



FIRST LOVE

Actor Alia Bhatt, set to produce her maiden film, says she will always be an actor first

LEISURE P2



DHAMI NEW U'KHAND CM

BJP has selected Pushkar Singh Dhami as the new Chief Minister of Uttarakhand ahead of next year's Assembly polls

NATIONAL P9



ITALY, SPAIN WIN

Italy, after beating Belgium, set up Euro semifinal date with Spain, who defeated the Swiss via penalty shootout

SPORTS P12



People should be thankful. They voted for one CM, we gave them three!

France begins judicial probe into Rafale deal

CONGRESS SATURDAY URGED PM NARENDRA MODI TO ORDER A JPC PROBE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 3: A French judge has been appointed to lead a "highly sensitive" judicial investigation into alleged "corruption and favouritism" in the ₹59,000 crore Rafale fighter jet deal with India, French investigative website Mediapart reported.

Following the development, Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala Saturday urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to come forward and order a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) probe into the Rafale deal.

"Corruption in the Rafale deal has come out clearly now. The stand of the Congress party and Rahul Gandhi has been vindicated today after the French government has ordered a probe," he told reporters at a press conference. However, there was no immediate reaction from the Indian government.

The Mediapart said the probe into the inter-governmental deal signed in 2016 was formally opened June 14. "A judicial probe into suspected corruption has been opened in France over the 7.8-billion-euro sale to India in 2016 of 36 Dassault-



built Rafale fighter aircraft," the Mediapart reported.

It said the investigation has been initiated by the national financial prosecutors' office (PNF).

The judicial investigation has been ordered by France's national financial prosecutor's office, following Mediapart's fresh reports in April of alleged wrongdoings in the deal as well as a complaint filed by French NGO Sherpa that specialises in financial crime.

Mediapart journalist Yann Philippin, who filed a series of reports on the deal, said a first complaint was "buried" in 2019 by a former PNF chief.

"The judicial investigation was finally opened following the revelations of the investigation #RafalePapers of @mediapart and

- French investigative website Mediapart reported a judicial probe into suspected corruption has been opened in France over the 7.8-billion-euro sale to India in 2016 of 36 Rafale fighter aircraft
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a new complaint from @Asso_Sherpa. A 1st complaint was buried in 2019 by the former PNF boss, Eliane Houlette," he tweeted.

In April, Mediapart, citing an investigation by the country's anti-corruption agency, reported that Dassault Aviation had paid about one million Euros to an Indian middleman. Dassault Aviation has rejected the allegations of corruption.

State will not procure any more paddy this season

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 3: Odisha Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare Minister Ranendra Pratap Swain Saturday made it clear that the state government will not procure any paddy beyond the deadline, which ended June 30.

Swain said this while reacting to the protests by the state unit of BJP at various places, especially in western Odisha, demanding procurement of paddy from farmers who have received tokens.

The minister said that the state government would not purchase paddy from the farmers now as the stipulated time fixed by the Centre has already lapsed June 30.

The state government has already procured 91 per cent (of the target) paddy from the farmers during this Rabi season. Last year only 83 per cent of the paddy procurement target could be achieved, Swain said.

"The protests by the BJP are nothing but a political compulsion. They are a frustrated lot. Rabi crops are grown in 17 districts of Odisha. Then why is the BJP taking to the streets in all the 30 districts," Swain asked.

He invited the Opposition leaders to come up with suggestions to further strengthen the paddy procurement system.

Meanwhile, state BJP Krushak Morcha president Pradeep Purohit said, "We are demanding procurement of paddy from the farmers who have already received tokens. Since the government is not procuring paddy any more, their tokens have lapsed."

"Is Swain aware of the duration of the tokens? It is only 12 days. Why has the duration been reduced from 30 days to 12 only?" Purohit asked, adding, "The government has failed to purchase paddy from the farmers within 12 days from the issue of tokens. So why should the farmers suffer?"

The Leaders' Choice

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Gatherings on rooftops, hotel bookings banned

POST NEWS NETWORK

Puri, July 3: The Puri district administration Saturday reviewed its earlier decision and imposed stricter restrictions on public viewing of the upcoming Rath Yatra festival even from rooftop of houses.

Later, Puri district Collector, **PURI RATH YATRA** Samarth Verma said that curfew will be clamped on the entire Puri town a day ahead of the Rath Yatra, July 12, and the restrictions will remain in effect till the afternoon of the following day (July 13).

Like last year, this year too, the Rath Yatra in Puri would be held without the participation of devotees and in strict adherence to Covid protocols. Local residents will not be allowed to go to their terrace to wit-

ness the Rath Yatra as it would come under the curfew restrictions

"As curfew will be imposed on the night before the Rath Yatra and remain in effect till the next day, no one will be allowed to remain on terrace as it is also under the curfew restrictions," said Verma.

"A couple of days before the Rath Yatra, we will inspect all the hotels and vacate the rooms," he added.

Verma added that a survey will be conducted and all hotels and lodges on Bada Danda (Grand Road) will be vacated. Strict instructions will be issued to these lodges not to accept bookings from any visitors from July 10 to 13. A survey to identify unsafe buildings is underway and those structures will also be vacated.

Covaxin 77.8% effective

Pune: Bharat Biotech Saturday announced safety and efficacy analysis data from Phase III clinical trials of Covaxin, a whole virion inactivated vaccine against SARS-CoV2 which was developed in partnership with ICMR and NIV Pune. Phase 3 clinical trials of Covaxin were conducted on 130 symptomatic Covid-19 cases, reported at least two weeks after the second dose, at 25 sites across India. "Covaxin was well tolerated as no reports of safety concerns were received."

MORE P9

WEATHER		BHUB	CTK
TEMP	MAX	30.6°C	32.5°C
	MIN	24.6°C	24.8°C
	Humidity	82%	86%
	Rainfall	Nil	Nil
	Forecast	Generally cloudy sky	

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leisure



PARIS HILTON FLAUNTS HER 'PRINCESS VIBES'

Socialite and entrepreneur Paris Hilton showcases her princess vibes in her latest post on social media. Paris posted a picture on Instagram where she is seen dressed in a yellow dress with minimal make-up, and curled up hair. The picture reminds of Disney princess Belle in *Beauty And The Beast*.

EMERALD FENNEL ENJOYS 'CINDERELLA' CHALLENGE

Actress-writer Emerald Fennell says she has enjoyed the challenge of finding Cinderella's personality when penning a new musical adaptation of the fairytale. Fennell has joined hands with Andrew Lloyd-Webber on a new musical version of the classic fairytale, reports *femalefirst.co.uk*.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181

ARIES
Some decisions are hard to take, but a firm resolve will help you stay committed. Sentimentality may shake your purpose, but once decided, you must stick to it. Also, learn to take heartbreak in your stride, says Ganesh.

TAURUS
Definitely not a day when you plan to get your feet dirty (maybe a pedicure, though). You might delay the start of a new project. Perhaps, a romantic escape with your sweetheart or a day in the spa grooming yourself with a lavish makeover will validate your lethargy today.

GEMINI
You will try very hard to strike a balance between logic and emotions. Though you may succeed in doing so in front of the world, you may not be so discreet with your friends. You will have an excellent time with your sweetheart, but your physical appearance will be a cause of concern to you, says Ganesh.

CANCER
A hectic day, combined with domestic pressure will make you exhausted. You feel a heavy burden on mind and heart. Don't be too emotional, says Ganesh. Take care not to pass domestic burdens on to your career or business, and thereby mar your capacity and efficiency.

LEO
You will pay more attention to the younger members in the family. You will guide the children in improving their daily schedule. An occasion to celebrate will present itself. You will be desirous of participating in some competition or program, says Ganesh.

VIRGO
A fear of the unknown will keep lurking in your mind today. The shadow will only grow larger as the day progresses. You may find yourself spending too much on your foreign friends. Ganesh advises you to be cautious in this regard today.

LIBRA
Ganesh says your children will gain achievements that will have you feel proud of them. You will get monetary benefit either by increment in salary or by inheritance. You will be able to gain substantial gains by investing in real estate or buying insurance policies.

SCORPIO
Ganesh asks you to practice caution today. There are strong possibilities that an evil eye may attack you in some or other way. So, keep a watchful eye. And remember, every day brings along an experience and a lesson with it.

SAGITTARIUS
Your stars are aligned in a way that you may have to travel long distance, either for business or for leisure. Socially, you are active as you are likely to attend a function and take the centre stage. You may also participate in religious activities and give importance of rites and rituals, if need be, informs Ganesh.

CAPRICORN
You have sacrificed a lot on enjoyment with friends and family, done some back-breaking work and kept your focus to reach where you are right now. Ganesh gives you a pat on your back for all the hard work you've put in. Now, it is time to watch the tree bear fruits. With some additional responsibilities, promotion in terms of salary or position is on the cards for you.

AQUARIUS
You blessed with a very high level of patience and practicality, and you can easily untangle any problem. But, it gives an excuse to the people around you to wash their hands of any responsibility. It may put you in a tight spot at times leaving you frustrated. It is not a nice feeling, agrees Ganesh, but learn to turn it your advantage, he adds.

PISCES
Looking at your planetary positions for today, there is a likelihood that you will suffer from reversals in fortunes financially. Hence be wary when it comes to financial dealings.

'Will always remain a nervous actor'

Mumbai: Actress Alia Bhatt took to Instagram Saturday to share her emotions as a debutant producer. The actress makes her debut as producer with the self-starring *Darlings*.

"Day one of DARLINGS! my first film as a producer but I will always be an actor first and forever (in this case a very nervous actor)" wrote Alia.

The actress posted black and white pictures from her makeup room and shared her nervousness before starting the film.

"I don't know what it is.. a night before I start a new film I get this nervous tingling energy all over my body.. i dream all night about messing up my lines.. become jumpy.. reach set 15 mins before time fearing I'll be late!" the 28-year-old star wrote.

Reaffirming her emotional state of mind, she added: "I guess this feeling will never go away, and it shouldn't - because being nervous.. and feeling unsure means you really really care PS - wish me luck pls."

Darlings stars Alia with Shefali Shah, Roshan Mathew and Vijay Varma. The film is co-produced by Shah Rukh Khan's production house Red Chillies Entertainment.



Aamir ends his second marriage

Mumbai: Top star Aamir Khan and his wife, filmmaker Kiran Rao, have announced their divorce in a statement issued to the press Saturday.

The statement read: "In these 15 beautiful years together we have shared a lifetime of experiences, joy and laughter, and our relationship has only grown in trust, respect and love. Now we would like to begin a new chapter in our lives -- no longer as husband and wife, but as co-parents and family for each other.

"We began a planned separation some time ago, and now feel comfortable to formalise this arrangement, of living separately yet sharing our lives the way an extended family does. "We remain devoted parents



to our son Azad, who we will nurture and raise together. We will also continue to work as collaborators on films, Paani

Foundation, and other projects that we feel passionate about.

"A big thank you to our families and friends for their constant support and understanding about this evolution in our relationship, and without whom we would not have been so secure in taking this leap. "We request our well wishers for good wishes and blessings, and hope that -- like us -- you will see this divorce not as an end, but as the start of a new journey. Thanks and love, Kiran and Aamir," the joint statement concluded.

Aamir and Kiran, who had been an assistant director to Ashutosh Gowariker on the set of *Lagaan*, got married in 2005. The two welcomed their son Azad Rao Khan in 2011 through surrogacy. IANS

Bhajji to make big screen debut in Friendship

Mumbai: Harbhajan Singh, one of the most successful off spinners India has ever produced, is all set to make his big screen debut with film titled *Friendship*.

The makers shared a poster featuring the cricketer and his friends in a "rapchik" mood, along with a lyrical video. Harbhajan, popularly known as Bhajji,

has earlier done guest appearances in films. *Friendship* will be his first major role. The film deals with action, sports and emotions.

In the film, Bhajji, a mechanical engineering student along with friends in first year, manages a clever escape from ragging by the seniors.

Slated to open later this year, the film will have a simultaneous release in Hindi, Telugu and Tamil.

Friendship is directed by John Paul Raj and Sham Surya, produced by Kiran Reddy Mandadi, and co-produced by Ram Maddukuri. IANS



Saroj Khan biopic announced on her death anniversary

Mumbai: A film on Saroj Khan's life was announced Saturday, which marks the first death anniversary of the late choreographer.

The film will bring to life the story of the struggle and success of Khan, widely acknowledged as India's first female choreographer. Details about the film are yet to be officially announced.

"We hope with this biopic, will be able to tell her story, her love for us, her passion for dancing, and her fondness for her actors and respect to the profession with this biopic," said Sukaina Khan, daughter of the late choreographer.

Her son Raju Khan, who is also a choreographer added: "I am glad I followed in her footsteps. My mother was loved

and respected by the industry and it is an honour for us, her family, that the world can see her story."

Saroj Khan passed away July 3 last year at the age of 71 due to cardiac arrest.

Khan choreographed around 3,500 songs in her career span and is a three-time National Award winner.

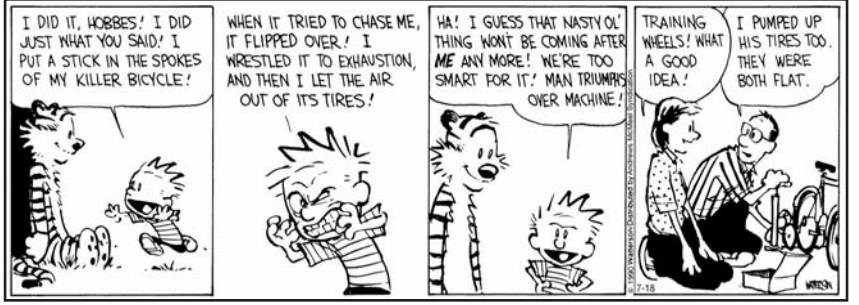
Rights to produce the biopic have been acquired by Bhushan Kumar's T-Series. IANS



PEANUTS



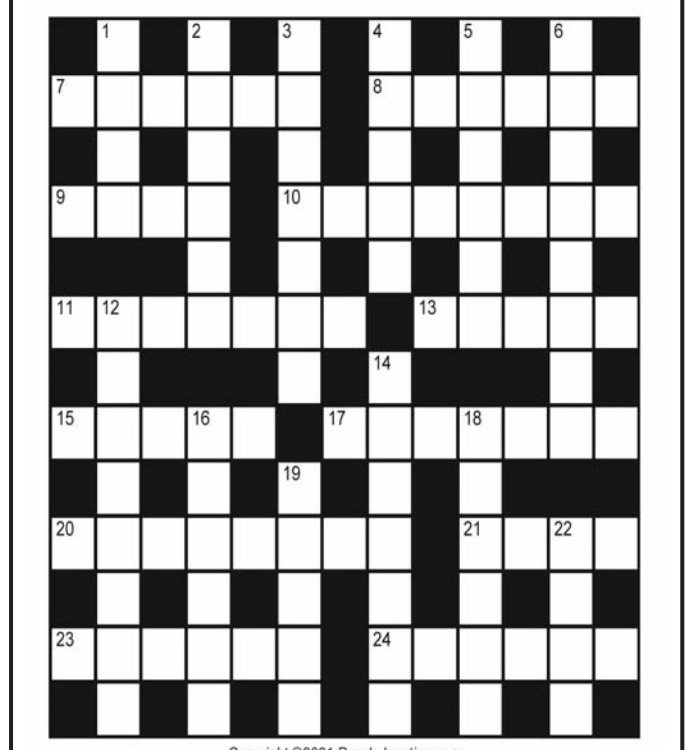
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



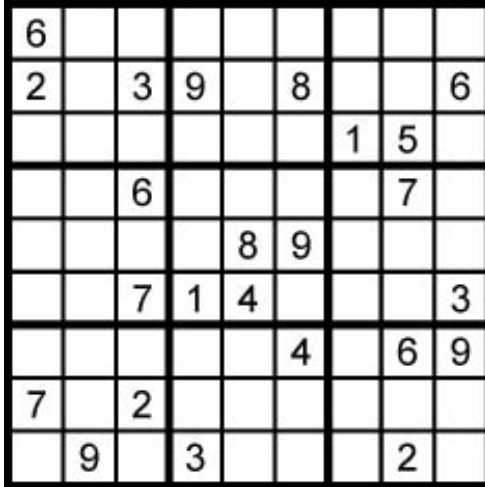
FUN post CROSSWORD



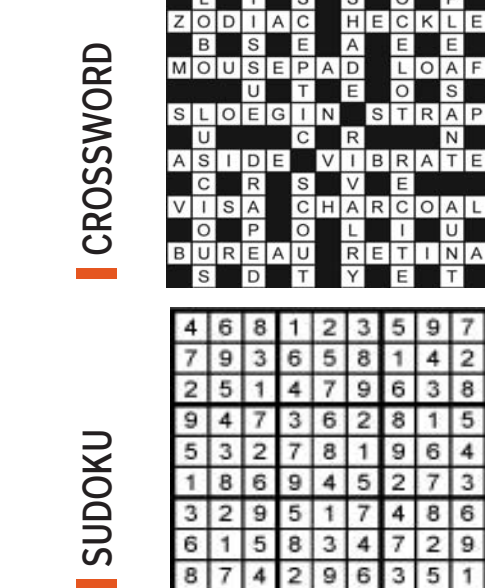
- Across
7 Obstacle
8 On the train
9 Without help
10 Retreat
11 Slippery
13 Yataghan, e.g.
15 Expression
17 Free weight
20 Irregular
- Down
21 Meek
23 Classical music
24 Romance language
1 Motorcar
2 Detestable
3 Busy workplace
- 4 Golfer's helper
5 Area
6 Atrocious
12 Annoyance
14 Barn section
16 Jane Eyre, e.g.
18 Knock about
19 Enthusiastic approval
22 Rodents

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

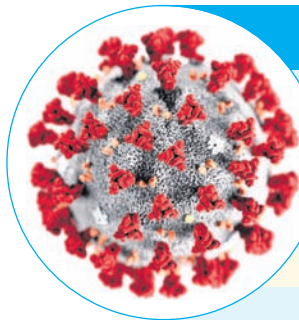


CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



TREE IS LIFE

A plantation drive underway at Viligram High School in Nimapara area of Puri district as part of 72nd Van Mahotsav celebrations, Saturday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	18,39,95,867	16,84,08,717	39,82,815
India	3,05,02,362	2,96,05,779	4,01,050
Odisha	9,19,026	8,87,420	4,154

Flights from Jeypore, Utkela likely by March

CONNECTIVITY BOOST



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 3: The state government in collaboration with the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) has planned to start flight operations from Jeypore and Utkela (in Kalahandi) airports by the end of this financial year.

The decks are being cleared to make the two airports in the state operational, revealed a meeting held between the officials of state Transport and Commerce department and MoCA here Saturday. Transport secretary Madhusudan Padhi and MoCA joint secretary Usha Padhee attended the meeting.

“Development of airports at Puri, Rourkela, Utkela and Jeypore was discussed. Air connectivity under UDAN for Jeypore and Utkela will be finalised by @MoCA_GoI and State Govt shortly,” Transport

department said in a tweet.

The airports at Jeypore and Utkela are being supported under UDAN (Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik) scheme. Formal application to get licence to make these two airports functional will be submitted to the Director General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) this month, said a senior officer, who was present at the meeting.

Air Odisha was the first to start flight operations to the locations but had suspended the services in later stage. After that, no one has participated in two to three rounds of bids. Now, the state has received two bids to start flight operations from Jeypore and Utkela, the official said.

Once all the issues are resolved, flight operations will start on three routes; Bhubaneswar-Jeypore, Utkela-Raipur, Utkela-Bhubaneswar. The technical team of DGCA will

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The technical team of DGCA will visit the two airports very soon to see whether all the norms have been complied with to start air operations

Apart from the two airports, Jeypore & Utkela, the officials also discussed development of airports at Puri and Rourkela

visit the two airports very soon to see whether all the norms have been complied with to start air operations.

Apart from the two airports, the officials also discussed development of airports at Puri and Rourkela.

According to the official, the Centre will provide 80 per cent of the viability gap funding (VGF) or subsidy to the operator while the state government will bear 20 per cent. Besides, the state government has developed required infrastructure at the proposed airports and will provide other supports like deployment of fire personnel, power and water supply among other facilities.

ARTISTIC TOUCH



Chitrakara servitors of Srimandir paint wooden figurines for the decoration of chariots ahead of this year's Rath Yatra in Puri, Saturday

OP PHOTO

Vax plan for pregnant hits training hurdle

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 3: Covid-19 vaccination for pregnant women in the state is likely to be delayed as the healthcare staffers are yet to be imparted the required training.

The Union government has recently approved usage of anti-Covid vaccines in India for pregnant women. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has also shared certain guidelines of the inoculation

drive for pregnant women with the state government.

However, the state Health department is still waiting for an orientation programme where the Union Health ministry will brief the states on the usage of the vaccines for pregnant women and the modalities of the system. Later, the states will train the health staffers involved in the said vaccination exercise.

Health department additional chief secretary PK Mohapatra

Administrations were asked to refrain from vaccinating pregnant women unless training is imparted to health staffers

Saturday wrote to the district Collectors and other officials to wait for the orientation programme by the Centre. He asked the dis-

trict administration to refrain from vaccinating the pregnant women unless full training is imparted to the staffers.

Unlike India, many western countries have started inoculating pregnant women with the mRNA based Covid vaccines available there while due to lack of adequate studies and evidence, the Indian government delayed including pregnant women into the ambit of Covid vaccination.

Tension grips hospital as newly-wed dies

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 3: Tension erupted at a private hospital here Saturday over the alleged wrongful administration of an injection leading to the death of a newly-married woman. The deceased was identified as Priyanka Patnaik of Mendhashal on the outskirts of the city.

Priyanka had tied nuptial knot with Ajit Ransigh of Baramunda area around 11 days ago. According to sources, Priyanka experienced excruciating pain in her neck late Friday night. She was later rushed to the private hospital located near Fire Station Square Saturday morning.

The family members claimed that she died soon after the administration of an injection at the hospital. They alleged that some other staffer of the hospital administered the injection to her instead of the doctor, who was present at the spot.

The relatives staged a protest outside the hospital demanding action against the doctor. They were later pacified by Nayapali police.

Yaas-hit districts report above 100 cases

STATE LOGS 2,917 NEW CASES OF CORONAVIRUS AND 45 FRESH FATALITIES

PNN/AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, July 3: State's Covid-19 caseload mounted to 9,19,026 Saturday as 2,917 more people tested positive for the infection, while 45 fresh fatalities pushed the death toll to 4,154, a Health department official said.

Some of the cyclone Yaas-hit districts such as Balasore, Mayurbhanj, Cuttack, Khurda and Bhadrak have been reporting more than 100 coronavirus cases each daily, which is a cause of concern, he said.

The Covid situation in western districts bordering Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand has improved, the official said. Of the 2,917 new cases, 1,677 were reported from quarantine centres and the remaining 1,240 during contact tracing.

Khurda district, which comprises the state capital Bhubaneswar, reported the highest number of new cases at 549, followed by Cuttack (422), Balasore (237), Mayurbhanj (165) and Jajpur (218). Several districts such as Deogarh, Bolangir, Jharsuguda, Gajapati and Nuapada have reported new infections in single digits.

The state government has relaxed Covid restrictions in most of these districts in western and south-



IN A NUTSHELL

Khurda district, which comprises the state capital Bhubaneswar, reported the highest number of new cases at 549, followed by Cuttack (422), Balasore (237), Mayurbhanj (165) and Jajpur (218)

The state has conducted over 1.39 crore sample tests for the virus, including 71,554 Friday, and the positivity rate stands at 6.57 per cent

Of the fresh fatalities, nine were reported from Khurda district, five each from Bargarh and Cuttack, four from Dhenkanal and three from Koraput, Sambalpur, Subarnapur and Sundargarh

ern regions of the state as the pandemic situation has improved there. Taking to Twitter, the Health and Family Welfare department said, “Regret to inform demise of forty-five Covid patients while under treatment in hospitals.”

Of the fresh fatalities, nine were

reported from Khurda district, five each from Bargarh and Cuttack, four from Dhenkanal and three from Koraput, Sambalpur, Subarnapur and Sundargarh.

Two deaths each were registered in Nayagarh and Puri, while one patient each succumbed to the dis-

ease in Angul, Ganjam, Jharsuguda, Kandhamal, Kendrapara and Mayurbhanj. Fifty-three other Covid-19 patients have died due to comorbidities, he said.

Odisha now has 30,557 active cases, while 3,265 patients were cured of the disease on Friday, taking the total number of recoveries to 8,84,262 patients.

The state has conducted over 1.39 crore sample tests for the virus, including 71,554 Friday, and the positivity rate stands at 6.57 per cent. The government has divided 30 districts of the state into 'A' and 'B' categories when it announced extension of the partial lockdown June 30 for 15 more days till 5am July 16.

Twenty districts where the test positivity rate (TPR) remains less than five per cent are in the 'A' category, while the remaining 10 coastal districts, where the number of cases is high, are in the category 'B'.

The weekend shutdown has been withdrawn from the 'A' category districts, while such restriction continued in areas falling under 'B'.

The shutdown started from 6am Saturday in Puri, Khurda, Nayagarh, Cuttack, Jajpur, Jagatsinghpur, Kendrapara, Bhadrak, Balasore and Mayurbhanj.

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 3: The regional office of the India Meteorological Department (IMD) Saturday issued warning of heavy rain in six districts for Sunday.

Issuing yellow warning for Sunday, the IMD said, “Heavy rainfall is very likely to occur at one or two places of Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Dhenkanal, Cuttack, Jagatsinghpur and Khurda districts.”

It also said that thunderstorm and lightning could also be seen during the day in several parts of the state. “Thunderstorm along with lightning is very likely to occur at one or two places over Balasore, Bhadrak, Jajpur, Kendrapara, Cuttack, Jagatsinghpur, Puri, Khurda, Nayagarh, Ganjam, Gajapati, Sundargarh, Deogarh, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj, Dhenkanal, Angul, Boudh and Kandhamal,” the department said.

It said that the state capital could also see light rain Sunday while the maximum temperature could go up to 33 degrees Celsius, said the weatherman adding the city may witness cloudy weather during the day. The regional Met office said that



Heavy rain is very likely to occur at one or two places of Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Dhenkanal, Cuttack, Jagatsinghpur and Khurda

several regions of the state received rainfall in the last 24 hours while the maximum 69mm rainfall was recorded in Nayagarh followed by 59mm rain in Sundargarh.

The maximum temperature was recorded at Chandbali (35.2 degrees C) while the minimum temperature was recorded at Phulbani, which saw 17 degrees Celsius, Saturday. Nevertheless, the department issued warning of thunderstorm and lightning for next two days while it has forecasted heavy rain June 7.

SHUTDOWN NORMS GO FOR A TOSS



Street food vendors run their businesses near Bhubaneswar railway station, Saturday, even though weekend shutdown has been clamped in the city to check the spread of novel coronavirus

OP PHOTO

NGT seeks probe into Ganjam stone quarry

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 3: The eastern bench of National Green Tribunal (NGT) has issued notice to the state government and other stakeholders in connection with alleged illegal stone quarry under Sanakhemundi tehsil of Ganjam district.

Earlier, a petition was filed by one Satrugana Jena before the NGT alleging that the stone quarry operations at Sata Dhangudi Hill were in contravention of the conditions set while granting environmental clearance to the project.

The petitioner had alleged that the quarry was being undertaken beyond the permissible areas without any approval of mining plan and without environmental clearance and consent to operate. The petitioner also alleged threat to local biodiversity due to the quarry activities in the area.

The tribunal has admitted the case for hearing and issued notices to the state government, the miner and other stakeholders concerned. “The matter requires con-



THREAT TO ENVIRONMENT

A petition was filed with the NGT alleging that the stone quarry operations at Sata Dhangudi Hill under Sanakhemundi tehsil of Ganjam district were in contravention of the conditions set while granting environmental clearance to the project

The petitioner had alleged that the quarry was being undertaken beyond the permissible areas without any approval of mining plan and without environmental clearance and consent to operate

The NGT directed for formation of a committee to look into the matter and inform the tribunal after conducting an inspection at the site

sideration. Issue notice to the state respondents, returnable within four weeks,” the order said.

The NGT also directed for formation of a committee to look into the matter and inform the tribunal after conducting an inspection at the site. “We are also of the view that it will be necessary to constitute a committee comprising the Ganjam Collector, senior scientist from Odisha State Pollution Control Board, senior scientist from State Environment Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA), senior scientist from Integrated

Regional Office of Ministry of Environment and Forests, Bhubaneswar,” the order said.

The Odisha State Environment Impact Assessment Authority would be the nodal authority for all logistic purposes, the tribunal ordered.

The committee has been entrusted with the task of enquiring into the allegations of excessive mining, mining beyond permissible limits, environmental degradation on account of alleged illegal stone mining and also estimation of environmental compensation

liable to be paid by the miner if accusations are found right.

The joint panel will also find out if the project was within any eco-sensitive zone of Lakhari Valley Sanctuary and also if there were any lack of approvals for the project.

NHRC seeks probe status in petrol pump blast case

NEGLIGENCE ALLEGED

Acting on a petition filed by rights activist Radhakanta Tripathy, the NHRC directed the authorities to submit an ATR on the steps taken by the state to compensate the injured or the kin of the deceased within four weeks

The rights body warned to take coercive action under Section 13 of Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993 if the government failed to comply with the order

One Sadananda Nayak succumbed to injuries, while undergoing treatment at AIIMS, New Delhi while another victim, Simanchal Parida, also died in the blast October 7, 2020

others sustained injuries in the blast October 7, 2020 as the storage safety issue has not been taken care of to handle the highly combustible material.

Tripathy requested the apex rights body to direct the officials to come out with plans and procedures for shifting hazardous industries to least populated areas with timely inspection.

The NHRC had earlier sought ATR from the Director General of Police and Principal Secretary of Home department on the outcome of the investigation in the case along with steps taken to rehabilitate the injured and the next of the kin of the deceased.

In pursuant to the directions of the NHRC, the Home department submitted the report stating that during investigation it was revealed that one retail outlet was in operation in the name of M/s Raj Bhawan Filling Station at Raj Bhawan Square, Bhubaneswar.

Periodic testing in respect of the storage vessel was due to expire October 13, 2020. So, testing was

being conducted wherein an underground bullet exploded causing large damage to property and human life. One Sadananda Nayak succumbed to injuries, while undergoing treatment at AIIMS, New Delhi while another victim, Simanchal Parida, also died in the blast.

The commission, while accepting the report, observed that the report is silent with regard to the outcome of the investigation and payment of compensation to the injured or next kin of the deceased.

The commission directed the registry to call for a report from the Commissioner of Police, Bhubaneswar and District Magistrate, Khurda, on the status of the investigation in the case along with steps taken by the state government to compensate the injured and next of the kin of the deceased.



A vaccination drive for advocates of Bhubaneswar court in progress, Saturday

OP PHOTO

Probe begins into land grab at Baliana

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 3: A miscreant has reportedly grabbed two landed plots owned by a woman on the outskirts of the Capital city using forged documents. Sources said Baliana police has started investigations into the matter by registering a case in this regard following intervention of SDJM court.

According to sources, the victim, Supriya Swain, alleged in her complaint that she had purchased two plots at Banguari under

The victim alleged that one Rashmi Ranjan has forged two sale deeds of the plots

Baliana police limits from Purna Chandra Sahoo and Kalandi Charan Barik in 2007. Subsequently, she also got the pattas (deeds) against these plots from Bhubaneswar tehsildar's office by following all the legitimate procedures. However, the victim was shocked

to know that someone has grabbed the landed properties using fraudulent means a few years ago. Swain alleged that one Rashmi Ranjan impersonated her and forged two sale deeds of the plots. The actual value of the said plots is quite high owing to the proximity of the properties to other big residential housing projects on the outskirts of the city.

As per the victim's complaint, the accused threatened the victim land owner of dire consequences when she accosted him.

Two snatchers held in Cuttack

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, July 3: Jagatpur police Saturday claimed to have arrested two criminals involved in several snatching cases at various places in the state.

The arrested have been identified as Dillip Kumar Das, 46, of Chandbali area in Bhadrak district and Deepak Kumar Satpathy, 28, of Mahanga in Cuttack district. Police seized gold chains weighing around 30 grams, seven mobile phones and a bike from the duo, sources said.

Two bike-borne miscreants had snatched a gold chain from a woman in Fakirpur area of Cuttack April 12. A complaint in this regard was filed at Jagatpur police station. The police had registered a case and examined the CCTV footage collected from the locality.

"During investigation, our officials came to know that Das and Satpathy, both history-sheeters, had snatched the gold chain from the woman. The duo has been involved in at least 48 cases of crimes at various places in the state," said Cuttack Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Prateek Singh.



Seven more special trains under ECoR

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 3: The Ministry of Railways has decided to run more special trains from and through the jurisdiction of East Coast Railway (ECoR).

As per the decision, seven new special trains including six originating from the ECoR jurisdiction will run from the second week of July till further advice.

The trains are: Bhubaneswar-Krishnarajapuram (Bangalore)-Bhubaneswar Humsafar Special, Visakhapatnam-Bhubaneswar-Visakhapatnam Daily Special, Visakhapatnam-Bhagat Ki Kothi-Visakhapatnam Special via Rayagada and Titilagarh, Visakhapatnam-Tata Nagar-Visakhapatnam Special via Bhubaneswar and Keonjhar, Visakhapatnam-Digha-Visakhapatnam Special, Visakhapatnam-Nanded-Visakhapatnam Special and Santragachhi-Tirupati-Santragachhi Special.

The Bhubaneswar-Krishnarajapuram-Bhubaneswar Humsafar Special will leave Bhubaneswar every Wednesday with effect from July 14 and Krishnarajapuram every Thursday from July 15.

Visakhapatnam-Bhubaneswar-

Visakhapatnam Daily Special is scheduled to begin its service from Visakhapatnam July 14 and from Bhubaneswar July 15 till further advice. Visakhapatnam-Bhagat Ki Kothi-Visakhapatnam Special will leave Visakhapatnam every Thursday from July 8 and the train is scheduled to begin its journey from Bhagat Ki Kothi every Saturday from July 10.

Visakhapatnam-Tata Nagar-Visakhapatnam Special will leave Visakhapatnam every Sunday from July 11 while it is scheduled to leave Tata Nagar every Monday from July 12, Railways sources said.

Visakhapatnam-Digha-Visakhapatnam Special is scheduled to leave Visakhapatnam every Thursday from July 8 and it will begin its journey from Digha Friday with effect from July 9. Visakhapatnam-Nanded-Visakhapatnam Special will leave Visakhapatnam every Tuesday, Wednesday and Saturday with effect from July 10 while the train is scheduled to leave Nanded every Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday from July 11. Santragachhi-Tirupati-Santragachhi Special will begin its journey from Santragachhi every Sunday from July 4 and it is scheduled to leave Tirupati every Monday from July 5.

BMC to intensify beggar-free campaign

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 3: With an aim to register Bhubaneswar among the topmost liveable smart cities in India, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) stated that it will intensify its drive against identification and rehabilitation of the beggars in all its wards.

In a mega campaign launched by the BMC along with the Commissionerate Police, Friday, the civic authority deployed three of its NGOs to conduct, identify and capture beggars across the city. As per sources, raids were con-

ducted in Janpath, Unit-1, Unit-2, Jaydev Vihar square and other areas where about 61 beggars were rehabilitated.

"We will be intensifying our drive for a beggar-free Bhubaneswar. It will be a continuous process till we rid the city of beggars. These beggars will be shifted to shelter homes where BMC will launch various programmes through which they will become self-reliant. They will be provided with cooked food, basic amenities and free medical checkups," said Laxmikant Sethi, Additional Commissioner.

Meanwhile speaking over

the Banjara communities living in groups at various places in the city, Sethi said that they will take help of police to take them out of Bhubaneswar. Efforts will be made to identify them and send them back to their native states. "Detailed action plan has been prepared which would cover counselling, education, skill development, and a sustainable settlement of persons engaged in begging," he added.

It can be mentioned that the authorities in December last year began the process to make 'Ekamra Kshetra' beggar-free. So

far, around 200 beggars have been caught and sent to different Shelters for Urban Homeless (SUHs). As per sources, there are eight SUHs with an inmate capacity of 368 while a rehabilitation centre for specially-abled beggars with an inmate capacity of 100 is in operation since May 5.

As per sources, the move of intensifying for a beggar-free city has come after Bhubaneswar was rated in top five most liveable cities according to a study. The study which accounts various parameters also takes into consideration economic ability and sustainability of a city.



Shops at Unit-II market in Bhubaneswar and Buxi Bazar in Cuttack remain closed due to the weekend shutdown, Saturday

OP PHOTO

27 python hatchlings released into Chandaka

POST NEWS NETWORK

Khurda, July 3: The Forest department officials recently released 27 baby pythons into Chandaka sanctuary after ensuring safe hatching of eggs collected from Gadaniala village of Mallipur panchayat under Khurda block.

The snakes were released near two ponds located in two separate places under Haladia range of Chandaka sanctuary, Forest department sources said.

Chandaka Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Ramakanta Nayak, Assistant Conservator of Forest (ACF) Girish Satpathy, Haladia Range officer Jaykrishna Panda and Forester Soumya Ranjan Behara among others were present during the release of baby pythons into the sanctuary.

"The baby pythons were released at two separate places in Chandaka. We hope that the snakes would soon get accustomed with their new habitats. We used a drone to monitor their movements after releasing them into the forests," said an official of the Forest department.

It is worth mentioning here that a mother python had laid eggs in a pit inside the forests near Gadaniala village in the first half



of May this year. The Forest department officials along with the villagers had erected barricades around the pit and covered the place with nets to ensure safety for the python and its eggs. The villagers and Forest department officials were guarding the place round-the-clock for safe hatching of the eggs.

As many as 30 eggs were relocated to the Forest department range office May 22 to save them from heavy rains triggered by the cyclonic storm Yaas. Altogether 27 baby pythons hatched out from the eggs June 30, sources said.

"The villagers of Gadaniala did a commendable job by protecting the mother python and its eggs. This episode has set an example for conservation of wildlife," said Mallipur Sarpanch Bijay Das.

CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

I, Saraswati Barua, W/o. Khirasagar Majhi of Village: Rajapada under Kesinga PS swear an affidavit on Dt.02.07.2021 before Notary Public, Bhawanipatna and declared on oath that Saraswati Barua and Saraswati Majhi is one and the same person. This is for the information of the general public at large. Saraswati Barua.

Govt procures 14.44L tonne Rabi crops

Bhubaneswar: The state government has procured 14.44 lakh tonne crops during this Rabi season, said Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare Minister Ranendra Pratap Swain at a virtual meeting recently. The minister said that 90.75 per cent of the registered farmers have sold their Rabi crops to the government. More than 2.5 lakh farmers had sold the crops to the government. The Rabi crops collected from farmers in 17 districts of the state have been stored at 1,125 storage centres, he added. For the Kharif season of 2020-2021, the government had set a target of collecting 71 lakh tonne crops but it collected 77.37 lakh tonne crops which is 6.37 lakh tonne more than the target.

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No pause to mining in Bichhakhandi



Illegality to fore

LOOT OF MINERALS CONTINUES EVEN AS THE CASE IS SUB JUDICE IN LOKAYUKTA AND THE VIGILANCE PROBE IS ON

NO REMARKABLE RESULTS FROM THE ENGAGEMENT OF ARMED SECURITY GUARDS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur, July 3: Hundreds of truck-loads of black stones and metals from Bichhakhandi hills under Dharmasala block in Jajpur district are being transported to various places in the state even though there is a case which is sub judice in the state Lokayukta and investigations are underway by the state vigilance department. Sources said efforts are on to derail the vigilance investigation.

Questions are being raised on the efficiency and transparency in the work of the armed security guards who were appointed in the first week of June at the district level to check the loot of minor minerals from the Bichhakhandi hills. The ongoing loot of the minerals proves that the administration has no power or will to check it.

Lokayukta chairperson Justice

Ajit Singh April 12, 2021 had ordered a Vigilance investigation of the loot of black stones and minor minerals from the Bichhakhandi hills and its adjoining forest land. The order came after a hearing in this matter (120/2021) was held.

The Lokayukta ordered the vigilance to submit a preliminary report of the investigation in two months. The vigilance began its inquiry May 13, 2021 and sought details of the minerals loot including excavation of black stones at the Bichhakhandi hills from the State Pollution Control Board (SPCB).

Regional officer of SPCB at Kalinganagar Pramod Kumar Behera said he has shared the details with the Vigilance department. However, even as the investigation is underway, it has not deterred the stone mafia from carrying out their loots from the hills. So much so that the armed security guards exclusively created for this purpose by District Collector Chakravarty Singh Rathore look helpless.

At the direction of the Additional Director General of Police (law and order) June 2, 2021, the District Collector had formed the armed security guards for this purpose. Deputy Superintendent of Police Prafulla Kumar Mishra was designated as the nodal officer of the wing. The District Collector's order said that the armed security personnel would help the revenue inspector in checking the trans-

portation of the minor minerals.

That apart, it was ordered that all illegal crushers operating in the area will be immediately shut. The ones that have licenses will compulsorily install CCTV cameras and maintain a register. There will be entries in the register on the inward and outward movement of the minerals in premises of the crusher.

The concerned tehsildar was directed to verify the entries in the register and the CCTV footage and based on them will submit a report every 15 days. In case there is mismatch of data in the register and the camera footage, strict actions will be taken against the concerned crusher owners.

To ensure foolproof monitoring of the work, sub-collector, tehsildar, Dharmasala and Darpana, SPCB regional officer of Kalinganagar, DDAM Jajpur Road, forest ranger of Dalijoda were directed to assist the armed security guards. IICs of Dharmasala, Jenapur and Badchana were included in the team.

One month has since passed but no remarkable results or actions have been heard from the works of the armed security guards. On the contrary, mindless loot of minerals from the Bichhakhandi hills is continuing.

In-charge tehsildar, Dharmasala, Debi Prasanna Mohanty said there have been raids by the armed security guards on the stone mafia. Raids were also conducted on Barada hill in the night of June 30. He said nobody will dare to enter the Bichhakhandi hills and the illegal mining activities have completely stopped now.

TIME TO GET CRACKING



Farmers transplating paddy saplings at a farmland in Mahakalapara of Kendrapara district as cultivation starts with the onset of monsoon

OP PHOTO

ASHA worker, after 2 vax jobs, succumbs to Covid

AGENCIES

Kendrapara, July 3: An ASHA worker, who had received both the doses of COVID-19 vaccine, succumbed to the infection in Kendrapara district, an official said Saturday.

Saraswati Mallick, 35, an accredited social health activists (ASHA) worker of the Derabish community health centre, was ad-

mitted to a Covid hospital in Chhata last week.

She was put on a ventilator after her oxygen level started dipping and she died Friday night, said Yashaswini Sahani, the assistant manager of ASHA in the Kendrapara district head-quarter hospital.

The ASHA worker was engaged in the door-to-door survey in connection with Covid

containment duty, official sources said.

The district ASHA workers' association has demanded adequate compensation to the family of the deceased.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik had earlier announced an ex-gratia of Rs 50 lakh for family members of Covid warriors, including ASHA and Anganwadi workers.

VIG PUBLIC PROSECUTOR HELD FOR TAKING BRIBE

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhawaniapatna, July 3: Public prosecutor at the court of the special Vigilance Judge in Kalahandi district was caught red-handed while accepting bribe from an accused, Saturday.

According to sources, Asutosh Mishra demanded Rs 3 lakh from former Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) of Mahulapatna police outpost named Malaya Rana to help him in a graft case.

The ASI was caught by a team of Vigilance sleuths in 2020, who had received a bribe of Rs 5,000 from a tractor owner to release the latter's vehicle, a senior Vigilance official informed.

Swinging into action, the Vigilance officials laid a trap and



caught Mishra while he was accepting Rs 1 lakh at his private residence in TV Centre locality under Bhawaniapatna police limits in Kalahandi district.

Rs 1 lakh was seized from Mishra by Cuttack Vigilance team. A detailed probe is underway, an official said.

Freedom fighter Niranjan Mohapatra dies at 100

POST NEWS NETWORK

Baliapal, July 3: Freedom fighter Niranjan Mohapatra from Baliapal area in Balasore district breathed his last Saturday morning. He was 100.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik among several other dignitaries offered their condolences following the demise of the octogenarian freedom fighter.

Born to Khitish Chandra Mohapatra and Munima Devi at Bolang village, Niranjan was deeply moved by the call of Mahatma Gandhi.

He dropped out of Class V even though his parents were insisting on continuation of his edu-



cation. Mohapatra plunged into the freedom movement by joining 'Banara Sena' - a group of aggressive nationalist children.

"India became independent from the British yoke. All hoped socialism will prevail; there will be no discrimination between the

haves and have-nots, no regional disparities, economic equality will be ensured, no appeasement politics, no communalism, no alcoholism and no corruption. However, all such dreams are yet to be fulfilled. We are far away from the prime goal of freedom," the freedom fighter had earlier said to OrissaPost during an exclusive interview in August, 2018.

Mohapatra had taken part in the Quit India Movement of 1942 and moved from village to village propagating Swadeshi movement. He had also persuaded people not to pay revenue to landlords, give up British-made clothes and use indigenously woven Khadi clothes.

Jagatsinghpur man hangs self after attacking daughter, wife



POST NEWS NETWORK

Jagatsinghpur, July 3: An elderly man hanged himself late Friday night after conducting a murderous attack on his wife and grown-up daughter at Chandpatna village in Jagatsinghpur district, police informed.

The man's daughter succumbed to injuries and his wife has been battling for life in hospital, the police official added.

According to source, the man was identified as Loknath Pal who was in his early fifties. He attacked his wife Kalpana and daughter Madhusmita with a sharp weapon. Later, the man hanged self.

Some neighbours rescued the mother and daughter duo from a pool of blood. They were imme-

diately rushed to Jagatsinghpur district headquarters hospital (DHH) for treatment in critical condition.

The daughter who was in her early twenties died while undergoing treatment. Loknath's wife was shifted to SCB Medical College and Hospital (SCBMCH) in Cuttack after her condition deteriorated.

On being informed about the incident, Sadar police reached the house in Chandpatna village Saturday morning. A detailed probe into the matter is underway.

Exact cause behind the incident has not been ascertained yet. Prima facie, it appears to be a case of family feud. Police have been investigating from all probable angles, the official informed.

Doctor held for killing wife in Ganjam district

POST NEWS NETWORK

Gopalpur, July 3: A doctor was arrested Saturday for murdering his wife at Madhapura village under Golanthara police limits in Ganjam district.

The deceased has been identified as S Debasmita and the arrested doctor as M Satyajit Subudhhi (33).

He worked at Keluapali community health centre (CHC).

According to family sources, Subudhhi had married S Debasmita Patra of G Udaygiri in January, 2017. Some years after marriage, their relationship turned sour over some reasons and they would quarrel. July 2 was not different either. They entered into a verbal duel.



Later, he lodged a report with Golanthara police station, saying

on his return from market he found his wife hanging from the ceiling fan.

A team from Golanthara police station reached the spot and recovered the body. On being informed, the deceased's family members also reached the spot. Debasmita's father had lodged a report with the police station, ac-

cusing Subudhhi of murdering his daughter.

On the basis of the complaint, the police had registered a case (178/21), detained the doctor and launched a probe.

The accused was produced in court and sent to judicial custody as his bail plea was rejected, it was learnt.

WASTAGE OF MONEY?



Even as the construction of a fly-over between Dhuchurapada Square and Kacheri Square in Sambalpur town has been completed, it is yet to be thrown open for public use

OP PHOTO

BeMC: Drainage problem troubles Silk City residents

POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, July 3: Residents of Patrapeta area under ward no-16 of Berhampur Municipality Corporation (BeMC) have been beset with several problems, including drainage.

A visitor to Patrapeta Sahi is welcomed by standing drainage water at the very entrance of the village. In rainy season, the drainage water submerges the village road, making it difficult for the villagers to go out of the village.

The residents alleged that the sanitation workers of BeMC engaged in cleaning drains were only going through the motions. As a result, knee-deep drainage water stands on the road for days together. "The sanitation workers do come to our area only after we register complaints. Thereafter, the same situation prevails," they alleged, adding that, this should not be the case during this pandemic time.

Pointing out the health issues arising out of drainage problem, they said the stagnant water has become a breeding place for mosquitoes and flies. This is why most residents are suffering from diseases



like malaria and filaria.

According to the residents, most of the PHED pipe lines are laid out in drains. At times, drainage water seeps through the pipes and contaminates the drinking water. The villagers have taken the issue up with the officials on several occasions but to no avail.

The villagers further alleged that the street lights in their locality are not working properly and the BeMC authority is hardly taking any steps to get them repaired.

When contacted, some senior residents said urban bank road, Khalasi Sahi and one way traffic

road come under Patrapeta Sahi. Yet, the civic body is not taking steps to address the issues.

In this regard, former corporator of ward no-16 K Madhavi, who was also a former mayor, said the drainage problem has often been brought to the notice of the BeMC but nothing has been done so far.

When asked, BeMC deputy commissioner Romanchal Khamari said he has already discussed with the commissioner on the drainage issue in ward no-16. "Steps will soon be taken to improve the drainage facility in the locality," he added.

FOCUS VACCINE HESITANCY

ON LIBERTY & CONSPIRACY

Although countries like Israel, the United Kingdom, and the United States have done particularly well getting Covid-19 vaccines into arms as fast as possible, vaccine hesitancy remains a serious hurdle. In the US, it has already derailed President Joe Biden's goal of administering at least one vaccine dose to 70 per cent of the US population by July 4.

In a CNN poll in April, about 26 per cent of US respondents said they do not intend to get vaccinated at all. That is a big problem, given that near-universal vaccination is the only reliable way to end the pandemic. Assuming, for example, that Covid-19 variants as contagious as measles become dominant, achieving herd immunity could require that 94 per cent of the population is immune.

In these circumstances, policymakers might be tempted to try to suppress vaccine hesitancy — much of it fuelled by conspiracy theories. To believers, the real danger is not Covid-19, but that Bill Gates is using vaccines to implant microchips in our brains.

But aren't conspiracy theories just another form of free speech? In his classic defense of that principle, *On Liberty*, John Stuart Mill offers two arguments: those who hold erroneous beliefs are more likely to abandon them in a free exchange of ideas, while vigorously contesting a true belief prevents it from becoming an unexamined prejudice or dogma.

In fact, conspiracy theorists rarely abandon their beliefs through a free exchange of ideas. Conspiracy theories have a "self-sealing" property, whereby new information that challenges the belief comes to be seen as further proof of it. If you try to convince a "9/11 truther" that the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks were not, in fact, an inside job, they will probably lament that you have been brainwashed, too, and urge you to read a report or watch a documentary showing that the official version of history is a lie.

The point to remember is that conspiracy theorists genuinely believe that a small secret group of people — a cabal — controls the world. With this as one's premise,



Now that vaccine hesitancy has emerged as a major threat to achieving herd immunity, public authorities might be tempted to crack down on conspiracy theories that are fuelling it. But before they do, they should revisit John Stuart Mill's famous defense of free speech

it makes sense to interpret all new information as validation of it.

Should we therefore stifle conspiracy theorists in the interest of facilitating a rational exchange of ideas? Mill, who opposed all forms of censorship, argued that such a public intervention is justified only on the basis of the "harm principle." As he famously put it in *On Liberty*: "The only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others."

Considered in isolation, many conspiracy theories do not fall afoul of Mill's principle. Simply believing that aliens have landed at Roswell, New Mexico, or that no one landed on the moon doesn't hurt anyone, though otherwise harmless conspiracy theories can of course encourage harmful acts. For example, the belief that 5G technologies help to propagate Covid-19 has led people in the UK to burn down cell towers.

Moreover, conspiracy theories sometimes do inflict direct harm, as is often the case when they are linked to anti-Semitism. It might

not matter that the British conspiracy theorist David Icke believes lizards are ruling the world; but it does when he lashes out against "Rothschild Zionists." Going back at least as far as the notorious Czarist secret police fabrication, The Protocols of the Elders of Zion, Jews have been the conspiracy theorist's cabal par excellence, which helps to explain why figures such as George Soros remain the subject of conspiracy theories — and the target of threats and defamation — to this day.

Similarly, many of those who violently attacked the US Capitol January 6, 2021, subscribe to the QAnon conspiracy theory, which holds that Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton, and Soros are part of a Satanist, pedophilic child sex-trafficking ring. In this case, the US has a number of legal measures designed to encompass the negative effects of conspiracy theories, such as "breach of peace" ordinances and laws against disorderly conduct or "hate speech."

But, again, these statutes address individual actions, not the beliefs themselves. The problem

with vaccine hesitancy is not the belief that Gates is trying to implant a microchip into your brain; it is the act of not getting vaccinated. What, if anything, can the state do about that?

Evidence from the UK suggests that as more people get vaccinated, vaccine hesitancy declines. The UK and the US both started with similar levels of "anti-vax" sentiment last summer, but such views have plummeted in the UK, and the country is now outpacing the US in vaccinations. This suggests that as more people get vaccinated and see that everything is okay, others may be more likely to follow suit. The best way to create this virtuous cycle is not to censor conspiracy theories but rather to vaccinate more people and spread the message that vaccines are indeed safe and effective. Seeking to prevent false beliefs from being aired simply gives ammunition to those claiming that the state is out to get them.

For the final holdouts, vaccine mandates might be the only solution, particularly if countries remain far short of herd immunity. With the highly contagious Delta variant ravaging communities with lower rates of vaccination, this would be a true application of Mill's "harm principle": to prevent harm to others.

As Mill observed, all beliefs are either wholly false, partly true, or wholly true. In the case of conspiracy theories, we should remember that many are often based on some grain of truth, or at least on a legitimate impulse to challenge the elite consensus. No, Gates doesn't want to control our minds with microchips; but it is perfectly reasonable to worry that today's tech giants have too much influence over the way we think.

Exploring these nuances is what Mill meant when he advocated for the vigorous public contestation of true beliefs. Though we might beat the pandemic eventually, the battle for critical thinking will go on.

The writer is Assistant Professor of Political Theory at the University of Nottingham.
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Nothing, not even the darkest falsehood can stop the ultimate triumph of Truth.

THE MOTHER



Wallow In Pettiness

Column writing is referred to as 'punditry' in America. Their definition of a pundit is "an expert in a particular subject or field who is frequently called upon to give their opinions to the public." However this is not how punditry usually expresses itself. Newspaper column writers are not experts in any particular subject or field. Almost all of them are drawn from the pool of journalists and used to be reporters or editors earlier. If they are experts at anything (and this is highly disputable) it would be in the narrow reporting space that they worked in. But how much expertise in medicine and surgery does a reporter on the healthcare beat have? None. Editors, and I have been one of four newspapers, are not experts at anything. Column writers are post facto commentators. They write about what has already happened. We have no idea what is to happen. How many Indian columnists predicted the recession, the second wave, the Chinese intrusion into Ladakh, the farm laws, the highest unemployment in history, the public's response to CAA, demonetisation and three years of declining GDP growth, the failure of GST or the dismembering of Kashmir? None.

Forget that, how many even predicted the landslide election result in West Bengal? We are not even experts in the political field and shouldn't be taken seriously. To be fair to us it is not our fault. The near future is hard to predict because it involves human agency. The government chooses to do something or not do something and this produces effects. None of us can tell how it will end, including often even the government.

But the longer term is easier to predict because it is not based on human agency but on technology and science. Some things are bound to happen because technology and its rate of improvement are predictable. Computers will get faster, petroleum will finish, manufacturing will require fewer people, robots will get better. All of these things are already happening and will continue to happen. To foresee the future is only to be able to examine the rate of progress.

The climate will change because science tells us that it is changing. Inequality will increase because companies are getting larger. Foreign influence will increase in the politics and economies of countries like India because they are technologically dependent. Warfare will become less violent but more decisive because military power is linked to technological power. The question is what all of this will ultimately mean for us. For centuries, this sort of thing did not matter because progress was slow compared to today. For a period in the 19th century, when electricity and mechanised locomotion were discovered and invented, the change was dramatic. The first man flew in December 1903 on a plane that could go a few metres. Within 66 years, one lifetime, Americans put men on the moon. That is change of a pace not seen before, but change has accelerated since then because of increasing power in computing.

Today's supercomputers have far more capacity at computation than the human brain. It is only a particular software or algorithm that requires to be developed to make them like us, which means for a computer to have general intelligence. Already at narrow intelligence a computer is much better than us, from flying airplanes to playing chess to scanning X-rays. But a computer cannot read a book like we can and does not know the difference between a dog and a sitar. It has no ability to think and people are currently working (most notable at companies owned by Google) on training computers to be like us.

What happens when such general intelligence is developed, as is being predicted will happen in the next few years? That machine will be able to improve itself rapidly through instant evolution. A being smarter than us will be able to make itself better and more intelligent to the point that we would think of it as a god. Again, many books have been written on this and in some of the most intelligent circles in America, including people like Bill Gates and Elon Musk, these things are being discussed seriously. They are doing so because artificial intelligence of that sort is perhaps only 20 years away and may prove to be a threat to mankind.

But while the world's most powerful people are talking about this, and to some extent some governments (both America and China have artificial intelligence programmes in their military), these are not subjects India thinks about.

If the West transitions rapidly by 2030 to renewable energy and electric cars, what will that mean for crude oil production? An American company is planning to colonise Mars within the next 10 years. The rockets to do this are already being made and tested. What will that mean for the future of the earth and its nation-state system? In a world where the difference between natural and synthetic is fast vanishing, how long will competitive sport be popular? 3D printing will soon change manufacturing and make a lot of trade obsolete. What is the future of nations which, like India, are still poor and have not transitioned to becoming developed? Where will our crores get employed?

Life for all of us will be very different in 10 years from how it is today. In 20 years life might be unrecognisable from how it is now. But wallowing in the narrowness of Indian politics and society, none of us is able to see it, much less predict it.

WISDOM CORNER

- To love abundantly is to live abundantly, and to love forever is to live forever. — HENRY DRUMMOND
- It has been my experience that folks who have no vices have very few virtues. — ABRAHAM LINCOLN
- The very essence of instinct is that it's followed independently of reason. — CHARLES DARWIN

WORDSWORTH

Nutrigenomics

Yet another term in -genomics for us to add to pharmacogenomics, toxicogenomics, chemogenomics and even aromagenomics. Our current obsession with genes is reflected in this growing list of words that borrow the word genomics, the study of the human genome, to create fashionable but often unlovely neologisms. This term refers to the study of our food and how it influences our health through interactions with our personal genetic make-up. It is suggested, in the hand-waving way of futurist commentators in this field, that one day many of our ailments might be treated not with drugs but with special diets. However, the complexity of the factors influencing health — not merely diet and heredity, but also economic and social conditions, culture and behaviour — are likely to make it difficult to isolate the influences of food from all the others. Though it is often confused with nutritional genomics, from which the name seems to be derived, the latter speciality usually refers instead to the genetic manipulation of plants so that they generate valuable vitamins and minerals to improve diet. "Nutrigenomics" researchers hope to do away with such blanket generalizations and instead target diets to specific people (*Newsweek*, September 2002). Nutrigenomics is the study of how different foods can interact with particular genes to increase the risk of diseases such as type 2 diabetes, obesity, heart disease and some cancers (*United Press International*, January 2003).



Hugo Drochon

THOUGH WE MIGHT BEAT THE PANDEMIC EVENTUALLY, THE BATTLE FOR CRITICAL THINKING WILL GO ON



Aakar Patel

What is the future of nations which, like India, are still poor and have not transitioned to becoming developed?

SPECTRUM POLITICS

Time for Rahul to take up Congress reins



Anita Saluja

HAVING COME TO TERMS THAT THE CONGRESS CANNOT SURVIVE WITHOUT THE NEHRU-GANDHI FAMILY, IT WOULD BE BETTER FOR THE PARTY LEADERS TO COME TOGETHER

At a time when the Congress Opposition should have been active in the field, exposing the massive failure of the Modi government in handling the Covid crisis, the party itself is facing an unprecedented crisis. Rahul Gandhi, who is the de facto Congress president, is still indecisive on taking up the reins of the party, even as top leaders are perplexed about their next course of action, while party workers are sitting idle, not knowing which way to tread.

The foundations of the 135-year 'Grand Old Party' are shaking as never before and unless the Nehru-Gandhi family comes forward to save the Congress nothing can be achieved. The realisation of 'better late than never' had forced the G-23 leaders, led by Ghulam Nabi Azad, to raise the issue of party leadership in the open. However, except for them, no one in the party came forward to join the group.

It took seven years for the party to persuade Sonia Gandhi to take up the Congress president's post in 1998 ever since the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi in 1991. The party

is again willing to wait for Rahul to make up his mind. Even in the past, it has waited for Rahul who agreed to become Congress vice-president in 2013 and finally consented to become Congress president only in 2017. He resigned in 2019, taking up the responsibility for the party's debacle in the Lok Sabha elections, and is now again being persuaded to energeise the Congress.

The Congress, therefore, is totally dependent on Rahul, who the BJP tags as 'Pappu.' In retrospect, one wonders, whether he could have handled the Covid situation better than those who are running the country. People would rather have 'Pappu' at the helm than those strategists who vanish when in need and come to the forefront only when the crisis blows over.

Having come to terms that the Congress cannot survive without the Nehru-Gandhi family, it would be better for the party leaders to come together. First and foremost, Rahul should be convinced to take up the reins of the party by getting himself elected as the Congress president. The dilly-dallying attitude of Rahul will

sharpen the anxiety of the people, who are hopeful of seeing the downfall of the Modi government. The Congress needs to firm up its act together, particularly when Assembly elections in Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Manipur, Goa, Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh are approaching.

The BJP's sole agenda has been to downgrade Rahul to a level where no one dares to side with him. By incessantly running the 'Pappu' campaign against him, they have succeeded in lowering the credibility of the Gandhi scion. Leave aside his own partymen, who are desperate to jump out of the sinking ship, even his own allies are in double-mind whether or not to join hands with him for alliance in the upcoming Assembly polls.

Here again, the urgency to revive the Congress becomes imminent for which Rahul alone can inject the required adrenaline to the party cadres. Unless the Congress is rejuvenated and is successful in dethroning the BJP in some of the states, the goal of defeating the saffron party at the national level would never be

achieved. Take the example of Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat and Uttarakhand where elections are due next year. In all these states it is a straight fight between the Congress and the BJP. It's only in Uttar Pradesh that there are other players like the Samajwadi Party and the Bahujan Samaj Party, which too have set their sights on forming the government in the state.

It is Rahul Gandhi on whose shoulders the future of the Congress, the prospects of the UPA and the hopes of millions of Indians are pinned upon. India being a democratic country, people would like to vote according to their wishes. But if there is no alternative to the BJP, they will be forced to vote for the same party. For that matter, even the BJP vouches for a good Opposition, though it is a different thing altogether that whenever Rahul Gandhi opens his mouth, the entire Modi Cabinet comes forward to attack him. Is he really a 'Pappu,' then?

The writer is a senior journalist and political commentator.

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

Readers of Orissa POST are most welcome to contribute letters (200 words), articles and columns (between 750-1250 words). Contributors are requested to send their contact numbers and full postal address/email ID. They may also send in their valuable comments, opinion and suggestions, preferably by email, to: edit@orissapost.com

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Bullying Beijing

Sir, This is in reference to "Xi: Will bash up anyone bullying China" *Orissa POST*, July 2. The Chinese President's loud warning to the world from the stage of Chinese Communist Party's centenary celebrations is farce. It is China under his dictatorial leadership that incessantly pursues the policy of bullying its neighbours in its quest for territorial expansion. Most of China's neighbours including India are the victims of its avoidable aggression. Further, China's motives and machinations stand brutally exposed due to the Wuhan-origin coronavirus that has killed millions and devastated the demography of the entire planet. Beijing believes China is the 'sole civilisation' and people in the rest of the world are 'barbarians' who are inferior and thus need to be subjugated. The 'barbarians' deserve contempt and should be made to kowtow to the Beijing durbar! Those who can't be bullied should be conquered with cash, backed up by the PLA's ever-expanding forces on land, sea and cyberspace. The aim is to buy every possible strategic asset overseas by resorting to hostile takeovers of foreign tech companies, luring foreign politicians with cash or kind and manipulating the media by any or every means to achieve global supremacy.
N Sadhasiva Reddy, BANGALORE

Wrong step

Sir, Active Covid cases in Odisha were continuously coming down over the last five weeks, down by 70 per cent. However, there was a slight increase June 24 (0.4 per cent) and June 30 (0.3 per cent). Based on this slight increase, the Centre has sent its team to Odisha. This is not correct on the part of the Centre. There are many states where the situation is worse. Among 21 states and union territories with population of one crore, the deaths per lakh population is lowest in Odisha.
Gopal Mittal, BHUBANESWAR

Boosting retail

Sir, The Centre's decision to classify retail and wholesale businesses as MSMEs appears to be beneficial to all parties involved. The amended guidelines will boost 2.5 million retail and wholesale organisations and would allow them to register as MSMEs on the Udyam Registration portal. Manufacturing and service firms were previously included in the existing definition of MSMEs, but retail and wholesale firms were not. We hope that the decision would help the retail and wholesale sectors.
Amit Singh Kushwaha, SATNA (MP)

Locals fret over AP Dy CM visiting Neredi project

VISIT FLARES UP TENSION IN BORDER ODISHA VILLAGES OVER CONSTRUCTION OF NEREDI BARRAGE BY ANDHRA



Andhra Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Dharmana Krishna Das and officials reviewing the Neredi barrage project at the worksite

block of Rayagada district and interacted with the residents on the situation.

The team led by BJP state vice-president Bhruhu Buxipatra comprised former Koraput MP Jayaram Pangi, Paralakhemundi MLA K Narayan Rao and Rayagada district party president Siba Patnaik. The BJP team visited the project-affected areas in these two districts and took stock of the situation.

The team members after visiting the areas briefed the media persons at a presser held at the Gunupur dak bungalow Friday afternoon.

In the presser, Buxipatra flayed the state government. He alleged that the tribunal order went in support of Andhra government as the state government failed to project its stand during hearing. The party members demanded that the state government construct a project at Panidangar on the upstream of the river to protect the interests of its residents.

The party leaders also flayed the one-sided order of the tribunal which directed the Odisha government to bear half of the expenditure of the Neredi project if it goes for construction of another project on the upstream of the river. The party leaders demanded that the Odisha government move Supreme Court against the tribunal order to protect its interest.

The BJP delegation Saturday organised a presser at Paralakhemundi in Gajapati district and tore into the state government for its inability to protect the interests of its residents. Buxipatra alleged that over 2000 acres in both the districts will be affected by the barrage if it comes up at Neredi. The barrage construction will lead to loss of homes and livelihood of farmers, daily wagers, labourers and tribals in the affected region.

He alleged that Andhra government might not have gone for construction of a barrage at Neredi if the state government had gone for construction of the Panidangar irrigation project. Among other party leaders, Kashinagar block chairperson CH Simadri, senior party leader Nrusingha Charan Patanaik were present at the press meet.

STOCK TAKING



A high-level team taking stock of the houses of fishermen damaged by high tidal waves at Rameyapatna village under Golanthara police limits in Ganjam district. The tidal waves crossed the coast and damaged the houses

Bridge at Pubansha approved, residents thank govt, Jena

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nishchintakoili, July 3: The long wait of people living in riparian areas of Luna and Chitrapala rivers of Nishchintakoili block in Cuttack district for a new bridge across Luna river on Katikata-Jaipur road at Pubansha will come to an end soon. The state government approved it Thursday.

Earlier, officials of Kendrapara PWD had visited the spot identified for the bridge. Samples of soil, sand and water collected by them from the spot have been sent for laboratory test. Similarly, a technical team also visited the site, inspecting the locations where the bridge's both ends will meet the road.

Once completed, people of about 20 panchayats residing in the riparian areas of Luna and Chitrotala rivers will be benefited. Other than doing away with the transportation problems faced by the farmers and traders, the bridge will also connect Cuttack district to Jagatsinghpur district.



Welcoming the move, Nishchintakoili block chairperson Sabita Ojha, Girish Mohapatra, Ashok Ojha, Ramakanta Mohanty and others expressed gratitude to the government and Mahanga MLA and Minister for Urban Development Pratap Jena.

Notably, with a view to improving the connectivity between

Cuttack and Jagatsinghpur districts, the Katikata-Jaipur road was upgraded. But the old narrow bridge on the road at Pubansha was left and is in a dilapidated state now.

The people of riparian areas had been demanding a bridge at Pubansha and brought the attention of Jena to their problems.

Five arrested for attacking police

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jeypore, July 3: Kakiriguma police in Koraput district Saturday arrested five persons in connection with an alleged attack on a police team that took place Friday.

According to sources, Kakiriguma police station IIC and a constable were attacked Friday afternoon by a mob over lifting of a youth's body from an accident site at Goudaguda where the locals had been protesting.

A 22-year-old man from Bariguda village had died in a road mishap at Goudaguda under Kakiriguma police limits. Family members of the deceased and local villagers had staged a roadblock on the spot.

The bike-borne youth was run over by a tipper. After being informed, police reached the spot and took the injured youth to Jeypore hospital in critical condition, where he was declared 'brought dead' by doctors, a senior official of Kakiriguma police station said.

Meanwhile, family members of the deceased including villagers alleged that police took the body to get rid of protests. This triggered anger, following which the irate mob roughed up the IIC and the constable.

POST NEWS NETWORK

Gunupur/Kashinagar, July 3: Days after the Vamshadhara Water Disputes Tribunal passed an order in favour of Andhra Pradesh for construction of a barrage on the river at Neredi, the Deputy Chief Minister of the neighbouring state visited the work site Friday and reviewed the project work, a report said.

The tribunal passed its order June 21, sparking sharp resentment among the residents of Gunupur in Rayagada district as well in Kashinagar of Gajapati district. This is because the construction of the barrage at Neredi will lead to severe water scarcity in these areas of both the districts in the river basins.

The residents are up in arms over the inability of the state government in protecting the interest of the residents of its own state. As if this was not enough, the visit of the Deputy Chief Minister Dharmana Krishna Das has only added salt to the injuries of the residents.

The team led by the Deputy Chief Minister comprised Anil Kumar Yadav, water resources minister, V Kalavati, Palkunda MLA, Reddy Shanti, Patapatna MLA, D Srinivas,

The residents are up in arms over the inability of the state government in protecting the interest of the residents of its own state

The opposition BJP has flayed the state government on the tribunal's order. It has termed the development as an intelligence failure as the state government has no knowledge about Andhra government's plan to expedite work at the project site after the tribunal order

Member of Legislative Council (MLC), the local District Collector and chief engineer of the water resources department.

The team visited the work site and reviewed the project. The order has come as a morale booster for the Andhra government as it has begun efforts to expedite the project work on the river.

The opposition BJP has flayed the state government on the tribunal's order. It has termed the development as an intelligence failure as the state government has no knowledge about Andhra government's plan to expedite work at the project site after the tribunal order.

Meanwhile, a state level delegation of the BJP visited the riparian villages Sara, Badinga, Palsingh villages under Kashinagar block as well as Gunupur and Panidangar village under Gudari

Cops seize 10.97 qntl of cannabis, 4 held



POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, July 3: Police have seized over 10.97 quintals of cannabis from three different places in Ganjam district in the last two days and arrested four persons, an officer said Saturday.

During patrolling at Golanthara Saturday, 3.7 quintals of cannabis, which was transported from Andhra Pradesh towards Bhubaneswar in a lorry, were seized by police, the officer said.

One person was arrested, while the driver and cleaner of the tanker managed to escape from the spot, Berhampur Sub-Divisional Police Officer Jayant Mohapatra said.

On Friday, police seized over 7.02 quintals of ganja from a dry-cashew laden truck near Kanheipur under the Khallikote police station limits.

The contraband was found inside cashew nuts. Besides ganja, around 6 quintals of cashew nut was also seized. The driver and helper of the truck, however, escaped from the spot, police said.

In another incident, police seized around 25-kg marijuana from Patapalli under Surada police station limits while being transported by the smugglers in a motorcycle Friday.

Another motorcycle was escorting them. Three persons, including a man and his two sons who are from Bramhanigaon in Kandhamal district, were arrested, Surada inspector-in-charge Ramesh Pradhan said.

Three days ago, police had seized over 31 quintals of ganja worth Rs 2 crore from a house at Khaparaganda village.

Covid-19 situation in Salipur grim

POST NEWS NETWORK

Salipur, July 3: At a time when Covid-19 graph is on a constant downward trend in the state, the situation in Salipur block in Cuttack district is still grim with over 30 fresh positive cases being reported from here on a daily basis.

According to the residents, due to people paying scant regard to Covid-19 guidelines, the situation is yet to improve in Salipur block.

On the one hand, people in Salipur town and even in its rural pockets are showing unprecedented enthusiasm to get vaccine doses,

while on the other hand they are not following the Covid-19 norms like wearing masks and maintaining social distancing.

Vaccination is going on at five places including Salipur community health centre (CHC) in the block. At these centres, sighting of long queues of people is a common thing. People from rural areas can also be seen spending nights at some centres to get doses the next morning. At some centres, stones or something like that can be seen placed in lines as a token of people's presence.

"The people's eagerness to get

Vaccination is going on at five places including Salipur community health centre (CHC) in the block. At these centres, long queues of beneficiaries is a common sight

vaccines to stay protected from the disease is a good thing. But we are suffering for some people who have been violating the norms," said intellectuals of the locality.

"People are still coming out with-

out masks on their faces. Some are seen wearing masks improperly. In markets and shops, people hardly follow social distancing norm. The same situation is witnessed at some vaccination centres as well," they alleged, adding that, these violators go on being adamant because of the administration not taking stringent action against them.

"To stop the spread of the disease, people should be aware of the seriousness of the situation and follow the norms. At the same time, the administration should come down heavily on the violators," they maintained.

DEVELOPMENTAL PROJECT



State Women and Child Development Minister Tukuni Sahu inaugurating a developmental project at Titlagarh in Bolangir district, Saturday

Additional tehsildar ploughs land, inspires youngsters



POST NEWS NETWORK

Malkangiri, July 3: For the additional tehsildar of Chittrakonda tehsil in Malkangiri district, going back to root and prepare land with a plough could not be more satisfying.

Meet this government servant Ashok Kumar Muduli, a native of Raisingh village in Koraput district.

Born into a farmer family, Ashok grew up seeing his father Bibhishan Muduli working in farmland. "I have a kind of weakness towards agriculture since my childhood days. I grew up rhyming 'chasa kama jahara kete sukha tahara' (farmers are the happiest ones).

These lines keep me inspiring always," he said.

"Even though my profession and passion are different things, whenever I get an opportunity to work in farmland I never miss it. In fact, the joy of working in the farmlands comes from within and it can't be expressed in words," he observed, adding that, those who are born in farmer families should never go away from agricultural activities.

At a time when the youths are turning away from agriculture, Ashok's spending time in farmlands wearing a vest and a loin-cloth will definitely inspire the youngsters, some senior residents of Raisingh village observed.

Man kills bro with wooden plank

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kendrapara, July 3: A 32-year-old man allegedly killed his younger brother in Kendrapara district, police said Saturday.

Surendra Samal attacked his younger brother Rajendra Samal (30) in a sudden fit of rage with a wooden plank at Sobala village Friday night,

an officer said. The victim who sustained head injuries bled to death on the spot, Pattamundai police station inspector Rakesh Kumar Tripathy said.

The suspect fled after committing the crime and a search is on to arrest him. An investigation is underway to ascertain the exact cause behind the attack, he added.

Experts trash draft Delhi Master Plan

THE DRAFT IGNORES DEEPLY-HELD CONCERNS OVER FAIR LAND USE, LACKS AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND SHORT-CHANGES MARGINALISED GROUPS TO BENEFIT BUSINESS

Why Delhi witnessed the hottest July day in 9 years

THE LATE ARRIVAL OF THE SOUTHWEST MONSOON AND A LOO BLOWING IN FROM THE DESERT STATE OF RAJASTHAN HAVE MADE LIFE MISERABLE IN NATIONAL CAPITAL

REUTERS

New Delhi, July 3: Planners in Delhi have set out a vision for a "sustainable, liveable and vibrant" future city in a master plan that experts say ignores its informal workers and bypasses its many poor.

The draft Delhi Master Plan 2041, open for public feedback until July 24, aims to cater to a population of about 29mn - up from 19mn now - with better public transport and mobility, wider housing options and more green space.

But the draft ignores deeply-held concerns over fair land use, lacks affordable housing and short-changes marginalised groups to benefit business, said Manju Menon, an urban expert.

There is a massive push for redevelopment, for greater commercialisation in residential areas, erasing agriculture from the city and denying housing spaces for the poor

MANJU MENON | URBAN EXPERT

"There is a massive push for redevelopment, for greater commercialisation in residential areas, erasing agriculture from the city and denying housing spaces for the poor," said Menon, a senior fellow at the Centre for Policy Research, a think tank.

"Unfortunately, this almost full-cooked draft has too much that is still not acceptable or missing, and it's not clear if there will be room for much change," she said.

Master plans are routinely used



around the world to shape tomorrow's cities, be it to add amenities, apportion land, protect the environment or improve citizens' quality of life.

Delhi's Master Plan 2041, its fourth since the first effort covering 1961-81, introduces policies for a "strategic and enabling framework that can nurture the future growth of the city," said Delhi Development Authority, the planning agency.

The plan "endeavours to address issues in a holistic manner; build on Delhi's inherent strengths and harness opportunities to realise the real potential of the city," it said.

Delhi was established as the capital of the Indian empire in 1911, when colonial British rulers moved the capital from the eastern city of Calcutta, now called Kolkata.

Architects Edwin Lutyens and Herbert Baker planned the heart of the city, and its grand avenues, iconic buildings and many monuments draw hordes of tourists.

The city is also a magnet for mi-

grants from nearby states seeking changed fortunes.

On the flip side, Delhi consistently ranks among cities with the worst air pollution in the world, while a plan to redo its central administrative area drew criticism over fears it will destroy heritage and swallow precious open spaces.

These were among the concerns of Main Bhi Dilli — or I am also Delhi — a collective of women's groups, housing groups and urban experts who have tried to make the planning process for this latest vision more inclusive and participatory.

Their main focus is how the plans might help or hinder the more than 6mn informal workers who typically toil as street vendors, construction labourers and trash pickers, and without whom the capital would cease to function.

"We wanted to see how the urban space can better serve informal workers, who make up 80% of Delhi's workforce but have not been a part of the conversation before," said Malavika Narayan, a research consultant at WIEGO, an informal women workers' group that is part of Main Bhi Dilli.

The coronavirus pandemic has also highlighted the "urgent need for secure, viable, decent housing, and access to sanitation, water and healthcare — not just for informal settlers, but for everyone in the city," she added.

Tens of thousands of migrant workers fled the city last year during lockdowns to control the pandemic.

The Main Bhi Dilli campaign consulted on the plan with young Indians, slum dwellers, vendors and home workers, and held virtual discussions during the coronavirus lockdowns.

The 45 days for public feedback on the draft plan is not enough, particularly as residents are still struggling with fallout from coronavirus, be it illness, unemployment or homelessness, the Main Bhi Dilli campaign said in a statement.

scientists say climate change is making them harsher and more frequent.

Delhi saw 43.1 degrees Celsius Thursday, the hottest July day in the city since 2012 when the capital sweltered under 43.5 degrees Celsius. Friday, the temperature again shot up to 41 degree Celsius in the city of 20 million.

Temperatures have remained more than seven degrees Celsius above normal for this time of the year, prompting India's weather office to classify it as "severe extreme heat".

India Meteorological Department said the mercury will stay above 40 degrees for the coming week because of the late arrival of the southwest monsoon and a hot wind known as the Loo blowing in from the desert state of Rajasthan.

The weather department has issued a heatwave alert for the region, with forecasters also saying some isolated places will witness thunderstorms. The intense heat has

driven up power consumption as more and more people turned to air-conditioners and air coolers.

Delhi's power consumption peaked to nearly 7,000 megawatts (MW) this week, 10 to 15 per cent higher than the average demand at this time of the year.

Forecasters predict that the annual rains will not hit Delhi before July 7, making it the most delayed monsoon in the national capital since 2006. The deadliest year for India was 2015 when over 2,000 were killed by intense heat.

Currently just five per cent of Indian households have air conditioning compared to 90 per cent in the United States and 60 per cent in China. But the market is forecast to boom in the coming years, driving up energy consumption in what is already the world's third-largest emitter of carbon dioxide.

Parts of Delhi and elsewhere regularly see scuffles when tankers arrive to deliver water.



Zero Covid figure in Delhi unlikely: Experts

Delhi had reeled under a brutal second wave with oxygen shortage and unavailability of beds. However, in the last few days cases have shown a steady decline with the positivity rate coming down below 1%

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 3: Cases of COVID-19 might be declining steadily but as the virus is mutating, attaining that magical zero figure in Delhi is unlikely, experts have said, and predicted that coronavirus will be reduced to an endemic in the future.

The Centre, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and his cabinet colleague Satyendar Jain had said last year that one will have to learn with coronavirus and make its prevention norms a part of our lives.

Dr Suresh Kumar, medical director of Delhi government-run LNJP Hospital said there will always be a few cases of the virus.

"Zero is an unlikely figure. The virus is mutating and it is difficult to predict its future behaviour," he said.

Explaining why the virus has posed such a challenge, Dr Sanjeev K. Singh, Resident Medical Director, Amrita Hospitals in Faridabad said it is an mRNA virus which keeps changing its structure.

"These virus is smart and just for the sake of living, it will keep mutating. Covid will be there and may not be affecting all 193 countries but it will be there. Coming down to zero won't be achievable. In hospitals for getting surgeries, one has to get tested for Hepatitis and HIV. Eventually, you will be tested for Covid too," he said.

Dr Gauri Agarwal, IVF expert and founder of Seeds of Innocence said keeping the 1918 pandemic as

a yardstick, we know that eradicating the virus is an unrealistic possibility.

"As COVID-19 gradually becomes an endemic, likely in 12-24 months, it will probably stop being a statistic that is being watched on a daily basis. Hence, while we may see zero reportable cases, there may never be a time with actual zero cases ever."

Amid concerns over the possibility of a third wave and emergence of the Delta Plus variant, experts assuaged fears of that possible wave being more lethal since a majority of the population has been infected.

"In my view, if a new strain doesn't come up against which the vaccines are not effective, I don't think the third wave will be as lethal as the second wave," said Dr Rajesh Chawla, Senior Pulmonologist, Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals, New Delhi.

He highlighted that coronavirus will become an endemic in days to come.

Agreeing with Chawla, Dr. Rommel Tickoo, Director, Internal Medicine, Max Healthcare, said we are still in the second Covid wave. "Seventy per cent of the cases are limited to Maharashtra, and southern states. In north Indian states, there was a sudden exponential increase and the virus infected a large number of people together which is why the steady decline. The effect of the virus will be blunted because of the majority of people being exposed to the virus and vaccination," he added.

Delhi had reeled under a brutal second wave with oxygen shortage and unavailability of beds adding to woes of patients. However, in the last few days cases have shown a steady decline with the positivity rate coming down below one per cent.

Monday, the city had recorded 59 cases, the lowest single-day rise this year, and two deaths. After that, the cases have hovered around the 90 mark.



Take a stand on farm laws: Farmers' body to MVA govt

AGENCIES

Mumbai, July 3: The All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee's (AIKSSC) Maharashtra unit Saturday appealed to the state government to take an unequivocal stand to repeal the Centre's three farm laws.

The three parties, the Shiv Sena, NCP and Congress, in the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government have expressed support for the farmers' movement, and now that the fight against these laws has come to a decisive turn, the government needs to take a firm and clear stand by passing a resolution against the Acts in the state legislature, AIKSSC said in a statement.

The state unit of the all India farmer body said the laws are a step towards corporatisation of agriculture, and companies have come up with a comprehensive strategy to make this opportunity a reality. "The central farm Acts that were introduced under the guise of breaking the shackles of capitalism, are in fact, a deliberate attempt to remove obstacles in the way of corporates. This will create a monopoly of corporates in the agricultural sector, giving them unlimited power to com-



mand the prices of commodities and to deny protection to farmers," the AIKSSC Maharashtra claimed in the statement.

While the state government is trying to bring new farm laws in Maharashtra by making some changes to the controversial Acts, amendments to the draft of the Central laws will not change the purpose behind them, nor will it change their anti-farmer and pro-corporate character, the farmers' organisation said. In the interest of farmers in the state, the AIKSSC Maharashtra demanded that the state government take an un-

equivocal stand that the three disputed farm laws be repealed and a resolution to give a fair guarantee to agricultural commodities be passed in the state Assembly.

Scores of farmers have been camping at Delhi's borders since November last year demanding that the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020; Farmers' (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020; and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020 be rolled back.

HC extends Stan Swamy's stay at Mumbai hospital

AGENCIES

Mumbai, July 3: The Bombay High Court Saturday extended the stay of Jesuit priest and activist Stan Swamy an accused in the Elgar Parishad-Maoists links case, at a private hospital in Mumbai till July 6.

Senior counsel Mihir Desai told a bench of Justices SS Shinde and NJ Jamadar that the 84-year-old was still undergoing treatment at the intensive care unit of the Holy Family Hospital, where he was shifted from the Taloja prison in Navi Mumbai following the HC's order May 28 this year.

Swamy, 84, who claims to be suffering from several ailments, including the Parkinson's disease, had moved the high court earlier this year through advocate Desai, seeking medical treatment and interim bail on health grounds.

He had tested positive for coronavirus at a private hospital last month and was subsequently shifted to the ICU. His plea for medical bail and bail on merits was listed for hearing in the high court Friday but could not be taken up due to the paucity of time. The bench adjourned the hearing to Tuesday and extended his hospital stay till then.

"Till the next hearing, on interim order on his (Swamy's) treatment at the private hospital will con-



tinued," the bench said.

Swamy also filed a fresh plea in the HC Friday challenging section 43D(5) of the UAPA that imposes stringent restrictions on the grant of bail to those booked under the Act. In his plea filed through advocate Desai, Swamy said the above section created an unsurmountable hurdle for the accused to get bail and, thus, was violative of the accused person's fundamental right to life and liberty as guaranteed by Constitution.

The practice under the criminal justice system is to presume an accused's innocence unless charges against him or her are proven by the prosecution. Section 43D(5) of the UAPA however, mandates that if a court has reasonable grounds to believe that the accusation against someone charges under the Act is prima facie true, then the accused shall not be released on bail.

Radio station helps educate kids sans smartphones

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Nashik, July 3: A community radio station that is helping educate poor students - who can ill-afford expensive smartphones - is earning laurels for helping bridge the digital divide during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown.

"Radio Vishwas 90.8," run by the Vishwas Dhyani Prabodhini & Research Institute (VDPRI), also bagged two awards at the recent 8th National Community Radio Awards, instituted by the Information & Broadcasting Ministry.

It won the first prize in the 'Sustainability Model Awards' and the second prize in the 'Thematic Awards' category for its radio programme, "Education For All" during the pandemic.

Launched in June 2020, the programme aimed at providing free education, especially for the poor students from Class 3 to Class 10, studying in Zilla Parishad and Nashik Municipal Schools, benefiting around 60,000.



Daily for 14 hours, it broadcast lectures in Hindi, Marathi, English and Sanskrit - recorded by 150 teachers in a studio - which all could access and gain education, said Radio Vishwas 90.8 Station Director Dr. H.V. Kulkarni.

According to Kulkarni, a group of teachers from Igatpuri taluka in Nashik distributed 451 FM devices comprising an USB, Bluetooth and high-end speakers to students to ensure they didn't miss out any lectures on the current syllabus.

Now, the plan is to upload these lectures on YouTube which can be used to teach the students when normal schooling resumes post-lockdown. "The programme received a very positive response... There are students trapped in poverty and

cannot afford smartphones for digital education," Kulkarni said.

The lectures were aired according to slots allocated for each subject, akin to school periods for the benefit of the students.

Buoyed with the success, the lectures were shared with 6 other CRSs in Maharashtra and the content was broadcast through their radio channels to benefit their student-listeners.

The CRS' innovative sustainability model enabled the radio station to sustain itself in four key areas - financial, human, technical and content.

Over the past 10 years, the radio station has developed a listener base of around 300,000, spread across a radius of 10-15 km, said Kulkarni.

The CRS focusses on topics of local and community interests ranging from kitchen gardens to favourite reading to issues that confront senior citizens, and is run by the locals who host talks, sing or play local songs and music for the keen audiences.

national

of the day quote

In 2017, BJP formed a government in Uttarakhand. But instead of working for the development of the state they went power hungry and in the last four and half years, two chief ministers have been changed

RANDEEP SURJEWALA | CONG SPOKESPERSON

GOIs recent decision to stop Darbar move is penny wise & pound foolish. Its economic & social benefits outnumber expenses incurred for moving the capital during summer & winter. Quite obvious that such insensitive decisions are taken by those who least care for J&K's welfare

MEHBOOBA MUFTI | PDP PRESIDENT

Nitish became chief minister of Bihar after putting morality and mandate aside... its result is now coming in the form of their own legislators and ministers levelling corruption charges on the government

LALU PRASAD YADAV | RJD PRESIDENT

SHORT TAKES

ED nabs journo

New Delhi: The ED Saturday said it has arrested a Delhi-based freelance journalist in connection with a money laundering probe linked to alleged leakage and supply of sensitive information to Chinese intelligence officers. Freelance journalist Rajeev Sharma was arrested under the criminal sections of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) July 1 and produced before a local court here Friday. The court granted the Enforcement Directorate (ED) seven days' custody of Sharma, the central probe agency said in a statement.

Naxals attack mine

Narayanpur: Some armed Naxals attacked an iron ore mine site in Chhattisgarh's Narayanpur district Saturday and torched at least four vehicles engaged in road construction work there, a police official said. Two employees working at the site reportedly went missing after the incident, he said. The incident took place in Aamadai iron ore mine area under Chhote Dongar police station area, Narayanpur Superintendent of Police (SP) Mohit Garg told PTI. Production is yet to start at the mine that has been allotted to Jayaswal Neco Industries Limited (JNIL) and pre-mining ground work is underway at the site, officials said.

Army pays tribute

Srinagar: The Indian Army Saturday paid tributes to Havildar Kashiray Bammanalli, who made the supreme sacrifice July 1 at Hanjan in south Kashmir's Pulwama district, at a solemn ceremony at the Badami Bagh Cantt in Srinagar. Lt Gen DP Pandey, Chinar Corps Commander and all ranks paid homage to the gallant soldier on behalf of the nation. Late Havildar Bammanalli was part of Operation Hanjan July 1 2021. "At around 00:25 am, during cordon and search operation in the village, the terrorists fired indiscriminately on the search party," the Army said.

Stuck elephant dies

Golaghat: A tusk-less adult elephant was found dead in a wetland in Assam's Golaghat district Saturday, forest officials said. The elephant had fallen into the Sungihola waterbody under Khumtai outpost of the district Friday morning and after being stuck there for a day, it died, they said. After a post-mortem was conducted, the body was buried in the vicinity, they added.

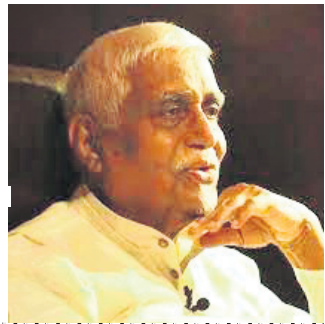


Rare footage from 1973 of an opposition protest when petrol prices were raised by seven paise. Atal Bihari Vajpayee arrived in Parliament on a bullock cart which would not be possible today with the new security restrictions on vehicle entry into the complex!

SHASHI THAROOR | CONGRESS LEADER

MODI CONDOLES IN SANSKRIT

Expressing grief over the passing away of KV Sampath Kumar, the editor of one of the country's oldest Sanskrit daily 'Sudharma', Prime Minister Narendra Modi wrote a condolence letter in Sanskrit to his widow KS Jayalakshmi. This letter was shared by Karnataka Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa on his Twitter handle Saturday



Covaxin efficacy out

Phase-III clinical trials of the vaccine was an event driven analysis of 130 symptomatic Covid-19 cases, reported at least two weeks after the second dose, conducted at 25 sites across India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Hyderabad, July 3: Bharat Biotech's Covaxin has demonstrated 77.8 per cent effectiveness against symptomatic Covid-19 and 65.2 per cent protection against the new Delta variant.

The company Saturday said it concluded the final analysis of Covaxin efficacy from Phase3 trials.

The efficacy analysis demonstrates Covaxin to be 93.4 per cent effective against severe symptomatic Covid-19 cases while safety analysis shows adverse events reported were similar to placebo, with 12 per cent of subjects experiencing commonly known side effects and less than 0.5 per cent feeling serious adverse events.

The efficacy data demonstrates 63.6 per cent protection against asymptomatic Covid-19, a release from the city-based vaccine maker said.



The Phase-III data came as Ocugen Inc (OCGNO), which is co-developing Covaxin with Bharat Biotech for the US market, prepares to file a request for full US approval.

Phase-III clinical trials of the vaccine was an event driven analysis of 130 symptomatic Covid-19 cases, reported at least two weeks after the second dose, conducted at 25 sites across India. The whole virion inactivated vaccine against SARS-CoV2, was developed in partnership with Indian Council of Medical Research and National Institute of Virology in Pune.

Krishna Ella, Chairman and Managing Director of Bharat Biotech, said, "The successful safety and efficacy readouts of Covaxin as a result

of conducting the largest ever Covid Vaccines trials in India establishes the ability of India and developing world countries to focus towards innovation and novel product development. We are proud to state that Innovation from India will now be available to protect global populations."

Director General of ICMR, Balram Bhargava said, "I am delighted to note that Covaxin developed by ICMR and BBIL under an effective public private partnership, has demonstrated an overall efficacy of 77.8 per cent in India's largest Covid phase-III clinical trial thus far. Our scientists at ICMR and BBIL have worked tirelessly to deliver a truly effective vaccine of highest international standards."

Customs deport spiders sent by post from Poland

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, July 3: Seizing a parcel containing 107 plastic vials containing foreign spiders, Chennai Air Customs have asked the postal authorities to deport them back to Poland.

According to the Commissioner of Customs, Chennai International Airport, officials intercepted a postal parcel that arrived from Poland at the Foreign Post Office here. The parcel was addressed to an Arupukotai (Tamil Nadu) based person.

On opening the parcel, a thermocol box was found in which 107 small plastic vials wrapped in silver foil and cotton were found.

On examination live spiders were found inside each vial.

WildLife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) officials and scientists of the Zoological Survey of India were called to identify the species.

Based on morphological examination they suspected the spiders to be of a genus Phonopelma and Brachypelma which are CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) listed Tarantulas, native of South, Central America and Mexico.

The Animal Quarantine Officials recommended deporting the spiders in the parcel to the country of origin as the said import is illegal as there were no proper documents.

Congress demands JPC probe into Rafale deal

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, July 3: A day after France ordered a judicial probe into the allegations of graft in 36 Rafale fighter jets deal with India, the Congress Saturday upped its ante against the Narendra Modi government and demanded Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) probe.

Addressing a press conference virtually, Congress spokesperson Randeep Singh Surjewala said, "The scandalous expose of Rafale scam involving corruption, treason, loss to public exchequer has finally been uncovered."

He said that Congress and former party chief Rahul Gandhi stand vindicated today.

The French have ordered an investigation into the Rafale scam. On June 14, 2021 French Public Prosecution Services has ordered an investigation for corruption, influence peddling, money laundering, favouritism on the complaint of an NGO, he said.

He said that if the role of former French President Francois Hollande and current President Emmanuel Macron is being investigated, then why not Indian former Defence Minister and an Indian company can also be investigated.

He said that the media outlet in France has revealed the deal between Dassault and an Indian company which constituted a joint venture.

French Public Prosecution Services has ordered an investigation for corruption, influence peddling, money laundering, favouritism on the complaint of an NGO

He said, "This substantiates the statement made by then President Francois Hollande, who said that the decision to appoint an Indian company as Dassault's industrial partner was of the Indian government, meaning the Modi government. And the French had no choice into the matter."

He also said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi signed a deal worth 7.8 billion euro to buy 36 Rafale jets in place of 126 fighter jets.

Surjewala pointed out that the French government deleted the anti-corruption clause.

The defects now clearly call for a JPC probe, Surjewala added.

The Congress leader's demand came a day after Mediapart.fr, a media outlet in European country said that a French judge has been appointed to lead a judicial investigation into alleged corruption and favouritism in the 7.8 billion euro sale to India of 36 fighter aircrafts.

MP girl tied to tree, beaten for running away from husband

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Alirajpur, July 3: In a shocking incident, a 19-year-old girl was tied to a tree and beaten brutally by her family members in a tribal village in Alirajpur district of Madhya Pradesh.

According to reports, the girl was dragged by her hair and then tied to a tree and beaten brutally. Her only fault was that she had left her husband's house and had gone to her relative's place without informing her parents.

The video of this incident has now gone viral on the social media.

The incident took place June 28 in Bada Futa Talab village under Bori police station.

PLOUGH & PLIGHT



Suren Das, a farmer, ploughs his paddy field at Santipur in Baksa district, Assam. Das alleges that he is yet to receive any financial assistance under PM Kisan scheme

PTI PHOTO

CONVERSION, PMLA CASE ED raids in Delhi, UP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 3: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) Saturday conducted searches at six locations in Delhi and Uttar Pradesh in a money laundering case linked to alleged conversion of some deaf students and poor people to Islam in UP with purported funding from abroad, official sources said.

The raids are being conducted at the office of Islamic Dawah Centre (IDC), house of main accused in the case Mohd Umar Gautam and his associate Mufti Qazi Jahangir Alam Qasmi, in south Delhi's Jamia Nagar area.

In UP, the raids are being conducted at the offices of Al Hassan education and welfare foundation and guidance education and welfare society located in state capital Lucknow. ED officials said these organisations are run by Umar

Gautam and have been playing an instrumental role in carrying out the alleged illegal conversions.

The central probe agency had late last month filed a criminal case under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) to probe this case unearthed by the Uttar Pradesh Police Anti Terrorist Squad (ATS).

The officials said several incriminating documents have been seized during the searches, which reveal the large-scale conversion allegedly carried out by Umar Gautam and his organisations across India.

The documents also reveal several crores of rupees of foreign funding received by the accused organisations for the purpose of illegal conversions, they claimed.

The ATS had arrested Umar Gautam and Qasmi and claimed that they had access to funds from Pakistan's ISI.

PUSHKAR SINGH DHAMI TO BE NEW UTTARAKHAND CM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dehradun, July 3: Pushkar Singh Dhami will be the new chief minister of Uttarakhand following his election Saturday as the leader of the BJP legislature party in the hill state where assembly polls are due next year.

The 45-year-old will be the youngest chief minister of the state and replaces Tirath Singh Rawat, who resigned Friday night within four months of taking charge from Trivendra Singh Rawat.

Dhami will be sworn in Sunday, Union minister Narendra Singh Tomar told reporters after a legislature party meeting at the state BJP headquarters where he was a central observer.

My party has appointed a common worker, son of an ex-serviceman, who was born in the border district of Pithoragarh to serve the people.



We'll work on people's issues with the cooperation of all. I will carry forward the work done by my predecessors, Dhami, a two-time MLA from Khatima in Udham Singh Nagar district, said. As Dhami takes over less than a year ahead of the next assembly elections, his biggest challenge lies in leading the BJP to another victory and retaining power in Uttarakhand, where the party has been plagued by factionalism.

Changing chief ministers twice in a short span has not helped the

party's image, with the opposition Congress accusing it of causing political instability and betraying the people.

We accept the challenge and we will take forward the party and serve the people, Dhami said when asked whether taking over as CM just months ahead of assembly polls will be an uphill task.

The chief minister-elect thanked the party leadership for reposing faith in him and said that he will work with everyone's cooperation.

Dhami's name was proposed by outgoing chief minister Tirath Singh Rawat and Pradesh BJP president Madan Kaushik and seconded by a number of MLAs, including former chief minister Trivendra Singh Rawat, Tomar told reporters outside the state BJP headquarters here.

No other name was proposed for BJP legislature party leader, Tomar said.

Beggars should work; state can't provide everything: HC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, July 3: The Bombay High Court Saturday said that homeless persons and beggars should also work for the country as everything cannot be provided to them by the state.

A division bench of Chief Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice GS Kulkarni said this while disposing of a public interest litigation (PIL) filed by one Brijesh Aarya, seeking directions to the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) to provide nutritious meals thrice a day, potable water, shelter and clean public toilets for homeless persons, beggars and poor people in the city.

The BMC informed the court



that food packets were being distributed to such people all over Mumbai with the help of NGOs, and sanitary napkins were being pro-

vided to the women from this section of the society.

The court accepted this submission and said no further di-

The court also raised questions on the petitioner, saying that granting all the prayers sought in the petition would be like an invitation to people not to work

rection is required to augment the distribution.

"They (homeless persons) should also work for the country. Everyone is working. Everything cannot be provided by the state. You (petitioner) are just increasing the population of this section of the society," the high court said.

The court also raised questions on the petitioner, saying that granting all the prayers sought in the petition would be like an invitation to people not to work.

The court, in its order, noted that public toilets in the city and across the state presently charge a minimum amount for usage, and directed the Maharashtra government to consider allowing homeless persons to use such facility free of charge.

"We direct the state government to look if the homeless persons can use these toilets free of charge," the bench said.

The bench also noted that the petition lacks details of who a homeless is, population of homeless persons in the city and so on.



Police personnel were deployed in strength and multi-layered barricades were put up on the road leading to the chief minister's farmhouse.

As scores of AAP workers carrying party flags forced their way through the first layer of barricades and reached the second, police used water cannon to disperse them.

In the melee, turbans of several protesters came off.

The police detained several AAP leaders, including Mann and MLAs Harpal Singh Cheema and Meet Hayer. They were later released.

Punjab has been reeling under an unprecedented power shortage with urban and rural areas facing long hours of load shedding amid scorching heat.

The Punjab government had already ordered reduction in timings of state government offices and reduced power supply to high energy consuming industries.

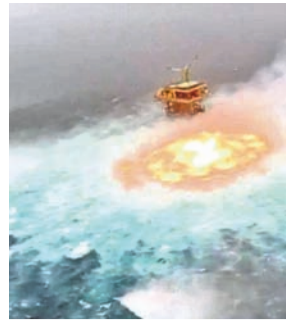
international



We need concrete actions that fundamentally change the way we handle military sexual assault and that make it clear that these crimes will not be minimized or dismissed
JOE BIDEN | PRESIDENT, US

EYE OF FIRE

A fire on the ocean surface west of Mexico's Yucatan peninsula early Friday has been extinguished, state oil company Pemex said, blaming a gas leak from an underwater pipeline for sparking the blaze captured in videos that went viral



of the day quote

The most urgent priority is to expedite the construction of the 'great wall of immunity' to fend off the virus, surpass political discrimination and carry out international anti-pandemic cooperation
WANG YI | FOREIGN MINISTER, CHINA

It is feared that we are on the way to a fifth wave throughout the country. God willing, the situation will improve in terms of vaccinations from next week
HASSAN ROUHANI | PRESIDENT, IRAN

What we have seen in the in vitro work is that the J&J vaccine works better against the Delta variant and gets better over time where both the Delta and Beta variants are concerned
PROFESSOR GLENDA GRAY | CEO, SOUTH AFRICAN MEDICAL RESEARCH COUNCIL

Afghan conflict rages as US troops withdraw

Over the past 24 hours, more than 300 Taliban fighters were killed in fighting with the Afghanistan forces

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
Kabul, July 3: Hundreds of Taliban fighters were killed in fierce battles with government forces across several provinces of Afghanistan, officials said Saturday, as Washington announced it would finish withdrawing its troops from the country by the end of August. Washington's announcement came after all US and NATO troops

vacated their main Bagram Air Base, from where the coalition forces led operations for two decades against the Taliban and their Al-Qaeda allies. Scores were killed in air strikes, including a pre-dawn assault Saturday, in the southern province of Helmand, where the insurgents and government troops have regularly clashed. There have been fears that Afghan forces would



struggle without the air support that the United States has provided. "In recent days, the Afghan air force has intensified its air strikes against the Taliban hideouts and the insurgents have suffered casualties," Attallah Afghan, a member of Helmand provincial council, told AFP. Both sides often exaggerate each other's casualties and their claims are difficult to independently verify. But since May

1 when the US military began its final withdrawal of about 2,500 troops, the two warring sides have clashed fiercely across the rugged countryside. As a result, the Taliban has seized dozens of districts in blistering assaults targeting government forces. Even as the fighting rages, the Pentagon has pressed on with its withdrawal to end America's longest war.

'Delta continuing to evolve and mutate'

In countries with low vaccination coverage, terrible scenes of hospitals overflowing are again becoming the norm

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Geneva, July 3: The world is in a very "dangerous period" of the Covid-19 pandemic compounded by more transmissible variants like Delta, which is continuing to evolve and mutate, World Health Organization Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has warned.



Germany backs vax switch after 1st dose

Germany's vaccine committee Thursday recommended that everyone who received an AstraZeneca first dose switch to BioNTech-Pfizer or Moderna jabs for better protection against the Coronavirus, including against the Delta variant. Studies show that the immune response is "clearly superior" when an AstraZeneca shot is combined with a second mRNA vaccine, compared with double AstraZeneca jabs, said STIKO. The commission therefore recommended the mix "regardless of age" and with a minimum gap of four weeks between the two jabs. Chancellor Angela Merkel had received a Moderna second jab after getting an AstraZeneca injection for her first.

global economic recovery and along the way prevent further dangerous variants from getting the upper hand," he said.

"Compounded by more transmissible variants, like Delta, which is quickly becoming the dominant strain in many countries, we are in a very dangerous period of this pandemic," Ghebreyesus said at a press briefing Friday. "But no country is out of the woods yet. The Delta variant is dangerous and is continuing to evolve and mutate, which requires constant evaluation and careful adjustment of the public health response,"

By the end of this September, we're calling on leaders to vaccinate at least 10 per cent of people in all countries
TEDROS ADHANOM GEBREYESUS | DIRECTOR-GENERAL, WHO

he said. Noting that the Delta variant has been detected in at least 98 countries and is spreading quickly in countries with low and high vaccination coverage, he said there are essentially two ways for countries to push back against new surges. "Public health and social measures like strong surveillance, strategic testing, early case detection, isolation and clinical care remain

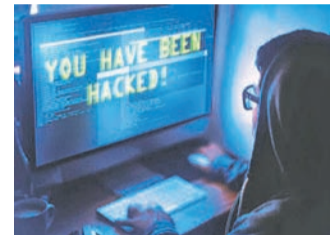
critical," he said, adding that masking, physical distance, avoiding crowded places and keeping indoor areas well ventilated are the basis for the response. Ghebreyesus underscored that the world must equitably share protective gear, oxygen, tests, treatments and vaccines and stressed that he has urged leaders across the world to work together to ensure that by this time next year, 70 per cent of all people in every country are vaccinated. "This is the best way to slow the pandemic, save lives, drive a truly

US IT firms hit by colossal cyber-attack

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Washington, July 3: A ransomware attack paralyzed the networks of at least 200 US companies Friday, according to a cybersecurity researcher whose company was responding to the incident.

The REvil gang, a major Russian-speaking ransomware syndicate, appears to be behind the attack, said John Hammond of the security firm Huntress Labs. He said the criminals targeted a software supplier called Kaseya, using its network-management package as a conduit to spread the ransomware through cloud-service providers. Other researchers agreed with Hammond's assessment. "Kaseya handles large enterprise all the way to small businesses globally, so ultimately, (this) has the potential to spread to any size or scale business," Hammond said in a direct message on Twitter. "This is a colossal and devastating supply chain attack."



Such cyberattacks typically infiltrate widely used software and spread malware as it updates automatically. Brett Callow, a ransomware expert at the cybersecurity firm Emsisoft, said he was unaware of any previous ransomware supply-chain attack on this scale. There have been others, but they were fairly minor, he said. "This is SolarWinds with ransomware," he said. He was referring to a Russian cyberespionage hacking campaign discovered in December that spread by infecting network management software to infiltrate US federal agencies and scores of corporations.

SHORT TAKES

20 missing in Japan landslide

Tokyo: Two bodies were found and about 20 people remained missing after a massive mudslide triggered by torrential rain hit Atami city of Shizuoka prefecture in central Japan Saturday, local authorities said. The disaster occurred at about 10:30 am local time in Atami city of Shizuoka prefecture Saturday, as heavy rainfall swept areas along the Pacific coast in central and eastern Japan, the Xinhua news agency reported. Firefighters are conducting a search and rescue operation in the slide-stricken area for the victims.

Armed standoff on I-95; 11 held

Wakefield: An hours-long standoff with a group of heavily armed men that partially shut down Interstate 95 ended Saturday with 11 suspects in custody, Massachusetts state police said. Police initially reported nine suspects were taken into custody, but two more were taken into custody in their vehicle later Saturday morning. Mass State Police Col Christopher Mason said the suspects surrendered after police tactical teams used armored vehicles to tighten the perimeter around them.

Ex-PM to lead Poland's Oppn

Warsaw: Former European Union leader and ex-Prime Minister Donald Tusk was elected head of the strongest party in Poland's fragmented Opposition Saturday. Tusk, 64, said he is returning to Polish politics and to the Opposition Civic Platform party to help fight the "evil" of the current right-wing government. Tusk co-founded Civic Platform, a center-liberal party, in 2001. It ruled Poland for eight years, most of the time with Tusk as prime minister, before the current conservative team won power in 2015.

Landslides, floods claim 38 in Nepal

Kathmandu: Flash floods and landslides triggered by torrential rains across Nepal have left at least 38 people dead, including seven children, and wounded over 50 others in the last 20 days, the Home Ministry said Saturday. The ministry said 51 people sustained injuries and 24 people, including three children, have gone missing in the incidents of floods and landslides in different parts of the country. Similarly, 1,250 people have been evacuated from different parts of the country that were hit by the natural disaster, it said.

Vatican indicts 10 over alleged financial crimes

AGENCIES

Vatican City, July 3: A prominent Italian cardinal was among 10 people sent to trial in the Vatican Saturday charged with financial crimes including embezzlement, money laundering, fraud, extortion and abuse of office. Cardinal Angelo Becciu, formerly a senior official in the Vatican administration, as well as two top officials at the Vatican's Financial Intelligence Unit will go on trial July 27 over a multi-million euro scandal involving the Vatican's purchase of a building in one of London's smartest districts. The trial will inevitably bring a swirl of media interest to the tiny city-state surrounded by Rome, and appears to underscore Pope Francis' determination to cure the rot in Vatican finances, even if it involves messy public hearings. Becciu, 73, whom the pope fired from his senior clerical post last year for alleged nepotism, and who has always maintained his innocence during a two-year investigation, becomes the most senior Vatican official to be charged with financial crimes. The charges against Becciu include embezzlement and abuse of office. An Italian woman who worked for him was charged with embezzlement and the cardinal's former secretary, a priest, was accused of extortion.

REAL ESTATE SCANDAL



The charges against cardinal Becciu include embezzlement and abuse of office

Becciu said in a statement that he was a victim of a "machination" and reaffirmed his "absolute innocence". Two Italian brokers, Gianluigi Torzi and Raffaele Mincione, were charged with embezzlement, fraud and money laundering. Torzi, for whom Italian magistrates issued an arrest warrant in April, was also charged with extortion. Four companies associated with individual defendants, two in Switzerland, one in the United States and one in Slovenia, were also indicted, according to the document.

Nepal's EC gears up for Nov polls despite uncertainty

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kathmandu, July 3: Nepal's election commission is preparing for the mid-term elections in November despite the uncertainty over polls due to the pending petitions in the Supreme Court against the dissolution of the House of Representatives, according to a media report.

The constitutionality of the President's move is being heard at the Supreme Court, raising the question if the elections would be held on set dates.

But the Election Commission of Nepal said that it would start to procure materials required for holding the polls next week after the Finance Ministry approved 7.72 Nepalese Rupees billion for holding the elections, The Kathmandu Post reported.

The ministry said it approved the budget for the commission to procure election materials and election management. This budget, however, does not cover the expenses for security arrangements for the polls.

Officials at the election body say though the House dissolution case is being challenged in the Supreme Court, the commission cannot say no to holding elections.

The commission is currently preparing the specifications for over 50 types of goods to be procured.

MILITARY MIGHT



A Ukrainian Marines tank fires during military exercises near Kherson, as Ukraine and the United States stage land military exercises involving more than 30 countries as part of multinational Sea Breeze 2021 drills in southern Ukraine

Over 43 migrants drown off Tunisia; 84 rescued

AGENCIES

Tunis, July 3: At least 43 migrants drowned off the coast of Tunisia Saturday and 84 others were rescued after their boat capsized overnight, the Tunisian Red Crescent said.

Mongi Slim, head of the organization, told The Associated Press that the boat, which was carrying 127 migrants, left Libya's coastal city of Zuwara Friday to cross

the Mediterranean Sea toward Italy. He said 46 Sudanese, 16 Eritreans and 12 Bengalis were among the migrants. The defense ministry's spokesperson, Mohamed Zekri, said the 84 migrants were rescued by fishermen. He declined to confirm the drowning of the other migrants. Libya is a frequent departure point for migrants making the dangerous Mediterranean Sea

crossing. Several shipwrecks from smugglers' boats carrying migrants have occurred in recent weeks, as attempts to reach Europe become more frequent amid warmer summer weather. Last week, Tunisian coast guards found seven bodies on the beaches of Djerba, an island off the southern coast. They were buried at the cemetery for migrants in Zarzis, Tunisia, who perished in the Mediterranean Sea.

Sirisha Bandla will fly into space with Richard Branson

SIRISHA BANDLA WAS BORN IN ANDHRA PRADESH'S GUNTUR AND WILL BE THE SECOND INDIA-BORN WOMAN TO GO INTO SPACE AFTER KALPANA CHAWLA

AGENCIES

Washington, July 3: Indian-American astronaut Sirisha Bandla will fly into space with Richard Branson in Virgin Galactic's VSS Unity, scheduled to blast off July 11 from New Mexico.

Bandla, born in India and grew up in Texas will be the second Indian-born woman to go into space after Kalpana Chawla and the fourth Indian to fly into space. The other two Indians who flew into space were Rakesh Sharma and Sunita Lyn Williams.

As astronaut number 4, Bandla's role will be that of a researcher experience. Besides her, there will

be one more woman crew member on the trip - Beth Moses.

"I am so incredibly honored to be a part of the amazing crew of #Unity22, and to be a part of a company whose mission is to make space available to all," she tweeted July 2 along with a video of the crew.

In a subsequent tweet, the astronaut said that she was overwhelmed by messages of love. "I really didn't need to tweet this since my friends flooded the feed yesterday with it. I was overwhelmed (in a good way!) by messages of love, unrecognizable capital text, and positivity yesterday. Slowly working my way through them...one platform at a time!" she wrote.



Bandla, started working at Virgin Galactic in 2015 and is currently the vice-president of government affairs

and research operations of the company. She completed her Bachelor of

Science in Aerospace, Aeronautical and Astronautical Engineering from Purdue University. She also holds an MBA degree from The George Washington University.

In the past, she has served as the associate director in the Commercial Spaceflight Federation, an industry association of commercial spaceflight companies.

Former Andhra Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu tweeted about Bandla and said, "Indian-origin women continue to break the proverbial glass ceiling and prove their mettle." "On July 11th, Sirisha Bandla with Telugu roots is set to fly to space aboard VSS Unity with Richard Branson and the team

marking the dawn of the new space age, making all Indians proud!" he wrote.

Billionaire entrepreneur Richard Branson will travel to the edge of space on Virgin Galactic Holdings Inc's test flight July 11, Branson's space tourism firm said July 1. A successful flight by Branson aboard Virgin's VSS Unity spaceplane would mark a key milestone in a race to usher in a new era of private commercial space travel.

It would also mean that Branson would travel beyond Earth's atmosphere ahead of fellow aspiring billionaire astronaut Jeff Bezos, the founder of rival space tourism venture Blue Origin.



Growing liquidity, developing the corporate bond market, and adopting global best practice are all part of the plan. India's capital markets have enormous potential to attract capital, and the UK provides access to a large and diversified global capital pool

CATHERINE MCGUINNESS | CORPORATION POLICY CHAIR, LONDON

'EVs TO RAISE INDIA'S IMPORT'

Rise in the use of electric vehicles (EVs) will result in increasing imports to India from Germany, said a Grant Thornton Bharat-FICCI report. At present, India and Germany aim to partner by leveraging advantages on each side and intensify cooperation on next-generation technologies, including IoT



of the day quote

Last year has been very challenging for both employers and employees. Employees have been on the edge about their jobs, increments and growth, as industries were going through many unexpected and unparalleled shifts

SHANTANU ROOJ | FOUNDER AND CEO, TEAMLEASE EDTECH

The June PMIs dropped back as virus outbreaks and supply chain issues created mounting headwinds for industry. With neither issue likely to be resolved soon, the rapid growth in industry over the past few quarters looks unlikely to be repeated

ALEX HOLMES | ECONOMIST, CAPITAL ECONOMICS

We are an economy in transition. It will be a few more months before the economy gets to pre-pandemic numbers across the board. We need to focus on areas that might not be growing – is there something else happening? Lack of supply? Permitting? Who knows what it might be

MARTY WALSH | LABOR SECRETARY, UNITED STATES

Big step towards transparency: IT Min praises Google, Facebook

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 3: IT Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad Saturday lauded major social media platforms such as Google, Facebook and Instagram for publishing their first compliance report on voluntary removal of offensive posts as per new IT rules, terming it a big step towards transparency.

Under the new IT rules, large digital platforms that have over 5 million users are required to publish periodic compliance reports every month, mentioning the details of complaints received and action taken thereon.

"Nice to see significant social media platforms like Google, Facebook and Instagram following the new IT Rules. First compliance report on voluntary removal of offensive posts published by them as per IT Rules is a big step towards transparency," Prasad tweeted.

The publishing of compliance reports by Google, Facebook and Instagram is bound to turn up the heat on Twitter, which has been engaged in a tussle with the Indian government over the new social media rules.

The government has confronted Twitter for deliberate defiance and



failure to comply with the country's new IT rules, and not appointing the requisite officers, leading to it losing the 'safe harbour' immunity

Facebook Friday said it "auctioned" over 30 million content pieces across 10 violation categories during May 15-June 15 in the country, as the social media giant brought out its maiden monthly compliance report as mandated by the IT rules.

It actioned content related to spam (25 million), violent and graphic content (2.5 million), adult

nudity and sexual activity (1.8 million), and hate speech (311,000).

Other categories under which contents were actioned include bullying and harassment (118,000), suicide and self-injury (589,000), dangerous organisations and individuals: terrorist propaganda (106,000) and dangerous organisations and individuals: organised hate (75,000).

Instagram took action against about two million pieces across nine categories during the same period.

Nice to see significant social media platforms like Google, Facebook and Instagram following the new IT Rules. First compliance report on voluntary removal of offensive posts published by them as per IT Rules is a big step towards transparency

RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD | IT MINISTER

'Actioned' content refers to the number of pieces of content (such as posts, photos, videos or comments) where action has been taken for violation of standards. Taking action could include removing a piece of content from Facebook or Instagram or covering photos or videos that may be disturbing to some audiences with a warning.

Google had stated that 27,762 complaints were received by Google and YouTube in April this year from individual users in India over alleged violation of local laws or personal rights, which resulted in removal of 59,350 pieces of content.

Koo, in its report, said it has proactively moderated 54,235 content pieces, while 5,502 posts were reported by its users during June.

Merchandise exports hit historic high levels in Q1



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, July 3: Turning adversity into opportunity, India has recorded highest-ever merchandise exports of \$95 billion in the April-June quarter of current fiscal year (FY22).

This is 85 per cent higher than exports of Q1 of 2020-21 and 18 per cent higher than the exports of Q1 of 2019-20. It is also 16 per cent more than the previous highest Q1 exports of 2018-19 (\$82 billion) and is higher than the earlier peak of exports in Q4 of 2020-21 (\$90 billion).

Commerce and Industry Ministry Piyush Goyal said that sector specific interventions, involvement of all the stakeholders and functioning of the government as a whole helped in achieving the growth. Simplification of procedures, and extension of timelines and licences has also resulted in the record performance of exports, he added.

The minister also said that going by the performance in first quarter of the fiscal, an ambitious target of \$400 billion exports has been set for 2021-22.

In the first quarter period, several labour intensive sectors have seen a rapid export growth. The exports in the engineering goods sector has increased by \$5.2 billion over Q1 of 2019-20. Likewise, rice exports growth has remained positive since May 2020 and rose by 37 per cent in Q1 of 2021-22 compared to Q1 of 2019-20.

India showcased robust export performance in April 2020 compared to major economies of the world. As compared to April 2019,

ON A ROLL

India recorded highest-ever merchandise exports of \$95bn in the April-June quarter of FY22, which is 85% higher than exports of Q1 of 2020-21 and 18% higher than the exports of Q1 of 2019-20

India's exports growth during April 2021 was higher than other major advanced economies like the EU, Japan, the US, South Korea, and the UK

India's exports growth during April 2021 was higher than other major advanced economies like the European Union, Japan, the US, South Korea, and the UK.

The country also received the highest ever FDI inflow in 2020-21 of \$81.72 billion. This is higher by 10 per cent compared to \$74.39 billion achieved in 2019-20. The positive momentum continues with FDI inflow of \$6.24 billion during April 2021, which is 38 per cent higher than April 2020.

Goyal said that number of start-ups recognised by the DPIIT has crossed 50,000 and these are spread across 623 districts. Nearly 1.8 lakh formal jobs have been created by over 16,000 recognised start-ups in 2020-21. Several times more have benefited from the start-up ecosystem.

To improve the ease of doing business and reduce the compliance burden 6,426 compliances have been reduced in Phase-I and 3,177 compliances are being reduced in Phase II. The timeline for Phase I was March 31, 2021 and for Phase II, it is August 15 2021.

SHORT TAKES

Libas goes the e-Comm way

Bhubaneswar: Libas Consumer Products Ltd. launched its products on India's most selling e-commerce sites/applications like Amazon, Flipcard, Meesho, Snapdeal and Big Basket. The company is in process of expanding the same to various Tier-II and Tier-III cities in India in various phases in the next three years. The company will open 100 stores in each phase. Recently the company had also announced foray into FMCG segment.

Sonalka sells over 33,000 units in Q1

BHUBANESWAR: Sonalka Tractors has quashed all records to clock highest ever Q1 cumulative tractor sales at 33,219 units and registered 30.6% growth. Raman Mittal, Executive Director, Sonalka Group, said, "As the international market is opening up, our exports have also grown by 90% which is also a healthy sign of economic recovery. The government has already extended MSP on Kharif crops by up to 5% and as per predictions of healthy monsoon; this year also we should see healthy demand for tractors, similar to that of last year."

Industry seeks extension

New Delhi: Industry associations have requested the government for an extension of the July 6 deadline for sending in comments on draft rules for e-commerce players, according to sources. In a consultation between industry associations and Department of Consumer Affairs, industry representatives sought extension beyond the July 6 deadline.

FIEO partners with Aramex

New Delhi: The Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) Saturday said it has inked a memorandum of understanding with logistics service provider Aramex India to support MSME exporters in India. As part of the MoU, it said Aramex will provide preferential pricing to FIEO members, as well as access to online services for cross-border express shipments. Members can access these services including creating pickup requests and preparing shipments, it said.

Odisha urged to restore pre-emption right of iron ore

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, July 3: Faced with soaring prices of iron ore and its shortage in Odisha, several industry associations have urged the government to reactivate the pre-emption right of the commodity produced in the state to ensure adequate availability of the raw material, officials said. The scarcity and the surge in prices are mainly on account of interstate exports of iron ore, Confederation of Indian Industry said.

Several other industry bodies like the Pellet Manufacturers' Association of India (PMAI) and the Orissa Sponge Iron Manufacturers Association (OSIMA) have sought the intervention of the state government to overcome the crisis.



"In recent times, the state-based iron and steel industry has been facing huge challenges due to low production of iron ore, rampant interstate dispatches, and thus the exponential increase in prices," CII said in a letter to the principal secretary of the department of steel and mines.

The companies, which have made huge investments in the value-added industries by setting of plants in the hinterland areas are facing severe raw material crunch, it said.

"There is an urgent need to reactivate pre-emption rights of iron ore for state-based end-use plants to ensure sustainable supply of usable ore," the industry body said.

MCL produces 10.63MT coal in April



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 3: A leading coal producer Mahanadi Coalfields Limited (MCL) posted 10.635 million tonne (MT) in coal production in the month of April during financial year 2021-22. The com-

pany had targeted to achieve 11.82 MT of coal production during the first month of current financial year. A subsidiary of Coal India Limited (CIL) produced significantly from opencast mining.

The company's monthly report claims that MCL produced 105.904

lakh tonne of coal in opencast mining whereas the company produced 0.450 lakh tonne from underground mining in same month.

MCL Chairman-cum-Managing Director PK Sinha had said that the company is set to achieve its coal production target of 163 million tonne in the financial year of 2021-22. Sinha said, "I am sure that coal miners in MCL will also achieve production target of 163 MT in the current fiscal."

MCL had achieved highest ever production of 148.01 MT and the highest ever coal despatch of 146 MT in year ended March 31, 2021. A record over-burden removal of 174.5 million cubic meters (MCuM) during last fiscal has set a strong foundation for enabling Coal India achieve the target of one billion production by 2024.

OSSIA strongly opposes Centre's move

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 3: Orissa Small Scale Industries Association (OSSIA), the oldest apex association of Odisha for MSMEs, strongly opposed the central government's decision over including retail and wholesale trades under the MSME sector.

OSSIA President Smarajit Mohanty said, "Now, bringing the retailers and wholesalers into the MSME fold will further reduce the importance of manufacturing sector. Inclusion of retailers and wholesalers will only increase the volume of MSME and enable the government to showcase the increase in the number of MSMEs."

This move of the government will make it difficult for them to carry out a realistic census of different sectors under MSME and identify

INCLUSION OF RETAIL, WHOLESALE TRADES



the issues of different sectors and frame a common policy for the sector."

The association claimed that the decision was an unwarranted move by the central government.

"The government has clarified that registration under Udyam and

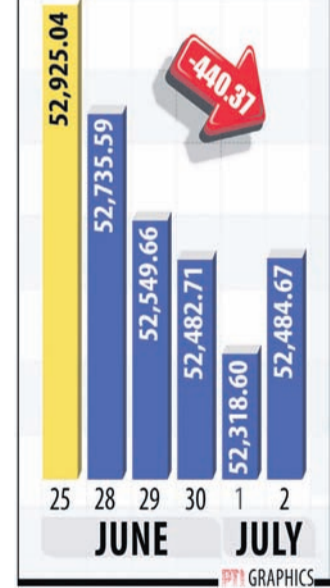
coming under the banner of MSME, retailers and wholesalers will be entitled and restricted to priority lending by financial institutions only, which will enable their revival.

But from our past experience what we have observed is that when

manufacturing and service sector were clubbed together under the banner of MSME, banks preferred to finance service providers (specially vehicle financing) than financing manufacturing sector as the felt it to be more secure lending and by financing the service sector," Mohanty said.

"We cannot rule out the possibility of manufacturing sector being neglected in matter of extending institutional financing; as in banking sector it is safer to finance retailers, wholesalers than financing a manufacturing unit. This will result in the manufacturing sector losing its sheen and importance," he added. The association also appealed Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik to understand this sinister design behind this move by the central government and use his good office to get this decision reversed.

SENSEX in a Week



Creators smile as Indians warm up to new crypto form

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, July 3: As high-net-worth individuals (HNWIs) continue to invest in cryptocurrencies and seek to diversify their portfolio, non-fungible tokens (NFTs) are slowly gaining asset-class credibility.

Indians are also warming up to this new digital asset that has given creators and collaborators a fresh platform to earn better moolah while generating more value for their work.

NFTs allow people to buy and sell ownership of unique digital items in cryptocurrencies, and keep track of who owns them using the Blockchain. NFTs can technically contain anything digital, including drawings, artworks, tweets, animated GIFs, songs or even video games.

TV host and actor Vishal Malhotra collaborated with artist Ishita Banerjee to release an NFT which was sold last week for 2.5 Ethereum (\$5,500) – five times the listed price.

On the NFT marketplace by WazirX, India's biggest cryptocurrency exchange in terms of trading volume, a unique NFT, which was a collaborative artwork between pop icon Ritviz and visual artist Santanu Hazarika, was sold for \$391.8 within 10 seconds of going live. WazirX has sold more than 160 pieces of digital art on its platform for NFTs within month of its launch.

The crypto company June 1 rolled out South Asia's first NFT Marketplace with 15 creators hailing from diverse categories such as space 3D artists, digital artists, muralist photographers, canvas

Non-fungible tokens (NFTs) allow people to buy and sell ownership of unique digital items in cryptocurrencies, and keep track of who owns them using the Blockchain. NFTs can technically contain anything digital

artists, street artists and visual artists. The platform came without any listing price and extended 50,000 WRX (WazirX tokens) as bonuses for the community.

"More artists and collectors across the globe are today tapping the power of NFTs. NFTs ensure the exclusivity of ownership and can be seen as a way to digitise artwork and other collectible items," said Sandesh B Suvarna, VP, WazirX



NFT Marketplace. According to Hazarika, the global NFT market is slowly becoming a crucial promotional tool for all artists to monetise their work and uniquely engage with their community of collectors and fans who value art.

"With NFTs, artists are now open to working with anyone," he said. The WazirX NFT Marketplace is powered by the Binance Smart Chain, which brings the gas fee – a sum required to mint the NFT via a blockchain – down from \$60-\$100 to about \$1. Since the NFTs are interoperable, anyone can later trans-

fer the NFT to a different cryptocurrency such as Ethereum.

An exhibition featuring the artworks of Bengal-born artist, Lalu Prasad Shaw, certified using NFTs is on view at Terrain.art till July 31.

"Terrain.art is delighted to be one of the first blockchain-powered platforms in India to register artworks using NFTs, presenting new works and those with prior histories through curated exhibitions," said its founder Aparajita Jain.

On the global stage, digital artist Michael Winkelmann or Beeple sold one of his NFT arts for nearly \$70 million earlier this year.

An NFT artwork by NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden was sold for more than \$5.4 million in April. Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey even sold his first tweet as an NFT for over \$2.9 million.



ITALY SET UP SPAIN DATE

Insigne superb curler, Barella brilliance help the Azzurri overcome Belgium challenge 2-1 in the quarterfinals

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Munich, July 3: Italy's defenders celebrated their stops like the attacking players celebrated their goals. Both had plenty of reason to be happy Friday.

Nicolo Barella and Lorenzo Insigne scored a goal each while Leonardo Spinazzola made a key second-half block to give Italy a 2-1 win over Belgium and a spot in the European Championship semifinals.

"Everyone, myself included, is really playing with a smile on their faces," said Insigne, whose team extended their national record unbeaten run to 32 games.

Romelu Lukaku kept his team in the game with a penalty right before halftime but the Belgians missed further chances to equalise in the second half as Italy's defenders excelled.

Barella put Italy in the lead in the 31st minute when Jan Vertonghen failed to properly clear the ball. Marco Verratti passed to Barella, who eluded two Belgium defenders before sending it in off the far post.

Insigne got the second in the 44th when he put a curling shot inside the far top corner after skipping past one defender and facing two more.

Belgium were awarded the penalty when Giovanni Di Lorenzo pushed Jeremy Doku shortly before halftime. Lukaku then made it 2-1 by sending his shot down the middle. It was only the second goal Italy has conceded at the tournament.

Italy will next play Spain in the semifinals Tuesday at Wembley Stadium in London. The Spanish defeated Switzerland on penalties in St. Petersburg.

In the second half, Spinazzola just did enough to deny Lukaku on the line with what seemed to be a certain equalizer when Kevin De Bruyne played the ball to the far post. Spinazzola was kissed by his



TWO SIDES OF EMOTION: Belgium's Kevin De Bruyne hides his face in disappointment, while Italy players rejoice their victory over the World No.1 side, Friday

grateful teammates, but he was later carried off on a stretcher with a leg injury.

De Bruyne started the match after recovering from a left ankle injury, but Eden Hazard remained out with a leg injury. "We gave everything that we could. I couldn't be prouder of my players and the staff," Belgium coach Roberto Martinez said after the end of his top-ranked team's 13-game unbeaten run.

Belgium played as they had in the 1-0 win over Portugal with defense a priority. A

back three quickly became a back five whenever Italy had the ball as Thorgan Hazard and Thomas Meunier retreated to help out.

Martinez brought on Dries Mertens and Nacer Chadli with about 20 minutes remaining. Chadli nearly set up an equalizer within seconds of coming on, but his cross was too high for Lukaku and it fell behind Thorgan Hazard.

Chadli then had to go off with what appeared to be a hamstring injury after being on the field for only about five minutes. Spinazzola followed in the 79th after he pulled up sharply while chasing the ball.

Simon turns saviour as La Roja toil hard before edging past 10-man Switzerland via penalty shootout



EXPRESSIONS SAY IT ALL: Spanish players rush towards their goalie Unai Simon (not in pic) to begin celebration, while the Switzerland players wear dejected looks following their loss, Friday

ASSOCIATED PRESS

St Petersburg, July 3: As Spain's jubilant players sprinted onto the field to celebrate a penalty shootout victory at the Euro 2020, Luis Enrique stood alone and simply pumped his fists.

Amid the tension and rising pressure inside Saint Petersburg Stadium, the Spain coach might have been the calmest person around.

For a team that had squandered chance after chance in extra time as Switzerland's energy-sapped players hung on for a 1-1 draw through extra time. For a team that had come into the match as the favorite and had taken an eighth-minute lead, only to see that wiped out by a defensive mistake.

So imagine the relief when Mikel Oyarzabal stepped up to convert the decisive spot kick past goalkeeper Yann Sommer, whose save on Kylian Mbappe's shot in a shootout win over France

got Switzerland to the tournament's quarterfinals for the first time.

After seeing the ball hit the back of the net, Oyarzabal headed straight to Spain goalkeeper Unai Simon, who had made two saves in the shootout. They were soon consumed by their teammates as "Y Viva Espana" blasted out from the stadium's loudspeakers.

Of course, the Swiss know that feeling. But unlike against France, when they scored all five of their penalties in the shootout, they failed with three of their four attempts this time. Fabian Schar and Manuel Akanji had shots saved by Simon, while Ruben Vargas fired the ball over the crossbar.

The quarterfinal match was perhaps unsurprisingly a more labored affair punctuated by big moments. Among them was a red card in the 78th minute for Switzerland midfielder Remo Freuler, whose studs connected with the ankle of substitute Gerard Moreno in a sliding challenge.

Yet a rearguard effort

— requiring a string of diving saves by Sommer and a number of last-ditch blocks by sprawling defenders — kept the Spanish at bay in the extra 30 minutes that were played almost entirely in Switzerland's half. A crowd made up of mostly Russian spectators was fully behind Switzerland, even to the extent of jeering Spain's players when they had the ball.

The Swiss initially missed the energy and authority of suspended captain Granit Xhaka, whose replacement — Denis Zakaria — had the misfortune of scoring the 10th own-goal of the tournament when he sliced the ball into his own net. Jordi Alba sent in the shot after latching onto a corner from the right that had sailed over everyone's heads in the area.

A defensive mix-up brought about Xherdan Shaqiri's equaliser in the 68th, which came just as Switzerland's players had started to assert themselves.

Amyeric Laporte came across to cover a pass over the top but touched the ball onto the leg of his center back partner, Pau Torres. Freuler pounced on the ball and laid it off to Shaqiri, whose first-time shot crawled into the bottom corner.



UNAI SIMON

10-man Brazil edge past Chile at Copa

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Rio de Janeiro, July 3: Defending Copa America champions Brazil defended strongly with 10 men to advance to the semifinals with a 1-0 win against Chile. Substitute Lucas Paqueta scored the only goal of the match only seconds before Gabriel Jesus was sent off early in the second half.

Paqueta's winner to the left corner of Chilean goalkeeper Claudio Bravo in the 46th minute gave Brazil fans some hope that the Selecao would ease into the next stage. But only two minutes later Jesus was sent off after hitting Chile's Eugenio Mena with a flying kick.

Neymar and Brazil coach Tite said after the match that Jesus didn't see Mena and accidentally

kicked him as he tried to recover possession in the midfield.

Brazil didn't stop threatening Chile with Neymar's dribbles and quick counter-attacks. But Chile was much closer to the equalizer; it had an Eduardo Vargas goal disallowed for offside and English-Chilean Ben Brereton hit the bar with a header in the 68th minute.

Peru advanced to the semifinal after beating Paraguay on penalties 4-3 after a 3-3 score in regular time, in the most thrilling Copa America match yet.

Brazil and Peru played the latest Copa America final in 2019, with the hosts winning 3-1. Jesus was also sent off in that match at Rio's Maracana Stadium. Monday's encounter will be at the same Nilton Santos Stadium where Brazil beat Chile.



SUPER SUB: Brazil's Lucas Paqueta (L) celebrates with Neymar (C) and Richarlison after scoring the lone goal in their match against Chile, Friday

PCI picks 24 para athletes for Tokyo

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 3: The Paralympic Committee of India (PCI) Saturday announced a 24-member athletics team, headlined by star javelin thrower Devendra Jhajharia and high jumper Mariyappan Thangavelu, for the Tokyo Paralympics, beginning August 24.

Besides Jhajharia and Thangavelu, who won gold in the F46 javelin and T-42 high jump events respectively in the 2016 Rio Paralympics, other top para-athletes include world record holders Sandeep Chowdhury and Sumeet. The PCI's selection committee

THE TEAM

MEN: Devendra Jhajharia, Ajeet Singh and Sundar Singh Gurjar (all javelin F-46), Sandeep Chaudhary and Sumit (both javelin F-64), Mariyappan Thangavelu, Sharad Kumar and Varun Singh Bhatti (all high jump T-63), Amit Kumar and Dharambir (both club throw F-51), Nishad Kumar and Ram Pal (both high jump T-47), Sonam Rana (shot put F-57), Navdeep (javelin F-41), Praveen Kumar (high jump T-64), Yogesh Kathuniya (discus throw F-56), Vinod Kumar (discus throw F-56), Ranjeet Bhati (javelin F-57), Arvind (shot put F-35), Tek Chand (javelin F-54).

WOMEN: Ekta Bhyana and Kashish Lakra (both club throw F-51), Bhagyashri Jadhav (shot put F-34), Simran (100m T-13).

RESERVE: Sandi Sanjay Sagar (men's javelin F-64).

picked the team after a two-day trial at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium here on June 29 and 30. The

selection meeting was chaired by PCI chief Deepa Malik. India has been granted 24 slots,

including four women athletes, by the World Para Athletics. The committee also picked men's F-57 javelin thrower Ranjeet Bhati, who was not in the long list of athletes for accreditation as his ranking was low before the trial.

"However, he significantly improved his performance in Final Selection Trial and is ranked 5th as per the MES Ranking as on 01.07.2021," the PCI said. "His selection is subjected to issuance of the accreditation for the upcoming Tokyo Paralympics 2020."

The committee also named Sandip Sanjay Sagar (javelin F-64) as reserve athlete.

GAUFF ENTERS 4TH ROUND

WIMBLEDON: Coco Gauff is back into the second week of Wimbledon. The 17-year-old American matched her breakout result from 2019 by reaching the fourth round with a 6-3, 6-3 win over Kaja Juvan on Centre Court. Gauff finished with 21 winners and broke her opponent five times. Gauff will face former Wimbledon champion Angelique Kerber Monday. In men's play, No. 7-seeded Matteo Berrettini advanced with a 6-4, 6-4, 6-4 win over Aljaz Bedene. Emma Raducanu became the youngest British woman to reach the fourth round of Wimbledon in the Open era. The 18-year-old Raducanu converted her third match point to beat veteran Sorana Cirstea 6-3, 7-5 on No.1 Court. She is playing in her first Grand Slam tournament. Deborah Jeavons was the previous youngest British woman to reach the fourth round at Wimbledon at age 19 in 1979.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Spinners lift India
WORCESTER: India spinners took wickets at regular intervals to nullify a promising start by England as the tourists bundled out the hosts for 219 in the rain-curtailed third and final Women's ODI here Saturday. Looking for a consolation win, India invited England to bat under overcast conditions after the contest became a 47-overs per side affair but as has been the case in the series, the hosts largely remained untroubled. They were placed comfortably at 110/2 but their strategy to attack Indian spinners resulted in wickets falling in clutches with a middle-order collapse. Natalie Sciver's confident 49 and Heather Knight's composed 46 propped the England innings while Deepti Sharma (3/47) took three wickets for India. Sophia Dunkley (28) and Kate Cross (16 not out) also chipped in. Sneha Rana (1/31), Poonam Yadav (1/43) and Harmanpreet Kaur (1/24) accounted for one batter each.

VERSTAPPEN TAKES POLE

SPIELBERG: Relentless Max Verstappen clinched his third straight pole position with a commanding drive for Red Bull at the Austrian Grand Prix Saturday, while title rival Lewis Hamilton could only manage fourth place for flagging Mercedes. Hamilton was under pressure in his final lap and went too wide on the last two turns. On the day he announced a two-year contract extension, the seven-time F1 champion was even upstaged by 21-year-old countryman Lando Norris, who qualified second for McLaren ahead of Verstappen's teammate Sergio Perez. Norris almost caught Verstappen, too, placing just 0.05 seconds behind him. Verstappen leads Hamilton 5-2 in poles this season and the pressure is on Hamilton heading into Sunday's race. He trails Verstappen by 18 points and 4-3 for wins. A bad day for Mercedes saw Valtteri Bottas qualifying in fifth.

Ranji season to start from November 16

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 3: The BCCI will conduct all its domestic tournaments across age-groups with the coveted Ranji Trophy, starting on November 16, being the marquee event among the 2127 matches scheduled for 2021-22 season.

Last season, the BCCI couldn't conduct any age-group tournament and was forced to cancel the Ranji Trophy due to COVID-19 pandemic.

However, a full-fledged domestic season will take place this year with Syed Mushtaq Ali T20 being held from October 20 and the National One-Day Championship for Vijay Hazare Trophy being scheduled from February 23, 2022.

"The season will commence on September 21, 2021, with the Senior Women's One Day League and will be followed by the Senior Women's One Day Challenger Trophy, which will take place from October 27, 2021," BCCI secretary Jay Shah said in a media release. The final of the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy will be played November 12, 2021.

The coveted Ranji Trophy will be played in a three-month window from November 16, 2021 to February 19, 2022. The Vijay Hazare Trophy final will take place March 26, 2022.

"The BCCI is confident of hosting the domestic season with health and safety of players and all people involved being paramount," the statement further read.