



PAYAL SHINES AT CANNES

Filmmaker Payal Kapadia won the Oeil d'or (Golden Eye) award for *A Night of Knowing Nothing* at Cannes Film Fest

LEISURE P2



TALIBAN-AF LEADERS MEET

After Qatar meet, Taliban says the movement wants a political settlement to Afghanistan's decades-long war

INTERNATIONAL P10



DHAWAN SCRIPTS WIN

Skipper Shikhar Dhawan's unbeaten 86 helps India beat Sri Lanka by seven wickets in the first ODI

SPORTS P12

IRREGULAR by MANJUL

Let them strike down the sedition law, sir. We can work efficiently even without IPC.

Covid deaths cross 5,000-mark in state

BHUBANESWAR: With reports of 66 fresh fatalities, the total deaths due to Covid-19 in the state crossed 5,000-mark Sunday. Now, the death toll stands at 5,058. According to the state health department, the highest 23 deaths were reported from Khurda district, eight in Ganjam district and six in Mayurbhanj and Sundargarh districts each. Similarly, five casualties were recorded in Boudh district while three deaths occurred in each of Bargarh and Nayagarh, two each in Gajapati, Kendrapara and Puri and one each from Bhadrak, Bolangir, Rayagada, Jagatsinghpur, Jajpur and Kandhamal district. However, the above list does not reflect deaths occurring on a particular day. It gives details of past deaths for which the death audit process has been duly completed and the cause of death has been identified as due to Covid-19, the department said.

P4

STF busts illegal sale of firearms

BHUBANESWAR: The Special Task Force (STF) of the Odisha Police busted illegal sale of firearms Saturday and seized as many as 10 guns besides arresting two criminals. The accused have been identified as Basanta Moharana of Nayagarh and Krushna Chandra Srichandan of Khordha town. Five pistols/revolvers, 5 SBML guns, 8 rounds of live ammunition, one empty cartridge, one motorcycle and other incriminating materials have been seized from their possession. The STF carried out a raid on the basis of intelligence input regarding illegal possession/sale of illegal firearms near village Siko under Jankia police limits in Khordha district. The accused were involved in multiple criminal cases in various districts, police sources said.

P3

WEATHER

TEMP

MAX

35.4°C

MIN

26.6°C

BHUB

CTK

35.6°C

27.5°C

Humidity

70%

74%

Rainfall

NIL

NIL

Forecast

Light rain very likely



AN ARDUOUS PATH: Commuters waded through a waterlogged street as heavy rain continues to lash Mumbai, Sunday

PTI PHOTO

MONSOON SESSION FROM TODAY

OPPN PREPARES TO CORNER GOVT

GOVT LINES UP 17 BILLS, SAYS WANTS HEALTHY DISCUSSION

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 18: The government has readied a big legislative agenda for the Monsoon session of Parliament beginning Monday even as the Opposition seeks to corner the ruling dispensation over its handling of the second wave of Covid-19 and the rise in fuel prices.

The government has listed 17 new Bills for introduction in the session.

Three of the Bills seek to replace ordinances issued recently. Once a session starts an ordinance has to be passed as a bill within 42 days or six weeks, else it lapses. One of the ordinances issued June 30, prohibits any agitation and strike by anyone engaged in the essential Defence services.

The Essential Defence Services Ordinance 2021 came in the backdrop of the announcement by major federations of the Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) to go on an indefinite strike from the later part of July to protest the government's decision to corporatisate the OFB. The Essential Defence Service Bill, 2021 has been listed to replace the ordinance, according to a Lok Sabha bulletin issued July 12.

The Commission for Air Quality Management in National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas Bill, 2021

ALL-PARTY MEET

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Sunday told an all-party meeting ahead of the Monsoon session that the government was ready for a healthy and meaningful discussion in Parliament on various issues. Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi quoted the Prime Minister at the meeting to say that the various floor leaders were told that the government was ready for a healthy and meaningful discussion on various issues raised as per rules and procedures. At the meeting attended by 33 parties, the Prime Minister said suggestions from public representatives, especially from the Opposition, are valuable as they make the discussion rich. Besides Modi, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Union minister and Leader of House in Rajya Sabha Piyush Goyal and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Joshi were present at the meeting.

P3

is another measure that seeks to replace an ordinance. According to the government, the ordinance was brought to provide a permanent solution and establish a self-regulated,

democratically monitored mechanism for tackling air pollution in the NCR and adjoining areas, rather than limited ad-hoc measures.

The Opposition on its part wants to corner the government by raising issues like alleged shortcomings in the healthcare system during the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic and the distribution of Covid vaccines to states. It would also seek replies on the rising prices of petrol diesel and cooking gas during the session which would end August 13.

According to the financial business listed in the bulletin, there would be a presentation, discussion and voting on Supplementary Demands for Grants for the year 2021-22. There would also be a presentation, discussion and voting on Excess Demands for Grants for the year 2017-18. During the session, all Covid-related protocols, which include maintaining social distancing, would be followed. Both the Houses will sit simultaneously.

Amid the pandemic, Rajya Sabha used to earlier sit in the first half of the day, and Lok Sabha in the second half. But from part two of the Budget session in March this year, the two Houses had started sitting simultaneously from their usual timing of 11 am onwards.

2 Maoists surrender, claim many rebels affected by Covid

PNN & AGENCIES

Malkangiri, July 18: Two Maoists carrying bounties on their heads surrendered before Odisha DGP Abhay in Malkangiri district Sunday, and claimed that many red rebels have been infected with Covid-19 and some of them have succumbed to the infection due to lack of proper treatment in the jungles, police said.

The surrendered Maoists said they were scared of the infection and preferred surrender over contracting the disease. They were identified as Rame Podiami alias Sabita, an area committee member and Pallachalam local organisation squad commander of the CPI (Maoist) outfit, and Raidhar Dhurua, secretary of its Daldali cell, an officer said.

Sabita carried a bounty of ₹2 lakh on her head, while Dhurua had ₹1 lakh reward for his arrest, he said. Speaking to reporters, the duo claimed that many Maoists have been infected with Covid-19 and some have succumbed to the disease due to a lack of proper treatment in the jungles.

"We were scared of the infection and preferred to surrender," the Odisha Police said in a statement quoting Sabita. The duo claimed that many Maoists from state want to return to the mainstream but are being prevented by the leaders from surrendering.

Reviewing the Left-wing Extremism (LWE) situation in Malkangiri and Koraput districts during a one-day visit, Abhay said, "Maoist activities in formerly cut-off area Swabhimana Anchal have come down significantly as many security camps have been established, bringing peace in the area."

The Leaders' Choice

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MUMBAI RAIN FURY

At least 33 die in house collapses, landslides

The rain fury reminded some Mumbaikars of the 24-hour rainfall figure of 944 mm July 26, 2005

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, July 18: At least thirty-three people died in house collapses triggered by landslides following incessant overnight rains in Mumbai, which caused severe water logging and disruption of suburban train services and vehicular traffic in the financial capital Sunday, officials said.

The Western Railway and Central Railway briefly suspended suburban train services in Mumbai after the heavy rains, and many long distance trains were terminated or regulated at various stations, officials said. Seventeen people died as a compound wall came crashing down on some houses located on a hillock after a landslide, a fire official said.

The retaining wall of the Bharatnagar locality in Mumbai's Mahul area collapsed at 1 am, the official said. Seven people were injured and taken to nearby Rajawadi hospital, he added.

Seven hutment dwellers died as six shanties collapsed after a landslide following incessant overnight rains in Mumbai's Vikhroli suburb

at 2.30 am, a civic official said. Two persons were injured and were sent to a nearby hospital, he added.

A 16-year-old boy died after a forest department compound wall collapsed in suburban Bhandup, an official said.

A viral video showed a two-wheeler being dragged in water in an inundated street in Chinchpokli area. The suburban train services were suspended due to water logging on the tracks due to the overnight heavy downpour; railway officials said, adding the services were resumed in the morning.

Before the pandemic, both the Central Railway and Western Railway used to ferry over 75 lakh commuters a day in over 3000 suburban train services which are now allowed only for emergency services staff and government employees.

The rain fury reminded some Mumbaikars of the 24-hour rainfall figure of 944 mm July 26, 2005.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued a red alert for Mumbai in the backdrop of heavy rains, a BMC official said.

Puri readies for Bahuda Yatra

DEVOTEE-LESS RETURN CAR FESTIVAL IS SCHEDULED FOR JULY 20



AGENCIES

Puri, July 18: The stage is set for Bahuda Yatra (Return Car Festival) of Lord Jagannath and his siblings scheduled to begin July 20 next.

As per tradition three chariots were pulled one by one with South turn from the entry gate parking and stationed at the exit gate of Gundicha temple known as Nakachanadwar facing towards the main temple Saturday. This exercise is called "Dakshini Moda".

After the observance of the daily needs of deities in the Adap mandap, three Puja pandas came with the "agya-mallyas" in a procession Saturday and handed over the order of the deities to park the chariots in front of the Nakachanadwar for the return journey. About five hundred police personnel were engaged in making all the three chariots on

the *Dakshini Moda* exercise. Meanwhile, the administration has geared up activities to conduct devotees "Bahuda Yatra" as was done during the Rath yatra July 12 last. This apart from the preparation by the temple administration was on to observe Sunabesh, the golden attire of the trinity and Adharpana rituals of deities after their arrival at the Simhadwar of the main temple.

The entire city and Badadanda would be placed under curfew for 48 hours for the Return Car Festival. Temple sources said after arriving at Simhadwar July 20, the Sunavesha of deities on the Rathas would be held July 21 followed by Adharpana offering July 22 and finally, the presiding deities would return to their original abode in the sanctum sanctorum of the temple July 23 known as Niladri Bije (homecoming of deities).

Amazon's Jeff Bezos to blast off into space tomorrow

THE MISSION COMES DAYS AFTER VIRGIN GALACTIC FOUNDER RICHARD BRANSON CROSSED THE FINAL FRONTIER, NARROWLY BESTING THE AMAZON MAGNATE IN THE BATTLE OF THE BILLIONAIRES

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Washington, July 18: Jeff Bezos, one of the richest person in the world, is set to join the astronaut club Tuesday on the first crewed launch by Blue Origin, another key moment in a big month for the fledgling space tourism industry.

The mission comes days after Virgin Galactic founder Richard Branson crossed the final frontier, narrowly besting the Amazon magnate in their battle of the billionaires.

Blue Origin's sights are, however, set higher: both literally in terms of the altitude to which its reusable New Shepard craft will ascend compared to Virgin's spaceplane, but also in its future ambitions.

Bezos founded Blue Origin back in 2000, with the goal of one day building floating space colonies with artificial gravity where millions of people will work and live.



Today, the company is developing a heavy-lift orbital rocket called New Glenn and also a Moon lander it is hoping to contract to NASA under the Artemis programme.

"They've had 15 successful New Shepard uncrewed flights and we've

been waiting years to see when they're going to start flying people," Laura Forczyk, founder of space consulting firm Astralytical, told AFP, calling it an "exciting time" for enthusiasts.

New Shepard will blast off at 8:00 am Central Time (1300 GMT) July 20

from a remote facility in the west Texas desert called Launch Site One, some 40 kilometers north of the nearest town, Van Horn. The event will be live streamed on BlueOrigin.com beginning an hour and a half before.

Oldest and youngest

Joining Bezos on the fully autonomous flight will be barrier-breaking female aviator Wally Funk, who at 82 is set to be the oldest ever astronaut, Dutch teenager Oliver Daemen, the company's first paying customer, who will become the youngest astronaut.

Rounding out the four-member crew is Jeff Bezos' brother Mark, a financier who directs the Bezos Family Foundation and works as a volunteer firefighter.

The pair is best friends, and Jeff shared the moment he asked his younger sibling to join him in a viral video on Instagram last month.

Notably absent is the mysterious

winner of a \$28 million auction for a seat, who had "scheduling conflicts" and will take part in a future flight, and has asked to remain anonymous, the company said.

After lift-off, New Shepard will accelerate towards space at speeds exceeding Mach 3 using a liquid hydrogen/liquid oxygen engine with no carbon emissions.

The capsule soon separates from its booster, and the astronauts unbuckle and begin to experience weightlessness.

The crew will spend a few minutes beyond the Karman line – the internationally recognised boundary between Earth's atmosphere and space, at 100 kilometers altitude, as the space-craft peaks at 65 106 kilometers high.

The booster returns autonomously to a landing pad just north of its launch site, while the capsule freefalls back to Earth before deploying three giant parachutes, and finally a thruster, to land gently in the west Texas desert.

FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES

The ruling emotion today will be passion. You will feel like chatting with your beloved the whole day. However, you will incur expenses and Ganesh advises you to remain balanced. But if you have decided already to go the whole hog, make fully sure you are in the right trappings.

TAURUS

The fates smile on you this day, assures Ganesh. You have a great chance of going for a new car, may be an SUV and go for a long spin. If that, for some reason doesn't materialize, you are sure to board a luxury bus and take a tour. Financial gains are strongly indicated.

GEMINI

You will express your feeling and opinions to people close to you and earn their support and wishes. However, you will still feel the need to be in solitude and peace in the later half of the day. Spending time with friends and family will ease your troubled mind more effectively, says Ganesh.

CANCER

Your day can be full of hurdles, feels Ganesh. Be careful of womenfolk. Discord with friends on petty issue is likely. Pending work will be finished. Be optimistic, says Ganesh.

LEO

There are many milestones that one covers during the course of one's life, but it is usually the moment of love that one always remembers fondly, says Ganesh. It is quite likely that today will be one such memorable day that ushers in a turning point in your love life.

VIRGO

Mission: Finding an exciting relationship. Status: Accomplished. And so Ganesh smiles. At office, outshine others with both words and actions. Bewitch people with your arsenal of sweet nothings and charm your way to win their hearts in the evening, says Ganesh.

LIBRA

Ganesh says you will try to impress other people with your appearance and personality. Under current circumstances there are chances of you falling in love with a new person who will become your beloved. The time spent with this person will be unforgettable says Ganesh, as love is in the air. Make the most of the day.

SCORPIO

Experience is the best teacher and today you should be thankful to your teacher as it is going to handle many new projects. You may even guide your peers and juniors in their work and enhance their imagination power.

SAGITTARIUS

Today, you may discover your innate talents and will be recognised for that with a huge round of applause. Aiming to carve a niche for yourself, you may take up Herculean task at work under the guidance of your boss. Way to go!

CAPRICORN

You will be in chirpy mood today, want to do anything and everything. Business opportunities will grab your eye balls, and you want to go ahead with those ideas. Ganesh predicts you will succeed in these ventures as luck is by your side. Socially, you will be busy as you will meet a lot of people and impress them with your wit and humour.

AQUARIUS

You work while you work and play while you play. This approach certainly contributes a lot to your success, says Ganesh. You stay focused on your goal and make each step boldly, but wisely. Enjoy the evening in the presence of your friends and family members, and bring a joyous end to the day, says Ganesh.

PISCES

It is best that you concentrate single-mindedly on the task at hand at the work-place, rather than diverting your attention to other things, if you want to meet all your deadlines today, says Ganesh. Compromising on certain issues in relationships will only help you, and is the best way to maintain the balance in your personal life.



CHRIS PENS LOVED-UP B'DAY WISH FOR WIFE ELSA PATAKY

On the occasion of his wife Elsa Pataky's birthday, Hollywood actor Chris Hemsworth uploaded an adorable post for her. Taking to Instagram, Chris posted a string of images of Elsa. "Happy birthday gorgeous," he captioned the post, adding a red heart emoji.

KANYE, IRINA ARE TOGETHER DESPITE BREAKUP RUMOURS

Despite breakup rumours, rapper Kanye West and supermodel Irina Shayk are still dating. According to the reports, Kanye and the supermodel were spotted hanging in France on his 44th birthday, before hopping on a private jet.



CANNES FILM FESTIVAL

Titane wins prestigious Palme d'Or award

Cannes: The prestigious Cannes Film Festival culminated here Saturday. The highlight of the event was French director Julia Ducournau's film *Titane* winning the most prestigious award of the festival — Palme d'Or.

The French and Belgian co-production tells the tale of a young female killer who indulges in sexual activity with cars after surviving a traumatic car crash in her childhood.

The award was presented to her by American filmmaker Spike Lee, who made quite a stir by giving away the winner prematurely at the beginning of the ceremony. He later apologised for the slip up.

The second-

most prestigious award of the festival, the Grand Prix, was a tie between Oscar-winning Iranian director Asghar Farhadi's film *A Hero* and *Compartment No. 6* directed by Juho Kuosmanen, French film director and screenwriter.

Amongst the other winners were Leos Carax, who won Best Director award for his musical *Annette*.

Norwegian actress Renate Reinsve went home with the Best Actress award for her work in the film *The Worst Person In The World*.

Actor Caleb Landry won the Best Male Actor award for his role in *Nitram*.



French director Julia Ducournau poses with the festival's coveted prize, surrounded by her two main actors, Vincent Lindon and Agathe Rousselle

AWARDS AT A GLANCE

- Palme d'Or: Julia Ducournau for *Titane* (France)
- Grand Prix: Shared by Ashgar Farhadi for *A Hero* (Iran) and Juho Kuosmanen for *Compartment No. 6* (Finland)
- Best director: Leos Carax for *Annette* (France)
- Best actress: Renate Reinsve for *Worst Person in the World* (Norway)
- Best actor: Caleb Landry Jones for *Nitram* (US)
- Best screenplay: Hamaguchi Ryusuke and Takamasa Oe for *Drive My Car* (Japan)
- Jury prize: Shared by Nadav Lapid for *Ahed's Knee* (Israel) and Apichatpong Weerasethakul for *Memoria* (Thailand)
- Best first film: Antoneta Kusijanovic for *Murina* (Croatia)
- Best short film: Hong Kong's *All The Crows In The World* by Tang Yi



‘Our generation should start restoring the planet’

Mumbai: Actress Bhumi Pednekar, who turned 32 Sunday, says her birthday wish would definitely be that the present generation should start restoring the planet.

"I think my wish definitely would be that our generation should be the generation that starts restoring the planet because that is most important. I truly wish that we address the dangers that we are challenged with and take steps to rectify it and that can only happen if we all change the way our perspective towards our planet is," Bhumi said.

The actress said her wish is that she continues doing good work and breaking

boundaries.

"We have to realise that everything is limited and one day if we don't stop, we will be done and over. For my career, my wish is that I continue doing good work and I continue breaking boundaries. The loyal fan base that I have created over the years I want to make sure that I don't disappoint them," she added.

IAN S

Payal Kapadia wins Best Documentary Award in Cannes

Cannes: Mumbai-based filmmaker Payal Kapadia has bagged the Oeil d'or (Golden Eye) award for Best Documentary for her film *A Night of Knowing Nothing* at Cannes Film Festival.

A Night of Knowing Nothing has emerged the winner in a list of 28 documentaries submitted from around the world.

The announcement was made through the Twitter account of Cannes Independent movie selection handle Quinzaine Des Real Saturday.

The tweet read: "The Oeil d'Or, the award for best documentary presented at the Cannes Film



Festival all sections combined, goes to A NIGHT OF KNOWING

NOTHING by Payal Kapadia, a film selected at the Directors'

Fortnight. Our warmest congratulations to Payal Kapadia and the entire film crew!"

The five-member jury was headed by American documentary producer Ezra Edelman. Other names in the jury were French filmmaker Julie Bertuccelli, French actor Deborah Francois, Franco-American film critic Iris Brey and Orwa Nyrabia, artistic director of the International Documentary Film Festival (IDFA) Amsterdam.

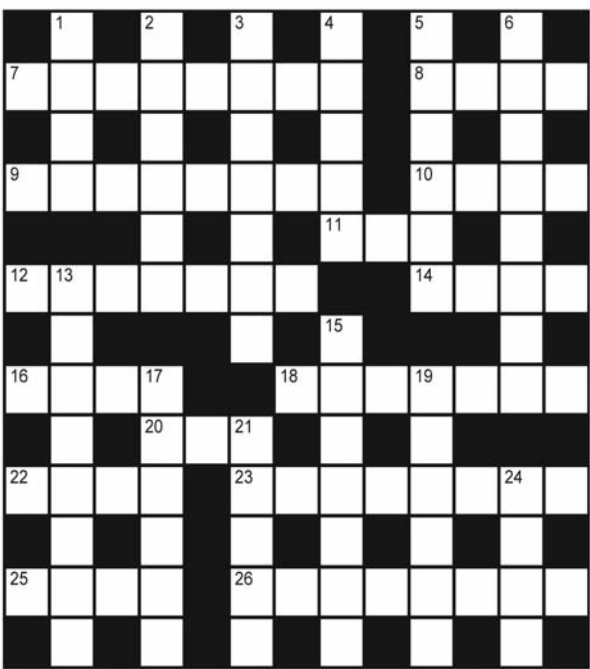
A Night of Knowing Nothing is a story of a college student who writes letters to lover when he is away.



IAN S

FUN post

CROSSWORD



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Across

- 7 Digitalis plant
- 8 Pawn
- 9 Military man
- 10 Outback birds
- 11 Canon camera model
- 12 Discard (4,3)
- 14 Chows down
- 16 Feudal worker
- 18 Science of matter and energy

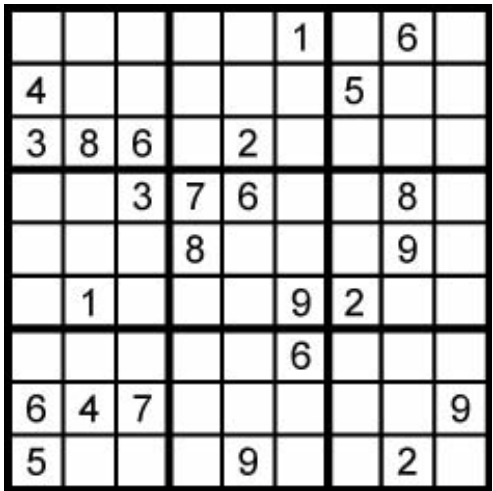
Down

- 1 London district
- 2 Terrestrial lizards
- 3 Ready to explode (5,2)
- 20 Call for help
- 22 Conclude, with "up"
- 23 Blonde's secret
- 25 Land measure
- 26 Vindictive

- 4 Sri Lanka export
- 5 Provolone
- 6 Kind of guitar
- 13 Hinder
- 15 Cucumber pickle
- 17 Spotted
- 19 Certain musical group
- 21 Paroxysm
- 24 Tympan, for example

SUDOKU

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

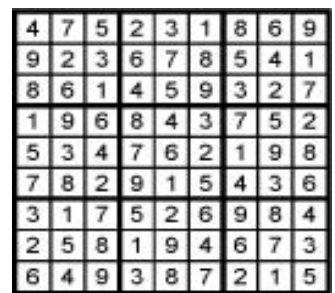


SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD



SUDOKU



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown

2 gunrunners nabbed; 10 firearms seized



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, July 18: The Special Task Force (STF) of Crime Branch (CB) has arrested two persons allegedly involved in illegal arms trade and seized 10 guns from their possession, a senior police officer said Sunday.

Following a tip-off, the STF personnel nabbed Basanta Moharana of Nayagarh and Krushna Chandra Srichandan of Khurda town while they were preparing to sell the illegal arms. The seized arms comprised five pistols/revolvers, 5 SBML guns, 8 rounds of live ammunition and one empty cartridge, said STF SP Tejeswar Patel.

This apart, one motorcycle and other materials have been seized from their possession, he said.

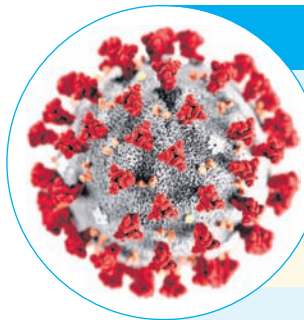
The STF carried out a raid on the basis of intelligence input regarding illegal possession/sale of illegal firearms near village Siko under Jankia police limits in Khurda district.

The SP said the arrested persons were booked under different Sections of the Arms Act and they were also involved in other criminal cases in different districts. The STF, since 2020, has seized as many as 47 firearms, 84 live ammunition and arrested several criminals.



LIVELIHOOD AT STAKE

A vendor sells inflated toys near Rasulgarh Square in Bhubaneswar amid the weekend shutdown, Sunday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	19,10,65,110	17,40,12,326	41,02,854
India	3,11,06,065	3,02,69,796	4,13,609
Odisha	9,54,326	9,30,418	5,058

Reopening of schools hailed but concerns persist

Keeping in mind the inconvenience online education has caused to majority of the students, the state government has decided to allow commencement of offline teaching for Class X and XII students from July 26. Though School and Mass Education Principal Secretary Satyabrata Sahu has clarified that attending the classes physically is not mandatory and rather discretionary, the damage the education system incurred due to the last two waves and a predicted third wave ramming in are the two aspects which have left students, parents and educationists alike in quandary.

Arindam Ganguly of **Orissa POST** speaks to a cross section of academics, students and parents over the decision...

School reopening is a great step and we are very

excited to go to school. However, the safety of students is a matter of concern, especially the ones below 18 years, as they are not yet vaccinated. Even all the teachers are not fully vaccinated. At this juncture, with the third wave expected to come in a few days, we have to be more aware and take precautions more seriously



MILONEE MISHRA | CLASS X STUDENT

The Capital city is still witnessing rise in Covid cases. Some cases were found in my locality too. So, my parents aren't ready to send me to school.



The government must find a solution to this situation.

YASH PRADOSH | CLASS X STUDENT

My entire Class XI studies were done online. So, going to school for Class XII will be exciting. But the fear of a third wave is still there. It all depends on my parents.



ADITI BALBANTRAI | CLASS XII STUDENT

The decision of resuming of fine classes is a welcome step because learning in physical classroom is the best way for effective studies. Before that, the government should also take steps to vac-



inate students as the third wave will be more dangerous for children, as per reports.

SWETALINA MOHANTY | CLASS XII STUDENT

I had literally lost all hopes of reopening schools this year but I was glad that the state government has finally taken the decision to get on with things back again. Also, owing to the first term of our boards this year, attending physical classes was a prime concern as it's surely going to help us a lot to get back on track with studies. Although the situations now are not very acceptable, I hope each one of us will follow the Covid-19 guidelines sincerely



SHRADHA DAS | CLASS XII, SCIENCE

The state government and private schools must ensure that the schools remain safe for students. Private schools must arrange appropriate infrastructure and strictly follow guidelines such as wearing masks and sanitising schools



PRASANNA BISOI | PARENT

The difficult situation is not over yet. However, education is important too. Rather than restarting the classes immediately with



the third wave round the corner, the state government should try to strengthen the online classes. The solution at this time is to wait for the third wave to subside and try to cover 70 per cent vaccination in the state

MITA RANI SAHOO | PARENT

At present, I have not taken any decision regarding sending my kid to school. We hope that the school will hold a meeting with the parents before resuming offline classes. I will take the decision only after looking at the situation in the school and their preparations



NANDITA DAS MOHAPATRA | PARENT

We are prepared. This decision was very important for board students, as they need extra focus which can be provided only in classrooms. Also, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) recently unveiled a special assessment scheme for Class X and XII Board exams for academic session 2021-22 in view of the pandemic. Under the new scheme, academic session will be divided into two terms with 50 per cent syllabus in each term. We hope that this style will be helpful to our students



NILAKANTHA PANIGRAHI | PRINCIPAL, SAI INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL



We are cleaning the school premises fully as per the standard operating procedure. We are also in talks with parents and are taking their consent before allowing kids back into the school. 90 per cent of our teachers have been vaccinated with first dose



SANDHYA JENA | PRINCIPAL, BJEM SCHOOL

The government's move to reopen schools is welcome, keeping in mind the problems faced by students in online mode of education due to poor (internet) connectivity. So far, the online mode has been able to cater to merely 40 per cent of the students



NABA KISHORE PUJARI | EDUCATIONIST

It's a positive step by the state government. It will help prepare students for the competitive exams.

It also breaks the monotony of studying alone from home, away from their friends and teachers. Meeting their peers will boost their mental wellness and build their confidence as well. Being in the physical presence of their teachers and learning from them face to face, will promote better education practices



MONA LISA BAL | CHAIRPERSON, KMIT INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

Meanwhile, intellectuals have stressed on the facts that education cannot be overlooked for such a long period and classroom teaching cannot be a substitute for online education.

However, the government, instead of taking consent of parents, should rather counsel them as some of the parents may be reluctant to send their kids to schools out of fear, they said. The role of school management committees can be pivotal. Subsequently, schools should also be opened for elementary grade children who are also losing out on education, they added.

ALL-PARTY MEET AHEAD OF MONSOON SESSION

Bring Bill on Legislative Council: BJD

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, July 18: The Biju Janata Dal (BJD) Sunday reiterated its demand for establishment of Legislative Council in the state and sought introduction of a Constitutional Amendment Bill during the Monsoon session of the Parliament commencing Monday.

BJD's Leader of the House in Rajya Sabha Prasanna Acharya and Parliamentary Party Leader in Lok Sabha Pinaki Misra placed several demands of the party during an all-party meeting convened by the Union government ahead of the Monsoon session. The all-party meet was also attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other senior leaders and ministers.

Misra said that earlier Home Minister Amit Shah had given assurance to the BJD MPs that the Centre would introduce a Constitutional amendment Bill for formation of a Legislative Council in the state. "However, no step has been taken in this regard," added the Puri MP.



The all-party meeting underway in New Delhi, Sunday

OP PHOTO

BJD PARLIAMENTARY PARTY LEADER IN RAJYA SABHA PRASANNA ACHARYA URGED THE CENTRE TO GRANT THE STATUS OF 'SPECIAL FOCUS STATE' TO ODISHA

The BJD leaders raised concern over the reluctance of the Centre regarding rice procurement from the state. The party urged the Centre to provide share of the additional cess collected from fuel and cooking gas to states to help them fight Covid-19 effectively

government agencies for rice procurement and demanded that the Centre must procure surplus rice from the state. He also sought release of pending subsidy to the state government.

The BJD demanded passage of Women's Reservation Bill during the Monsoon session. The regional party further demanded the Centre to provide share of the additional cess collected from fuel and cooking gas to states to help them fight Covid-19 effectively.

Private buses to resume ops today

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, July 18: Private bus operators have decided to resume their services Monday following an assurance by the state government to look into their demands.

Even though the state government had allowed intra-state bus services a few days ago, private bus operators did not resume services immediately citing various issues related to loans, insurance, bank EMIs and taxes.

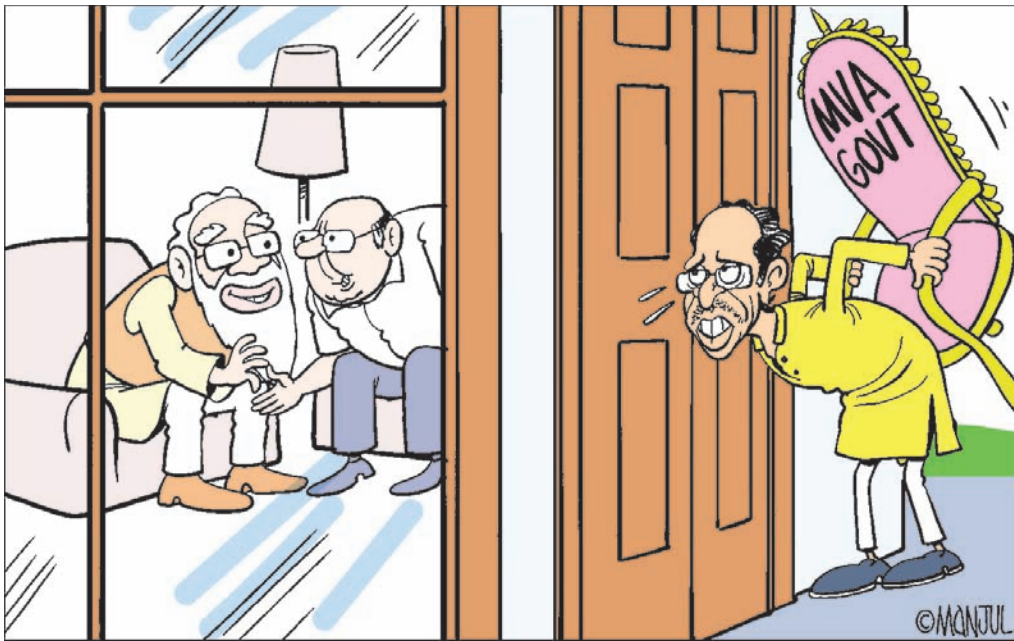
"The state government has assured us to consider the issues raised by our association. So, we have decided to resume bus services Monday," said a private bus operator. But, private bus employees said that their griev-

ances remained unaddressed.

"More than 45,000 employees of 14,000 private buses bore the brunt of prolonged lockdown. The state government did not take any step to address our grievances. The association also did not raise our grievances with the government," said Cuttack Motor Employees' Union general secretary Sisir Kumar Lenka.

Private Bus Owners' Association general secretary Devendra Kumar Sahoo said, "We had urged the government to provide assistance to the bus employees. The government has assured us that it would form district-level committees under the chairmanship of Collectors to identify bus employees and provide them aid."

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



5T Secretary takes stock of Taladanda, CNBT projects

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, July 18: 5T Secretary VK Pandian reviewed the progress of Taladanda canal renovation and Cuttack Netaji Bus Terminal (CNBT) construction here Sunday.

Sources said that Pandian, accompanied by senior officials, reached the project sites early in the morning.

It was learnt that work on the first phase of Taladanda canal renovation project, which is around 1.55 km, is nearing completion. It was decided to extend the canal work up to the National Highway-16. The total length of the renovation work, with roads on both sides till the NH-16, will be around 3.55 km.

The 5T Secretary directed the officials to ensure shifting of the public utilities, and expediting the project work.

Pandian later reviewed the progress of ongoing work for the CNBT which is being built over an area of 17.91 acre at Khannagar in the Silver City here.

He directed the officials concerned to discuss with the people regarding shifting of the library from the project site and submit a



5T Secretary VK Pandian along with other officials inspects canal renovation work

Work on the first phase of Taladanda canal renovation project, which is around 1.55 km, is nearing completion

proposal regarding its relocation to a suitable site within 10 days. The project is scheduled to be completed by August 2022, sources said.

Works Secretary Krishan Kumar, Special Secretary to CM Vineel Krishna, RDC (Central) Anil Kumar Samal, Cuttack Collector Bhabani Shankar Chayani, CMC Commissioner Ananya Das and senior project officials were also

present during the visit.

According to sources, the century-old Taladanda canal is being renovated with an expenditure of around Rs 30 crore in order to turn it into a major source of irrigation for places connected to it.

The CNBT will come upon a sprawling 12 acre of land. There will be a three-storey building and will have 180 bus bays. The state-of-the-art bus terminus is being constructed with an expenditure of Rs 84 crore, sources said, adding that the CNBT will help accommodate an increasing number of buses and ensure modern facilities to passengers as the existing facility in Badambadi area here remains overcrowded most of the time.

COURTESY VISIT



Gitanjali Awards director Krishna Mohan Tata presents his book 'A Jar of Pebbles' to **Orissa POST** and Dharitri Editor Tathagata Satpathy at the office of the newspapers in Bhubaneswar, Sunday

OP PHOTO

20 to face action for breaching cordon during Car Fest July 12

Puri, July 18: With criminal proceedings having been initiated against 20 people, five more have been identified by Puri police who ventured into the prohibited area breaching the security cordon during the Srigundicha Yatra July 12.

City deputy superintendent of police (DSP) told newsmen that all the 20 were booked in the criminal case for violating the curfew norms. He said all of them were served notice to appear before the police to explain their presence inside the Rath cordon.

Meanwhile, one Ranjan Patra appeared and claimed that he is a bona fide servitor and a pass was issued to him by the temple administration, the DSP said, adding his name has been deleted from the list.

This apart, CCTV footage, live TV coverage by I&PR department, and drone camera footage are being analysed by the police to find out unauthorised persons inside the security cordon around the three chariots on the Rath Yatra day.

The lawyers of Puri Bar Association, social activists and devotees are peeved at the partisan attitude of police on initiating action against the intruders. They alleged that no action was taken by police against a mine owner from Dhenkanal, a contractor from Bhubaneswar and a music director from Cuttack who were present inside the prohibited area of Rath cordon.



FAIRNESS QUESTIONED

The lawyers of Puri Bar Association, social activists and devotees are peeved at the partisan attitude of police on initiating action against the intruders

Although these persons have been identified, the police are yet to prosecute them in the case

telecast of the Car Festival proceedings.

The residents have demanded a thorough probe into the issue and legal actions against those who facilitated their entry into cordon.

The Puri district administration had put the entire city under curfew for 48 hours and residents of houses along the Badadanda were asked not to go to the rooftop or balcony to watch the pulling of chariots.

The government had banned the entry of devotees into the 3 km-long Grand Road, the venue of the Car Festival July 12, 2021 and allowed only the servitors to pull the three chariots while strictly following Covid protocols.

However, the breach of security cordon was noticed during the Srigundicha Yatra, said sources.

BMC: FOLLOW COVID NORMS AT OFFICE OR FACE MUSIC

Bhubaneswar, July 18: With fear of third wave of the pandemic looming large, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) Sunday warned public and private offices here to ensure strict compliance of Covid norms or face actions.

"It's very important to ensure strict compliance of Covid norms, including wearing masks, maintaining social distance and washing hands, by employees of both private and public organisations during the working hours. I urge all private, state and central government offices and other stakeholders to take necessary steps in order to make sure Covid norms are appropriately followed on their premises," said BMC Commissioner Sanjay Singh.

Enforcement teams of BMC will carry out surprise visits at the workplaces to check if Covid norms are being followed. "Any organisation found violating the norms will either be shut or fined," Singh said.



Youths play cricket on a road in VSS Nagar area of Bhubaneswar as vehicles stay off roads owing to weekend shutdown Sunday

HEAVY RAIN LIKELY TO LASH STATE FOR 5 DAYS: IMD

Bhubaneswar, July 18: The regional office of the India Meteorological Department (IMD) Sunday issued a warning of heavy rain for five days starting from Monday.

While issuing the warning for Monday, the department said, "Heavy rainfall very likely to occur at one or two places over the districts of Nuapada, Kalahandi, Keonjhar, Kandhamal and Deogarh."

It also said that thunderstorms and lightning could be seen in districts like Malkangiri, Koraput, Rayagada, Gajapati, Nabarangpur, Nuapada, Kalahandi, Bolangir, Bargarh, Boudh, Sonepur, Sundargarh, Jharsuguda, Deogarh, Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar and Kandhamal.

The forecast for Monday also said that light to moderate rain could be seen in different parts of

coastal Odisha and interior parts of the state. The weatherman expected heavy rain to continue for five days in different parts of the state besides thunderstorm, lightning. The department meanwhile said that the state Capital could see a few spells of rain Monday.

"Partly cloudy sky with one or two spells of rain or thunder-shower: Maximum and Minimum temperature are very likely to be around 35°C and 28°C respectively," the department said in its weather forecast for Monday for the state capital.

The department in its weather report for Sunday said that the maximum temperature in the day was recorded at Sonepur at 37.4°C while the minimum temperature was recorded in Phulbani at 19°C.

Rainfall in most parts of the state during the day Sunday was scanty except Koraput. Koraput saw 40.8°C during the day, Sunday.

Seaside bar proposal unacceptable: MONNA

Bhubaneswar, July 18: Protesting the state government's proposal to set up seaside bar and restaurants, Milita Odisha Nisha Nibarana Abhijana (MONNA) Sunday wrote a letter to Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik.

MONNA president Padma Charan Nayak said that the state government is coming out with a proposal to create and issue bar licence to the to-be-made seaside restaurants near Puri and other beaches of Odisha.

"We came to know that you have already initiated the process and floated a tender in this regard. We strongly protest this. At a time when liquor menace is destroying many homes, the move under the pretext of wooing tourists will only downgrade values among the youths. Withdraw any such proposals immediately, failing which MONNA will launch protests, sensitise people regarding the ill effects of the move and leave no stone unturned to stop the initiative," said Nayak.

Covid-19 toll surges past 5K as state confirms 66 more deaths

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, July 18: Odisha's Covid-19 tally soared to 9,54,326 Sunday as 2,215 more people tested positive for the infection, while the state's coronavirus death toll crossed the 5,000 mark as 66 fresh fatalities were registered, a Health department official said.

The fatalities reported in 16 of the 30 districts pushed the state's death toll to 5,058 even as the total number of Covid tests also breached the 1.5 crore mark.

Khurda district, under which Bhubaneswar falls, recorded the highest number of new cases at 483, followed by Cuttack (348) and Balasore (150).

As many as 1,272 new cases were registered in quarantine centres, while 943 infections were detected during contact tracing, even as the daily test positivity rate (TPR) dipped to 2.85 per cent, he said.

Khurda also registered the highest number of fatalities at 23, followed by Ganjam (eight) and Mayurbhanj and Sundargarh (six each).

So far, Khurda has reported the highest number of coronavirus deaths at 897, followed by Sundargarh (440) and Ganjam (416).

VITAL STATS

Odisha's Covid-19 tally soared to 9,54,326 Sunday as 2,215 more people tested positive for the infection in a day

Puri, Nayagarh, Khurda and Cuttack have TPR above 5%

The state has thus far tested over 1.50 crore samples including 77,519 in the last 24 hours

State's cumulative positivity rate stands at 6.33%

Odisha's case fatality ratio is 0.53%, one of the lowest in the country

QR code-based Id cards for railway station vendors

Bhubaneswar, July 18: Khurda Road Railway Division has introduced QR code-based identity cards in a bid to prevent unauthorised vendors from selling food items at the railway station.

All authorised vendors are provided with identity cards with QR code which contain all the information about the vendor.

By downloading the QR code app, train ticket examiners (TTEs) can check the validity and authenticity of the vendor.

This will help in wiping out unauthorised vending in station platforms and ensuring quality food for passengers.

Khurda Road Division is adopting innovative strategies in consultation with the corporate setups for the safety of passengers and staffers.

Earlier, keeping in view the safety of passengers and railway authorities, automatic ticket checking & managing access (ATMA) system was installed at Bhubaneswar railway station.

The ATMA system is based Information Technology (IT) which will support in effective screening of passengers for temperature and checking of tickets from a safe distance at entry and exit points, East Coast Railway sources said.

Scientists bring laurels for NRRI, bag 2 ICAR awards

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, July 18: Scientists of National Rice Research Institute (NRRI), Cuttack, have won two awards from the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR).


Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar, in a virtual ceremony Friday, announced awards in various categories to mark the 93rd foundation day of ICAR, an organisation under the ministry.

A K Nayak, principal scientist, and his team from NRRI have been awarded Nanaji Deshmukh Award for Outstanding Interdisciplinary Team Research in Agricultural and Allied Sciences, 2020.

The award is instituted to recognise and incentivise outstanding interdisciplinary team research, the ICAR said.

Nayak's team took a multidisciplinary approach involving soil science, agricultural physics, agricultural microbiology and plant breeding to devise optimum N (nitrogen)-management strategy for rice to identify the controlling factors of N-use efficiency of rice, developing efficient genotypes and devising appropriate nutrient management strategy.

The web-based rice crop manager



Upendra Kumar, another scientist from the institute, has been awarded the Lal Bahadur Shastri Outstanding Young Scientist Award, 2020, in the category of natural resource management and agricultural engineering

State govt has sanctioned Rs 2.84 crore for construct of liquid bio-fertilizer, Azolla, BGA and AM fungal production units at the NRRI for the first time

is widely popularised in Odisha for site specific nutrient management, according to the ICAR.

Upendra Kumar, another scientist from the institute, has been awarded the Lal Bahadur Shastri Outstanding Young Scientist Award, 2020, in the category of natural resource management and agricultural engineering.

Kumar's research strategy is a blend of basic strategy and applied research works covering major aspects of soil microbiology, biogeochemical cycles and fertility, particularly under changing climatic scenarios to cater to the problems associated with rice.

This has led to the development of novel products like liquid and carrier-based rice-specific bio-inoculants for nutrient management, Azolla-based bio-fertilizer (spore-carp), and livestock feed and microbial-growth medium.

Based on these products, the Odisha government has given a grant of Rs 2.84 crore to construct rice-specific liquid bio-fertilizer, Azolla, BGA and AM fungal production units at the NRRI for the first time.

Kumar has also characterised the microbial resources in relation to nitrogen fixation, nitrification, de-nitrification and straw-decomposition in rice under varying nutrient and climatic conditions.

ILLEGAL SAND MINING



Cuttack Sadar police seized 17 trucks and an excavator over illegal sand mining from Sidhua riverbank in 42 Mouza area during a raid in the intervening night of July 17 and 18. A penalty of ₹75,000 has been imposed on each of the seized trucks

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ROAD SAFETY AWARENESS



Police personnel carry out an awareness campaign on the importance of road safety at Daringbadi in Kandhamal district, Sunday

OP PHOTO

Drinking water projects on fast track in Bhanjanagar

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhanjanagar, July 18: Construction of drinking water facilities in Bhanjanagar block of Ganjam district is on a fast track. It is expected that most of the projects will be completed and operational by 2022. Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Bikram Keshari Aруkh

has recently laid the foundation stone for drinking water projects at Binjigiri, Khandikoti, Biripadar and Kanabindha villages.

Reports said, all households in Biripadar, Khandikoti, Binjigiri and Kanabindha villages under Bhanjanagar block will be supplied with clean and hygienic drinking water through pipes by



2022. The Odisha government has set a target to provide clean drinking water to all households in the state by 2024, a report said. Work is going on at a very fast pace to implement the programme.

The Rural Development department is also carrying out upgradation of a major road project connecting Nidhiapli with Baiballi at a cost of ₹8.82 crore.

Lack of irrigation facilities hits cultivation in Salipur block

POST NEWS NETWORK

Salipur, July 18: Lack of irrigation facilities has hit cultivation on hundreds of acres of farmland under this block in Cuttack district, a report said.

With monsoon playing hide and seek, farmers are yet to start cultivation in the block. The canal through which water could have been supplied to the farmers is presently clogged with aquatic plants and other debris. As a result, it has sparked resentment among the farmers in the area.

Reports said that farmers in the

area mainly depend on rain and the canal water for their farmlands. The Tentol branch canal which originates from the Kendrapara canal is not functional at all. The flow of water has completely stopped and so the farmlands are not getting proper supply.

In such a situation, farmers are hoping that there will be sufficient rainfall soon and they can start cultivation. Saplings have already been planted, but those are withering due to lack of proper supply of water. Most of the agricultural land now has shrubs and wild grass growing. Farmlands on

the upstream of the canal have also developed cracks due to heat and insufficient water.

Also, farmlands in Bodamundi, Pikol and other villages on the upstream also are suffering due to lack of irrigation facilities. This is because the authorities have not cleaned the branch canal No 6 which also originates from Kendrapara canal.

The canal authorities have released water in the Kendrapara canal from July 9. However, Salipur block is not being able to avail of the facility as most of the smaller canals are clogged with silt.

POST NEWS NETWORK

Malkangiri, July 18: The dream of having its first railway line passing through Malkangiri district has once more been rekindled with the resumption of the survey which had been conducted earlier. The railway line will connect Malkangiri and Jeypore districts. It will be 126 kilometres in length. A total of 46 kilometres of railway track will pass through Malkangiri district.

Earlier a survey had been conducted for acquiring land for the project. During the survey it was found out that the proposed track was passing through an under-construction airstrip in Malkangiri district. So a decision to change the direction of the track was

'Ashirvad Yojana' spills beans on Covid-related deaths in Bolangir

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bolangir, July 18: The Odisha Covid-19 dashboard informs that so far 23,070 persons in Bolangir district have tested positive for the virus. It also points out 22,898 persons have recovered while 87 have succumbed to the disease. However, there are doubts regarding the exact number of fatalities. It has led to controversies in various quarters in the district.

It has been alleged that the district administration and the Odisha government are fudging Covid-19 data and concealing the actual number of Covid-related deaths in the district.

The enlistment of orphaned children due to both or one of the parents succumbing to Covid-19, in the 'Ashirvad Yojana' has suddenly put the spotlight on Covid-19 deaths in the district. Over 2,733 children have applied for financial assistance in 'Ashirvad Yojana'. The applicants have lost either both parents or one. However, the actual reason for the deaths is not available. Hence officials are at a loss to tackle the situation. Many feel that in the process, children actually orphaned due to Covid-19 will be deprived of their financial benefits.

Notably, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had announced that financial assistance will be provided to the children orphaned due to Covid-19 much before the Odisha government had launched the 'Ashirvad Yojana'.



The enlistment of orphaned children with both or one of the parents succumbing to Covid-19, has suddenly put the spotlight on Covid-19 deaths in the district

It has been alleged that many children are being deprived of their benefits due to lack of proper certificates mentioning the cause of death as Covid-19

The Odisha government launched the scheme in April 2020 to provide financial assistance to orphaned children. Now with so many applications submitted in Bolangir district, a huge controversy is raging over the number of deaths due to Covid-19

It has been alleged that many children are being deprived of the benefits due to lack of proper certificates mentioning the cause of death as Covid-19.

The Odisha government launched the scheme in April 2020 to provide financial assistance to orphaned children. Now with so many applications submitted in Bolangir district, a huge controversy is raging over the number of deaths due to Covid-19. Many said that the number of applicants prove that there has been a much higher fatality

rate than the 87 reported.

The district reported its first Covid-19 positive case in May 2020. Later, many more persons tested positive for the virus and were admitted to the hospital for treatment. Many of them recovered but a substantial number succumbed to the virus. It has been alleged that in many cases the authorities have not mentioned Covid-19 as the cause of death in the certificates. This has been done with the intention of fudging facts, many people in the know of things, said.

Hopes for Malkangiri-Jeypore rail line rekindled

POST NEWS NETWORK



■ THE RAILWAY LINE WILL CONNECT MALKANGIRI DISTRICT AND JEYPORE AND WILL BE 126 KILOMETRES IN LENGTH. A TOTAL OF 46 KILOMETRES OF RAILWAY TRACK WILL PASS THROUGH MALKANGIRI DISTRICT

■ DURING SURVEY, IT WAS FOUND OUT THAT THE PROPOSED TRACK WAS PASSING THROUGH AN UNDER-CONSTRUCTION AIRSTRIP IN THE DISTRICT. SO A DECISION TO CHANGE THE DIRECTION OF THE TRACK WAS MOOTED. THEREFORE, A FRESH SURVEY OF LAND HAS BEGUN

mooted. Therefore a fresh survey of land has begun.

Malkangiri sadar tehsildar Gunanidhi Nayak, senior section engineer of East Coast Railway (Vishakhapatnam), Surya Narayan, an official of the Hyderabad-based survey company and revenue de-

partment officials carried out a survey of how much government and private land is to be acquired for the project. They visited some of the proposed sites through which the railway line will pass.

The proposed tracks will pass through 13 villages under the

Sindhirmal and Malkangiri RIs circles and 625 acres of forest area. The Revenue and Forest departments, however, are yet to start a joint survey for estimation of the trees that need to cut for the construction of the railway track.

7 injured in group clash, 2 critical

POST NEWS NETWORK

Basudevpur/Padmapur, July 18: Seven people were wounded, four of them critically, when two groups of people clashed over a road construction at Kashiipur village of Andola panchayat in Bhadrak district Sunday.

The injured were identified as Ranjan Behera, Samir Jena, Karunakar Behera, Ratikant Jena, Suresh Mishra, Shankarsan Roul, and Tanushree Roul. They were first admitted for treatment to the Basudevpur district headquarters hospital (DHH).

However, as the condition of Ranjan and Samir turned critical, they were shifted from the DHH to SCB Medical College and Hospital

in Cuttack. The situation in the village continues to be tense in the aftermath of the incident.

According to reports, Shankarsan has built a house in a farmland near Kashiipur road. However, as there is no approach path to the house, he built one. In the process, he encroached on the land of Suresh while constructing the approach road, late Saturday night.

In the morning, Suresh found out about the encroachment on his land. He confronted Shankarsan and a heated argument broke out between the two.

At this juncture, the family members of Shankarsan allegedly attacked Suresh, Ranjan, Samir, Karunakar and Ratikant with sharp weapons.

Free eyecare services for Dongria Kondhs

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rayagada/Bissamkatak, July 18: The members of Dongria Kondh community living in Niyamgiri hills of Rayagada district, who were recently in news for refusing to take Covid-19 vaccines, are having free eye treatment at their door steps.

With the Tribal Odisha Eye Disease Study (Toes)-a Diagnostic Action Research Project inaugurated Friday at Khajuri and Kadrugumma villages of Kurli panchayat under Bissamkatak block by Collector Saroj Kumar Mishra, it is hoped that the members of this particularly vulnera-



ble tribal group who have long been living with eye diseases will

benefit immensely. Under this project, which is organised jointly by

the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Research and Training Institute (SOSTRI), Odisha PVTG Empowerment and Livelihoods Improvement Programme (OPELIP) and LV Prasad Eye Institute of Hyderabad under the aegis of the ministry of tribal affairs, the members of the PVTG are going to get free eye checkup, treatment, operation and glasses.

According to a source, a target has been set to test 10,190 members of 2,600 Dongria Kondh families living in 99 villages in Niyamgiri hills in three months.

Informing about the project, project manager of Chatikana OPELIP, Sudarshan Padhi said

the members of Dongria Kondh community have shown interest to get their eyes tested. "On the first day, over 200 members turned up and received treatment," he added.

Notably, the Dongria Kondh tribals, who live their lives according to a set of their own principles, had refused to undergo RT-PCR test when some administrative officials approached them during the second wave of the pandemic to convince them for the same. Even, they had said they were not worried about Covid-19. However, after much persuasion, they had agreed to undergo RT-PCR test and receive doses.

Online education remains a distant dream in many Sundargarh villages



POST NEWS NETWORK

Sundargarh, July 18: Online education has still remained a distant dream for students living in remote villages of Sundargarh district. This is because of lack of internet connectivity. One such village is in the district is Rangamati.

The village still does not have any mobile network available. There are mobile phones, but without

any connection. So online learning is not possible for students living in this village. Every day they trek three kilometres to reach a small hill top in Kadopani panchayat which is in neighbouring state Jharkhand to attend online classes. It is the closest place where some form of network is available. Approximately, 50 students from Classes I to VII attended the on-line classes conducted by Soni Sangeeta Dzungdung.

The students of Tirolakucha village under Gurundia block also experience the same predicament every day. Amar Mundari, Sachin Mahali and Gopal Oram were seen sitting on top of Jhandi hill Saturday, seven kilometres away from their village. When asked, they said they are giving their online tests. As there is connectivity problems in their village, they had no option, but to travel this far.

Amar is a Class IX student while Sachin and Gopal study in Class VII. They are students of a private school in Bhubaneswar. The school is conducting online classes on a regular basis and the examinations started July 1.

When asked, the trio said they have regularly been trekking the distance to attend the online classes and exams. "We don't have mobile networks in our village. So we have no other option but to travel this arduous journey every day as the network is only available there," the three said in unison.

EMPOWERING WOMEN



Women farmers receive training Sunday for preparation of fruit, vegetable and flower saplings at a camp in Nabarangpur. It was organised by the Bhubaneswar-based Central Horticulture Research Centre


OP PHOTO

EAST COAST RAILWAY
Tender Notice No. ST-OT-AMC-IPS-STATCON-223, Dt. 14.07.2021
NAME OF WORK : (I) PROVISION FOR COMPREHENSIVE ANNUAL MAINTENANCE CONTRACT OF INTEGRATED POWER SUPPLY SYSTEMS MANUFACTURED BY M/S STATCON ELECTRONICS INDIA LIMITED IN KHURDA ROAD DIVISION OF EAST COAST RAILWAY FOR A PERIOD OF TWO YEARS. (II) PROVISION FOR COMPREHENSIVE ANNUAL MAINTENANCE CONTRACT OF INTEGRATED POWER SUPPLY SYSTEMS MANUFACTURED BY M/S STATCON ELECTRONICS INDIA LIMITED AT PARADEEP IN KHURDA ROAD DIVISION OF EAST COAST RAILWAY FOR A PERIOD OF TWO YEARS UNDER DEPOSIT SCHEME.
Tender Value in (₹) : 2,18,36,554.24, Cost of Tender Document (₹) : 11,800/- (including 18% GST).
Bidding Start Date : 21.07.2021, Date and Time of Closing of Tender : At 1100 Hrs. of 04.08.2021.
No manual offers sent by Post / Courier / Fax or in person shall be accepted against such e-tenders even if these are submitted on firm's letter head and received in time. All such manual offers shall be considered invalid and shall be rejected summarily without any consideration.
Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-Tender is available in website : <https://www.reps.gov.in>
Note : The prospective tenderers are advised to revisit the website 15 (Fifteen) days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes / Corrigendum issued for this tender.
Divisional Railway Manager (S&T) / PR-220/M/21-22
Khurda Road

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There is nothing small in God's eyes; let there be nothing small in thine.

SRI AUROBINDO



Cuban Crisis

It is an irony of history that when China is celebrating the centenary of its party, the Communist Party of China (CPC), another communist country, Cuba, is confronted with the biggest mass demonstrations for three decades against food shortage, high prices, power outage and one party political system. As thousands of protesters took to the streets in towns across Cuba, it was not simply an expression of nation-wide anger against a temporary economic crisis compounded by the Covid-19 pandemic. The outpouring of anger is a tell-tale manifestation of the people's lack of faith in the Cuban variety of communism that has failed to improve the common man's quality of life. This is mainly because Cuban communism has all these years been doggedly refusing to effect economic reforms or combine socialism with the market forces the way Chinese communism has done to emerge as the second largest economy of the world.

The assertion by Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel July 17 that the protests are nothing but a black 'lie' spread by the USA does not cut much ice as images circulated on social media sites in Cuba clearly show all's not well. The protests began in the morning of July 11 in the town of San Antonio de los Baños in the west of the island. With millions of Cubans now with mobile internet on their phones, news of the protests quickly swept to Havana and thousands erupted in central Havana chanting 'homeland and life' and 'freedom'. This was a parody on the clarion call given by Cuba's Communist liberator Fidel Castro in the 1950s - 'homeland or death'. The protesters are angry because there is an acute shortage of basic food and medicine and there are power-cuts in the current spell of gruelling heat. The common refrain of the protesters is change of government, multiparty elections and end of communism.

Even if there is an element of truth in the Cuban President's charge that the USA is engineering the demonstrations to overthrow Communist rule in Cuba, fact remains that the Cuban economy is collapsing for a combination of factors including the rulers' refusal to reform it for the past 30 years. The Trump administration dealt a severe blow to the island's economy with over 200 new sanctions aimed at sabotaging Cuba's economy and stirring discontent. The measures are being continued by his successor Joe Biden. The pandemic has worsened the crisis with drastic fall in tourism, a key revenue earner for Cuba, drop in remittances contributed by Cubans working in the USA and the crude oil crisis in friendly Venezuela.

Cubans have become accustomed to waiting in queues for hours to buy basic goods such as chicken and detergent. Medicines have disappeared from pharmacy shelves.

Cuba had witnessed the biggest protests in 1994, when tens of thousands demonstrated at Havana's Malecón promenade amid an acute economic crisis brought on by the fall of the Soviet Union. But, the charisma of Fidel Castro had bailed the Communist rulers out at that time.

Now, Cuba's economy is struggling like never before and Miguel lacks Castro's stature. Apart from the toll the pandemic has taken on tourism, the poor harvest of sugar this season has hit the economy hard. Sugar, which is mostly exported, is a key earner for Cuba. As a result, the government's reserves of foreign currency are depleted and it is unable to buy imported goods to supplement shortages, as it would normally do.

But, the main problem that has brought this crisis to Cuba is the country's Soviet-style, centrally planned economy and its hesitation to adopt market-oriented reforms that other remaining communist countries have taken up. Its economy has contracted by over 35 per cent and it never recovered from the crisis the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 plunged it into, economists say. At the same time Cuba did not heed advice from China and Vietnam to reform its economy. During an official visit in 2018, the general secretary of Vietnam's Communist Party, Nguyen Phu Trong, urged Cuba to adopt the model of market economy as Vietnam had done in the 1980s. Over 30 million Vietnamese were lifted out of poverty in the wake of the new experiment. Cuba's government owns and operates most industries, while most of the labour force is employed by the state.

Faced with severe shortages of food and medicine, Diaz-Canel recently picked up the pace of reforms, unifying the country's dual currency and legalising the status of private businesses allowed to operate decades ago. He also promised more movement in that direction. But for the average Cuban, the reforms are too little, too late and they lack credibility. Former leader and brother of Fidel, Raul Castro had also promised ambitious economic reforms in 2011, but they were never fully implemented.

Hence, it won't serve much purpose to the current Cuban leadership either to see an American plot in the spate of protests or put down massive demonstrations with an iron hand. The challenge is to the economic model and political ideology and the response will show the mettle of the leadership.

WISDOM CORNER

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Nothing great in the world has ever been accomplished without passion.

GEORG WILHELM FRIEDRICH HEGEL

“

All truth passes through three stages. First, it is ridiculed. Second, it is violently opposed. Third, it is accepted as being self-evident.

ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER

“

Whoever fights monsters should see to it that in the process he does not become a monster. And if you gaze long enough into an abyss, the abyss will gaze back into you.

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

WORDSWORTH

■ Omphaloskepsis

Omphaloskepsis is the practice of figuratively contemplating one's navel as an aid to meditation or introspection, hence introspection itself. It's relatively new, having been invented by Aldous Huxley in his book Those Barren Leaves in 1925. It turns up in only a few dictionaries and seems to be a word that survives more for the opportunity to show off one's erudition than as a real aid to communication. It's formed from two Greek words, omphalos, "navel, boss, hub", and skepsis, "the act of looking; enquiry".

■ On all fours

The image behind it is that of a dog or similar animal. If it has use of all four legs, it runs smoothly and evenly, as opposed to the way it would limp if one of its legs were damaged. The expression was originally on all four, known from the sixteenth century in phrases we're still familiar with, such as to crawl upon all four (the final "-s" was added in the nineteenth century; earlier, a word such as "legs" or "extremities" was understood). In the eighteenth century, people started to use to run on all four as a figurative expression to describe some proposition or circumstance that was fair or equitable, well-founded, sturdily able to stand by itself. To be on all four or to stand on all four meant to be on a level with another, to present an exact analogy or comparison with something else (presumably the image is of two animals standing together, both on all four legs, hence in closely similar situations).

LOL

Tough rodents

Three rats are sitting at the bar bragging about their bravery and toughness. The first says, "I'm so tough, once I ate a whole bagful of rat poison!"



The second says, "Well I'm so tough, once I was caught in a rat trap and I bit it apart!" Then the third rat gets up and says, "Later guys, I'm off home to harass the cat."



Mohamed ElBaradei

THIS US BIAS IN FAVOUR OF ISRAEL HAS BECOME, OVER TIME, A MATTER OF CONSENSUS IN AMERICAN POLITICS

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

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

Why privatise LIC? The government says it is not privatisation but only an initial public offering of some stake. That was what Anurag Thakur, then Minister of State for Finance and Corporate Affairs, unequivocally stated in the Parliament sometime back. The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has recently given its in-principal approval for LIC's IPO. The government's fast and preparatory steps indicate the actual sale is most likely to start during the last quarter of the current fiscal. IPO or with whatever name it is called, the government is going to ease its monopoly control on LIC, selling a part of its stake.

Considering its unparalleled achievement in terms of not only the enormous social benefit it generated but the support it provided to the exchequer during troubled times, does not LIC qualify to be excluded from any plan for privatisation? The enormous potential of the milch cow (LIC's IPO alone is estimated to fetch around ₹1 lakh crore in the ₹1.75 lakh crore disinvestment plan) and the urgent need for funds make the government blind to the damage it is going to cause in the long run. It is not at all reasonable to sell LIC's stake, the family silver, for fiscal deficit needs.

Even a cursory look at the birth and evolution of LIC shows how ludicrous is the idea of easing monopoly control on it. Private insurance did not work in the public interest during the pre and early post-Independence years. The very first life insurance company, Oriental Life Insurance Company, set up in Calcutta (now Kolkata) in 1818 served only the European community. This and many other foreign companies did not cover Indians' lives at all. It required concerted efforts by persons like Babu Mutty Lal Seal to make the British companies agree to insure Indians' lives. Even after agreeing to this, Indian lives were treated as sub-standard and heavy extra premiums were charged. Although this anomaly was removed, private insurance could not be freed from fraud and incompetence.

FOCUS LIC'S IPO

HOPING AGAINST HOPE



LIC is not only providing efficient life insurance service to people but utilising people's money for the country's economic development besides giving huge funding support to the government

Before nationalisation, 25 insurance companies went into liquidation, 80 did not even file their statutory returns, 245 life and 108 general insurance companies failed the policyholders. The Vivian Bose Commission, set up during Nehru's time, noted many other irregularities like money-laundering and false claims of big business houses and their accommodating sister concerns in the insurance business.

To protect the public interest, the LIC was formed just with ₹5 crore capital in 1956, amalgamating 245 private entities which included 154 Indian, 16 foreign and 75 provident fund societies. Although the capital was enhanced to ₹100 crore, it was not an extra burden; the LIC had internally generated the sum. The present authorised capital of ₹25,000 crore, too, doesn't serve any useful purpose as long as the sovereign guarantee to policyholders (Section 37) remains intact.

Despite minimal government support and private competition since 1999, the LIC's growth has been phenomenal. Its market share in the number of policies (the number is more important than money because the public sector's focus is on low-income groups) in March 2021 was 81.04 per cent and for the whole financial year was 74.58 per cent. In case of premium amount, it was 64.74 per cent and 66.18 per cent for March 2021 and the whole financial year respectively. The customer service of the public sector insurer has been ex-

cellent as found when the MARG's survey was employed by the RN Malhotra Committee in 1993; 97 per cent of the respondents rated the service good/excellent.

The LIC has eight zonal offices and 113 divisional offices, 2,048 branches, 1,526 satellite offices and 1,178 mini offices in the country (March 31, 2020). It has foreign branches, in Fiji (Suva) and Lautoka, Mauritius (Port Louis) and the United Kingdom (Wembley) and joint ventures in Bahrain, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Kenya, Saudi Arabia and Bangladesh and a wholly-owned subsidiary in Singapore.

With its ₹31 lakh crore balance sheet, LIC is the country's second-largest financial services institution next only to the SBI with ₹39.51 lakh crore assets. The sum assured stands at ₹56,86,035.01 crore. LIC has 1,14,498 employees besides 10,80,809 active agents out of total 12,08,826 agents (March 31, 2020).

Although the government gets only 5 per cent of the surplus leaving 95 per cent to the policyholders, it got ₹2,697.74 crore dividend in 2019-20. The net total income was ₹6,15,822.94 crore. The taxes LIC paid that year amounted to ₹10,225.24 crore.

Besides being the biggest institutional investor in the country (Rs 30,69,941.67 crore as of March 31, 2020), LIC gives funding support to the government in a big way. During 2019-20 it subscribed ₹1,78,717.61 crore to the government of India securities and ₹1,28,483.62 crore to the state gov-

ernments' borrowings. During the same year, it invested ₹52,297.79 crore in the social sector: power, housing, water supply and sewerage, roads, bridges and railways.

The investments, as of March 31, 2020, for Central, state, social sector and other government guaranteed securities aggregated to ₹24,01,456.50 crore. LIC operates varied other activities: it owns LIC Housing Finance Ltd (with ₹2.10 lakh crore outstanding loans as of March 31, 2020), LIC Mutual Fund Asset Management Company Ltd, LIC Pension Fund Ltd, LIC Cards Services Ltd and IDBI Bank.

At least one thing that should deter the government from LIC's disinvestment is the support it gets for other PSUs' disinvestment; LIC purchases a substantial portion of other PSUs' stake. Examples: LIC was allotted 4.4 per cent of the 5 per cent stake of ONGC's disinvestment in 2012; 60 per cent (Rs 6,000 crore) of NMDC's stake (of ₹9,928 crore) in 2009-10 and ₹4,263 crore of NTPC's ₹8,480 crore. Other purchases include: SAIL (71 per cent in 2013), BHEL (Rs 2,685 crore in 2014), Coal India Limited (Rs 7,000 crore in 2015), Indian Oil Corporation (Rs 8,000 crore in 2015), GIC (Rs 8,000 crore in 2015); New India Assurance Company (Rs 6,500 crore in 2017) and HAL (Rs 2,900 crore in 2018). Also, LIC bought 51 per cent of the beleaguered IDBI Bank's stake in 2019.

LIC is not only providing efficient life insurance service to the people but utilising people's money for the country's economic development besides giving huge funding support to the government. It is an 'apathandhava' (a friend in need), in its true sense, to this, previous, and future governments. So, the present government has no right to sell the stake without the approval of the people in general and the workforce of the organisation in particular. It is not correct for the government to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs or the 'kamadhenu' that fulfills all its wishes. Hope the government will reconsider. Or, is this going to be hoping against hope?

The writer is a development economist and a commentator on economic and social affairs.

SPECTRUM GEOPOLITICS

The US that Israel & Palestine need

For many generations of Arab youth, mine included, studying and working in the United States was a coveted opportunity to experience freedoms, possibilities, and the sense of egalitarianism that the American way of life embodied. It was a doubly enriching experience for those of us raised in authoritarian or conservative societies. It was thrilling to be able to think and act independently, without societal pressure. I was excited to take home some of the lessons I learned from a functioning democracy, not least the vital role of freedom of expression, the importance of civil society, and the exceptional benefits of empowering people.

Of course, I was also aware of the US system's failings, and in particular the perpetuation of racism and inequality. I remember the Jim Crow laws enforcing racial segregation in the former Confederate states, and the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., who articulated African-Americans' dreams of equality and human decency. But I was hopeful that America's democratic system had the tools it needs for self-correction. I remain so, based on the major transformations in values,

laws, and mindsets that I witnessed.

What shocked me most was how the US, a country that prides itself on its love of freedom and justice, could all too often pursue a hegemonic and repressive foreign policy, from its appalling wars in Vietnam and Iraq to its support of ruthless dictators. Regardless of its cause, the disconnect between America's self-image and its foreign policy fuelled a confused perception of the country in the Arab world and elsewhere. While many young Arabs wanted to become US citizens, almost all of them loathed US foreign policy.

Arabs and Muslims saw the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as Exhibit A in the case against America. They found it difficult to grasp why a sense of empathy for the Jewish people - which was fully justified, given the horrible atrocities committed against them - should somehow translate into injustice against the Palestinians. This US bias in favour of Israel has become, over time, a matter of consensus in American politics; for many lawmakers, support for Israel is synonymous with the fight against anti-Semitism.

Even more dangerous was the conflict's religious dimension,

which added to a creeping schism between the Muslim and Western worlds. Relations soured further as a result of US-led wars in the Middle East, and hit rock bottom with President Donald Trump's Muslim travel ban and his "Deal of the Century" to secure peace in the region - an offering to the Palestinians that deepened mistrust by being far worse than any that had come before.

The latest outbreak of Israeli-Palestinian violence again brought to the surface the deep-seated sense of humiliation and rage harboured not only by Palestinians in the occupied territories, but also among Israeli Arabs and across the Arab and Muslim world. It was widely hoped that US President Joe Biden's administration would make the promotion of democracy and human rights central to its foreign policy. But this hope quickly dissipated when the US government simply repeated the familiar mantra that "Israel has the right to defend itself" without mentioning the elephant in the room: Israel's crawling expansion of settlements in occupied Palestinian territory, its policy of discrimination, and its denial of the Palestinians' right to an

independent state.

On a personal level, this was profoundly disheartening. Over five decades, I have seen how the US approach to upholding Palestinians' rights has become almost apologetic. Today, I contemplate in disbelief how the Jewish people, who suffered so much for so long, are capable of inflicting on another people some of the same atrocities previously committed against them.

But I still sense a glimmer of hope, and a widespread acknowledgment that a return to the status quo ante and the hellish cycle of violence is not viable. I also sense the beginning of some soul-searching inside Israel, among the Palestinians, and across the Arab world to find new ways forward based on coexistence and mutual acceptance.

A more evenhanded US approach would help the Palestinians, Israel, the region, and the world. If Biden can manage the necessary shift in US foreign policy, then America truly will be back.

The writer, Director General Emeritus of the International Atomic Energy Agency, is a Nobel Peace Prize Laureate.

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BSP for Brahmins

Sir, In a laughable development bordering on the ludicrous, BSP supremo Mayawati is organising 'Brahmin Sammelans' in various districts of Uttar Pradesh to woo the Brahmins who, she alleges, are being ignored by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. The irony is that not so long ago her party despised the upper castes to the extent of coining the infamous slogan of "tilak, tarazu aur talwar, maro jutey inko chaar." It is the bane of Indian politics how core ideologies are compromised at the altar of electoral arithmetic without even batting an eyelid.

Bhaskar Roy, NEW DELHI

Karnataka giveaway

Sir, Though Karnataka Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa has denied reports of his resignation, the stony silence maintained by the central leaders proves that something is cooking. His two-day visit to Delhi to meet the BJP's top brass and agreeing to help the central leadership find a replacement is a giveaway. The CM who has been directed to helm the state 'for now' announced that he would convene a BJP legislature party meeting July 26, the day he completes two years in office, raising the stakes further.

NJ Ravi Chander, BANGALORE

Let the Games begin

Sir, We are eager to exhale after two years of being cooped up. More than us, the global sports fraternity is raring to go. For a fortnight from Friday, July 23, the headlines will be about the heights achieved by the human body and spirit, rather than the doom and gloom that we are being subjected to. With 11,000 athletes from 206 countries competing, new records and new champs will emerge. Twenty-seven world records were broken in the 2016 Rio Olympics and 32 in 2012, London. Tokyo, 2021, is anyone's guess, with the athletes rusty and the stands empty. All over the world, the athletes have found themselves stranded due to the lockdown resulting from rising cases of coronavirus, and Indian athletes were no exception. The Olympic Games symbolise the triumph and celebration of the unity of all human wisdom and power. The Olympics is the celebration of tolerance, peace, mutual respect and universal brotherhood spreading through the means of sports. But, the athletes as well as the organisers need to be alert because cases of coronavirus are being reported in the Olympic village. For the moment though, let's forget the games politicians play and sit back to enjoy the biggest sports show on earth.

Aman Jaiswal, NEW DELHI

Scant rainfall, defunct LI points trigger farm crisis

Saplings wilt as farmlands go dry

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhanjanagar, July 18: With monsoon playing truant, the farming sector is affected by insufficient rain in Bhanjanagar and other areas in Ganjam district. Adding to the crisis are defunct lift irrigation points. Farmers are worried a lot, a report said.

According to the report, farmers alleged that they were supplied seeds by government authorised agencies for the kharif season. The seeds were sub-standard and the saplings were affected by pest quickly.

Moreover, the farmlands are dry due to dearth of water while most lift irrigation points in the region have gone kaput. They apprehend a looming crisis in the agriculture sector owing to insufficient rainfall.

Farmers are unsuccessfully trying to save the paddy saplings while resentment is growing among them. Upset over supply of sub-standard seeds and defunct lift irrigation points, farmers in Bhanjanagar, Jagannathprasad and Bellaguntha blocks are bracing themselves for an agitation. They demand immediate supply of fertilisers.

By the second week of June, Bhanjanagar has received much less rainfall than normal. Therefore hectares of farmlands are lying dry.

Bhanjanagar and Sorada reservoirs are the lifelines for agriculture in this area. This year, both the reservoirs do not have adequate



water to feed the agriculture sector. Farmers observed that if the area does not get rain in five to six days, water supply from the reservoirs will stop.

Water will be released from Daha reservoir July 25 while Baghua reservoir lacks water to meet the needs of agriculture, they added. Panipanchayats looking after the reservoirs will decide when water will be released through canals.

When contacted, executive engineer, Gokula Chandra Padhi of the Water Resources department said that they have started releasing water through canals. "This process will go on for four months. Normal rainfall is expected in coming days," he added.

Farmers of Tanarada under Bellaguntha block - Sania Bisoyi, Akula Nayak and Radhamohan Sethi alleged that they were supplied

with sub-standard seeds due to which saplings are prone to pests.

"Saplings are wilting due to pest attacks. Help of agriculture officials is sought, but they do not come out for our rescue at the time of crisis," they lamented.

There are two irrigation points in Bhanjanagar area, but they are of no use for the last few years due to electrical problem.

Despite scanty rainfall, farmers are still trying their best to save crops. "We now need good seeds and fertilisers. The department should immediately look into this issue in the larger interest of farmers," locals said.

Mukund Chandra Padhi, agriculture officer of Jagannathprasad block, said that the department is receiving reports from different areas about saplings being affected by pests. Farmers are being advised to apply pesticides, he added.

FARMERS FUME AS LI PROJECTS GO KAPUT

POST NEWS NETWORK

Khandapara, July 18: Two lift irrigation points have been set up near Sunamuhin river on the outskirts of Khandapara town in Nayagarh district. Farmers alleged that these two facilities are of no use for farming as they are lying defunct due to lack of repair and maintenance for last nine years.

Nine years ago when the two projects were made functional, farmers were enthused about prospects for the agriculture sector in the region. However, the projects failed to deliver their service as the concerned department did not pay attention to their maintenance.

"Lakhs of rupees have been spent for the two projects to bolster irrigation for farming in the riparian pocket, but it seems the funds spent on the project have gone down the drain," local farmers lamented.

Now, farmlands are dry due to poor rainfall. "Had the lift irrigation project been repaired earlier, they would be of good use at this time of crisis," farmers noted.

Time after time, farmers have drawn attention of the lift irrigation department towards the sorry state of the projects. But no step was taken to set them right.



Farmers alleged that the two LI facilities are of no use for farming as they are lying defunct due to lack of repair and maintenance for last nine years

Service wires connected to the project have been stolen by miscreants while the premises of the two projects are lost in wild creepers

On the other hand, service wires connected to the project have been stolen by miscreants while the premises of the two projects are lost amidst wild creepers.

Local farmers have sought the attention of the department and the district administration for immediate steps to make the projects functional.

Contacted, Bijay Kumar Tarai, assistant engineer of the lift irrigation department, admitted that the two projects are defunct, but quick steps will be taken for their restoration.

ACF MURDER MYSTERY

Six-member police team begins probe

POST NEWS NETWORK

Paralakhemundi, July 18: A six-member team of policemen from Paralakhemundi police station Sunday travelled to Balasore and Mayurbhanj districts to probe the alleged murder of assistant conservator of forest (ACF) Soumya Ranjan Mohapatra.

According to an official source, the team will interrogate the parents of deceased Soumya in Balasore and his spouse Bidya Bharati Panda at Kaptipada in Mayurbhanj district.

planned 'murder' over extramarital affair between accused Bidya Bharati and the DFO. A cook who was present at home on the intervening day is also under police scanner.

Abhiram demanded a probe into the incident by the Crime Branch.

Meanwhile, a scientific team Friday conducted a detailed scrutiny, but only found smoky smell inside Soumya's bedroom. There were no traces of inflammable objects that could have caused the fire mishap in which



The team will interrogate the parents of deceased Soumya in Balasore and his spouse Bidya Bharati Panda at Kaptipada in Mayurbhanj district

A senior official said that two suspects in the mysterious death - Gajapati DFO Sangarm Keshari Behera and the deceased's spouse Bidya Bharati - came under police scanner after the ACF's father Abhiram Mahapatra lodged an FIR levelling murder charges against them.

As per the FIR, the ACF's father termed his son's death as a pre-

the ACF is said to have died, a senior police official said.

No sign of any damage caused to items like plastic articles and paper documents owing to a fire incident could be seen, the official added.

Notably, the deceased OFS officer succumbed to over 90 per cent burn injuries July 13 while undergoing treatment in Cuttack.

FUELLING ANGER



Youth activists of Congress take out a bicycle rally in Jeypore, protesting against the Central government over steep rise in fuel prices, Sunday OP PHOTO

No registration yet in 19 PACSes in Jaleswar

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jaleswar, July 18: Registration of farmers has not yet started in 19 primary agriculture cooperative societies (PACS) under Jaleswar block in Balasore district.

The secretaries of these PACSes have also not received training till date. This has cast doubts over timely procurement of kharif paddy in this area this year.

Meanwhile, the secretaries have drawn attention of their higher authorities in this regard.



The secretaries of these PACSes have also not received training till date. This has cast doubts over timely procurement of kharif paddy in this area this year

In the current kharif season, paddy is expected to be harvested on 20 hectares of land in Jaleswar area.

The secretaries have also pointed out that procurement is affected due to delay by millers and lack of tokens. They also observed that there is a need for extending the timeline of tokens issued to farmers.

Meanwhile, the secretaries of PACSes in other blocks have received training on online registration of farmers. The secretaries have demanded immediate provision of training so that the stalemate that is expected to hit procurement could be evaded.

LADY FOREST GUARD RAPED

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sundargarh/Bonai, July 18: A youth posing as a CRPF jawan allegedly raped a lady forest guard and decamped with her jewellery in Bonai of Sundargarh district on the pretext of marriage.

The matter came to the fore after police arrested the accused identified as Kalinga Gourab Parida, 30, from Sarankul in Nayagarh district, Sunday.

Parida, a native of Jajpur Road area in Jajpur district was staying at Sarankul.

Parida, posing as a CRPF jawan, feigned love for the lady forest guard and developed a relationship with her.

He often visited the survivor's residence in Bonai and shared physical relationship with her. Later, he duped the survivor and decamped with her jewellery from her residence.

Realising that she has been tricked, the survivor lodged a complaint at Bonai police station, June 15. Police registered a case and arrested the accused.

SCOURGE OF WITCHCRAFT

16 held for thrashing 3 members of family

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Berhampur, July 18: At least 16 people were arrested in Ganjam district Sunday for allegedly thrashing three members of a family on the suspicion of witchcraft, police said.

Villagers suspected Bimal Nahak of practising witchcraft as at least six persons had died in the past one-and-half month at Chirikipada Sasan in Polasara area, 52km from Berhampur.

Several villagers Friday allegedly assaulted the 45-year-old man, who claimed innocence. They had also attacked his wife and son when they rushed to his rescue, police said.

After being informed about the incident, police rushed to the spot and rescued the trio from the mob and admitted them to the Polasara community health centre. The man was referred to the MKCG Medical College and Hospital in Berhampur. His condition was stated to be stable, police said.

A case has been registered against 30 villagers, Polasara police station inspector in-charge Jeetendra Mallick said.

We have raided the village and arrested at least 16 people for their



involvement in the attack, Purushottampur sub-divisional police officer, Suryamani Pradhan said, adding that a search was on for more suspects.

The incident took place just a day after police and other officials had created awareness against witchcraft, sources said.

It was the second such incident in the district in the last one month. Angry villagers had allegedly beaten to death a 50-year old man at Ramayapalli under Chamakhandi police station limits June 19 on the suspicion that he practised black magic.

WODC funds allocated for Ghanteswari development

Dhankauda block administration will carry out development of the shrine. WODC has sanctioned ₹35 lakh while the government has provided ₹10 lakh

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, July 18: Ghanteswari peetha is one of the major shrines in western Odisha. The development of the shrine has been a priority in view of its tourism potential.

A host of development works have been undertaken so as to attract tourists and devotees in large numbers. The funds of Western Odisha Development Council will be utilised for various projects here.

A rest room and a Jaina Mandap will be built at the shrine. All necessary official formalities have been made ready. The administration of Dhankauda block will carry out development of the shrine. WODC has sanctioned ₹35 lakh while the government has provided ₹10 lakh.

"Development works will be started very soon. WODC had sought to know from the block administration if it can carry out the development works at the shrine or not. The administration made the cost estimate of the projects to be executed and all reports have been submitted to the WODC," said BDO Basanti Hati.

A parking lot, a market complex, a rest room and toilets for tourists and devotees, and a jaina mandap will be built at the shrine,

she added.

The BDO also added that the state government is attaching priority on tourism sector with multiple facilities for tourists.

Notably, Ghanteswari peetha stands on the Mahanadi near Chipiliima village. Tourists used to take a route to the shrine from Goshala Chhak on NH-53.

A second bridge across the Mahanadi has been built facilitating communication link to the shrine.



Expectant mother made to walk 4 km



POST NEWS NETWORK

Patana, July 18: A 31-year-old expectant mother was made to walk four kilometres Saturday as the emergency vehicle failed to reach her village due to non-motorable road condition. This happened in Majhi Sahi of Bana Mahuladiha village under Dumuria panchayat in Keonjhar district.

According to a source, Parbati Majhi, wife of Surendra Majhi, a resident, went into labour pain Saturday. The family members then called 108. A 108 ambulance came but failed to reach her village as the bridge on the road to the village was in a dilapidated state.

With no option left, an ASHA and ambulance staff helped her walk up to the ambulance. It was four kilometres away from her house. She was rushed to Patana com-

Parbati Majhi, wife of Surendra Majhi, a resident, went into labour pain Saturday. The family members then called 108 ambulance. It came but failed to reach her village

munity health centre (CHC) and from there she was shifted to Keonjhar district headquarters hospital (DHH) as her condition deteriorated.

Since there is no permanent gynaecologist at Patana CHC, women in labour pain often fail to get immediate medical attention. The villagers urged the administration to get the dilapidated bridge repaired and appoint a permanent gynaecologist at Patana CHC.

BSP to woo back Brahmins in UP

Party to launch campaign from Ayodhya to reach out to Brahmin voters

AGENCIES

Lucknow/Ballia, July 18: Stepping up preparations for the UP Assembly election, Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) chief Mayawati Sunday announced that a campaign will be launched from Ayodhya to reach out to Brahmin voters and urged the community not to be 'misled' by the BJP.

Speaking to the media here, she claimed the people from the 'upper castes' were repenting voting for the BJP in the last state elections and said their interests will be safeguarded if her party comes to power.

"A campaign, led by BSP general secretary Satish Chandra Mishra, will be started from Ayodhya July 23 to awaken the Brahmin community once again. The Brahmins will be assured that their interests will remain safe under the BSP regime," the former chief minister and Dalit leader said.

Mayawati's Brahmin outreach was considered as one of the key factors for her win in the 2007 UP assembly election.

The BSP chief said she is fully confident that the members of the "Brahmin community will not get misled by the BJP" and will vote



The Brahmins will be assured that their interests will remain safe under the BSP regime

MAYAWATI | BSP CHIEF

for her party in the upcoming elections.

The ruling BJP hit back, alleging the BSP chief is 'remembering' the Brahmins only because of assembly elections next year and is pursuing 'opportunistic politics'.

On the agitation against the farm laws, the BSP chief said all political parties should come together and hold the Centre ac-

countable.

"The indifferent attitude of the Centre towards farmers protesting against the three farm laws is extremely sad. It is necessary that pressure is put on the Centre in Parliament," she said.

Mayawati alleged that there is rising unemployment and inflation, which is posing hardships to the people, due to the wrong economic policies of the central

government.

She said the BSP MPs will raise issues such as the rise in fuel and cooking gas prices and matters related to COVID-19 vaccination during the Monsoon session of Parliament which begins Monday.

"There are many issues on which the public wants accountability of the government," she said.

She claimed that people from the 'upper castes' especially the Brahmin community are 'feeling extremely sad as they had voted for the BJP and helped form its government for five years.'

She also praised the Dalit community, saying it stayed united in the last assembly election and voted for her party.

"I feel proud of the people of the Dalit community in the state who did not deviate, remained united, and voted for the BSP. As a result, in the 2017 UP Assembly elections, we may have got less number of seats, but our vote percentage stood at 22.23, more than the Samajwadi Party's 21.82 per cent."

She said that not only the BJP but the Congress also had tried to "lure the Dalits by using different tactics".

"They ate 'khichdi' in the house of Dalits, although it was brought from their own house as they did not like the 'khichdi' cooked by the Dalits and brought from the home of the Dalits. Rath Yatra was also taken out," she said.

Have an open mind: Priyanka on forging alliance for UP polls

AGENCIES

Lucknow, July 18: Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra Sunday said her party is 'open-minded' about forging an alliance with other political parties for the Uttar Pradesh Assembly polls.

Asked whether the Congress will go it alone on all the 403 assembly seats in the state or align with some political party, Priyanka Gandhi told reporters in an informal meeting here, "It is too early to say."

On whether she is ruling out an alliance, she said, "I do not rule it out. We are absolutely not closed-minded. We are keeping an open mind."

"Our aim is to defeat the BJP," she said, adding that other political parties should also be "open-minded". Priyanka Gandhi said the organisation is also her area of focus and a lot of work has been done on it in a silent manner.

"I have an open mind, but my priority is my party," she said.

To a question on the Congress becoming active in her presence and tending to become inactive as soon as she leaves the state, the party general secretary said, "When I come (here), there is media focus and you pay attention. But when I am not here, you do not pay any attention. But our work is going on."

"We have done the maximum work during the COVID-19 pandemic. You can see that we are the



Congress is no longer confined to garlanding photographs. Our party has been out of power for 30-32 years, and it has become weak. However, full efforts have been made, and a lot of energy has come (into the party)

PRIYANKA GANDHI VADRA | CONGRESS GENERAL SECRETARY

ones who have raised issues. Congress is no longer confined to garlanding photographs. Our party has been out of power for 30-32 years, and it has become weak. However, full efforts have been made, and a lot of energy has come (into the party)," she added.

Asked to comment on what ails the Congress, Priyanka Gandhi said, "Congress is an old party and in old institutions, there are certain ideas and ways that become fixed. At the same time, in the elders, there is a lot of wisdom and experience, yet you have to bring in the new. So the challenge for the Congress is that you have to bring the good from the old, keep it, and

be able to reach out to the public."

When asked if she will camp in Lucknow more often, she said, "Well, I will be going to Delhi today. I will be absent for 15-20 days and after that, I will come. The thing is that I get caught up with a lot of work in Delhi and I am required for other things. But I intend to spend much more time here."

To a query on whether she will be the Congress 'CM candidate for the 2022 UP Assembly elections, Priyanka Gandhi said, "It's too early to say."

The Congress leader, who was on a three-day visit to Lucknow, also said that plans are afoot to revamp the Congress Seva Dal in UP.

Danish Siddiqui to be buried at JMI graveyard



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 18: Slain photojournalist Danish Siddiqui will be laid to rest at the Jamia Millia Islamia graveyard, according to a statement Sunday.

"Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI) Vice Chancellor accepted the request of the family of late photojournalist Danish Siddiqui to bury his body at the JMI graveyard meant exclusively for university employees, their spouses and minor child," the university said in the statement.

Siddiqui had done his masters from the university. His father Akhtar Siddiqui was the Dean of Faculty of Education there.

Danish Siddiqui had studied at AJK Mass Communication Research Centre (MCRC) from 2005-2007.

The Jamia Teachers' Association (JTA) expressed condolences at the death of Danish Siddiqui.

The Officiating Director of AJK

MCRC said, "Danish was one of the brightest stars in our hall of fame and a proactive alumnus who kept returning to his alma mater to share with students his work and experiences. We will miss him deeply but are determined to keep his memory alive."

Professor Sabeena Gadihoke said his photographs were hard-hitting but he never compromised on the dignity of those within his frames. "Danish had the unique ability to bestow a journalistic picture with empathy and to give dignity and grace to his subjects," she added.

JTA president Professor Majid Jamil described his death as a big loss to journalism and the Jamia community.

Siddiqui, who won a Pulitzer Prize in 2018, worked for Reuters news agency and was killed Friday in the town of Spin Boldak, near the border with Pakistan. He was embedded with Afghan special forces at the time of his death.

Pvt schools burn a hole in parents' pocket

Hundreds of parents, who have been financially hit due to Covid-19, have discontinued their children's studies from private schools after private schools took strict action against those who could not deposit their fees

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, July 18: The charging of exorbitant fees by private schools has become a major contentious issue for thousands of parents across the national Capital during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

Hundreds of parents, who have been financially hit due to Covid-19, have discontinued their children's studies from private schools after private schools took strict action against those who could not deposit their fees.

All India Parents Association National President, Ashok Agarwal, told IANS that all such parents should consider shifting their children from unaided private schools to Delhi government schools so that they do not have to pay high fees.

At such a time the government should not deny admission to any such student based on any particular ground. Quality education should also be ensured through proper recruitment of teachers.

Poonam Kochhity, Principal of Seth Anandram Jaipuria School, says that her school is following req-

uisite government instructions. However, those parents who are struggling with financial problems are being given a fee discount. Parents can now pay the fees in monthly mode. On special request, parents facing financial problems can also make late payment of fees.

On the subject of paying school fees during the Covid-19 pandemic, Heritage Xperiential Learning School says, "Although most of the parents of children studying in our school have paid the fees, Covid-19 has posed financial challenges for many parents. We offer a discount in fees to parents facing financial challenges."

At the same time, the Delhi government has decided that such students studying in private schools across Delhi, who now want to leave private schools and enroll in government schools will no

longer need to take transfer certificates. These students will be granted admission to Delhi government schools without submitting the transfer certificate. The Education Department officials will take the transfer certificates of these students from private schools at their level.

Delhi deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia, who is also the education minister, said due to Covid-19 several people have lost their jobs. In such a situation many parents cannot afford to pay the exorbitant fees charged by private schools and are getting their children enrolled in government schools. However, many private schools are demanding arrears according to the hiked fees for the last one year.

In case of non-payment of this amount, transfer certificate is not being issued by private schools to

children. Therefore, the Delhi government has provided this relief to the students in case of a TC, he said. The daughter of Kiran Pathak, a parent from Delhi, studies in class 7. According to her, the new decrees of the school that have come out in the past few days have increased the troubles of the parents. Many private schools are now not only charging hiked fees but also demanding fees hiked in the last one year. According to Kiran, if the situation persists she will have no option but to send her daughter to a government school by shifting her from private school.

Manish Sisodia said the Delhi government is firmly defending the students and parents in the court over fee hike by private schools. The AAP government appeals to the parents that if they want they can enroll their children in Delhi government schools.



Delhi cancels Kanwar Yatra



AGENCIES

New Delhi, July 18: The Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) Sunday prohibited the annual Kanwar Yatra in the city to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

"No celebrations, processions, gatherings, etc. Shall be allowed during forthcoming Kanwar Yatra-2021 starting from July 25 in NCT of Delhi," stated an order issued by the DDMA.

The DDMA order came a day after the yatra was cancelled in Uttar Pradesh.

The yatra usually goes on till the first week of August and sees thousands of Shiva devotees, called 'kanwariyas', travelling mostly on foot from neighbouring states, including Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Delhi, to collect water from the Ganges in Haridwar in Uttarakhand.

Earlier this week, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had said that governments should take every step to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

IN ALL ITS GLORY



Clouds hover over the Taj Mahal in Agra, Sunday,

PTI PHOTO

Portable theatres become vaccination centres

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 18: From entertaining hundreds as a travelling theatre to re-inventing itself as a coronavirus facility amid the intense second wave, the portable cinema hall has now been transformed into vaccination centre for inoculating people against the infection.

The travelling theatre was established to take cinema to rural and interior parts of the country in 2015 and has since showcased different films.

Even though the cinema business was paralysed by the pandemic, these inflatable theatres on wheels resumed with all COVID-19 protocols.

The last film screened in these theatres was "Kaagaz" that was taken to the interiors of Uttar Pradesh this year; but as the pandemic situation worsened in the country, it was decided to convert these 150-seater theatres to Covid facilities.



FACT FILE

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The portable cinema company, Picturtime Digiplex, had converted its portable theatres to coronavirus field facilities in

Maharashtra, Delhi, Madhya Pradesh, Assam and Uttar Pradesh during the second wave of coronavirus.

Since then over 5,000 COVID-19 patients have been treated at the facility, said Sushil Chaudhary, founder and CEO of Picturtime Digiplex.

And now, as the vaccination drive picked up in the country, one of these mobile theatres in Delhi has been converted to a vaccination centre, he said.

Established in collaboration with Apollo hospitals, the vaccination centre since its operation on July 13 has inoculated 400 people till now, he added.

"While our field hospitals with oxygen bed facility continue to be put to good use in various states of the country, we thought why not transform our medical unit at Apollo Delhi into a full-fledged vaccination centre. I believe such is the power of portability and these rapid deployed medical enclosures that it could change its form and purpose as per the need of the hour. We are hoping to set up more of such vaccination centres as per requirement," said Chaudhary.

of the day quote

Some people are working in complete harmony with the aim to spread confusion and anarchy in the country

DR SAMBIT PATRA | BJP SPOKESPERSON

With coordinated efforts of the northeastern states and other security agencies, we have to jointly curtail the chain of drugs supply to the rest of the country through the northeastern region

HIMANTA BISWA SARMA | ASSAM CHIEF MINISTER

Coronavirus cases are on the rise globally, including in India, which is a cause of concern

SHIVRAJ SINGH CHOUHAN | MADHYA PRADESH CHIEF MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Spurious liquor claims 16 lives

Patna: At least 16 people have died in Bihar's West Champaran district after consuming spurious liquor over the last few days, officials said, adding that more than 12 people have also been hospitalised in a serious condition.

Farmer killed in lightning strike

Mathura: A 26-year-old farmer died after being struck by lightning in a village here Sunday, police said. Netra Pal, a resident of Makrand Gadhi village that falls under Naujhil police station, was working in the fields when he was caught in a thunderstorm. Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) Ram Dutta Ram said.

Ectasy pills worth ₹50 lakh seized

Chennai: Ecstasy pills worth ₹50 lakh sent from Spain were seized after the drugs reached here and two individuals were arrested in this connection, the Customs Department said Sunday. Acting on inputs, the personnel of the department opened a cardboard box and found in it 994 ecstasy pills also known as methylene-dioxy-meth-amphetamine (MDMA).

Tributes pour in for Kadambini Ganguly

Kolkata: Tributes poured in for Kadambini Ganguly, one of India's first two women doctors Sunday, her 160th birth anniversary. Along with Anandi Joshi, Ganguly became the first woman in colonial India to study medicine and earn a degree in 1886. While Joshi studied at Womans Medical College of Pennsylvania in the US, Ganguly pursued western medicine at Calcutta Medical College (CMC).

K'taka eases curbs

Bangalore: Karnataka Sunday announced fresh relaxations to the Covid lockdown norms by allowing temples, cinema halls/multiplexes, 'rangamandiras' (theatres), auditoriums and similar entertainment centres to reopen across the state from Monday - with 50 per cent capacity. According to fresh guidelines released by the Revenue Department here, besides all entertainment centres, the state government also reduced the duration of night curfew by an hour from July 19, while higher educational institutions like colleges and universities will start from July 26, but with riders.



I am not a political tourist. I have been regularly coming to UP. This is BJP's propaganda to show me and my brother Rahul as non-serious politicians and we are not going to be cowed down by it

PRIYANKA GANDHI VADRA | CONGRESS GENERAL SECRETARY

Sidhu appointed as Pb Cong president

SANGAT SINGH GILZIAN, SUKHVINDER SINGH DANNY, PAWAN GOEL, AND KULJIT SINGH NAGRA HAVE BEEN APPOINTED WORKING PRESIDENTS

AGENCIES

New Delhi, July 18: Congress president Sonia Gandhi Sunday appointed Navjot Singh Sidhu as the new president of the party's Punjab unit, notwithstanding the strong opposition from Chief Minister Amarinder Singh.

Rahul Gandhi also appointed four working presidents to assist Sidhu in the run-up to the next Assembly elections.

The appointments came after days of internal squabbling and public bickering that virtually divided the state unit between two factions owing allegiance to Singh and Sidhu. The new working presidents are Sangat Singh Gilzian, Sukhwinder Singh Danny, Pawan Goel and Kuljit Singh Nagra, who represent different regions and castes. "Congress president has appointed Navjot



Singh Sidhu as the president of Punjab Pradesh Congress Committee with immediate effect," according to a party statement. "The party appreciates the contributions of outgoing PCC president Sunil Jakhar," the statement said. Nagra, who was in-charge of party affairs in Sikkim, Nagaland and Tripura, has been relieved of his present responsi-

bilities. Sidhu, who joined the Congress from the BJP ahead of the last assembly elections in 2017, has increased his efforts to gather support in the past few days and met several MLAs and leaders.

With the decision, the party leadership has clearly signalled to put its weight behind Sidhu while ignoring Amarinder Singh's opposition. The leadership feels Sidhu can lead the party's campaign with fresh energy and enthusiasm and help ensure its victory in the upcoming assembly polls slated for early next year. Sidhu's ability to pull crowds and launch a vigorous campaign has worked in his favour as the party feels that infusing fresh energy in the party ranks is required at a time slackness has set in after four-and-half years in power. The support of Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra has also helped in Sidhu

clinging the post despite strong resistance. The cricketer-turned-politician now faces the challenge of uniting the party and bringing cohesion in its ranks, besides winning the trust of the old guard and veterans. Chief Minister Singh is learnt to have told Sonia Gandhi that he will not meet Sidhu till he publicly apologises for his attacks on him in the recent past.

Calls are being made by party veterans to unite the party ahead of the assembly polls, else the AAP and the Akali Dal-BSP combine could upstage it. AICC general secretary in-charge for Punjab affairs of the party Harish Rawat congratulated Sidhu and the four working presidents.

He expressed his gratitude to Congress president Sonia Gandhi for granting approval to the new team in Punjab. "Thank you madam for your great gesture," Rawat said.

Sonia rejigs Cong Parliament groups

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 18: Ahead of the Monsoon session, Congress president Sonia Gandhi has reconstituted the party's strategy groups for Parliament by including party leaders Manish Tewari and Shashi Tharoor in the panel for Lok Sabha and Ambika Soni and Digvijaya Singh in the panel for Rajya Sabha.

Tharoor and Tewari are part of the G-23 leaders who had written to Gandhi last year seeking an overhaul of the organisation, including a visible and full-time leadership, triggering a storm in the party. The reconstitution of groups has been done to ensure the effective functioning of the party in both houses of Parliament during the Monsoon session starting Monday, Gandhi said. The groups will meet daily during the session and can meet during the inter-session periods as well. The Parliamentary strategy group for Lok Sabha is led by Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury and has deputy leader Gaurav Gogoi, chief whip K Suresh and whips Ravneet Singh Bittu and Manickam Tagore as members. Senior party leaders Manish Tewari and Shashi Tharoor are the new inclusions in this strategy group for lower house.



In Rajya Sabha, the new members included in the strategy group are Ambika Soni and Digvijaya Singh, while P Chidambaram is also part of the group.

Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge is the leader of the strategy group in Rajya Sabha, while Anand Sharma, who is deputy leader of the party, and Jairam Ramesh, who is the chief whip of the party in the upper house, are also in the strategy group, besides AICC general secretary K C Venugopal.

The joint meetings of these groups can be convened as and when needed and Mallikarjun Kharge shall be the convener; the communication by Congress president Sonia Gandhi said.

No nod for Eid congregational prayers in Kashmir

Srinagar: No congregational prayers would be allowed in the Kashmir Valley on Eid-ul-Zuha because of the COVID protocol that limits the number of people offering prayers in any group to 25, officials announced Sunday. Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, PK Pole said that no congregational prayers will be allowed on Eid-ul-Zuha in Kashmir in view of the prediction of Covid's third wave. He said that it will be difficult to limit the number to 25 if congregational prayers are allowed, and Eid prayers will be allowed in a decentralised manner like it has been allowed during the peak of Covid's second wave. Pole appealed to the people to follow government SOPs and medical experts' instructions on the occasion of Eid and avoid the Covid-19 threat. Considering the damage caused by the third wave of Covid in other countries, everyone should follow the guidelines and precautions strictly on the occasion of the upcoming Eid, he said.

WHEN GOD SAVES



A senior citizen narrowly escaped death after the driver of Mumbai-Varanasi Special train applied emergency brakes at Kalyan in Mumbai and saved him as he was crossing tracks

PTI PHOTO

Intense rainfall over north India from July 18-21: IMD



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 18: The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has predicted intense rainfall activity over north India from July 18-21 and over the west coast till July 23.

The IMD said moderate to severe thunderstorms with lightning are very likely at isolated places over Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, and east Rajasthan during the next 24 hours.

"They may cause injuries leading to casualties to people and animals staying outdoor," the MeT department cautioned.

The IMD said rainfall activity is very likely to increase with widespread rainfall to isolated heavy to very heavy rains very likely over

the western Himalayan region (Jammu, Kashmir, Ladakh, Gilgit, Baltistan and Muzaffarabad, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand) and adjoining north-west India -- Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, UP and north Madhya Pradesh -- from July 18 to 21.

There will be decrease in rainfall activity over the same regions thereafter. Isolated, extreme heavy rainfall is also very likely over Uttarakhand on July 18 and 19 and over northwestern parts of UP July 19.

Moderate to heavy rainfall at isolated places are also very likely over Delhi and Chandigarh July 18 and 19. Western and southern India is also expected to receive heavy rains.

All-party meet: Parties demand restoration of MPLAD funds

AGENCIES

New Delhi, July 18: Various parties, including the Congress and the TMC, Sunday demanded restoration of MPLAD funds, in an all-party meeting chaired by Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, sources said.

He assured them that he will raise the issue with the government and its top functionaries, they said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and floor leaders of various parties were present in the customary all-party meeting on the eve of the Monsoon session of Parliament.

The session will begin on Monday and conclude August 13.

Leader of Congress in Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, TMC leader Sudeep Bandopadhyay, YSR Congress leader Midhun Reddy were among those who raised the issue of MPLAD funds during the meeting in the presence of Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi, the sources said.

Birla also told members that they will be given adequate opportunity for discussion on issues



of public interest and appealed to them to cooperate with the Chair in the smooth conduct of the House.

In the meeting, Speaker Birla lauded the leaders for their support during the last five sessions, an official statement said.

He also appealed to them to continue their cooperation during the Monsoon Session too, it said.

Leaders of political parties assured the speaker that they will extend all cooperation in smooth functioning of the House.

Later, talking to reporters, Birla said he has requested leaders of parties in Lok Sabha to respect the sanctity and dignity of the House and sought their cooperation for the smooth conduct of the pro-

ceedings of the House. He said that the House represents the collective will and aspirations of the country and it is the responsibility of members to voice the concerns of the people they represent, while maintaining the decorum and rules of the House.

The speaker said that the House belongs to all members and he will give all of them ample opportunity, including those from smaller parties and single member parties, to participate in the proceedings so that more and more issues of public interest can be discussed.

Birla informed that for the session, extensive arrangements have been made for safety of members, officials and the media according to Covid protocols. He also noted that an app is being developed which will be an "one stop solution" for all parliamentary matters. The Monsoon session of Parliament is the sixth session of the 17th Lok Sabha and subject to exigencies of government business, would conclude on August 13. There would be a total of 19 sittings.

Finance Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman either.

I am no Nitish: Uddhav tells PM

Details have surfaced about what transpired during the private meeting between the Prime Minister and Uddhav Thackeray in Delhi June 8. Both have maintained cordiality and even when Sena-BJP were fighting publicly, the Prime Minister stayed clear. But it is clear that the PM has taken the command of Maharashtra affairs in his own hands. The Prime Minister is keen that BJP comes to power in the crucial state of Maharashtra having 48 Lok Sabha seats. The BJP-Sena alliance had won 42 seats in 2019 But BJP alone cannot win so many. But the BJP is waiting for some 'accident' to happen. Uddhav Thackeray is reported to have told the PM, "Aapke Logon Ne Mujhe Wahan Dhakela Hai" (Your people have pushed me into this

situation). What he meant was that he had not even thought of an alliance with Congress and NCP. But it was BJP leadership which forced him into this situation in 2019 and joined hands with NCP and Congress. He also explained that he could not "suo-moto" break the existing three-party alliance and join hands with the BJP like a midnight coup. He cannot walk out just like that. Though he did not name any state leader, sources say he had Nitish Kumar in mind. Uddhav doesn't want to be Bihar's Nitish Kumar who changed sides merely to stay in power. Uddhav also said that ideologically he had not compromised even after joining an alliance with Congress and NCP. The PM on his part said the BJP would be happy about his continuation as CM until five year term. Sena's Sanjay Raut too echoed these sentiments saying, "If BJP had not pushed Shiv Sena to such an extent, it would have been in power today."



JP Nadda's new headache

BJP president J P Nadda has a huge problem in hand to accommodate 11 of the 12 sacked ministers including six Cabinet Ministers in the organization. Of the 12, Thaawar Chand Gehlot had already been appointed Karnataka governor. Santosh Gangwar who was labour minister in the government until the other day,

may also be sent as governor or given some post. He is a Kurmi leader from UP and the party would like to keep the Kurmis in good humour. It is clear that Sadanand Gowda will neither be made Governor nor given a post in the Central BJP as B L Santosh, powerful general secretary, doesn't like him. There is some problem in making axed senior minister Ravi Shankar Prasad as General secretary in the BJP. He is senior to Nadda and other general secretaries will also be uncomfortable with him. However, Prakash Javadekar (who held information and broadcasting, and environment) may be rehabilitated and tipped to receive key assignments in poll-bound states. There are 8 general secretaries after Bhupender Yadav moved to the ministry. Yadav was general secretary in charge of Gujarat and Bihar. Gujarat votes late next year. Ramesh Pokhriyal, dropped as Education Minister is being considered for party assignment

because of polls in Uttarakhand. There are as many as five vacancies in the BJP parliamentary board, due to the untimely death of Arun Jaitley, Sushma Swaraj and Ananth Kumar, elevation of M Venkaiah Naidu as Vice-President and the appointment of Gehlot as governor. With most of the old guard having been sidelined or sent to the Raj Bhavans, the selection for the five vacancies will be keenly watched.

Jumbo ministry's jumbo problems

Prime Minister Modi's blockbuster mega reshuffle and presence of as many as 45 Ministers of State have created tremors. While 12 were shown the doors, many including Yessopad Naik (Goa) holding Independent Charge of the Aayush ministry, were demoted. Pralhad Patel who was MoS (IC) of Culture & Tourism was also demoted and given Jal Shakti & Food Processing under two

Cabinet Ministers. Interestingly, a small Jal Shakti ministry under Gajendra Shekhawat now has two Ministers of State - Patel and Bisheshwar Tutu. Worst, a small ministry like Culture & Tourism ministry with a budget of less than ₹4700 crores has one Cabinet Minister along with four Ministers of State. No ministry in the Modi government including Home, Finance, Railways or External Affairs has four Ministers of State. But it seems, Modi has some mega plans for the ministry of Culture & Tourism under G Kishen Reddy. Yessopad Naik, Ajay Bhatt, Arjunram Meghwal & Meenakshi Lekhi are new MoS in this ministry. But the Tourism and Culture ministry has no room for three Ministers of State and the Cabinet Minister Reddy is struggling to carve out a role for his four juniors. Rao Inderjit Singh who was made MoS Corporate Affairs, has no room for him to sit in the ministry and hasn't taken the charge. No work allocation order was issued by the

of the day quote

We acknowledge very much the work which has been done in Australia, but our text in the draft decision ... Is a proposal for putting the site on the list of world heritage in danger because of the threats which were identified



MECHTILD ROESSLER | DIRECTOR OF THE WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE, UNESCO

The decision by the European Court of Justice on headscarf in the workplace is another blow to the rights of Muslim women with headscarf and will play right into the hands of those warmongers against Islam in Europe



IBRAHIM KALIN | CHIEF ADVISER, TURKEY

The situation is getting serious with a high rate of transmission, especially with the dangerous delta variant. We have to put the health and safety of the people as top priority



PHAM MINH CHINH | PRIME MINISTER, VIETNAM

SHORT TAKES

Deuba wins vote of trust in Parl

Kathmandu: Nepal's new PM Sher Bahadur Deuba Sunday comfortably won a vote of confidence in the reinstated lower House of Parliament. Deuba, secured 165 votes in the 275-member House of Representatives. As many as 249 lawmakers participated in the voting process and 83 of them voted against Deuba while one lawmaker remained neutral, it said. A total of 136 votes were required for Deuba to win Parliament's confidence.

Cubans gather in support of revolt

Havana: Thousands of Cubans gathered at the La Piragua esplanade in Havana to express their support of the island nation's government after the recent unrest. Raul Castro, leader of the Cuban socialist revolution, President Miguel Diaz-Canel, high-ranking officials, and leaders of social organisations attended the event Saturday. He said that the Cuban revolution continues to stand by its people, and accused the US administration of sponsoring a political and communicational campaign against the Caribbean country.

4 shot outside stadium in US

Washington: Four people were shot outside a baseball stadium crowded with thousands of spectators in the US capital Saturday, causing the game to be abruptly halted as spectators were ushered out. Police said four people had been shot but there was "no ongoing threat", without clarifying the condition of the gunshot victims. Police tweeted officers were "responding to a shooting... in which two people were shot outside of Nationals Park," in the Navy Yard neighborhood of southern Washington, DC.

Rights group in Russia shuts down

Moscow: A rights group in Russia announced Sunday that it was shutting down, citing fear of prosecution of its members and supporters. The Team 29 association of lawyers and journalists specializing in treason and espionage cases and freedom of information issues said Sunday that Russian authorities accused it of spreading content from a Czech non-governmental organization that had been declared "undesirable" in Russia.



Today, as we reflect on the suffering of all victims and survivors of grave crimes, I encourage all states to ratify the Rome Statute, and call on the international community to drive forward efforts to achieve accountability and justice for all

ANTONIO GUTERRES | SECRETARY-GENERAL, UN

1ST BATCH OF HAJ PILGRIMS

The first batch of Haj pilgrims have arrived at the Grand Mosque in Macca to perform their first ritual for the annual pilgrimage. It is the second consecutive Haj limited to domestic pilgrims only in an attempt to prevent the further spread of Covid-19



Taliban favours political settlement over conflict

TALIBAN LEADER MAWLAWI HIBATULLAH AKHUNDZADA REFERRED TO THE IMPOSITION OF AN ISLAMIC SYSTEM

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Islamabad, July 18: Senior Afghan leaders are in the Middle Eastern state of Qatar talking peace with the Taliban, whose leader Sunday issued a statement saying the insurgent movement wants a political settlement to Afghanistan's decades of war.

Still, there are few signs of a political agreement on the horizon, as the battles over Afghan districts continue in dozens of provinces and in the cities there are thousands seeking visas to leave.

Meanwhile in his statement ahead of Tuesday's Eid al Adha Islamic holiday, Mawlawi Hibatullah Akhundzada, the Taliban leader, said the Islamic Emirate, as the Taliban called their government



during their rule that ended with the US-led coalition invasion in 2001, favoured a political settlement.

"In spite of the military gains and advances, the Islamic Emirate strenuously favours a political settlement in the country, and every

opportunity for the establishment of an Islamic system," he said.

Akhundzada's statement referred to the imposition of an Islamic system without explaining what that meant and how that differed from the system of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

He promised to support education, but for girls he said the "Islamic Emirate will ... Strive to create an appropriate environment for female education within the framework of sublime Islamic law."

The Taliban have denied reports of destruction by their commanders saying that the footage being shown is old and accuses the government of propaganda.

Af calls back envoy, diplomats from Pak

The diplomatic crisis between Pakistan and Afghanistan deepened Sunday after Kabul announced that it will withdraw its ambassador and other senior staff from Islamabad after the abduction and torture of the daughter of its envoy to Pakistan. "Following the abduction of the Afghan ambassador's daughter in Pakistan, the leadership of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan called back Afghanistan's ambassador and senior diplomats from Pakistan until all security threats are addressed including the arrest and trial of the perpetrators of abduction," the Afghan foreign ministry said in a statement.

Merkel pays visit to flood-affected areas

Death count in western Europe reached over 188

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Schuld, July 18: Chancellor Angela Merkel said Sunday that she was horrified by the "surreal" devastation in the flood-ravaged region of Germany, as the count in western Europe reached at least 188 people dead with dozens still missing.

Merkel, who is retiring from politics after September's elections, listened to the accounts of residents where the swollen Ahr river swept away houses and left debris piled high in the streets.

At least 157 people have died since Wednesday in Germany's worst flooding in living memory, police said.

In Rhineland-Palatinate state alone, authorities reported 110 dead and 670 injured.

At least 27 people have lost their lives in neighbouring Belgium.

Rescue crews were sifting through rubble to find victims and survivors, often in dangerous conditions. Police deployed speedboats

It is shocking -- I can almost say that the German language doesn't have words for the destruction that's been wreaked

ANGELA MERKEL | CHANCELLOR, GERMANY

and divers to recover bodies swept away in the torrents.

Historic heavy rainfall also battered Switzerland, Luxembourg and the Netherlands.

As the waters began to recede in Rhineland-Palatinate and neighbouring North-Rhine Westphalia (NRW), concern shifted south to Germany's Upper Bavaria region, where incessant rains inundated basements and led rivers and creeks late Saturday to burst their banks.

One person died in Berchtesgaden Land, a spokeswoman for the Bavarian district told AFP. Pope Francis expressed his "nearness" to the people of the stricken regions.



LINE OF DEFENCE



Lebanese army members take cover behind shields as they deploy during a protest after Lebanese Prime Minister-Designate Saad al-Hariri abandoned his effort to form a new government in Beirut, Lebanon

REUTERS

UK PM to self isolate after backlash

AGENCIES

London, July 18: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and finance minister Rishi Sunak will both self-isolate in line with national guidance, abandoning heavily criticised plans to take part in a pilot scheme that would have allowed them to continue working.

The U-turn comes a day after health minister Sajid Javid said he had tested positive for COVID-19 and at a time when the government's coronavirus response is under intense scrutiny.

Almost all remaining restrictions in England will be lifted Monday despite a surge in infections as ministers put their faith in the advanced vaccine programme.

Cases are rising by more than 50,000 a day and hundreds of thousands of Britons are being asked to self isolate for 10 days, causing havoc for employers and parents, prompting train cancellations and forcing some businesses to close their doors.

The government announced at 0700 GMT that Johnson and Sunak had been exposed to a person with COVID-19 and would take part in a

trial scheme that allowed them to keep working instead of self-isolating.

But less than three hours later that decision had been reversed after a flurry of criticism from voters, political opponents and business owners.

Opposition politicians had said it was hypocritical for Johnson and Sunak to exempt themselves from some of the rules.

"Boris Johnson and Rishi Sunak have been busted yet again for thinking the rules that we are all following don't apply to them," said Labour Party leader Keir Starmer.

Gaza's Hamas Islamist-run government says 2,200 homes were destroyed and 37,000 damaged by Israeli bombing during the 11 days of cross-border fighting in May



POOR SALES

In Gaza's livestock markets, breeders and farmers reported poor sales ahead of the holiday. At one market in the town of Khan Younis, some customers loaded animals onto donkey carts to take them home.

US, Iran feud over prisoner swap talks

AGENCIES

Washington, July 18: The Biden administration lashed out at Iran Saturday for accusing it of delaying a proposed prisoner swap to force a quick resumption of indirect nuclear talks.

In a pair of tweets from his verified account, Seyyed Abbas Araghchi said the nuclear talks in Vienna could not resume until Iran's hardline president-elect is inaugurated in early August. "We're in a transition period as a democratic transfer of power is under-



way in our capital," he said. "TEN PRISONERS on all sides may be released TOMORROW if US&UK fulfill their part of deal."

'Iran ready to proceed today'

Iran insisted Sunday that a prisoner swap deal has been agreed with the United States, the Iranian foreign ministry spokesman said, a day after Washington denied such an agreement had been reached. "Outrageous" = the US denying simple fact that there is an agreed deal on the matter of the detainees. Even on how to announce it," Saeed Khatibzadeh said in a tweet. "Humanitarian swap was agreed with US & UK in Vienna-separate from JCPOA (the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action)- on release of 10 prisoners on all sides. Iran is ready to proceed TODAY." Iran has said that the seventh round of the talks will not resume until Iran's hardline president-elect, Ebrahim Raisi, takes office in early August.

COVID MISINFORMATION

Facts tell a different story, FB tells Biden

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

San Francisco, July 18: After US President Joe Biden said that social media platforms like Facebook are "killing people" with Covid-19 misinformation, the social network giant has replied saying that facts tell a very different story to the one promoted by the administration in recent days.

Guy Rosen, VP of Integrity at Facebook, said in a blog post Saturday that at a time when Covid-19 cases are rising in the US, the Biden administration has chosen to blame a handful of American social media companies.

Rosen said that the Biden administration is calling for a whole of society approach to this challenge.

"We agree. As a company, we have devoted unprecedented resources to the fight against the pandemic, pointing people to reliable information and helping them find and schedule vaccinations. And we will continue to do so," he posted.

According to him, since January, vaccine acceptance on the part of Facebook users in the US has increased by 10-15 percentage points and racial and ethnic disparities in acceptance have shrunk considerably.

"The data shows that 85 per cent of Facebook users in the US have been or want to be vaccinated against Covid-19. President Biden's goal was for 70 per cent of Americans to be vaccinated by July 4. Facebook is not the reason this goal was missed," Rosen said.

The social network said that since the pandemic began, more than 2 billion people have viewed authoritative information about Covid-19 and vaccines on Facebook.

After war with Israel, mourning Gaza marks Eid al-Adha holiday

AGENCIES

Gaza city, July 18: For Palestinians who lost loved ones in the fighting between Gaza militants and Israel two months ago, there is little cause for celebration during the upcoming Muslim holiday of Eid al-Adha.

Known as the Feast of Sacrifice, it commemorates for the faithful the prophet Ibrahim's readiness to sacrifice his son to show his dedication to God.

The holiday, coinciding with Hajj, the annual Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca, begins Tuesday, and Muslims traditionally mark the occasion by slaughtering sheep or cows and exchanging gifts.

For this year's four-day festival, Mahmoud Issa, a 73-year-old re-

tired teacher, bought new clothes for his grandchildren and took them to a farm to choose an animal to slaughter. But, he mourns the death of his daughter Manar, 39, and her daughter, Lina 13, who he said were killed by an Israeli missile that destroyed their house in the Bureij refugee camp May 13. Manar's husband and three other children survived.

More than 250 Palestinians were killed in hundreds of Israeli air strikes in Gaza that were launched after Hamas began firing rockets at Israel in retaliation for what the group said were rights abuses against Palestinians in Jerusalem.

Thirteen people were killed in Israel during rocket barrages that disrupted life and sent people running for shelter.

of the day quote

We are targeting the 250-500cc segment specifically because we strongly believe that there is a high growth potential in that part of the premium 2W segment. We can stick between 250cc and 500cc to this segment because above 500 again becomes too powerful or too much of a jump for most of the people

VIKAS JHABAKH | INDIA BUSINESS HEAD, BENELLI INDIA

When I came to India in 2011, India had less than 200 startups, a handful of VCs and angel investors, and the value of all public and private companies was less than 3bn. I believe India will create \$500bn in new wealth by 2025 and \$1tn by 2030 from the startup revolution

SANDEEP AGGARWAL | FOUNDER, DROOM

What we are seeing is a strong V-shaped recovery, demand rebounding back to the pre-second (Covid) wave level. We are also seeing that there is a strong confidence, which is also coming to the market driven by the strong vaccination drive

SHARAD AGARWAL | INDIA HEAD, LAMBORGHINI

SHORT TAKES

Renault to hang production

Seoul: Renault Samsung Motors will temporarily suspend production at its plant in the southeastern port city of Busan due to shortages of chips for vehicles, the company said Sunday. The South Korean unit of Renault SA will close down its plant in Busan, 453 kms southeast of Seoul, Monday for two days, it said. It will be the first time that the Renault Samsung plant has been shut down due to chip shortages, reports Yonhup news agency.

Rossari Biotech to acquire Tristar

New Delhi: Rossari Biotech Ltd, a speciality chemicals manufacturer, Sunday announced the acquisition of Tristar Intermediates at an enterprise value of ₹120 crore. The board of the company has approved the acquisition of Tristar Intermediates, a move which will help Rossari Biotech expand its product portfolio, primarily in the personal care segment, a joint statement said. As per the agreement and subject to customary closing conditions, Rossari will be acquiring 100% equity share capital of Tristar Intermediates, it added.

20 IVF to be added by FY22

New Delhi: IVF and fertility centres chain Seeds of Innocence is looking to add 20 such centres across the country by the end of 2021-22 and also planning an international foray during the period, a top company official said. The company has 10 in vitro fertilisation (IVF) and fertility centres across eight states in the country.

'Services exports may grow 10%'

New Delhi: The country's services exports are expected to grow 10% in 2021-22 due to healthy growth of sectors such as professional and management consulting, audio visual, freight transport, and telecommunications, according to SEPC. Services Export Promotion Council (SEPC) Chairman Maneck Davar said despite the pandemic, the sector recorded a decline of only 3% in exports in 2020-21 to \$205.27 billion.



Globus has posted over two-fold growth in FY 2020-21 to ₹208 cr, compared with ₹100 cr in 2019-20. This year, I think we should be able to close at around ₹350 cr. With the right solutions, we have already touched 25,000 customers pan-India and we are increasing day-by-day

KIRAN DHAM | CEO, GLOBUS INFOCOM

RIL'S RETAIL BIZ TO GROW 3 TIMES

Reliance Industries' (RIL) retail business is expected to grow three times in next the next three to five years at a robust CAGR of 35-40%, said a Bernstein report. Digital or new commerce continues to scale up and contributes 10% of sales, it said



Auto exports recover amid improved pandemic situation

AGENCIES

New Delhi, July 18: Automobile exports from India recovered in the first quarter with all vehicle segments, including passenger vehicles and two-wheelers, witnessing growth following an improvement in the pandemic situation across various international markets.

As per the latest SIAM data, total vehicle exports during the April-June quarter this fiscal stood at 14,19,430 units as compared with 4,36,500 units in the same period of 2020-21 which saw massive disruptions due to the COVID lockdowns across the country, hampering sales as well

overseas shipments.

SIAM Director General Rajesh Menon said that while two-wheeler shipments were better than previous three years, passenger vehicles, three-wheelers and commercial vehicles export numbers were yet to catch up with numbers in the first quarter of 2018-19 fiscal.

"If we just compare export numbers of Q1 of 2021-22, two-wheelers have done better than previous three years, however, the total number of passenger vehicles, three-wheelers and commercial vehicles exports were higher in Q1 of 2018-19," he noted.

In the April-June quarter, passenger vehicle exports from the



country stood at 1,27,115 units as against 43,619 units in the same period of 2020-21.

Passenger car exports stood at 79,376 units, utility vehicle shipments at 47,151 units while van exports were at 588 units.

Maruti Suzuki India led the passenger vehicle segment with exports of 45,056 units followed by Hyundai Motor India which shipped 29,881 units during the period. Kia Motors shipments stood at 12,448 units while Volkswagen India

If we just compare export numbers of Q1 of 2021-22, two-wheelers have done better than previous three years, however, the total number of passenger vehicles, three-wheelers and commercial vehicles exports were higher in Q1 of 2018-19

RAJESH MENON | DIRECTOR GENERAL, SIAM

chipped in with 11,566 units during the quarter.

Two-wheeler exports rose to 11,37,102 units in the April-June period as against 3,37,983 units in the same period of FY20. Similarly,

commercial exports during the first quarter stood at 16,006 units as compared with 3,870 units in the April-June period of 2020-21.

Tata Motors led the segment with shipment of 6,653 units followed by Mahindra & Mahindra with 3,931 units.

Three-wheeler exports rose to 1,37,582 units in the period under review as against 50,631 units in the first quarter of 2020-21. Domestic wholesales across all categories in Q1 this fiscal, stood at 31,80,039 units as compared with 14,92,612 units in the April-June period. Comparatively, total dispatches in the domestic market stood at 60,84,478 units in Q1 of 2019-20.

Flipkart says CCI probe shouldn't treat it the same as Amazon

REUTERS

New Delhi, July 18: Walmart's Flipkart should not be treated the same as rival Amazon in an Indian antitrust probe as the evidence against the two firms was "qualitatively different", Flipkart argued in a court filing seen by Reuters.

Both Amazon and Flipkart have challenged the Competition Commission of India (CCI) in court as they seek revocation of an Indian court's June decision to allow an antitrust probe against them to continue. The companies deny any wrongdoing.

India's government has called the US firms arrogant and accused them of using legal routes to stall the investigation.

In final submissions made to a court in Karnataka, the Walmart unit argued that CCI and the court "confuse the facts" between the case of Amazon and Flipkart, and overlooked that they were "fierce competitors".

To back its arguments, it said that a business agreement examined by the CCI before ordering its probe was only between Amazon and its sellers, and there was no such evidence against the Walmart unit.

"The allegations and the evidence before the CCI against the Appellant were qualitatively different from those relating to Amazon...The CCI should have independently examined the case against each of the two platforms," Flipkart said in its 46-page submission, which was not public.

The Indian court is likely to pass a written order on the appeals in



Both Amazon and Flipkart have challenged the CCI in court as they seek revocation of an Indian court's June decision to allow an antitrust probe against them to continue

coming days.

Flipkart and Amazon did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The CCI didn't respond outside regular business hours Sunday.

For years, Amazon and Flipkart have denied allegations from brick-and-mortar retailers about circumventing Indian law by creating complex business structures.

Trade minister Piyush Goyal last month lashed out on US e-commerce giants for filing legal challenges and failing to comply with the CCI's probe, saying "if they have nothing to hide... why don't they respond to the CCI?"

In February, a Reuters' investigation based on internal Amazon

documents showed the US firm for years had helped a small number of sellers prosper on its platform in India, using them to bypass foreign investment laws. Amazon also has indirect equity stakes in two of its big online sellers, Cloudtail and Appario, which get "subsidized fees", Reuters reported.

The Walmart unit argued in its submission that "unlike in the case of Amazon", there were no structural links of any kind between Flipkart and its sellers. Flipkart "ought to have been treated differently from Amazon," it said.

Amazon and Flipkart are leading players in an e-retail market India forecasts will be worth \$200 billion by 2026.

OPEC, allies reach 'full agreement'

The disagreement, sparked by a demand by the UAE to increase its own production, temporarily upended an earlier meeting of the cartel

AGENCIES

Dubai, July 18: OPEC and allied nations Sunday agreed to raise the production limits imposed on five countries, ending an earlier dispute sparked by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) that roiled global energy prices.

The disagreement, sparked by a demand by the UAE to increase its own production, temporarily upended an earlier meeting of the cartel. In a statement Sunday, the cartel announced that Iraq, Kuwait, Russia, Saudi Arabia and the UAE would see their limits rise.

"What bonds us together is way beyond what you imagine," Saudi Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman said. "We differ here and there but we bond."

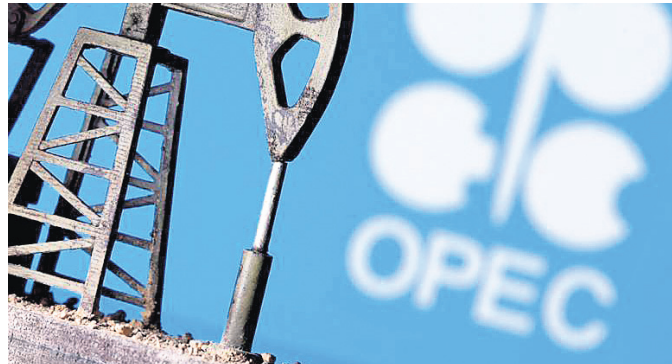
Prince Abdulaziz declined to elaborate on how they came to that consensus, saying it would see the

cartel "lose our advantage of being mysterious and clever."

But he clearly bristled at earlier reports on the dispute between Saudi Arabia, long the heavyweight of the Vienna-based cartel, and the UAE. Prince Abdulaziz deferred at the beginning of a news conference afterward to al-Mazrouei in a sign of respect.

"The UAE is committed to this group and will always work with it and within this group to do our best to achieve the market balance and help everyone," al-Mazrouei said.

Oil prices collapsed amid the coronavirus pandemic as demand for jet fuel and gasoline dropped amid lockdowns across the globe, briefly seeing oil futures trade in the negatives. Demand since has rebounded as vaccines, while still distributed unequally across the globe.



FPIs turn cautious, pull out ₹4,515cr from equities in July



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 18: Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) have pulled out ₹4,515 crore from the equities segment in the first half of July as they turn cautious towards the Indian market.

"With markets trading near all-time high, FPIs would have chosen to book profits. They have also been staying on the sidelines given high valuations and most likely on the back of the risk of a potential third wave of the coronavirus pandemic," said Morningstar India Associate Director (Manager Research) Himanshu Srivastava.

Though the continuing firmness in the dollar and the possibility of rising bond yields in the US do not augur well for capital flows into emerging markets like India, there is no immediate worry at the moment, he said.

Besides, he also added that the outflows have not been huge which signifies that foreign investors are adopting a cautious stance towards Indian equities rather than being negative on it.

MCL CMD lays foundation stone of FMC project



POST NEWS NETWORK

Talcher/Bhubaneswar, July 18: PK Sinha, Chairman-cum-Managing Director, Mahanadi Coalfields Limited (MCL) Sunday laid the foundation stone for First Mile Connectivity (FMC) project at Kaniha area in Talcher coalfields. The cost for the project is estimated at ₹268.05 crore.

OP Singh, Director (Technical/Operations), Keshav Rao, Director (Personnel) and Baban Singh, Director (Technical/Projects & Planning) were present on the occasion. The FMC project for RLS of 10 MTPY capacity has been awarded to Mecon Ltd and it is expected to complete by May, 2023.

Builders laud state's stamp duty cut decision

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 18: The developers from state capital breathed a sigh of relief as the state government has proposed in the cabinet meeting on reduction of stamp duty on registration of Power of Attorney given to builders for the development of real estate projects.

Through the proposed amendment of Indian Stamp Act, a new article for agreement for sale of immovable property involving delivery of possession or Development Agreement in respect of any immovable property was introduced with chargeability of stamp duty at

2%. Currently, the stamp duty is being charged 5%.

The CREDAI Bhubaneswar Foundation welcomed the proposal. General Secretary Umesh Pattnaik said, "The reduction will definitely make a change in the real estate sector in Odisha and will bring more revenue to the state government. Also, it will give a boost to real estate investments in Odisha during pandemic times."

Due to 5% stamp duty, less number of Development Agreements is registered leading to a revenue loss to the state as well as legal complications. "The cut in stamp duty is relief for the sector and for developers. It will enable builders to re-

duce their selling prices of apartments and finally customers will be benefited by this move," Sachin Singh, Director of Property Brands said.

Another developers' association AFORD said that this cost is still lower in states like West Bengal. And also, "the registration and stamp duty slab for purchase of apartments should be lowered in comparison to the same on lands to encourage the sale of apartments as by construction of apartments, valuation of the whole property is increased in comparison to a bare land or duplex project as more no. of flats are constructed using the floor area ration said, Nishith Ranjan Nanda, President.

ANALYSTS EXPECT 'MUTED' JUNE QUARTER FOR TELCOS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 18: Analysts have predicted a "muted" June quarter for telecom companies due to slow smartphone sales amid lockdowns, free recharges given by telcos for low income users to help them stay connected during the pandemic and moderate subscriber additions.

In its note, JM Financial said while it expects "subdued activity" in the lower ARPU (Average Revenue Per User) category and consolidation of SIM, similar to 1QFY21 period, it remains cautious of a possible sequential decline in usage metrics. This, given that

the "second Covid wave in India has impacted the professional/ middle income category, who drive the bulk of the data usage".

"We expect Q1 FY22 to be a muted quarter in terms of subscriber additions and sequential ARPU growth across telcos," the report said. In its analysis, bulk of the subscriber addition happened in June 2021, post the start of un-locking across the country.

"We expect Jio/Bharti to add 8 million/2 million subscribers in Q1 FY22, while we expect VIL (Vodafone Idea) to report 7 million subscriber losses, driven by both consolidation in the lower ARPU subscribers and subscriber losses



to other networks," it said observing that ARPU growth would be "muted".

Wireless revenues for the quar-

ter are anticipated to be relatively "tepid" dragged down by sluggish smartphone sales which were hit by localised lockdowns, free

LULL CONTINUES
JM FINANCIAL SAID WHILE IT EXPECTS "SUBDUED ACTIVITY" IN THE LOWER ARPU CATEGORY, IT REMAINS CAUTIOUS OF A POSSIBLE SEQUENTIAL DECLINE IN USAGE METRICS

THE CAPITAL MARKET FIRM EXPECTS JIO/BHARTI TO ADD 8MN/2MN SUBSCRIBERS IN Q1 FY22, IT EXPECTS VIL TO REPORT 7MN SUBSCRIBER LOSSES, DRIVEN BY BOTH CONSOLIDATION IN THE LOWER ARPU SUBSCRIBERS AND SUBSCRIBER LOSSES TO OTHER NETWORKS

recharges doled out by companies for the bottom-of-the-pyramid subscribers and an overall moderation in subscriber additions, ac-

cording to a report by Emkay. So far as subscriber addition are concerned, it said, Jio is expected to outpace Bharti with 5 million adds, while Bharti's subscriber base is assumed to be flat sequentially.

Jio's outperformance would be partially driven by the full impact of JioPhone tariffs launched in February 2021, it said. For Vodafone Idea, it anticipated a contraction of about 4 million in subscriber base along with a decline in ARPU.

ICICI Securities' in its report expected Q1FY22 revenue growth for telecom sector to be "slow" despite an additional day in the quarter.

88-STRONG INDIAN CONTINGENT ARRIVES IN TOKYO AMID TIGHT VIRUS PROTOCOLS

1st batch checks in

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Tokyo, July 18: Excited and cautious in equal measure, the first batch of athletes from India's Olympic contingent arrived here Sunday. They cleared the exhaustive Covid-19 related protocols at the airport before entering the Games Village.

The arrival of the Indians came on a day when two athletes staying in the Olympics Village tested positive for Covid-19. The 88-strong Indian contingent were given a grand send-off at the Delhi airport Saturday night. They were joined here by the shooters and boxers who were training in Italy and Croatia till Saturday.

The group included archers, badminton and table tennis players and both the men's and women's hockey teams. Participants for judo, gymnastics, and swimming also were in the first contingent. They landed in the Japanese capital aboard a chartered Air India flight from New Delhi.

"It was a six hour wait at the (Tokyo) airport where we underwent Covid-19 tests but that was expected. All came out clear and we have checked into the village. All smooth so far," a contingent member said Sunday.



Indian sportspersons wearing masks pose at the airport after their arrival in Tokyo for the Olympic Games PTI PHOTO

The group included stars such as World Champion shuttler PV Sindhu, six-time World Champion boxer MC Mary Kom, World No.1 boxer Amit Panghal (in his category), top archer Deepika Kumari and TT player Manika Batra

among others.

The Indians were duly masked. Some of them even wore face shields as they went through the paperwork at the airport before boarding buses to the Games Village.

Some Indian athletes have

reached Tokyo a few days earlier from their respective training bases abroad. India's lone weightlifter in fray, Mirabai Chanu arrived here Friday from her training base in St Louis, USA.

India will be represented by a 228-

strong contingent, including 119 athletes, at the Games.

Four Indian sailors – Nethra Kumanan and Vishnu Saravanan (laser class), KC Ganapathy and Varun Thakkar (49er class) – were the first Indians to arrive here from their training bases in Europe. They started training Thursday.

Even the news of two athletes testing positive for the virus in the Games Village did not affect the spirit of the Indian sportspersons. They appeared in a positive frame of mind and went through the protocols at the airport and the village in a meticulous manner. Mary Kom remarked that it is for the benefit of the athletes only that such restrictions have been put in place.

Meanwhile the shooting contingent will start training from Monday, informed Sanjeev Rajput who will be taking part in his third Olympics. "We have booked our bus to check out the shooting range," Rajput said.

Despite the scepticism, IOC president Thomas Bach has insisted that the Games pose 'zero risk' for the residents of the Olympic Village and the Japanese people in general.

The Games will be held behind closed doors as infections soar in the Japanese capital. The city is recording more than 1,000 cases per day for the past few days.

Now Covid-19 hits Olympic Village

VIRUS THREAT CONTINUES TO GROW AS OPENING CEREMONY DRAWS NEAR

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Tokyo, July 18: Three athletes, two of them staying at the Olympic Village, have tested positive for Covid-19, the Games Organising Committee (GOC) announced Sunday. This new development has added to the scepticism around the troubled event which opens July 23.

It is the first instance of athletes staying at the village catching the infection. Their identities have not been revealed by the organisers. The third infected athlete is staying at a designated Games hotel.

A total of 10 cases were detected on the day, including five 'Games concerned personnel', one contractor, and a journalist, according to the Covid-19 positive case list uploaded by the GOC. The total number of Games-related Covid-19 cases has now risen to 55 as per the GOC records.

"When there is a positive Covid-19 – it means action. There is a clear procedure to identify close contacts. A case is not just data in a spread sheet but leads to action, including immediate follow-up testing," International Olympic Committee's (IOC) Games executive director Christophe Dubi stated.

"We can safely say that 40,000 Covid-19 tests have been carried

Two of the three athletes who tested positive Sunday were staying at the Olympics village

So far 55 people associated with the Games have tested positive for Covid-19

out before coming to Japan for the 18,000 Games participants. Then there is the screening at the airport followed by regular screening, testing for athletes every day," he added.

The organisers did not specify whether the two infected athletes staying at the village will be quarantined elsewhere.

The development comes a day after a non-athlete at the Village tested positive for the dreaded virus. He was shifted out of the premises. "...We believe we have the situation under control. As such, properly if cases are found, the individuals are isolated and we trace all close contacts if there are any other cases, that's what is most important," Hide Nakamura, chief Games delivery officer for Tokyo 2020, said in a press conference.

"Even with all measures fully taken, there will be some positive (coronavirus) cases. What is important is that when such cases arise, we properly systematically isolate them so that there will be no further transmissions," he added.

OCA tourneys to start July 26

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 18: The senior and U-19 Inter-District cricket tournament for the Kalahandi Cup will start July 26, the Odisha Cricket Association (OCA) said in a release Sunday. A total of 37 teams will be participating in the event. The Inter-District tourney for the under-16 boys will also start on the same day. In this event 36 teams will be taking part.

In the three segments the teams have been divided into six groups. Among the teams to watch out for in the tournaments are East Coast Railways (ECORSA), Bhubaneswar A & B, Cuttack A&B and Rourkela. As the tournament will be played during the monsoons, the OCA has kept a number of reserve days for smooth conduct of the matches. The league and preliminary stage matches will end in the second week of August.

It will be good opportunity for Odisha cricketers to showcase their skills as cricket remained largely suspended due to the Covid-19 pandemic last year. This year also the virus is creating havoc.

However, OCA in their release hasn't mentioned anything regarding the protocols that are to be followed during the matches.

The dates of the super league and the finals will be announced later. Keeping in mind the weekend shutdown in many districts, the OCA has also not scheduled matches on those particular days as it would cause problems to the players.

SHORT TAKES

Samson injured

Colombo: Wicketkeeper-batsman Sanju Samson could be ruled out of the white-ball series against Sri Lanka after he sustained a knee ligament injury during a training session. He was the first choice for the ODI game Sunday, but was replaced by Ishan Kishan. "Sanju Samson sprained a ligament in his knee and was hence not available for selection. The medical team is tracking his progress at the moment," BCCI's media team informed.

'Fittest team'

Mumbai: Former captain of the Indian hockey team MM Somaya has termed the present side as the 'fittest-ever' to play in the Olympics. Somaya was in the team that won the hockey gold in the 1980 Moscow Olympics. "The Tokyo Olympics team are one of the fittest to leave our shores. This enables them to play high-intensity hockey for the entire duration of a match. Besides, they are more aware tactically than earlier teams. The 'rolling substitution' rule in particular is being leveraged well by the team and this should enable them to maintain a blistering pace right through the tourney," Somaya said.

Career-best show

Midland: India's golfer Aditi Ashok and Thailand's Pajaree Anannurakarn missed out on their maiden LPGA success but won a lot of praise after finishing tied-3rd at the Dow Great Lakes Bay Invitational tournament here. After three bogey-free rounds, the Indo-Thai duo called 'Spice Girls' for the week added a four-under 66 to finish tied third. Yet their 19-under total fetched them a career-best third place finish behind, Thai sisters Ariya and Moriya Jutanugarn (24-under), who had a second 59 in the week, and the defending champion Cydney Clanton and Jasmine Suwannapura (21-under).

BFC's new recruit

Bangalore: Bengaluru FC (BFC) announced Sunday the signing of 19-year-old attacker Harmanpreet Singh. The former East Bengal winger, a product of United Punjab FC, moves on a free transfer and joins the Blues ahead of their upcoming AFC Cup playoff stage clash against Eagles FC. Harmanpreet joined SC East Bengal in 2020 ahead of their debut season in the ISL and played seven matches for them. Harmanpreet said he will relish the new challenge with the Blues. "I am looking forward to learning from experienced players like Sunil Chhetri and a few others," said Harmanpreet. AGENCIES

TOTAL DOMINATION IN TOUR DE FRANCE

Pogacar retains crown



AGENCIES

Paris July 18: Tadej Pogacar of Slovenia won his second straight Tour de France title Sunday thus establishing a new era of dominance after dominating over his competitors for nearly two weeks. In the end, his triumph was a foregone conclusion as he did not leave any room for serious competition.

The race's outcome had been known for days, and Pogacar, 22, entered the traditionally celebratory final stage with an unassailable lead of 5 minutes 20 seconds. It was the margin he had established Saturday and he held on to it to retain his crown with ease. Fans who have been following the race regularly were of the opinion that even in the years to come, Pogacar will not really face any serious challenge.

In a sport where superlative

performances are routinely shadowed by suspicions of cheating – Pogacar has been hailed as a machine, a tornado and a champion who might leave his mark on the Tour's history as past greats like Bernard Hinault and Eddy Merckx have done. Merckx, 76, said last week that Pogacar was on his way to at least five Tour de France titles; others have said the race has entered 'the Pogacar era'.

However, in spite of his dominating win, Pogacar is not ready to consider himself as the boss of Tour de France. "Except for media attention, nothing has changed for me," he said after the win Sunday. "There's a bit more media, more press: more and more questions that are actually the same. You get more and more comfortable, and everything else is the same," he added.

AFTER KUL-CHA CHOKE SRI LANKA

Dhawan, Kishan script win

AGENCIES

Colombo, July 18: Debutant and birthday boy Ishan Kishan's (59, 42b, 8x4, 2x6) blitzkrieg and a patient unbeaten knock by skipper Shikhar Dhawan (86, 95b, 6x4, 1x6) helped India achieved a resounding seven-wicket victory over Sri Lanka in the first ODI of the three-match series here Sunday. Chasing 263 for a win, India easily achieved the target in the 37th over to stamp their dominance in the match. In the process, Dhawan also crossed the 6,000-run milestone in ODIs.

Kishan, who celebrated his 23rd birthday Sunday, dominated the Sri Lankan bowling hitting the bowlers all over the park. He was confidence personified and put India in a commanding position before his departure. In the process, he scored the fastest half century on ODI debut, reaching his 50 in just 33 balls.

Dhawan on the other hand anchored the innings. He was associated in three useful partnerships that made the chase look easy. First, he put on 58 runs for the first wicket with Prithvi Shaw (43, 24b, 9x4), then he added another 85 for the second wicket with Kishan and finally 72 runs for the third wicket with Manish Pandey (26) to seal an easy win for India.

Earlier, Kul-Cha' were seen back in action together after a long time as India restricted Sri Lanka to 262 for nine. Kuldeep Yadav (2/48) and Yuzvendra Chahal (2/52) bowled



CAPTAINS KNOCK: Shikhar Dhawan flays the ball through the off-side during his match-winning knock against Sri Lanka, Sunday PHOTO COURTESY: BCCI

Brief scores	
Sri Lanka 262 for 9 (Chamika Karunaratane 43 n o, Dasun Shanaka 39, Deepak Chahar 2/37, Kuldeep Yadav 2/48) lost to India 263 for 3 in 36.4 overs (Shikhar Dhawan 86 n o, Ishan Kishan 59) by seven wickets.	

a steady line and length and picked up wickets at regular intervals to choke the hosts before Chamika Karunaratane's (43 n o, 35b, 2x4, 1x6) took Sri Lanka past the 250-run mark. The two were well-supported

by Krunal Pandya's (1/26) nagging accuracy.

The Indian pacers also bowled a lot of slower deliveries at the back end as Deepak Chahar (2/37) and Hardik Pandya (1/33) also got some success. Hardik though never looked like bowling any effort deliveries and, instead, tried to hit the hard lengths.

A number of Sri Lankan batsmen got starts but failed to convert those into good scores. Among them were skipper Dashun Shanaka (39), Charith Asalanka (38) and opened Avishka Fernando (33).

PUGILISTS BETTER EQUIPPED NOW TO HANDLE PRESSURE, SAYS NIEVA

Boxing coach exudes confidence

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 18: "It's like the big final exam after studying very hard," according to Indian boxing's high performance director Santiago Nieva. He is a touch nervous but mostly excited ahead of his own Olympics debut. Nieva is aware that all the 'good work of past four years wouldn't count if there is no medal to show in Tokyo'.

"I am a little tense, not all the time but sometimes. Mostly I am excited because it is like the final exam after all the hard work," Nieva said ahead of his departure with the Indian boxers, Saturday. "This is my first Olympics. I was there in London 2012 as an expert on the sport, if that counts for anything," he added.

Nieva said results matter, nothing else. "Everything that we have done so far, all that we have worked on will not be appreciated if we don't get an Olympics medal. I am aware of that," the boxing coach pointed out.

The five Indian male boxers who will compete in Tokyo are World



STAR ATTRACTION: Amit Panghal, currently ranked No.1 in the world, will be India's best medal hope in boxing at the Tokyo Olympics

No.1 Amit Panghal (52kg), Manish Kaushik (63kg), Vikas Krishan (69kg), Ashish Choudhary (75kg) and Satish Kumar (+91kg). In the women's segment, it will be MC Mary Kom (51kg), Simranjit Kaur

(60kg), Lovlina Borgohain (69kg) and Pooja Rani (75kg).

Nieva said that Indian pugilists have improved in three aspects that make them better medal contenders. "We were poor in clinches,

I believe we have achieved the training targets that we set for ourselves. I am confident that this time it will be a stronger performance

SANTIAGO NIEVA | COACH

close range boxing and mental strength. The boxers have worked on these aspects and have improved by 70-80% in all the three departments," Nieva informed.

"For example, Amit is a fantastic long range boxer and we have made sure that he improved in close punches as well. He is not the tallest boxer in his category, so he had to improve in close range boxing," Nieva added.

Nieva who has also been associated with Swedish and Argentina boxing teams in the past was quick to point out that the boxers will have to take control of the centre of the rings if they are to win medals. "They have to do that. They cannot evade that and expect to win," asserted Nieva.

Controversy mars Hamilton's triumph

AGENCIES

London, July 18: In the end defying Formula One (F1) champions Lewis Hamilton won Sunday the British Grand Prix. He took 52 laps to win the race. However, most present at the Silverstone race track talked only about the first lap and forgot the remaining 52. It was the story about nine thrilling corners on the opening one that completely changed the complexion of the title race.

It was in the opening lap that championship leader Max Verstappen crashed out of the British Grand Prix when a spirited battle with Hamilton sent the Dutchman spinning hard into a barrier. The race was red-flagged Sunday for the tire barrier to be repaired and Hamilton was dealt a 10-second penalty for making contact with Verstappen. The seven-time world champion had no reaction on his radio when Mercedes informed Hamilton of the penalty. He coolly overcame the penalty to emerge victorious.

Verstappen beat Hamilton at the start for the second day in a row at



Silverstone and the two title contenders furiously zigzagged for position. The drivers touched at least twice as Hamilton tried to slip past Verstappen for the lead.

Hamilton's front wheel touched Verstappen's rear wheel the second time the drivers made contact, and the Red Bull careened off course, through the gravel and into the tire barrier. A tire from Verstappen's car bounced off the car during the spin. The driver however, escaped unscathed.

Hamilton told his Mercedes team the position in the corner was his and he was not to blame. "I was ahead going in there, man," Hamilton said over the radio. "I was fully alongside him, my line. Yeah, he turned in on me, man," he added.