospects today. However, this progress may not be in the direction that you expected. Financial opportunities and success will knock at your door, a rare combination of guests.

GEMINI

You will meet all kinds of people in matters related to work. You will need to understand their demands and needs and will have to strive to fulfill them. Your courteous nature will endear you to people. You will receive praise for your intelligence as well, says Ganesh.

CANCER

People will surround you. You will entertain them with your hilarity. Social contacts will benefit you. Students will excel and concentrate on their work. It will be a good day, says Ganesh.

LEO

You are businesslike and practical in your approach, however, you have a tendency to lose your temper. You will be able to channelise your aggression into business today. It is a good thing, since you need an outlet for your energy. The advice of your elders will help you.

VIRGO

You will find your banal day-to-day routine work to be very irritating today, foresees Ganesh. Avoid the tendency to exaggerate things out of proportion. You will not, however, let anything impact on your enthusiasm to work. You will do something novel to win the appreciation of people.

LIBRA

Ganesh says that you will behave unlike your nature and take a more serious attitude towards life. This is unlike you but your seriousness will give you the opportunity to take up further responsibilities that will prove to people that you can be responsible too.

SCORPIO

Blood is thicker than water, and you will experience this in true sense today, says Ganesh. Dedicate this day to your family and friends, enjoy and make merry. Feel as if you are on the top of this world when you set out on a secret date with your beloved. Life is beautiful, indeed!

SAGITTARIUS

Your temper is as hot as a fireball today, foresees Ganesh. Not for nothing they say that anger may destroy the world. Don't axe your own feet by your aggressive behaviour. Cool down and think before you act. There are chances that you may experience financial crunch, handle it carefully, advises Ganesh.

CAPRICORN

You are witty and wise. With your extraordinary vision and intelligence you will help many their career and later, thanks to you, they will be near to their goals. Whenever some dark clouds of reality hover above your head, you know how to find the silver lining and get out of a problem.

AQUARIUS

You have done back-breaking work to come this far. Today, you will see your efforts come to fruition. But, you need to be aware about the presence of the green-eyed people around you, especially if you are in some kind of a business, warns Ganesh. Take care of your health.

PISCES

Organized and sorted as you are, you will still find yourself clouded with emotions today. Those you are thoughtful and calculative as a person, you will discover the joy of emotions and the warmth that accompanies them. You will take the time to feel things instead of thinking of them and this change in your behaviour will either be the cause of worry or amusement for those who are close to you, says Ganesh.

Kay Kay reveals his 'escapist way'

New Delhi: Kay Kay Menon is solid as ever essaying a complex role in the segment *Bahurupiya* of the anthology series *Ray*. The episode is based on late legend Satyajit Ray's short story in Bangla titled *Bahurupi*, or the impressionist, and comes laden with an element of fantasy. The actor decodes how he faced the challenge of essaying a brutally realistic role that treads into the domain of make-belief.

"I have an easy way that can also be called the escapist way. I look at a story as a story. I removed the baggage. I look at it as (director) Srijit (Mukherji)'s interpretation of the story and that's the newspaper headline for

me," says Kay Kay. The story casts the actor as a timid make-up artist named Indrashish Saha, who inherits a strange book on prosthetic expertise when his grandmother passes away, along with a substantial amount of money. Reality and fantasy fuse in the storyline, and Indrashish is sucked into a vortex of doom as he begins to imagine he is invincible and starts abusing his newfound 'power' to 'become' anybody he wishes.

The 54-year-old actor addresses the element of make-belief about the story saying: "Even in a newspaper, you often see headlines that are unimaginable, right? You believe it because it is in the newspaper. Similarly, for me, the story becomes factual at that point of time. I try to remove all other baggage attached to it."



Malaika's mushy b'day wish to Arjun

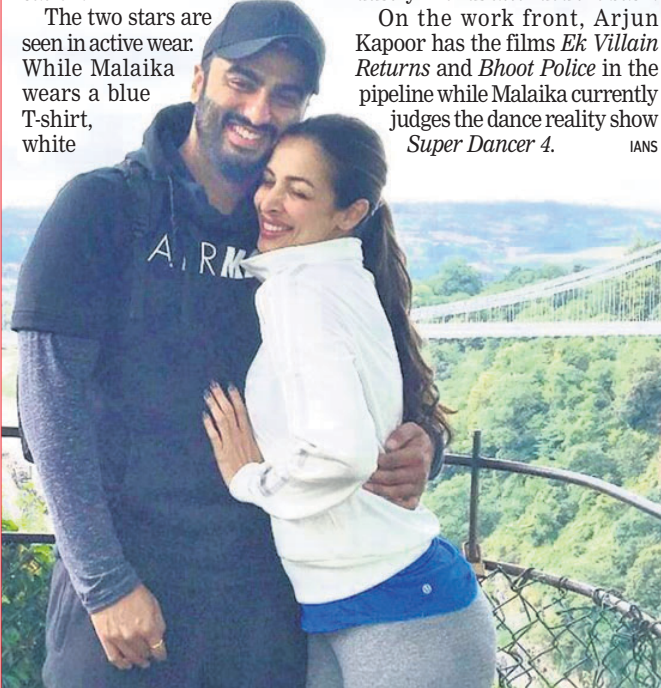
Mumbai: Malaika Arora wished Arjun Kapoor on his 36th birthday Saturday with a romantic wish and a cozy picture of the couple.

"Happy birthday my sunshine," posted Malaika on Instagram, along with a picture of the two. In the picture post, Malaika is seen in Arjun's arms smiling against the backdrop of a picturesque valley. The picture appears to be a throwback from a vacation.

The two stars are seen in active wear. While Malaika wears a blue T-shirt, white

sweatshirt and grey track pants, Arjun dons a grey T-shirt, black hoodie, black shorts and a cap. Celebrations for Arjun's birthday started Friday night at Mumbai's Taj Mahal Palace hotel. The actor had a star-studded birthday bash attended by some of his industry friends and family members.

From Ranbir Kapoor and Alia Bhatt to Ranveer Singh and Aditya Roy Kapur, many of Arjun's industry friends attended the bash. On the work front, Arjun Kapoor has the films *Ek Villain Returns* and *Bhoot Police* in the pipeline while Malaika currently judges the dance reality show *Super Dancer 4*.



Bhoomika unveils her new avatar

Bhubaneswar: Bhoomika Dash, one of the top actresses of Odia film industry, is all set to appear in a new avatar in her next film *Mana Mora Kagaja Gudi* opposite Rakesh. The movie explores the dark phase of youngsters' lives when they take to drugs.

Talking about her character, Bhoomika says, "I will play the character of a small town girl Nisha who takes to substance abuse and fights hard to get rid of it. She becomes lonely after losing her father at an early age. Eventually, she starts keeping company with people who happen to be drug peddlers and gets trapped. Then Rakesh comes to her rescue and helps her come out of the situation. The plot also tells how children, after getting neglected by their working parents, become wayward in life."

Written by Dibyasingh Ray, *Mana Mora Kagaja Gudi* is directed by debutant Debjyoti Patra. Japani has scored its music

while Basantraj Samal and Manas Padhiary have written the lyrics and dialogues respectively. Somio is the film's director of photography. PNN



SAI Int'l hosts global reading fest 'Booktopia'

APART FROM INDIA, THE GLOBAL EVENT SAW PARTICIPATION OF AROUND 500 STUDENTS FROM JAPAN, SOUTH KOREA, SOUTH AFRICA, RWANDA, UGANDA AND PAKISTAN

Bhubaneswar: City-based SAI International School organised 'Booktopia', a global reading festival inspired by Round Square ideals, to encourage reading habits among school students, Saturday.

Round Square is an internationally diverse network of 200 like-minded schools in 50 countries on six continents that connect and collaborate to offer world-class programmes and experiences, developing global competence, character and confidence in students.

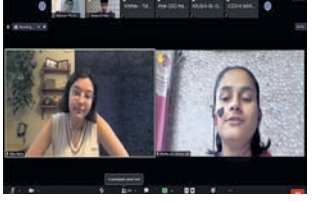
Apart from India, the global event saw participation of around 500 students from Japan, South Korea, South Africa, Rwanda, Uganda and Pakistan.

Teen prodigy Elise Marr, a Michigan based writer, composer, singer, actor and musician was



Participants showing their books during a session

magical, mystery and others. Speaking on the occasion Silpi Sahoo, the Vice-Chairperson of the school said, "Reading is an enriching experience that shapes



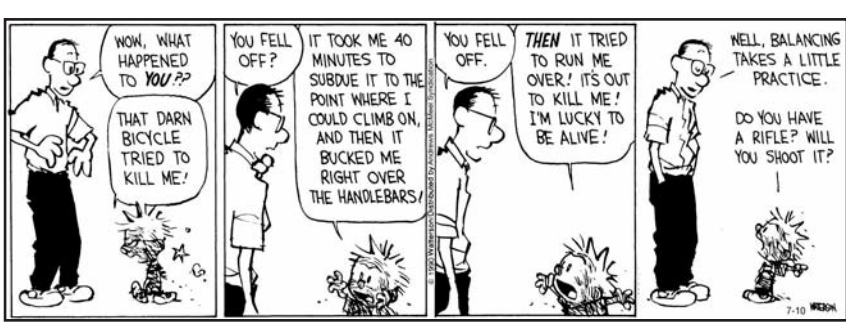
Elise interacting with a student

a child's future and deepens one's thoughts and feelings. It widens our world, expands our perspectives and enhances our imagination. It influences the way we perceive different things and opens our heart to possibilities." PNN

PEANUTS



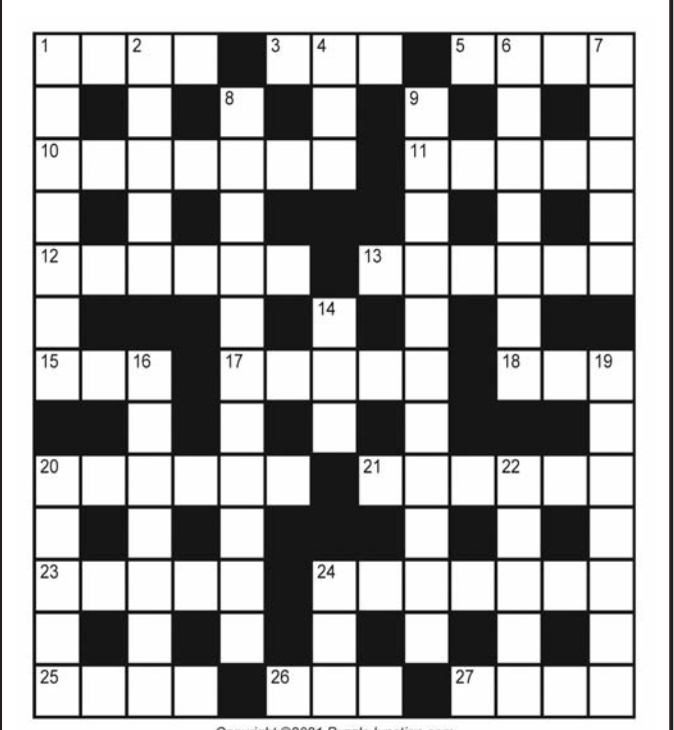
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



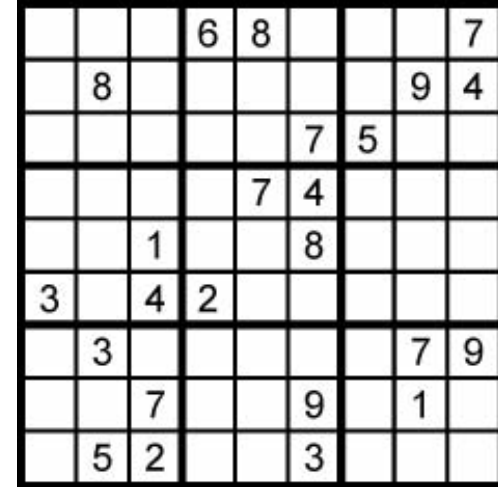
FUN post CROSSWORD



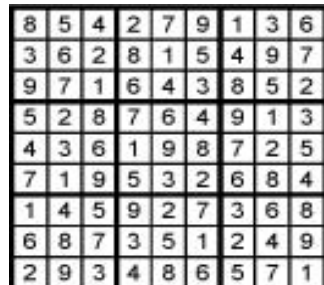
- Across
- 1 Confront
 - 3 Spending limit
 - 5 Catcall
 - 10 Staircase part
 - 11 Jingle
 - 12 Docket
 - 13 Chin feature
 - 15 Salad ingredient
 - 17 Blatant
 - 18 Easy mark
 - 20 Sudden
 - 21 Empty
 - 23 Public spat
 - 24 Loose-fitting dress
 - 25 Effortless
 - 26 Maid's cloth
 - 27 Heavy load
 - 28 Camp craft
 - 4 Summer mo.
 - 6 Greek mountain peak
 - 7 Motif
 - 8 Owls and hawks, e.g. (5,2,4)
 - 9 Riddle (5-6)
 - 14 Jewel
 - 16 Lofts
 - 19 Oceanic birds
 - 20 Seating request
 - 22 Little green man
 - 24 Chinese tea
- Down
- 1 Leaves
 - 2 Camp craft
 - 4 Summer mo.

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

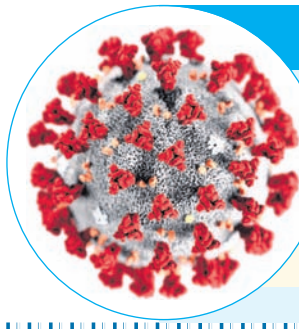


CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



CHARIOT WORK

Carpenters constructing the domes of chariots at Rath Yard in Puri, Saturday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	18,13,54,977	16,59,13,569	39,28,721
India	3,01,83,143	2,91,93,085	3,94,493
Odisha	8,97,062	8,63,824	3,848

Allocate 95% vax to govt hosps, Centre told

PNN/ AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, June 26: Seeking modification in the vaccination policy, the state government has urged the Centre to allocate Covid-19 vaccines in 95:5 ratio between the state government and private hospitals instead of 75:25 earlier.

State Health and Family Welfare Minister Naba Kishore Das in a letter to Union Health and Family Welfare Minister Harsh Vardhan Saturday said that the vaccination activities will be "severely affected" if the Centre does not change its guidelines. Earlier June 14, Additional Chief Secretary Health, Pradipta Kumar Mohapatra had written to the Union Health secretary for a similar demand.

The minister in the letter mentioned that the procurement by

MINISTER'S TAKE



As per the revised Central guidelines that came into effect June 21, 25% of monthly production of vaccines by domestic manufacturers will be procured by private hospitals

However, presence of private hospitals in state is very low and limited to only 5 per cent of the total healthcare sector

The state govt apprehends that as per the existing guideline the state may lose out its proportionate share of 25 per cent allocation of vaccines to the private sectors

private hospitals in Odisha is very negligible.

As per the revised Central guidelines that came into effect June 21 across the country, 25 per cent of monthly production of vaccines by

domestic manufacturers will be procured by private hospitals. However, till date, only seven private hospitals in Odisha have been able to procure vaccines from the manufacturers, Das said in his letter.

Noting that the presence of private hospitals is very low and limited to only about 5 per cent of the total healthcare sector in Odisha, Das said the state government apprehends that, as per the existing guideline, the state may lose out its proportionate share of 25 per cent allocation of vaccines to the private sectors.

Das urged Vardhan to revise the allocation of vaccines to Odisha at a ratio from 75:25 to 95:5 keeping in mind the ground reality. And, the share of the private sector may be handed over to the state government, he demanded.

"Since June 21, 2021, we are able to vaccinate more than 3 lakh beneficiaries per day and will continue our endeavour to achieve 100 per cent vaccination in the state," Das mentioned in the letter.

Supply documents to Odisha, Ch'garh: Mahanadi tribunal

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, June 26: The Mahanadi Water Disputes Tribunal Saturday directed the Central ministries and agencies to supply documents related to Mahanadi basin to Odisha and Chhattisgarh.

A three-judge bench of the tribunal headed by Supreme Court judge Justice AM Khanwilkar and comprising Justices Ravi Ranjan and Indermeet Kaur issued directions to the Central agencies after both the states apprised the tribunal that they haven't received all the documents required in the adjudication of Mahanadi river water dispute between the riparian states. The tribunal has posted the matter for hearing to August 14.

During the hearing, the counsels appearing for Odisha and Chhattisgarh complained before the tribunal that agencies like Central Water Commission (CWC), India Meteorological Department (IMD), Ministry of Jal Shakti, Ministry of Environment and Forests and others have not supplied complete documents sought by both the states.

The Odisha government had



sought copies of Technical Advisory Committee notes of over 23 projects cleared in Mahanadi basin since 1950 namely Mayana Tank, Gej Tank, Dhara Tank and Saroda Tank. The state government also sought detailed reports of several projects cleared by the CWC in Mahanadi basin.

The state government had requested the Ministry of Jal Shakti to provide it letter of submissions and summary of recommendations made by the advisory committee in 1948 for Hirakud dam. It had also demanded Terms of Reference, report of advisory committee constituted in 1952 on

Hirakud dam project. The state government also requested all Public Accounts Committee reports on the Hirakud dam except 11th report. It also pleaded for the project wise detail utilisation in Mahanadi basin.

Further, Odisha government sought environment clearance reports issued to around 35 projects in Mahanadi basin from the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

Notably, the Mahanadi tribunal, constituted in 2018, has completed the three-year tenure March 12, 2021 and is now on the extension of two years.

Eye on rural polls, BJD appoints senior observers

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, June 26: In view of the upcoming Panchayat elections in the state, ruling BJD Saturday appointed senior observers for 30 districts.

The party also rejigged the observers for all the districts.

A statement issued by BJD general secretary (Media Affairs) Manas Mangaraj said party president Naveen Patnaik has appointed six leaders as party's senior observers for various districts.

Former minister Debi Prasad Mishra has been appointed as senior observer for Ganjam, Nayagarh, Kandhamal, Khurda, Puri and Boudh districts while Soumya Ranjan Patnaik has been given the charge of Sundargarh, Jharsuguda, Sambalpur, Subarnapur, Deogarh,



Angul and Dhenkanal.

Similarly, MP Prasanna Acharya is the senior observer for Cuttack, Jagatsinghpur, Kendrapara, Jajpur, Bhadrak and Balasore.

Minister Bikram Keshari Arukha is the senior observer for Malkangiri, Koraput, Nabarangpur, Rayagada and Gajapati. Finance Minister Niranjan Pujari is senior observer for four western districts—Nuapada, Kalahandi, Bolangir and Bargarh. Likewise, former MLA Maheswar Mohanty will act as

senior observer for Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar.

The regional party has also named observers for all 30 districts. Party's organisational secretary Pranab Prakash Das has been given the charge of Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar districts while MLA Chandra Sarathi Behera is the observer for Koraput and Malkangiri.

The ministers who have been given charge of various districts are: Prafulla Mallik (Ganjam), Samir Ranjan Dash (Jagatsinghpur), Ashok Chandra Panda (Jajpur), Naba Kishore Das (Kalahandi), Pratap Jena (Kandhamal), Susanta Singh (Bolangir & Deogarh), Tusharakanti Behera (Nabarangpur), Padmanabha Behera (Nayagarh), Dibya Shankar Mishra (Nuapada) and Ranendra Pratap Swain (Puri). Senior BJD MLA Pratap Deb is

the new observer for Balasore district while Sudhir Kumar Samal for Bargarh, Prasanta Muduli for Angul, Pranab Balabantaray for Bhadrak, Soubhagya Nayak for Boudh and Usha Devi for Cuttack.

Legislator Atanu Sabyasachi Nayak is the district observer for Gajapati and Rayagada whereas Bijay Nayak will continue to work for Dhenkanal district.

Nalini Kanta Pradhan is the observer of Sambalpur; Subash Singh for Jharsuguda, Debashish Samantaray for Kendrapara, Pramila Mallik for Khurda, Pradip Kumar Amat for Subarnapur and Pritiranjana Gharai for Sundargarh.

Senior leader Sanjay Das Burma, who was earlier the observer for Nabarangpur and Rayagada districts, has been excluded from the new list.

39 sportspersons join police

Bhubaneswar: Thirty-nine meritorious sportspersons including 30 women Saturday joined the Odisha Police. Previously, 96 sportspersons were appointed in various ranks of Odisha Police in six-phases. At an induction programme held virtually, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik said the state will continue to support the sportspersons in every possible manner to enable them to achieve their dreams. He congratulated the new personnel in Odisha police and said the state is investing more than ₹1,000 crore in developing the sports infrastructure across the state.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given to all concerned that Krushna Chandra Behera, S/o. Udaynath Behera of A/P.O./P.S.- Choudhary has lost Original RSD No. 10431502028 Dtd.14.07.2015 executed by Baram Behera in favour of Susama Behera.

The aforesaid Krushna Chandra Behera has applied for a housing loan to the LICHL, Cuttack by offering mortgage of the said property documents. All concerned therefore having any claim over the property purchased under the said document i.e. RSD No. 10431502028 Dtd.14.07.2015 are required to file their claim with the undersigned within 15 (fifteen) days from the date of publication of this notice, failing which it will be presumed that the property relating to the said document is free from encumbrances and any claim in respect thereof against the applicant as mortgagor and the Company as the mortgagee shall be void and ineffective after the lapse of 15 (fifteen) days of publication of this notice.

(U.K. Mishra), Advocate
LICHL, Cuttack Area Office
Link Road, Cuttack

Cuttack
Dt.: 25.06.2021

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Monsoon plays truant as 11 dists receive deficit rain



Monsoon rain lashes the Capital city of Bhubaneswar, Saturday

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, June 26: As many as 11 out of 30 districts in the state have received deficit rainfall till date ever since the onset of southwest monsoon, Bhubaneswar Meteorological Centre said Saturday. The state has received 169.6 mm rain during the period from June 1 to 26 which is 3 per cent less than the normal average rainfall of 175.3 mm. The highest 255.3 mm rainfall was recorded in Sundargarh district while Ganjam district recorded the lowest rainfall of 79.5 mm. Districts like Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Jajpur, Bhadrak, Boudh, Bolangir, Kandhamal, Ganjam, Gajapati, Rayagada and Nabarangpur have recorded deficit rain ranging

from 20 to 59 per cent during the period, the Met Centre said.

Bhadrak district recorded the highest 49 per cent deficit rain, followed by Ganjam & Gajapati (46 per cent each), Kandhamal (35 per cent), Jajpur (34 per cent), Keonjhar (27 per cent), Bolangir (26 per cent), Nabarangpur (25 per cent) and Mayurbhanj, Rayagada & Boudh (24 per cent), it said.

Puri is the only district that has received excess rainfall of above 60 per cent. The district has recorded 220 mm rainfall so far which is 66 per cent more than the normal downpour. Nine other districts—Sundargarh, Jharsuguda, Bargarh, Sonepur, Nuapada, Cuttack, Jagatsinghpur, Kendrapara & Koraput—have recorded excess

RAIN RAIN COME AGAIN

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The highest 255.3 mm rainfall was recorded in Sundargarh district while Ganjam district recorded the lowest rainfall of 79.5 mm

Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Jajpur, Bhadrak, Boudh, Bolangir, Kandhamal, Ganjam, Gajapati, Rayagada and Nabarangpur districts have recorded deficit rain ranging from 20 to 59 per cent

rainfall of 20 to 59 per cent. The remaining nine districts have received normal downpour during these days. The districts are: Balasore, Dhenkanal, Angul, Deogarh, Sambalpur, Nayagarh, Khurda, Kalahandi and Malkangiri. Meanwhile, the Meteorological Centre said thunderstorm with lightning is very likely to occur at one or two places of Balasore, Bhadrak, Jajpur, Kendrapara, Cuttack, Jagatsinghpur, Puri, Khurda, Nayagarh, Ganjam, Gajapati, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj, Kandhamal, Rayagada, Malkangiri and Koraput districts Sunday.

BMC RESCUES HOMELESS BEGGARS IN CITY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, June 26: The Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation Saturday said it had rescued many homeless beggars and rehabilitated them to shelter homes.

Several agencies have been regularly conducting special drives for the rescue of homeless persons found in the city, the BMC said.

“With an aim to make Bhubaneswar #BeggarFree, BMC team mobilised and rescued many homeless beggars from Master Canteen area, Ram Mandir area, Rajmahal area,” the civic body tweeted.

They were taken to a shelter for urban homeless (SUH), where they “will stay with other inmates as a family”, it said.

For providing shelters to the homeless persons, eight SUHs are in operation with an inmate capacity of 368, the civic body had said in a separate post Friday.

The corporation added that a rehabilitation centre for specially-abled beggars with an inmate capacity of 100 is in operation since May 5.

Two rehabilitation centres are also in operation for the elderly, women and child beggars with a capacity of 100, it added.

CANAL RENOVATION



Work in progress for Taladanda canal (inset) renovation and beautification project in Cuttack, Saturday

OP PHOTO

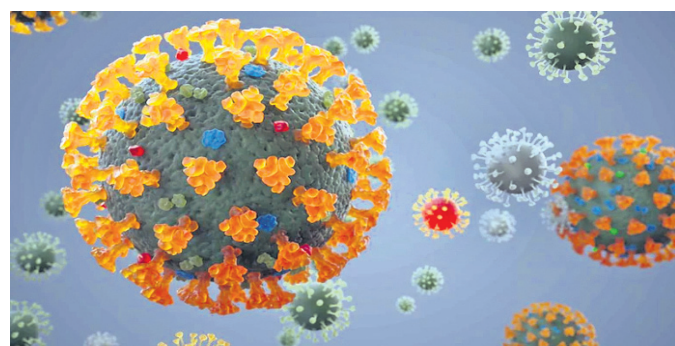
24 dists see surge in positivity rate

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, June 26: The test positivity rate (TPR), a crucial parameter in Covid-19 management, has shot up in 24 districts Saturday as compared to the previous day.

According to state Health department data, the TPR moved northward in Angul, Balasore, Bargarh, Bhadrak, Bolangir, Boudh, Cuttack, Deogarh, Dhenkanal, Gajapati, Ganjam, Jagatsinghpur, Kandhamal, Kendrapara, Khurda, Koraput, Malkangiri, Mayurbhanj, Nuapada, Puri, Rayagada and Sonepur.

Data shows that 12 out of 24 districts have recorded TPR of above 5 per cent. The districts are—Balasore (6.93 per cent), Bhadrak (7.18 per cent), Cuttack (7.89 per cent), Dhenkanal (5.04 per cent), Jagatsinghpur (7.99 per cent), Kendrapara (5.21 per cent), Khurda



(10.64 per cent), Malkangiri (7.4 per cent), Mayurbhanj (8 per cent) and Puri (10.17 per cent). Two other districts - Jajpur and Nayagarh - have also recorded above 5 per cent TPR even though there is a downward trend. The state as a whole recorded a TPR of 5.17 per cent Saturday while it was 4.53 per cent Friday.

Commenting on this, Public Health director Bijay Mohapatra said the state government has intensified active surveillance and vaccination drive to minimise the infection rate. However, TPR in some districts including Bhubaneswar city is rising because some people are still violating Covid guidelines and putting others at risk, he said.

3,554 new cases, 47 fatalities in 24 hours

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, June 26: Odisha's Covid-19 tally rose to 8,97,062 Saturday as 3,554 more people tested positive for the infection, while 47 fresh fatalities pushed the state's coronavirus death toll to 3,848, a Health department official said.

As many as 3,644 more people have been cured of the disease, taking

the total number of recoveries to 8,60,142, he said, adding the

state now has 33,019 active cases. A total of 2,028 new cases were registered in quarantine centres, while 1,526 fresh infections were detected during contact tracing.

Khurda district, of which Bhubaneswar is a part, reported the highest number of new cases at 651, followed by Cuttack (501) and Balasore (271).

Khurda reported the highest number of new cases at 651, followed by Cuttack (501) and Balasore (271). Khurda also recorded the high-

est number of fresh fatalities at nine, followed by five each in Bargarh, Cuttack and Nayagarh, and three each in Sundargarh, Puri and Ganjam. Fifty-three coronavirus patients have died due to comorbidities to date. The state has thus far tested over 1.34 crore samples for Covid-19, including 68,695 Friday. Odisha's positivity rate stands at 5.17 per cent.

DEMO AGAINST FARM LAWS



Activists of CPI, AITUC and BKMU hold a demonstration at Bhagwati Bhawan in Bhubaneswar, Saturday, seeking scrapping of the new farm laws

OP PHOTO

Capital city adopts smart ways to detect black spots

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, June 26: In a bid to enhance surveillance system in Capital city, the Commissionerate Police and Bhubaneswar Smart City Limited (BSCL), Saturday, held a joint meeting that discussed setting up of advanced technologies for efficient traffic management and enforcement activities.

Chaired by BSCL CEO, Sanjay Kumar Singh, the meeting held on BDA premises was also attended by Police Commissioner Soumendra Priyadarshi, and Additional Police Commissioner Rekha Lohani. The meeting reviewed several systems being implemented by BSCL under the city surveillance system and smart traffic management system. “We discussed how traffic vio-

The automatic vehicle location system with on-board units will help track the vehicles of Commissionerate Police

lition detection system (TVDS) can further be strengthened to enforce traffic rules. We also proposed how public address system and dynamic message signboard can be used for effective dissemination of information during calamities. Traffic accident recording system will also be used for collection of accident data and subsequent analysis over GIS platform for tracing out black spots and accident-prone areas,” a

BSCL official said. The city has 25 public address systems, 15 dynamic message signboards and 25 live traffic violation detection system working across the city under the BSCL. Moreover, there are nine traffic accident recording system devices to know the location and analyse accident-prone sites. Meanwhile, emphasising the rapid use of the modern technology for effective city-level administration, the meeting also discussed the automatic vehicle location system with on-board units for real-time tracking of Commissionerate Police vehicles and their optimised operation management. Through this facility, the usual vehicle tracking system will become interactive with two-way communication.

Step up vigilance to curb nCoV: Cong

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, June 26: The state unit of Congress Saturday urged the state government to ensure proper enforcement of Covid-19 protocols at every level.

Party leader Suresh Routray Saturday said, “The number of Covid-19 cases detected Saturday has raised apprehensions about a worsening pandemic situation. The government needs to take it very seriously and must adopt timely actions. The government needs to tighten the norms and increase vigilance.” He also said, “It has already closed down Unit I market following violation of Covid norms but now the concerns are more regarding wet markets where we see large congregations despite the lockdown in place. We need to put the curbs at such places. Human lives are important and more vigilance can help us tackle the disaster better.”

Take almonds to stay fit: Experts

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, June 26: Almond Board of California hosted a session on importance of ensuring family health and nutrition amidst the Covid-19 pandemic. Addressing the seminar held recently, some experts stressed the use of almonds for a healthy life. The session was attended by R/Sheela and Bengali and Odia actress Arpita Chatterjee and Ritika Samaddar, Regional Head-Dietetics, Max Healthcare - Delhi. Chatterjee said, “Almonds are known to be a source of zinc, which plays a crucial role in growth, development, and the maintenance of immune function. I keep almonds in the house all the times, and ensure that each family member eats a handful of the nuts every day.”

Crushed by pandemic, artistes seek aid from govt

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, June 26: The Covid-19 pandemic and the restrictions imposed by the government to check the spread of the deadly virus have taken a heavy toll on the livelihood of artistes of Odia film and serial industry. Restrictions on shooting of films and serials have pushed many actors, lyricists, singers, technicians and other artistes into financial misery. These artistes have exhausted their savings to meet daily expenses during the pandemic. Even, a few artistes have either sold out their musical instruments or mortgaged them to arrange money for family expenses, sources said. Amid this gloomy situation, the artistes have urged the state government to provide financial as-

FILM INDUSTRY IN DOLDRUMS

Restrictions on shooting of films and serials have pushed many actors, lyricists, singers, technicians and other artistes into financial misery

These artistes have exhausted their savings to meet daily expenses during the pandemic

A few artistes have either sold out their musical instruments or mortgaged them to arrange money for family expenses

sistance to them. “The Covid-19 pandemic has given a body blow to the film and serial industry of Odisha. Hundreds



of artistes including actors, singers and technicians have lost their source of livelihood. Several films have been left incomplete due to Covid-19 restrictions,” said producer and actor Pradyumna Lenka. Actor Sritam Das has claimed

that many producers and directors were following the Covid-19 protocols strictly at the shooting sets. However, the state government had put restrictions on the shooting of movies and serials in the wake of second wave of the

pandemic. As a result, many junior artistes, technicians, cameramen and light men lost their livelihood, he added. Popular singer Ira Mohanty and lyricist Nirmala Nayak urged the state government to address the plight of the artistes by providing assistance to them. “Artistes are like daily wagers. They earn their bread by working in movies and serials. The second wave of the pandemic has inflicted heavy damage on the industry. It is the duty of the government to help all sections of the society during this moment of crisis,” they said. Lyricist Babu Goswami, on the other hand, pleaded for a special scheme for the working and retired artistes. “Artistes usually provide entertainment to the people. Besides, their work enriches our culture and tradition. The govern-

ment should not show step-motherly attitude to us. There should be a special scheme to help the artistes,” Goswami said. Director Sudhanshu Sahu, however, welcomed the state government's decision to put restrictions on shooting of movies and serials during the second wave. “We have to wait for some more days to resume shooting. Now, the primary task of the government is to bring the infection rate under control,” Sahu added. Music director Abhijit Majumdar said the artistes of film industry have formed an outfit to collect donations from its members and assist those suffering from financial distress. “We have raised our plight with the state government through various forums. However, the government is yet to listen to our pleas,” Majumdar said.

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DISTRESS SALE



Members of Dongria Kondh tribe resort to distress sale of pineapples as they failed to transport their produce due to the lockdown in Bissamkatak of Rayagada district

Free dialysis for needy at RGH

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, June 26: A free dialysis service was started at the Rourkela Government Hospital in Odisha that would benefit people who cannot afford the cost and have to go to faraway places for the procedure, officials said Saturday.

Rourkela MLA Sarada Nayak and Sundargarh Collector Nikhil Pawan Kalyan inaugurated the unit Friday.

The dialysis unit has four machines. The service began under the 'Sahaya' scheme of the state government, Kalyan said.

It was difficult for many families to avail the dialysis service at the right time as they cannot afford the high cost, Nayak said.

Hospital Director Santosh Swain said the service would hugely benefit those who have to go to places like Cuttack for dialysis. The District Collector said the service has been made operational in a public-private partnership mode.

Smart City tag still eludes Berhampur

SURVEY FOR SMART ROADS AND 20 SMALLER ROADS BEGINS



POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, June 26: The Silk City has not yet been upgraded to a Smart City as promised to it by the government. Recently, the Berhampur Municipal Corporation (BeMC) has begun a survey for building smart roads in the city. The civic body's budget meeting for 2021-22 Thursday approved a spend of ₹20 crore for this project. It's proposed that 20 smart roads will be built in some select lines in 40 wards of BeMC.

The earlier elected council had decided to convert the Silk City into a Smart City. All preparations for this had been completed in accordance with the guidelines of the government of India. Then mayor and commissioner K Madhvi and Nikhil Pawan Kalyan, respectively had visited Bhubaneswar and Delhi several times in this regard. However, Rourkela scored over Berhampur in the final pecking order. The Silk City was dropped out of the list of Smart Cities.

Now, the state government has decided to build smart roads in 114 urban areas of the state in phases. Berhampur and the Chief Minister's Assembly constituency Hinjlicut have been included in the first phase. This has enthused the civic body. A sum of ₹20 crore has been earmarked for this in this year's budget. According to the engineering section of the BeMC, the survey work has been expedited.

Under the smart roads project, the proposed pathways will be widened. Special measures will be taken to ease vehicular traffic on these roads. Separate roads will be built for two wheelers and pedestrians. This will smoothen the existing traffic issues in the city, officials sources said.

It may be mentioned here that the BeMC has a network of over 400 km of pucca, concrete and kutcha roads. The contract firm for the Janibilli drinking water supply project has dug roads at many places in the city on the alibi of laying of pipelines. The condition of these roads has been miserable.

While the main roads of the city have been repaired as they are used by senior officers and politicians, the condition of the lanes and by-lanes in the city has been pathetic. Denizens have demanded expeditious completion of the construction of the smart roads project and the survey work before that.

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DELTA PLUS IN ODISHA

Epidemiology team rushed to Deogarh

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, June 26: A day after the detection of a Delta Plus variant case coming to the fore in the state, the Odisha government Saturday rushed an epidemiology team to Deogarh district which reported the first such case, official sources said.

The patient who has been found carrying the Delta Plus variant of the SARS-CoV-2, was stable and has no such health complaints. The epidemiology team will further examine his health condition after six weeks of his illness, said Director of Health Services (DHS) Dr Bijay Mohapatra.

He said the state government had undertaken contact tracing of the infected person and the health condition of all of them will now be examined again. The team will also verify the vaccination status of the people who have come in contact with the patient.

The DHS said that the Delta Plus variant infected person from Deogarh had taken the first dose of the vaccine March 30. He was infected in April, maybe after coming in contact with another Covid patient. He was asymptomatic due to the effect of vaccination. His entire genome has been sequenced and he has fully recovered, he said.

"The case of Deogarh proves that vaccines are effective against the Delta Plus variant, which is also called as a variant of concern," Dr Mohapatra said, adding



the epidemiology team will ascertain the impact of the new variant on the patient and his contact persons.

Meanwhile, the Director of Institute of Life Sciences, Bhubaneswar, Dr Ajay Parida said there is no point in panicking over detection of the Delta Plus variant in Deogarh district in Odisha.

"We have found only one Delta Plus variant case in Odisha so far. The concerned person of Deogarh district was infected in April. It has been found during genome sequencing conducted on over 3,000 samples collected from four states like Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Bihar. However,

we have not found any other case of this variant, so far," Dr Parida said.

Dispelling the fear of the Delta Plus variant among the people, Dr Parida said: "Had it (delta plus) been so dangerous, we could have found more such cases. But since April, no other sample has tested positive for the new variant."

As not a single case has been detected in the last two months, it indicates that the new strain has not spread fast as predicted, Dr Parida said. "If it was highly contagious, then we must have found a number of variants of the same strain from April to till date. So, we should not unnecessarily panic about the new strain," he said.

The ILS director said the Delta variant was found in plenty during the second wave of the pandemic. But, now it has been mutated and named as Delta Plus. The Delta Plus variant is as dangerous as the Delta variant, he opined.

Meanwhile, what has come as a matter of concern for the health experts in the state is that the test positivity rate (TPR) in some districts remained around 10 per cent. The state government had earlier relaxed lockdown norms keeping in view the TPR rate, said Dr Mohapatra. The state government will further review lockdown restrictions at a high-level meeting June 30.

Cash loading firm staff held for loot of ₹34L from ATMs

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, June 26: Police arrested an employee of a cash loading firm on the charge of looting cash to the tune of ₹34 lakh from the ATMs of four banks, Saturday.

The accused was identified as Harish Chandra Das, a B. Tech graduate and an employee of a private cash loading firm in the city, an official of the Sector-7 police station said. He was working with Writers Pvt Ltd for the last one year.

According to police, Das managed to commit the loot by using the secret passwords of the ATMs in which he used to load cash on be-



half of the firm. He committed the loot in phases on various occasions while loading cash with another employee over a period of

one year. The fraud came to light after the banks conducted an audit recently.

Later, the authorities of the banks filed separate FIRs at Sector 19, Sector 7, Chhend and Government Railway police stations in connection with the fraud.

"The accused Harish Chandra Das is a B.Tech degree holder. He stole ₹34 lakh on different occasions in the last one year while loading cash in ATM machines. The matter came to light after an audit was conducted," said Rourkela SP Mukesh Kumar Bhamoo.

"Separate cases have been registered and the accused has been arrested and produced in a court. If needed, we will take him on remand for further questioning," Bhamoo added.

Dana Majhi's daughter clears Class X exams

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, June 26: Chandini Majhi, the daughter of Dana Majhi who carried his wife's corpse on his shoulders for 10 km after allegedly being denied a hearse by the government hospital in Kalahandi district, was among the 2,81,658 girls who cleared the Class X state board examinations, the results of which were declared Friday.

Chandini, a student of a tribal school run by Bhubaneswar-based Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS), secured 200 marks out of 600. Her two younger sisters are also studying in the school.

Dana Majhi from Melaghar village in Thuamul-Rampur block of the district had walked 10 km with his wife's body in 2016.

After the incident came to light, KISS founder Dr Achutya Samanta had admitted Majhi's three daughters to the school in view of his poverty.

Chandini, who had walked along with her father, thanked Samanta.

KISS has achieved a 100 per cent result, while the state-wide pass percentage has been 97.89 per cent, Samanta said. As many as 1,900 students of the institute appeared in the examination.

Mohan Charan Raita of Saura tribe from Gajapati district emerged as the KISS topper, securing 540 marks.

Woman's body found near creek, injured kid rescued

AGENCIES

Kendrapara, June 26: The Odisha Police Saturday recovered the mutilated body of a woman and rescued an injured child from a mangrove forest in Kendrapara district.

The woman's body and the injured child, aged around two years, were found near a creek in the Kandarapatia mangrove forest under the Jamboo Marine Police Station limits, a police officer said.

A forensic team reached the spot and started an investigation, he said, adding that the woman's body and the injured minor have not been identified.

A preliminary investigation suggested that the woman was murdered, the officer said.

The body of the woman was sent for post-mortem, while the child was taken to the district headquarters hospital, he said, adding that the health condition of the boy is stated to be serious.

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES



Artistes perform during a promotional campaign of a welfare scheme as part of an initiative by the district administration to provide them employment opportunities during the lockdown in Sundargarh, Saturday

Gang of dacoits busted in Jeypore

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jeypore, June 26: In a major crackdown, Jeypore town police busted a 16-member gang of dacoits in Koraput district as part of its anti-criminal drive.

The gang includes nine minors as well, Jeypore sub-divisional police officer (SDPO) Arup Abhisekh Behera informed media persons at a presser held here.

"A total of 16 dacoits including nine juveniles have been apprehended in connection with two cases of theft and robbery in Jeypore town, two cases in Sadar and one case in Sunabeda area,"

Behera said. According to a police source, a number of articles including swords, cloaks, chloroform spray, mobile phones, laptops, TV sets and gold jewellery were recovered from the gang. Police have also seized grocery items worth over ₹7 lakh from the gang.

Separate teams of police were earlier formed to nab the criminals as the police had been getting several complaints regarding dacoity and robbery in Jeypore town.

The special teams prepared a blueprint and collected vital information on secret hideouts of the miscreants who were active in the town, a senior official said.

Shortage of textbooks hits students amid pandemic

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, June 26: The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic has wreaked havoc with the education of students. Even as the government has introduced various initiatives like online education including in the YouTube mode to take care of the classroom education of students, absence of Class IX and Class X textbooks in the market has further distressed the parents and students alike.

The reason cited for the unavailability of these textbooks in the market is the changes in the curriculum, especially in Oriya and Geography. At least 60,000 Oriya textbooks have reached here. But no Geography textbooks have



of Secondary Education over the last three days. Despite changes in the Oriya curriculum, 6,000 Oriya textbooks have reached here. But no Geography textbooks have

arrived here as yet, said deputy secretary in-charge Kailash Chandra Behera.

Earlier, textbooks worth over ₹1 crore were sold to dealers in

Sambalpur zone. However, books worth just ₹40 lakh to ₹42 lakhs have been sold to dealers in the current academic year. Books could not be sold even as there was heavy

demand for books here.

Only recently, supply of books to dealers has started. Sambalpur zone has nine districts and 121 dealers under it. There are 23 dealers in Sambalpur district, 31 in Bargarh district, one in Deogarh, eight in Jharsuguda, 23 in Sundargarh, 20 in Bolangir, four each in Sonepur and Kalahandi and seven dealers in Nuapada district. Books are supplied to these dealers as per their invoices, officials said.

At present, 60,000 textbooks have reached the branch office in the first phase. These books have been equitably distributed across the nine districts in the zone. Behera said even Geography books will be made available to students without much delay.

FOCUS HONG KONG

DEATH OF FREE SPEECH



Apple Daily offered some of Asia's sharpest political reporting and was often the only publication in Hong Kong that regularly exposed and analysed financial or political wrongdoing

The Hong Kong newspaper Apple Daily has been forced to close. On the day it was shuttered, people queued to buy one last copy; a million were printed. The paper was doomed since last year, when China's Communist government imposed a harsh National Security Law on Hong Kong. Its offices were raided by the police. Its journalists were threatened with violence. Its assets were frozen. Salaries could no longer be paid. Senior editors and a chief columnist were arrested.

The paper's alleged crime was "collusion with foreign powers," or as the former Chief Executive of Hong Kong, CY Leung, crassly put it, "collusion with scum from foreign countries." Its real crime was its highly critical coverage of the Communist Party of China, of the Hong Kong government, and of corrupt local tycoons and politicians ever since Jimmy Lai founded the paper in 1995.

Lai himself has already been in prison for almost a year, charged with fraud, collusion with foreign countries, and taking part in unlawful demonstrations. He could in theory be locked up for life.

Neither Lai, nor his paper, fit the high-minded ideal of progressive activism. Apple Daily is partly a sensationalist tabloid full of stories about the sexual transgressions of movie stars and other local celebrities, salacious gossip, and general muckraking. In most liberal democracies, such publications are usually seen as the unfortunate price to be paid for the right to free speech. The British tabloid press, for example, is hardly progressive, high-minded, or principled.

But Apple Daily was principled in its way. True, the paper's tone was populist and not always civil. People from mainland China arriving in Hong Kong to share in its riches were once compared to "lo-custs." But Apple Daily also offered some of Asia's sharpest political reporting and was often the only publication in Hong Kong

that regularly exposed and analysed financial or political wrongdoing.

Lai is a fascinating and complicated figure. An avowed admirer of Donald Trump and a devout Catholic convert, he holds rather strident views on the superiority of Western Christian civilization over what he sees as the tyrannical nature of Chinese civilization. This opinion is not uncommon among Christian Chinese political activists, but it tends to find more backing from the far right in the West than from liberals.

Lai is what might be described as a rough diamond. After fleeing China in 1959 at the age of 12, in less than 30 years he worked his way up from being a child labourer in a garment factory to become a textile magnate whose jeans brand, Giordano, sold well all over China and elsewhere in Asia. He became a very rich man.

Everything changed radically for Lai after the savage crackdown on the pro-democracy demonstrations in China in 1989. He had supported the student protesters occupying Tiananmen Square and sent them free T-shirts. When the Chinese authorities sent in troops

to crush the protests, killing thousands, Lai became a vocal opponent of the Communist regime. He sold his garment business, which was threatened with closure in China anyway, and started a magazine called Next, and then Apple Daily. "Information to me is freedom," he said.

Lai wrote articles calling Li Peng, who carried out the savage crackdown in 1989, an "idiot" and "the son of a turtle egg" (a particularly nasty insult among mainland Chinese). Since Li was rumored to have been adopted by Zhou Enlai after his own father was killed - a claim Li has denied - calling his parentage into question was an especially stinging affront. The government denounced Lai as a "traitor," a "black hand," a "rotten apple," and so on, and viewed his support of democratic politicians and activists in Hong Kong, and his efforts to keep the memory of 1989 alive, as dangerously subversive.

It was in fact unusual for a Hong Kong tycoon to defy the Communist government and promote democracy. Most businessmen keep quiet or do their best to please and pla-

cate the government in Beijing. Local businesses stopped advertising in Lai's publications, and pro-China newspapers in Hong Kong published cartoons of Lai as a monstrous beast wrapped in the American flag.

Lai faced physical danger as well. His house in Hong Kong was firebombed. He was threatened with machetes, and he was under constant surveillance and followed wherever he went.

Yet he never gave up. Lai turned up every year to commemorate the Tiananmen Square Massacre. He marched in pro-democracy demonstrations. He visited Britain and the United States to elicit support for maintaining Hong Kong's freedoms. Although he was ridiculed for meeting US Vice President Mike Pence during Trump's presidency, he went to see the Democratic Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, too. And his tabloid, with its peculiar blend of scandal, gossip, and serious political reporting, was Hong Kong's indispensable voice of free speech.

Now that voice has been silenced, and Lai is in prison with others who tried to protect the right of Hong Kong's citizens to speak and write freely to be ruled by law, and to vote for their own autonomous government. Their politics are diverse: Martin Lee is a venerable barrister and moderate liberal democrat, Joshua Wong is a young leftist firebrand, and Lai is a red-baiting, Trump-admiring conservative Christian. Yet they stand together. When freedom is under siege, people cannot afford the narcissism of small differences that is tearing apart liberal politics in countries where people think democracy can be taken for granted.

*The writer is an editor and author; most recently, **The Churchill Complex: The Curse of Being Special, From Winston and FDR to Trump and Brexit***

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When we have passed beyond knowings, then we shall have Knowledge.

SRI AUROBINDO



Years of Growth Lost

Four years ago, the Indian government would use the phrase "fastest growing economy." The prime minister would repeat the phrase "one bright spot in the global economy" to describe, and used it last at 8 pm November 8, 2016, when he gave us the Demonetisation speech.

Since then, we have not heard much about the fastest growing bright spot. There is not much talk about the economy and has not been for the last four years. When it looked like India's economy had run into trouble, the boasting paused. Now that it is clear that India's economy has been ruined, we have stopped speaking about it entirely. Of course, just because the government does not speak about something does not mean that the problem does not exist. It does and we must try and understand what has happened to India.

According to government data, our economic growth began braking sharply before January 2018. From here, for some reasons which we need not speculate about today, we fell into a decline which we could not pull out of. For the four quarters of 2018 and for the next four quarters of 2019 and for the first quarter of 2020, we fell. This was before the Covid pandemic and by the time the national lockdown was announced, we had stopped growing completely.

The government did not tell us why our economy had imploded. The prime minister simply stopped speaking on the subject. On October 14, 2019, The Hindu published a piece written by Parakala Prabhakar, who is finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman's husband. Assessing the economy, he wrote: "There is anxiety all over about the economic slowdown in the country. While the government is still in denial mode, data flowing uninterrupted into the public domain show that sector after sector is starting at a seriously challenging situation. Private consumption has contracted and is at an 18-quarter low of 3.1%; rural consumption is in a deep southward dive and is double the rate of the urban slowdown; credit off-take by micro and small industries remains stagnant; net exports have shown little or no growth; GDP growth is at a six-year low with the first quarter of FY20 registering just 5%; and unemployment is at a 45-year-high. The government, however, is yet to show signs that it has come to grips with what ails the economy. Much less evidence is available to believe that it has a strategic vision to address the challenges."

This was 20 months ago and before the pandemic, and before the recession of 2020 and before the second wave of Covid. I received a newsletter from a business daily this week which listed what the position was for the last financial year, which ended a few weeks ago in April.

Consumer spending contracted by 9 per cent and investments contracted by more than 10 per cent. Manufacturing, services, and construction lost value somewhere in the range of 8 per cent. What happened in the last financial year was that we went back to the past. We slowed down, then we stopped growing and then we started going back. The rest of the world kept growing and left us behind. The reason the average Indian is today poorer than the average Bangladeshi is to be found in the last 48 months. By April 2021, manufacturing, trade, transport and communications were down at the same level that they were in 2018. That is three years of growth lost. Construction has lost two years.

The output of core industries such as cement, refineries, steel is the same as it was in March 2017. That is four years India lost while the rest of the world produced more.

Sales of passenger vehicles including cars have gone back to their 2016 levels. That's a loss of five years. This is not an anomaly. The auto sector has been hammered for many years now and it is clear that the middleclass has stopped growing. Two wheeler sales are today at the same point that they were 10 years ago. The sales of commercial vehicles, meaning trucks that carry around goods, are today below where they were when Narendra Modi first became prime minister.

Is this some new data that I am referring to? No, this is publicly available and has been known to all who are part of the sector. If some of us have not known that the situation is this grim it is purely because it has not featured in a Mann Ki Baat yet.

If you don't acknowledge a problem, as Manmohan Singh said about the economy in an interview last year, then you cannot begin to solve it. This is why we will not solve this problem. The leader of India has too much pride to say to us that he has failed us on the economy. His cabinet of chamchas dare not say it either. His finance minister's husband must write an article in one of India's most reputable newspapers to bring to the notice of the world that we are sunk.

The impoverishing of Indians and the wrecking of our economy is happening at the same time when the concentration of our wealth is being skewed towards a few. The two richest men in Asia are not from China, whose economy is six times bigger than India's. They are two Gujarati men who represent the model of 'growth' in India.

WISDOM CORNER

- Trust in dreams, for in them is hidden the gate to eternity. **KAHILIL GIBRAN**
- No bird soars too high if he soars with his own wings. **WILLIAM BLAKE**
- To be angry is to revenge the faults of others on ourselves. **ALEXANDER POPE**

WORDSWORTH

Nosopoetic

Despite its form, this has nothing to do with poetry (or noses). The first part is from Greek nosos, a disease, while the second is a disguised form of poietikos, creative or productive, which is the source of the English adjective poetic with the same sense plus a number of specialist compounds, including galactopoietic, relating to the production of milk, and morphopoietic, of the formation of organic structures. So something nosopoetic causes disease. You might think the term would have found favour with doctors, as it would be a useful addition to their vocabulary. It never caught on, however - despite appearing in a couple of glossaries of medical terms in the early nineteenth century - and around the middle of the century was supplanted by pathogenic. Nosopoetic was invented by the extraordinary mathematician, physician and satirist Dr John Arbuthnot, who also created the persona of John Bull who symbolises the English character and nation. He introduced nosopoetic in his work of 1733, An Essay Concerning the Effects of Air on Human Bodies. More than a century later, it appeared in a work written by a pioneering educationalist in Indiana to encourage students to learn new words by putting them in context: *The multifarious cibarious substances engorged into inane and jejune stomachs, during the nuptial festivity, were extremely nosopoetic on the guests (Letters to Squire Pedant, by Samuel Hoshour, 1856)*. Cibarious means relating to food, or edible; inane is being used here in its ancient sense of void or empty; jejune is likewise in its earliest meaning of fasting or being hungry. This periphrastic conglomeration may be reduced to "The wedding guests became ill from overeating on empty stomachs."



Ian Buruma

WHEN FREEDOM IS UNDER SIEGE, PEOPLE CANNOT AFFORD THE NARCISSISM OF SMALL DIFFERENCES THAT IS TEARING APART LIBERAL POLITICS IN COUNTRIES WHERE PEOPLE THINK DEMOCRACY CAN BE TAKEN FOR GRANTED



Aakar Patel

Now that it is clear that India's economy has been ruined, we have stopped speaking about it entirely. Of course, just because the government does not speak about something does not mean that the problem does not exist

SPECTRUM NATION

Education system & global competitiveness



Bharat Jhunjhunwala

IT IS CLEAR THAT OUR EDUCATION SYSTEM IS NOT PROVIDING SKILLS TO THE YOUTH THAT MAY ENABLE THEM TO EARN A LIVING

The Switzerland-based Institute of Management Development (IMD) makes a World Competitiveness Ranking of major economies. India has been ranked 43rd among 64 countries. Among the five BRICS economies, China is placed at 16th rank, Russia at 45th, Brazil at 57th, and South Africa at 62nd. India was placed at 41st rank in 2016. We then slipped to 47th in 2017, climbed back to 43rd in 2018 and remained there in the last two years. Another Global Competitiveness Index of 141 countries is made by the World Economic Forum. They have placed China on 28th, Russia on 43rd, South Africa on 60th, India on 68th and Brazil on 71st position. Here too India has been slipping. India was placed at the 58th rank in 2018 and slipped to 68th rank in 2019.

The main cause of this slippage is our education system. India was placed at 59th rank among 64 countries in education. They have also said that unemployment increased from 10.4 per cent to 23.0 per cent in the last year. It is clear that our education system is not providing skills to the youth that may enable them to earn a living. This unfortunate situation exists despite considerable expenditures being made by the Union and state governments. According to RBI, the governments spent 3.3 per cent of GDP on education in 2019-20. The GDP

in this year was ₹197.4 lakh crore. This works out to an expenditure of ₹6,51,618 crore. The school-going age population is 45.9 crore. The per student expenditure being made is ₹14,196 per year. This money is being spent in paying hefty salaries to government teachers. The government is giving attractions like no fee, free books and mid-day meals to encourage students to enroll in government schools where they get sub-standard education. The government teachers fundamentally have no interest in teaching because their salaries are secure irrespective of the results of their students. The curriculum is also 'backward' looking with focus on regional languages against English; and on languages instead of mathematics and sciences. Time has come to undertake surgery of the government education system. The governments must give this huge money directly to students in the form of 'education vouchers' with which they may pay the fees in a school or university of their choice. My estimate is that about 1/3rd students will not use these vouchers. The 2/3rd students who use these vouchers can be given vouchers of ₹24,000 per year which would be more than sufficient for them to pay fees of good English medium schools in most small towns and villages which are charging about ₹1,000 per month as per my as-

essment. The government can also make teaching of computers compulsory from Class VI so that students can be prepared for future challenges and opportunities. In this background the New Education Policy is entirely a failure. It fails to introduce English at primary level, technical education at secondary level and fails to create a carrot-and-stick policy for teachers. Unfortunately, the policy is being made by the same education bureaucracy.

The second weakness in our competitiveness ranking is in the area of environment and health. The IMD has ranked India at the lowest among 64 countries. We are at 64th rank in both components - pollution and human development. The policy of the Union government is to look the other way on environment in order to attain economic growth. For example, in the recent past the government has relaxed requirements of air pollution for thermal power plants; it has promoted pollution of our rivers by converting them into waterways; and it has proposed amendments to the Environment Impact Assessment that would take a number of activities out of the requirement to obtain an environment clearance. The government's policy is counterproductive. The pollution is leading to a decline in our competitiveness and hitting growth.

The situation in health is similar. The Union and state governments are spending ₹1,900 per year per person. The two components of this expenditure are public and curative health. Public health constitutes vaccination, health education, epidemiology and similar activities that can only be undertaken by the government. The expenditures on curative health are substantially made to provide free healthcare to government employees though, of course, private patients are also treated. The government must dismantle the curative health system and provide 'health vouchers' to every citizen with which she can buy healthcare from either private or government hospitals. About ₹1500 per year can be provided from the present expenditures, including to government servants.

The situation is serious. It is necessary to improve our competitiveness in the community of nations. That, in turn, requires that we repair our education, environment and health policies that are pulling our competitiveness down. We are slipping and will continue to slip as the GDP growth rate will continue to fall as has been happening over last seven years.

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

Support, don't stigmatise

Sir, The theme for this year's International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking is 'Share Facts on Drugs, Save Lives.' The most common reason for initiation into drug use is peer pressure. It's a case of 'if you cannot beat them, join them.' It was also found that they started using drugs because they have friends who are already using drugs or who are already addicted to drugs, so while hanging out with those friends they were initiated into the habit. The other reasons why people get into drugs is stress, due to family pressure or because parents do not understand them. They are being judged by others; depression due to unemployment, not getting proper care and love from family, and personal problems like divorce and loneliness. Some people who are alcoholics and are fed up with life are easier to get influenced by drug addict friends. But unlike alcohol in the case of drugs the suffering or withdrawals are worse. Now in order to prevent drug addiction more awareness about its ill-effects is needed for the younger generation. We need to catch them young. Families should be open and accept the reality if their children are using drugs, and seek immediate help from de-addiction centres. On the other hand, the community should be made aware so that there will be no discrimination and stigmatisation against drug addicts. It is important that parents, the community and teachers interact with de-addiction centres available near them to be able to support drug addicts in need of help.

K Ravi, BHUBANESWAR

Standoff escalates

Sir, Twitter denying access to Electronics and IT Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad for an hour, alleging a violation of US copyright laws marks an escalation in standoff between the Union government and the US digital giant. Twitter reinstated the account with a warning note that they may lock it again or potentially suspend it in case of any additional notices against the account. The minister claimed that his statements castigating the microblogging platform on television channels for non-compliance with India's IT norms had ruffled Twitter's feathers. Several legal experts have flayed the platform's move as being arbitrary and against IT rules. The unprecedented spat has put Twitter in the eye of a storm.

NJ Ravi Chander, 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

OrissaPOST
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Waterlogged Aul villages appeal to govt for bridge



Centre and the state government spend crores of rupees to fulfill the fundamental needs of these people such as their education, health and transportation, but nobody cares to find out whether these funds have borne the desired fruits

Four thousand people living in these three villages are cut off from the outside world as most of the time in a year they find themselves marooned

As the surrounding rivers of these villages are connected to the Bhitarkanika sanctuary, these rivers are always infested with crocodiles. The villagers always live under the fear of death

basic as an ambulance whenever there is a health emergency or a fire tender when there is a fire the village. The only link for their association with the outside world is by way of boats. Their long-held demand for a bridge to their panchayat has been buried under bulky files of the administration.

The state government had laid the foundation stone of a bridge in 2016. However, the irony is that there is no follow-up action after that. Officials visit these waterlogged villages whenever there are some official functions, politicians also visit them before elections, but they forget the hard fate of these people once their work is over.

As the surrounding rivers of these villages are connected to the Bhitarkanika sanctuary, these rivers are always infested with crocodiles. The villagers always live under the fear of death.

People's miseries know no bounds whenever there is a flood in the rivers. Regular floods have turned to be a permanent curse for these residents. Floods inundate their farmlands and get them sand-cast. This is high time the government did something for these people, claim local intelligentsia.

Health services have been a dream for these people. Residents, even if they are afflicted by a small cold, are forced to visit hospitals in Rajnagar or Mahu. As it were, there is no government or the administration to listen to the plight of these people. Villagers of the panchayat have again appealed to the government to construct a bridge over the rivers, without further delay.

Ekamania gram panchayat in Aul block of Kendrapara district is a case in point. Ekamania, Nalapahi and Dakhinadiha villages constitute this panchayat which is 15 km from the block headquarters. The panchayat is surrounded by the Brahmani and the Kharashrota rivers.

Four thousand people living in these three villages are cut off from the outside world as most of the time in a year they find themselves marooned. They have no access to health, education and transportation.

People cannot avail a facility as

POST NEWS NETWORK

Aul, June 26: Even many decades after independence, there are hundreds of villages in the state that are still deprived of basic human amenities.

The Centre and the state government spend crores of rupees to fulfill the fundamental needs of these people such as their education, health and transportation, but nobody cares to find out whether these funds have borne the desired fruits. People are still marooned from the outside world as they were decades back.



Encroachments near Bhima Bhoi Medical College and Hospital in Bolangir were razed

OP PHOTO

DEMOLITION DRIVE

Survey begins for 3rd railway line of SER

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jaleswar, June 26: Even as people in this region have long demanded upgradation of the Jaleswar railway station on the outskirts of Balasore district, the authorities have paid scant regard to this demand. Besides Jaleswar, people of Baliapala, Bhograi, Rasgovindpur, Raibania areas depend on this railway station. Even people in East and West Midnapur districts of West Bengal look to this railway station for their transportation.

As this station falls under the south-east division of the railways, it has not made enough

progress, sources said. Even as this station generates revenue in the region of ₹10 crore per annum, it has not been upgraded to NSG-4 category. Many outfits on behalf of the people of Jaleswar and members of the social welfare development council have met the railway divisional railway manager (DRM) at Kharagpur and additional general manager at Kolkata, but to no avail.

The railway authorities had promised these delegations that their demands will be favourably considered whenever work for the third rail line begins. However, nothing has come off this promise

even as work for the third rail line has begun.

People in Jaleswar have expressed concern that the authorities have ignored the old map and the station development plans. A railway team comprising DRM Manoranjan Pradhan, chief engineer, construction BK Jain, deputy engineer Bom Bom Pande, assistant engineer Rajiv Choudhry, chief divisional operating manager Satyendra Barma, chief commercial manager Manoj Kumar Singh, commercial manager Ashutosh Singh carried out a survey.

A memorandum was submitted to the committee after it was

known that the main building of the proposed station will come up on the platform number 4 instead of the platform number 1, as demanded.

The secretary of the social welfare development council, Ramachandra Jena, BJP leader Arun Kumar Bej, Ramakanta Bhanj, Abani Kumar Chand, Sarat Chandra Parida, Ajit Mohanty, Sukumar Rana, Ramchandra Sahu, Kamal Chakrabarty, Rabindra Kumar Patra, Manoranjan Das, Phalguni Panigrahi, Jagannath Gochhayat, Sanjeev Kumar Patra, Rabinarayan Patra, Satyanarayan Dash, Rayaj Khan were present at the meeting.

Declare one day for children in each district: W&CD dept

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, June 26: The Women and Child Development department Friday directed the District Collectors to declare one day in each quarter as "A day for children" in the state.

In a letter to all District Collectors, Aravind Agrawal, Director, ICDS and Social Welfare said "We have been successful to prevent more and more number of child marriages as compared to previous years and as of now, as many as 3,007 villages in the state are declared child marriage free."

To end child marriage fully, a taskforce and a committee have been set up in each of the 30 districts across the state. However, it is observed that due to various reasons these committees are not meeting regularly.

Therefore many issues which could have been settled at district and sub-district level are not being addressed properly. Hence, in order to establish synergy and bring harmony among the district level committees, the district may decide a fixed day in each quarter and declare it as 'A day for children'.

On this specific day a combined meeting of the committees at district and sub-district level can be organised to take stock of the griev-

To end child marriage fully, a taskforce and a committee have been set up in each of the 30 districts across the state to address the issues properly

ances related to children, review of effective implementation of child protection related laws, schemes and programmes. It could be a dedicated working day to be planned to discuss issues related to protection of rights of children with clear accountability and follow-up plan.

This will help in ensure regularisation and make these committees functional. This will also enhance coordination among authorities and committees, it will also save time of responsible officers while increasing their commitment. It will help in making children a priority and will create a protective environment for them.

The action taken in this regard and declared 'Fixed Day Meeting- A Day for Children' may be intimated to this department, said Agrawal.

Crematorium near Kesinga stadium in Kalahandi opposed



POST NEWS NETWORK

Kesinga, June 26: The residents of Kesinga town in Kalahandi district are opposing the construction of a crematorium close to the stadium.

Sub-Collector Sushant Kumar Singh was on an official visit to Kesinga NAC Friday. On this occasion, ex-municipality chairman Ram Kumar Jain, BJP's Kesinga town president Prashant Kumar Banerjee, Sarita Sindur and some senior citizens took the matter up with him at the NAC office, demanding that the under-construction crematorium on the west side of the stadium be shifted to

a place near the Tel river. According to sources, Kesinga NAC had launched a signature campaign last year, seeking people's opinion regarding the construction of a crematorium near the stadium.

Meanwhile, the District Collector has directed the PWD to construct the crematorium at an estimated cost of ₹75,00,000. At a time when the construction work is presently going on in full swing, the town residents have started opposing the coming up of a crematorium near the stadium.

They alleged the stadium is the only such facility in Kesinga town. Once the crematorium is

started, it may upset the sport lovers and affect organising of sports events in the stadium. Besides, there is no facility near the crematorium for the relatives of the cremated persons to immerse ashes after the cremation. There are some government offices like tehsil office, RD office, excise department's office, kendu leaf godown and fire station near the stadium as well.

Mentioning the above issues, ex-municipality chairman Jain and BJP's Kesinga town president Banerjee requested Sub-Collector Singh to take steps to shift the crematorium to somewhere else. They have proposed a place near the Tel river.

Kalahandi Sub-Collector Singh said he will discuss with the Collector in this regard. When asked, executive officer, Kesinga NAC, Siddharth Pattanayak said there is no government land near the Tel river. "Since the type of the land near the river is village forest type, there will be problem in getting a crematorium constructed on it. In order to prevent the sanctioned money from returning, the crematorium is being constructed near the stadium," he added.

Lecturer held for sexually assaulting female student

POST NEWS NETWORK

Balasore, June 26: In a shocking incident, a lecturer of Balasore Art and Craft College near the ITI in this town was arrested by police on charges of sexually assaulting a plus-II girl student of the college.

The matter came to fore after a video of the incident went viral on social media platforms. The accused lecturer was identified as Sashanka Sekhar Das, a lecturer of History department in the college. Police arrested him after the girl's father taking offence of the video lodged a complaint in the Sadar police station.

Police registered a case under 354(A) IPC and 8 POCOA Act and arrested the accused, Sadar IIC Ashok Nayak said. The accused and the victim were taken for medical examination. Later, he was produced in court from where he was remanded to judicial custody after his bail pleas were rejected.

Reports said that Das was conducting group tuitions due to closure of the college for Covid-19 pandemic and often used to call the students to his house for tuitions.

Recently he called the girl to his residence on the pretext of providing tuition classes and tried to outrage her modesty. Family mem-



Das was conducting group tuitions due to closure of the college for Covid-19 pandemic and often used to call the students to his house for coaching

bers and the girl lodged a complaint with the college authorities following which he was dismissed from the service. Later, the girl's father lodged a complaint at the Sadar police station after a video of the incident went viral in social media a few days back.

Meanwhile, some other students have also made allegations of misbehavior against the lecturer.

FRONTLINE WORKERS



ASHA workers engaged in Covid related works receiving pulse-oximeters at a programme in Sonepur

OP PHOTO

Lack of road forces villagers to carry critical patient on cot

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sundargarh, June 26: Relatives and friends of a critical patient were forced to carry the latter on a cot for about two kilometres in the absence of adequate road connectivity at Kumudaphala village under Balishankara block in Sundargarh district. The man turned critical after consuming poison in a bid to commit suicide.

The man's family members had to rush him to a hospital to save his life. They dialed the 108 helpline number for an ambulance. However, the vehicle could not reach Kumudaphala as it had to cross a creek on its way to the village, a local said.

The ambulance driver was forced to park his vehicle on the road nearly two kilometres away from the patient's village. With assistance of the driver and a few villagers, the man was carried on a cot to the vehicle.

Ambitious 'ring-road project' in Subarnapur district falters

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sonepur, June 26: Despite having sufficient funds for the purpose, a proposed ring-road project in Subarnapur has faltered thanks to the apathetic attitude of the administration. None of the officials concerned have any answer as to when the project will start, locals alleged.

According to sources, the ring-road project includes a portal frame bridge (PFB) on a 1,250 metre-long stretch starting from Kumbharpada to Dasamati Ghat. A concrete retaining wall will be constructed on the side facing the Mahanadi river. A tender was floated for the project with an estimated cost of ₹56,09,83,000, several months ago.

Soil was tested at 45 peer points to facilitate the bridge construction, in January this year. Chief engineer of the works department had inspected the project site and advised the contract firm to col-



lect sample soil from deeper ground level, the source said.

However, after recollection of soil samples from the peer points, the project did not witness any progress, the locals lamented.

Meanwhile, Sonepur MLA and finance minister Niranjana Pujari had ordered the department officials to expedite the project work.

Notably, the ancient town is sur-

rounded by the Mahanadi and the Tel rivers from three sides. Erstwhile king Birmirodaya Singh Deo had planned to build a ring road to save the town from flood.

Later, the state government took up the project and decided to complete the ring road as it would not only protect the town from possible floods but also ease the traffic woes on roads inside the town.

Punjab, Haryana farmers take out protest marches

AGENCIES

Chandigarh, June 26: Scores of protesting farmers from Punjab and Haryana Saturday took out protest marches against the Centre's three farm laws even as police used a water cannon to disperse cultivators as they broke barricades at the Chandigarh-Mohali border.

Farmers had planned to march towards Punjab and Haryana Raj Bhavans here and submit a memorandum to mark the completion of seven months of their agitation against the three central agri-marketing laws June 26.

A heavy police force was deployed in and around Chandigarh to stop protesters from heading towards Punjab and Haryana Raj Bhavans, said officials.

Barricades were put up at many places to prevent farmers coming from Mohali and Panchkula to go towards Chandigarh.

However, agitating farmers, coming from the Mohali side, entered Chandigarh after forcing their way through barricades put up at the Chandigarh-Mohali border while facing water cannon. A protester could be seen climbing to the top of a water cannon vehicle.

Earlier, a large number of farmers from several parts of Punjab as



sembled at Gurdwara Amb Sahib in Mohali before moving towards the Punjab Governor House.

Similarly, farmers from several parts of Haryana also gathered at Gurdwara Nada Sahib in Haryana's Panchkula. They headed towards Haryana Raj Bhavan.

Farmers in Panchkula forced their way through a layer of barricades but they were not allowed to enter Chandigarh and stopped

at the Chandigarh-Panchkula border where Haryana police had deployed water cannon and trucks.

Farmers coming from the Mohali side were led by farmer leader Balbir Singh Rajewal while protesters from the Haryana side were led by Haryana BKU (Chaduni) leader Gurnam Singh Chaduni and Samyukt Kisan Morcha member Yogendra Yadav. Carrying farmer outfits' flags

and raising slogans against the BJP-led government, farmers, including women and youths, coming from Mohali marched towards Chandigarh on tractors, vehicles and walked on foot.

They were stopped near sector 17 by police where some buses were parked on the road to prevent protesters from heading towards Punjab Raj Bhavan. Rajewal there submitted the memorandum to

FARMERS HAD PLANNED TO MARCH TOWARDS PUNJAB AND HARYANA RAJ BHAVANS AND SUBMIT A MEMORANDUM TO MARK THE COMPLETION OF SEVEN MONTHS OF THEIR AGITATION

FARMERS COMING FROM THE MOHALI SIDE WERE LED BY FARMER LEADER BALBIR SINGH RAJEWAL WHILE PROTESTERS FROM THE HARYANA SIDE WERE LED BY HARYANA BKU (CHADUNI) LEADER GURNAM SINGH CHADUNI AND SAMYUKT KISAN MORCHA MEMBER YOGENDRA YADAV

the Chandigarh Deputy Commissioner for giving it to the Punjab Governor.

Similarly, Gurnam Singh Chaduni and Yogendra Yadav gave a memorandum to another official to submit it to the Haryana governor.

After the submission of memorandums, farmer leaders appealed to protesters to return.

Though traffic was diverted to alternative routes, commuters in Chandigarh faced inconvenience. The majority of farmers were without masks and not following Covid-appropriate behaviour.

BJP holds statewide protest to demand OBC quota in local bodies



AGENCIES

Mumbai, June 26: The Maharashtra unit of the BJP Saturday held 'chakka jam' or road blockade protests across the state demanding restoration of reservation for the Other Backward Classes (OBC) in local governing bodies which was quashed by the Supreme Court in March this year. The party had announced that it would hold agitation at 1,000 locations across the state.

Leader of Opposition in the Assembly Devendra Fadnavis participated in a protest in his home district Nagpur, while Leader of Opposition in the Council Pravin Darekar took part in an agitation in Thane, due to which traffic on the road connecting the city with Mumbai affected for some time.

Addressing BJP workers in Nagpur, Fadnavis said his party will restore reservation for OBCs in local bodies if given power, and if not, he will retire from politics.

"The fact is that this issue can be resolved at the state level. The state government can restore the reservation by formulating a law. There is no need for any act of the Central government. That is why OBC reservation is prevalent in other states except in Maharashtra. You (MVA) will have to make a law. We will not stop until we expose their lie. This protest is held to condemn this government on the issue," he said.

Fadnavis, who represents Nagpur South-West seat in the Assembly, said OBCs are being purposely deprived of the political reservation. "I want to appeal to all the OBC ministers in the MVA government.

The fact is that this issue can be resolved at the state level. The state government can restore the reservation by formulating a law. There is no need for any act of the Central government. That is why OBC reservation is prevalent in other states except in Maharashtra

DEVENDRA FADNAVIS | LEADER OF OPPOSITION IN THE ASSEMBLY

There is no enmity between us and them. If you are honest towards the cause of the OBCs then regardless of party lines we are ready to stand with you. I want to tell you with full confidence that within the next three to four months we can bring back the OBC reservation. If you give us power...I want to tell you with confidence that if I fail to bring back the political reservation for OBCs, I will retire from politics," the former chief minister said.

Former minister Pankaja Munde, who led a protest in Pune, said if the BJP's demand are not met, the party will launch bigger protests in future. The Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government in the state has failed to retain political reservation for the OBCs, which is necessary for the community's uplift, she said.

Munde alleged the state government kept deferring various elections, including those in the cooperative sector, when the case regarding the OBC reservation was pending in the court, and it was only after the court scrapped the quota, the elections were announced.

KOTKAPURA POLICE FIRING

Badal questioned for 4 hours by SIT



Faridkot in 2015.

Several senior Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) leaders, including Bikram Singh Majithia, Balwinder Singh Bhundar, N K Sharma and Daljit Singh Cheema, reached the Punjab Police Officers' Institute in a show of support to Badal.

After his questioning, Badal came out of the institute at 3.10 pm and then waved at the Akali Dal workers from his vehicle.

"I am indebted to the party workers for giving so much love and respect," Badal tweeted.

On Tuesday, the SIT led by Additional Director General of Police (Vigilance Bureau) LK Yadav had questioned Shiromani Akali Dal patriarch and former Punjab chief minister Parkash Singh Badal for two-and-a-half hours.

The Punjab government had formed the new SIT to probe the Kotkapura police firing incident following the directions of the Punjab and Haryana High Court.

The new SIT is investigating the two FIRs registered on October 14, 2015 and August 7, 2018 in connection with the Kotkapura incident.

The High Court had on April 9 this year quashed a report by an earlier Punjab Police SIT into the firing at people protesting in Kotkapura in 2015 over the alleged desecration of the Guru Granth Sahib in Faridkot district.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, June 26: Shiromani Akali Dal chief Sukhbir Singh Badal Saturday was questioned for around four hours by a Special Investigation Team probing the 2015 Kotkapura police firing incident.

The Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) dubbed the SIT investigation as "malicious". Badal reached the Punjab Police Officers' Institute at Sector 32 here around 11 am following a summons by the SIT.

Badal was the deputy chief minister and holding the home portfolio when incidents of desecration of religious texts and the subsequent police firing at people protesting against it had taken place in

A true leader knows when to protest, says Uddhav

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, June 26: In a veiled barb at the state BJP leadership, Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray Saturday said knowing what is the right moment to stage a protest and when dialogue is a better option is the hallmark of a "true leader".

He was speaking at a virtual function to mark the birth anniversary of Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj, the reformist ruler of the erstwhile princely state of Kolhapur.

There were legal hurdles in the implementation of the Maratha quota - quashed by the Supreme Court in May - and a legal solution needs to be found, Thackeray said.

Protesting on the streets should be avoided during the Covid-19 pandemic, and "taking an appropriate decision on when to protest and when to have dialogue is the hallmark of a true leader," he said.

"A true leader is one who protects the community in terms of employment, education and health. Spreading the virus through a show of strength is not right. We are doing all we can to fight the legal case. A review petition has been filed," he said. "Taking to the streets for rightful and just demands is in the blood of the Shiv Sena. But we know that when there is unanimity and agreement over an issue, protest should stop and dialogue should take place," the chief minister said.



FOR A CAUSE



Police personnel take part in a bicycle rally to create awareness against substance abuse on the occasion of International Day against Drug Abuse, in Patiala, Saturday

Punjab CM writes to Rajnath for Sainik School sanction

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chandigarh, June 26: Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh Saturday urged Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh to immediately approve the memorandum of agreement (MoA) for a Sainik School in Gurdaspur district, and also sanction a third Sainik School in Bathinda.

In a letter to the Defence Minister, Amarinder said the state government would sign the MoA for the third Sainik School as soon as the approval of the ministry is received.

The Chief Minister pointed out that the state government has already allotted 40 acres of land at Dalla Gorian in Gurdaspur district to establish Punjab's second Sainik School and the MoA has



also been signed and submitted to the Department of Ex-Servicemen Welfare in the Ministry of Defence.

However, he said this shall not, in his opinion, suffice to meet the aspirations of the Punjabi youth.

Emphasising on the need for at least one Sainik School each in the Malwa, Doaba and Majha regions, the three natural geographical divisions of the state, he said it was felt that a third Sainik School in Bathinda will suitably cater to this requirement.

Long road to recovery awaits Elephanta Island

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, June 26: The coronavirus pandemic has hit the tourism industry hard everywhere and the Gharapuri island that houses famous Elephanta caves, a world heritage site off Mumbai coast, is no exception to it.

The residents of this tiny island, which comprises three hamlets- Rajbunder, Shetbunder and Mora Bunder- are completely dependent on tourism for livelihood, and in normal times, except during monsoon, this place witnesses a heavy footfall of tourists who come to see the collection of cave temples predominantly dedicated to the Hindu god Shiva.

However, the situation changed after the Covid-19 crisis broke out last year. The pandemic and the subsequent nationwide lockdown as well as the state-level restrictions have affected the lives of the people.

The residents said that besides them, the gram panchayat has also

COVID IMPACTS TOURISM



run out of money, and some NGOs are helping them out with groceries and other things.

Talking to PTI, Gharapuri's sarpanch Baliram Thakur, said 99 per cent of the 1,100 population depends on tourism, which is completely shut since March 2020.

"There are cutlery shops, small restaurants, local guides, who provide services to the tourists. Only

Study needed on Ujani Dam water supply to Latur: Maha min

AGENCIES

Latur, June 26: Maharashtra water resources minister Jayant Patil Saturday said experts have been directed to study the feasibility of providing water from Ujani Dam in Solapur district to people in Latur. The dam has been built on Bhima river, a tributary of the Krishna river, and has been at the centre of several promises by politicians cutting across party lines that its water would be supplied to parched Latur city.

Speaking at a press conference while touring Latur during the day as part of the NCP's 'Pariwar Sanwad Yatra', Patil said he had received memorandums from state



ministers Amit Deshmukh and Sanjay Bansode as well as MLA Babasaheb Patil about supplying water from Ujani Dam to Latur.

Not promising if the demand could be met, the minister, who is also Maharashtra NCP chief, said, "Experts have been asked to study

the feasibility of supplying Ujani Dam water to Latur. It will require detailed study."

The minister said there was also some legal difficulty in supplying water from this dam to people of Latur, though he did not elaborate.

The residents of this tiny island are completely dependent on tourism for livelihood, and in normal times, except during monsoon, this place witnesses a heavy footfall of tourists

ferry services would stop plying due to rough weather in monsoon period, due to which there used to be no tourists. "But the last one-and-a-half year of lockdown has hurt us very hard," he said.

"Initially, the gram panchayat provided food grains to the local residents, but now it has run out of money. We don't know whether we will be able to pay salaries to our 14 member staff," Thakur said.

He said the gram panchayat has been demanding a share in the funds collected by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) - Rs 40 per domestic tourist and Rs 400 per foreigner. "But we don't get any financial assistance from the ASI for providing basic amenities at

the world heritage site," he said. The ferry boat service from the Gateway of India has remained shut since the island is shut for tourists and the locals have to go to Uran, Nhava and Mora for daily purchases, he said.

Another resident, Someshwar Bhoir, said his local eatery has remained shut since March 2020. "We have run out of our savings and have to depend on the small fish available near the shore for our diet. Some NGOs have been helping out with groceries and sanitizers, masks required for the safety," he said.

The ASI has appointed 40 security guards at the Elephanta caves. Even though the premises are shut, these guards are paid their salaries on time, Bhoir claimed. "All of them are outsiders. Had the local youths been roped in to provide security, the villagers would have benefited. Similarly, the local youth should have got employment to man the Elephanta jetty," he said.



Let us reiterate our commitment to share facts on drugs and realise our vision of a drugs free India. Remember-addiction is neither cool nor a style statement
NARENDRA MODI | PRIME MINISTER

TRAIN WITH A VIEW

The Indian Railways Saturday launched a Vistadome coach service on the Mumbai-Vistadome Express Special train, which ran full house. Railway Ministry officials said that the Mumbai-Pune Deccan Express Special train started its first run with LHB rake and Vistadome coach Saturday



of the day quote

May we work now if your fight over oxygen is finished? Let us together make a system so no one faces shortage of oxygen in third wave. Corona will win if we fight with each other. The nation will win if we fight together
ARVIND KEJRIWAL | DELHI CHIEF MINISTER

It took 70 years for the BJP to succeed in their agenda of abrogation of Article 370. We won't back off from our mission, even if it takes us 70 weeks or 70 months or more time
OMAR ABDULLAH | NATIONAL CONFERENCE VICE PREZ

I want the Olympics movement and the importance of Olympics to be understood by everyone, spread across the length and breadth of India. Sports is the biggest soft power of a nation
KIREN RIJU | UNION SPORTS MINISTER

Inoculation of 60+ age group sluggish after initial high

HEALTHCARE EXPERTS EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER THE SLOW PACE OF VACCINATION OF THE 60-PLUS PEOPLE WHO ARE MORE PRONE TO HAVE CO-MORBIDITIES AND REMAIN MORE SUSCEPTIBLE TO SEVERE DISEASE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, June 26: The pace of vaccination of the 60-plus population has become sluggish in the past few weeks after an initial high, with healthcare experts attributing it to mobility issues and misinformation and unsubstantiated apprehensions about the jobs.

According to Health Ministry data, 2.29 crore elderly people have been fully vaccinated so far while 6.71 crore have received just one dose of Covid-19 vaccine till now.

The 60-plus population in India was projected to be at 14.3 crore in 2021, so that would imply that just 16 per cent of them have been fully vaccinated till now.

Vaccination for those over 60

years of age and those of 45-plus with co-morbidities started from March 1 at both government and private centres.

On an average about 80.77 lakh vaccine doses were given to the 60-plus population per week between March 13 and April 2, but the weekly figure dropped to about 32 lakh between June 5 to 25, according to the data.

Healthcare experts expressed concern over the slow pace of vaccination of the 60-plus people who are more prone to have co-morbidities and remain more susceptible to severe disease.

Dr Sujeet Ranjan, Executive Director of The Coalition for Food and Nutrition Security (CFNS), said myths, misconceptions and

rumours about Covid-19 vaccines are the biggest hurdle to vaccination coverage.

Some people think they will never contract Covid-19, others believe that the virus itself is on the way out. Irrational mistrust of scientifically approved vaccines is also a factor. While vaccine hesitancy has always been a phenomenon in our country, today it tends to accentuate on opinions on social media, where even people with no subject expertise but having wide following can influence people, he said.

Some people in rural areas believe that Covid-19 is mostly for urban people. Also, many people have heard on the social media that the vaccine and its side-effects

EXPERTS RAISE CONCERNS



will show up two to three years from now. These rumours, suspicion and fear are making it harder to remove vaccine hesitancy, he

added. He said it has also been observed that most public places in rural areas lack senior citizen-friendly infrastructure.

Hospitals have expressed concern over the slow pace of vaccination of 60-plus people who also suffer from the maximum number of comorbidities.

Dr Shuchin Bajaj, Founder Director, Ujala Cygnus Group of Hospitals, said vaccine hesitancy in the elderly population is a very real issue. Among many factors, one is a fear that people with previous heart disease will have some issue because of some unfortunate videos that were circulating around. Some people have done their CRP (c-reactive protein) tests also to see if that was raised and then they feel that they should not take the vaccine, Bajaj said.

Bajaj said mobility is also a very big issue for the 60-plus age group.

SII begins manufacturing Covovax; kids' trial in July

In August 2020, Novavax and SII had announced an agreement under which the US biotechnology company had given SII the licence to manufacture and supply the vaccine in low and middle-income countries



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, June 26: The Pune-based Serum Institute of India (SII) has begun manufacturing Novavax's protein-based vaccine Covovax, CEO Adar Poonawalla has said.

The company will also begin clinical trials of Novavax for children starting July.

Excited to witness the first batch of Covovax (developed by @Novavax) being manufactured this week at our facility in Pune, he shared in a tweet Friday.

In the recently released Phase-3 trials, Covovax has shown overall 90 per cent efficacy against Covid-19. The US-based trials also demonstrated the two-shot vaccine 100 per cent protection against moderate and severe disease.

The vaccine has great potential to protect our future generations below the age of 18. Trials are ongoing. Well done team, he said.

SII's Phase-2 and 3 clinical trials of Covovax will reportedly be conducted in 920 children - 460 each in 12-17 years and 2-11 years groups, media reports said.

In August 2020, Novavax and SII had announced an agreement under which the US biotechnology company had given SII the licence to manufacture and supply the vaccine in low- and middle-income countries.

In March 2021, CEO Poonawalla said Covovax will be launched by September this year.

Covovax trials finally begin in India; the vaccine is made through a partnership with Novavax and Serum Institute of India, said Adar Poonawalla. Hope to launch by September 2021!

Recently, the Centre stated that Novavax Covid vaccine efficacy data in a large trial are promising and that clinical trials are being conducted and are in an advanced stage of completion in India.

What we're learning from data available in the public domain is that this vaccine is very safe and highly effective, Dr VK Paul, NITI

Aayog Member (Health) said earlier this month.

The company intends to file for regulatory authorisations in the third quarter, upon completion of the final phases of process qualification and assay validation needed to meet chemistry, manufacturing and controls (CMC) requirements. Upon regulatory approvals, Novavax remains on track to reach a manufacturing capacity of 100 million doses per month by the end of the third quarter and 150 million doses per month by the end of the fourth quarter of 2021.

Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech has also two vaccines that are being tried on children, Covaxin and BBV154, a one-shot nasal vaccine.

ZyCoV-D, the Zyudus' Covid-19 vaccine has also started trials on children in the age group 12-18 years. The government is also considering providing legal indemnity to Pfizer and Moderna to roll out their vaccines in India. Pfizer has announced that its vaccine is safe for children above 12 years of age.

SHORT TAKES

BJP appoints new unit chiefs

New Delhi: The BJP Saturday named Bhabesh Kalita and Sharda Devi as presidents of its Assam and Manipur units respectively. The appointments were made by BJP national president JP Nadra and come into immediate effect, party general secretary Arun Singh said in a statement. Kalita, who is a sitting MLA in the Assam assembly, will replace Ranjeet Kumar Dass, who became a minister in the newly-formed government in the state led by Himanta Biswa Sarma.

Floods following overnight rain

Patna: Water-logging occurred at several places in Patna Saturday following overnight rain. Water accumulated up to knee level in several posh areas including Rajvanshi Nagar, outside Patna airport and Boring Road. The official residence of deputy CM Renu Devi and the Bihar Vidhan Sabha also got flooded due to the heavy rain. Residents in these localities are facing huge problems. Rain water also entered Nalanda Medical College and Hospital's, general, OPD and ICU wards.

Rajdhani derails; passengers safe

Mumbai: The front wheel of the locomotive hauling the Nizamuddin-Madgaon Rajdhani Superfast Special, derailed while it zoomed through a tunnel in Ratnagiri, officials said here Saturday. The incident occurred around 4.15 am as the train sped between Ukshi and Bhoke stations in the Karbude Tunnel on the Konkan Railway route. The mishap occurred owing to a boulder crash in the tunnel, but there are no injuries to any passengers, most of whom were sleeping at that time in the train.

NCB busts int'l drug syndicate

New Delhi: The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) Saturday said that it has busted a drug trafficking syndicate operating over darknet. The syndicate was supplying drugs to international markets with the use of multi cryptocurrencies, said an NCB official, adding that they even used internet pharmacy as method. The official said that the syndicate were operating nine websites all registered in geographical space beyond India. He said that the syndicate is spread across Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand in India and having tentacles in US, UK, Canada and Philippines.

Resolve poor connectivity in rural areas: CJI to Law Min

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, June 26: Chief Justice of India NV Ramana has written to Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad seeking steps to resolve the poor digital connectivity in rural, tribal, remote and hilly areas that is adversely impacting the pace of justice delivery.

The CJI referred to the digital divide and said that a whole generation of lawyers is being pushed out of the system due to the technological inequality.

He was speaking during the release of a book, 'Anomalies in Law and Justice', authored by former Supreme Court Judge Justice RV Raveendran in a virtual function here.

During the course of the panel discussion that followed the launch



of the book, he informed that the matter of connectivity figured prominently in the two-day conference of chief justices of high courts that he had held recently.

The poor connectivity in rural, tribal, remote and hilly areas is adversely impacting the pace of

justice delivery and is also depriving thousands of young lawyers across the country of their livelihood.

A whole generation of lawyers is being pushed out of the system due to digital divide, the CJI said.

Justice Ramana also said that he recently wrote to the minister of Law, Communications and IT highlighting these issues and requested him to initiate steps on priority to bridge the digital divide and also to evolve a mechanism to help the advocates who have lost livelihood due to the Covid pandemic and who are in dire need of financial assistance.

The CJI also highlighted the need to declare the legal professionals and associated functionaries as frontline workers and the need to vaccinate them all on priority.

MONEY LAUNDERING CASE

ED summons Anil Deshmukh next week

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, June 26: Former Maharashtra home minister Anil Deshmukh has been asked to appear before the Enforcement Directorate (ED) for questioning early next week after he sought a fresh date for appearance in a money laundering case related to an alleged multi-crore bribery-cum-extortion racket that led to his resignation in April, officials said.

The 71-year-old Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leader was asked to depose before the investigating officer at the agency office in Ballard Estate here by 11 am. However, he did not turn up and instead sent his lawyers to the ED office seeking case documents and a fresh date for appearance.

Official sources said Deshmukh has now been asked to appear next week by Tuesday. Earlier, lawyers of Deshmukh handed over a letter written by the politician to the investigators.

"He (Deshmukh) will not appear today. We have not been given documents related to this case and we have given a letter to ED demanding these documents and case details in which he is to be questioned. We will furnish our reply accordingly," lawyer Jayvant Patil told reporters outside the ED office.



The central agency early on Saturday arrested his personal secretary Sanjeev Palande (51) and personal assistant Kundan Shinde (45) after it carried out raids against them and Deshmukh in Mumbai and Nagpur Friday.

The aides were brought to the ED office for questioning following the searches and arrested subsequently. They were sent to ED custody till July 1 by a special PMLA here. The ED case against Deshmukh and others was made out after the CBI first carried out a preliminary inquiry followed by a regular case being filed on the orders of the Bombay High Court.

The court had asked the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to look into the allegations of bribery made against Deshmukh by former Mumbai Police commissioner Param Bir Singh.

Top BJP leaders meet to discuss strategy for Assembly polls 2022

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, June 26: Preparation for the assembly polls in five states early next year was the main agenda of a meeting of senior BJP leaders, including several Union ministers, Saturday as they deliberated on political and governance issues linked to these states.

Party president JP Nadra and Union ministers Amit Shah, Rajnath Singh, Nirmala Sitharaman, Narendra Singh Tomar, Smriti Irani, Piyush Goyal and Dharmendra Pradhan were among those who attended the meeting, party leaders said.

Preparation for the assembly polls in five states was the main agenda of the meeting, a party leader said after the meeting.

Union ministers Pralhad Joshi, Mansukh Mandaviya and Hardeep Singh Puri, besides BJP general secretary Bhupender Yadav and its vice president Baijant Jay Panda also attended the meeting.

Assembly polls in Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Manipur and Goa are slated for early next year.

The BJP is in power in all these states except Punjab, and has been holding a series of meetings of its senior leaders as it works to put up an impressive show in the next round of elections.

In the meeting, party leaders also took stock of various development works going on in these states as the BJP leadership has often stressed on the need for coordination among different ministries and the party organisation in an effort to factor in the feedback, sources said.

Uttar Pradesh is especially crucial to the BJP's political fortunes as the party has been the dominant power in the country's most populous state since Prime Minister Narendra Modi led it to power at the Centre in 2014.

The ruling party leaders have been holding deliberations for weeks over a number of political and governance issues.

Ayodhya to be global tourism hub, PM reviews development plan

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, June 26: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Saturday reviewed the development plan for Ayodhya as Uttar Pradesh government officials made a presentation which encompassed various aspects of Ayodhya's development.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath was also present in the meeting.

Ayodhya's development is being envisaged as a spiritual centre, global tourism hub and a sustainable smart city. The Prime Minister

was informed about various upcoming and proposed infrastructure projects to improve connectivity with Ayodhya. Various infrastructure projects like Airport, expansion of Railway Station, Bus station, roads and highways were discussed.

An upcoming Greenfield township was also discussed which includes lodging facilities for devotees, space for Ashrams, Maths, Hotels, Bhavans of various states. A tourist facilitation centre and a world class museum will also be built. Special attention is being



given to development of infrastructure around the Saryu river and its ghats. Cruise operation on

the Saryu river will also be made a regular feature. The city will be developed to ensure sustainabil-

ity with adequate spaces for cyclists and people on foot. Traffic management will also be done in a modern manner using Smart City infrastructure.

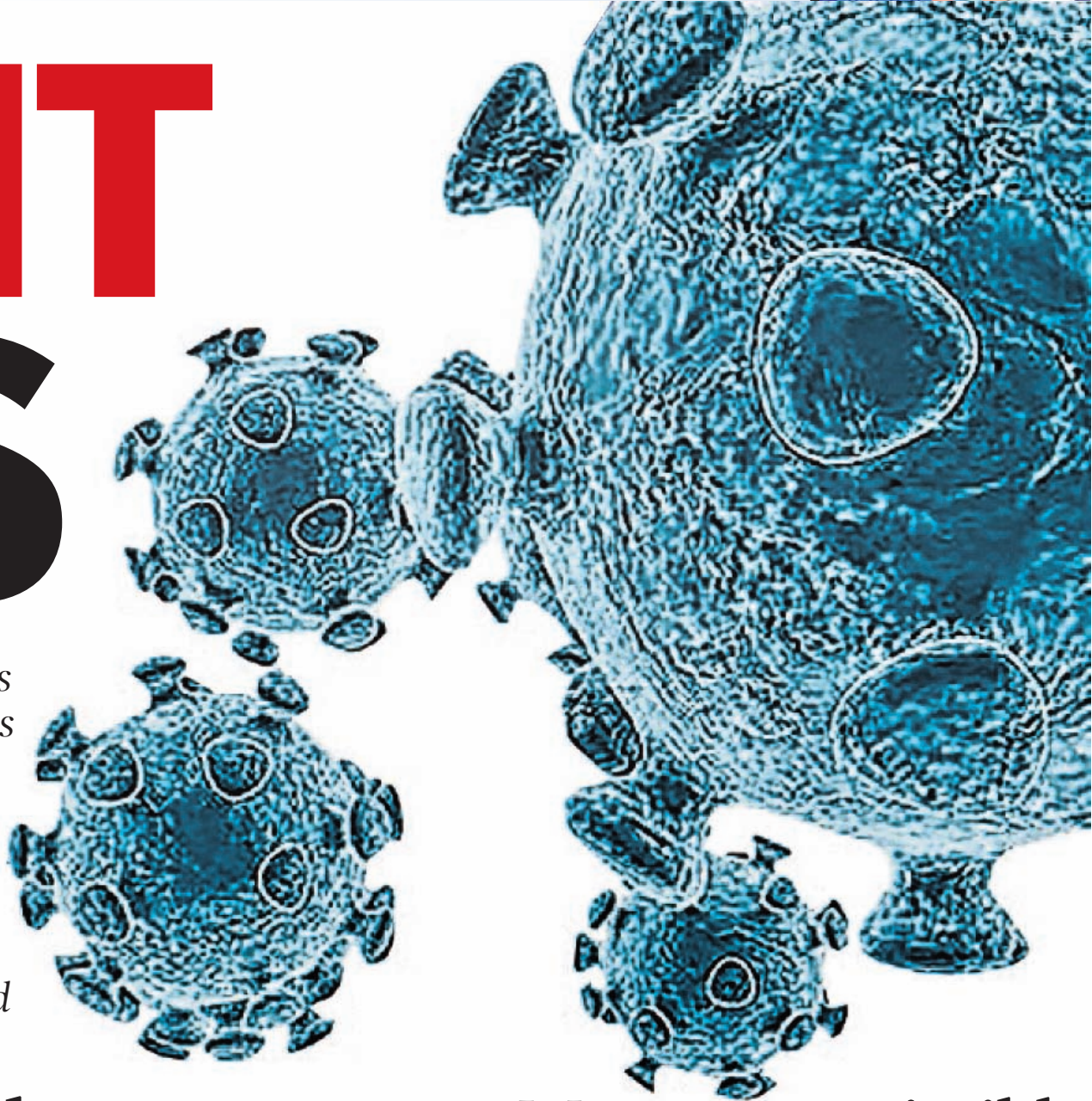
Prime Minister Modi described Ayodhya as a city that is etched in the cultural consciousness of every Indian. Ayodhya should manifest the finest of our traditions and the best of our developmental transformations.

He said that the coming generations should feel the desire to visit Ayodhya at least once in their lifetime.



MUTANT TALES

From Bangladesh to Australia, when the global Coronavirus crisis was gradually lessening in intensity, the Delta variant has forced nations to impose new curbs. Delta variant, earlier named Indian variant but later renamed as B.1.617.2, is a variant of lineage B.1.617 of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes Covid-19. After causing widespread mayhem in India for almost two months, the Delta variant of Covid-19 is now spreading rapidly in several other countries around the world



Surge rings new pandemic alarm

The highly-contagious Delta variant is causing a surge in new Covid-19 cases even in countries with high vaccination rates and experts warn that inoculation campaigns are in a race against time to contain it. For the moment the pandemic is still slowing down with the World Health Organization (WHO) reporting the lowest number of new cases worldwide since February and decreasing deaths attributed to the Coronavirus. But concerns are growing about the fast-spreading variant, prompting new restrictions in countries that had previously managed to control their epidemics. Cases are on the rise in Russia, Australia, Israel and across parts of Africa, in part due to Delta. Other countries fear they could be next.



that vaccines are slightly less effective against Delta, they are still highly effective. But only after the second dose. A study conducted by the Public Health England, has found that both Pfizer-BioNTech and AstraZeneca-Oxford vaccines provide a 33% protection against symptomatic disease caused by the variant after the first dose. Two weeks after the second dose the vaccine was found to be 88% effective at stopping symptomatic disease from the Delta variant. The same study concluded that AstraZeneca-Oxford vaccines provide a 33% protection against symptomatic disease after first dose and

two weeks after the second dose the vaccine was 60% effective against the variant. **RETURN TO RESTRICTIONS?** Delta is so contagious that experts say you would need to inoculate more than 80 percent of a population in order to contain it - a target that would be challenging even for nations with significant vaccination programmes. In Africa, the WHO estimates that only one percent of the population is fully vaccinated - the lowest ratio globally. A further complication is that Delta seems to largely bypass immunity that might be conferred by a previous infection, said Samuel Alizon, a biologist specialised in infectious disease modelling. "We can't really rely on natural immunity anymore," he told AFP. With large numbers of younger people remaining unvaccinated, tough measures may have to be reintroduced to stop the spread, even in nations where large-scale vaccine rollouts had held out the promise of reopening. In Europe, the ECDC warned that any further relaxation of con-

DELTA DATA

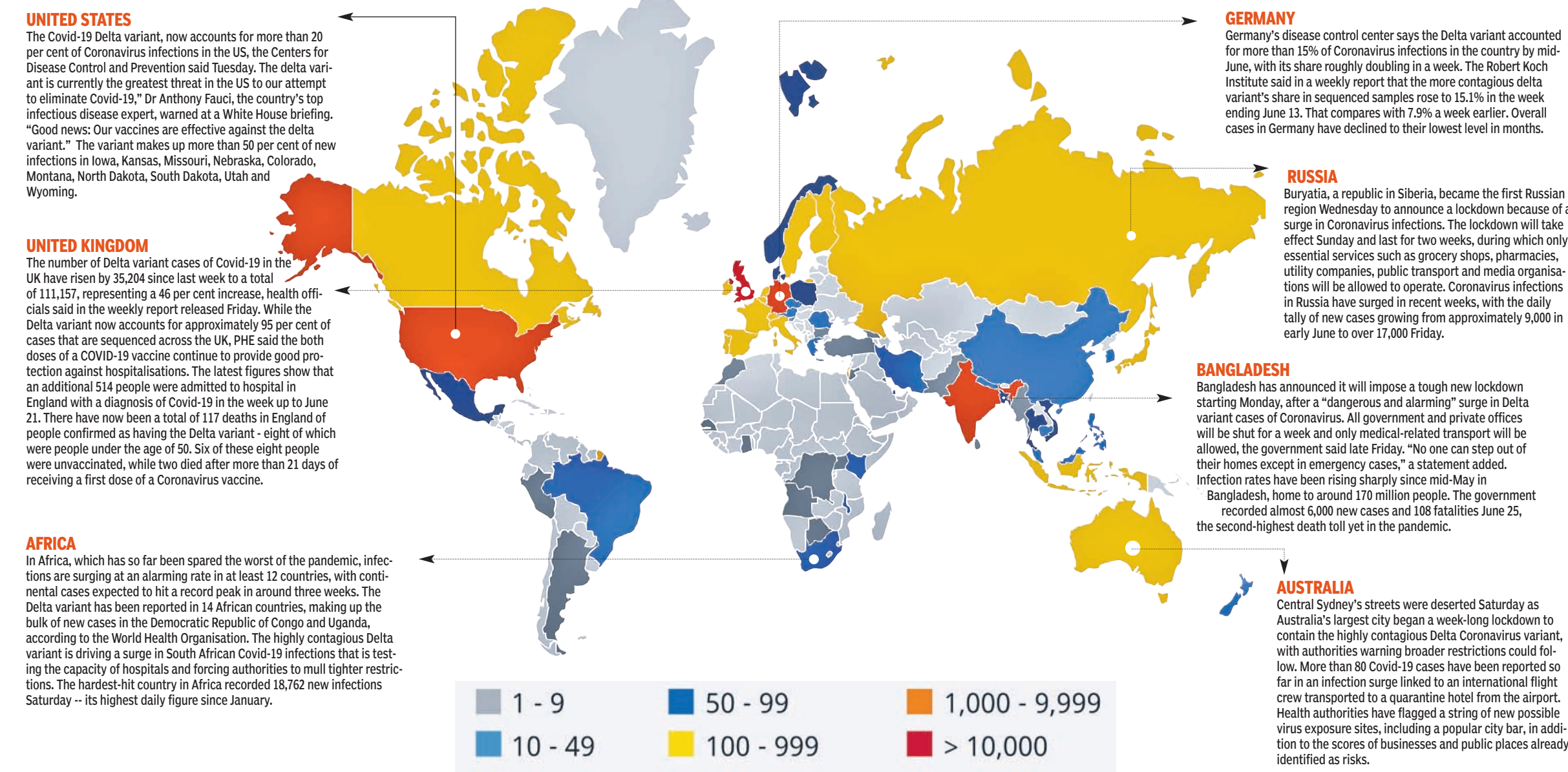
- The Delta variant has certain significant mutations in the spike protein of the virus. These spikes are like hooks that have to find the receptors in a human cell. Studies have shown that these spikes hook onto receptors called ACE-2 and allows the infection to spread by replicating the genetic code of the virus.
- Some key mutations in Delta variant - E484Q, L452R and P614R - make it easier for the spikes in the virus to attach to ACE-2 receptors. This means it can infect and replicate faster and even evade the body's natural disease-fighting immunity more efficiently.
- According to WHO, the spike protein make the Delta variant the "fastest and fittest" variant yet.

Most transmissible of all variants: WHO

The Delta variant of Covid-19, identified in at least 85 countries, is the "most transmissible" of the variants identified so far and is spreading rapidly among unvaccinated populations, WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has warned. "I know that globally there is currently a lot of concern about the Delta variant, and the WHO is concerned about it too," Director-General Ghebreyesus said at a WHO press briefing Friday. He noted with concern that as some countries ease public health and social measures, "we are starting to see increases in transmission around the world. More cases means more hospitalisations, further stretching health workers and health systems, which increases the risk of death," he said. While pointing out that new Covid-19 variants are expected and will continue to be reported, "that's what viruses do, they evolve - but we can prevent the emergence of variants by preventing transmission." In a strong warning, Dr Maria Van Kerkhove, Covid-19 Technical



Lead at the WHO said the Delta variant is a "dangerous" virus and is more transmissible than the Alpha variant, which was itself extremely transmissible across Europe and any country that it entered. "The Delta variant is even more transmissible," she said, adding that the WHO is seeing trajectories of incidents that are almost "vertical" in a number of countries around the world.





Higher consumption of fuels should support a rise in the indirect taxes levied on them, affording a window for a partial reversal in the cess hikes that were imposed last year
ADITI NAYAR | CHIEF ECONOMIST, ICRA

INDIA EXPORTS DRAGON FRUIT

In a major boost to agri export, India has exported the first consignment of 'Dragon Fruit' to Dubai. Accordingly, a consignment of 'Dragon Fruit' also referred as Kamalam has been exported from Maharashtra. It was processed and packed at APEDA recognised exporter



of the day quote

The first phase of Ola's electric scooter factory is nearing completion and the company expects to start rolling out vehicles soon
BHAVISH AGGARWAL | CEO, OLA GROUP

During the past seven years, over \$70bn investment has been made in renewable energy in India. India has a liberal foreign investment policy for renewables allowing 100% FDI through the automatic route in sector
RK SINGH | POWER MINISTER

India's tyre industry has an immense growth potential in the emerging new world order. However, an effective collaboration between the industry and raw material partners is imperative to harness this potential
ANSHUMAN SINGHANIA | MD, JK TYRE & INDUSTRIES

'MSMEs need to integrate with global value chains'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, June 26: MSMEs need to understand the importance of integration with global value chains which are driving the trade currently, Union minister Pratap Chandra Sarangi said Saturday. The Minister of State for MSME said that at present lot of trade is happening in the form of global value chains and MSMEs should understand the importance of integration with those chains and upgrade themselves accordingly. The integration of MSMEs is critical for the financial viability of global value chains as not only do they provide a low-cost way of



operations but also with their geographical reach and innovation capabilities, MSMEs form the cornerstone for fostering global economic growth. In the process of integration to

At present lot of trade is happening in the form of global value chains and MSMEs should understand the importance of integration with those chains and upgrade themselves accordingly

The integration of MSMEs is critical for the financial viability of global value chains as not only do they provide a low-cost way of operations but also with their geographical reach and innovation capabilities, MSMEs form the cornerstone for fostering global economic growth

the global value chain, MSMEs face many challenges, therefore

efforts must be made to strengthen the sector locally to enable their penetration and reach globally, he said at the Assoham webinar.

The ministry has undertaken several initiatives to modernise the sector during the last year. These include putting in place financial support mechanisms through Fund of Funds, broadening definition of MSMEs, introducing IT based Champions platform to provide solutions to issues of MSMEs. "The role and potential of Indian MSMEs along with the need to improve their efficiency, productivity and quality needs to be viewed in the context of a globally competitive landscape," he added.

VW to end sales of combustion engines in Europe by 2035



REUTERS

Berlin, June 26: German carmaker Volkswagen will stop selling combustion engines cars in Europe by 2035 as it shifts to electric vehicles, but later in the United States and China, a board member was quoted as saying Saturday.

"In Europe, we will exit the business with internal combustion vehicles between 2033 and 2035, in the United States and China somewhat later," Klaus Zellmer, Volkswagen board member for sales, told the Muenchner Merkur newspaper. "In South America and Africa, it will take a good deal longer due to the fact that the political and infrastructure framework conditions are still missing."

By 2050 at the latest, the entire Volkswagen fleet should be CO2-neutral, Zellmer told the newspaper.

In Europe, he is aiming for electric cars to account for 70% of total sales by 2030. This would prepare the company for a possible tightening of the European Union's climate targets and even go beyond them.

EU policymakers have clamped down on exhaust emissions, forcing carmakers to spur development of low-emission technology or face penalties if they exceed limits on CO2 emissions.

RBI bars MPs, MLAs from holding MD post in UCBs

Under the propriety criteria, the person to be nominated as MD shall not be engaged in any other business; shall not hold the position of a MP or state legislature or municipal corporation or municipality or other local bodies

AGENCIES

New Delhi, June 26: In a crackdown on political interference, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has barred MPs, MLAs and members of municipal corporations or other local bodies from holding the office of managing director (MD) or whole-time director (WTD) in urban cooperative banks (UCBs).

These directions are applicable to all Primary (Urban) Co-operative Banks. The RBI had exempted UCBs with a deposit size of less than ₹100 crore from the requirement of seeking prior approval of the Reserve Bank for appointment/ re-appointment/ termination of appointment of MDs or WTDs.

Under the propriety criteria, the person to be nominated as MD or WTD shall not be engaged in any other business or vocation; shall not hold the position of a Member of Parliament or state legislature or municipal corporation or municipality or other local bodies; and shall not be a director of any company other than a company registered under Section 8 of the Companies Act, 2013.

In addition, he shall not be a partner of any firm which carries



on any trade, business or industry; should not have substantial interest in any company or firm as defined in Section 5 (ne) read with Section 56 of the Banking Regulations Act, 1949; and shall not be a director, manager, managing agent, partner or proprietor of any trading, commercial or industrial concern.

In addition, the person should not be of unsound mind and stands so declared by a competent court; should not be an undischarged insolvent; should not be convicted by a criminal court of an offence involving moral turpitude; and should not be a director of any

other co-operative bank or a co-operative credit society.

The person shall submit a self-declaration form on personal integrity. While the exempted UCBs are not required to obtain prior approval, they are required to formulate a board approved policy based on all the other provisions of these directions for appointment / re-appointment / termination of appointment of MD or WTD.

These banks shall immediately report the appointment / re-appointment / termination of appointment of MD or WTD to the respective regional offices of the RBI.

US inflation measure posts biggest y-o-y increase since 1992

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

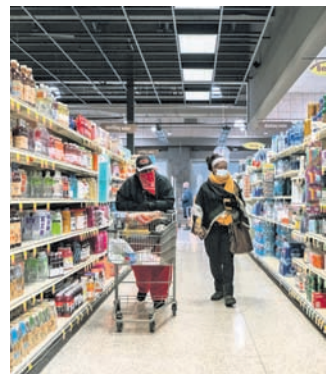
Washington, June 26: A key US inflation measure closely watched by the Federal Reserve posted its biggest year-on-year increase in May since 1992, indicating rising inflation pressures with the reopening of the economy, the Commerce Department reported.

The so-called core personal consumption expenditure (PCE) price index, the Fed's preferred inflation measure, jumped 3.4 per cent in May from a year ago, the largest 12-month increase since April 1992, Xinhua news agency quoted the Department as saying Friday.

Including volatile food and energy prices, the headline PCE price index rose 3.9 per cent from a year earlier, the fastest annual pace since August 2008, well above the Fed's inflation target of 2 per cent.

"Many of the increases we are currently seeing will play out as we move into the summer months when the effect of a sharp drop in prices a year ago dissipates. The remainder will intensify debate within the Fed about when to taper asset purchases and hike rates," Diane Swonk, chief economist at Grant Thornton, a major accounting firm, said Friday in a blog.

"Faster than expected inflation figures have made many within the ranks of the Federal Reserve more nervous about rate hikes,"



Many of the increases we are currently seeing will play out as we move into the summer months when the effect of a sharp drop in prices a year ago dissipates. The remainder will intensify debate within the Fed about when to taper asset purchases and hike rates

DIANE SWONK | CHIEF ECONOMIST, GRANT THORNTON

Swonk said, adding seven out of 18 Fed officials are now expecting to raise rates at least once in 2022.

But Fed Chair Jerome Powell said on Tuesday that the central bank would not raise interest rates preemptively based on inflation fears, reiterating recent inflation surge is transitory.

SHORT TAKES

Amazon's AWS buys Wickr

New York: Amazon's cloud computing unit has bought encrypted messaging platform Wickr to enable secure communication as employees largely work from home, the company said. Wickr, a startup founded by privacy advocates, offers to help develop self-destructing messaging technology for financial services firms and gaming companies. The value of the deal was not disclosed. Companies moving to hybrid work environments due to the Covid-19 pandemic are increasingly focusing on protecting their communication with business partners across remote locations.

Affle claims victory in Indus

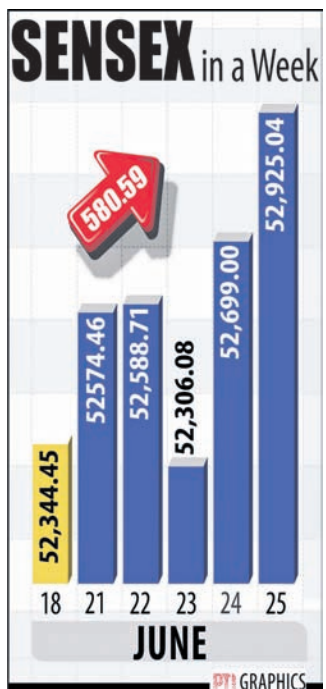
New Delhi: Digital advertising firm Affle claims to have won the initial legal battle in a case filed against it by Walmart-owned PhonePe in a Singapore court in the Indus OS stake sale matter. PhonePe had placed a bid to acquire 92 per cent stake in Indus OS at a valuation of around USD 60 million. However, the biggest shareholder in the company, Affle Global Pte Ltd (AGPL), has opposed the deal.

CESL resumes distribution

New Delhi: Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL) Saturday said its subsidiary CESL has resumed distribution of LED bulbs in villages of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, as part of its Gram Ujala Scheme. Under the Gram Ujala programme, rural consumers are given a 7 watt and a 12-watt LED bulb with a three-year warranty against submission of working incandescent bulbs at an affordable cost of ₹10 per bulb. The scheme was launched by Union Power Minister RK Singh in March this year, EESL said.

Federal Bank gives 400-odd jobs

New Delhi: Federal Bank Saturday said it has provided 400-odd part-time jobs with a monthly salary of ₹18,000 at its branches in Kerala so far, in a bid to help those who lost their employment due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Designated as 'Covid Wardens', these people were hired to manage crowds, provide masks and sanitiser to the public visiting the branches in the state, it said. The livelihood enhancement project was started as part of its CSR initiative in August 2020 and is continuing even now.



BIZ BUZZ

Realme launches advanced products

Bhubaneswar: Realme, India's first brand to launch a 5G enabled smartphone, launched the newest additions to its Narzo family- Realme Narzo 30 5G and Narzo 30, along with realme Smart TV Full HD 32 inch and realme Buds Q2. Realme Narzo 30 5G, is powered by new-gen 5G Processor called the MediaTek Dimensity 700 5G, which also supports 5G Dual SIM Dual Standby. It comes with a massive 5000mAh battery and smart 5G power saving. Its camera consists of a 48MP high resolution primary camera and a 16MP ultra-clear front camera. It has upto 11GB RAM and 6GB hardware. Its 6GB + 128GB storage variant is priced at ₹15999. The first sale is scheduled for June 30, 12:00 pm. While, Realme Narzo 30 comes with MediaTek Helio G95 gaming processor and features a 6.5-inch screen with a 90Hz ultra-smooth display. It comprises a massive 5000mAh battery.



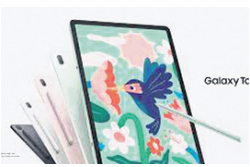
MINI India rolls out all-new MINI range of cars

Bhubaneswar: MINI India launches the all-new MINI 3-Door Hatch, the all-new MINI Convertible and the all-new MINI John Cooper Works Hatch in India. This all-new MINI range will be available in petrol engines as Completely Built-up Units (CBUs). Test Drives and Bookings are open at all MINI authorised dealers and the MINI Online Shop (shop.mini.in). MINI now offers its latest range of products in the premium compact car segment in India. The ex-showroom prices of the petrol engine variants of The all-new MINI 3-Door Hatch, The all-new MINI Convertible and The all-new MINI John Cooper Works Hatch are ₹38,00,000, ₹44,00,000 and ₹45,50,000 respectively. MINI India offers secure and comprehensive ownership packages that include Service Inclusive, Repair Inclusive and MINI Secure which further reduce cost of ownership.



Samsung brings in two Galaxy Tabs

Bhubaneswar: The smartphone brand Samsung launched Galaxy Tab S7 FE and Galaxy Tab A7. Galaxy Tab S7 FE is priced at ₹46999 for 4GB + 64GB variant and ₹50999 for 6GB + 128GB variant. While Galaxy Tab A7 Lite is available in 3GB + 32GB and priced at ₹14999 for LTE and ₹11999 for WIFI model. Galaxy Tab S7 FE features a large 12.4-inch display supporting a 16:10 aspect ratio picture and 244 pixels per inch (PPI) resolution for vivid picture details. At 10090 mAh, Galaxy Tab S7FE comes with a mega battery. It comes with the powerful Qualcomm Snapdragon 750G processor that helps deliver enhanced performance. Galaxy Tab A7 Lite has an 8.7-inch screen. The new model sports 8MP rear camera and a 2MP front camera.



Survey reveals interesting travel trends in post-Covid world

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, June 26: The Covid-19 related travel curbs in different parts of the country have had a lasting impact on the track and tourism industry. With mobility restricted, less Indians were travelling for non-essential work for most part of the last year.

Now with the second wave of the pandemic subsiding and people are coming out, the most pertinent question in the travel industry is whether finally leisure travel will pick up pace? What will be the trend in the post-Covid world?

A survey by Thomas Cook India and SOTC Travel as part of their Third Holiday Readiness Report has found that people's interest in travel has increased tremendously during the month with several expressing desire to start travel im-

mediately to get over the period of relative immobility brought about by the pandemic.

A significant 69 per cent of the respondents in the survey indicated keen interest to travel in 2021 post ease in restrictions - with 18 per cent ready to travel immediately post unlock and 51 per cent within the next 3-6 months.

What has changed from pre-Covid period to now is that people are increasingly preferring travel choices that provide hygienic staying options coupled with best safety protocols.

In the survey, 70 per cent respondents ranked health & safety as the key consideration while re-sanitisation of rooms was selected by 52 per cent respondents as a key requirement.

Majority or about 66 per cent of the respondents showed willing-



A significant 69% of the respondents in the survey indicated keen interest to travel in 2021 post ease in restrictions

ness to increase spends to ensure higher levels of health and safety on their holiday. Another interesting trend brought out by the survey is that a whopping 81 per

cent respondents reiterated their need for refundable or zero cancellation products.

With the uncertainty created by the virus, people want flexible prod-

ucts where cancellations would be allowed as a rule.

The Thomas Cook India and SOTC Travel surveyed over 4,000 customers across India's Tier 1-3 cities to identify emerging consumer behaviours and trends that will drive travel preferences in the Covid era.

The survey covered consumers of India's top eight metros, mini metros like Pune and key Tier 2/3 markets such as Jaipur, Indore, Tiruchirappalli, Madurai, Nagpur, Surat, Baroda, Bhubaneswar, Lucknow, Chandigarh, Mysore, Coimbatore, Visakhapatnam, Guwahati, Patna etc.

What is interesting is that travellers want options for both domestic and international travel in just about equal number of preferences expressed in the survey. Among the domestic destina-

tions, Kashmir, Leh-Ladakh, Himachal, Andamans, Goa and Kerala have caught the fancy of the travellers, while Dubai-Abu Dhabi, Maldives, Mauritius, Thailand, Europe etc. remain hot travel destinations globally. Also, 35 per cent respondents chose holidays between 3 and 5 days; 52 per cent for 6-12 days; and 13 per cent for over 12 days.

About 62 per cent respondents prefer to travel with family/friends; 20 per cent as couple/ solo; and 18 per cent in a vaccinated group.

Even with the pandemic still lurking, 77 per cent respondents continued to express strong preference for interaction with an expert for guidance/reassurance, 27 per cent opting to purchase holidays through retail outlets while 17 per cent for home service.



IN A BATTLE OF NO.7s, RONALDO'S PORTUGAL TAKE ON DE BRUYNE'S BELGIUM IN A ROUND OF 16 MATCH OF EURO 2020

Thrilling clash on cards

AGENCIES

Seville, June 26: One of the stand-out ties in the round of 16 stage of Euro 2020 will take place here Sunday evening, with Belgium, who have a 100 percent record at this summer's competition, facing the defending champions Portugal.

Belgium breezed into the knock-out round by winning all three of their Group B fixtures to top the section, while Portugal ultimately qualified from Group F in third behind France and Germany in the 'Group of Death'.

Martinez's side are now unbeaten in their last 12 matches and will certainly fancy their chances of challenging for the trophy, although the winner of this contest is likely to face a dangerous Italy side in the quarterfinals.

Belgium finished third at the 2018 World Cup but have not advanced past the quarterfinals of a European Championship since finishing as runners-up in 1980, meaning that their experience in the latter stages is limited despite now being considered as one of the finest sides in international football.

Portugal, as mentioned, ultimately qualified from Group F in third position, having picked up a 2-2 draw against France Wednesday night. The section provided all sorts of twists and turns in the final gameweek, but a spirited Hungary ultimately finished fourth to exit the competition.

A Seleccion are, of course, the holders of the European

Championship, having triumphed at Euro 2016; they also reached the semifinals in 2000 and 2012, in addition to claiming the runners-up spot at Euro 2004, which is an indication of their credentials in this famous competition.

Portugal will have to do it the hard way if they are to make another final, with the likes of Italy, France and Spain all possible opponents in the latter stages, and it will be fascinating to see how they perform Sunday night, as Belgium will certainly believe that they can harm the Iberian side.

Martinez's team selection for this match is going to be fascinating, but it is expected to be Kevin De Bruyne and Eden Hazard

alongside Lukaku in the final third of the field, leaving Dries Mertens on the bench.

Dedryck Boyata should get the nod over Jason Denayer to start in the back three, while Thorgan Hazard is likely to keep out Yannick Carrasco to feature as the left-sided wing-back for the Red Devils.

Youri Tielemans was an unused substitute against Finland but will be back in the side for this match, with Witsel also potentially featuring in the middle of the park, which would allow De Bruyne to form part of the front three.

As for Portugal, Nelson Semedo had been expected to miss out with the problem that he picked up

against France in the latter stages of Wednesday's contest, but the defender has trained ahead of his match and should get the nod once again, with Diogo Dalot on standby.

Daniilo Pereira is also a doubt with the blow to the face that he suffered against the world champions, but the midfielder is being tipped to overcome the issue to feature as part of a midfield three.

Czech test awaits the Dutch



The in-form Netherlands would look to carry forward their winning run when they take the field against Czech Republic at the Puskas Arena in Budapest, Sunday

AGENCIES

Budapest, June 26: The Netherlands outfit is arguably exceeding expectations under Frank de Boer prepare for battle in the round of 16 stage of Euro 2020 as they take on the Czech Republic at the Puskas Arena, Sunday.

The Oranje eased through Group C as winners to advance to the knockout stages, while the Czech Republic booked their spot in the elite 16 as one of the four best third-placed outfits.

The ruthless nature of the Netherlands has shone through at these Championships, with no other team in the group stage topping the eight goals that Oranje scored in their three group matches, and De Boer has witnessed his side score at least two goals in each of their last 10 matches in all competitions.

Having seemingly found the optimal formula for success with a new-look 3-4-1-2 set-up, De Boer is

slowly winning over his critics after some pre-tournament pessimism with regard to their chances, and another welcome fixture with Wales or Denmark awaits should the Netherlands progress as expected.

Not since Euro 2000 - when De Boer was an integral cog in the Oranje machine - have the Netherlands opened a European Championships campaign with four straight victories, but having dazzled and delighted so far, a first quarterfinal appearance since 2008 is no less than their ardent supporters will accept.

Following in the footsteps of Scotland and Croatia, Czech Republic became the third team to be thwarted by England's staunch defence at Wembley, as a first-half header from Raheem Sterling was all that separated the two sides during a low-key affair in the English capital.

Despite falling to their first and only defeat of the group stage at

Wembley, the Czechs' victory over Scotland and dogged draw with Croatia was enough for them to advance as one of the best third-placed outfits, and they have been rewarded with a fixture of daunting proportions.

In doing so, Jaroslav Silhavy has already steered his side further than Pavel Vrba could during their ill-fated 2016 run - keeping with the theme of the Czech Republic bowing out at the group stage one year then progressing to the knockout rounds during the next cycle.

The Czech Republic have never been knocked out at the last 16 stage of the Euros as an independent nation, but if they are to break the cycle of going one worse than they did in previous knockout rounds (runners-up in 1996, semi-finalists in 2004 and quarterfinalists in 2012), Silhavy will need Patrik Schick and co to be firing on all cylinders at the Puskas Arena.

Manu-Saurabh bags silver in 10m air pistol

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Osijek (Croatia), June 26: Continuing their impressive run, the Indian duo of Saurabh Chaudhary and Manu Bhaker clinched the silver medal in the 10m air pistol mixed team event at the ISSF Shooting World Cup here Saturday.

Already assured of a silver, the Indian duo was on par with Russia's Vitalina Batsarashkina and Artem Chernousov at 12-12 before losing the last two series to go down 12-16.

Representing the other Indian team in the same event, Yashaswini Singh Deswal and Abhishek Verma missed out on a bronze medal. Deswal and Verma, who qualified in the third place, were completely outplayed by Iran's Golnoush Sebgathollahi and Javad Foroughi, losing 7-17 in the bronze play-off.

It was a bad day in the office for the Indian rifle shooters, competing in the 10m air mixed event.

SPRINTER'S TOKYO OLYMPIC QUALIFICATION TAKE A NUDGE AFTER SUFFERING STRAIN

Dutee's hopes hang by a thread

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Patiala, June 26: Star sprinter Dutee Chand's hopes of cracking Tokyo Olympic qualification time of 11.15 seconds in the women's 100 metres final at the National Inter-State Athletics Championships Saturday may get dashed after she strained her left quadriceps muscles in the morning session.

"It was a bad day for me on Saturday morning as I strained my left quadriceps muscles during the women's 100m heats. I've taken medicine as well as treatment from physio. My leg injury should be fine. I should be able to run a fast time in the final in the evening," the 25-year-old 2018 Jakarta Asian Games silver-medallist in 100m/200m told IANS.

At the Indian Grand Prix IV, Dutee had clocked 11.17 seconds in women's 100m final. It was a national record and better than her previous record of 11.22secs clocked



in 2019 in Ranchi. Dutee says she went all out during women's 4x100m relay heats Friday and wasn't able

Injury scare for Hima

Patiala: Star sprinter Hima Das Saturday suffered an injury scare after sustaining a muscle pull during the 100m heats at the ongoing National Inter-State Athletics Championships here. However, the severity of her injury could not be ascertained. "We hope Hima Das recovers ASAP after muscle pull during 100m heats this morning at Inter-State meet," the Athletics Federation informed on its twitter handle. Hima, who is on the verge of missing out on Tokyo Olympics as she is yet to qualify for the showpiece, did complete the race and finished third in heat 3 with a timing of 12.01 seconds. In the process, she also qualified for the final to be held on Saturday evening, but her participation in the title race is still not confirmed. If the injury turns out to be serious, it will be a big blow to 4x100m women's relay team's qualification bid for the Tokyo Games as Hima is vital member of the quartet, also comprising Dutee Chand, Dhanalakshmi and Archana Suseendran. Hima is unlikely to make it to Tokyo if she doesn't make it to the relay team.

to fully recover for Saturday morning's 100m heats. "I clocked 11.76 seconds to win my heats. I took it easy in the preliminary round in the morning session as the main focus is the final which is in the evening," she added.

"To prepare for the evening 100m

final, Dutee said she has taken medicine and got treatment from her physio. "I'm feeling better. Hope the stiffness will vanish by evening. Will do a good warm-up for the evening session. I will see how my injured leg reacts and will plan the final race accordingly," she added.

HI nominates Sreejesh, Deepika for Khel Ratna

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, June 26: Veteran India goalkeeper PR Sreejesh and former women's team player Deepika were Saturday nominated by Hockey India for this year's prestigious Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna Award.

old Sreejesh, who will be playing in his third Olympics and probably last, has played a key role in India's silver medal win at the 2018 Hockey Champions Trophy in Breda, bronze medal at the 2018 Asian Games and gold at the 2019 FIH Men's Series Finals in Bhubaneswar.

HARMANPREET, VANDANA AND NAVJOT RECOMMENDED FOR ARJUNA AWARDS



PR Sreejesh



Deepika

Besides the duo, vice-captain of India's Tokyo Olympics-bound men's team Harmanpreet Singh and women's team members Vandana Kataria and Navjot Kaur were nominated for the Arjuna awards.

The national federation also nominated RP Singh and Ch Sanggai Ibemhal for the Dhyan Chand Award for Lifetime Achievement, while coaches BJ Kariappa and CR Kumar were recommended for the Dronacharya Award.

According to a statement issued by HI, the period of consideration for the Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna Award is between January 1, 2017 to December 31, 2020.

During that period, the 35-year-

Sreejesh has received the Arjuna award in 2015 and the prestigious Padma Shri recognition in 2017. Deepika, on the other hand, was a vital part of the Indian women's hockey team, which won the silver medal at the 2018 Asian Games and at the 2018 Asian Champions Trophy.

Dragflick sensation Harmanpreet has over 100 international caps while Vandana has over 200 international caps. Navjot boasts of over 150 international appearances.

The National Sports Awards are given to the country's sports persons by the President of India on the occasion of National Sports Day August 29 every year to celebrate hockey legend Major Dhyan Chand's birthday.

Swimmer Sajan Prakash creates history for India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, June 26: Sajan Prakash Saturday became the first-ever Indian swimmer to qualify for the Olympic Games by breaching the 'A' standard time, clocking 1:56:38 seconds in the men's 200m butterfly event at the Sette Colli Trophy in Rome, Italy.

The Games 'A' standard was set at 1:56.48 seconds and the 27-year-old Prakash completed the run 0.10 seconds faster at the FINA-accredited Olympic qualifier.

"I have worked very hard for this, and I was confident with the way I had trained," Prakash was quoted as saying in a press release.

"This was my last chance, and I knew I had to do it here. I had come so close to the qualifying mark in the previous meets, but my Coach Pradeep Sir and I planned my tapering in such a way that I would peak at these two events in Serbia and Rome.

"I am grateful to all the support



I have received from SFI, SAI and the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (MYAS). I believed in myself and my Coach Pradeep Kumar. Pradeep Sir was the anchor and I owe this to him. I knew I had it in me, and I am glad I achieved it,"

added Sajan.

Prakash also rewrote his own national record of 1:56.96s that he had set last week at the Belgrade Trophy swimming competition. This will be Prakash's second successive Olympics, having repre-

sented India in the 2016 Rio Games.

"Historic moment in Indian Swimming!!! Sajan Prakash breaks the glass ceiling clocks 1:56.38 an Olympic qualification time. CONGRATULATIONS," tweeted Swimming Federation of India.

Prakash will take part in the Tokyo Games alongside Maana Patel, who has been nominated by the Swimming Federation of India for the Universality places.

Prakash's direct qualification means Srihari Nataraj, who missed the 'A' the 100m men's backstroke by 0.05s in Rome Friday, will not be competing in the Tokyo Games despite being nominated for the Universality places.

The Universality quota allows one male and one female competitor from a country to participate in the Olympics, provided no other swimmer from the same gender qualifies for the Games or receives a FINA invite based on his or her Olympic Selection time (B time).

It was a good day for Indian swimming as TOPS developmental swimmer Kenisha Gupta also created a national record. The Mumbai swimmer clocked 57.35 second in the 100m freestyle event at the Rome event.