



## RUMOURS QUASHED

Actor Sonam Kapoor Ahuja has quashed rumours about her pregnancy with a social media post

LEISURE P2



## PLAN REJECTED

China rejects WHO's plan for second phase of coronavirus tracing in Wuhan, to probe the lab leak theory

INTERNATIONAL P10



## 3RD ODI TODAY

With the series already in the bag, India look to tinker with the playing XI in the third ODI against Sri Lanka

SPORTS P12

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## ODISHA OFFICER IN UN PANEL

**Bhubaneswar:** IRS officer Rasmi Ranjan Das from Odisha has been appointed as an expert in the UN Tax Committee for the 2021-2025 period. He is the only Indian among the 25 chosen for the panel. Das is currently serving as Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Finance. He has around 28 years of experience as a member of Indian Revenue Service (IRS) in policy making and implementing Direct Tax Laws in the country. He is also the Indian delegate to the Inclusive Framework (IF), a group of more than 135 countries monitoring BEPS.



## I-T RAIDS ON MEDIA COMPANIES

**New Delhi:** The Income Tax department conducted Thursday multi-city raids against two prominent media groups – Dainik Bhaskar and Bharat Samachar – on charges of tax evasion, official sources said. Residences of promoters and some staffers of Dainik Bhaskar were also searched in Bhopal. Raids at the newspaper's offices at Bhopal, Jaipur, Ahmedabad, Noida are continuing at the time of filing this report. The two media groups have been critical of the Covid-19 management in India by the Centre and have done numerous stories highlighting failings of authorities.

P9

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## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



I know the news is about potholes but get it cleared from IT, CBI & EDI

MARKET WATCH	
INDEX	VARIATION
SENSEX	52837.21 ↑ 638.70
NIFTY	15824.00 ↑ 191.90
DOLLAR	74.77 ↓ ₹0.18
EURO	87.77 ↓ ₹0.05
GOLD	₹47,540 ↓ ₹33
SILVER	₹66,974 ↓ ₹163

WEATHER	
	BHUB CTK
MAX	32.2°C 33.8°C
MIN	25.5°C 24.6°C
Humidity	94% 95%
Rainfall	1.1mm 2.0mm
Forecast	Light rain very likely

# Scribes detain MLAs

Mediapersons demand action against policewoman for assaulting reporter

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Kendrapara, July 22:** Tension prevailed as journalists Thursday allegedly locked up five BJD MLAs in the district collector's office here and refused to release them protesting against the attack on a scribe of a web portal by a female constable, the previous day. The journalists in the district staged demonstrations all through the day.

According to our district correspondent Jagannath Dhal, the scribes demanding action against the female cop, detained Mahakalapara MLA Atanu Sabyasachi Nayak, Kendrapara MLA Sashi Bhushan Behera, Patkura MLA Sabitri Agrawal, Rajnagar MLA Dhruva Sahoo and

Aul MLA Pratap Keshari Deb. The scribes also demanded the suspension of the three police personnel present during the assault on the web journalist.

According to our Derabish block correspondent, Bebartha Ajay Das, the journalists asked the legislators to take action against the errant cops but the MLAs tried to sideline their pleas. This angered the mediapersons as they locked up the legislators inside the Collectorate. Some sources in the know of things also confirmed the development.

The legislators had come to the district collectorate to attend a virtual meeting on construction of a barrage on Mahanadi river.

Scribe Bhimsen Sethi had gone to the Kendrapara SP office July 19

when he found the policewoman working without a mask. He clicked a photo of hers and posted it on social media platforms. Since then Pinu Nayak had been nursing a grudge against Sethi.

When Sethi went to cover Wednesday, a BJP demonstration over an attack on the Dalit families in the district, the lady constable assaulted him while hurling abuses.

The highhandedness of the female cop angered the scribes after the video went viral on social media platforms Thursday morning.

Demanding stringent action against the accused, hundreds of journalists Thursday gheraoed the Collector's office during which they locked up the legislators.

The legislators invited a five-member team of the scribes to come inside and have a discussion with them. They assured the delegation that action will be taken against the errant cops following the discussions. The law-makers were then released.

The journalists later, met the collector at his residential office and submitted a memorandum demanding suspension of the cops. Collector Amrit Raturaj assured them of action after discussing the issue with the SP.

Purna Chandra Das, secretary of State Web-Media Association said the agitation will continue till the errant cops are punished.



BJD lawmakers including Pratap Keshari Deb (blue shirt) and Sashi Bhushan Behera were locked up by journalists in Kendrapara

OP PHOTO



## PROTECTING NATURE

Four-year-old Nino Gomes, who has been named 'Green Agent' by the 'Municipal Urban Cleaning Group', collects garbage under the sea accompanied by her marine biologist father Ricardo

REUTERS PHOTO

# Delta variant may lead to third wave

## No UC, no aid

Tribals deprived due to Odisha's glitch

POST NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi, July 22:** The Union government has not released funds to Odisha under the Special Central Assistance to Tribal Sub-Scheme (SCA to TSS) for the year 2021-22 as the state has failed to provide utilisation certificates (UCs) against the previous year's allocation.

The Union Ministry of Tribal Affairs, in response to a written question by Biju Janata Dal (BJD) Amar Patnaik, said that there is zero allocation to Odisha under SCA to TSS for 2021-22 and also grants under Article 275 (1) of the Constitution as the state government has not submitted the utilisation certificates and physical progress reports for previous year's funds.

The Centre had released ₹90.10 crore under SCA to TSS for the year 2020-21 but the Odisha government, according to the ministry, has utilised only ₹56.35 crore. Similarly, there is zero utilisation of ₹63.04 crore grant released by the Centre under Article 275 (1) for the year 2020-21.

"Main reason for non-release of approved funds during any given year has been non-submission of pending utilisation certificates (UCs) and physical progress reports (PPRs) by the Odisha government for previous years' releases," Renuka Singh Saruta, Minister of State for Tribal Affairs said.

## MUTANT CAN REMAIN ACTIVE FOR 1 MONTH

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, July 22:** In spite of the slowly receding number in Covid-19 cases in the state, experts are of the opinion that people should be wary about the Delta variant as it has the ability to mutate quickly. It has been found that 93 per cent of the new cases during the second wave of Covid-19 that hit the state were due to the Delta variant. This information was shared Thursday by Ajay Parida, Director, Institute of Life Sciences (ILS). Parida also informed that the Delta variant is highly infectious.

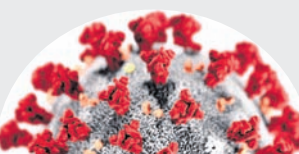
Parida attributed this to the results of genome sequencing of randomly selected samples from Covid-19 infected persons done at the institute. He claimed that the genome sequencing hints towards the stagnation of Covid-19 cases in the state.

"The Delta strain of the virus was responsible for the spread of the disease during the second wave. Genome sequencing of around 65,000 people were done in India and it was found that close to 96 per cent were infected by the Delta variant of the virus," Parida said.

"The ILS analysed around 3,000 samples of Covid-infected persons. It was found that 92 per cent of them had Delta virus strains. Among all the cases examined in the last 15 days, 93 per cent were infected by

## FATALITY RATE REMAINS HIGH

**BHUBANESWAR:** Even though the rate of new infections in Odisha continued to remain below the 2,000-mark, the fatality rate remained high with the state registering 67 deaths in the last 24 hours, according to information provided by the Health department. The new fatalities took the death toll to 5,308 in the state. Odisha also reported 1,948 new cases of infection. It took the total tally of infected persons to 9,61,934 while the active caseload now stands 19,623.



the Delta variant," Parida added.

Parida also pointed out that unlike other mutants the Delta variant is active up to more than a month. Hence there is always the possibility of the virus spreading quickly "In the second wave we have seen infections lasting for more than three weeks. This is because the persons have been hit by the Delta variant," Parida pointed out.

"So the threat of the Delta variant still looms large and people should be aware of it," the expert signed off.

# Vaishnaw under Opposition fire

Pegasus statement snatched from IT minister, torn and flung in air

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, July 22:** Trinamool Congress (TMC) MP Shantanu Sen snatched papers Thursday from Communications and Information Technology Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw in the Rajya Sabha. He then tore the papers and flung those in the air as Vaishnaw was about to make a statement on the alleged snooping row using Israeli spyware Pegasus.

TMC, Congress and other Opposition members rushed to the Well of the House as Vaishnaw was called to make a statement on the issue.

Sen's act stopped Vaishnaw from making the statement. The minister said he was laying a copy of his statement on the table of the House.



Deputy Chairman Harivansh Singh asked the members to desist from unparliamentary behaviour. He then adjourned the proceedings of the House for the day. "Please do not adhere to this unparliamentary practice," Harivansh said. He added that the report all MPs want to hear has now been laid on the table of the House and it can be discussed.

Prior to Harivansh's comments,

heated words were exchanged between Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri and the Trinamool MP. Marshals had to intervene to bring the situation under control. Later Sen alleged at a press conference that Puri had verbally abused him and was on the verge of physically assaulting him before he was rescued by his colleagues. He also claimed Puri even gestulated rudely at him.

"The Union Minister threatened me and abused me. He was about to assault me when my other colleagues came to my rescue," alleged Sen.

The statement Vaishnaw laid on the table of the House was similar to the one he had made July 19, a day after reports appeared of journalists, political rivals and critics of the government being

targeted through surveillance using Israeli company NSO Group's Pegasus spyware.

In the statement, Vaishnaw, whose phone number was among those listed as compromised by 'Washington Post', called the reports an 'attempt to malign the Indian democracy and its well-established institutions'.

"A highly sensational story was published by a web portal and many over-the-top allegations made around this story. The press reports appeared a day before the monsoon session of Parliament. This can't be a coincidence. In the past, similar claims were made regarding the use of Pegasus... Those claims had no factual basis and were categorically denied by all parties," Vaishnaw pointed out.

# Watershed Olympics expected for India

Record medal haul predicted bettering the previous high of six in London

## OPENING CEREMONY DIRECTOR DISMISSED

**Tokyo:** Tokyo Olympic organising committee fired Thursday Kentaro Kobayashi, director of the opening ceremony because of a Holocaust joke he made during a comedy show in 1998. The dismissal was announced by organising committee president Seiko Hashimoto. "Kobayashi has been dismissed. He was accused of using a joke about the Holocaust in his comedy act, including the phrase 'Let's play Holocaust', in one of his shows," said Hashimoto.

AGENCIES

**Tokyo, July 22:** There is palpable tension, a sense of dread actually, but the Covid-hit Olympic Games starting Friday could prove to be a watershed event for the biggest ever Indian contingent with shooters, boxers and wrestlers expected to lead an unparalleled medal rush.

India, who have won only 28 Olympic medals so far (11 of them by the men's hockey team), are looking forward to achieve their best-ever medal tally. Till date, the only individual gold for India was bagged by shooter Abhinav Bindra (Beijing, 2008). The highest number of medals (six, none of them gold) came in London (2012). India are

hoping to do better than that this time around with 120 of their athletes (68 men and 52 women).

The shooting contingent definitely has many contenders for medals due to their form in the last couple of years. A 19-year-old Manu Bhaker, 20-year-old Elavenil Valarivan, an 18-year-old Divyansh Singh Panwar, and a 20-year-old Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar are just some names from whom medal hopes are sky high.

Lone warrior Mirabai Chanu (49kg) is a medal contender in weightlifting. The 26-year-old has come a long way since failing to record a single legitimate lift in the Rio Olympics five years ago. Since then, she has been a World



GEARING UP: Members of the Indian women's hockey team go through their stretching drills at the Olympic Village

PTI PHOTO

Champion (2017) and a Commonwealth Games champion (2018). She also holds the world

record in clean and jerk. If all goes well, hers could be among the first medals that India would celebrate.

Another bunch to watch out for is the archery team, led by seasoned World No.1 Deepika Kumari. Expectations are high over the boxing contingent with pugilists like World No.1 Amit Panghal (62kg), MC Mary Kom (51kg), and Vikas Krishan (69kg) in fray. Among the eight wrestlers, the two to watch out for are Bajrang Punia (65kg, men) and Vinesh Phogat (53kg, women).

Even though PV Sindhu has not been in superlative form, one cannot rule out a medal for her because of her big match temperament. The Manpreet Singh-led men's team and the Rani Rampal-led women's side are in with a genuine chance if they hold their nerves on the big stage.

The Centre had released ₹90.10 crore under SCA to TSS for the year 2020-21 but the state government, according to the ministry, has utilised only ₹56.35 crore

Similarly, there is zero utilisation of ₹63.04 crore grants released by the Centre under Article 275 (1) for the year 2020-21

Significantly, special central assistance to Tribal Sub-Scheme was released to 27 states having notified STs for development and welfare of the tribal people. Similarly, the grants under Article 275 (1) are provided for the purpose of promoting welfare of scheduled tribes in the state or raising the level of administration of the Scheduled Areas.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES Today you will feel like displaying your power. If you find that people are awestruck when you pass by, take it that your labours are doing the trick. Otherwise, take it that you have to get things in better order. Ganesha says either ways you have more work to do.

TAURUS This is not a day when you should be fooling around with your health. Do not take your health and fitness for granted, warns Ganesha. You will be feeling lazy and listless all day long. Chances are that you could fall ill on account of carelessness. Both physical exertion as well as mental stress should be meticulously avoided.

GEMINI A day of conflicting emotions awaits you. Your personal and professional life will both be important. Hence you will experience anxious moments as you try to balance the demands made by both. However, the good news is you will succeed in your attempts and will do justice to all your duties, says Ganesha.

CANCER You will love to stroll in a world of fantasy. Religious impact will prevail over you. You will charter your fantasy to a mysterious level. You will have communion with God at a temple, mosque or church, you will try to draw lessons from your experience.

LEO A fun-filled day awaits you. You will enjoy all the activities that you take up today. At the work-place too a progressive day awaits you. You will be worried about the fruits of your labour, but they are likely to be sweeter than you thought they will be, says Ganesha.

VIRGO Contemplating on past successes will help you gather the resources for achieving more of it in the near future. New contacts will help you make considerable headway on the road to success. Ganesha says your amiable nature will help you in getting along easily with people.

LIBRA Ganesha says that you need to be more careful in your work field as your enemies or your competitors will try to pull you down today. You will have to be very careful in making business agreements or negotiations regarding give and take in the business.

SCORPIO Long pending task of getting your home renovated may begin today. There are a couple of object de art that have caught your eyes and you wish to decorate your home with those artefacts. You may even plan a small celebration to share your home's new look! A great day indeed.

SAGITTARIUS You seem to be on a self-appreciation mode today. Grooming, makeover and attracting attention in on your cards today, you make extra efforts to get that glamorous look for your self. And as Ganesha says, it will surely not go unnoticed as you bag a lot of compliments for it.

CAPRICORN You regret spending hefty amount of money on branded items and luxuries, but you'll see a ray of hope today, feels Ganesha. Your bank account is strengthened by some heavy cash flow, and needless to say, it will give you a great relief. Now, you'll understand the value of money and curb on your urge to spend lavishly.

AQUARIUS Today is your day! Your performance will speak for itself and everyone at work, including bosses, will appreciate your efforts, says Ganesha. Work will not seem burdensome any more, in fact you will enjoy your job like never before. You may wish to contact some old friends and be in touch with them once again.

PISCES You are likely to feel a lot of tension and stress today. You will feel down owing to some disagreement with someone or due to some unfathomable reason. Even that special someone will be unable to chase away your blues. A little meditation will help you to bounce back and get into your daily routine, says Ganesha.



LESLIE GRACE TO PLAY BARBARA IN BATGIRL

Actress Leslie Grace has been roped in to play the title role in *Batgirl* and will star as crime fighter Barbara Gordon in the upcoming film. According to deadline.com, Warner Bros And DC Films was already looking at the Afro-Latina actress after her breakout role in *In The Heights*.

GREW UP WATCHING WOMEN WHO DID IT ALL: THEE STALLION

Rapper Megan Thee Stallion has said that she takes inspiration from the women in her life. "I grew up watching women who did it all. I saw people like my grandmother and my mother pursue their education while showing off their curves, and working 9-to-5 jobs," she said.



'It's never a bad time to be a singer'

New Delhi: Neha Kakkar is fast emerging a one-woman industry of sorts, belting out hits with astonishing regularity and currently ruling the roost. She says it is never a bad time to be a singer in the industry. Over the past years, she has delivered back-to-back hits that include film songs such as *Garmi*, *Dilbar* and *O saki saki*.

Asked if it is a good time to be a singer in the industry, Neha said: "It's never a bad time to be a singer in the industry; that's for sure. How unique you are matters but most of all, it's important to be a good human being. All our friends in the music industry are really nice and we wish them success."

In a very short time, Neha has become the undisputed queen of remixes. Before making her debut in Hindi movies, Neha and her siblings Tony and Sonu Kakkar sang at jagratas. IANS



Kirti urges girls to break glass ceilings

Mumbai: Actress Kirti Kulhari took to social media Thursday to talk about her passion for riding bikes.

Kirti said she is fascinated by bikes and urged girls to break unsaid rules — like gearless vehicles like scooty are for girls and heavy vehicles with gears like bikes are meant for boys.

Taking to Instagram, Kirti shared a few videos of herself riding a bike. She wrote: "I am fascinated by bikes... Not as I pilion but as a Rider.. I know it's one of those million unsaid rules where anything gearless/ easy like scooty are for girls and something heavy/

with gears like bikes is for boys. But isn't it just another conditioning?"

"I think it's so cool to ride a bike and be the WOMEN that we are. we don't have to be MEN to experience something in life.. Come on girls.. break another #glass-ceiling and let bikes be a thing as much for girls as much it is for boys.. and let us take the boys for a ride this time," she urged.

The actress also spoke about her desire to make a bike trip to Ladakh next year. IANS



Sonam rubbishes pregnancy rumours

Mumbai: Actress Sonam Kapoor Ahuja has put an end to rumours about her being pregnant, with a post on social media.

Sonam posted a clip on Instagram story where she talked about her first day of getting her periods. In the clip, the actress is seen sipping on ginger tea and holding a hot water bottle.

"Hot water bottle and ginger tea for first day of my period," she wrote as caption on the post that she shared Wednesday.

Rumours about Sonam's pregnancy started as soon as she arrived in India from London.

The actress will soon be seen in the film *Blind*. IANS



TOP STYLE DIVAS OF SMALL SCREEN

Mumbai: You are what you wear. The proverb goes apt with television stars too, for they become style icons for what they wear on screen and fans love to follow their dresses, jewellery, hairstyles and other looks.

Here is a look at five actresses who have made an impact on the wardrobes of fans with their stunning style statements.

Pratibha Ranta

She made her debut in *Qurbaan Hua* and now has become a trendsetter for the wedding ceremony look. Her embroidered kurta sharara in the show can be the best choice for your friend's haldi, mehndi and saangeet cere-



monies. They are subtle and classy at the same time.

Neha Pendse

Neha is popular these days for her role of Anita bhabhi in her show *Bhabhi Ji Ghar Par Hai!* She dons sa-

rees in a vintage manner that gives the character a classy touch. The patterns and designs are very inspired from the late eighties and the early nineties. Those who prefer to wear satin and chiffon admire her draping style and look.



Erica Fernandes

She can be seen as Sonakshi in the show *Kuch Rang Pyar Ke Aise Bhi: Nayi Kahaani*. Her looks are curated to bring out a strong statement.

Her long flowy Indian wear such as kurtas and churidars, teamed with oxidised jewellery, add an edge to the look, and her cotton sarees paired with bold earrings present her independent and working woman look.



Rubina Dilaik

She is a style icon, and from *Choti Bahu* to *Shakti*, Rubina never fails to catch your attention. Apart



from her sarees, her blouse designs have inspired a lot. From off shoulders to flared sleeves, she has set a distinct trend. So, if you want to go for a classy and simple look, give her dressing style a shot.

Shraddha Arya

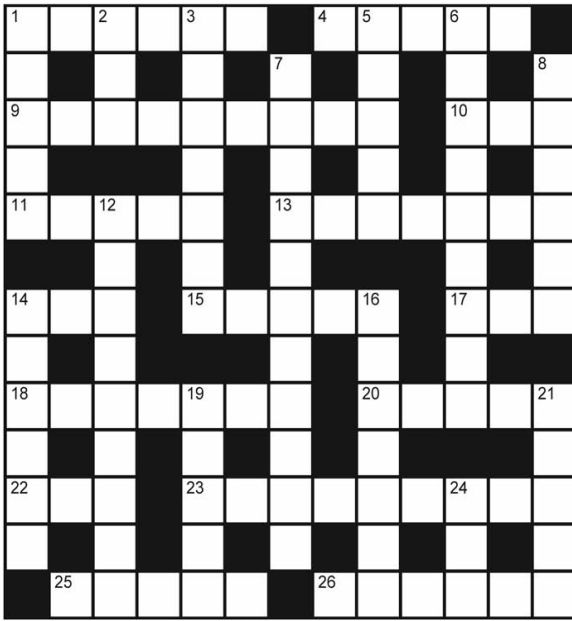
She is currently portraying Preeta Karan Luthra in *Kundali Bhagya*. She has gained a lot of fame for her traditional look, wearing embroidered lehenga with jewellery to ethnic sarees.

Because of her desi look she has become a youth icon, and her ethnic fashion statement is loved by the audience.



FUN post

CROSSWORD



Across

- 1 Morsels
- 4 Weeper of myth
- 9 Joke's conclusion (5,4)
- 10 WWW address
- 11 Tempest
- 13 Wet blanket
- 14 Auction unit
- 15 Fashion
- 17 Word on a dipstick
- 18 First part of Dante's *Divine Comedy*

Down

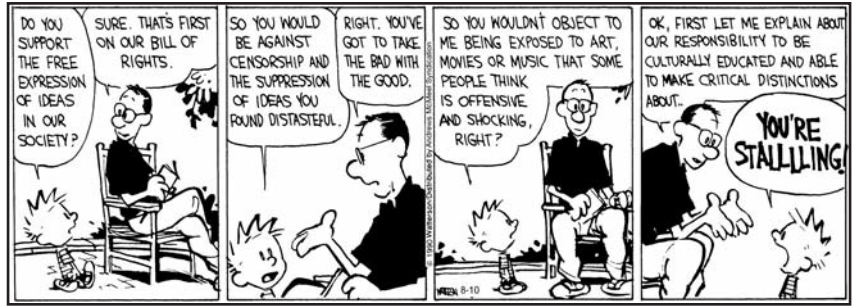
- 1 Sleeveless garments
- 2 Ornamental vase
- 20 Ziti, e.g.
- 22 Airport posting, in brief
- 23 Lake Eyre locale
- 25 Bakery supply
- 26 Fruity frozen dessert

- 3 West Indies islands
- 5 Utopian
- 6 Casual wear (4,5)
- 7 Disney character (6,5)
- 8 Cavorted
- 12 Passé (3-2-4)
- 14 Hang around
- 16 Kind of penguin
- 19 Lion sounds
- 21 In the know
- 24 Mouth piece

PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

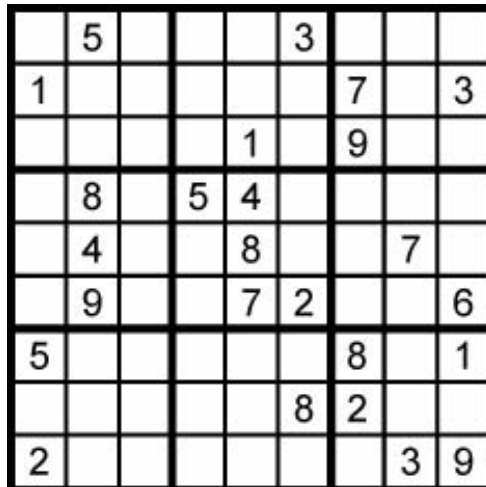


BREVITY



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.

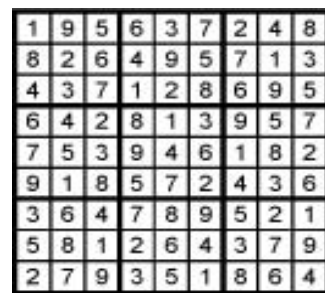


SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD



SUDOKU



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



# Tea packaging unit unveiled at Gopalpur

THE ₹100-CRORE PROJECT IS EXPECTED TO CREATE 900 JOBS

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, July 22:** Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Thursday inaugurated a tea packaging unit of Tata Consumer Products Limited (TCPL) at Gopalpur Industrial Park in Ganjam through videoconferencing.

The plant with an investment of ₹100 crore was completed in 18 months and it will provide employment opportunities to more than 900 people in Ganjam, said an official.

According to the official, the unit will be developed as the largest tea packaging plant in the country. Currently, it has a production capacity of 15 million kilogram of tea. The capacity will be further enhanced to 50 million kilograms.

Operated by M/s Amalgamated Plantations Private Limited, an associate of Tata consumers and the second largest tea producer in India, the unit will cater to the needs of Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Telangana and central India.

Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Minister said, "The policy framework and facilitation mech-



Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik inaugurates a tea packaging unit of TCPL at Gopalpur virtually as 5T Secretary VK Pandian looks on

OP PHOTO

anism of Odisha has been successful in mobilising investments in diverse sectors such as petrochemicals, food processing, apparel and garments. The ongoing diversification of the industrial base will boost the employment opportunities in Odisha."

Naveen thanked the Tata Group for assisting the state government in mobilising medical oxygen, PSA, Plants and critical accessories during the pandemic.

Highlighting the stellar performance of the state in setting up industries, Naveen said that Odisha has continued to remain at the forefront of industrial devel-

opment in India.

Industries Minister Dibya Shankar Mishra outlined the state's growth in terms of industrial development in the last 20 years. Mishra said that Odisha has provided a stable platform to industries for a healthy growth in Odisha.

Tata Steel managing director TV Narendran said that the steel major has invested over Rs 60,000 crore in Odisha during the last five years. The company has invested Rs 500 crore for infrastructure development in Gopalpur Special Economic Zone.

Secretary to CM (5T) VK Pandian moderated the programme.

## Registration for Special OJEE begins today

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, July 22:** In view of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and rescheduling of the 2021-22 academic session, it has been decided to conduct a Special Joint Entrance Examination (Special OJEE) for admissions to 1st year BTech courses of all government and private engineering colleges in Odisha against the vacant seats.

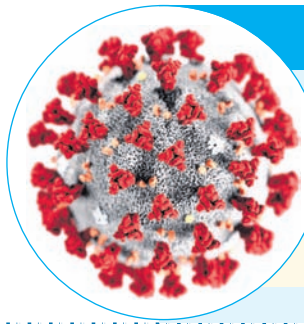
The exam is only for those who have not appeared and/or will not appear in the JEE (Main)-2021 examination due to some reason or the other.

As per an official notification, the process of online application for admission to BTech courses will start from July 23, 2021 and the last date will be August 10, 2021. Fees can be paid till August 12 (11:59pm). Detailed instructions and terms and conditions for online application will be like other forms as per the Information Brochure available in the website - www.ojee.nic.in.

The syllabus for the examination will be as per the JEE (Main) - 2021. The detailed schedule regarding dates of the examination and downloading of admit cards and others will be notified in due course of time, on assessment of the pandemic situation. Candidates are advised to visit the official websites of OJEE regularly for updated information.

## CRY FOR COVID AID

SUCI activists hold a demonstration in front of the Cuttack Collectorate, Thursday, seeking financial assistance to the families of people who died of Covid-19



## COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	19,30,07,039	17,54,83,945	41,46,088
India	3,12,57,720	3,04,29,339	4,18,987
Odisha	9,61,934	9,36,950	5,308

## Be responsible to avoid further waves: City AIIMS Director

Odisha, along with the entire country, is bracing for an impending third wave of Covid-19. Khurda district, which encompasses the state capital Bhubaneswar, has been bearing the brunt of the pandemic for a long time. Director of AIIMS Bhubaneswar, **Dr Gitanjali Batmanabane**, while speaking to Manish Kumar of **Orissa POST**, shares her valuable insights on the difficult circumstances, and the institution's strategy against Covid as well as black fungus...

■ **Why does Khurda still remain Covid-troubled?**

■ People from different parts of the state and also from neighbouring states like West Bengal are coming to avail medical services in Bhubaneswar. As regular inflow of patients and their attendants continue, Khurda district bears the maximum burden of Covid-19 cases. Moreover, many people here are openly flouting Covid norms.

■ **As per a survey, 40% of the vaccinated people have got infected. What are your thoughts on vaccine efficacy?**

■ Scientific evidences suggest that the vaccine will not prevent infection but it will definitely help reduce hospitalisation and fatalities owing to Covid-19. At AIIMS too, we now see less number of vaccinated persons coming for admissions or dying due to the disease. Take our own case for example. Around 1,800 staffers of AIIMS, Bhubaneswar have contracted the virus till now but we didn't see a single death. Also, there was less number of hospitalisations.

■ **Is a third wave inevitable? When may Odisha face it?**

■ We can expect many more waves and not just the third wave as the virus is mutating. There is no robust mechanism to precisely predict the next wave. It depends more on people's behaviour. With responsible behaviour and more vaccination only we can avoid such a wave and the resultant hospitalisation. Also, we can't say for sure if the virus, after further mutation, is going to be more lethal or infectious.



■ **What are the unique facilities that AIIMS-Bhubaneswar offers which are not available in other government set-ups?**

■ There are many like the ECMO facility, brachytherapy and radio surgery. We have recently received a lithotripsy machine worth Rs 3 crore for treatment of stones without a surgery. Installation of PET-CT machine for cancer care is in progress. It is not available at any other government hospital in the state. We have paediatric flexible bronchoscope used in removing obstructions in respiratory tracts of children. We are also the first to set up an electro-physiology lab for cardiac care which is used in cases with irregular heart beat. There are many others.

■ **How did you continue treatment during Covid, lockdowns and shutdowns?**

■ In extreme cases, we closed down walk-in OPD services but we continued indoor and emer-

gency services. Also, when many private hospitals were shunning Covid patients, we continued services like delivery of pregnant women, dialysis and cancer treatment for those who were Covid positive. For OPD, we offered telemedicine, facilitated mobile apps for video consultations, connected with the state-run district hospitals for follow-up treatment of patients from across the state.

■ **There were reports of shortage of black fungus drugs at AIIMS. What is the status now?**

■ There is no shortage now. Earlier, we used to get around 60-70 vials per week but now we are getting around 400 vials a week. There was also misinformation that only liposomal Amphotericin B is effective against black fungus, but normal Amphotericin B is also effective. It is easily available and also needed in lesser amount than the former. We used it here and tackled the black fungus cases.



## ADHARA PANA RITUAL

Adhara Pana flows down from Nandighosa chariot after servitors smashed earthen pots containing the delicious drink that was offered to Lord Jagannath, Thursday. As per belief, ghostly bodies that descend upon the Grand Road to witness the annual Car Festival return to their dwelling places after partaking the drink

OP PHOTO

## Heavy rain in state likely today

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, July 22:** The regional office of the India Meteorological Department (IMD) Thursday said that heavy to very heavy rain could occur in different parts of the state Friday.

Issuing warning of heavy rain for Friday, the IMD, in its evening bulletin, said, "Heavy to very heavy rain is very likely to occur at one or two places in Bargarh, Jharsuguda, Sundargarh, Sambalpur; Nuapada, Bolangir and Deogarh."

It also said that heavy rainfall is also likely to occur at one or two places in Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj,

**The weatherman did not issue any warning of very heavy rainfall from Saturday for the next five days**

Nabarangpur, Kalahandi, Sonapur, Boudh, Angul, Cuttack, Dhenkanal, Jajpur, Bhadrak and Balasore. Light to moderate rain or thundershower is likely to affect several other parts of the state.

The intensity of the rainfall, however, may subside slowly after Friday. The weatherman did not issue any warning of very heavy rainfall from Saturday for the next five days. However, warning of

heavy rainfall has been issued till July 26.

The MeT office also said that the state capital could see a few spells of rain or thundershower Friday. The maximum temperature in the city could go upto 31 degrees Celsius.

It said that the highest rainfall in the state was recorded at Paradip (64mm) Thursday. It was followed by Puri which saw 23mm of rainfall.

Similarly, the highest temperature in the state was reported from Chandbali which saw 34.5 degrees Celsius while the minimum temperature was recorded in Malkangiri which saw 19 degrees C.

POST NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi, July 22:** A delegation of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MPs from Odisha Thursday met Union Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution Minister Piyush Goyal and sought an enquiry into the alleged irregularities in implementation of Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) in the state.

The BJP delegation alleged that the needy and eligible people have been deprived of benefits under PMGKAY which was rolled out by the Centre in the wake of Covid-19 pandemic to provide additional food grains to the disadvantaged sections.



The BJP MPs alleged that 5.43 lakh National Food Security Act (NFSA) card holders were left out during distribution of food grains under PMGKAY in May 2021. It has been said that out of 92.83 lakh NFSA card holders in Odisha, free food grains have been distributed to around 87.39 lakh card holders in May. In June 2021, as many as 4.54

lakh NFSA card holders were not given food grains under the PMGKAY.

"As many as 4.07 lakh card holders in May 2021 and 4.04 lakh card holders in June 2021 were left out during distribution food grains under NFSA scheme," alleged the BJP MPs. The BJP delegation submitted a memorandum to Goyal

and stated that around 11.35 lakh metric tonne (LMT) food grains have been allocated to Odisha free of cost under PMGKAY during the period of May to November 2021, of which 6.22 LMT has been lifted. They also claimed poor lifting of food grains in tribal dominated districts.

"Lifting of food grains under PMGKAY and NFSA is below 10 per cent in districts of Kendrapara, Keonjhar, Khurda, Malkangiri, Mayurbhanj, Jharsuguda, Jagatsinghpur, Dhenkanal, Cuttack, Bargarh, Angul, Balasore, Bhadrak, Ganjam and Sundargarh. Most of these are backward and tribal dominated districts of Odisha," the BJP MPs said.

## ₹20L package for Remuna Durgadevi site

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar/Balasore, July 22:** Odia Language Literature, Tourism & Culture Minister Jyoti Prakash Panigrahi Thursday visited Durgadevi temple under Remuna tehsil in Balasore district where the archaeologists had also discovered a fortified historical site. The minister declared Rs 20 lakh package for the development of the site.

Panigrahi also said that the government has plans to establish a museum at the place. He also directed the state archaeologists to take steps for the conservation and preservation of the site including Durgadevi temple situated in the village.

Durgadevi is located about 20 km from Balasore town in Remuna tehsil, bordering Mayurbhanj district. The site has circular mud fortification of about 4.9 km in circumference and is situated in between rivers Sona on south and Budhabalang on its north-eastern direction. The village is named after its presiding deity Durgadevi.



Two small nullas Gangahara and Prassana join the site from north and south, forming a natural moat at the site which was an ancient water management system developed at least 4,000 years ago.

According to sources, archaeological excavation was started with an aim to correlate the simultaneous growth and development of maritime activities and urbanisation in East Coast of India linking Ganga valley in north and Mahanadi valley in Central Odisha.

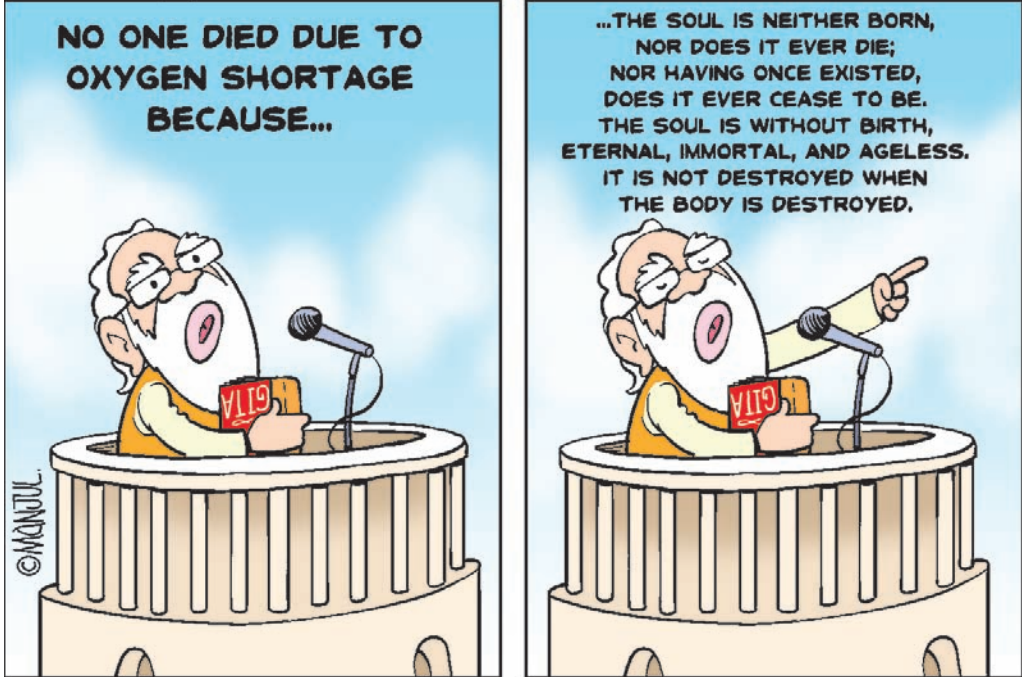
During excavation, articles from Chalcolithic period including earthen vessels, earthen jewellery, earthen toys and iron nails were found from the site. The findings

also include iron slug, javelin and nail as well as red and black earthen pots believed to be of the Iron Age. The team also discovered the base of a circular hut, red-painted pottery, black slipware, red slipware and copper objects belonging to Chalcolithic Age.

After receipt of licence from Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) for archaeological excavation project in February 2021 and approval of the project by the Culture Minister, the excavation was started from March 2021 and continued till May 5, 2021 in the first phase.

In order to authenticate its time period, the excavated objects have been sent to a UGC-managed laboratory in New Delhi for testing. The excavation work has been halted for the time being due to second wave of Covid-19. The new findings will certainly add a new chapter to the history of Odisha, the sources added.

## POLITICKLE by MANJUL





# State logs 1,948 fresh Covid cases, 67 deaths



PNN/ AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, July 22:** Odisha's Covid-19 tally rose to 9,61,934 Thursday as 1,948 more people tested positive for the infection, while 67 fresh fatalities pushed the state's coronavirus death toll to 5,308, a Health department official said.

As many as 1,120 new cases were reported in quarantine centres, while the remaining 828 infections were detected during contact tracing, he said.

Khurda district, under which Bhubaneswar falls, recorded the

highest number of fresh infections at 480, followed by Cuttack (279) and Jajpur (115).

Khurda also registered the highest number of fresh fatalities at 20, followed by Balasore (eight) and Bargarh (seven).

Odisha now has 19,623 active cases, while 9,36,950 people have recovered from the disease so far, including 1,943 Wednesday.

Fifty-three other coronavirus patients have died due to comorbidities thus far.

Odisha's daily test positivity rate (TPR) stands at 2.45 per cent as 79,372 samples were tested for Covid-

Khurda registered the highest number of fresh fatalities at 20, followed by Balasore (eight) and Bargarh (seven)	
High TPR is being reported in districts like Jajpur (24.65 per cent), Kendrapara (6.34 per cent), and Cuttack (4.65 per cent).	Khurda, on the other hand, is showing a decline in TPR which currently stands at 3.94 per cent

19, taking the cumulative tests to over 1.53 crore. The state's cumulative positivity rate stood at 6.26 per cent.

However, high TPR is being reported in districts like Jajpur (24.65 per cent), Kendrapara (6.34 per cent), and Cuttack (4.65 per cent).

Khurda, on the other hand, is showing a decline in TPR which currently stands at 3.94 per cent, the official said, adding that TPR has dipped below 2 per cent in most of the districts.

The state has thus far administered over 1.47 crore doses, including 1.21 lakh Wednesday. As many as 8,699 pregnant women have been inoculated to date.

## 6,597 students to sit for HSC offline exam

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, July 22:** The Board of Secondary Education (BSE), Odisha, Thursday informed that the offline High School Certificate (HSC) examinations will be conducted at 278 centres across the state from July 30 to August 5. The board has also released the admit cards for the exams.

As per the BSE sources, as many as 6,597 students will appear for the HSC offline exams at 278 designated centres while 8,493 will sit for State Open School Certificate examinations at 222 centres. Besides, 61 students will appear for Madhyama exams at 4 centres.

"The admit cards for offline HSC, SOSOC and Madhyama exams 2021 are available in the website bseodisha.ac.in. The students can download their admit cards by entering the school code in the link available in the website. For correspondence course exam, a candidate can download his admit cards by entering his name and father's name," informed the BSE.

The board said that the fresh candidates of SOSOC examination, 2021 (1st) and correspondence course regular candidates of annual HSCE 2021, who have not filled up forms for the offline exams, can also appear the exams.

## MYSTERIOUS DEATH IN CITY

# YOUTH'S BODY EXHUMED FROM KUAKHAI RIVERBED

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, July 22:** The Commissionerate Police Thursday exhumed the body of an unidentified youth from Kuakhai riverbed near Barimunda on the City outskirts.

A few locals had spotted the hands of a body tumbling out of the sand Wednesday evening and informed the police, sources said.

A police team led by Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Uma Shankar Dash, Assistant Commissioners of Police (ACPs) Anil Kumar Mishra and Sanjiv Satpathy and Mancheswar police in-charge Sudhir Kumar Sahoo along with the members of a scientific team exhumed the body.

"The body is of a youth aged around 18 to 25 years. At least 50 per cent of his face has been badly decomposed. The youth was wearing a black track suit and a white full-sleeve shirt. Besides, he was wearing an earring (right). A pair of sandals were also found near the body," said a police officer.

The police registered an unnatural death case and sent the body to AIIMS-Bhubaneswar for post-mortem.



OP PHOTO

The body is being exhumed in the presence of police and scientific team

**Anybody having any information on the youth can contact the police on mobile no. 8280338321 and landline no. 0674-2540555**

"The scientific team used 3D scanner to videograph the whole process. The body did not bear any injury mark. The height of the youth is around 5ft 8 inch while his

weight is around 46 kg. It is suspected that the youth might have been either strangled or poisoned to death," said the official.

DCP Dash said they would collect information regarding all missing persons under various police limits in the Capital city and its outskirts to identify the youth.

"Anybody having any information on the youth can contact the police on mobile no. 8280338321 and telephone no. 0674-2540555," said the DCP.

# Railways renders pivotal service in Puri Car Fest

Indian Railways has been providing a very essential service in facilitating the smooth running of the Chariots of the Trinity in the Car Festival every year.

A team of 40 experienced staff from Railways actively participate to place the Chariots side by side by lifting and shifting their positions using traversing jacks. All the jacks are placed at different places under the axles and operated simultaneously. About 30 traversing screw jacks (12 for Nandi Ghosh, 10 for Tala Dhawja and eight for Deba Dalana) are used.

The team escorts the Chariots during their journey from Shrimandir to Shrigundicha Temple covering 3 kms. On the fifth day of the ceremony (Hera Panchami), all 3 chariots are reversed and placed at Nakachana Dwar (exit gate of Shrigundicha Temple) for the return journey. The team escorts the Chariots during their return journey too. After reaching the Lions Gate, the 3 Chariots are placed side by side in proper position for 'Suna Besa'. Each Chariot is shifted for six to eight feet to position them properly. This is entirely done by the team led by a Senior Section Engineer of the mechanical department of the Puri Coaching Depot.

Legend has it that in early 1960s, one of the Chariots got entangled



with an electric poll damaging its axle. Senior officials were clueless about what was to be done. Incidentally, a Railway officer witnessing the Festival found an analogy with that of restoration during coach derailment. He suggested using screw jacks and offered help from Railways voluntarily. Since then, East Coast Railways has been rendering the service every year.

The wish of Lord to step out from his Holy abode to see his devotees is nothing but his magnanimity. In this ocean of love and devotion that fills up in the souls of men and women the contribution of Railway is a small cog in the wheel.

**Kaushalendra K Khadanga, Chief Public Relations Officer, East Coast Railway**

# Now, app for OCAC Tower mgmt

*OCAC Tower Management Application will automate various administrative processes like space allocation to companies, dues collection, subsidy management, monthly demand generation and grievance redressal*

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, July 22:** Electronics and Information Technology (E&IT) Minister Tusharkanti Behera Thursday launched 'OCAC Tower Management Application', a web-based application for seamless management of workspaces, at OCAC Tower here, an official said.

"Transparency is key thrust of our 5T model of governance. Odisha Computer Application Centre (OCAC) Tower Management Application will facilitate transparency in the management of office space at the edifice. I'm sure that the web-based application will boost the confidence of the IT companies operating out of the OCAC Tower," the E&IT Minister said while launching the newly-developed application.

According to E&IT Secretary Manoj Kumar Mishra, creating an enabling environment with the right facilitation service is the department's key focus as it would help the industry operate in a worry-free environment.

"With a simple interface, OCAC Tower Management Application is yet another step towards ensuring transparency in the administrative process through e-



**OCAC Tower offers working space to IT startups and IT/ITES and Electronic System Design and Manufacturing MSME units**

governance and removal of all bottlenecks in office space management," Mishra pointed out.

According to sources familiar with the development, the web-based application will automate

various administrative processes like space allocation to companies, dues collection, subsidy management, monthly demand generation and grievance redressal.

"The application will also facilitate online payment, digital communication between OCAC and occupants, and online grievance management," the source said.

With a super built-up area of around 2.30 lakh square feet, OCAC Tower is a swanky structure near Acharya Vihar Square here that offers working space to IT startups and IT/ITES and Electronic System Design and Manufacturing (ESDM) MSME units.

## Teachers vaccinated

**Bhubaneswar:** Amid concerns raised by a section of parents and students about school reopening, School and Mass Education Minister Samir Ranjan Dash Thursday said almost all the school teachers and other staffers have been vaccinated.

## CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

I, Saraswati Shoree, spouse of Army No.15623693Y, Rank NK-K.C. Dharua, R/o. Vill/PO. Siallati, Dist. Nuapada declared that I have changed my name from Saraswati Shoree to Saraswati Shoree due to incorrect name mentioned in my husband's service record. That above both the names belongs to one and same person. Henceforth, I shall be known as only Saraswati Shoree.



Women transplant paddy seedlings at a farmland on the outskirts of Bhubaneswar, Thursday

OP PHOTO

# Will work for improving FM University's rank: New VC

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, July 22:** Governor and Chancellor of Universities in Odisha, Ganeshi Lal Thursday appointed Santosh Kumar Tripathy, a retired professor of Utkal University, as the Vice Chancellor (VC) of Fakir Mohan University in Balasore for a period of four years.

Tripathy was working as a professor in the Department of Personnel Management and Industrial Relations (PM&IR) of Utkal University. He has more than 30 years of teaching experience. He has authored 10 books and successfully guided 17 PhD and 40 MPhil scholars.

Speaking to Orissa POST, Tripathy said his main aim would be to improve the ranking of FM University at the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) and put it among the top 100 universities in the country.



Santosh Kumar Tripathy

"We will also work towards making the university an A+ rank varsity in the country. Health and interest of the students in study will be our main focus as the pandemic has hampered the education system in big way. We will try to provide

proper education to the students by using information technology," Tripathy added.

Tripathy further said that the former VC of FM University, Dinabandhu Sahoo, had started several incubation centres in the varsity. "We will make sure that the incubation centres are utilised by the students. We will try to improve the language centre in the varsity as Balasore district had contributed much to the Odia language," Tripathy added.

Notably, Sahoo had been appointed as the VC of FM University in December 2020 for the period of four years. But, Sahoo resigned from his post after four months of assuming office. Governor Ganeshi Lal accepted Sahoo's resignation and appointed Maharaja Sri Ram Chandra Bhanja Deo University, Baripada, VC Kishore Kumar Basa as the in-charge of VC of FM University.

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# NO HEADWAY IN SOUMYA DEATH PROBE

Two police teams that visited Soumya's native place Khaira and his wife's parental village Goudagaon have returned without much headway

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Paralakhemundi, July 22:** With the death case of Assistant Conservator of Forests (ACF) Soumya Ranjan Mohapatra taking new turns with each passing day, Gajapati police are yet to crack the case.

The three-member crime branch team that has been camping in Paralakhemundi since Tuesday to help local police visited Soumya Ranjan's government quarters Thursday. They are investigating to find out the veracity of different theories that have emerged so far, it was learnt.

The crime branch team including a cyber expert had met Gajapati SP Tapan Kumar Pattanayak Wednesday and discussed the investigation progress so far.

Meanwhile, two police teams that had visited Soumya Ranjan's native place Khaira in Balasore district and his wife's parental village Goudagaon under Kaptipada police limits in Mayurbhanj district returned Wednesday. Paralakhemundi IIC Bibekananda Swain was also part of a team. It is said that they have collected some vital information that will help crack the mystery.

According to sources, the investigation will proceed on the basis of the information gathered by the police from the two places. When asked, IIC Swain refused to divulge anything saying it may hamper the



FILE PHOTO

investigation.

While DFO Sangram Keshari Behera has already been booked for his alleged involvement in the case, Gurandi OIC Mamata Panda is also under police scanner for detaining the ambulance that was on its way to hospital carrying a badly burnt Mohapatra at DFO's office. Informing about the investigation, Gajapati SP Tapan Kumar Pattanayak said both officials will be questioned at an appropriate time.

Meanwhile, the police are waiting for postmortem report, hoping it will help solve the case.

## ACF suffered burn injuries inside quarters: CB

In a sensational disclosure, the Crime Branch team said that Soumya had sustained burn injuries inside his official quarters.

The Crime Branch team led by Crime Branch DSP Bijay Kumar Mallik along with Paralakhemundi Sub-Divisional Police Officer (SDPO) Ramkrushna Pati had visited the house Thursday.



While informing about what led them to conclude that the forest officer had suffered burn injuries at his quarters, Mallik said a piece of mosquito net placed on the skylight which is at a height of nine feet has been found melted.

"Similarly, some portions of backdoor have burned and some partially burnt clothes have also been found," he said, adding that despite close inspection they did not find any sign of disturbance outside the house, suggesting the incident

occurred inside the house.

The team also found some documents including letters written by Soumya's wife Bidyabharati.

## 2nd hand-written note: Bidya was desperate for divorce

Another hand-written note of Bidyabharati Panda, the wife of deceased ACF surfaced Thursday morning, which reveals her desperation for a divorce from her husband.

According to an official of the in-

vestigating team, police have already seized the notes, which were written in a personal diary, from the ACF's government residence in Paralakhemundi town.

Bidyabharati has ventilated her emotions in the purportedly hand-written note seeking divorce from her husband. She has also expressed her deep hatred towards the deceased ACF in the note. "Oh God, help me get divorce anyhow," the hand-written note read.

It is pertinent to mention that this is the second note recovered by the investigating officials. In the first hand-written note that had surfaced Wednesday, Bidyabharati mentioned that she hated her husband.

"I hate you (Soumya) the most in the world. I hate this man. Even hate to combine my name with his. I spoiled my life for all my stupid decisions," the note previously written by Bidyabharati stated.

On the other hand, Bidyabharati clarified Wednesday that the note had nothing to do with Soumya's death saying, "I had written it after knowing about his extra-marital affair, in order to express my sorrow. The letter has no relevance with his death."

The police team, investigating the alleged murder case, is yet to arrive at any conclusion. However, the recent revelation Wednesday has made the case much murkier.

# Major renovation of Sasan canal soon

GOVT GIVES NOD TO PROJECT, SANCTIONS ₹63CR



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Sambalpur, July 22:** Sasan canal, a lifeline for agriculture for major parts of Sambalpur, is all set for renovation. The state government has given its go-ahead to the detailed project report submitted by the water resources department, a report said.

The report said the canal renovation will be carried out with cement-tiered composite duluxe carpet (CCDC) method. Renovation will be done for an 8-km stretch of the 22-km long canal in the first phase.

Speaking about the project, Pramod Kumar Panda, executive engineer of the water resources department, revealed that the state government has sanctioned ₹63 crore for its renovation while the tender process

has been initiated. It is expected that the renovation will start in November.

The executive engineer added that under the CCDC method, water flow in the canal will not be blocked for a long time while renovation work is on. This will not hamper the irrigation to farmlands.

The canal bed will be paved with concrete carpets as thick as 11 mm to ensure that water flows quickly and smoothly. The renovation will check siltation and save ₹40 lakh as annual maintenance cost.

In 2002-03, ₹34 crore was spent for renovation while ₹70 crore had been spent in 2007. As the canal has not been dredged for a long time, water flow to the tail end areas has been affected with farmers facing water shortage.

# Police bust interstate mobile phone snatching gang, 9 held



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Berhampur, July 22:** In a major crackdown Wednesday night, Ganjam police busted an interstate mobile phone snatching gang and arrested nine persons in this connection. The police caught the gang members during a routine patrolling which was being carried out on NH-16 in this district.

According to police sources, the nine arrested are history-sheeters and were previously involved in a number of mobile phone snatching

incidents that targeted elderly persons in crowded areas.

During the patrolling, the local police team intercepted an auto-rickshaw. Following a thorough search, police seized the three-wheeler, a country-made revolver with three cartridges, three bombs, swords and iron rods along with 32 stolen mobile phones.

Berhampur sub-divisional police officer (SDPO) Bishnu Pati said that eight of the arrested belong to Sahibganj district of neighbouring Jharkhand and one hails from Bhubaneswar. The snatchers had been staying at a hotel in Bhubaneswar for the last several days. They had come to Berhampur July 17 to commit crime, Pati added.

As many as 10 out of the 32 seized mobile phones were snatched from different areas of Berhampur and Hinjili between July 17 and 18. Police have registered a case in this connection and launched a probe which is underway to find out involvement of others, if any, Pati informed.



People feeding hungry monkeys on roadside while travelling through a forested area in Rayagada, Thursday

OP PHOTO

# Doorstep schooling for kids deprived of online edu

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhanjanagar, July 22:** Students of the Government Elementary Teacher Education Institution (ETEI) here spare two hours a day to teach students of primary schools in remote areas of the state, who were deprived of online classes during the Covid-19 pandemic, a report said.

This is being done as part of a joint collaboration between the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

As many as 174 students of the institution pursuing their career in diploma in elementary education are teaching 1727 kids deprived of online education two hours a day.

Among them, 291 are from scheduled caste while 285 are from scheduled tribe. The students are teach-



ing the kids as part of the project.

The students pursuing their training in ETEI reach out to primary school students in far-flung areas, who do not have facility for online education and teach them near their houses as part of their internship.

Since uncertainty looms over reopening of schools and holding of

physical classes, one trainee student will be engaged for at least 10 school students for the doorstep schooling. The programme is being implemented under the direct supervision of their principal Bamadev Tripathy. The trainees visit the villages that lack internet connectivity to teach students near their houses by following

**T**HE CHILDREN BELONGING TO POOR FAMILIES ARE UNABLE TO BUY MOBILE PHONES WHILE NETWORK CONNECTIVITY IS AN ISSUE AT MANY PLACES. AS A RESULT, MANY STUDENTS FAIL TO AVAIL BENEFITS OF ONLINE EDUCATION

**R**EALISING THE GRAVITY OF THE SITUATION, NCERT AND UNICEF DECIDED TO ENGAGE THE STUDENTS IN IDENTIFYING THE KIDS IN NEED OF CLASSROOM COACHING AND IMPART LESSONS TO THEM, JULY 15

Covid-19-appropriate behaviour.

Sources said students of state run schools are being imparted coaching in their subjects through online method, YouTube and through classes telecast in Doordarshan.

The children belonging to poor families are unable to buy mobile phones while network connectivity

is an issue at many places. As a result, many students face a lot of problem in availing online education.

Given such situation, NCERT and UNICEF decided to engage the students in identifying the kids in need of classroom coaching and impart lessons to them, July 15. The students pursuing diploma in elementary education were roped in and asked to spare two hours a day in teaching the kids. Each trainee student identifies 10 to 15 students and impart lessons to them.

However, at many places the trainees find it difficult in identifying the kids. Reports said even outstation trainees implement the project in their respective areas. Jyotirani Bishoyi, a trainee from Mumbai and Ponderarani Badatya from Srikakulam district of Andhra Pradesh, teach both Odia and non-Odia kids in their respective areas.



## STOCK TAKING

Officials of Koraput district administration taking stock of the situation at Neredibalsa village of Kotia panchayat. The visit came a day after officials from Andhra Pradesh distributed land pattas to local residents

OP PHOTO

# Bike-lifting gang busted in Rayagada; 4 arrested

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Gunupur, July 22:** Police busted a bike-lifting gang in Gunupur area of Rayagada district and recovered 10 bikes from their possession, sources said Thursday. The police arrested four members of the gang late Wednesday night. The accused were identified as Bidyadhar Dhoba, Devendra Goudali, Dipu Sabar and Chitanag Bansh. Bike lifting cases were being reported at the locality here at regular intervals for the past few days.

Acting on a tip-off, Gunupur police led by sub-divisional police officer (SDPO) Ajay Kumar Barik conducted raids Wednesday night at a place and arrested the four. As many as ten bikes were recovered from their possession.

**ZONAL OFFICE: BHUBANESWAR ZONE**  
Star House, 1/10, Jayadev Vihar, Nayapalli,  
Bhubaneswar-751015, Tel: 0674 - 2362251/2362246,  
Email: zo.bhubaneswar@bankofindia.co.in

## REQUIREMENT OF PREMISES

Detailed notification inviting offers for premises for our **Mahanadi Vihar Branch**, Dist.: Cuttack, Odisha are available in our website [www.bankofindia.co.in](http://www.bankofindia.co.in). Prescribed format for submission of offer may be obtained up to **2.00 P.M. of 05.08.2021** from our office at above address. Alternatively, the format can be downloaded from our website. Last date for submission of offer is up to **5.00 P.M. on 05.08.2021** at Zonal Office, Bhubaneswar.

Zonal Manager, Bhubaneswar Zone

No.O-465 **GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA**  
**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER**  
**RURAL WORKS DIVISION, PHULBANI**  
Phone-06842-253708, E-mail: [rw\\_phulbani@yahoo.co.in](mailto:rw_phulbani@yahoo.co.in)  
No. 3274/RWDP, Dated the 14.07.2021

**Government of Odisha e-Procurement Notice**  
**Bid Identification No. Online Tender/03/ERWD PHULBANI/ 2021-22**

1. Name of the work : Road Works (4Nos.)
2. Estimated cost : Rs. 6.96 Lakhs to Rs. 17.40 Lakhs
3. Period of Completion : 2 (Two) Calendar Months
4. Date & Time of availability of : From 26.07.2021 to Bid documents in the Portal 05.08.2021
5. Last Date/ Time for receipt of : 05.08.2021 up to 5.00 PM Bids in the Portal
6. Name and address of the : Executive Engineer, Rural Officer Inviting Bid Works Division, Phulbani

Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal website <https://tenders.ori.nic.in/nicgep/app>  
**Executive Engineer, Rural Works Division, Phulbani**  
OIPR-25077/11/0003/2122

**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA**  
**DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES**  
Office of the Superintending Engineer, Mechanical Circle (Med.I.P.), Hiraakud  
Email Address: [semec-eicwr.od@nic.in](mailto:semec-eicwr.od@nic.in)

e-Procurement Notice - Bid Identification No.-SEMC/MDRGL/06/2021-22 No.A-315:-


01. Name of the work : Mechanical Gate Works
02. No. of works : 01 (One)
03. Category of executors : SSI Units registered under DIC / NSIC / MSME for Irrigation Shutters/ Hydro Mechanical Gates
04. Bid identification No. : SEMC / MDRGL / 06/ 2021-22
05. Estimated cost : Rs. 17.10.920.00 (Excluding GST)
06. Period of completion : Two calendar months
07. Date & time of availability : From Dt.28.07.2021 (10.00 A.M.) to of bid documents in the portal Dt.07.08.2021 (5.30 P.M.)
08. Last date / time for receipt : Dt.07.08.2021 (Upto 5.30 P.M.) of bids in the portal
09. Date and place of : Dt.09.08.2021 (12.00 Noon onwards in the O/o the undersigned) opening of bids
10. Name of the Officer : The Superintending Engineer, Mechanical Circle (Med. I.P.), Hiraakud, Dist.- Sambalpur

Further details as well as any corrigendum can be seen only from the e-procurement portal <https://tendersodisha.gov.in>.  
**Sd./- Superintending Engineer, Mechanical Circle (Med. I.P.)**  
**Hiraakud, Dist.: Sambalpur**  
OIPR-32403/11/0002/2122



“Life is life - whether in a cat, or dog or man. There is no difference there between a cat or a man. The idea of difference is a human conception for man's own advantage.”

SRI AUROBINDO



# What if US delists Chinese firms?

Chinese firms are more enthusiastic than most about listing on US stock exchanges. Currently, 250 companies, including those that are registered in Hong Kong or offshore centers but derive most of their revenue and profits from mainland China, trade on US equity markets. But a recent flurry of official measures in both China and the United States suggests that the two governments are not keen on Chinese firms retaining their US listings. If push comes to shove, how would delisting hurt either country?

The latest controversy concerns the dominant Chinese ride-hailing platform Didi Global (partly owned by Uber), which on June 30 raised \$4.4 billion in a successful IPO on the New York Stock Exchange. Within 48 hours, the Cyberspace Administration of China (CAC), citing a suspected data-security breach, announced that it would restrict the company's ability to sign up new users. The CAC then ordered the removal of Didi from all domestic Chinese app stores, and the State Administration of Market Regulation, the country's antitrust authority, fined the firm for not obtaining prior approval for earlier mergers and acquisitions.

The penalties imposed on Didi – widely interpreted as a warning to other Chinese companies against listing in the US without government approval – partly reflect three concerns among Chinese policymakers. The authorities are worried that sensitive digital data, including the location of (and traffic flows around) important addresses in China, may fall into the hands of the US intelligence or Defense communities. They also do not want Chinese technology firms to become too large and powerful, and fear that Big Tech companies' forays into financial markets may undermine financial stability.

I suspect that the Chinese authorities have a fourth reason: to reduce US leverage. In the last days of his administration, President Donald Trump signed America's Holding Foreign Companies Accountable Act. The new law authorises the delisting of Chinese companies from US stock exchanges if China fails to allow the US Public Company Accounting Oversight Board (PCAOB) to obtain the underlying worksheets of these firms' auditors after three consecutive years. And on June 22, the US Senate passed another Bill that could bring delisting forward by one year.

If the US has the option of delisting Chinese firms en masse and in a disorderly manner at a time of its choosing, it could potentially use it to generate financial and economic instability in China. The Chinese authorities may, therefore, find it prudent to reduce or eliminate this vulnerability.

US lawmakers' ostensible reason for threatening to delist Chinese companies is to protect American investors from potential accounting frauds such as the one committed by Luckin Coffee last year. But US investors have lost much more money as a result of accounting scandals at US companies such as Enron, WorldCom, HealthSouth, Freddie Mac, American International Group, and Lehman Brothers, some of which took place after the PCAOB was established. Moreover, Chinese firms' most egregious accounting frauds tend to be discovered by professional short-sellers using techniques – such as undercover company visits – that auditing firms do not employ.

Chinese authorities once tacitly encouraged US listings, viewing them as a symbol of China's embrace of the global capital market. Many Chinese technology firms also had little alternative to listing in the US before 2018. But the situation today is different.

Previously, many Chinese firms chose to list in New York instead of Shanghai or Shenzhen because their foreign private-equity or venture-capital investors wanted to avoid China's foreign-exchange controls. Moreover, China has much tougher listing requirements and a long and uncertain waiting period for regulatory approval. For example, Amazon and Facebook would not have been allowed to list in China at the time of their US IPOs because they did not have the requisite profits.

Similarly, although Hong Kong imposes no capital controls, it also had stricter listing requirements than the US until 2018. In particular, while the US allows different classes of shares to have different voting rights – as is the case with Alibaba and Didi, for example – Hong Kong required voting rights and financial stakes to be exactly aligned. Most countries regard a divergence between voting rights and cash-flow rights as facilitating bad corporate governance, because it potentially allows controlling shareholders to enrich themselves through self-dealing at the expense of other investors.

But after seeing so many Chinese companies choosing New York, the Hong Kong Stock Exchange decided to allow US-style multiple share classes for technology and life-sciences firms. More Chinese firms have since listed in Hong Kong, or have a dual listing there and in New York. Tencent, China's biggest social-media company, was first traded in Hong Kong before adding a secondary listing in New York, and currently commands a higher price-to-earnings multiple than Facebook, its closest US counterpart.

This suggests that the effects of delisting US-traded Chinese firms may be manageable for both China and America. China, as a high-savings country and a net exporter of capital, does not need US listings of its companies to import more capital. And while some firms' founders and initial investors may experience a valuation haircut in their IPOs, this does not pose a major challenge to the Chinese government.

Similarly, most US hedge funds, mutual funds, and rich individuals will still be able to invest in Chinese firms listed in Hong Kong, and even – albeit less conveniently and straightforwardly – those listed in mainland China. True, delisting profitable and fast-growing Chinese companies may reduce returns for many middle-class US households whose pension funds are restricted to investing only in US-listed securities, and US stock exchanges will lose business. As ordinary Americans would not connect lower returns on their pension funds to delisting of Chinese firms, US politicians are unlikely to face a backlash. And that fact could make delistings more likely.



Shang-Jin Wei

A recent flurry of official measures in both China and the United States suggests that the two governments are not keen on Chinese firms retaining their US stock-market listings. Moreover, the effects of delisting these often fast-growing companies may be easily manageable for both countries



Daron Acemoglu

THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT'S ACTIONS ARE PART OF A BROADER EFFORT TO DECOUPLE CHINA FROM THE UNITED STATES – A DEVELOPMENT THAT COULD HAVE GRAVE GLOBAL IMPLICATIONS

## FOCUS CHINA

# DANGERS OF DECOUPLING



The challenge today is to achieve a model of peaceful coexistence that allows for competition between incompatible visions of the world and cooperation on geopolitical and climate-related matters. That doesn't mean the West should accept China's human-rights abuses; but nor should it allow itself to fall into a Cold War-style trap

The Chinese government's crackdown on Alibaba last year, and on the ride-hailing company Didi this month, has generated fevered speculation about the future of that country's tech industry. Some view the recent Chinese regulatory interventions as part of a justifiable trend paralleling US authorities' own intensifying scrutiny of Big Tech. Others see it as a play for control of data that might otherwise be exploited by Western countries. And still others, more plausibly, see it as a shot across the bow to remind big Chinese companies that the Communist Party of China is still in charge.

But, most consequentially, the Chinese government's actions are part of a broader effort to decouple China from the United States – a development that could have grave global implications. Despite steady deterioration in Sino-American economic and strategic relations, few thought the rivalry would turn into a Cold War-style geopolitical confrontation. For a time, the US was overly dependent on China, and the two economies were too closely intertwined. Now, we may be heading toward a fundamentally different equilibrium.

Three interrelated dynamics defined the Cold War. The first, and perhaps most important, was ideological rivalry. The US-led West and the Soviet Union had different visions of how the world should be organised, and each tried to propagate its vision, sometimes by nefarious means. There was also a military dimension, illustrated most vividly by a nuclear-arms race. And both blocs were eager to secure the lead in scientific, technological, and economic progress, because they recognised that this was critical to prevailing ideologically and militarily.

While the Soviets eventually proved less successful than the US in driving economic growth, they did chalk up early technological-military victories. The successful launch of the Sputnik satellite served as a wake-up call for the US.

The stark rivalries of the Cold War were possible largely because

the US and the Soviet Union were decoupled. US investments and technological breakthroughs did not automatically flow to the Soviets (except, sometimes, through espionage) in the way that they have with China in recent decades.

But now, Sino-American hostilities, exacerbated by Donald Trump's incoherent diplomacy, have created modern analogs of the Cold War rivalries. The ideological rift, which was not even on the horizon 20 years ago, is now well defined, with the West extolling the virtues of democracy (warts and all) while China confidently pushes its authoritarian model around the world, especially in Asia and Africa.

At the same time, China has opened new military fronts, not least in the South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait. And, of course, the economic and technological rivalry has been escalating over the past decade, with both sides concluding that they are in an existential race to achieve dominance in artificial intelligence. Although this focus on AI may be misguided, there is little doubt that mastery of digital technologies, bioscience, advanced electronics, and semiconductors is of paramount importance.

Some observers have welcomed

China-US collaboration. Moreover, commentators nowadays tend to downplay the Cold War's tremendous costs. If the West now lacks credibility when advocating human rights and democracy – including in Hong Kong and China – that is not only because of a generation of disastrous military interventions in the Middle East. During the years when the US thought that it was locked in an existential conflict with the Soviets, it toppled democratically elected governments in Iran (1953) and Guatemala (1954), and supported vicious dictators like Joseph Mobutu in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Augusto Pinochet in Chile.

It is an equally grave mistake to think that the Cold War fostered international stability. On the contrary, the nuclear arms race and brinkmanship on both sides prepared the ground for war. The Cuban Missile Crisis was hardly the only time that the US and the Soviets came close to open conflict (and “mutually assured destruction”). There were also close calls in 1973, during the Yom Kippur War; in 1983, when Soviet early-alert systems sent a false alarm about a US intercontinental ballistic missile launch; and on other occasions.

The challenge today is to achieve a model of peaceful coexistence that allows for competition between incompatible visions of the world and cooperation on geopolitical and climate-related matters. That doesn't mean the West should accept China's human-rights abuses or abandon its allies in Asia; but nor should it allow itself to fall into a Cold War-style trap. A principled foreign policy should still be possible, especially if Western governments allow their civil societies to lead the scrutiny of China's abuses at home and abroad.

The writer, Professor of Economics at MIT, is co-author of *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity and Poverty* and *The Narrow Corridor: States, Societies, and the Fate of Liberty*.

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## SPECTRUM KASHMIR

# Why are Sikhs of Kashmir angry?

Javed Beigh

THE RECENT CONTROVERSY OVER ALLEGED CASES OF FORCED CONVERSION AND MARRIAGE OF SIKH GIRLS HAS RUPTURED THE CORDIAL RELATION BETWEEN KASHMIRI MUSLIMS AND SIKH COMMUNITIES

Kashmir has historically been a multireligious society, where Kashmiri Muslims, Kashmiri Hindu Pandits and Kashmiri Sikhs have lived with each other for centuries maintaining cordial, harmonious and brotherly relationship. Sikhs of Kashmir, who actually are not historically from Punjab but are believed to be Brahmin and Rajput converts from neighbouring Jammu region and even Kashmir valley are very much an integral part of Kashmiri society.

After the exodus of the Kashmiri Hindu Pandits, the Sikhs of Kashmir are now the largest religious minority of Kashmir Valley. The bond between Kashmiri Sikh and Kashmiri Muslim communities is as old as the history of Kashmir. The Kashmir valley is home to some of the most important and sacred gurdwaras located in Srinagar and Baramulla cities. So why did the Sikh community of Kashmir suddenly up in arms?

The recent controversy over alleged cases of forced conversion and marriage of Sikh girls has not only been widely publicised and politicised, but it has also ruptured the cordial relation between Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri

Sikhs. The problem lies in the fact that Kashmir's majority Muslim population loves to remain in complete denial of how their image is perceived outside Kashmir valley but sooner or later they are confronted with the bitter reality, which is never debated or resolved and, therefore, the problem continues to persist.

Regardless of what the majority Muslim population of Kashmir may think about themselves, the fact is that Kashmir valley is not only a conflict region but is also recognised as one of the most radical Muslim enclaves of the world, where religious minorities (Kashmiri Pandits and Sikhs) have been persecuted for their religious beliefs. No one outside Kashmir believes in the so called “Jagmohan” conspiracy theory for facilitating forced exodus of Kashmir's largest religious minority of Kashmiri Hindu Pandits. The dark episode of 1989 of the forced and violent exodus of Kashmiri Pandits has remained a biggest blot on the former secular credential of Kashmir's majority community.

The subsequent rise of religious radicalism, orthodoxy, social conservatism and proliferation of puritan Islamic school of thoughts

has further dented the image of Kashmir as an enclave of moderate, tolerant, secular Muslims, who followed their own unique syncretic Sufi Islam called “Rishiyyat” that was an amalgamation of Central Asian Sufi traditions and Kashmir's own Hindu Shaivism.

I have been regularly hearing stories of Muslim community pressure on Sikhs to convert to Islam, which happens both expressly and indirectly. It is a fact that Kashmiri Sikh girls are special target of religious harassment. My Sikh friends would regularly tell me how their Muslim acquaintances would ridicule their faith and practices and would encourage them to visit mosques and learn about Islam. Kashmiri Sikh girls would be pressured to be “girlfriends” with Muslim boys. Few years back a Kashmiri Sikh girl was stabbed over her refusal to wear hijab. The Sikh community of Kashmir, which already knows about the misery of Kashmiri Pandit community, has been living in fear. They know that their presence is misused to exhibit an example of secular credential of Kashmiri Muslims but they can't say anything due to fear of being stuck in an overwhelmingly

Muslim majority region, where they have substantial financial and economic interests.

Sikhs in Kashmir are angry because they have been facing and quietly suffering the religiously driven onslaught of converting to Islam for a long time, accelerated by the rise of the new generation of radicalised, orthodox puritan Muslims of Kashmir. These radical Muslims don't even spare Sufi Islam following Kashmiri Muslims and regularly taunt and harass them of following a “corrupt” faith and indulging in “shirk” and “biddah” and worshipping graves, one can only imagine the plight of Sikh minority, who can't even express their misery and suffering that they endure on daily basis out of fear of their security. The latest incident, even though politicised by a Sikh politician from Delhi has finally broken the patience of Sikh community of Kashmir Valley and emboldened them to tell their tale of suffocation and suffering.

The writer is a political leader and is state secretary of *People's Democratic Front*. Views expressed are personal. IANS

# Letters

## TO THE EDITOR

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

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

## Quality of school education

Sir, The news, “1,000 schools either merged or shut” published in the Orissa POST July 10, 2021, has attracted the attention of the people of Odisha. On this issue, the logic given by the government is unscientific. Why is the number of students in government schools slowly declining? Of course, the standard is lower quality. Without improving the quality of education, existing schools are being closed. The government argues that schools will be merged with nearby government schools to provide quality education to students. What is the quality of education where they will go? In a democracy, the right to free education is the right of every person, and this right is guaranteed by our Constitution. The initiative will help pave the way for opening of private schools. If private schools replace government schools, children from poor households will be deprived of education due to inability to pay fees, especially students in tribal-dominated areas. Odisha is a poor state where the struggle for 100% education is still going on. The question is how to bring back students who have moved from government schools to private schools after the government's new decision. This is reason why the Orissa High Court has cancelled the school amalgamation guidelines issued by the state government. It is in fact a historic decision in the field of education, which has reassured the general public and the poor; as the state government's decision to close or merge government schools was anti-people. This policy resulted in the exclusion of thousands of students from education.

Asit Mohanty, JAJPUR

## Political swamis

Sir, Lingayat swamis in Karnataka, as in the past, are backing Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa even as pressures are mounting against him to stay in the power: With the Assembly election just less than two years away from now, the revolt against him is more politically motivated than to serve the interest of the public. What is intriguing is that the Lingyat swamis are unnecessarily poking their nose in the politically muddied water. Politics must be left to politicians. The interference of the swamis in the political arena is setting a bad precedence for others to do caste politics. The role of swamis is to work for the betterment of the people and indulge in religious activities, but not to meddle in the political activities. The Assembly members must be given the choice of electing their leaders. Caste should not come in the way.

KV Seetharamaiah, HASSAN

## WISDOM CORNER

“You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself any direction you choose.”  
DR. SEUSS

“I've missed more than 9000 shots in my career. I've lost almost 300 games. 26 times I've been trusted to take the game winning shot and missed. I've failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed.”  
MICHAEL JORDAN

“The two most important days in your life are the day you are born and the day you find out why.”  
MARK TWAIN



AUCTION OF GANDHALPADA MINE IN THE OFFING

Locals fear sal forest extinction, livelihood loss

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Keonjhar, July 22:** In the wake of reports that 11 iron ore mines in the state will be auctioned in August, large scale tree felling is feared to happen around Gandhalpada iron ore mine. It is estimated that nine lakh sal trees and herbal plants will be cleared.

According to reports, Gandhalpada iron block and Kasia iron and dolomite mines are under Joda mining circle. Over 100 iron, manganese and dolomite mines are operational in the district.

However, many mines are inoperative as they fail to deliver minerals as per allotted quantities. It is alleged that forest and environment of the district has already taken a heavy beating owing to mining and mineral transportation.

Gandhalpada will face adverse ecological impact due to upcoming mining activities. Gandhalpada



ECO- CONCERN

Many mines are inoperative as they fail to deliver minerals as per allotted quantities. It is alleged that forest and environment of the district has already taken a heavy beating owing to mining and mineral transportation

Gandhalpada will face adverse ecological impact due to upcoming mining activities. Gandhalpada mine at Guali panchayat is rich with sal forest

Environmentalists observed that the sprawling forest area has been a source of livelihood for thousands of local people, especially tribal communities living around it. Their livelihood will be adversely affected by the mining

mine at Guali panchayat is rich with sal forest. Recently, a notification was put out seeking auction of the mines, triggering concern by local people and environmentalists over possible felling of sal trees and its adverse impact on the local ecology.

Gandhalpada mine is spread over 2.24 square/km while an area

of 2.12 square/km is identified as mineral reserve. The area bordering on Sundargarh is just 1 km from NH-215.

An area of 241.558 hectares of land will be leased out for mining, out of which 181.461 hectares are forest area. As per an assessment, the area has a reserve of 314.37 million tonnes of iron ores while 262.69 mil-

lion tonnes are of high grade iron ore. Environmentalists observed that the sprawling forest area has been a source of livelihood for thousands of local people, especially tribal communities living around it. Their livelihood will be adversely affected by the mining, they added. It was roughly estimated that about 9 lakh sal trees will be felled to

A fresh bid to auction the mines in the virgin forest land has stoked resentment among locals.

It is alleged that after the auction of the mines, lease holders and some influential local people make big bucks from the mining and mineral transportation at the cost of the local tribals who lose their livelihood and get nothing in return. They lead their life from daily wages, it is said, but mining in their area fetches them only adverse implications from forest clearing, it was alleged.

Salil Behera, the joint director of the Joda mining circle, said that the government had decided to auction the mine on a proposal.

As for the issue, DFO Swayam Mallick said as per rules, permission of the forest department is taken. "Besides, survey of trees in the proposed mine area is conducted before the auction while environment impact assessment is also carried out," he observed.

Newborn girl found abandoned in Angul

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Angul, July 22:** An abandoned newborn girl was rescued from Ragadipadia village under Bantala police limits in Angul district Thursday.

According to sources, a local woman identified as Shanti Naik from Ragadipadia village had gone to a nearby nullah to dispose of household waste where she heard the cries of a baby. Following the direction where the crying sound was coming from, she reached a bush and found the newborn girl wrapped in clothes. She rescued the child and took it to her house.

At the time of filing of this report, neither the police nor Childline officials reached the village to provide assistance or medical care to the newborn. Meanwhile, Shanti has since been providing maternal care to her. Some locals said that the child was abandoned because of her gender; others suggested it to be a case of an unwed motherhood. The mother abandoned her child owing to social stigma.

Coming soon: Aradi science park

GOVT HAS SANCTIONED ₹6 CRORE FOR THE PROJECT IN FIRST PHASE



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Aradi, July 22:** The state government has taken a host of developmental projects for Akhandalamani Peetha in Bhadrak to boost tourism. The latest thing added to the list is a science park to be set up at Kuleipada near Aradi. The government has given its nod to the project.

According to reports, the science park will come up on five acres while ₹6 crore has been allocated for the project in the first phase. Meanwhile, a tender has been floated for it.

According to the district administration, more land and funds will be provided for the park project in the next phases.

A team of officials comprising

Collector Gyanaranjan Das, sub-collector, a senior assistant of the science and technology department and others, took stock of the project Thursday

Collector Gyanaranjan Das, sub-collector, a senior assistant of the science and technology department, Chandbali tehsildar, the project director of NCCP (GoI) and Aradi revenue inspector took stock of the project at the village Thursday.

The officials revealed that construction work of the project will be started in August.

Notably, the project was announced by the state government two years ago, but conversion of land took time.

POLLUTION WOES



Women stage protests by blocking a road against operation of stone crushing units in Harbhanga block of Boudh district, Thursday

OP PHOTO

Woman's naked body recovered in Barbil

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Barbil, July 22:** Police recovered the naked body of a woman who went missing since July 18 from Karakhendara jungle under Barbil police limits in Keonjhar district Thursday.

The police identified her as a resident of Nalanda locality.

According to sources, the woman went missing July 18. Her family members launched a frantic search for her at every possible place but did not find her. Local residents first spotted the body lying naked in the jungle. They immediately informed the police. The police reached the spot. The family members also reached the spot and identified the deceased. The cops sent the body for postmortem.

Registering a case, they have launched an investigation. According to local residents, the deceased might have been murdered by miscreants after sexual assault.

However, the police said they could say something about the cause of the death only after receiving the post mortem report.



No defence for Talcher Civil Defence Organisation office

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Talcher, July 22:** The Civil Defence Organisation office set up in Angul district's mineral-rich Talcher town in 1981 is lying neglected without any officers and staff except for a night watchman.

Like policemen, fire services personnel and Odisha Disaster Rapid Action Force (ODRAF), the trained civil defence volunteers are expected to come to the rescue of people in times of crisis such as natural calamities, emergencies or war-like situations. If required, they are also expected to help police in maintaining law and order situation. With these objectives, the central and state governments jointly started the Civil Defence Organisation.

In Talcher town, an office of Civil Defence Organisation was set up in 1981. A total of 1,513 volunteers were inducted after their training. However, the office, as well as volunteers, have long been neglected. They don't receive assistance from the government. Barring a night watchman, the Civil Defence Organisation office does not have any officers or staff.

The state government took an initiative to set up the office of Civil Defence Organisation in Talcher



town as the town has important of fices such as MCL, NTPC, TTPS and Heavy Water Plant among others.

When it was set up, the office was considered Category-II Civil Defence town office. Later it was upgraded to Category-I (A) Civil Defence Town office and subsequently to Category-I Civil Defence Town office.

A total of 1,513 volunteers were

trained to protect the lives and properties during war and emergencies. Besides, they were trained to tackle natural disasters such as cyclone and flood. Moreover, they were expected to assist the police in maintaining law and order during festivals such as Rath Yatra, Hingula Yatra and other functions.

There should have been a CDI, an SSI, a junior clerk, a peon, a

IN A SHAMBLES

The trained civil defence volunteers like police and paramilitary personnel are expected to come to the rescue of people in times of crisis such as natural calamities, emergencies or war-like situations

In Talcher town, an office of Civil Defence Organisation was set up in 1981. A total of 1,513 volunteers were inducted after their training but the office, as well as volunteers, have long been neglected

A total of 1,513 volunteers were trained to protect the lives and properties during war and emergencies. They were also expected to tackle natural disasters such as cyclone and flood and assist police in maintaining law and order during festivals such as Rath Yatra, Hingula Yatra and other functions

bike rider and a night watchman in this office. After lying vacant for 11 years, a CDI was appointed in 2016. He retired in April, 2018 and the CDI post has since been lying vacant.

A clerk had somehow been managing the scene, but after his transfer, the office now seems to have lost its identity. The office doesn't have

the required equipment for the volunteers to use at the time of need.

For this office, Angul district Collector is the controller and the Sub-Collector is the deputy controller. However, with the office not having a permanent deputy controller, its activities are being seriously hampered. Further, nobody seems to be concerned about the earnings of volunteers.

Gyana Ranjan Das, a volunteer, said the office is a Category-I Civil Defence Town office. While volunteers feel encouraged, the government hardly thinks about it. Both central and state governments should take necessary steps in this regard, he added.

Sharing a similar sentiment, volunteers Bauri Bandhu Bej and Srinibas Sethy said the office has been kept in a state of neglect. With the volunteers not being assigned tasks, their earning has come to zilch.

When contacted, Talcher Sub-Collector Biswaranjan Rath said he has informed the Collector about the state of affairs of the office.

In this regard, Collector Siddharth Shankar Swain said, "I will find out why no appointment has been made and then I will take steps for filling up the vacancies."

Brown sugar worth ₹20L seized, one held



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Jaleswar, July 22:** In a major breakthrough, excise officials seized brown sugar worth ₹20 lakh and arrested a peddler on NH-60 near Chalanti in Jaleswar Thursday.

Acting on intelligence inputs about the drug trafficking, excise superintendent Asaf Alli had directed officials for a raid in the area.

A five-member excise team was doing patrolling in the area when they intercepted a youth in suspicious circumstances. On checking, excise officials recovered 200 gm of brown sugar worth ₹20 lakh from him and arrested him. The accused was identified as Sanjay Kumar Singh (31) of Baripada in Mayurbhanj district. A bike was seized from him. A case was registered against him.

LIVESTOCK SAFETY



Chilika Wildlife Division organises a vaccination camp for livestock at Balugaon in Khurda

OP PHOTO

LOWER SUKTEL IRRIGATION PROJECT

Ensure ration, housing for oustees: MLA

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bolangir, July 22:** Loisingha MLA Mukesh Mahaling took stock of the progress of the Lower Suktel Large Irrigation Project at the departmental guesthouse here. Project director, relocation & rehabilitation Mahendra Kumar Mahapatra, special land-acquisition officer Kumar Nagabhushan and executive engineer S Bhoi were present at the meeting.

Dr Mahaling examined the eviction and the relocation process in the affected villages of Pardhiapali, Koindapali and Khuntapali.

Sources said no rehabilitation colony has been constructed for the displaced people. As a result of which ousted families are moving around by their own efforts. Repeated requests not to displace the families during the rainy season have fallen on deaf ears. No one



FILE PHOTO

has an answer to how the displaced people are staying. If this is the scenario from the beginning of the relocation process, what condition will arise later, Dr Mahaling asked the officials.

Free ration was being provided to the villagers of Pardhiapali, Koindapali and Khuntapali under

the food security schemes. Families that have been already evicted stay at different places. "Has the administration taken any steps in this regard to provide them ration and pensions such as old-age pension," asked the MLA.

There are a number of landless, differently-abled and poor indi-

viduals among the displaced. He urged the administration to take necessary steps to ensure their compensation, rehabilitation and livelihood.

He urged the officials to take proper measures to provide them with the food security and pension schemes. The displaced have been deprived of the benefits of the PMAY scheme. He sought inclusion of eligible beneficiaries on a priority basis.

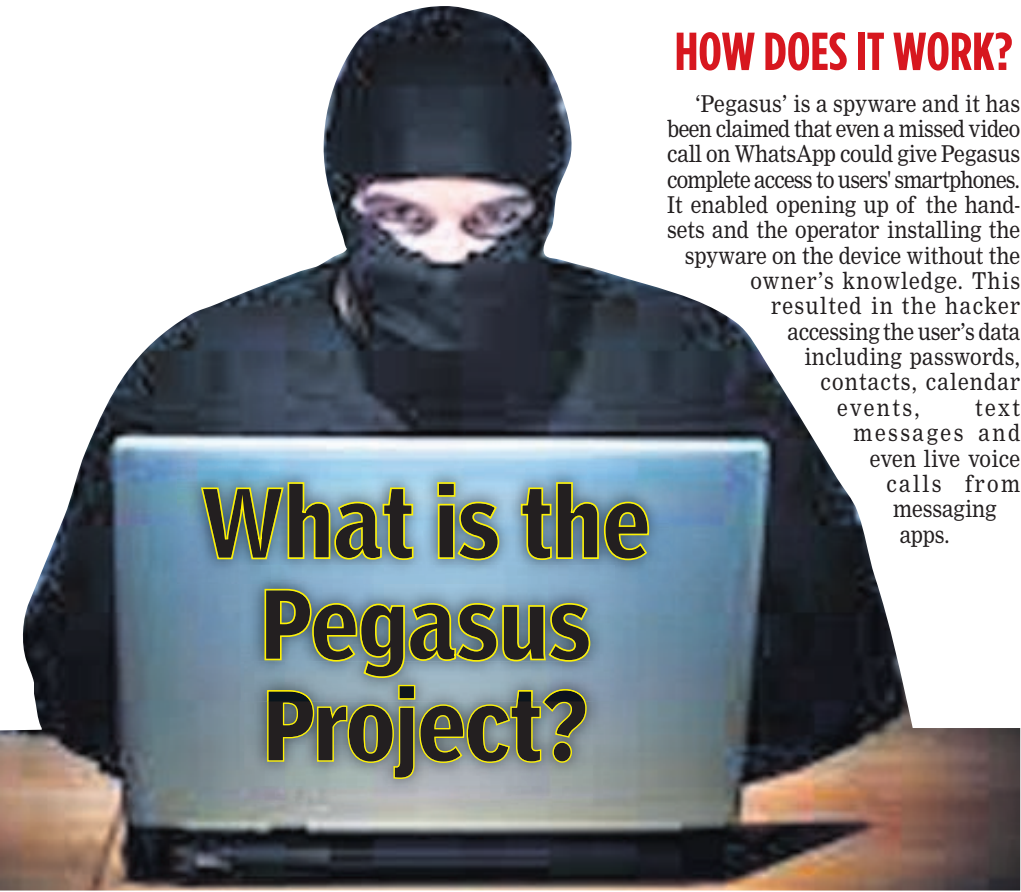
He asked the officials to build the model colony as soon as possible and undertake steps to ensure their rehabilitation and livelihood. He also reviewed the construction of the dam and the pressur pipe canal system. He suggested the authorities take measures so that maximum number of villages get irrigation facility. The officials said steps will be taken to execute the inputs from the MLA.





# YOU ARE BEING WATCHED

Pegasus is reportedly a highly invasive tool that can switch on a target's phone camera and microphone, as well as access data on the device. Israel's NSO Group, which is at the heart of the alleged state surveillance of thousands of human rights activists, lawyers, journalists, politicians, and dissidents in various countries including India, has built such a tool — Pegasus. A number of prominent Indian politicians including Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, journalists, activists and government critics are suspected to be potential targets of the spyware. **Orissa POST** takes a close look at this global issue



## HOW DOES IT WORK?

'Pegasus' is a spyware and it has been claimed that even a missed video call on WhatsApp could give Pegasus complete access to users' smartphones. It enabled opening up of the handsets and the operator installing the spyware on the device without the owner's knowledge. This resulted in the hacker accessing the user's data including passwords, contacts, calendar events, text messages and even live voice calls from messaging apps.

## What is the Pegasus Project?

**F**orbidden Stories and Amnesty International had access to a list of tens of thousands of phone numbers worldwide that were potentially targeted by Pegasus spyware, and shared it with media organisations from different countries. While Forbidden Stories oversaw the investigation, called the Pegasus Project, Amnesty's International's Security Lab provided forensic analyses and technical support during the probe.

Pegasus is spyware owned by NSO Group, an Israeli technology firm. It enables the remote surveillance of smartphones, secretly unlocks the contents of a target's mobile phone and transforms it into a listening device. The firm claims the spyware is sold exclu-

sively to "vetted governments" around the world to combat "terrorism" and other serious crimes. The company, which does not confirm the identity of its customers, has termed the Pegasus Project's findings "exaggerated and baseless". Though the Indian govern-



ment has not accepted so far whether any of its agencies is using the spyware, the investigation suggests the widespread and continuing abuse of the hacking spyware in the country. Indian news website *The Wire*, along with *The Guardian* and *The Washington Post* Monday reported that most of the politicians including Rahul Gandhi, were targeted in the run-up to the 2019 national elections, which saw Narendra Modi return to power with a bigger majority than in 2014.

The expose has caused a major political controversy in India with the Congress calling Modi's right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) the "Bharatiya Jasoos Party" — "jasoos" means a spy in Hindi — and accusing it of listening to people's "bedroom conversations".

Pegasus exploits undiscovered vulnerabilities, or bugs, in Android and iOS

Once installed on a phone, Pegasus can intercept and steal more or less any information on it, including SMS, contacts, call history, calendars, emails and browsing histories

## ESSENTIAL DIGITAL SECURITY TIPS

- DON'T IGNORE UPDATES**  
Frequently updating your phone or laptop system and keeps them secure.
- USE A PASSWORD MANAGER**  
It generates passwords that are hard to guess and stores them in encrypted form.
- DOUBLE UP**  
Enable two-factor authentication when you can.
- GET ORGANISED**  
Delete accounts you no longer use. Review your privacy settings on sites like Google and Facebook.
- SECURE YOUR PHONE**  
Choose a complex screen look like an 8-digit pin or alphanumeric code. Make sure you can recover accounts if you loose your phone.
- USE A VPN APP**  
A VPN will help protect your online activities when accessing public WiFi networks.
- CHOOSE APPS CAREFULLY**  
Only download them from the official app store.
- THINK BEFORE YOU CLICK**  
SMS and email attachments could contain malware.

The maker of the powerful spy software says blaming the company is like "criticising a car manufacturer when a drunk driver crashes"

## SNOOPING SCANDAL

# Democracy in India hanging by a thread

OPPOSITION ACCUSES PM OF COMPROMISING NATIONAL SECURITY FOLLOWING REVELATIONS THAT DOZENS OF INDIANS WERE POTENTIAL TARGETS OF SNOOPING BY THE ISRAELI-MADE SPYWARE

**T**he Indian government has found itself at the heart of a spyware scandal that has sent seismic waves across the entire political world.

More than 300 Indian phone numbers were among nearly 50,000 selected worldwide as being of possible interest to clients of the Israel-based NSO Group, maker of the spyware. The leaked database was shared with *Le Monde*, *The Guardian*, *Washington Post*, *Die Zeit*, *Sueddeutsche Zeitung* and 10 other global news organizations as part of the investigation known as the Pegasus Project.

In India, numbers belonged to politicians, dozens of journalists, activists, businessmen, a Supreme Court judge and even two ministers in Narendra Modi's government, according to the news website *The Wire*, which was part of the global investigation. Former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi, BJP ministers Ashwini Vaishnaw and Prahlad Singh Patel, as also former election commissioner Ashok Lavasa and poll strategist Prashant Kishor were among those whose phone numbers were listed as potential targets for hacking.



### PM ACCUSED OF 'TREASON'

India's main opposition Congress party has accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of "treason" and compromising national security following revelations that dozens of Indians were potential targets of snooping by an Israeli-made spyware. "Why is this government snooping on its own citizens, including many who are going about their own lawful business? The firm claims the spyware is sold exclusively to vetted governments around the world to combat terrorism and other serious crimes. This is very

serious," Congress MP Shashi Tharoor said. So far, forensic analyses performed 22 Indian smartphones, whose numbers appeared on the list, showed that at least 10 were targeted with Pegasus spyware, seven of them successfully.

Soon after the report came to light, pandemonium broke out in parliament, with proceedings disrupted and opposition parties demanding that an independent inquiry be set up. The government went on the defensive, calling it a "fishing expedition," and refused to set up an independent investigation after claiming that it was not

involved in the surveillance. Home Affairs Minister Amit Shah released a statement in which he attacked Congress and various international organisations, calling them "obstructors" and "disrupters" whose only aim was to humiliate India on the world stage.

### BRIEF HISTORY OF PEGASUS

**2016:** Researchers at Canadian cybersecurity organisation *The Citizen Lab* first encountered Pegasus on a smartphone of human rights activist Ahmed Mansoor.

**September 2018:** The Citizen Lab published a report that identified 45 countries in which Pegasus was being used. As with the latest revelations, the list included India.

**October 2019:** WhatsApp revealed that journalists and human rights activists in India had been targets of surveillance by operators using Pegasus.

**July 2021:** The Pegasus Project, an international investigative journalism effort, revealed that various governments used the software to spy on government officials, opposition politicians, journalists, activists and many others.

## 14 WORLD LEADERS IN LEAKED DATABASE



IMRAN KHAN   EMMANUEL MACRON   KING MOHAMMED VI   CYRIL RAMAPHOSA   BARHAM SALIH

**T**elephone numbers linked to at least 14 heads of states and governments, including French President Emmanuel Macron, Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan and South African President Cyril Ramaphosa are among the 50,000 numbers on a leaked database that includes some people whose phones were targeted for hacking by Pegasus spyware. NSO Group, which counts some 36 governments around the world as its customers, denies the database has anything to do with the company, its spyware or its clients. However, a forensic examination of a cross-section of phones by the Pegasus Project — an international media consortium comprising 17 news organisations, including *The Wire* — found traces

of the deadly spyware on 37 phones on the leaked list.

However, the latest names to emerge from the list indicate that the world's highest political officer-bearers may have been persons of interest to government clients in other countries.

While it is accepted that foreign countries would attempt to eavesdrop on high-level conversations, diplomatic controversy usually erupts when it is publicly aired — like when Germany took umbrage over the US reportedly snooping on Angela Merkel.

As mentioned at the launch of the Pegasus Project, *The Wire* will not be revealing the identity of those numbers which seem to be the subjects of counter-terrorism or state-to-state espionage. But,

along with its international partners, it has made an exception for current and former heads of states and governments.

The phone numbers on the leaked database include at least one king, Morocco's Mohammed VI, three Presidents — France's Emmanuel Macron, Iraq's Barham Salih and South Africa's Cyril Ramaphosa — and three prime ministers — Pakistan's Imran Khan, Egypt's Mostafa Madbouly and Morocco's Saad-Eddine El Othmani — who are still in office.

There are seven former leaders who were selected when they were still in office. They include Lebanon's Saad Hariri, Uganda's Ruhakana Rugunda, Algeria's Noureddine Bedoui and Belgium's Charles Michel.

## Amnesty International stands by Pegasus

**A**mnesty International Thursday said it "categorically stands" by the findings of the Pegasus Project and asserted that the data is irrefutably linked to potential targets of NSO Group's Pegasus spyware. "Amnesty International categorically stands by the findings of the Pegasus Project, and that the data is irrefutably linked to potential targets of NSO Group's Pegasus spyware. The false rumours being pushed on social media are intended to distract from the widespread unlawful targeting of journalists, activists and others that the Pegasus Project has revealed," Amnesty International said.



# LEGAL VIEWPOINT

**I**n the Indian context, the Pegasus case effectively throws numerous complicated questions. Is spyware illegal in India? The answer for the same is clear "yes". This is so because the nature of these activities is aimed at unauthorisedly accessing into computer systems and communication devices without the permission of the owner or person in-charge of the same.

Hence, all spyware-related activities are illegal in the country under the Information Technology Act, 2000 as the activities of spyware tantamount

## PLEA IN SC SEEKS COURT-MONITORED PROBE

**A plea has been moved in the Supreme Court seeking a court-monitored SIT probe into the Pegasus snooping scandal. The plea filed by advocate ML Sharma has claimed that the snooping scandal is an attack on the Indian democracy and the Supreme Court could force the government to come clean on the issue of the use of Pegasus in India or the existence of NSO contracts. The plea said: "The Pegasus scandal is a matter of grave concern and an attack on the Indian democracy, country's security and judiciary. The widespread use of surveillance is morally disfiguring. National security implications of this software are huge".**

to unauthorisedly accessing computer resource, dishonestly or fraudulently without the permission of the user or owner of the computer resource. The said

activity becomes an offence under Section 66 read with Section 43 of the Information Technology Act, 2000. Since spyware programs conducts ille-

In the Indian context, the Pegasus case effectively throws numerous complicated questions on the legal viewpoint

gal activities which are offences under the existing law in force, the same constitute illegal acts and in violation of the law.

The central government has powers to direct intercept of any electronic information in any computer resource if it is in the interest of the sovereignty or integrity of India, defence of India, security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States or public order or for preventing incitement to the commission of any cognisable offence relating to above or for investigation of any offence.



## of the day quote

That is an unfortunate trend as I see some amount of recruitment is taking place. It is 69 to be precise. But then if you compare it with the same period of previous year it was 85. You see a declining trend here but the fact is that certain recruitment is taking place

**DILBAG SINGH** | DGP, JAMMU AND KASHMIR

This is not a story. This is a non-starter across the globe because based on a concocted, fabricated, evidence-less story, nobody does story. Because that story itself calls for forgery and defamation

**MEENAKSHI LEKHI** | UNION MINISTER

Our universities must become the staging grounds for experiments in developing the most principled version of our democratic ethos. And by extension, a microcosm of what our democratic society one day could be

**SHASHI THAROOR** | CONG LEADER

## SHORT TAKES

### India, UK hold mega wargame

**New Delhi:** The Indian Navy and the UK's largest warship HMS Queen Elizabeth and its strike task group carried out a mega wargame featuring a range of complex drills in the Bay of Bengal, signalling a resolve to deepen military cooperation in critical sea lanes. The Indian Navy said the military exercise July 21 and 22 was designed to hone the ability of the two navies to operate together in the maritime domain.

### AP put on alert

**Amaravati:** Amid warnings of incessant rains in Andhra Pradesh issued by the Met department, Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy Thursday put the state on alert. Directing the district collectors to be on alert to tackle possible flood-like situations, the Reddy said, "IMD has predicted heavy rains in various districts across the state and the district collectors should monitor the situation at the ground level and take necessary steps."

### 2 LeM ultras held

**New Delhi:** The National Investigation Agency Thursday arrested two members of Lashker-e-Mustafa (LeM) for their alleged involvement in a conspiracy to commit terrorist activities in Jammu and Kashmir with an intention to threaten the sovereignty, integrity and security of India, an official said. Mohammad Arman Ali, 20, and Mohammad Ehsanullah, 23, both residents of Bihar's Saran, were co-conspirators and involved in transportation of two separate consignments of illegal arms and ammunition from Bihar to Mohali and Ambala, the official of the premier investigation agency said.

### 38 saved in TN fire

**Chennai:** A quick action by the fire department helped evacuate 38 people who were trapped on the third floor of a building at Anna Salai here when the fire broke out Thursday afternoon. Fire force personnel from Triplicane, Madras High Court, Egmore, Anna Square, and Teynampet were pressed into service and the timely action saved the lives of several people. Of the thirty-eight people evacuated from the third floor of the building, eight including a baby were rescued from the place using a sky lift.



**Pegasus is worse than Watergate scandal; it is super emergency. They (BJP leadership) don't trust even their own officers and ministers. I have heard they tapped the phones of several RSS people**

**MAMATA BANERJEE** | WEST BENGAL CM

# Missing out on Covid deaths unlikely, says govt

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, July 22:** Refuting media reports that alleged India's Covid-19 death toll was vastly undercounted, the government Thursday said the reports assume that all excess mortality figures are Covid deaths, which is not based on facts and totally fallacious.

Given the robust and statute-based death registration system in India, while some cases could go undetected as per the principles of infectious disease and its management, missing out on the deaths is unlikely, the Union Health

Ministry said.

There have been some recent media reports alleging that India's toll of excess deaths during the pandemic could be in millions, terming the official Covid-19 death toll vastly undercounted, the ministry said in a statement.

In these news reports, quoting findings from some recent studies, the US and European countries' age-specific infection fatality rates have been used to calculate excess deaths in India based on the sero-positivity.

The extrapolation of deaths has been done on an audacious as-



sumption that the likelihood of any given infected person dying is the same across countries, dismissing the interplay between various direct and indirect factors such as race, ethnicity, genomic

constitution of a population, previous exposure levels to other diseases and the associated immunity developed in that population, the statement said.

Furthermore, the sero-prevalence studies are not only used to guide strategy and measures to further prevent the spread of infection to the vulnerable population but are also used as another basis to extrapolate deaths.

The studies also have another potential concern that the antibody titers may diminish over time, leading to underestimation of true prevalence and corresponding over-estimation of infection fatality

rate. Further, the reports assume that all the excess mortality figures are Covid-19 deaths, which is not based on facts and totally fallacious. Excess mortality is a term used to describe an all-cause mortality figure and attributing these deaths to Covid-19 is completely misleading, the statement said.

India has a thorough contact-tracing strategy. All the primary contacts, whether symptomatic or asymptomatic, are tested for Covid-19. The true detected cases are the ones that test positive with RT-PCR, which is the gold standard of Covid-19 test.

# Rains pound Maha; thousands marooned

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Mumbai, July 22:** At least four persons were reported killed as torrential rains pounded Maharashtra Thursday for the second time in five days, hitting the coastal Konkan and western parts severely, officials said.

Though Mumbai was largely spared, heavy rains lashed coastal districts of Thane, Palghar, Raigad, Ratnagiri, and Sindhudurg and the western districts of Satara, and Kolhapur. Pune, Nashik, Aurangabad, Parbhani, and Solapur also saw torrential rain, with the state deploying the NDRF, the SDRF, and Indian Coast Guard boats and helicopters, while Indian Navy teams were kept on standby.

Several towns and cities like Bhiwandi, Badlapur, Ulhasnagar, Kalyan, Dombivli, Chiplun, Khed, Sawantwadi, Mangan, Mandangad, Kudal, Mahad, and others were inundated in three to six feet water; and higher in some low-lying areas. Flood waters rushed into shops, offices, homes and ground floor flats, while around half a dozen homes were damaged or collapsed, many big and small vehicles were fully submerged or washed away, and people remained trapped in their homes for hours.

The latest disaster came as the state was barely recovering from the Sunday floods which claimed more than 33 lives in Mumbai and Mumbai Metropolitan Region areas.

Relief and Rehabilitation Minister Vijay Wadettiwar said that two NDRF teams have been rushed to rescue people stuck in floods waters in Chiplun to safer locations, as Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray directed officials to prevent any loss of lives.

# I-T raids on Dainik Bhaskar, Bharat Samachar draw flak

*Both Dainik Bhaskar and Bharat Samachar have been critical of the Covid-19 management in the country and done numerous stories highlighting the failings of authorities and the distress of people during the second wave of the pandemic*



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, July 22:** The Income Tax Department Thursday conducted raids across several states against prominent media group Dainik Bhaskar as well as Uttar Pradesh-based TV channel Bharat Samachar for alleged tax evasion, drawing a sharp response from several quarters, sources said.

The raids against the multimedia Dainik Bhaskar group - which has presence in 12 states and runs newspapers as well as operates radio stations, web portals and mobile phone apps - were taking place in 30 locations, including Bhopal, Jaipur, Ahmedabad and Noida, sources said.

The searches started around 5.30 am and were going on till evening.

The group is also involved in textiles and mining businesses and the department is also looking into

these transactions, an official said on condition of anonymity.

There was no official word from the Income Tax Department or its policy-making body, the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT), on the searches targeting the promoters and staffers of Dainik Bhaskar, and Bharat Samachar.

The issue was raised in the Rajya Sabha. It also came in for wide condemnation from several leaders, including West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, Rajasthan's Ashok Gehlot and Delhi's Arvind Kejriwal.

"Agencies are doing their own work and there is no interference in them." Union minister Anurag Thakur said in response to the criticism, "One should take complete information and sometimes many issues come up that are far from truth...." he said, replying to a question on the Congress' al-

## 'Checked transactions, not editorial content'

The Income Tax Department Thursday rejected allegations that its officials suggested changes in news stories while they conducted raids at multiple offices of the Dainik Bhaskar media group on tax evasion charges. The department issued a series of three tweets, saying its teams only looked into financial documents during the searches. Certain allegations have appeared in some sections of media that IT Dept officials were suggesting changes in stories & taking editorial decisions during their search on offices of a certain publication. These allegations are absolutely false & are categorically denied by IT Dept, the IT Department tweeted.

legation that the raids were intended to throttle the voice of democracy.

Bharat Samachar TV said on its official Twitter handle that searches are being conducted at the house of its Editor-in-chief Brajesh Mishra, state head Virendra Singh, houses of some employees and the channel office.

Tax sleuths also raided some premises linked to BJP MLA from Uttar Pradesh's Harraiya assembly seat Ajay Singh and his associates. It was, however, not immediately clear if the raids were connected to the media groups.

In Bhopal, personnel of the Central Reserve Police Force and the Madhya Pradesh police were seen providing security to tax officials searching the residential premises of Dainik Bhaskar's promoters.

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Guwahati, July 22:** Twenty-three militants of National Liberation Front of Bodoland (NLFB) led by their chief and other top leaders surrendered in Assam Thursday. The 23 NLFB militants headed by their self-styled chief M Batha laid down their arms to Assam Minister for Information and Public Relations and Parliamentary Affairs, Pijush Hazarika, at a function at Lalpani in Udalguri district in western Assam.

After welcoming the Bodo militants into the mainstream, Hazarika said that in response to the appeal of Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, the leaders and members of NLFB, including Batha, have finally returned home. Former Assam CM and Union

minister Sarbananda Sonowal said in a tweet, "The surrender of NLFB cadres including the outfit's chief M Batha is a welcome sign. This shows people's trust in the new era of peace and development in Assam and Northeast under the leadership of PM Shri Narendra Modi ji. My congratulations to HM Shri Amit Shah ji and CM Shri Himanta Biswa Sarma.

Batha, who was an expert sharpshooter in the now disbanded National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB), had formed the new extremist group - NLFB - to revive insurgency in the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) in western Assam.

The National Investigation Agency had announced a ₹10 lakh bounty on Batha.

# Yediyurappa hints at resignation

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Bangalore, July 22:** Dropping enough hints that he would resign as the Chief Minister, Karnataka chief minister, BS Yediyurappa Thursday said that he would resign if the BJP's central leaders asked him to do so.

Yediyurappa told reporters he was ready to accept any decision made by the BJP high command after July 25, as he would be completing two years in office July 26.

I appeal to my supporters not to protest against any decision taken by my party central leaders. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Amit Shah (Home Minister) and our national President JP Nadha have



special love and faith towards me. I will receive their decision July 25 and based on that I will resume my new assignment July 26 onwards, he said.

He added that as you (Media) all are aware that no position is given in our party to those who have crossed 75 years of age, but appreciating his work they (party central leaders) have given him an opportunity despite him crossing 78 years.

Based on the instructions that the

central leaders will give me July 25, I will begin my work from July 26. We have a special programme July 26 regarding 2 years of our government, after attending that event, I will abide by the instructions from the national president, he added.

He reiterated that irrespective of the party central leader's decision, his decision to bring the BJP back to power in 2023 will remain undiluted. This is my firm commitment to my party, the CM said.

Yediyurappa, BJP's first Chief Minister in south India, has almost completed two years in office since he took over from the Congress-Janata Dal (Secular) coalition in July 2019.

# Amarinder to attend Sidhu's 'coronation'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Chandigarh, July 22:** Just a day ahead of his 'coronation', Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh Thursday extended an invite to all lawmakers for tea Friday and then attend the ceremony of the new state Congress team taking charge led by Navjot Singh Sidhu.

Punjab CM Capt Amarinder Singh has invited all Punjab Congress MLAs, MPs and senior party functionaries at Punjab Bhawan for tea at 10 am Friday. They will all then go to Punjab Congress Bhawan together from there for the installation of the new PPCC team, Chief Minister's

## PUNJAB CONG SCUFFLE



Media Advisor Raveen Thukral informed in a tweet.

Sidhu sent an invite, signed by some 62 legislators, through working presidents, Kuljit Singh Nagra and Sangat Singh Gilzian, to the 'sulking' Chief Minister to attend the swearing-in ceremony.

Earlier, the camp of the Chief Minister was adamant on its demand that Sidhu should first apologise publicly over his purported remarks against the government over the power crisis and the sacrilege issue and then he would meet him.

In a first show of solidarity and strength, Sidhu, accompanying 62 legislators, comprising four Cabinet ministers, Wednesday paid obeisance at the Golden Temple in Amritsar.

However, the Chief Minister and his close confidants were absent from Sidhu's maiden visit to his constituency Amritsar (East) and religious places there.

# After 8 months at Delhi border, protesting farmers gather near Parl

**THEY ORGANISED A 'FARMERS' PARLIAMENT' AND DEBATED THE CHANGES IN THE APMC ACT IN TWO SESSIONS, PUNCTUATED BY A 'LANGAR', ON THE FIRST DAY. THE DEBATE ALSO FEATURED WOMEN AND THE ELDERLY**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, July 22:** After eight months of harsh winters, unforgiving heat, and rains, farmers protesting against the three contentious agri laws Thursday reached Jantar Mantar, a few metres away from Parliament where the Monsoon Session is underway, unrelenting in their demand that the legislations be scrapped.

"We have come this far after losing many of our own. We are ready for a long haul. We have come prepared," said Harpal Singh from Bharatiya Kisan Union (Chaduni), as he wrapped his saffron safa around his head.

The 200 farmers, wearing identification badges and carrying flags

of their unions, travelled to Jantar Mantar from their Singhu border protest site in four buses with a police escort.

The protest was to start at 11 am, but the farmers reached the venue only by 12.10 pm.

Farmer leader Shiv Kumar Kakka said police stopped them at three places en route and their Aadhaar cards were checked.

"Even a bus from Pakistan won't be subject to such strict checking... The government wants to harass the farmers," Harpal Singh said. "Two of our buses broke down en route, so police escorted us in DTC buses," he added.

Upon reaching Jantar Mantar, the farmers raised slogans, pumping their fists in the air, and demanded



that the government scrap the three laws.

However, they were restricted to a small section of Jantar Mantar with police putting up barricades on both sides.

Farmers' representatives from several states, including Maharashtra, Odisha, Kerala, West Bengal, Telangana, Gujarat, Punjab, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh, joined the stir.

They organised a "Farmers' Parliament" and debated the changes in the APMC Act in two sessions, punctuated by a 'langar' (community kitchen), on the first day. The debate also featured women and the elderly.

The Samyukt Kisan Morcha, a joint forum of the farmers' unions protesting against the three laws, said 20 MPs from Kerala visited the farmers' parliament and expressed solidarity with them.

As no politician was allowed to share the stage, the MPs joined in as audience.

Farmer leaders say 200 farmers will come to the protest site everyday till August 13 to discuss the three laws clause by clause.

Police threw a ring of security

around central Delhi and kept a tight vigil on the movement of vehicles.

Several teams of the Delhi Police manned the roads leading to the protest venue, while personnel of the Rapid Action Force, a specialised unit of the Central Reserve Police Force, stood guard at the site, carrying riot shields and batons.

A water cannon and metal-detector gates have been deployed at the site. Two tankers carrying drinking water have also been stationed there.

The Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee organised a langar for the farmers and media persons and kept an ambulance on standby.



# international

## of the day quote

We're going to find out, the levels of violence, does it go up, does it stay the same, there's the possibility of negotiated outcome still out there, there's the possibility of a Taliban takeover (and) any other number of scenarios

**GENERAL MARK MILLEY** | CHAIRMAN OF JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF, US

There are other countries that choose differently and in doing so it will be easier for them, in some ways, to achieve climate neutrality. I still believe that in the long term nuclear energy isn't a sustainable form of energy production

**ANGELA MERKEL** | CHANCELLOR, GERMANY

We had a terminal and if there was a problem, our oil exports would be cut off. The oil industry is very important for us, and it is also important for the enemy

**HASSAN ROUHANI** | PRESIDENT, IRAN

## SHORT TAKES

### ■ Republicans block bipartisan Bill

**Washington:** US Senate Republicans have blocked a vote to advance a \$1.2 trillion bipartisan infrastructure bill, as negotiators are expected to continue their talks in hopes of reaching a deal in the next few days. The vote Wednesday failed 49-51 in the upper chamber, with all Republicans voting against the measure, reports Xinhua news agency. Sixty votes were needed to advance it.

### ■ Tirumurti meets UNGA's Bozkir

**United Nations:** India's Permanent Representative to the UN, TS Tirumurti, who will be presiding over the Security Council next month, held discussions with General Assembly President Volkan Bozkir about New Delhi's agenda for leading the Security Council, according to a spokesperson. The spokesperson said that Tirumurti briefed Bozkir about the agenda "focusing on High-level Open debates on Maritime Security, and on Technology and Peacekeeping, as well as a High-level briefing on the Threats to International Peace and Security caused by Terrorist Acts".

### ■ Shooting at pub leaves 10 hurt

**Rome:** A shooting incident sparked by a scuffle between university students at a pub in the Italian city of Taranto left 10 people wounded, including two with serious injuries, a police official said. The official told Xinhua news agency Wednesday that four women and six men, all aged 20 to 28, were injured after the shooter opened fire with a pistol at the Yachting Club Porticciolo di San Vito. The shooting reportedly took place after an argument among the estimated 300 university students on the premises.

### ■ China floods death toll reaches 33

**Beijing:** The death toll from torrential rains in central China's Henan province increased to 33 Thursday, while eight people still remain missing and more than 3 million others affected, local authorities confirmed. A total of 376,000 local residents have been relocated, said the provincial emergency management department. Rainwater has damaged more than 215,200 hectares of crops, causing a direct economic loss of about 1.22 billion yuan (\$188 million).

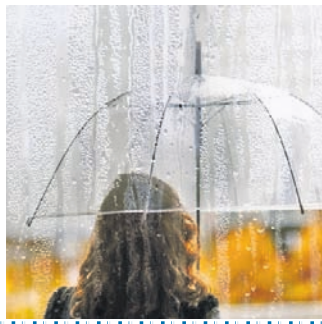


I'm sorry that we haven't been able to achieve the marks that we had hoped for at the beginning of this year. Of course I am. I take responsibility for the vaccination programme. I also take responsibility for the challenges we've had

**SCOTT MORRISON** | PRIME MINISTER, AUSTRALIA

## FAKE RAIN

The UAE is creating fake rain using cloud-blasting drones that fly into clouds and unleash electrical charges to produce downpours amid 50°C heat in Dubai. The UAE's cloud seeding operations are part of an ongoing \$15M mission to generate rain in the country



# Rockets emit 100 times more CO<sub>2</sub> than planes

ROUGHLY TWO-THIRDS OF THE PROPELLANT EXHAUST IS RELEASED INTO THE STRATOSPHERE AND MESOSPHERE, WHERE IT CAN PERSIST FOR AT LEAST TWO TO THREE YEARS

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**London, July 22:** The commercial race to get tourists to space is heating up between Virgin Group founder Sir Richard Branson and former Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos. Sunday 11 July, Branson ascended 80 km to reach the edge of space in his piloted Virgin Galactic VSS Unity spaceplane. Bezos' autonomous Blue Origin rocket was launched July 20, coinciding with the anniversary of the Apollo 11 Moon landing.

## 14 killed as monsoon rain batters Pakistan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Peshawar, July 22:** At least 14 people were killed and 26 others injured in rain-related incidents in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in the last 24 hours, the officials said Thursday.



The Provincial Disasters Management Authority (PDMA) said that incessant monsoon rain stuck various parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and inundated low lying areas in the province's Dera Ismail Khan, Hazara and Malakand divisions and resulted in the complete damage of four houses and partial damage of 21 others. "Houses were damaged due to the continuous monsoon rain that struck Khyber Pakhtunkhwa resulting in the death of 14 people and injuries to 26 others in the last one day," a senior official from the PDMA said. The respective district administrations in the province have geared up relief and rescue activities in areas affected by the monsoon rains and issued necessary travel advisory for the tourists, the official said.

But, what are the environmental consequences of a space tourism industry likely to be. Bezos boasts his Blue Origin rockets are greener than Branson's VSS Unity. The Blue Engine 3 (BE-3) used liquid hydrogen and liquid oxygen propellants. VSS Unity used a hybrid propellant comprised of a solid carbon-based fuel, hydroxyl-terminated polybutadiene (HTPB), and a liquid oxidant, nitrous oxide. The SpaceX Falcon series of reusable rockets will propel the Crew Dragon into orbit using liquid kerosene and liquid oxygen. Large quantities of water vapour



are produced by burning the BE-3 propellant, while combustion of both the VSS Unity and Falcon fuels produces CO<sub>2</sub>, soot and some water vapour. The nitrogen-based oxidant used by VSS Unity also generates nitrogen oxides, compounds that contribute to air pollution closer to Earth. The very high temperatures during launch and re-entry also convert stable nitrogen in the air into reactive nitrogen oxides. During launch, rockets can emit between four and ten times more

## PROBE INTO COVID ORIGINS

# China's most direct pushback

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Beijing, July 22:** China Thursday categorically rejected the WHO's plan for the second phase of coronavirus origin-tracing in Wuhan, especially to probe the lab leak theory, as it dismissed reports that some of the employees of the facility were infected with the deadly virus before it spread to the city and the world.

China will not follow the World Health Organisation's suggested plan on the second phase of Covid-19 origin-tracing, Zeng Yixin, the vice minister of the National Health Commission (NHC), told a media briefing here.

The work plan on the second-



phase origins study proposed by the WHO contains language that does not respect science, he said.

China's broadside against the WHO and its Director General

“Asking actually China to be transparent, open and cooperate, especially on the information, raw data that we asked for at the early days of the pandemic. We owe it to the millions who suffered and the millions who died to know what happened

**TEDROS ADHANOM GHEBREYESUS** | DIRECTOR GENERAL, WHO

We hope the WHO can carefully consider the advice by Chinese scientists, take investigating the origin of the Covid-19 virus as a scientific question free from political interference, and proactively and properly conduct sustained investigations into the origin of the virus in various countries across the world

**ZENG YIXIN** | VICE MINISTER OF THE NATIONAL HEALTH COMMISSION, CHINA

# ‘Pingdemic’ puts Britain’s food supply under strain

AGENCIES

**London, July 22:** British supermarkets said Thursday that some products were in short supply and petrol stations had been forced to close after the official health app told hundreds of thousands of workers to isolate following contact with someone with Covid-19.

British newspapers carried front-page pictures of empty shelves in supermarkets, declaring a “pingdemic”.

Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng told Sky News the government was “very concerned” about the situation but that he did not recognise the network's characterisation of “bare” supermarket shelves.

With cases rising to nearly 50,000 day in the United Kingdom, hundreds of thousands of people have been advised - or “pinged” - by the National Health Service's contact-tracing app to isolate for 10 days.

The drastic reduction in staffing that has resulted has sown chaos through sectors as diverse as food



■ MEAT INDUSTRY SAYS FOOD SUPPLIES COULD FAIL

■ ICELAND CHAIN CLOSES SOME STORES DUE TO STAFF SHORTAGES

■ BP PLC SAYS SOME SITES TEMPORARILY CLOSED DUE TO LACK OF FUEL

supplies, haulage, supermarkets, hospitality, manufacturing and media. To avoid disruption, many people have deleted the app from their phones. Official data showed the app had told nearly 620,000 people to isolate in England and Wales in the week up to July 14.

Government ministers say it plays an important role in countering the spread of the virus, which has killed about 129,000 people in Britain - the seventh highest toll in the world. They have allowed some workers in critical roles to carry on working, even when “pinged”.

# Russia leads in new arms race

*Hypersonics are able to travel at velocities of at least five times the speed of sound and manoeuvre in mid-flight, making them much harder to track and intercept than traditional projectiles*

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

**Moscow, July 22:** The Avangard, the Kinzhal and now the Zircon -- Russia is leading the race to develop a range of new hypersonic weapons that President Vladimir Putin has dubbed “invincible”.

Moscow's latest step came this week with another successful test of the Zircon, a ship-launched hypersonic missile.

Fired from one of Russia's most powerful warships, the Admiral Gorchkov frigate, a Zircon travelling at seven times the speed of sound flew more than 350 kilometres (over 215 miles) to hit a target on the coast of the Barents Sea.

If more tests are successful, the Zircon looks set to join Avangard hypersonic glide vehicles and the air-launched Kinzhal (Dagger) missiles in Russia's arsenal of hypersonic weapons.

And experts agree that - for now at least -- Russia has an edge in their development.

“No one except Russia has hypersonic weapons but everyone wants them,” Moscow-based independent defence analyst Alexander Golts told AFP.

Putin used his state-of-the-nation address in 2018 to first present an array of hypersonic weapons, boasting that they could circumvent all existing missile defence systems.

The United States, China, France and other major powers have announced plans to develop their own hypersonic weapons and are expected to soon catch up.

Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said Russia's new hypersonic missiles “are potentially destabilising and pose significant risks”, while a NATO official said the weapons were creating “a greater risk of escalation and miscalculation”.

But analysts say that while they are impressive, the hypersonics are not game-changing technology.

With the second-largest arsenal of nuclear weapons in the world and a huge cache of ballistic missiles, Russia already has more than enough military capacity to deter its enemies.



# Floods in China, Germany expose climate vulnerability

BY THE END OF THE CENTURY, SUCH STORMS COULD BE 14 TIMES MORE FREQUENT

AGENCIES

**Washington, July 22:** Deadly floods that have upended life in both China and Germany have sent a stark reminder that climate change is making weather more extreme across the globe.

At least 33 people in the central Chinese province of Henan died Tuesday. In Germany floods killed at least 160 people and another 31 in Belgium last week. The consecutive disasters have reinforced the message that significant changes will have to be made to prepare

for similar events in future.

As the atmosphere warms with climate change, it also holds more moisture, which means that when rainclouds break, more rain is released. By the end of the century, such storms could be 14 times more frequent, the researchers found in the study using computer simulations.

“You need technical measures, bolstering dikes and flood barriers. But we also need to remodel cities,” said Fred Hattermann at the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research. He said there was increasing focus on so-called “green-



adaptation” measures, like polders and plains that can be flooded, to stop water running off too fast.

## Where's the money?

Environment and energy ministers from the Group of 20 rich na-

tions were making little progress Thursday on how to reach climate goals, officials said, with a cluster of countries resisting any firm commitments.

The G20 meeting in Naples is discussing the natural environment Thursday, and energy and climate change Friday, and diplomats have struggled for days to find common ground to put together joint statements on both topics.

“It looks like there will be a complete lack of any commitments on money,” said Oscar Soria of the US-based online activist group

# Junta accused of arresting doctors amid Covid surge

AGENCIES

**Nay Pyi Taw, July 22:** Angered by doctors' support for anti-junta protests, Myanmar's military has arrested several doctors treating Covid-19 patients independently, colleagues and media said, as the health system struggles to cope with a record wave of infections.

Since the military overthrew scores of doctors have been arrested for their prominent role in a civil disobedience movement.

Myanmar registered Thursday over 6,000 new Covid-19 infections after reporting 286 deaths a day earlier, both record highs. Medics and funeral services say the real death toll is far higher, with crematoriums unable to keep pace.

To help people who either refuse to go to a state hospital, because of opposition to the military, or find hospitals are too strapped to treat them, some doctors participating in the anti-junta campaign have offered free medical advice over the telephone, and visited the sick at home in some cases.

But according to doctors and media reports in the past few weeks nine volunteer doctors offering tele-medicine and other services have been detained by the military in Myanmar's two largest cities - Yangon and Mandalay.

The information team of the army-led State Administration Council issued a statement denying reports that five doctors had been arrested in Yangon, but omitted any reference to the alleged arrests in Mandalay, which included doctors active in the civil disobedience movement.

The National Unity Government, set up as a shadow body by army opponents, and media reports had also accused security forces of taking oxygen cylinders, protective wear and medicine for their own use during those raids.

Yanghee Lee, a former UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Myanmar now on an advisory council, has accused the junta of “weaponising Covid-19 for its own political gain.”



## of the day quote

We acknowledge the contribution of OYO's independent, small hotel and homeowners. Hundreds of OYO's partners came forward selflessly to support the country with quarantine, self-isolation, and accommodation requirements

**ROHIT KAPOOR** | CEO (INDIA & SOUTH-EAST ASIA), OYO

Recent filings and public offerings reflect the maturity of our market to accept the business model of new age tech companies, which aren't amenable to valuation through conventional metrics of profitability

**AJAY TYAGI** | CHAIRMAN, SEBI

BlackBuck started with a dream to re-imagine trucking, to make it 10X simple and 10X efficient. It has been six years and we are just getting started to make a difference

**RAJESH YABAJI** | CO-FOUNDER AND CEO, BLACKBUCK

## SHORT TAKES

### US govt likely to breach debt limit

**Washington:** The US federal government is most likely to run out of borrowing room and breach the debt limit in October or November, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) said in a report. Currently, there is no statutory limit on the issuance of new federal debt because the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2019, enacted in August 2019, suspended the limit through July 31, 2021, the CBO report released Wednesday said.

### Audi launches all-electric SUVs

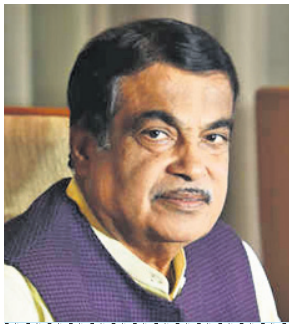
**New Delhi:** German luxury carmaker Audi expects 15% of its sales in India through EVs by 2025, as it kicked off its EV journey with the launch of three all-electric SUVs under its e-tron range, said a company official. The company, which launched the e-tron 50 and e-tron 55 along with e-tron Sportback, priced at Rs 99.99 lakh, Rs 1.16 crore and Rs 1.18 crore respectively, will bring more models out of the 20 electric cars that it plans to launch globally by 2025.

### Diageo India inks pact with NRAI

**Mumbai:** Beverage company Diageo India and National Restaurant Association of India Thursday announced that they have partnered to provide Covid-19 vaccines to their food and beverage (F&B) trade partners, who are registered under 'Raising the Bar' programme. As a part of this programme, Diageo India and NRAI will now provide the necessary support to the F&B industry during the pandemic by covering the costs for the vaccines for all restaurant employees, a joint statement said.

### Coffee exports hit nine-yr low in FY20

**Mumbai:** India's coffee exports have seen a steady decline in the last decade amid growing need for value addition across multiple stages of coffee processing globally and rising demand for specialty coffees, according to a report. India exported nearly USD 720 million worth of coffee in 2020-21, out of which 42% mainly constituted the Robusta coffee beans exports, according to a report by global trade finance company Drip Capital, which quoted the data from Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT).



The excise duty rates on petroleum products have been calibrated to generate resources for infrastructure and other development items of expenditure, keeping in view the prevalent fiscal situation

**NITIN GADKARI** | UNION MINISTER

## 'SENTIMENTS TURNS PESSIMISTIC'

Sentiments in the real estate market turned pessimistic during the April-June quarter because of the outbreak of the 2nd wave of Covid-19 pandemic but the future outlook for the next six months remains optimistic, according to a survey by Knight Frank, FICCI and Naredco



## Centre okays 100% FDI in BPCL to boost divestment process



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, July 22:** The Union Cabinet Thursday approved raising the foreign investment limit in privatisation-bound public sector oil refiners, a move that will aid the sale of government stake in BPCL.

Officials said the Cabinet has approved a proposal to allow foreign direct investment (FDI) limit in public sector refineries that are disinvestment candidates to 100 per cent from the current 49 per cent.

At present 49 per cent FDI is allowed in oil refineries promoted by public sector companies under the automatic route.

This limit meant Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) couldn't have been sold to a foreign player.

Two out of the three companies that have put in an initial expression of interest (EoI) for buying out the government's entire 52.98 per cent stake in BPCL are foreign entities.

## Godrej Security aims 15% market share by 2022

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, July 22:** Godrej Security Solutions launched India's most secure home camera range –the Spotlight, at starting price of ₹4,999, during a virtual press conference.

The Spotlight range of cameras leverage Amazon Web Services (AWS) world-class cloud infrastructure, including on-shore data centres in India, as well as Internet of Things (IoT), analytics, and security services to provide scalable and easy to use cloud storage options, and secure data transfer between the cameras and the cloud.

Mehrnosh Pithawalla, Vice-President, Godrej Security Solutions, said, "We have introduced the Spotlight range of home cameras, that assures easy-to-use surveillance and the ability to constantly stay connected to your loved ones without fearing the possibility of someone spying on your home. Moreover, with proven cloud technology from AWS, we are able to address stringent data security challenges."

"This need for home security cameras has been further fueled by the pandemic as people are compelled to stay away from their loved ones. In fact, we have seen a 40% uptick in home camera demand due to this need of the hour," Pithawalla added



## DIGITAL CURRENCY

# RBI CONTEMPLATING PILOT LAUNCH SOON

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, July 22:** The Reserve Bank is working on a phased implementation strategy for its own digital currency and is in the process of launching it in wholesale and retail segments in the near future, RBI Deputy Governor T Rabi Sankar said Thursday.

He said the idea of Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) is ripe, and many central banks in the world are working towards it. Sankar further said CBDC is needed to protect consumers from the "frightening level of volatility" seen in some of the virtual currencies which have no sovereign backing.

He said central banks across the



globe are engaged in exploring CBDCs, and a few countries have also introduced such concepts.

"Perhaps the idea for CBDCs is near," he said while participating

in an online discussion organised by The Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy. In India, a high level inter-ministerial committee constituted by the Ministry of Finance has ex-

amined the policy and legal frameworks, and has recommended the introduction of CBDC as a digital form of fiat money in the country.

"Like other central banks, RBI has also been exploring the pros and cons of introduction of CBDC since quite some time," he said, and added generally countries have implemented specific purpose CBDCs.

The RBI, he said, is currently working towards a phased implementation strategy and examining cases which could be implemented with little or no disruption in the banking system and the monetary policy."

Conducting pilots in wholesale and retail segments may be a possibility in the near future. So, some progress has been made. You know

we could likely come up with this in the near future," Sankar said.

The Deputy Governor further said legal changes would be necessary as the current provisions have been made keeping in mind currency in a physical form under the Reserve Bank of India Act.

He said consequential amendments would also be required in the Coinage Act, Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) and Information Technology Act. "These are some of the things that. We are looking at internally," he added.

The Deputy Governor further said some of the key issues being examined by the RBI include scope of CBDCs, underlying technology, and validation mechanism.

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TOKYO OLYMPICS: OPENING CEREMONY TO WITNESS ABOUT 30 INDIAN PARTICIPANTS AS OTHERS OPT OUT DUE TO THEIR COMPETITIONS THE NEXT DAY

# Athletes prioritise events



(From L): India's flag bearers at the opening ceremony of Tokyo Olympics – MC Mary Kom and Indian men's hockey team captain Manpreet Singh, who poses in front of Olympics logo at the Olympics Village in Tokyo

From hockey, only flag-bearer, men's team captain Manpreet Singh, will participate in the ceremony "Archery, Judo,

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Tokyo, July 22: Indian athletes from seven sports, including shooting, badminton, archery and hockey, will skip the Olympics opening ceremony Friday because of COVID-19 concerns and competitions lined up the next day, leaving just about 30 in attendance at the event.

Badminton, Weightlifting, Tennis, Hockey (men and women), Shooting, the above are not participating due to matches on 24th, practice sessions on 24th and staying safe," Indian Olympic Association President Narinder Batra said. "The march past will be in Japanese alphabetical order and India's number is 21st," he added. IOA secretary general Rajeev

Mehta had earlier stated that no more than 50 will attend the ceremony. Only six officials from each country are being allowed take part in the march-past.

"We won't like to create a situation where our athletes are in danger of getting infected. So a decision has been taken to limit the number of athletes and officials participating in the opening ceremony within 50," Mehta told PTI.

At this point, the Indian participation looks like this – Hockey (1), Boxing (8), Table Tennis (4), Rowing (2), Gymnastics (1), Swimming (1), Sailing (4), Fencing (1), officials (6).

"Both the flag-bearers – MC Mary Kom and Manpreet Singh are participating in the opening ceremony," Batra said. The decision was taken after a meeting between chef de mission B P Baishya and India's number is 21st," he added. India is being represented by

more than 125 athletes in the Games with the overall contingent size being 228, including officials, coaches, other support staff and alternate athletes in view of the COVID-19.

Along with the shooters, archers and the men's and women's hockey teams are also scheduled to compete the day after the opening ceremony.

While Mary Kom is not scheduled to compete the next day, Manpreet will be leading the side out for the first Pool A game against New Zealand on Saturday.

"Those who are quarantining are also not allowed," deputy chef de mission Prem Kumar Verma had said about the athletes and officials, who have recently landed in the Japanese city.

Among other countries, Britain will have no more than 30 athletes taking part in the ceremony due to COVID-19 fears. The UK has 376 athletes in fray at the Games.

## Tough overall draw for Indian pugilists



AMIT PANGHAL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Tokyo, July 22: Top seed and World No.1 Amit Panghal (52kg) was among four Indian boxers who got byes into the Olympic Games pre-quarterfinals as the country's pugilists geared up for a tough campaign going by the draws unveiled here Thursday.

An unprecedented nine Indian boxers would be vying for medals at the showpiece, where none could secure a podium finish in the 2016 edition.

Panghal will step into the ring July 31 in the last-16-stage against the winner of the contest between Botswana's Mahomed Rajab Otukile and Colombia's Herney Rivas Martinez.

The 25-year-old Asian Games champion, who is expected to advance, might find China's Hu Jianguan, the 2016 Olympics bronze-medallist, as a possible quarterfinal opponent.

In the women's competition, six-time World Champion MC Mary Kom (51kg) will square off against Dominica's Miguelina Hernandez on July 25 and up next for her would be Colombian third seed Ingrid Lorena Victoria Valencia as she pursues a second Olympic medal.

Also getting a bye was former Asian Games bronze-medallist Satish Kumar (+91kg), who is the first super heavyweight from India to make the Olympic cut. He will face Jamaica's Ricardo Brown in the pre-quarters and if he wins,

the Armyman will run into top seed Bakhodir Jalolov – reigning World Champion and a three-time Asian champion – of Uzbekistan.

Debutant Ashish Chaudhary (75kg), who has been an Asian silver-medallist, will be up against China's Erbieke Toutheta in his Games opener. The winner meets Brazilian third seed Hebert Sousa in the pre-quarters.

Commonwealth Games silver-medallist Manish Kaushik (63kg), also making his Games debut, has Britain's European silver-medallist Luke McCormack to contend with in the opener. If he wins, third seed Cuban Andy Cruz awaits him in the last-16 stage. Cruz is the reigning world and Pan American champion.

Another fancied Indian Vikas Krishan (69kg) will take on Japan's Mensah Okazawa in the round of 32 Saturday and if he crosses this hurdle, he will be fighting Cuba's third-seeded Roniel Iglesias. Iglesias is the 2012 Olympic gold-medallist and also a former World Champion.

In the women's draw, Pooja Rani (75kg) will take on Algeria's Ichrak Chaib, in her opening bout and will be up against China's second seed Li Qian if she progresses. Qian is the reigning Asian champion and the 2018 World Champion.

Lovlina Borgohain (69kg) got a bye and will face Germany's Nadine Apetz in her opening clash. Simranjit Kaur (60kg) also got a bye and has Thailand's Sudaporn Seesondee awaiting her in the pre-quarters.

## Gold winners to get ₹75 lakh from IOA

NEW DELHI: The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) Thursday announced that it would give the Tokyo Olympics gold medallists a cash award of ₹75 lakh apart from giving each of the participating National Sports Federations (NSFs) a bonus amount of ₹25 lakh. The IOA Advisory Committee has recommended that silver medallists will be presented ₹40 lakh, while the bronze winners will get richer by ₹25 lakhs. IOA will also recommend a sum of ₹1 lakh to each Indian participants at Tokyo Games. The IOA has also acknowledged the suggestions of its advisory group that a bonus of ₹25 lakh be given to each participating NSF and a further support of ₹30 lakh to each medal-winning NSFs. Besides, a support of ₹15 lakhs each will be received by other member National Sports Federations.

## OLYMPIC-BOUND ODISHA ATHLETES

TUSHARKANTI BEHERA

Odisha has produced several illustrious sports persons worthy of competing in the world's biggest sporting platform, the Mount Everest of sport-the Olympics but only few have made cuts in past. There is always that line to be crossed for attaining the iconic stature as an Olympian athlete. Six Odia athletes have accomplished that distinction for Tokyo Olympics 2020. Playing for the country in Olympics, no doubt in a once-in-a-life time opportunity for each athlete which will always be revered and cherished. These champions are not made overnight. Attributes that are common to all of them is fire, grit and determination! They have scripted stories of inspiration, have defied many odds on their way, have challenged themselves, pushed themselves hard and have crafted goals.

Dutee Chand, the ace Odia athlete, India's very own golden girl, who will be heading to Tokyo as only athlete in Indian contingent to represent the country in two track and field individual events. She has a heart-wrenching tale that can tear hearts apart. Her making big in athletics has a mountain of guts and resolve behind it. Overcoming all the way through the troubled waters in childhood to be the fastest woman of India is no less than grandeur. Her career was in

## Experiments on cards for Men in Blue

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Colombo, July 22: India coach Rahul Dravid will have to choose between experimenting and continuing the winning combination in his bid to ensure a clean sweep against Sri Lanka in the third and final ODI here, Friday.

While Shikhar Dhawan-led India won the first game by seven wickets, Deepak Chahar pulled a heist in the second one with his match-winning unbeaten 69 as the visitors won by three wickets.

Now, it remains to be seen whether India continue with Prithvi Shaw, who got scores of 43 and 13, to partner the skipper at the top, or go in for classy Devdutt Padikkal or an equally elegant Ruturaj Gaikwad – both superb List A players.

If Shaw gets another opportunity, he would be more than keen to get



Coach Rahul Dravid and skipper Shikhar Dhawan are likely to consider multiple changes to India's playing XI for the third ODI against Sri Lanka

a big score, as he failed to convert his start in the first game.

Another dilemma for the team management would be whether to persist with aggressive Ishan Kishan or give an opportunity to Sanju Samson, another hard-hitting

batman, to make his ODI debut.

The likes of Manish Pandey and ever-improving Suryakumar Yadav are certain to maintain their places as the duo are the middle-order backbone. With vice-captain Bhuvneshwar Kumar making it clear that there are



goalkeeper.

Birendra Lakra, the versatile Hockey star who is compared to rock of Gibraltar in his defense. He grew up idolizing the legend Dilip Tirkey and never has limited his pursuit for excellence even in difficulties. His outstanding performances in the field, swiftly thwarting forwards from rival teams from scoring goals is a treat to watch. Rising up on his career ladder has always been pegged and challenged by injuries. Despite testing times during his injury periods, Birendra always remained resolute and earnestly worked on his comebacks. Very composed and determined as player, he has always bounced back from injuries stronger and has never allowed negative thoughts to cloud his determination. Saunamara in Sundargarh has given India yet another star hockey player, Amit Rohidas after the great

## TALES OF GRIT, GUTS & GLORY!

Dillip Tirkey. It's like dream come true for the hard working Amit, who happens to be the first non-triathlon Hockey Olympian from Odisha. His upbringing was marred by difficult economic conditions in his family. Undeterred, he always pursued his passion for Hockey idolizing Tirkey. His journey to Olympics has not been smooth either. He had been through many ups and downs but always stood firm in his purpose. It took twelve long years of perseverance for him to come to this stage of glory, since his induction to national junior team in 2009.

Ace shuttler, Pramod Bhagat, world para badminton champion is the best favorite to win Gold in this Tokyo Paralympics. Being World number one in the SL3 Men's Singles and Doubles categories, he is the player to reckon. Even after he was diagnosed with Polio in childhood, his love for badminton never waned down. It only got intense. In the entire badminton community, para and able-bodied, nobody has been a five-time world champion! With 101 medals on his chest, nobody can tell he had developed polio at age five. The man who loves to take challenges head-on, his very name resonates story of inspiration and determination. When people pitied him for his disability he proved everyone wrong. Polio has quietly surrendered before this strong deter-

no fitness issues with Hardik Pandya, the flamboyant Baroda player and his brother all-rounder Krunal are expected to play.

There are times when every player does not want to rest and play each game, but the team management would need to consider the workload of the bowlers, as they are playing six matches in just 12 days in humid Sri Lankan conditions.

In the two previous games, the Indian bowlers managed to contain the inexperienced Sri Lankan batting-line up and pulled things back.

While Bhuvneshwar could continue to lead the attack, it remains to be seen whether the team management opts for young Navdeep Saini or uncapped impressive left-arm pacer Chetan Sakariya in place of last game's hero Deepak Chahar, who has been exceptional with his knuckle-ball.

mined personality.

Very heartening to find the latest entry of Namita Toppo in the Indian women hockey squad. She rightly deserved her entry with over 160 international caps to her credit. A mid-fielder of caliber, she has shown lot of promise and determination to excel in sport. Namita has represented the nation in almost all international tournaments since 2018 and have been credited with many wins. Like any other athlete, her career was also flawed by injuries and struggles. But, she always stayed focused to her goals and bravely faced the imminent pains. Her self-belief and mental toughness could always win those battles. Her lengthy spell on the side-lines has never deterred her focus from the game and urge of excellence.

Much to my delight and optimism, sports in Odisha has brought in new possibilities bringing refreshing new identity through these talented world class athletes. I wish many more athletes of such resolute come to fore from my state and bring laurels for the country! Very best to all athletes from Odisha to shine in Indian colours in upcoming Olympics.

The writer is Minister of State (Independent Charge), E & IT, Sports & Youth Services, Government of Odisha

## OLYMPICS DIARY BLAST FROM PAST

With only a day to go for the Tokyo Olympics, let's take a look at interesting facts and trivia about the Games from its previous editions. Here are some highlights and fun facts from the 1988, 1992 and 1996 Olympics Games...

### Seoul Games, 1988

- The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) boycotted the Games and was joined by Cuba, Ethiopia and Nicaragua.
- Tennis returned to the programme after 64 years. The event was now open to professionals. Germany's Steffi Graf concluded her Grand Slam tennis season by winning the Olympic gold.
- 10 athletes were banned from the Games for using performance-enhancing drugs.
- Swedish fencer Kerstin Palm became the first woman to take part in seven Olympic Games.
- For the first time, all three medallists in equestrian dressage were women.
- Canada's Ben Johnson set a world record in the 100m sprint, but tested positive for steroids. After his disqualification, USA's Carl Lewis was awarded the 100m gold, meaning he had successfully defended his 1984 Olympic title.
- Soviet pole-vaulter Sergey Bubka won his first gold medal.
- Gymnast Daniela Silivas of Romania won three gold medals and equalled compatriot Nadia Comaneci's record of seven perfect 10s in one Olympic Games.

### Barcelona Games, 1992

- Apartheid was abolished in South Africa and it was re-invited to the Olympic Games by the International Olympic Committee, after a 32-year ban from participating in international sport.
- The Olympic cauldron was ignited using a flaming arrow, lit from the flame of the Olympic torch.
- Germany sent a unified team having reunified in 1990, the last such team was at the 1964 Summer Olympics.
- Badminton and women's judo were added to the Olympic programme.
- As the Soviet Union was dissolved in 1991, the formerly

- Soviet-occupied states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, sent their own teams for the first time since 1936.
- Chinese diver Fu Mingxia, age 13, became one of the youngest Olympic gold medallists of all time.
- Croatia, Slovenia and Bosnia and Herzegovina made their Olympic debuts after the separation of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.
- Great Britain's Derek Redmond tore a hamstring during a 400-meter semi-final heat. As he struggled to finish the race, his father entered the track without credentials and helped him complete the race, to a standing ovation from the crowd.

### Atlanta Games, 1996

- Boxing legend Muhammad Ali lit the Olympic cauldron.
- For the first time in Olympic history, all 197 recognised National Olympic Committees were represented at the Games.
- Beach volleyball, mountain biking, lightweight rowing and women's football made their first appearance.
- A total of 24 countries made their Summer Olympic debuts in Atlanta, including 11 former Soviet republics participating for the first time as independent nations.
- USA's Andre Agassi became the first men's singles tennis player to combine a career Grand Slam with an Olympic gold medal.
- Austrian sailor Hubert Raudaschl became the first person ever to compete in nine Olympic Games.
- USA's Carl Lewis won his ninth gold medal in track and field.