



BEING VULNERABLE

Actor Ananya Pandey says she takes social media trolls positively, but it hurts when her family is attacked

LEISURE P2



NEW SECURITY ISSUES

India's security challenges are becoming complex as the global geopolitical scenario is changing, says Rajnath Singh

NATIONAL P9



TALIBAN RULE CHALLENGED

Flag-waving protesters took to streets in Afghan cities Thursday as opposition to the Taliban spread

INTERNATIONAL P10



'KILLINGS REWARDED WITH BITCOINS'

UNITED NATIONS: The financial resource mobilisation of Islamic State (IS) has become more robust, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar told the United Nations Thursday. He emphasised that flow of funds has continued for the dreaded terror group and rewards for killings are now even being paid in Bitcoins. He was addressing a UNSC briefing on threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts. "IS remains active in Syria and Iraq.They are very active and rewards for killings are now being paid in Bitcoins," said Jaishankar.



JCO, MILITANT KILLED IN SHOOTOUT

JAMMU: A Junior Commissioned Officer (JCO) of the Indian Army and a terrorist were killed Thursday during a fierce gun fight in Jammu and Kashmir's Rajouri district, officials said. Security forces had launched a search operation in Thanamandi belt following inputs. The search operation turned into an encounter after the terrorists opened fire on the forces who retaliated. "A JCO of Rashtriya Rifles had suffered bullet injuries in the encounter and died in the hospital Defence PRO, Jammu, Lt Col Devender Anand said.

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STRETCHING FOR SUCCESS: A kho kho player flies through the air to catch his adversary at a training camp currently on in the city to finalise teams for the 'Kehlo India' 2022 meet

OP PHOTO

AP zeroes in on Kotia land

■ AP government officials entered two villages in Kotia panchayat and started identifying land for takeover to carry out various development projects against an SC order

POST NEWS NETWORK

Pottangi, August 19: Odisha's neighbouring state Andhra Pradesh is using every trick in the book to grab Kotia panchayat under this block in Koraput district. However, its latest move to identify land within the panchayat for establishment of developmental projects has sparked concern among officials of the district administration.

Seba Rapo Kami, sarpanch of newly-formed Phatusineri panchayat and Kuneti Kusamma, sarpanch of Phagunsineri panchayat in Kotia also accompanied the MLA and officials. Notably, Andhra Pradesh government has declared Phatusineri and Phagunsineri villages in Kotia panchayat as two separate panchayats and conducted elections there despite stiff opposition by the Odisha government.

The MLA and officials visited the village and identified land for developmental projects worth ₹5 crore. Among them will be the construction of a healthcare centre, panchayat office, schools and Anganwadi buildings.

The visit of the Andhra MLA and officials to Kotia panchayat comes two days after the visit of an all-party delegation of the state to the



Officials and cops of Andhra Pradesh government and hold a meeting at a village in Kotia panchayat

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



MARKET WATCH

INDEX		VARIAION
SENSEX	55629.49	↓ 162.78
NIFTY	16568.80	↓ 45.80
DOLLAR	74.54	↓ ₹0.10
EURO	86.95	↓ ₹0.03
GOLD	₹47,180	↑ ₹48
SILVER	₹62,171	↓ ₹312

WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK
TEMP MAX	29.6°C	34.5°C
TEMP MIN	25.6°C	25.2°C
Humidity	94%	84%
Rainfall	0.7mm	Nil
Forecast	Generally cloudy sky	

Bhartruhari, family booked for alleged dowry harassment

AGENCIES

Bhopal, August 19: Police here have booked BJD MP from Cuttack, Bhartruhari Mahtab, his wife and son, after their daughter-in-law alleged harassment for dowry, an official said Thursday. The complainant, a resident of Mahadev Parisar locality in this city, got married in December 2016 to the son of Mahtab, he informed.

She lodged a complaint at a women police station here Tuesday and said her family had spent a huge sum on her wedding and that she was allegedly being harassed for dowry, the official said on condition of anonymity. Based on the complaint, police have registered an FIR against Mahtab, his wife Maheswata and son Lokranjan.

A case was registered against the three under IPC Sections 498 (a) (subjecting a woman to cruelty), 506 (criminal intimidation) and 34 (acts done by several persons in furtherance of common intention), and provisions of the Dowry Prohibition Act, the official informed. "We have registered the FIR and started an investigation into the case," he added.

The BJD MP however, said he is yet to get a notice from the police or court. "I do not know the nature of allegation against me and my family," he stated. "I came to know of the FIR from the media," added Mahtab.

ROAD SAFETY BEEFED UP

■ State and national highways in seven Odisha cities will be under extra electronic surveillance to ensure seamless movement of traffic

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, August 19: In order to strengthen safety and hassle-free flow of traffic, the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways issued Thursday new traffic rules. Due to the new rules, electronic enforcement devices shall be placed at national and state highways in seven towns of Odisha.

The ministry has asked the Odisha government to place appropriate electronic enforcement devices at high-risk and high-density corridors on national and state highways in Angul, Balasore, Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, Rourkela, Talcher and Kalinga Nagar. The electronic enforcement devices shall be placed in such manner

that they do not cause any obstruction in traffic flow and create viewing problems. The devices will be installed in 132 towns and cities across India.

The ministry has already issued a notification amending the Central Motor Vehicles Rule 1989 for what it called 'Electronic Monitoring and Enforcement of Road Safety'. The rules made provisions for placement of electronic enforcement devices such as speed camera, CCTV, speed gun, automatic number plate recognition (ANPR), weigh in machine (WIM) and any such technology that the state governments decide on to ensure road safety.

According to the new rules, footage from an enforcement device having electronic stamp for location, date and time, can be used to issue challan for various offences like over speeding, unauthorised parking, jumping red lights or any other traffic rule.

The ministry said that a notice shall be sent within 15 days of the offence and the record registered by way of electronic monitoring will be stored till the dis-

FASTag in all state toll gates

BHUBANESWAR: To ensure seamless traffic movement and prevent congestion at toll plazas, the Odisha government has asked concerned officials to introduce FASTag services all over the state. The Works department Thursday asked chief engineer (Roads) to initiate the necessary process for seamless collection of tolls through FASTag services at the plazas. The state government has taken this step following National Payments Corporation of India's (NPCI) request for implementation of the service in all toll gates of Odisha.

posal of the challan. The challan will also carry the date, time and place of offence and specify the provision of the Act which has been violated. It will be accompanied by photographic evidence of the offence committed.

'Love jihad' gets Gujarat HC boost

6 SECTIONS OF THE CONTROVERSIAL LAW HAVE BEEN PUT ON HOLD THROUGH AN INTERIM ORDER TO SAVE COUPLES OF INTER-FAITH MARRIAGE FROM HARASSMENT

AGENCIES

New Delhi, August 19: Six sections of a law to stop 'love jihad', including one that places burden of proof on the accused, cannot be allowed to stand, the Gujarat High Court said Thursday in an interim order. It ruled the provisions could not apply to inter-faith marriages that showed no evidence of force or fraud. This can be considered as a significant step as many couples of inter-faith marriages has suffered harassment in states like Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh.

Inter-faith marriages between adults exercising free consent and without allurements or cheating 'cannot be termed as marriages for the purpose of unlawful conversion', the court ruled.

A Gujarat HC division bench comprising Chief Justice Vikram Nath and Justice Biren Vaishnav said the interim order has been passed to protect people from unnecessary



harassment. The interim order was passed in response to a petition that challenged a 2021 amendment seen as violating individuals' freedom of choice and religion, and invading individuals' personal autonomy. Last month, the Gujarat chapter of the Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind filed a petition. It said that some of the amended sections of the law were unconstitutional.

Chief Justice Nath said Thursday:

"We are of the opinion that pending further hearing, rigors of section 3, 4, 4a to 4c, 5, 6, and 6a shall not operate merely because the marriage is solemnised by a person of one religion with another religion without force, allurements or fraudulent means and such marriages cannot be termed as marriage for the purpose of unlawful conversion. This interim order is to protect the parties which solemnised

inter-faith marriages from unnecessary harassment."

Among the sections struck down by the interim order is 6A, which says those accused of forcing a marriage for the purpose of conversion must prove otherwise – a clause that contradicts the Indian Evidence Act of 1872, which states the burden of proof lies on the complainant.

The Gujarat Freedom of Religion Act was amended in April as several BJP-ruled states, including Assam, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh (which votes next year), created, or announced an intention to create, similar laws. In December, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Chouhan said those who 'do anything like 'love jihad'... will be destroyed'. Before that UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath invoked 'Ram naam satya' - a Hindu funeral chant – to 'warn those who... play with our sisters' respect'.

VANDE BHARAT TRAINS FOR PURI SOON: VAISHNAW

POST NEWS NETWORK

Puri, August 19: The pilgrim town and other parts of Odisha will soon have better railway network coverage as the Indian Railways will extend the services of the Vande Bharat Express with this town. This was disclosed Thursday by Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav here Thursday.

"Puri is one of the most favoured and religious destinations from people all across India and even the world. The development work of the Puri railway station is already underway. Connecting Puri through the Vande Bharat Express is on the cards. I am confident that it will start very soon," the minister said.

During his visit here Vaishnav said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had recently announced that 75 Vande Bharat Express trains will connect every corner of India in 75 weeks of 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav'.

Diesel rate reduced for 2nd straight day

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, August 19: Diesel price was cut Thursday by 20-25 paise per litre across India. It is the second straight day of reduction, but petrol rates were unchanged.

Diesel price in the national Delhi was reduced to ₹89.47 per litre from ₹89.67 a litre, according to a price notification by state-run oil companies. The reduction comes on the back of a similar cut Wednesday. However, the rate of petrol remained stagnant at ₹101.84 a litre.

The price cut follows international oil prices tumbling to their lowest level since May after the

CITY FUEL PRICE	
PETROL	₹102.72 (No Change)
DIESEL	₹97.54 (-0.25)

US Federal Reserve signalled it was set to start tapering asset purchases within months, hurting commodities and lifting the dollar. India is 85 per cent dependent on imports to meet its oil needs and so benchmarks local fuel rates to international oil prices.

Petrol and diesel prices were last hiked July 17. Prior to that, the petrol price was increased by ₹11.44 a litre between May 4 and July 17. Diesel rates had gone up by ₹9.14 during the same period.

FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
Sometimes, pressure is a good thing, as it brings out the best in you. You will out-shine your colleagues in whatever you choose to do. But your expectations may far exceed the outcome. Ganesha asks that you have patience. Results take time.

TAURUS
Planning your own milestones and celebrating the success of friends is the agenda for the day. Your thoughts will be progressive in business or at work, and any plans you make will make a rock-solid foundation for your future. Social gatherings and parties will beckon with bubbly and bruschetta.

GEMINI
You will be in a spot of bother owing to financial problems today. You will try to reduce your expenses and increase your savings, but circumstances will be such that you will have to spend your money. You will spend your day in all this financial jugglery, says Ganesha.

CANCER
You may get a gift from your life partner. Ties with business partners will be good and you will get a good news from them. Time to make new plans for the future with spouse. You will feel greater companionship with spouse, giving you joy.

LEO
Decisions taken in haste will prove to be harmful. You need to carefully weigh the pros and cons of every decision that you take today, considering all the possible alternative thoroughly. You need to be extremely industrious on the work-front as well. You will feel very energetic and raring to go. However, you will run out of energy at the end of the day, says Ganesha.

VIRGO
Something you achieve in a most unexpected manner will make you very happy today. But your happiness may possibly be marred by getting agitated about the problems you are facing. You may expect new funds for new projects, says Ganesha. Your business will flourish today.

LIBRA
Ganesha says that you will be able to see a huge change in your personal and social status. Ganesha says that this may be due to medium like television or due to your innovative ideas in your work place. People will be praising you and your work today. You will be more interested in the fine arts.

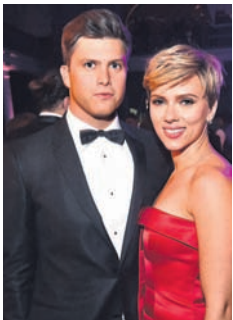
SCORPIO
Your energy levels are on an all time high today, as you plan to begin a new business venture. You are determined to give in your best and toil hard till you succeed in your plans. Well, and the day turns out to be fruitful and worthy when you garner compliments and positive feedback about your work from your peers, says Ganesha.

SAGITTARIUS
You take the path of spirituality for the peace of mind and to stay away from the daily humdrum of life. You will not only seek love, but also spread love around you. In a nutshell, a pleasant day in store for you, says Ganesha.

CAPRICORN
You have become workaholic and others may have complaints against you for being so busy. But, you should not take to heart as you are finishing off assignments which have been hanging in there for a long time now. Once done with the work, you'll have ample of time for your lover.

AQUARIUS
Amid all the boring work buzz, you will manage to sustain your sense of humour. And, why not? After all, you are an expert at inducing a laugh riot! You are in a gregarious mood and that explains it. This also makes you a welcome guest at any party you may wish to grace.

PISCES
You will experience mixed feelings today. On one hand tension and stress about how to set a deteriorating situation right will keep you worried, and on the other hand you will be in a mood to accept things for what they are. What you learn now will be very vital in your development, and will help you progress and become a better person in the future, says Ganesha.



SCARLETT, COLIN WELCOME THEIR FIRST BABY TOGETHER

Hollywood star Scarlett Johansson and Colin Jost have welcomed their first baby together. Johansson's representative Marcel Pariseau confirmed to *people.com*. The *Black Widow* actress is also mom to daughter Rose Dorothy (7), whom she shares with her second husband Romain Dauriac.

JESSICA'S KIDS ARE NERVOUS ABOUT RETURNING TO SCHOOL

Hollywood actress Jessica Alba is sending her children Honor, Haven, and Hayes to school in September. However, she says her children are worried about going back to school after spending over a year being homeschooled amid the Covid pandemic, reports *femalefirst.co.uk*.



Bell Bottom: A must watch on big screen



Director: Ranjit M. Tewari
Cast: Akshay Kumar, Vaani Kapoor, Huma Qureshi and Lara Dutta

Bell Bottom features Akshay Kumar as a RAW agent, who pulls off the impossible mission of re-capturing a hijacked plane and landing it safely on Indian soil with all the passengers alive, without any bloodshed. It is slick and stylish all along. The Akshay Kumar character, Anshul, is driven not only by the call of duty, but also because of a personal loss. His mother, an asthma patient, played by Dolly Ahluwalia, had died when an Indian flight had been hijacked by the Pakistanis. She had lost her life because she'd been denied life-saving oxygen by the hijackers. Akshay Kumar's character therefore is focused, determined and goal-oriented.

The film stars Vaani Kapoor as the leading lady (Akshay Kumar's wife). Her character has an amazing twist to her, which is revealed much later in the story. Lara Dutta plays Mrs Indira Gandhi and Huma Qureshi, a special agent working for the Dubai government.

Akshay Kumar has definitely nailed the look and nuances of a special agent, who lives a normal life but drops everything when duty calls. He is in top form looking slick and suave in his retro look and for the most part holds the movie with his acting skills.

Vaani Kapoor has a sweet but impactful role. She excels in playing a good-humoured character and looks stunning, and brings a lot of freshness when on-screen. For Lara Dutta, this could be a career-defining role. She looks so much like Mrs Gandhi and excels in her performance. Huma Qureshi, es-

pecially when her real identity is revealed, will definitely blow you away.

The narrative is gripping and every character comes with a back story or sudden twist, so the audience doesn't lose interest.

The production designer who recreated the 1980s deserves special mention. Bell Bottom is a must-watch on the big screen.

IAN S

Woman labourer making hay from grains

Widow Asha Nayak of Kotpad, who once struggled to make ends meet, now rakes in the moolah by selling eco-friendly 'rakhis' made from paddy grains

Bhubaneswar: Apart from foods, paddy farming also provides other valuable products that help the poor improve their standard of living.

Widow Asha Nayak from Kotpad in Koraput district is a shining example. Once struggling to arrange square meals for the family following her husband's death, Asha is now raking in the



Asha at her 'rakhi' stall in Kotpad

moolah by selling eco-friendly 'rakhis' made from paddy grains.

Though it is her maiden attempt to make rakhis from paddy, the move has turned out to be a profitable proposition with youngsters making beeline at her shop to buy her unique products.

Asha says, "After, losing my husband, the sole breadwinner of the family, in April, 2021, it was tough to feed my three children. First, I started working as a daily wager to eke out a living. But the earning was not adequate to meet the family needs. I had to

plan for my sons' future also. It was then that an official from Odisha Rural Development & Marketing Society (ORMAS) advised me to make 'rakhis' from paddy grains, which were high in demand last year, to supplement family income. I went for it and managed to create a new identity for myself."

She further adds: "Making idols using seeds is our family business. However, it has been badly hit due to Covid outbreak. By the grace of god, my new venture is flourishing at the moment. As I go to work during the day time, I make 'rakhis' at night with the help of my sons."

The family has so far made nearly 350 'rakhis' and most of them have been sold out. The 'rakhis' are priced in the Rs30-Rs60 range, it was learnt.

PNN

It hurts when family gets trolled: Ananya

Mumbai: Actress Ananya Pandey said that even though she takes social media trolls with a pinch of salt, it really hurts her when her family gets trolled.

Pandey was most recently trolled for her comments on the Korean boy band, *BTS*. In 2019, she launched the *Be Positive* initiative against social media bullying.

Appearing in the chat show *Pinch Season 2* by Arbaaz Khan, Pandey said, "If people troll me, I take it in a positive way, but it upsets me when they start saying things about my mom, dad and even my little sister. I don't hate my haters; in fact, I feel they are my biggest fans because they are constantly checking on me."

Pandey, who'll be seen next in the action film *Khaali Peeli* with Ishaan Khatter, said, "I have always felt that the answer to hate should be love. I started *Be Positive* so that people who have no one to talk to, can reach out to someone. Always talk to someone you trust. It can be your teacher, parents, or the cyber police." **IAN S**

Pranitha's post on Afghanistan goes viral

Bangalore: Multi-lingual actress Pranitha Subhash from Karnataka has taunted apologists in the backdrop of the Taliban taking over Afghanistan and her post has gone viral on social media.



Pranitha, the popular South Indian actress of *Bhuj*, has stated that "Apologists in India are using 'Hindu terror' as a defence to whitewash what's happening in Afghanistan. Attempts to legitimise the concept will remain a figment of their imagination. Beware, enemies are not present beyond our borders, they are around you too," she posted.

Pranitha further said reports of young girls being raped and enslaved in Afghanistan are horrifying. "What was the use of ISAF's two-decades-long presence if they don't protect the most vulnerable? Our prayers are for the safety of the Afghan people," she added.

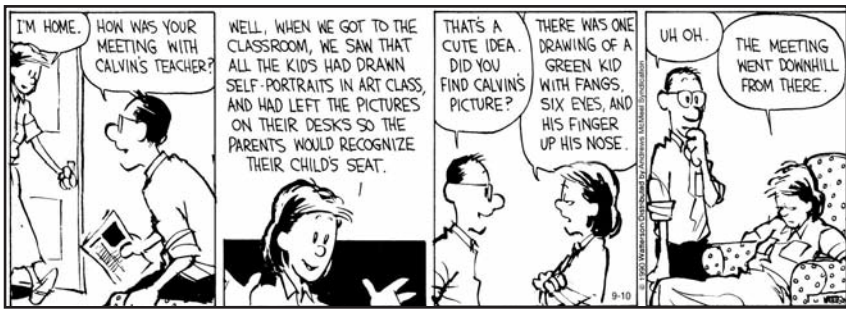
The posts went viral and people have appreciated the boldness of the actress. **IAN S**

FUN post

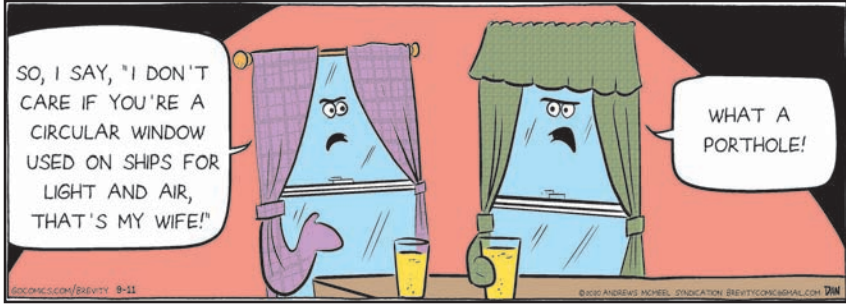
PEANUTS



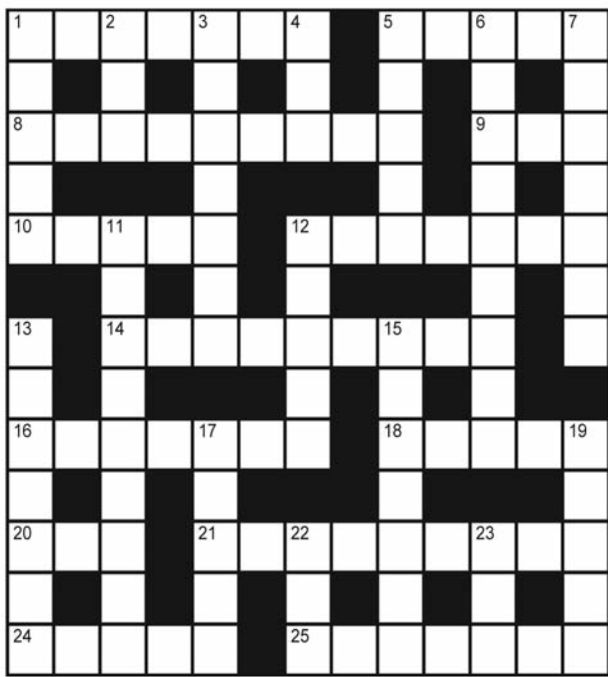
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



CROSSWORD

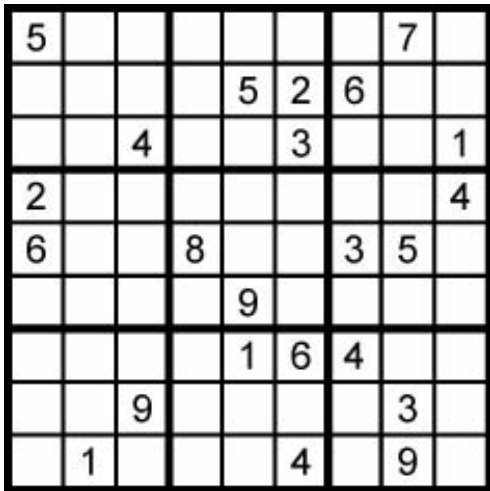


- Across**
- 1 Building custodian
 - 5 Passover feast
 - 8 Self-control
 - 9 Fluid container
 - 10 Anesthetic type
 - 12 Advice to a sad sack (5,2)
 - 14 Bramble bush
 - 16 Island south of Martinique (2,5)
 - 18 Analyze syntactically
 - 20 Caviar
 - 21 Shower starter?
 - 24 Divans
 - 25 Really bad
 - 6 Warship
 - 7 Chef's stash
 - 11 Snorkeling locale (5,4)
 - 12 Hooded snake
 - 13 Soaks up
 - 15 In a quick manner
 - 17 Woes for toes
 - 19 Supporter of the arts?
 - 22 Cretan peak
 - 23 Physics unit
- Down**
- 1 Precious stone
 - 2 Zero
 - 3 Hits the booze
 - 4 Like sushi
 - 5 Twilled fabric

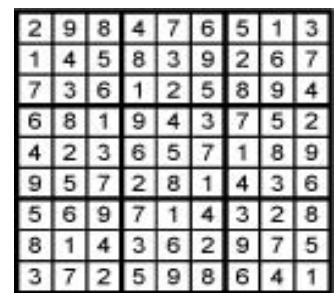
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

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



downtown

Afghan students call for unity to trounce Taliban

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, August 19: With the Taliban taking over Afghanistan, the country and its people are going through a rough phase as images and videos continue to emerge showing people's helplessness over there. Many students who are studying here appealed to Indian government and other countries to come to the rescue of the helpless civilians of Afghanistan.

As uncertainty looms large, many Afghan students staying in Odisha are spending sleepless nights as they are worried about their families in their homeland.

Orissa POST spoke to a few Afghan students studying in several colleges, universities and institutes in Odisha about the prevailing situation there, the condition of their family members and how are they coping with this situation and also about their future plans.

A final year Civil Engineering student of NIT Rourkela whose family resides in Capital city of Kabul, on condition of anonymity, said that the situation is tumultuous there and his family is living in utter fear and in isolation. He said that his father is a government employee and the Taliban people are visiting their neighbourhood every day in search of government employees. It is alleged that the Taliban are torturing government employees.

At present, nine students from Afghanistan are studying in NIT Rourkela and are in constant talks with Afghan Embassy who are reportedly unable to provide any kind of help to them as the previous government has lost control over everything.

Ferdaws Sayadi, a resident of Baghlan province in North Afghanistan studying BBA at KIIT University for the last two years, said that the situation in their area is presently normal. "But we can't guarantee that for long. My family is safe now but not sure about tomorrow," he added.

Sayadi said that the Taliban are incapable of ruling a country and that they are basically a group of militia. "My father is a doctor and my family is presently stuck inside the house with no hope to go anywhere. I'm planning to bring my family to India and have been in talk with government officials. But I'm not sure as to how much time will it take."

Asadullah Amiri of Parwan province who is also studying BBA at KIIT University for two years said that the Taliban can never rule with peace as their track record shows sufferings of people and right to life was under threat. "Therefore, I request India and other countries to come forward and provide safety and security to people of Afghanistan which should be main priority now."

Ehsan Ullah Noori, a student of M SC in Computer Science at Utkal University is also worried about the safety of his family members. He said that the Taliban are destroying the peace and tranquility of the region. If the Taliban are not stopped now, they would destroy all the possibilities of Afghanistan becoming a democratic country.

Meanwhile, Utkal University Vice-Chancellor Sabita Acharya said that she spoke to Nuri personally. His father and brothers were working in government offices in Afghanistan, she said. Their accounts have been seized. He is in severe mental trauma, Acharya stated.

"We are trying to console him that we are with him. He is safe in guest house and his bank account has also been opened in SBI. The Indian Council for Cultural Relations is funding for his education. His monthly expenses are being borne by the government of India," said the Utkal VC.

She also said that 60 students from Afghanistan have applied for studying in Utkal University this year.



Afghan students at a technical institute in Bhubaneswar

OP PHOTO

The Taliban are destroying the peace and tranquility of the region. If the Taliban are not stopped now, they would destroy all the possibilities of Afghanistan becoming a democratic country

EHSAAN ULLAH NOORI | AFGHAN STUDENT AT UTKAL UNIVERSITY

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Puri officer arrested for disproportionate assets

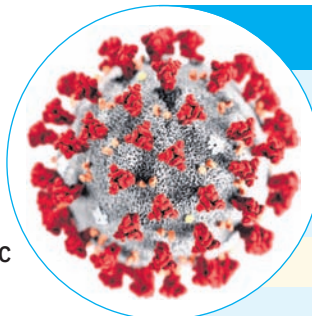
AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, August 19: The Vigilance Directorate Thursday arrested an industry promotion officer for allegedly possessing assets worth Rs 1.09 crore, disproportionate to his known sources of income.

House searches were conducted Wednesday at five places in Puri, Khurda and Nayagarh districts, all linked to the officer; a press release of the Vigilance Directorate said. The assets were unearthed following the raids at the properties of Sitaram Sahoo, industry promotion officer at the District Industries Centre in Puri. Sahoo was found in possession of assets 52 per cent more than his known sources of income, the press release said.

The officer had come under the vigilance scanner following allegations of possessing disproportionate assets. Multiple raids were conducted by eight teams. Sahoo was arrested and forwarded to the special vigilance court in Bhubaneswar.

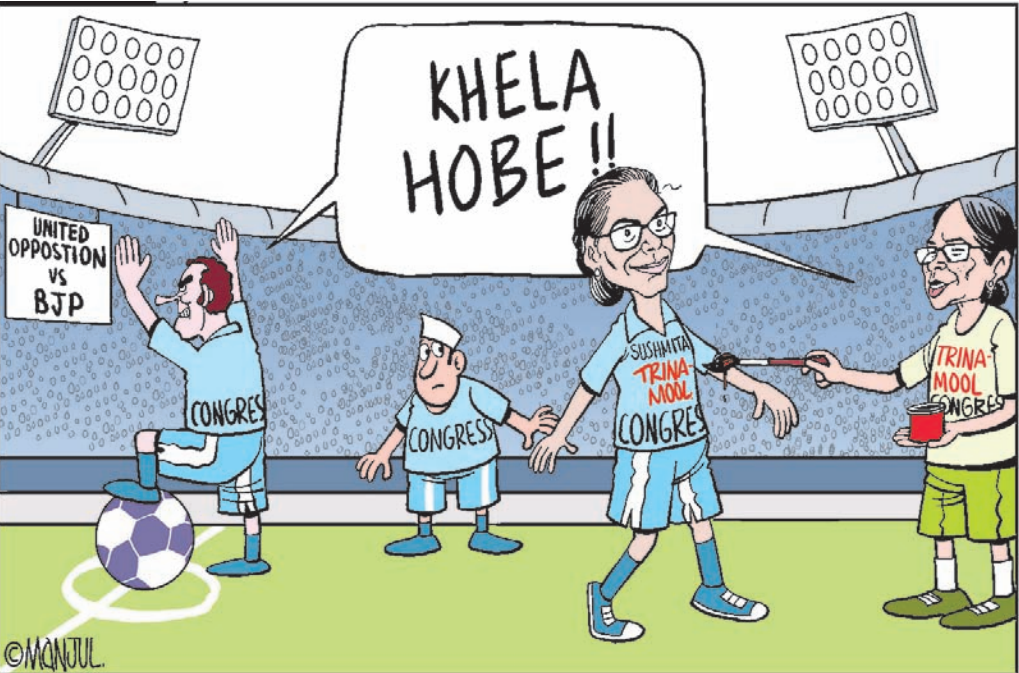
A case has been registered in this regard under the Prevention of Corruption (Amendment) Act.



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	21,04,58,213	18,85,23,245	44,11,447
India	3,23,22,258	3,15,25,080	4,33,049
Odisha	9,98,187	9,82,319	7,154

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



Vaishnaw embarks on 'Jan Ashirwad Yatra'



Union Ministers Ashwini Vaishnaw and Dharmendra Pradhan being greeted by BJP workers upon their arrival at the airport in Bhubaneswar

OP PHOTO

PNN/AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, August 19: Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw Thursday embarked on BJP's 'Jan Ashirwad Yatra' in Odisha and described the state as his 'karma bhoomi'.

The bureaucrat-turned-politician received a rousing welcome by the saffron party workers on his arrival at Biju Patnaik International Airport here.

Accompanied by Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, Vaishnaw launched the four-day programme in the state to aware people of the benefits of various central schemes.

"Odisha is always my karma bhoomi," Vaishnaw, the 1994-batch former IAS officer said.

He was district magistrate and Collector of Cuttack and Balasore in the 1990s and later became the private secretary to former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

Vaishnaw said he was overwhelmed by the reception he received from the BJP activists on his maiden visit to the state after becoming a central minister. Pradhan and Vaishnaw went to Lord Jagannath temple in Puri and were welcomed by the people on their way to the Pilgrim town from here.

Taking to Twitter, the railway minister posted a photo of him

with an elderly person who greeted him on his way to Puri.

He stopped his vehicle at several places and interacted with the people standing on both sides of the road. Vaishnaw, who hails from Rajasthan, was elected to Rajya Sabha in 2019 with the support of the ruling BJD in Odisha and became the Union minister last month.

The minister tried to prove that he belongs to Odisha as he kept on updating about his visit to the state on his official Twitter handle and wrote all the messages on the microblogging site in Odia.

BJP state general secretary Golak Mohapatra said Vaishnaw will travel to Rayagada in a train Thursday evening and visit Koraput the next day for the party's programme. He is scheduled to go to Nabarangpur Saturday and to Kalahandi and Bolangir August 22.

Pradhan will also attend various programmes in Bhubaneswar, Cuttack and Khurda from August 19 to 22, Mohapatra said. The party sources said the two Union ministers will travel 419 km in the four days and hold programmes at 115 places in six parliamentary constituencies spread over seven districts.

Another minister from Odisha, Biswaswar Tudu, however, could not participate in the party's programme as he is not well due to post-Covid complications.

Govt: Treatment only by designated staffers

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, August 19: Acting on media reports regarding enforcement of a security guard to check the blood pressure in a hospital in Ganjam, the Health department has asked the chiefs of all government healthcare facilities to engage only the designated staffers for the treatment of patients.

Additional Chief Secretary (ACS), Health and Family Welfare department, PK Mohapatra has written to the directors of Capital Hospital and Rourkela Government Hospital, chief district medical officers (CDMOs) and Superintendents of all government medical colleges in this regard.

Media reports claimed that a security guard was engaged to check the blood pressure of a patient in a hospital in Ganjam in the absence of doctors recently.

"The matter has been enquired into and it is revealed that the doctor was on duty and was measuring blood pressure of the patient and the security guard was only helping in binding the cuff of the BP instrument," Mohapatra said in his letter. "The government has taken serious note of this incident and due care should be taken so that such incidents are not repeated," he warned.

Mohapatra asked the chiefs of government-run healthcare facilities to ensure that the patients are treated or attended to only by the designated healthcare staffers. This apart, due care should be taken not to engage any non-healthcare personnel in assisting the doctors / paramedics in the process of treatment, he said.

EX-YOUTH CONG CHIEF SUCCUMBS TO COVID

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, August 19: Former Odisha Youth Congress president Sangram Keshari Jena, also the son of ex-OPCC president Jaydev Jena, died due to post-Covid-19 complications at a hospital in Hyderabad Thursday, family sources said.

Sangram was 44 years old and is survived by his wife and two children.

Sangram's younger brother Manoj said he was airlifted to the private hospital in May after his condition deteriorated due to Covid-19 related complications. He was shifted outside the state as ECMO treatment could not be made available to him in Odisha. He was on the ventilator for over three weeks after testing positive for Covid in April.

Beginning his career as a students' leader, Sangram became the general secretary, BJB College Students' Union, in 1996-97. In 2014, he also unsuccessfully fought the elections for Bhadrak Lok Sabha constituency on a Congress ticket.

OPCC president Niranjan Patnaik and many other party leaders expressed their condolences over the untimely demise of Sangram, popular among the youths.

Mandatory RT-PCR test for legislators

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, August 19: The Odisha Legislative Assembly Secretariat Thursday said that all legislators will have to undergo RT-PCR test ahead of the upcoming Monsoon Session beginning September 1.

A meeting was conducted by Speaker Surya Narayan Patro on this issue. After the meeting the Speaker said that other than the law-makers, their drivers, Assembly staffers and others expected to enter the premises will also have to undergo RT-PCR test.

The tests will be conducted at the Assembly Secretariat a few days before the Monsoon Session begins. Only those who test negative will be allowed entry. The testing sessions will be conducted in multiple shifts from August 29 to August 31. The BMC has been entrusted with the task of sanitizing the Assembly premises on a daily basis.

Special arrangements have also been made to ensure social distancing during the Monsoon Session. Videoconferencing facilities have also been set up. The speaker said that the Assembly session will be conducted with strict adherence to Covid-19 protocols.



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The borrower(s)/guarantor(s)/mortgagor(s) having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrowers/guarantors/mortgagors and the public in general that the Authorised Officer has taken **SYMBOLIC POSSESSION** of the property of below mentioned account in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules. The borrower(s)/guarantor(s)/mortgagor(s) in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of **Indian Bank, Jharsuguda Branch, Jharsuguda** for an amount mentioned herein below.

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Borrower : Sri Sibsagar Rohidas, S/o Indra Rohidas, (Mortgagor) Gurantor: 1. Sri Santosh Rohidas, S/o Sri Krupa Rohidas, 2. Sri Rohitosh Rohidas, S/o Sri Krupa Rohidas, all are At-Brundamal, Jharsuguda, PIN-768203	All that Part & parcel of Land & Building recorded in the name of Sri. Sibsagar Rohidas	15/04/2021	18.08.2021	₹8,16,172/- as on 31.03.2021 + interest costs & expenses thereon

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POSSESSION NOTICE
[Rule-8(1)] of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules-2002

City logs 553 new dengue cases in 10 days

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, August 19: The state Capital has recorded as many as 553 cases within the last 10 days, which is stated to be the highest jump in new cases since the outbreak.

The City is also observing an alarming rise in dengue cases as the caseload goes beyond the 1500-mark, with 82 new cases detected Thursday.

As per sources from the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC), Thursday's was the highest single-day spike. With this, the tally of dengue cases reached 1,552, the highest ever recorded in the last five years.

While cases have been coming in since January from around the City, the last 10 days have observed the sharpest rise.

The City reported its first case of dengue this year earlier in January. While only three cases were reported in the entire month, two were observed in February. This was followed by three in March and two in April. While no cases were detected in May, only two popped up in June.

However, massive spike in cases



was observed in July with the detection of 551 cases. While only 10-20 cases used to be reported earlier, the numbers increased to 30-40 everyday. Meanwhile, the last ten days have already observed 543 new cases.

“Cases recorded are cumulative, and active cases are less in number. Out of the total cases, 1,060 have recovered and others are under ob-

servation. We are continuously carrying out sanitation and awareness drives around the affected areas. The daily caseload will soon see a drop,” said a BMC official.

While most of these cases have been reported from slums of Chandrasekharpur, Niladri Vihar and Sailshree Vihar, residents have blamed the civic body's indifference for rise in cases. “The city observes

While most of these cases have been reported from slums of Chandrasekharpur, Niladri Vihar and Sailshree Vihar, residents have blamed the civic body's indifference for the rise in cases

The total tally of dengue cases is at 1,552 which is also the highest in the last five years

Special teams deployed in affected areas have visited 21,572 households covering around 92,000 people and destroying as many as 54,154 breeding sources having 55,464 larva of Aedes Aegypti (vector carrier of Dengue)

dengue cases every year but garbage collection is not done on a regular basis. Issues like water logging are not taken care of,” complained Bijay Behera, an activist here.

Meanwhile, the BMC official also added that until now, special teams deployed in affected areas have visited 21,572 households covering around 92,000 people. During their visits, the teams have destroyed 54,154 breeding sources having 55,464 larva of Aedes Aegypti (vector carrier of Dengue).

Racket busted: 1,500 stolen batteries worth ₹10L seized

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, August 19: The Commissionerate Police seized around 1,500 stolen batteries near the KTM showroom at Mancheswar Industrial Estate here Wednesday night. The police also arrested six persons involved in the battery heist racket.

The accused were identified as Md Estyak, 35, of Mallick Bazar in Kolkata, Musaruddin Mulla, 24, Akram Sekh, 24, Sekh Sabir, 32, of Diamond Hawrah in South 24 Pragana and Surjit Singh Saini, 55, of Godakpur; under Beldah police station in West Midnapur district of West Bengal and Sk Jafar, 25, of town area in Ganjam.

Following inputs from reliable sources, a team of Mancheswar police rushed to a place near KTM showroom where the accused were found waiting for someone. The police during search found three vehicles including one Ashok Leyland truck (OR-05B-2555) and a light commercial vehicle (OD-07AE-0623) of the same company, one Tata truck (OD-07L-2536) loaded with huge quantities of batteries.



The accused failed to show any documents regarding the ownership of the huge quantity of goods loaded in the three vehicles. Subsequently, they confessed to the police that the batteries were stolen from different places in Ganjam and adjoining districts and they were transporting the booty to a buyer in Kolkata.

The accused revealed that they were waiting for one of their associates in Bhubaneswar at the showroom when the raid happened. The seized goods have been valued at around Rs 10 lakh. The racket used to collect the stolen batteries across Odisha and resell them after refurbishing.

Lokayukta seeks report on SBM irregularities

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, August 19 : The Odisha Lokayukta has sought the response from the project director (PD) of DRDA and Executive Engineer of Rural Water Supply and Sanitation (RWSS) of Bhadrak in connection with the alleged irregularities in implementation of Swachh Bharat Mission in Chandbali block.

The authorities have been asked to submit their responses by the next hearing scheduled to be held September 21.

Earlier, the Lokayukta had served notice on the Block Development Officer, Junior Engineer (RWSS) of Chandbali Block, Sarpanch, Panchayat Executive Officer and Gram Rozgar Sevak of Khadalpokhari Gram Panchayat seeking their replies over the allegations of massive fund embezzlement under the scheme. They had been directed to submit their response by August 18, but to no avail. So, the Lokayukta has again issued reminders asking the aforementioned officials to send their responses positively by September 21.

PET aspirants stage stir, seek change in eligibility criteria

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, August 19: Students and members of All Odisha Bachelor of Physical Education (BPEd) Teachers and Masters of Physical Education (MPed) Students' Union protested at the Directorate of Secondary Education (DSE) office here Thursday, demanding change in eligibility criteria for the posts of contractual Physical Education Teacher (PET) in government secondary schools of the state.

The students staged a dharna in front of the DSE office at Heads of Departments building (Nataala) and shouted slogans against the Directorate. Apprehending disturbances, the authorities locked the main gate of the building, sources added.

Recently, the state government had released an official notification for

recruitment against 4,619 vacancies for the post of contractual teachers, including 1,260 PET posts. As per the notification, the candidates who have qualified Plus II or its equivalent examination from a recognised institution with minimum 50% marks in aggregate (45% for SC/ST/PH/SEBC candidates) and CPED/ BPEd/ MPed from a recognised board/university can apply for the posts.

However, the students demanded to amend the educational qualification criteria stating that those who have secured less mark in Plus II examination cannot apply for the post even though they possess BPEd certificates. “We have raised the issue before the concerned minister and director. However, all our demands have fallen in deaf ears. We will continue our protest until our demands are not met,” said Shiba, an agitating student.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, August 19: Odisha's Covid-19 tally rose to 9,98,187 Thursday as 1,041 more people, including 128 children and adolescents, tested positive for the infection, while 68 fresh fatalities pushed the state's coronavirus death toll to 7,154, a Health official said.

Though the daily count had remained below 1,000 for three consecutive days from Monday, it rose to 1,041 in the last 24 hours. The daily test positivity rate (TPR) also witnessed an increase to 1.57 per cent from 1.43 per cent Wednesday, the official said.

As many as 605 new cases came from quarantine centres while the remaining 436 fresh infections were detected during contact tracing.

Khurda district, under which Bhubaneswar falls, recorded the

highest number of new cases at 398, followed by Cuttack (176). Cuttack registered the highest number of fresh fatalities at 18, followed by Jagatsinghpur (10), Khurda (seven), Dhenkanal (six), Bhadrak and Mayurbhanj (five each), Angul (four), Balasore, Jajpur and Kendrapara (three each), Ganjam (two), and Nayagarh and Sundargarh (one each).

Fifty-three coronavirus patients have died due to comorbidities to date, the official said.

The state now has 9,664 active cases, while 9,81,316 people have recovered from the disease thus far, including 845 Wednesday. The coastal state has tested over 1.72 crore samples for Covid-19 so far, including 66,281 Wednesday, and the cumulative positivity rate stands at 5.77 per cent, he added.

The coastal state has so far inoculated 2,01,03,544 people, of whom



46,76,107 have received both doses. Meanwhile, around 12 per cent of the new cases reported among children and adolescents in the age group of 0 to 18 years have emerged as a cause of concern for the administration.

Though the daily count had remained below 1,000 for three consecutive days from Monday, it rose to 1,041 in the last 24 hours

The daily test positivity rate (TPR) also witnessed an increase to 1.57 per cent from 1.43 per cent Wednesday	Around 12 per cent of the new cases are children and adolescents in the age group of 0 to 18 years
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coming days due to a possible third wave of the pandemic. Since August 15, out of the 4,680 people who tested positive for Coronavirus in Odisha, 604 cases were found among children and adolescents.

Director of Health Service (DHS) Bijay Mohapatra said the state has made adequate arrangements for the treatment of Covid-19 affected children.

TEACHER'S PROMOTION

HC summons S&ME secy

Cuttack: The Orissa High Court has directed School and Mass Education (S&ME) department Principal Secretary Satyabrata Sahu to depose before it on a case pertaining to the promotion of a lady teacher of Jagatsinghpur district. Justice Bishwanath Rath has directed Sahu to depose before the court September 6 and explain as to why action would not be taken against him for disobeying the court order several times. Petitioner Shobharani Mohanty had approached the Odisha Administrative Tribunal in 2015 in connection with her promotion. The tribunal had given its verdict in favour of Mohanty. However, the S&ME department had not obeyed the tribunal order. Subsequently, Mohanty filed a case in the HC.

NGT summons Koraput DM, DFO in deforestation case

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, August 19: The Eastern Bench of National Green Tribunal (NGT) has issued orders seeking personal appearance of Koraput Collector, Jeypore Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) and others in connection with a deforestation case.

This comes after the committee formed by NGT failed to furnish details regarding the case owing to lack of coordination among different departments. The case was related to illegal felling of trees in Gulumi forest of Koraput district.

“In view of this matter, we di-

rect the Integrated Regional Office of Ministry of Environment and Forests, Bhubaneswar, the Collector of Koraput and the Divisional Forest Officer, Jeypore Forest Division to appear before the tribunal through videoconference on the next date fixed,” the NGT said in its order.

The tribunal was told that while the Ministry of Environment and Forests was the nodal office for the committee, it did not receive any information from DFO and inspection of the site could not be done.

Petitioner Kiran Kumar Mishra and others had alleged that Stage II environmental clearance of a power industry had expired in 2005 but

the project works continued sans clearance. It was also stated that a government committee had already found the firm violating norms.

The illegal actions reported by the local DFO included digging of a channel from a river to the power industry, and earth cutting to form a road to the same within 4,772 hectare of the revenue forest land which was not handed over by the revenue department to the firm.

The NGT later directed formation of a joint committee comprising the Koraput district Collector, regional office of the Ministry of Forest and Environment and Jeypore DFO to probe into the matter.

Vaishnav inspects Bhub Rly station

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, August 19: Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav Thursday visited Bhubaneswar railway station and inspected the platforms.

He interacted with passengers and found out that they were happy with the overall cleanliness of the station. He said, “I have received many memorandums regarding the East side entry of the Bhubaneswar railway station. So I thought to inspect it too. It will be developed soon. Railway station is the heart of any city. Same is the case with Bhubaneswar. We must keep it clean, tidy and healthy.” After the inspection, he boarded the Hirakhand Express en route to Rayagada.

LPG cylinder explodes in Khurda, injures seven

POST NEWS NETWORK

Khurda, August 19: At least seven persons suffered critical burn injuries after an LPG cylinder exploded inside a house at Gambharimunda village under Banpur police limits in Khurda district Thursday.

According to a source, the mishap took place at the home of one Rabindra Pradhan from the village. The cylinder caught fire while a family member was cooking Thursday morning.

Neighbours ran to the family's aid and attempted to douse the fire. However, the cylinder exploded

Neighbours ran to the family's rescue and attempted to douse the fire, but the cylinder exploded

and seven people were injured in the incident. One of the seven injured is a member of Pradhan's family, while the other six are villagers.

As their condition worsened, they were all sent to hospitals in Bhubaneswar and Cuttack, locals said. Police arrived at the spot upon being notified and are carrying out an investigation.

IMD: Heavy rain unlikely this week

Bhubaneswar: The regional office of the India Meteorological Department (IMD) Thursday predicted that chances of heavy rain in the next week are less. The department, however, issued warning of heavy rainfall for Friday in six districts. “Heavy rainfall is very likely to occur at one or two places over the districts of Deogarh, Sonepur, Boudh, Kandhamal, Angul and Sambalpur,” it said in its warning Friday. It also added, “Light to moderate rain or thundershower is very likely to occur at most places over the districts of Odisha.” The department however has not issued any warning of heavy rain, very heavy rain, thunderstorms and lightning in the next four days and has said that there could be little change in the local weather for the next few days after that.

PNN/AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, August 19: A heritage research group Thursday claimed to have stumbled upon the ruins of an ancient temple of 13-14th century CE in Puri district.

The four-member team of ‘Rediscover Lost Heritage’, the group currently listing the archaeological monuments of the Ratnachira Valley, found the ruins near the mouth of the Bhargavi river in Balanga area, 31 km from Puri city.

Project coordinator Deepak Nayak said that the remains of the ancient temple were found scattered, both inside the river bed and the surrounding areas. “The

temple may date back to 13th-14th century CE or earlier, considering the iconography of the antiquities,” Nayak said in a release.

Many of the blocks have also been carted away by the villagers for construction. A stairway from the river bed to the steep bank has around two dozen of these carved ancient temple blocks, it stated.

According to the team leader Anil Dhir, the Ratnachira Valley is a treasure house of many archaeological wonders, most of them being obscure and unknown as they have not been documented.

Legend has it that Lord Rama had drawn the Ratnachira river to quench Devi Sita's thirst, using her pearl ring to chart its course.



The ancient river, which now runs dry for most of the year, has many myths and legends with flourishing heritage on both sides of its short stretch.

The team found broken images,

pillars, door jambs and a multitude of minor broken artifacts. They also discovered carved stone panels, some of which have been affixed by the sides of the nearby Akhandalamani temple, which

was made about a century ago.

“We came across an intricately carved lintel section of a broken door jamb. The central figure is a beautiful image of Goddess Gajalaxmi,” Nayak said. “Nagakanya images were seen in many carved stone blocks, besides a lot of fine filigree work of the older temple,” he added.

The team discovered that there was a large cluster of blocks in the middle of the river that appears to be the foundation of the ancient temple, according to the statement. There are hundreds of huge sunken stone slabs on the bank, possibly once used in the temple's construction.

Some of the stone slabs, made of

sandstone and laterite, have consistent and identical holes on both their sides, suggesting the use of iron clamping. Many were damaged and ruined by machinery used for sand mining, it added.

“Considering the bulky size of the stone slabs, one can imagine it was not a small temple but a mid-sized or bigger temple,” Dhir said.

A more detailed study is needed by experts to determine the antiquity of the temple, which certainly crumbled due to the change of course of the Bhargavi river. Dhir appealed to the state Archaeology department to conduct a proper survey of the entire 60 km of Ratnachira valley and document the monuments.

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Lack of fresh water may spell doom for Bhitarkanika

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kendrapara, August 19: Construction of a drinking water project on the Kharasrota river is being opposed by local residents and activists as they claim the project will have a bad impact on the Bhitarkanika National Park which was declared as a Ramsar site by UNESCO in 2002.

The under-construction drinking water project on the river at Barunadiha area under Rajkanika block of Kendrapara district has been a cause of concern for environmentalists too.

According to them, any decrease in the amount of fresh water will have a catastrophic impact on the wetland. It is feared that the wetland will not get any fresh water in the coming days.

As many as seven rivers and 27 rivulets that flow through Kendrapada district help protect the mangrove forests in Bhitarkanika. The district heavily depends on the Brahmani, the Baitarani and the Mahanadi river systems.

If the flow of fresh water is stopped or reduced due to the project, it will spell disaster for the ecosystem of Bhitarkanika, they feared. Trying to save Bhitarkanika from the possible damage, environmentalists from different parts of the state have raised five questions for the district administration,



Any decrease in the amount of fresh water will have a catastrophic impact on the Bhitarkanika wetland. It is feared that the wetland will not get any fresh water in the coming days

Mangrove forest grows well at the places where there are saline and fresh water in 60:40 proportion. Due to lack of fresh water in coastal areas, there are only casuarina jungles and no mangrove forest

The stream of the Brahmani river will not be sufficient to keep the ecosystem of Bhitarkanika alive. At a time when the ecosystem of Bhitarkanika is threatened, the stoic silence of the DFO and Chief Forest Conservator has raised doubts

State government and Central government as well as for the state and district level forest officials. If they fail to offer satisfactory answers, they will intensify the drive against the project, the environmentalists warned.

Srikant Nayak, Biswanath Mohanty and Faizal Khan from Bhubaneswar, Soumyaranjan Mohanty from Puri, Balaram Panda from Rayagada and Hemant Kumar Rout, Prof Bhubanmohan Jena

and lecturer Kshitish Kumar Singh from Kendrapara said the decrease in fresh water will destroy the mangrove forest in the region.

Mangrove forest grows well at the places where there are saline and fresh water in 60:40 proportion. Due to lack of fresh water in coastal areas, there are only casuarina jungles and no mangrove forest.

Of the 480-kilometre-long coastline in the state, mangrove forest spreads over 222 square kilometre.

tres. Of the 48-kilometre-long coast in Kendrapara district, mangrove forest spreads over 183 square kilometres.

The Bhitarkanika wetland receives the required amount of fresh water from rivers like Mahanadi, Baitarani and Brahmani's tributary Kharasrota.

Due to various reasons, these rivers will soon go dry. With Chhattisgarh constructing a barrage on the Mahanadi river, Kendrapara receives comparatively less water during the non-monsoon period.

At the same time, a mega reservoir on the Mahanadi river is under construction at Santara under Kujang block in Jagatsinghpur district. With an objective to supply water to 200 villages in Marshaghai and Mahakalpara blocks in Kendrapara district, two mega projects are currently under construction. As a result, Bhitarkanika will not get sufficient water.

Similarly, the water of the Baitarani river hardly reaches Bhitarkanika during the non-monsoon period. As of now, construction of a reservoir on Baitarani river is underway. This will further hamper the flow of fresh water to Bhitarkanika. Two mega irrigation projects and an equal number of mega drinking water projects will be constructed on the Kharasrota river. At the same time,

water will be drawn from the river for the mega drinking water project in Bhadrak district.

The stream of Brahmani river will not be sufficient to keep the ecosystem of Bhitarkanika alive. At a time when the ecosystem of Bhitarkanika is threatened, the stoic silence of the DFO and Chief Forest Conservator has raised doubts.

Nuahata of Chandbali block in Bhadrak district and Barunadiha, where the controversial drinking water project is under construction, are coming in the eco sensitive zone. The environmentalists sought to know how the project is being allowed in an eco sensitive zone.

Their third question is why no project is being taken up to help the water flow of rivers reach Bhitarkanika. The fourth one is why no study has been undertaken with respect to availability of fresh water.

Their last question is when the fact-finding committee will submit its report on the condition of the Bhitarkanika National Park after completion of mega projects at different locations.

When contacted, DFO Jagyandatta Pati said the Bhadrak drinking water project has been passed in December 2020 while IIT, Hyderabad has already submitted a report on the project.

No sign of development in Malkangiri villages

POST NEWS NETWORK

Malkangiri/Chitrakonda, August 19: The district administration claims it is implementing a series of development projects in various parts of the district for the benefit of local residents, a report said. However, the so-called beneficiaries continue to live a life of neglect and deprivation for shoddy implementation of the welfare schemes.

A case in point is four villages under Khairaput block where people remain cut off from the block headquarters during rainy season due to absence of a bridge in the river. Kirimpali river flowing in the area separates Kadaguda, Kandhaguda, Nandapuriaguda and Sargiguda villages from the block headquarters. These villages are situated about 1 to 2 km from the Khairaput block.

People of these villages travel daily to Khairaput block by crossing the river for their daily work. However, Kirimpali river cuts off these villages from the mainland during rainy season.

As a result, people in these villages had to cross the river in groups by holding one another's hands. They risk their lives while crossing the river as there is every possibility of them getting swept



away in the river:

Residents said the river Kirimpali has turned into a sorrow for these four villages. Dama Majhi, Chandra Sekhar Nayak and Jalandhar Dur alleged they have long been demanding a bridge, but their pleas are yet to be addressed.

In a separate case, residents in Dhuliput panchayat under Chitrakonda block have to travel 18 km to Hataguda in Badapada to get rations as there is no fair price shop in their panchayat. The panchayat located on the fringes of Andhra Pradesh has over 25 villages under its jurisdiction. They spend ₹5 as travel fare for 1-kg rice. The residents have demanded a fair price shop in their panchayat.

TAKING A PLEDGE



Students of Malkangiri College taking a pledge for protection of children from child marriage, trafficking, sexual exploitation and other evils as part of a campaign 'Dinatie Sisunka Pain'

OP PHOTO

Balidiha dam, a big draw for visitors in Mayurbhanj

POST NEWS NETWORK

Baripada, August 19: Balidiha dam under Shyamakhunta block in Mayurbhanj district has recently emerged as a favourite tourist spot. Its picturesque beauty is so enchanting that visitors who come here immediately fall for its charm.

Nested 17 kilometres away from Baripada town, Balidiha dam's main attraction is sparkling water overflowing the dam and running down the steps forming a perfect background for clicking selfies. Nature lovers throng the spot in good numbers and return after spending some quality time there.

The dam was constructed on Palapala river in 1912 by the then Mayurbhanj king Sriram Chandra Bhanj Deo. The dam was designed by foreign engineers. The objective behind the dam was to irrigate farmlands and provide food to people in lieu of their labour. It had to store water during rainy season and release it later for agricultural purpose.

Since the British era reservoir is silted up, the excess water keeps running over and goes down the crest which is designed like a flight of steps, in July, August and September.

The charming effect of the water flowing down the steps is to be seen to be believed. These days, visitors from Balasore, Bhadrak, Keonjhar districts and from places including West Bengal and Jharkhand flock at the spot



DAM WAS CONSTRUCTED ON PALAPALA RIVER IN 1912 BY THE THEN MAYURBHANJ KING SRIRAM CHANDRA BHANJ DEO. THE DAM WAS DESIGNED BY FOREIGN ENGINEERS AND THE OBJECTIVE BEHIND THE DAM WAS TO IRRIGATE FARMLANDS AND PROVIDE FOOD TO PEOPLE IN LIEU OF THEIR LABOUR

LOCAL PEOPLE URGED THE ADMINISTRATION TO RESURRECT THE DAM AND DEVELOP THE PLACE AS A TOURIST SPOT BY SETTING UP A PARK SO THAT TOURISTS, INSTEAD OF COMING ONLY DURING THE RAINY SEASON, CAN VISIT THE SPOT ALL THROUGH THE YEAR

and capture the moments in photographs.

Since the flow of water is slow, starting from children to elders, everyone can enjoy here. Similipal's green forest with the blue sky stretching over like a canopy and below the reservoir give the visitors an experience of a lifetime.

Describing their exhilarating experience, Saraswati Nayak, a visitor, said, "I feel lucky because during our stay, there were cotton candy clouds floating in the sky and at the same time, the sun was setting down the horizon, scattering its bright golden rays on the water of the reservoir. I can never

forget the moments we spent here."

Meanwhile, lack of basic facilities at the spot disheartened many. "The district administration should develop the spot. It should have sitting arrangements and houses, cottages for tourists who want to spend some time there. Most importantly, steps should be taken for the safety of visitors," observed Saroj Nayak, another visitor.

Similarly, local people urged the administration to resurrect the dam and develop the place as a tourist spot by setting up a park so that tourists, instead of coming only during the rainy season, can visit the spot all through the year.

BJP slams govt over health cards

POST NEWS NETWORK

Malkangiri, August 19: Leaders of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) decried the government's move to launch health cards for people under the Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana in Malkangiri district.

Addressing a press meet here Friday, Malkangiri MLA and BJP's district unit president Aditya Madhi alleged that the state government has laid a trap through health cards to grab voters ahead of the coming three-tier panchayat elections.

"The government has changed Biju Krushak Bima Yojana to the Biju Swasthya Bima Yojana to influence voters"

"The state government had earlier introduced the Biju Krushak Bima Yojana, but the scheme has become ineffective. In Malkangiri, no farmer has benefitted from the crop insurance scheme," he pointed out.

The BJP leader also said farm-

ers could have got ₹5 lakh from the Centre-sponsored Ayushman Bharat Yojana, if the state government had implemented it.

"The government has changed the Biju Krushak Bima Yojana to the Biju Swasthya Bima Yojana to influence voters. Now, the Chief Minister, eight ministers, chairpersons of 10 corporations and MLAs from other districts will visit the district to create an electoral atmosphere," he observed. He demanded a super specialty hospital in the district and land pattas for forest dwellers.

Big bucks from lemon grass farming

POST NEWS NETWORK

Baripada, August 19: Tribal-dominated Mayurbhanj district is known for sabai grass farming, but a sexagenarian farmer in the district has shown a way how to earn from lemon grass cultivation. He earns over a lakh of rupees per month from lemon grass farming, apart from providing livelihood to 25 families.

The tribal farmer has set an example for others in the matter of self employment. Jitendranath Murmu, 60, a resident of Dunguridihi under Baripada block, had been cultivating sabai grass in his farmland. Like him, scores of other farmers used to do the same because of high demand of sabai grass in the local market and outside. But lockdown and shutdown severely affected the sabai grass farming, locals said.

Some of them thought of doing something else to eke out a living. Jitendranath wanted to grow lemon grass on his farmland.

"Sabai grass farming has been a traditional calling. But over years, farmers are unable to get right price for the sabai grass. Another factor is that sabai grass grown in West Bengal is sold in Mayurbhanj market, denting the business of local farmers. Farmers had to incur losses and gradually have turned away from the farming," Jitendranath explained.

He added that processing of sabai grass in unfavorable weather was a problem that led to loss for him for years.

"I stopped doing sabai grass cultivation. I heard lemon grass has better market outside. Initially, I farmed lemon grass on an acre of land on an experimental basis. For two years, it failed to fetch me profits. I followed YouTube about techniques of lemon grass. Then, it was successful," he added.

He expanded the lemon grass farming to 60 acres.



THE TRIBAL FARMER AS WELL AS SCORES OF OTHER FARMERS USED TO DO SABAI GRASS FARMING BECAUSE OF ITS HIGH DEMAND IN THE LOCAL MARKET AND OUTSIDE. BUT LOCKDOWN AND SHUTDOWN SEVERELY AFFECTED THE SABAI GRASS FARMING, LOCALS SAID

The farming has become profitable for him.

"Lemon grass farming needs certain kind of land where it will be harvestable within three to four months. Oil is extracted from the grass. Lemon grass has no market in the locality. So I set up a lemon grass processing plant which extracts oil from grass. The oil is sold outside the state," he said.

Jitendranath's lemon grass processing plant produces seven to eight litres of oil every day. A litre of lemon oil is sold for ₹1,100 to ₹1,200 to a trader in Bihar, he said.

Lemon grass oil is used in manufacturing of soap, perfume and talcum powder.

The sexagenarian has also engaged some unemployed youths of his village in his farming. They earn their livelihood from this.

Meanwhile, his lemon grass farming has inspired others to do so. The government has provided ₹22 lakh under MGNREGS to nine local farmers to purchase lemon grass saplings.

Observers said that lemon grass has a huge potential for income generation for unemployed youths. The government should come out with financial support and incentives to boost this farming. Interested farmers should be imparted technical training with creation of marketing facility, they added.

Sambalpur Municipal Corporation
Sambalpur
Email Id: sambalpurm.hud@nic.in
'e' Procurement Notice
Bid Identification No.: 02/SMC_SBP/2021-22
No. C-774:- The Municipal Commissioner on behalf of Municipal Corporation, Sambalpur invites tenders in Single Cover System. Bid documents consisting of specification the Schedule of Quantities and the set of terms and conditions of contract and other necessary documents can be seen in the Govt. Website i.e. <https://tendersodisha.gov.in>
1. Number of Civil Works: **23 (Twenty Three) numbers**
2. Estimated Costs: **1.78 lakhs to 17.85 lakhs**
3. Period of completion: As per NIT
4. Date and time of availability of the bid documents in the portal: **From 11.00 A.M. of 21.08.2021 to 05.00 PM of 03.09.2021**
5. Last Date/Time for receipt of bids in the portal: **05.00 PM of 03.09.2021**
6. Bids will be opened on : **11.00 AM of Dt.04.09.2021**
7. Name and address of the officer inviting bid: **Municipal Commissioner, Sambalpur Municipal Corporation, Sambalpur**
Sd./- Commissioner, Sambalpur Municipal Corporation
OIPR-13122/11/0014/2122

OFFICE OF THE DIVISIONAL FOREST OFFICER, CHILIKA WILDLIFE DIVISION, BALUGAON						
At/Po- Gopinathpur, Dist- Khordha, Email- chilkawilddivision@gmail.com						
TENDER CALL NOTICE						
TENDER CALL NOTICE NO-01 of 2021-22						
No. MM-163						
Sl. No.	Name of Work	Approx Estimated Cost (Rs.)	Class of Contract or eligible	Bid Security/ E.M.D. (Rs.)	Cost of documents (Non-refundable) (Rs.)	Period of completion (in months)
1	2	3	4	5	6	
1	Construction of Range Officer Residence, Tangi Wildlife Range of Chilika WL Division. (Composite work Civil+EI+PH)	17,47,321/-	D&C	Bid Security Declaration to be submitted	6,000/-	05 (Five) calendar Months
2	Construction of Forester Quarter at Arakhakuda of Satapada WL Range of Chilika WL Division. (Composite work Civil+EI+PH)	14,41,071/-	D&C	Bid Security Declaration to be submitted	6,000/-	05 (Five) calendar Months
3	Construction of Forest Guard Quarter at Mukteswar of Tangi WL Range of Chilika WL Division. (Composite work Civil+EI+PH)	10,75,000/-	D&C	Bid Security Declaration to be submitted	6,000/-	05 (Five) calendar Months
4	Construction of Forest Guard Quarter at Rambhartia of Satapada WL Range of Chilika WL Division. (Composite work Civil+EI+PH)	10,75,000/-	D&C	Bid Security Declaration to be submitted	6,000/-	05 (Five) calendar Months
The bid documents, Tender documents, terms & conditions will be available in the office of the DFO, Chilika Wildlife Division, Balugaon from 03.09.2021 to 17.09.2021 in any Govt. working day. OIPR-08015/11/0001/2122						
Sd./- I/C DIVISIONAL FOREST OFFICER, CHILIKA WILDLIFE DIVISION						

EAST COAST RAILWAY
CORRIGENDUM TO
E-Tender No. PCEECoR2122TP03
The Tendered Quantity & Estimated Value have been modified in respect of the above tender in <https://www.ireps.gov.in>.
All concerned to visit the website to take note of the changes.
Deputy Chief Engineer/TP/ Bhubaneswar
PR-300/M/21-22

EAST COAST RAILWAY
e-Tender Notice No. SNTPBSSEIPRDPOT032021, Date: 16.08.2021
Name of the Work: ALL INDOOR AND OUTDOOR SIGNALLING WORKS (EXCLUDING MSDAC) FOR PROVISION OF NEW ELECTRONIC INTERLOCKING AT PADADEEP FOR POWER OPERATION OF ADDITIONAL POINTS AND SIGNALS OF BOT LINES, IFCCO/CONCOR SIDING, PEQCTPL LINES OF KHURDA ROAD DIVISION OF EAST COAST RAILWAY.
Approx cost of the work: ₹15,54,19,593/-, Completion Period of the work: 12 (Twelve) Months.
Date & time of Tender Closing: 07.09.2021,1030 hrs.
No manual offers sent by Post/Courier/ Fax or in person shall be accepted against such e-Tenders, even if these are submitted on firm's letter head and received in time. All such manual offers shall be rejected summarily without any consideration.
Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-Tenders is available in website <http://www.ireps.gov.in>
Note: The prospective tenderers are advised to visit the website 15 (Fifteen) days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes/ corrigendum issued for this tender.
Dy. Chief Signal & Telecom Engineer (P&D)/ Bhubaneswar
PR-51/CE/21-22

Be only a burning fire for progress, take whatever comes to you as an aid to your progress and immediately make whatever progress is required.

THE MOTHER



Friends of the Taliban?

The days and nights following the Taliban’s capture of Kabul and the collapse of the Afghan government have been remarkably calm. Most shops and businesses are closed. Ordinary Afghans are hiding in their homes. The Taliban are acting as a police force, protecting the city from marauders. And yet, in this moment of relative stillness, Afghans are facing a monumental realisation: they now live in a completely new country.

In defending his decision to withdraw all American troops from Afghanistan, US President Joe Biden acknowledged that events unfolded “more quickly” than US officials had anticipated. According to Biden, that is because Afghanistan’s political leaders, including President Ashraf Ghani, “gave up and fled the country,” and “the Afghan military collapsed, sometimes without trying to fight.” Afghanistan’s acting Defence Minister, General Bismillah Khan Mohammadi, defended the military, tweeting, “They tied our hands from behind and sold the country. Curse Ghani and his gang.”

Whatever happened in Kabul’s corridors of power last week, now it is the Taliban that occupies them. But who are the Taliban, which the world’s mightiest country spent more than \$2 trillion attempting to defeat, and what will their return to power mean for Afghans and their neighbours?

The Taliban are not a unified force, but rather a motley collection of groups with conflicting interests. There are significant differences between the “civilized” political wing represented by the political office in Doha, influential clergy, and the numerous warlords on the ground. Afghans’ prospects depend crucially on which elements of the Taliban prove dominant. That is why it is essential to identify and support the more moderate Taliban leaders.

Here, there might be good news. The latest information suggests that Taliban co-founder and political chief Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar will become Afghanistan’s new leader. He has positioned himself as a pragmatic, experienced, and thoughtful leader, capable of uniting influential Taliban groupings around him and negotiating effectively with international actors. August 17, Baradar arrived in Afghanistan.

Moreover, Taliban leaders have also pledged to create an “inclusive Islamic government.” According to Suhail Shaheen, a Taliban spokesperson, such a government would include non-Taliban Afghans, including some “well-known figures.” One such figure could be former Afghan President Hamid Karzai, who has formed a coordination council to manage a peaceful transfer of power. That council – which is now in Doha to meet with Taliban leadership – also includes Abdullah Abdullah, chairman of Afghanistan’s High Council for National Reconciliation, and former Prime Minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar.

Ironically, this sort of “inclusivity” would exclude many of the Taliban’s more radical segments, raising the risk that the extremists will seek partnerships with terrorist groups like al-Qaeda or the Islamic State. But the bigger risk would arise from efforts to turn Afghanistan into a mono-ethnic (Pashtun) state, based on a winner-take-all mindset. This would almost certainly reignite civil war.

Beyond building an inclusive government, the Taliban will need to strengthen its army and police force, and establish diplomatic relations with the rest of the world. Among the group’s fastest friends are likely to be Russia and China. Zamir Kabulov, a Russian presidential envoy to Afghanistan, says that the Kremlin maintains good relations with the Taliban, so Russia is not worried about what is happening in the country. On a recent phone call, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi told his Russian counterpart, Sergey Lavrov, that they should “protect the legitimate interests” of their respective countries in Afghanistan, “report on the situation, and support each other.”

The Taliban might also find willing partners in Afghanistan’s Central Asian neighbours. The leaders of Afghanistan’s ethnic Uzbek and Tajik communities – the warlords Abdul Rashid Dostum and Atta Mohammad Noor – did flee the country after the fall of Mazar-i-Sharif, which they had been defending. Many commentators viewed this as a rejection of the Taliban. But I believe that it reflects an unwillingness to continue fighting, and expect both men to return to Afghanistan soon.

More broadly, Central Asian countries seem to be cautiously optimistic about the potential for cooperation with a Taliban-led Afghanistan. After all, Baradar has pledged not to “allow the emergence of a threat and danger from Afghanistan” to Central Asian countries, and has welcomed the Uzbek-initiated plan to construct the “Kabul Corridor” railway from Termez in Uzbekistan to Peshawar in Pakistan via Mazar-i-Sharif and Kabul. In fact, with the United States gone, the vision of a “Greater Central Asia” with more open trade and improved infrastructure among the countries of the region could gradually become a reality.

Afghanistan’s future will also be shaped by the policy of the US and its allies. America’s humiliating defeat and chaotic retreat has severely undermined its international standing. The question now is how much responsibility, if any, the US will take for ensuring the Afghan people’s well-being, given the leading role it played in destroying their country.

The first step should be to convene a special international conference on Afghanistan involving all interested parties, with China and Russia central players. Donor countries must be united under the auspices of the United Nations Security Council, and with the involvement of the UN system and multilateral development banks, they should create a special fund to assist in Afghanistan’s reconstruction.

On the diplomatic level, whether one likes it or not, Russia, with its deep influence in Central Asia, holds the key to rebuilding Afghanistan. If the West embraces this process, perhaps its relations with Russia can improve as well.



Djoomart Otorbaev

On the diplomatic level, whether one likes it or not, Russia, with its deep influence in Central Asia, holds the key to rebuilding Afghanistan. If the West embraces this process, perhaps its relations with Russia can improve as well



Robert Skidelsky

THE SLOWER-BURNING THREAT IS THAT POPULATIONS, ACCUSTOMED TO THE “AUTOMATIC” PROVISION OF SERVICES ON WHICH THEY RELY, WILL GRADUALLY LOSE THEIR RESILIENCE TO “SHOCKS,” BOTH NATURAL AND ARTIFICIAL

FOCUS TECHNOLOGY

FAIL-SAFE FAILURES

The other day, my wife and I were leaving our apartment building. I pressed the button which automatically opens and shuts the door. Nothing happened. We could not leave the building, except perhaps by jumping through a window. Eventually, the concierge, who happened to be outside, managed to open the door manually. He explained that there had been a power cut. The fail-safe system, which also worked electronically, had failed as well. The power cut lasted two hours.

For decades, the American political class has intervened relentlessly and recklessly in countries whose people they hold in contempt. And once again they are being aided by America’s credulous mass media, which is uniformly blaming the Taliban victory on Afghanistan’s incorrigible corruption.

I thought of all the doors in London and elsewhere which now open and shut automatically: train doors, automobile doors, elevator doors, supermarket doors (not yet, thank goodness, aircraft doors). At one time, all these doors were opened and shut by hand. The same was true of locking and unlocking. Today my key fob causes my car doors to lock and unlock automatically: I googled to find out why: “Modern key fobs work through RFID, an intelligent barcode system that uses electromagnetic fields to identify and track data on ‘tags’ that contain stored information. The information then passes through radio waves.”

And apparently my key has become a source of risk: “If a digital key fob gets hacked or electronically duplicated, the cybercriminal who did it can steal your car! And now researchers have discovered ‘key cloning’ is not only possible, but it’s a serious threat.”

So far, power outages have been local and temporary. India has experienced two major incidents, in New Delhi in July 2012 and in Mumbai in October 2020. The Delhi one affected 620 million people (some 8% of the world’s popula-



So much of our lives nowadays are determined by the smooth functioning of technologies of which we know little. Even if the risk of a global breakdown remains remote, we will increasingly find ourselves helpless and panic-stricken in the face of even mild upsets to ‘normal’ life

tion). In Mumbai, all suburban train services stopped, with passengers trapped inside; central heating systems failed; traffic lights went dark; financial services were suspended; intensive care units in hospitals had to run on generators to keep patients breathing; and online exams had to be canceled. Maharashtra’s Energy Minister attributed the two-hour Mumbai outage to a “technical failure.”

A permanent outage that shuts down the entire world has been a favorite theme of science fiction. In EM Forster’s 1909 short story “The Machine Stops,” the survivors of an (unexplained) ecological disaster now live underground. Transport, communications, production, and services are powered by electricity, and there is no personal contact: music is piped continuously into cells from which inhabitants never stir; beds descend at the press of a button, and human matter is excreted into giant “vomitories,” located above ground.

“Cannot all you lecturers see that it is we that are dying, and that down here the only thing that really lives is the Machine,” the

hero, Kuno, tells his benighted mother: “We created the Machine, to do our will, but we cannot make it do our will now. It has robbed us of the sense of space and of the sense of touch, it has blurred every human relation and narrowed down love to a carnal act, it has paralysed our bodies and our wills, and now it compels us to worship it. The Machine develops – but not on our lives. The Machine proceeds, but not to our goal. We only exist as blood corpuscles that course through its arteries, and if it could work without us, it would let us die.”

But then the Machine starts breaking down. There are hiccups to the piped music; the “virtual” lectures suffer power cuts; the artificial food turns moldy; the air becomes foul; the bath water starts smelling; and the sleeping apparatus fails.

Then, one day, the Machine stops working altogether. Civilization ends. Panic-stricken crowds fill the tunnels leading to the surface, but the jammed ventilation shafts have stopped working as well, trapping them underground. Permanent night descends.

Since Forster wrote his story,

there have been many more explorations of this idea. In René Barjavel’s 1943 novel *Ravage*, electricity suddenly disappears, with chaos, disease, and famine following. More recently, in *Infinite Detail* by Tim Maughan, cyberterrorism has shut down the internet, and with it, global production, supply chains, communication, energy, travel, and state security systems. The population reverts to barbarism. The same idea is the premise of *Blackout* by Marc Elsberg, a disaster thriller about a cyberattack that causes the collapse of the European and US electricity grids.

Apocalyptic collapses on this scale are still the stuff of fiction. Apart from anything else, many places remain without internet, having never had the infrastructure to support it. But the number of such places is steadily and rapidly declining, in part as a result of the efforts of social media and tech giants, which, by expanding the number of internet users, also enlarge their customer base and broaden the reach of their information monopolies.

The slower-burning threat is that populations, accustomed to the “automatic” provision of services on which they rely, will gradually lose their resilience to “shocks,” both natural and artificial. Having lost their memory of how things were done in the past, and knowing little or nothing about how the processes on which they rely actually work, they will be helpless and panic-stricken in the face of even mild upsets to ‘normal’ life. They have made a God of the Machine, or as, academics more soberly explain, they live by the “scientific-technological paradigm” and are governed by its “frame of necessities.” The Machine promises to improve our lives, but what happens if the doors no longer open?

The writer, a member of the British House of Lords, is Professor Emeritus of Political Economy at Warwick University.

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SPECTRUM AFGHANISTAN

Does Taliban victory mean Pak triumph?



Saeed Naqvi

WAS THIS COLLAPSE OF A LARGE SECTION OF THE AFGHAN ARMY UNEXPECTED? IS ONE TO BELIEVE THAT GREEN ON BLUE ATTACKS HAD ENDED JUST BECAUSE THE US MEDIA HAD STOPPED REPORTING SUCH INCIDENTS?

It is a flawed line of thinking that Taliban victory in Afghanistan is somehow a victory for Pakistan too. On the contrary, Pakistan’s problems begin now. Pashtun populations on both sides of the border are just one of them. The failure of the Istanbul conference on Afghanistan reflects Pakistan’s inability to persuade the top Taliban leadership to attend what was billed as a 10-day jamboree. All participants, including President Ashraf Ghani, were expected to emerge having sorted out Afghanistan from A to Z. Nothing of this happened. Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu came down a few notches in his boss, Tayyip Erdogan’s esteem. Cavusoglu believed that Pakistan would deliver the Taliban at the conference. It could not.

Turkey’s willingness to “look after” Kabul airport was based on Ankara’s anticipation that Ghani and the Taliban would agree. The Taliban would have none of it. Bring in mechanics, engineers and experts at handling airports, but no military presence “on Afghan soil”.

Describing Indo-Pak dynamics on Afghanistan as a zero-sum game has antecedents.

In 2010, Gen. Stanley McChrystal, as the force commander in Afghanistan, was unhappy that the popularity of India’s socio-eco-

omic development work distracts Pakistan from its war-on-terror focus. To this, Gen. David Petraeus added his bit: “India’s Cold Start doctrine worries Pakistan.”

My interactions in Kabul, Gardez and Mazar-e-Sharif some years ago surprised me: Pakistan was seen as a troublemaker. India’s development works were appreciated. At night all of Kabul was glued to Hindi films on TV.

After US Deputy Secretary, Richard Armitage threatened to “bomb Pakistan into the stone age” a terrified President Pervez Musharraf made a U-turn. His army turned upon exactly the mujahideen that Pakistan ISI had trained to see the back of the Soviets in 1989.

This about-turn by Pakistan became part of the historic memory of Taliban. That’s the rub: the “unreliability” quotient of Pakistan was cited even by the Taliban spokesman who showed disinterest in the Istanbul conference.

There is a suspicion that promoting the Turkish profile in Afghanistan may well have been a Pak ploy to ensure a friendly nodal point, namely Kabul airport in the neighbouring country. Chatter on any high-profile role for Ankara in Kabul is, for the moment, inaudible.

Abdus Salaam Zaeef was the Afghan ambassador in Islamabad

and a friend of the late Mullah Omar. After Pakistan joined the war on terror, Zaeef found himself in Guantanamo Bay for four years. Zaeef was bitter: “The manner in which they treated our prisoners was worse than the Israeli treatment of Palestinian prisoners.” These complaints belong to an era many moons ago. Surely, the situation has changed after Prime Minister Imran Khan took office. The Taliban today are not the ones who won in 1996. The new Taliban have Shia and Uzbek commanders too but keep your fingers crossed for the women of that country.

Was this collapse of a large section of the Afghan Army unexpected? Is one to believe that Green on Blue attacks had ended just because the US media had stopped reporting such incidents? US officers training the Afghan army were frequent victims of their own trainees. Little wonder President Joe Biden was almost bitter: “I don’t regret the decision to withdraw.”

He said the US had spent \$3 trillion for 20 years training and equipping an Afghan army of 3,00,000. “Now it is time for the Afghans to sort it out among themselves.”

Years ago, a former Governor of Baluch, Prof Habibullah Habib, told me a story which sounded conspiratorial then. “The British Provincial Reconstruction team

was doing excellent work in the north of the country.” Why did they so willingly agree to vacate the peaceful region for the Germans to take over? What surprised Prof Habib even more was the alternative destination selected by the British contingent. They chose to be headquartered in the troubled province of Helmand - why?

Prof Habib’s question may well have been answered two days ago by a former British Defence Minister, Johnny Mercer, who served in Afghanistan: “A lot of British blood was spilled in Helmand.” He asks angrily: “Was it really for nothing?” Helmand, it must not be forgotten, is the world’s largest centre for poppy production which blossomed in 20 years of the war.

His colleague, another Defence Minister, Tobias Elwood has gone one better; he wants Afghanistan re-invaded. “Britain must step up and show international leadership, convene a conference of like-minded States and get a plan in place to deliver effective military support. If we don’t, everything we fought for since 2001 will be lost.”

The writer is a senior commentator on political and diplomatic issues. Views expressed are personal.

IAN S

WISDOM CORNER

- Talent is God given. Be humble. Fame is man-given. Be grateful. Conceit is self-given. Be careful.

JOHN WOODEN
- A wise man is superior to any insults which can be put upon him, and the best reply to unseemly behavior is patience and moderation.

MOLIERE
- When written in Chinese, the word ‘crisis’ is composed of two characters. One represents danger and the other represents opportunity.

JOHN F. KENNEDY

LOL
Genius vs idiot

A proud and confident genius makes a bet with an idiot. The genius says, “Hey idiot, every question I ask you that you don’t know the answer, you have to give me \$5. And if you ask me a question and I can’t answer yours I will give you \$5,000.” The idiot says, “Okay.” The genius then asks, “How many

continents are there in the world?” The idiot doesn’t know and hands over the \$5. The idiot says, “Now I ask: what animal stands with two legs but sleeps with three?” The genius tries and searches very hard for the answer but gives up and hands over the \$5,000. The genius says, “Dang it, I lost. By the way, what was the answer to your question?” The idiot hands over \$5.

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

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

Let down

Sir, When the Monsoon Session of Parliament commenced, people did not nurse high hopes on its productivity knowing most of their parliamentarians well. Nevertheless, some worthwhile transactions were expected to be carried out. As it turned out, both Houses were adjourned sine die – courtesy: unruly members. Lok Sabha had 21 per cent productivity, while Rajya Sabha 28 per cent. Only, the 127th Constitutional Amendment Bill to restore the rights of states to identify and provide reservation to the Other Backward Classes (OBC) was passed. The General Insurance Business (Nationalisation) Amendment Bill too scraped through. Eighteen other Bills were given the nod without any meaningful interaction. For the passing of the OBC Bill, the Houses were united as one – obviously with an eye on the vote bank. Nothing was heard in the din as the Opposition and the government were constantly at each other’s throats. Opposition was not ready to let go of the government and the latter was loath to concede an inch. Indeed, the session began on a volatile note, and but for a brief lull, culminated in chaos. A sober man like Rajya Sabha Chairman Venkaiah Naidu breaking down was a tell-tale sign of the deep rot that has come to stay with the parliamentary democracy of the country.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

Criminals in politics

Sir, Politics has been polluted severely due to the entry of more and more criminals. Party loyalty forces people to vote for a particular party. This has been a blessing in disguise for the politicians with criminal antecedents. The Supreme Court has rightly issued directions that the consent of the High Court is necessary to withdraw the criminal cases against the law makers. Not all the cases registered against the politicians may be genuine. Politically motivated charges are framed and cases registered against the politicians who are in Opposition parties. Such cases are withdrawn if and when the present Opposition parties come to the power in the subsequent elections. There are also cases where the incumbent governments seek to withdraw both genuine and non-genuine cases from the courts to subvert political interests. It is only the courts which can judge which cases can be allowed to be withdrawn and which cannot. In this context, the ruling of the Supreme Court to take the consent of the High Court concerned before withdrawing the cases is timely. This would check-mate the ruling party from shielding their law makers.

KV Seetharamaiah, HASSAN

Dwarasuni ghat a death trap; 52 dead in 7 years



Despite repeated written appeals by locals to widen the ghat road, Mayurbhanj forest department and the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) are yet to take any concrete action

The perennial issue of traffic congestion on Dwarasuni ghat has triggered resentment among local residents. Apart from 52 deaths over last seven years, at least 128 more have been injured

POST NEWS NETWORK

Baripada, August 19: Frequent accidents at Dwarasuni ghat on NH-49 passing through Bangiriposi area in Mayurbhanj

district has turned into a death trap for commuters, locals have alleged.

As many as 52 people have died in the last seven years at the spot, a source said.

Athagarh: Irregularities in 26 coop societies alleged



POST NEWS NETWORK

Athagarh, August 19: Farmers in Athagarh area of Cuttack district alleged large-scale irregularities in sanctioning of loans and fund misappropriation in 26 cooperative societies. They have submitted a memorandum to the district administration and warned of agitation if action is not taken against the staff involved in irregularities.

According to reports, farmers leader Abhay Barik, in a letter to the administration, has demanded an immediate investigation into financial fraud, fund misappropriation and irregularities in release of loans in 25 cooperative societies.

"If The administration does not

initiate an investigation into financial wrongdoings in the cooperative societies, farmers will start agitation in front of the head office of Cuttack Central Cooperative Bank and stage a road blockade at Chandbali Chhak in Athagarh August 23," the farmer leader said.

"All cooperative societies in Athagarh have violated guidelines of the cooperation department, but the authorities concerned are paying no heed to the wrongdoings," he added.

The Chief Minister, the 5-T secretary, cooperation minister, Athagarh sub-collector, local IIC, assistant registrar of cooperative societies and district registrar of cooperative societies have been apprised of the irregularities.

Guard provides health services at Hinjili hospital; video goes viral

POST NEWS NETWORK

Hinjilicut, August 19: A security guard was seen providing health services to patients at Hinjilicut government hospital in Ganjam. A video purportedly showing the man checking blood pressure of a woman patient lying on a bed at the health facility has gone viral on social media.

The patient is from Tankachhai village of Hinjili subdivision. The woman was admitted to the hospital after she fell sick a couple of days ago, a local villager said.

Notably, the existing government health facility was earlier upgraded to Category-II sub-divisional hospital (SHH) with 80 beds



and a new building. Number of doctors and nurses were also stepped up. Treatment of patients started at the SHH on RMC campus in February this year. Although there is a staff colony on its premises, most of the doctors and nurses stay in Berhampur and prefer private practice leading to deterioration in health services at the centre.

DEMO FOR ROAD



Activists of Socialist Unity Centre of India, demanding construction of a pucca road from Chandrapur to Baliapatta villages under Chhendipada block in Angul district, taking out a rally, Thursday

The excluded beneficiaries will be included in NFSA only after a target is approved by the department

MITHUN BEHERA | CIVIL SUPPLIES INSPECTOR

Despite repeated written appeals by locals to widen the ghat road, Mayurbhanj forest department and the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) are yet to take any concrete action.

The perennial issue of traffic congestion on Dwarasuni ghat has triggered resentment among local residents. Apart from 52 deaths over last seven years, at least 128 more have been injured.

It is pertinent to mention, an eight-kilometre long stretch of the NH-49 from Bangiriposi area pass through Similipal Tiger Reserve. Hundreds of heavy as well as light vehicles ply through the road every day.

Widening the ghat road was delayed as the Forest Department failed to hand over land to NHAI. A letter (No-5766, dated-15.12.2020) was written for the purpose to the Forest Department, an official said.

Closure looms large over 610 category high schools

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur, August 19: As many 610 schools in the state, marked as 610 category high schools, are in a state of neglect even as closure threat loomed large over these schools due to indifference by the state government, a report said.

These schools were established in various parts of the state in 1984 by the local residents as there were not too many schools for the education of local students. The district has 51 schools in this category. This has pushed the future of students studying in these schools to uncertainty.

These schools were established to ensure overall development of local students and to strengthen the education system in the state. They were established with the funds collected by the local residents. The funds were used in construction of the school building and in providing meager salaries to teachers. The schools ran for many years with the funds collected by the local residents. But their fate changed when the state government overtook the management of these schools June 1, 1994 and marked them as 610 category high schools. It was then expected that these schools will run smoothly with the funds available from the state government.



The fate of these schools changed when the state government overtook the management June 1, 1994 and marked them as 610 category high schools. It was then expected that these schools will run smoothly with the funds available from the state government

Shortage of teaching and non-teaching staff has also plagued the normal functioning of these schools. It is apprehended that these schools will find it hard to continue in the long run and may close down soon

Bhagabati High School at Siha panchayat under Barchana block from where 3,000 students have passed out over years is a case in point. This school is struggling for survival over two years

agement of these schools June 1, 1994 and marked them as 610 category high schools. It was then expected that these schools will run smoothly with the funds available from the state government.

However, that was not to be as not a single department of the state government has sanctioned a single pie for the development of infrastructure of these schools during last 37 years.

Moreover, shortage of teaching and non-teaching staff has also plagued the normal functioning of these schools. It is apprehended that these schools will find it hard to continue in the long run and may close down soon.

Bhagabati High School at Siha

panchayat under Barchana block from where 3,000 students have passed out over years is a case in point. This school is struggling for survival over two years.

Later, it saw some development after its old students provided funds under the Mo School Abhiyan project as well as with some meager funds available from the state government.

ernment. A park, a cycle stand, toilets and drinking water facilities were built in the school with the available funds.

However, the school is battling with numerous other problems. The school does not have a physical education teacher since 2004 and a clerk. Meanwhile, the headmaster, an assistant teacher, Sanskrit teacher and two fourth grade employees have retired while the rest of the teachers and employees are going to retire in a year or two. The state government is not taking any steps to fill up the vacant posts. This has hit classroom teaching and day to day functioning of the school. The school may close down if the situation continues for long.

Residents alleged that the state government is neglecting these schools by putting them in a different category. They questioned the state government's decision to not deny government status to these 610 schools when over 3000 high schools established before 1984 were taken over by the government June 7, 1994 and declared as government high schools.

Sans Aadhaar linking, 2441 denied rations

POST NEWS NETWORK

Koksara, August 19: Even as state and central governments have emphasized on ensuring food to the poor under the NFSA, but over 2000 people in Koksara block of Kalahandi district have been deprived of rations.

Reason: Their Aadhaar has not been linked to ration cards. Dealers allegedly deny entitlements to ration card holders without Aadhaar linking.

According to reports available from block civil supplies office, 2441 beneficiaries in 22 panchayats under this block are not availing their rations. Notably, each beneficiary is provided 5kg rice per head every month.

The reports said, 112 beneficiaries



According to reports available from block civil supplies office, hundred of beneficiaries in Amapani panchayat, Badapadaguda, Bardang, Dahangaon, Dalguma, Dudukathenga, Gambhiriguda, Gotamunda, Kashibahal, Kaudola, Khuntia, Koksara, Rengapalli and Phuphagaon are unable to lift their quotas of rice

Many beneficiaries blamed officials of the civil supplies department for their problem. Though they have been frequenting to the block office, their plight is yet to be over. They demanded immediate Aadhaar linking

in Amapani panchayat, 89 in Badapadaguda, 156 in Bardang, 178 in Dahangaon, 161 in Dalguma, 81 in Dudukathenga, 146 in Gambhiriguda, 203 in Gotamunda, 134 in Kashibahal, 33 in Kaudola, 154 in Khuntia, 21 in Koksara, 104

in Rengapalli, 129 in Phuphagaon, 133 in Mahima, 154 in Temara and 264 in Ladugan are unable to lift their quotas of rice from retailer. At the pandemic times, they have to go through a lot of hardship, they said.

They lamented that absence of Aadhaar linking has been a cause of concern for them. Hundreds of beneficiaries were deprived of their quotas of rice for months together.

Many have blamed the officials of the civil supplies department for their problem. Though they have been frequenting to the block office, their plight is yet to be over. They demanded immediate steps for Aadhaar linking.

Civil supplies inspector Mithun Behera said these beneficiaries will be included in NFSA only after a target is approved by the department.

KALAHANDI VARSITY GETS UGC TAG

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhawanipatna, August 19: The University Grants Commission (UGC) Wednesday recognised Kalahandi University in Bhawanipatna as a university under Section (F) of the UGC Act. According to a UGC communique, Kalahandi University has been added to the list of universities as per Section 2(F) of the UGC Act, 1956, maintained by the UGC on its official website www.ugc.ac.in.

The institution is now authorised to award degrees as defined by the UGC.

Besides, it may run regular courses through its own departments, constituent colleges, or associated institutions with the approval of applicable statutory agencies and councils as needed.

Notably, the newly-established university will operate within the Act's established territorial bounds.

I-Day celebrated in R'gada school

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rayagada, August 19: The 75th Independence Day was celebrated at St Xavier's High School at Bhakurguda in this district. Rayagada MLA Makaranda Muduli hoisted the National Flag and lit the traditional lamp on this occasion, in the presence of principal Sunita Rao, administrator AK Pradhan and headmaster Ramesh Patnaik.

The MLA spoke about the freedom fighters. Subrat Choudhary, social worker of Rayagada, was the guest of honour. Students of the school performed various cultural programmes along with their teachers. Later, a plantation drive was undertaken in the school where students and teachers as well as guests planted saplings on the school premises.

Speaking on the occasion, the guests laid stress on plantation drive for healthy environment.

Sambalpur woman, kin stuck in Afghanistan

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, August 19: After Taliban captured power in Afghanistan, Juhura Begum, a woman of Motijharan area, has been worrying about her daughter and her family living there.

Juhura's daughter Shakila Banu lives in Kabul with her husband and kids. For over two months, Juhura hasn't spoken to her daughter over phone.

Now, with the collapse of the government in Afghanistan following onslaught by the Taliban, the mother in Juhura is pining for her daughter Shakila.

Juhura says that about 12 years back, her daughter and son-in-law Attawala Khan had left for Kabul with their children. Since then, they have been living there.



"Since then they have never visited Sambalpur. But my daughter was in touch with me over phone. There has been no phone call from them for over two months. I am also unable to contact them from my side. With these developments I wish my daughter come back to

"My daughter was in touch with me over phone. There has been no phone call from her for over two months. I am also unable to contact them from my side. I wish my daughter come back to Sambalpur,"

Sambalpur," said Juhura, a woman in her mid-fifties.

She also pines for her grandchildren who used to study in a school here. Shakila got married to a youth from Afghanistan-Attawala Khan after a courtship while he used to stay in Sambalpur.

of the day quote

The students have passed the exam. The posts are lying vacant. But on seeking employment, SSC-GD candidates were beaten with sticks. A strong India will be built by giving employment to the youth, not by beating them with sticks

PRİYANKA GANDHI VADRA | CONGRESS LEADER

There should be no violence of any form. Every state has the responsibility to maintain status quo. We are not enemies. We are all citizens of the country. The seven sisters (NE states) should not treat each other as enemies

KIREN RIJU | UNION MINISTER

The legal process has begun and I will appear before the ED after the legal process is completed. I will cooperate with the ED. I have always followed high standards in my entire social and political life

ANIL DESHMUKH | EX-MAHA HOME MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Landslide cuts off Sikkim from Bengal

Gangtok: A landslide has blocked National Highway 10, snapping the arterial road link between Sikkim and West Bengal Thursday, an official of the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) said. Following heavy rain, a massive amount of rocks and slush rolled down the hill and blocked the highway at 29th Mile area in neighbouring West Bengal, around 60 km from the Himalayan state's Rangpo border. Efforts are on to clear the debris and open the highway at least for one-way traffic, but rain and a continual flow of debris are hampering the work, said the BRO official.

Man recovers after 109 days on ECMO

Chennai: In a rare case, a Chennai man diagnosed with Covid-19 and resultant lung complications spent about 109 days on ECMO (Extra Corporeal Membrane Oxygenation) and ventilator support and recovered without having to undergo a lung transplant, the city hospital which treated him said Thursday. Fifty six year-old Mudiija stepped out of the hospital as a healthy man today. "He became a living miracle, as none in the country has ever recovered without a lung transplant after spending over 9 weeks with ECMO support," Rela Hospital claimed.

New frog species found in Adi hills

New Delhi: A team of biologists from Delhi University, Wildlife Institute of India and North Carolina Museum of Natural Science (USA) has discovered a new species of frog from the Adi hills Arunachal Pradesh, according to an official statement. The new species of Cascade Frog has been named Adi Cascade Frog (Amolops adicola) after the Adi hills, which are home to Adi tribes, an indigenous group of people from the Himalayan regions in the state.

Light intensity quake hits J&K

Jammu: A light intensity earthquake struck Jammu and Kashmir Thursday, though no casualty or damage to property was reported from anywhere. A statement issued by the disaster management office said, a slight intensity earthquake measuring 3.6 on the Richter Scale occurred in J&K at 5:08 am Thursday. The coordinates of the earthquake are latitude 32.7 degrees north and longitude 75.4 degrees east. The epicentre was in Udhampur area in J&K.

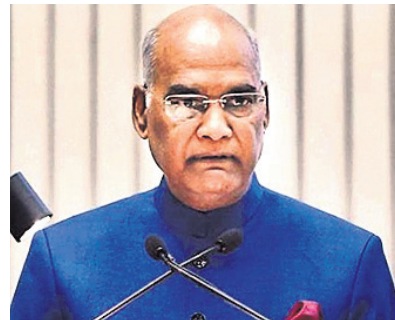


As a big country, India should approach the issues of the Taliban with a degree of confidence and should not indulge in a 'widow's wail' as if Pakistan has taken over Afghanistan or has an advantage over it

YASHWANT SINHA | EX-EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER

PREZ UNDERGOES CATARACT SURGERY

President Ram Nath Kovind Thursday underwent a cataract surgery at the Army hospital here, a Rashtrapati Bhavan statement said. The surgery was successful and he has been discharged from the hospital, it said



MEA'S SPECIAL AFGHAN CELL WORKS 24x7

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, August 19: A round-the-clock special cell set up by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) following the Taliban takeover of Kabul has been focusing on keeping track of stranded Indians in Afghanistan, ascertaining assistance being sought and advising further course of action.

The 'Special Afghanistan Cell' was set up in MEA in the evening of August 16 to coordinate repatriation and other requests from Afghanistan in a streamlined manner.

The cell is being manned 24x7 by young officers of the MEA under the guidance and supervision of senior officers and more than 20 officials have been deployed to it, people familiar with the matter said. The officers manning the cell answer calls, respond to emails and WhatsApp messages, enquire about the well-being and current status of people contacting them, they said. It also updates the database of

The MEA said the immediate priority for the government is to obtain accurate information about all Indian nationals currently staying in Afghanistan

Indians still in Afghanistan, ascertains assistance being sought, and advise further course of action, they said.

The cell was set up prior to the departure of India-based personnel from the Indian embassy in Kabul in order to ensure seamless contact of Indians still remaining in Afghanistan.

It has been working in close coordination with various divisions of the MEA to ensure the smooth flow of most updated information

to all concerned, the people cited above said.

The Taliban swept across Afghanistan this month, seizing control of almost all key towns and cities including Kabul in the backdrop of the withdrawal of the US forces. Kabul fell to the Taliban Sunday.

Following the evacuation, the MEA said the focus now would be to ensure the safe return of all Indian nationals from the Afghan capital.

DRDO DEVELOPS TECH TO SECURE IAF FIGHTER JETS



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, August 19: The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has developed an advanced chaff technology, which is used to distract enemy's radar-guided missiles, to safeguard Indian Air Force fighter jets from enemy missiles.

The IAF has started the process of induction of this technology after the completion of successful trials, a DRDO statement said Thursday.

Two DRDO laboratories developed the advanced chaff material and chaff cartridge - 118I and it has met the qualitative requirements of the IAF, the statement mentioned.

"The importance of this (advanced chaff) technology lies in the fact that very less quantity of chaff material deployed in the air acts as decoy to deflect enemy's missiles for ensuring safety of the fighter aircraft, it stated.

The technology has been given to the industry for production in large quantities to meet the annual rolling requirement of the IAF, it noted.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh Thursday lauded the DRDO, the IAF and the industry for indigenous development of this critical technology, terming it one more DRDO step towards 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' in the strategic defence technologies, the statement mentioned.

Militants murder Apni Party leader



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Srinagar, August 19: Terrorists Thursday shot dead a Jammu and Kashmir Apni Party leader in Kulgam, officials said here.

Ghulam Hassan Lone was shot at by the ultras in his native Devsar area, they said, adding he was rushed to a hospital where he succumbed to his injuries.

Police said they have taken cognisance of the incident.

This comes just two days after terrorists shot dead BJP leader Javed Ahmad Dar in the same district.

Before that, two Lashkar-e-Taiba terrorists on August 9 barged into the house of a BJP sarpanch in Anantnag district and killed him and his wife. Lone's killing also evoked widespread condemnation from mainstream political parties including the PDP, the National Conference and the People's Conference.

Unfortunately there seems to be no end to the spree of political killings in Kashmir: Unreservedly condemn the killing of Apni party leader Ghulam Hassan Lone. My deepest condolences to the bereaved family, PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti tweeted.

States gear up for third wave with focus on kids

Schools in at least 11 of India's 28 states have opened after more than a year of closures, raising worries these could become breeding grounds for transmission of the virus



AGENCIES

Mumbai, August 19: Several Indian states are building facilities with more paediatric beds, plus oxygen, due to concern that children returning to school without being vaccinated will be among the most vulnerable during a third wave of coronavirus infections.

Health administrators have taken heed of trends in the United States, where a record number of children have been hospitalised as the coronavirus Delta variant, first found in India, has surged through unvaccinated populations.

During a second wave of infections in India that peaked in April and May, hundreds of thousands of people died for want of oxygen and medical facilities, and now there are concerns that another

India's Covid testing touches 50cr-mark

India has reached the milestone of conducting 50 crore Covid-19 tests across the country, according to the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), the apex body at the forefront of formulating Covid testing protocols in India. With an average daily testing of more than 17 lakh in August, India has tested 50 crore samples across the country till date, achieving the milestone of last 10 crore tests in just 55 days. This has been enabled by rapidly increasing the testing infrastructure and capacity across the country.

third wave will gather during the winter months.

"We don't know how the virus will behave, but we cannot afford to be unprepared this time around," Suhas Prabhu, who heads the

Paediatric Task Force in the big western state of Maharashtra, said.

The Maharashtra government has stockpiled medicines, and built facilities for additional pediatric beds and oxygen provisions in new centres in Mumbai and Aurangabad.

Built on empty stretches of land or in re-purposed stadiums, the Mumbai facilities have a total of 1,500 pediatric beds, most of them with oxygen.

"We can upgrade this capacity to double if needed," Suresh Kakani, a senior official with Mumbai's civic body said.

In neighbouring Gujarat, authorities have set up 15,000 pediatric oxygen beds, health commissioner Jai Prakash Shivahare said.

India provides vaccines to people above the age 18. Most vaccines administered in India are made by AstraZeneca, while shots produced by local manufacturer Bharat Biotech are also being used.

Another local firm Zydus Cadilla and Bharat Biotech are separately testing vaccines for children but the results are not expected until the year end.

Meantime, schools in at least 11 of India's 28 states have opened after more than a year of closures, raising worries these could become breeding grounds for transmission of the virus.

'Security challenges becoming complex'



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, August 19: India's national security challenges are becoming "complex" in view of rapidly changing geopolitical scenario globally and there is a need to create a capable and self-reliant defense industry besides a strong and modern military, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said Thursday.

Singh's comments came amid growing concerns in India and elsewhere over the Taliban sweeping across Afghanistan this month, seizing control of almost all key Afghan towns and cities including Kabul following the withdrawal of the US forces.

"Today, the security scenario in the whole world is changing very fast. Because of this, the challenges to our national security are increasing and becoming complex. There are constant changes in the global geopolitical situation," Singh said, without making specific references.

He was speaking after launching the 'Defence India Startup Challenge 5.0 (DISC 5.0), an initiative under the Innovations for Defence

Today, the security scenario in the whole world is changing very fast.

Because of this, the challenges to our national security are increasing and becoming complex. There are constant changes in the global geopolitical situation

RAJNATH SINGH | DEFENCE MINISTER

Excellence (iDEX) that acts as an umbrella organisation to promote technology development for the defence sector.

Singh said considering the fast-changing security challenges, India must focus on having a strong, capable, and 'self-reliant' defence industry to cater to the needs of the armed forces.

"It is necessary that we not only create strong, modern and well-equipped forces, but also develop our defence industry, which is equally strong, capable, and most importantly, completely 'self-reliant,'" the defence minister said.

ARTISTE FOR AWARENESS



Jaison, who came in the guise of a tiger, takes the Covid-19 vaccine dose at a vaccination camp for 'Pulikkali' artistes, in Thrissur, Wednesday

PTI PHOTO

'CAN HARM ONE'S SELF-ESTEEM'

ARRESTING ACCUSED NOT MANDATORY ALWAYS: SC

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, August 19: The Supreme Court observed if arrest is made routine, it can cause incalculable harm to the reputation and self-esteem of a person as it emphasised that it is not mandatory to take the accused in custody at the time of filing a charge sheet.

A bench of Justices Sanjay Kishan Kaul and Hrishikesh Roy said, "If the Investigating Officer has no reason to believe that the accused will abscond or disobey summons and has, in fact, throughout cooperated with the investigation, we fail to appreciate why there should be a compulsion on the officer to arrest the accused."

The bench emphasised if trial courts were to insist on the arrest

of an accused as pre-requisite formality to take the charge sheet on record in view of the provisions of Section 170 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC), then we consider such a course misplaced and contrary to the very intent of Section 170 of the CrPC.

It stressed that personal liberty is an important aspect of the constitutional mandate.

The occasion to arrest an accused during investigation arises when custodial investigation becomes necessary or it is a heinous crime or where there is a possibility of influencing the witnesses or accused may abscond, it noted.

The bench pointed out merely because an arrest can be made because it is lawful does not mandate that arrest must be made.

At most of the restaurants in the area, the mood among the Afghan nationals was sombre on what would have been the 102nd anniversary of their Independence Day

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, August 19: For Afghans living in India, August 19 is a milestone day with the community getting together to mark their country's Independence Day in a foreign land.

On Thursday, however, days after the Taliban regained control of Afghanistan; the mood at Delhi's 'Little Kabul' was anything but celebratory.

This 'Independence Day' was not about the spirit of freedom but fear that their war-ravaged homeland was back under Taliban control, Afghans at Lajpat Nagar, Bhogal and Hazrat Nizamuddin said as they anxiously followed events on social media, television channels and other media outlets.



From restaurants to departmental stores, the spirit of freedom, otherwise peaking on the anniversary day, was running low. Sharifa Ashuri, 23, who had moved to Delhi from Kabul in 2015, after the death of her father, said what is happening in Afghanistan

is weighing heavy on our minds.

At a restaurant in Lajpat Nagar, where she works to make a living, she scrolls through social media feed to read about the situation in her country. Her colleagues, also Afghans, huddle around her to watch videos, purportedly showing

the Taliban roaming on the streets. Kabul Delhi Restaurant in Lajpat Nagar-II, otherwise brimming with guests and known for offering choicest Afghan delicacies, only had very few patrons in the afternoon that ate quietly in a corner.

The 17-year-old restaurant, named after the capital cities of India and Afghanistan to signify the cultural connect of the two countries, is one of the preferred culinary destinations in Delhi to enjoy Afghan cuisine like Kabul Uzbeki, kofta chhalao, qawrdagh (mutton fry), qorma kofta, and firni (desserts). A framed picture of Jami Masjid of Herat is hung on the wall, and a period drama plays on TV screen with low volume, but no special menu for August 19.

Afghanistan had achieved

Independence in 1919, overthrowing the British colonial yoke, with Amanullah Khan being its first sovereign ruler, a revered figure among the Afghans.

Ashuri, wearing a black T-shirt which reads 'Paris', and sporting a tattoo near her left wrist, said she shuddered to even think of the fate of women in Afghanistan.

I feel comfortable wearing a pair of denim or a T-shirt in India, but in Afghanistan, I will be shot dead now, if the Taliban see me in this dress, she said, as she fixed a dupatta over her head.

Ashuri, when asked the meaning of Independence for her, pointed to her tattoo and said, "Birds! That's what freedom should be. Maybe, one day, I will fly to my dream city, Paris, from Delhi if not from Kabul."

of the day quote

The peace, tranquility and integrity of Ethiopia, which has a strategic location and importance in Africa, is important to us. All the countries in the region will be affected by the worsening of the situation (over Tigray)

RECEP TAYYIP ERDOGAN | PRESIDENT, TURKEY

The Health Ministry had removed the denigrating and irrelevant questions in questionnaires for blood donors. There's no difference between one blood and the other. Discrimination against gays in donating blood is over

NITZAN HOROWITZ | HEALTH MINISTER, ISRAEL

They haven't let the strong candidates (take part) in the election. Now even the ones that aren't that strong are being removed from the race – they're scared of smart voting

ALEXEI NAVALNY | KREMLIN CRITIC, RUSSIA

SHORT TAKES

HK activists plead guilty to charges

Hong Kong: Seven Hong Kong pro-democracy activists pleaded guilty Thursday to organizing and inciting others to take part in an unauthorized assembly held in 2019. The seven activists appearing in court included Raphael Wong, the former chairman of the League of Social Democrats political party, and Figo Chan, who led the Civil Human Rights Front, a now disbanded group that organized protests. "I was protesting based on the principle of civil disobedience. One of the key elements of civil disobedience is to accept the charges," Wong said Thursday ahead of the proceedings.

Pak police nab 15 for harassing girl

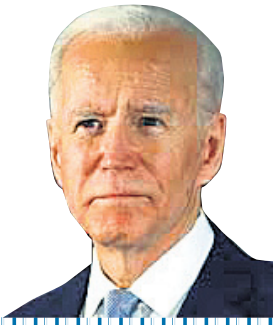
Lahore: Police in Pakistan Thursday arrested 15 people allegedly involved in the sexual assault of a YouTuber girl on Independence Day at the historic Minar-i-Pakistan, after the incident sparked nationwide outrage and drew international condemnation. The incident took place August 14 when hundreds of youngsters were celebrating Independence Day at Azadi Chowk near Minar-i-Pakistan in Lahore. Politicians from all parties and members of civil society have strongly condemned what many of them called "sexual terrorism".

China issues alert for rainstorms

Beijing: China's National Meteorological Centre Thursday issued an alert for rainstorms in some northern, eastern and central parts of the country, calling for precautionary measures. From 8 am Thursday to 8 am Friday, heavy rains are expected in parts of Hebei, Tianjin, Shandong and Henan, with up to 130 mm of rainfall expected in certain areas, reports Xinhua news agency. These regions are likely to encounter over 60 mm of hourly precipitation accompanied by thunderstorms and gales.

Active bomb threat near US Capitol Hill

Washington: A man in a pickup truck was threatening to set off a bomb on Washington's Capitol Hill Thursday, triggering evacuations and a massive police response -- months after the site was targeted in a deadly insurrection. Much of the complex was cordoned off as police and FBI agents negotiated with the driver who drove his truck onto the sidewalk near the Capitol building and Library of Congress -- and searched for possible explosives.



If there's American citizens left, we're gonna stay till we get them all out. The idea that somehow, there's a way to have gotten out without chaos ensuing, I don't know how that happens

JOE BIDEN | PRESIDENT, US

CHINA MARKS TIBET ANNIV

China Thursday marked the 70th anniversary of the founding of the Tibet Autonomous Region on the roof of the world, with a call to accept the rule of the Communist Party



'OUR FLAG, OUR IDENTITY'

Afghans protest Taliban on I-Day

The demonstrations come as Afghans mark the Independence Day holiday commemorating the 1919 treaty that ended British rule



Protests in Kabul and eastern cities, several killed
Leader of anti-Taliban opposition supports protests

People tore down the white flag of Taliban
Taliban tell people with no travel documents to leave airport

AGENCIES

Kabul, August 19: Flag-waving protesters took to the streets of more Afghan cities Thursday as popular opposition to the Taliban spread, and a witness said several people were killed when the militants fired on a crowd in Asadabad in the east.

"Our flag, our identity," a crowd

Ex-Malaysia Deputy PM Ismail Sabri to clinch leadership

AGENCIES

Kuala Lumpur, August 19: Former Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob moved closer Thursday to forming the next government after securing a parliamentary majority from the same coalition that collapsed earlier this week.

If confirmed, Ismail Sabri's appointment would mark the return of the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) party to leadership, three years after it lost a general election because of corruption allegations, especially around the multi-billion dollar scandal at investment fund 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB).

Muhyiddin Yassin, who is now serving as caretaker PM, said Thursday his alliance unanimously backed his former deputy to ensure continuity of policies on "fighting Covid-19 and the nation's recovery" until it was suitable to hold elections.

The support was conditional on Ismail Sabri ensuring that the new cabinet members were free from graft charges, he said in a statement. Several UMNO politicians were charged with corruption after the 2018 election defeat.

King Al-Sultan Abdullah, the constitutional monarch who will be appointing a new premier, is scheduled to meet with the country's other senior royals Friday. A decision on the new government head is likely to be announced after that. In Muhyiddin's government, Ismail Sabri was among ministers responsible for framing Malaysia's response to the pandemic and he could be taking over at a time when the country's coronavirus infections and deaths per million rank as the region's highest.

of men and women waving black, red and green national flags shouted in the capital Kabul, a video clip posted on social media showed, on the day Afghanistan celebrates independence from British control in 1919. A witness reported gunshots fired near the rally, but they appeared to be armed Taliban shooting in the air.

One woman walked wearing an

Taliban carrying out door-to-door manhunt

United Nations: The Taliban is intensifying a search for people who worked with US and NATO forces, a confidential United Nations document says, despite the terrorists vowing no revenge against opponents. The report provided by the UN's threat-assessment consultants says the group has "priority lists" of individuals it wants to arrest. Most at risk are people who had central roles in the Afghan military, police and intelligence units, according to document. The Taliban have been conducting "targeted door-to-door visits" of individuals they want to arrest and their family members, the report says. It adds that terrorists are also screening individuals on the way to Kabul airport and have set up checkpoints in major cities, including the capital and Jalalabad. The report says the terrorists are "rapidly recruiting" new informers to collaborate with the Taliban.

Afghan flag around her shoulders, and those marching chanted "God is greatest". At some protests elsewhere, media have reported people tearing down the white flag of the Taliban.

Some of the demonstrations are small, but combined with the on-going scramble by thousands of people to get to Kabul airport and flee the country, they underline the challenge the Taliban face to govern the country.

In Asadabad, capital of the eastern province of Kunar, several people were killed during a rally, but it was not clear if the casualties resulted from Taliban firing or from a stampede that it triggered, witness

Mohammed Salim said.

"Hundreds of people came out on the streets," Salim said.

Protests also flared up in the city of Jalalabad and a district of Paktia province, both in the east.

Wednesday, Taliban fighters fired at protesters waving flags in Jalalabad, killing three, witnesses and media reported. Media reported similar scenes in Asadabad and another eastern city, Khost, Wednesday.

"Salute those who carry the national flag and thus stand for dignity of the nation," First Vice President Amrullah Saleh, who is trying to rally opposition to the Taliban, said on Twitter.

HOLiest FESTIVAL



Shiite Muslim worshippers gather around the shrine of Imam Abbas during a Muharram procession in Karbala, Iraq. Muharram, the first month of the Islamic calendar, is a month of mourning for Shiites in remembrance of the death of Hussein

PTI PHOTO

Bombing hits Pak Shia procession

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lahore, August 19: A powerful explosion ripped through a Muharram procession in central Pakistan's Punjab province Thursday, killing at least two, including a seven-year-old girl, and wounding 59 people, a senior minister and police officials said.

The incident took place in Bahawalnagar, some 260 kilometres from Lahore when a Shia procession was heading to an Imambarah as part of the annual Ashura commemoration.

Punjab Home Minister Raja Basharat confirmed to the media



that at least two people were killed in the attack carried out by a man who threw a hand grenade at the mourners in the procession which was passing near a mosque in Bahawalnagar.

He said the attacker had been arrested and pictures shared on social media showed police dragging a bearded and shirtless man in hand-

At least two people were killed in the attack carried out by a man who threw a hand grenade at the mourners

cuffs. Basharat said besides the two people killed in the explosion, two of the injured were in critical condition and undergoing treatment at Bahawalpur Victoria Hospital.

Videos circulating on social media showed people running around in panic after the blast and ambulances rushing injured persons to the hospital.

India targets Pak-based terror groups at UNSC



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

United Nations, August 19: Pakistan-based terror groups like LeT and JeM continue to operate with both impunity and encouragement, India told the UN Security Council Thursday, calling on it not to take a selective view on the scourge of terrorism and to have the courage to call out the double speak of those who extend state hospitality to individuals who have innocents' blood on their hands.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, chairing a high-level United Nations Security Council briefing on "Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts" held under India's current presidency of the UNSC, said the heightened activities of the proscribed Haqqani Network justifies this growing anxiety.

It is therefore vital that the Security Council "does not take a selective, tactical or complacent view of the problems we face," the External Affairs Minister said.

"We must never countenance sanctuaries for terrorists or overlook their raising of resources," he said.

Without naming Pakistan, where proscribed UN terrorists and ter-

In our own immediate neighbourhood, ISIL-Khorasan (ISIL-K) has become more energetic and is constantly seeking to expand its footprint. Whether it is in Afghanistan or against India, groups like Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) continue to operate with both impunity and encouragement

S JAISHANKAR | EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER, INDIA

ror groups enjoy safe havens and state support, Jaishankar said "when we see state hospitality being extended to those with innocents' blood on their hands, we should never lack the courage to call out their double-speak."

Pakistan-based Hafiz Saeed, a UN designated terrorist whom the US has placed a USD 10 million bounty on, has been convicted for 36 years imprisonment in five terror financing cases. He is serving a jail sentence at the Kot Lakhpat Jail in Lahore for his conviction in terror financing cases.

Nepal's main Oppn party officially splits



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kathmandu, August 19: Nepal's main Opposition CPN-UML, the largest communist party of the country, has officially split, with one of its factions led by dissident leader Madhav Kumar Nepal applying for registering a new political party, after the government backed a controversial ordinance to make it easier for political parties to split.

Nepal Wednesday submitted an application at the Election Commission (EC), for registering a new political party named CPN-UML (Socialist).

Earlier Wednesday, on the recommendation of the Council of Ministers, President Bidya Devi Bhandari issued an ordinance to amend the Political Parties Act 2071, aimed at easing the procedure for political parties to split.

The amendment ordinance stipulates that 20 per cent or more members of the parliamentary party and the central committee of

a political party can split their mother party.

Before the amendment, provisions of the Political Party Act required dissidents to have the support of 40 per cent of members in the parliamentary party and the central committee to split their mother party.

The ordinance introduced by the Sher Bahadur Deuba government has led to splits in at least two parties, marking what observers say an unprecedented political event, The Kathmandu Post reported.

The ordinance was introduced by Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba-led government Tuesday, to make it easy for the dissidents to split their mother parties, The Himalayan Times reported.

The ordinance is likely to help Madhav Kumar Nepal-Jhalanath Khanal faction of the CPN-UML faction that has been playing a crucial role in the formation of the current coalition government, and is vital to ensure its continuity.

WHO slams global rush towards vax boosters

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Geneva, August 19: The World Health Organization condemned Wednesday the rush by wealthy countries to provide Covid vaccine booster shots, while millions around the world have yet to receive a single dose.

Speaking before US authorities announced that all vaccinated Americans would soon be eligible to receive additional doses, WHO experts insisted there was not enough scientific evidence that boosters were needed.

Providing them while so many were still waiting to be immunised was immoral, they argued.

Earlier this month, the WHO

called for a moratorium on Covid vaccine booster shots to help ease the drastic inequity in dose distribution between rich and poor nations.

'Shame on all humanity'

WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus voiced outrage at reports that the single-dose J&J vaccine currently being finished in South Africa was being shipped for use in Europe "where virtually all adults have been offered vaccines at this point".

"We urge J&J to urgently prioritise distribution of their vaccines to Africa before considering supplies to rich countries that already have sufficient access," he said.



"Vaccine injustice is a shame on all humanity and if we don't tackle it together, we will prolong the acute stage of this pandemic for years when it could be over in a matter of months."

South African NGO's have denounced the shipments from South Africa as "vaccine apartheid" when less than two percent of 1.3 billion Africans have been fully vaccinated so far.

We're planning to hand out extra life jackets to people who already have life jackets, while we're leaving other people to drown without a single life jacket. The fundamental, ethical reality is we're handing out second life jackets while leaving millions and millions of people without anything to protect them

MIKE RYAN | EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, WHO

"Millions of doses" produced there have been exported since March to Europe and the United States, several NGO's said in a

statement Tuesday.

"J&J are complicit in vaccine apartheid, diverting doses from those who really need them to the wealthiest countries on earth," Fatima Hassan, of the South African NGO Health Justice Initiative, told AFP.

"It's colonialist extraction, plain and simple," said Hassan.

"Global allocation of vaccines is currently not being made by public health officials but instead by a handful of company officials, who consistently prioritise Europeans and North Americans over Africans," said Dr Matthew Kavanagh of the Health Law Institute at Georgetown University.

of the day quote

Given the huge interest from marquee investors across the US, Asia and EMEA, the bond attracted the lowest-ever coupon globally in issue rating category, thus setting a benchmark for other Indian Banks to capitalise on

KAKU NAKHATE | PRESIDENT AND INDIA COUNTRY HEAD, BANK OF AMERICA

The (new metro) project supports the urban transformation of Bangalore city into a more livable and sustainable city through support to urban public transport and urban development with concepts of transit-oriented development and multi-modal integration

TAKEO KONISHI | COUNTRY DIRECTOR (INDIA RESIDENT MISSION), ADB

There is a big opportunity for the country to be on course for an early phase down of HFCs, through domestic innovation, which would also make Indian industry globally competitive in climate-friendly cooling products

ALEX HILLBRAND | HFC ADVOCATE, CLIMATE AND CLEAN ENERGY AND INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM, NRDC

SHORT TAKES

Board Infinity to hire 2K freshers

Mumbai: Edtech and career exploration platform Board Infinity Thursday said it is planning to hire 2,000 employees in the next six months and grow the paid learner base to 3 lakh by the end of 2022. The startup is planning to hire freshers and young professionals in areas like technology, digital marketing, operations, sales, the company said.

Flipkart CEO meets FM

New Delhi: Flipkart CEO Kalyan Krishnamurthy Thursday met Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. The Finance Minister's office tweeted a picture from Sitharaman's meeting with Krishnamurthy. While details of the meeting were not shared, sources said the top executive informed the minister of the company's engagement with sellers, especially MSMEs. Krishnamurthy also highlighted the company's focus on helping artisans and weavers leverage digital platforms to reach more buyers, sources added.

Sonalika launches agro solutions app

Bhubaneswar: Sonalika has launched its new 'Sonalika Agro Solutions' tractor and implement rental app to bridge the gap between farmers and hi-tech farm machinery - from land preparations to harvesting. The platform connects the farmers with a huge range of machinery renters that offer high-tech agricultural implements on rent within their vicinity. The farmers can choose from various options available as per their convenience.

Piaggio rolls out special edition

Mumbai: Piaggio, the maker of the premium Vespa scooter, has rolled out a special edition of the two-wheeler in the domestic market on completing 75 years of the iconic brand. The special 'Vespa 75th' will be offered in 125cc and 150cc engine options and available across all Vespa dealerships in the country, Piggio India said. The 125cc 'Vespa 75th' is priced at ₹1.25 lakh (ex-showroom), whereas the 150cc version costs ₹1.39 lakh (ex-showroom), Piaggio India said.



The pandemic forced the government to shift priorities as supply chains and revenue streams dwindled. As vaccination rates increase throughout India and public health improves, the governments will focus on furthering the digitalisation efforts on concerns like citizen experience and digital inclusion

APEKSHA KAUSHIK | SENIOR PRINCIPAL RESEARCH ANALYST, GARTNER

EXPORTERS CONCERNED

Bilateral trade with Afghanistan has been impacted and Indian exporters are concerned about their payments as banking services and remittances may face restrictions due to the ongoing situation in the land-locked country, industry body FIEO said Thursday



'Housing market likely to reach new peak in 2 yrs'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, August 19: The housing market in the top seven cities is likely to attain a new peak by 2023, when housing sales are estimated to cross 3.17 lakh units and new launches by 2.62 lakh units during the year, according to a report by Anarock Property Consultants.

It noted that the unprecedented rise in homeownership sentiment, faster adoption of technology and digital marketing, and innovative business practices have served to soften the overall impact of Covid-19 on the Indian residential sector.

Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) and Bangalore are all set to lead from the front with maximum housing sales and new launches in 2023. Of the total estimated housing sales and new launches in 2023:



MMR is likely to comprise a 28% share of total sales and nearly 30% of new launches. Bangalore is estimated to have a 20% share of

homes sold and a 17% share of units launched. NCR may comprise an 18% share of sales and 15% of new launches.

The residential sector was showing healthy y-o-y growth from 2017 until the latest peak year of 2019, but this trajectory was derailed by the Covid-19 pandemic. Otherwise, 2020 was expected to be a watershed year for the housing sector

ANUJ PURI | CHAIRMAN, ANAROCK PROPERTY CONSULTANTS

The report noted that 2021 is expected to fare better than 2020, but it is unlikely to reach the levels of 2019, the most recent peak year.

Anuj Puri, Chairman of Anarock Property Consultants said, "The residential sector was showing healthy y-o-y growth from 2017 until the latest peak year of 2019, but this tra-

jectory was derailed by the Covid-19 pandemic. Otherwise, 2020 was expected to be a watershed year for the housing sector."

"While the second half of the year did showcase the remarkable resilience of Indian residential real estate, a new bottom for the sector was created in 2020 with housing sales plunging to nearly 1.38 lakh units while new launches dropped to 1.28 lakh units. 2020 is not a year that the industry is likely to forget very soon," he said.

Encouragingly, the ongoing trend of sales exceeding supply is likely to continue and 2021 is expected to witness an increase of 35% in housing launches and a 30% increase in sales over the previous year. However, against the peak year of 2019, supply and sales may be lower by 28% and 31% respectively.

Ind Ra revises up FY22 GDP estimate to 9.4%



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, August 19: India Ratings and Research (Ind Ra) Thursday revised upwards its 2021-22 GDP growth forecast to 9.4 per cent considering the surprisingly faster recovery after the second wave of Covid, higher exports and sufficient rainfall.

The rating agency had earlier expected the economy to grow by 9.1 per cent in a scenario where vaccinating all the adults gets pushed back to March 2022 and 9.6 per cent if the government achieves its target of rendering vaccine doses by December. On Thursday, Ind Ra said the government is likely to miss its target, and vaccinating all adults will get spilled over to March, but revised upwards the growth forecast.

Its principal economist and director of public finance, Sunil Kumar Sinha explained that the recovery in June and July from the after-effects of the second wave of the pandemic has been surprisingly fast, calling it as one of the main reasons for the revision.

Additionally, the global markets are also doing good as the COVID threats ebb leading to higher exports in India, while the south west monsoon has revived which increases the prospects on the rural economy front, Sinha said, pointing that these factors prompted the new growth estimate.

India looks to work with US on market access issues: Goyal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, August 19: India will look at working with the US on market access issues to promote bilateral trade as Washington has indicated that it is not looking for a new trade agreement as of now, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said Thursday.

He also said that Australia has shown significant interest to do an early harvest pact with India and exporters should share areas of their interest with the ministry. An early harvest with countries like Australia will help India engage with others on similar lines, Goyal said.

"The US as of now has kind of indicated that they are not looking for new trade agreements, but we look at working with them for more market access issues on both the sides and I think that would also be a big relief and a big opportunity opener for our export sector," he said while addressing the Export Promotion Council leaders in Mumbai.

On the proposed free trade pact with the UK, the minister said it is progressing well as both the teams are in talks.

"We are working with line ministries on areas where we can quickly close the deal in terms of an early harvest if possible, so instead of trying to address 11,000 lines (or products), we can look at areas of



The US as of now has kind of indicated that they are not looking for new trade agreements, but we look at working with them for more market access issues on both the sides and I think that would also be a big opportunity opener for our export sector

PIYUSH GOYAL | COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY MINISTER

their immediate interest and our immediate interest," Goyal said.

On the comprehensive trade pact

with the European Union, he said discussions have started as the EU is a 27-nation bloc, an agreement with them is a much longer process. "We will work very hard to speed it up," he added.

The minister also assured the industry that India will not allow the "same mistakes" that were made in the past FTAs and is trying to allow an interactive approach this time.

"We are engaging with all of you and industry to ensure that FTAs are fairly and equitably crafted, bringing in more elements of reciprocity. But FTA cannot be a one way traffic. We also have to open our markets to others if we are wanting a larger pie in their markets, and therefore my appeal and request to all is to also identify areas where we have the confidence that we can withstand competition," he said.

BIZ BUZZ

Zupee raises \$30mn

NEW DELHI: Zupee, a leading innovator in India's online skill-based gaming industry, announced that it has raised \$30 million at a pre-money valuation of \$500 million in Series B funding round. This round of funding has been co-led by Silicon Valley-based WestCap Group and Tomales Bay Capital, with participation from Matrix Partners India & Orios Venture Partners. This round comes within 6 months after its Series A round at a \$100 million valuation, which is more than 5 times increase in the company's valuation. With total funds raised now at \$49 million, Zupee is backed by some of the best in the industry - WestCap Group, Matrix Partners India, Smile Group and Orios Partners. The company has an existing user base of over 10 million users.



V-Guard Thursday conducted a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative at Puri. Under this initiative, the company donated 32 wheelchairs to the government hospital.

CBoI holds green campaign

BHUBANESWAR: Central Bank of India (CBoI), Kolkata Zone conducted green campaign, dedicated towards the Covid warriors for their relentless service during the pandemic. CBoI also gave condolences to those staff who died during the pandemic. Field General Manager DN Rajendra Kumar organised the green campaign. The mega event was organised at Kendriya Vidyalaya-2, Burla in the presence of Ganesh Pradhan, the school principal.



China's planned anti-sanctions law for HK unsettles financial sector

Hong Kong is the regional hub for many global financial firms, and accounts for the bulk of the profits for firms such as HSBC and Standard Chartered

REUTERS

Hong Kong, August 19: Global banks and other financial institutions in Hong Kong are scrambling to find out details of China's planned imposition of an anti-sanctions law on the city, and trying to understand how it could impact their operations in the financial hub.

Beijing adopted a law in June under which individuals or entities involved in making or implementing discriminatory measures against Chinese citizens or entities could be put on a government anti-sanctions list.

Financial firms are closely watching a meeting this week (in Hong Kong) of the National People's Congress Standing Committee, the highest organ of China's parliament, for signs on how and when similar legislation will be intro-

duced in Hong Kong. Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam said Tuesday she did not have an explicit timetable for its implementation.

The move came as the US government imposed several rounds of sanctions on Hong Kong and Chinese officials over Beijing's crackdown on the city's freedoms under sweeping national security legislation.

Under the planned law, if financial institutions in Hong Kong implement US sanctions, they may be exposed to legal risk in Hong Kong for doing so, financial sector executives and lawyers said.

"Many foreign multinational companies are asking about the impact of the anti-foreign sanctions law, especially international banks and financial institutions," said Shaun Wu, a Hong Kong-based partner at law firm Paul Hastings.



"It is significant because international banks and financial institutions may find themselves caught between a rock and a hard place."

Concerns have swirled over for-

the spectre of financial firms getting caught in the crossfire as sparing between the world's two largest economies escalates.

While top executives at Hong Kong's biggest financial firms have not aired their concerns in public, people familiar with the matter said there had been intense discussions internally on how to deal with it.

A senior executive told Reuters that Hong Kong Financial Secretary Paul Chan had abruptly cancelled a meeting with business groups scheduled for Thursday, without providing a reason.

The executive, who declined to be identified due to sensitivity of the matter, said businesses were scrambling for information and Chan had made no effort to allay concerns despite repeated requests for meetings.

Offices of the Hong Kong government and Chan did not immediately respond to Reuters request for comment.

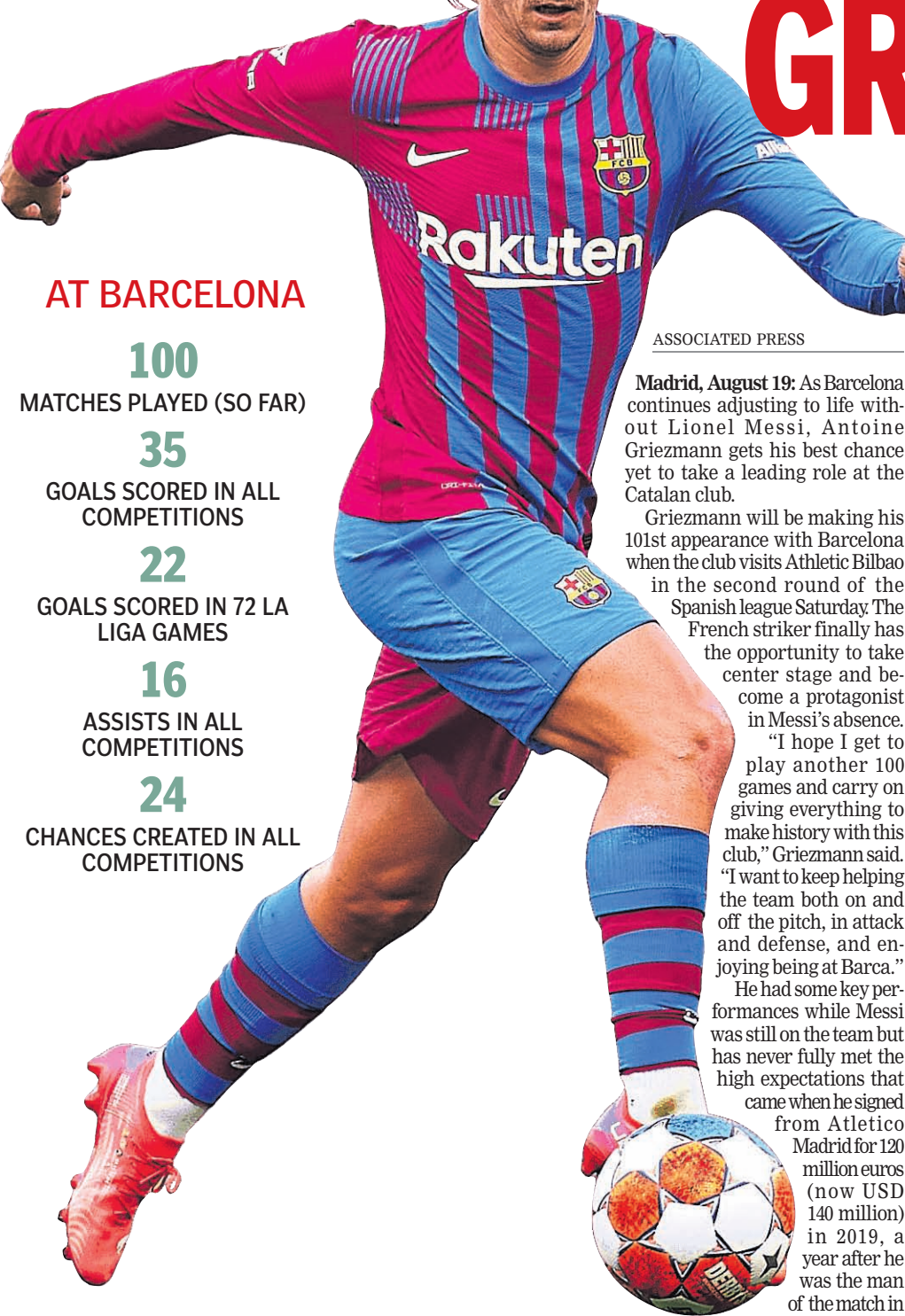
Hong Kong is the regional hub for many global financial firms, and accounts for the bulk of the profits for firms such as HSBC and Standard Chartered.

"Some of our financial institution clients are trying to plan out different scenarios ahead of the anti-foreign sanctions law, trying to decide what they would do if someone is sanctioned by the US and subsequently run the risk of prosecution in Hong Kong for complying with such sanctions," said Rod Francis, head of FTI Consulting's financial crime practice.

"But while scenario planning is useful, there's only so much of that kind of navel gazing you can actually do."

“Despite the farewell to Leo Messi, we are very excited about this new season. We are convinced that we will give you many joys this season. It is important to have the best, but we don't change our ideas or the way we play either. Griezmann has played in his position and he has done well

RONALD KOEMAN



AT BARCELONA

100
MATCHES PLAYED (SO FAR)

35
GOALS SCORED IN ALL COMPETITIONS

22
GOALS SCORED IN 72 LA LIGA GAMES

16
ASSISTS IN ALL COMPETITIONS

24
CHANCES CREATED IN ALL COMPETITIONS

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Madrid, August 19: As Barcelona continues adjusting to life without Lionel Messi, Antoine Griezmann gets his best chance yet to take a leading role at the Catalan club.

Griezmann will be making his 101st appearance with Barcelona when the club visits Athletic Bilbao in the second round of the Spanish league Saturday. The French striker finally has the opportunity to take center stage and become a protagonist in Messi's absence.

"I hope I get to play another 100 games and carry on giving everything to make history with this club," Griezmann said. "I want to keep helping the team both on and off the pitch, in attack and defense, and enjoying being at Barca."

He had some key performances while Messi was still on the team but has never fully met the high expectations that came when he signed from Atletico Madrid for 120 million euros (now USD 140 million) in 2019, a year after he was the man of the match in

the World Cup final won by France.

The 30-year-old Griezmann, who has 35 goals with Barcelona, used to play a secondary role even to Luis Suarez and youngsters such as Ousmane Dembele and Ansu Fati. At times, he wasn't even a regular starter and had few minutes off the bench.

Now he has the competition of Barcelona's biggest offseason signing, Dutch international Memphis Depay, but coach Ronald Koeman has already hinted they will not be fighting against each other for a starting spot. Koeman said after the pre-season that he "liked the connection" between Griezmann and Depay.

Both played well in the team's 4-2 opening victory against Real Sociedad, which marked the start of Barcelona's first season without Messi after 17 years. The Argentina star joined Paris Saint-Germain after Barcelona failed to give him a new contract because of its financial struggles.

Other forwards for Barcelona this season include Sergio Aguero and Martin Braithwaite, who scored twice against Sociedad. "It was very important to get a win," said Griezmann, who is 14 goals from equaling Thierry Henry as the club's highest scoring Frenchman. "It was a good game and hopefully we can now get another win against Athletic."

Barcelona have won 12 of their last 15 league matches against Athletic, which opened with a 0-0 draw at Elche Monday.

Real Madrid will also be counting on a French striker when it tries to add to its winning start in a visit to Levante Sunday. Karim Benzema, the team's top scorer last season, picked up from where he left off and scored twice in the 4-1 win at Alaves Saturday.

Jersey #10 at Barca yet to find a suitor

BARCELONA: FC Barcelona will try to keep the #10 shirt open for the next season, according to new rumors which contradict news that Philippe Coutinho was offered the shirt. The Brazilian has worn #14 to this point, but Rey Manaj wore it in Barcelona's first match of the season, fueling speculation. However, until the transfer window closes, shirt numbers are not permanent. Reports in the media said that Coutinho would wear the famed #10, which had in the past been worn by the likes of Romario, Ronaldinho, Diego Maradona, Rivaldo and of course, Lionel Messi. The latest news says that Barcelona would rather no one wear the shirt for the upcoming season. La Liga regulations do not permit a club to retire a number, but teams can choose not to give it to any player - but only under certain circumstances. First team players must wear a number 1-25, meaning the only way to keep a number between 1 and 25 open is to have less than 25 first team players. At the moment, Barcelona has 25 first team players, meaning some player must wear #10. Of course, with the transfer window open, a player could still leave. Barcelona are said to prefer giving the #10 shirt to a youth player registered as a first teamer, rather than a veteran player such as Coutinho.

Levante were the last team to beat Madrid in the league, winning 2-1 in the Spanish capital in January. Madrid have won only two of its last four league matches against Levante.

Defending champion Atletico Madrid also won their opener, 2-1 at Celta Vigo, and now they host Elche at the Wanda Metropolitano.

JHINGAN WOULD BE TESTED TO THE LIMIT

‘Always wanted to stay outside comfort zone’

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, August 19: Trusted for his leadership qualities by his new club HNK Sibenik, Indian centre-back Sandesh Jhingan feels he would be 'tested to the limit' while enhancing his game outside his comfort zone at Croatian league Prva HNL.

Jhingan will become the first India international footballer to play in the Croatian top-tier league after completing a move from ATK Mohun Bagan to HNK Sibenik.

"This will enhance my game. This is where I would be tested to my limit. Challenges wise, if I can put in the work, if I stay disciplined enough then I can see if I can get into the starting XI.

"It's quite challenging but I trust myself, my work ethic, it's always on me whether I will play or not," Jhingan said during a virtual interaction Thursday.

The top central defender added, "I think I am at a stage of my career where I really want to test myself in the highest-level possible and I think this is the perfect platform for me. It has been my personal desire to play in Europe and I have taken up this challenge upon myself."

Named India's footballer of the year last month, the 28-year-old is already in Croatia and watched Sunday's home win against Hrvatski Dragovoljac in the country of the 2018 World Cup finalists.

Asked if big moves such as these are going to help the Indian senior team, he responded in the positive. "When I go back I will have to earn my place in the national team and once I make it, hopefully, I will also play better in the national team, and the national team will also look good with one of its playing player better football."

Jhingan started his youth career at St. Stephen's Football Academy in Chandigarh and got a break in the top division with United Sikkim in 2011.



“Every Asian has a desire to move to Europe, so I had to take this decision. I am at the right age now to take a new challenge in my career

SANDESH JHINGAN

As a young 21-year-old, Jhingan first broke into prominence during the inaugural edition of the Indian Super League (ISL) when he was adjudged the Emerging Player of the League in 2014.

A feat that helped him earn a place in the senior India national team making his debut in 2015 against Nepal at the FIFA World Cup 2018 qualifiers.

"If you have monitored my career, I have always preferred to take to take decisions outside my comfort zone. I wanted to go somewhere... I always have this thing in my mind that sky is the limit.

"I dreamt big, worked hard for it, remained disciplined and made sacrifices to achieve my full potential. I never went after money, I always chose glory over money. That's how I take my decisions... I would sleep with a clear conscience. Yes, it's the right decision."

The defender has two ISL runners-up medals with Kerala Blasters FC where he spent six years and moved to ATK Mohun Bagan in 2020 after missing the previous season due to injury.

India favourites vs Pak, feels Gambhir



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, August 19: Former India opener Gautam Gambhir reckons that India will go into the T20 World Cup as a "far superior" outfit than arch-rivals Pakistan while Afghanistan led by Rashid Khan will be the team to watch out for.

India and Pakistan open their group league campaign October 24 at the Dubai stadium. Gambhir, who scored a memorable 75 against Pakistan in the 2007 World T20 final, said that there will be lot of pressure on India's neighbours.

"Expectations are going to be really high from Pakistan as well, and at the moment, if you see, India is far more superior to Pakistan," Gambhir told Star Sports. "In a T20 format, anyone can beat anyone because it is a very individual kind of format, and we should not take any team for granted.

"For example, you should not take Afghanistan for granted. People like Rashid Khan can create upsets. It's the same with Pakistan. But, yes, there will be pressure on Pakistan."

He said Afghanistan's IPL players make them a competitive outfit which can certainly cause a few upsets. "I have always been a believer that if you want to talk about one team that is going to be a real underdog in this tournament, that



must be Afghanistan. Additionally, they have got people like Rashid Khan, Mujeeb, and Mohd Nabi, you can't take them players lightly."

The group 1 which comprises Australia, West Indies, England and South Africa is the 'Group of Death' according to Gambhir. "That's actually the real group. You have got four teams locked in and playing what, on day one of the T20 World Cup, that's going to be a very exciting Saturday."

Defending champions West Indies have always been a solid

team in shortest format. "West Indies have always been very unpredictable with the kind of firepower they've got, they can go on to win the third time as well.

"England has also got the firepower. They have probably got the most consistent white-ball team over the last couple of years - after winning the 50-over World Cup. Australia has literally gone off the radar, probably because a lot of main players are missing, but then again, they can be very dangerous on that particular day."

Oz name squad for ICC T20 World Cup

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

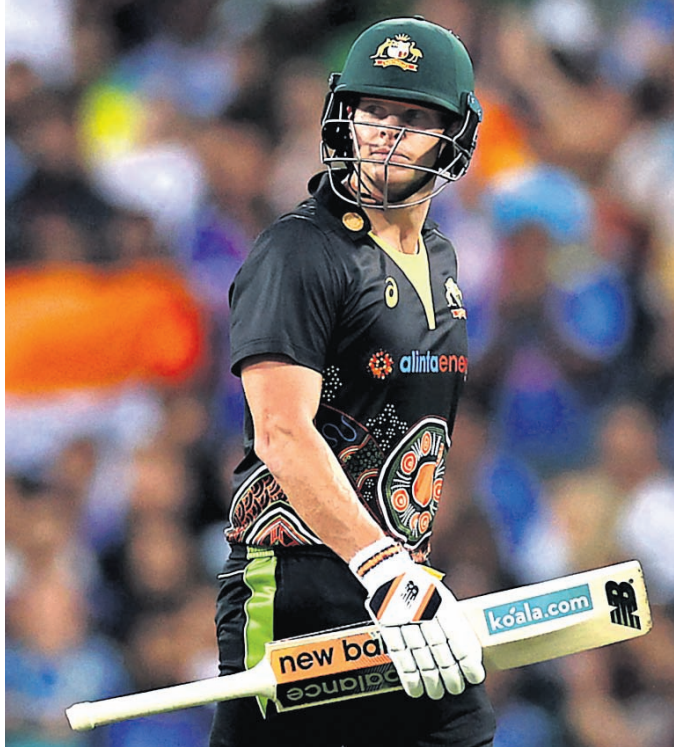
Melbourne, August 19: Steve Smith, David Warner and Pat Cummins were Thursday recalled as Australia named a full strength squad in search of an elusive ICC T20 World Cup title later this year.

The 15-man Australia squad for the showpiece, to be held in Oman and UAE in October, is a mixture of pace, spin and hard-hitters keeping in mind the slow, spin-friendly conditions of the pitches in the UAE.

The trio had opted out of Australia's limited overs tour of the West Indies and Bangladesh recently.

In a major development, Australia has included uncapped Josh Inglis as a backup to wicket-keeper Matthew Wade. Inglis, who is yet to make his international debut, has been chosen ahead of Alex Carey and Josh Philippe.

Having dominated the ODI World Cup with record five titles and two runner-up finishes, Australia would be eager to break their jinx in the T20 World Cup. Australia have endured a poor run in the T20 format off late, losing back-to-back series to West Indies and Bangladesh recently.



Steve Smith has been included despite his ongoing elbow injury

But the return of Marcus Stoinis, Glenn Maxwell, Warner, Cummins, Smith and Kane Richardson after opting out of recent white-ball tours of the West Indies and Bangladesh, will add much-needed

firepower to Australia's team.

Smith has been included despite his ongoing elbow injury, while limited overs skipper Aaron Finch, who missed the Bangladesh series to undergo knee surgery, is expected to be fit on time for the tournament.

Dan Christian, Nathan Ellis and Daniel Sams have been named as reserves and will be travelling with the team.

Keeping in mind the spin-friendly conditions, Australia has included three frontline spinners in the squad - Ashton Agar, Mitchell Swepson and Adam Zampa. Mitchell Starc, Cummins, Richardson and Josh Hazlewood will be in charge of the pace department.

The T20 World Cup will feature 16 teams and will be played from October 17 to November 14. Australia will open their campaign in the Super 12 stage against South Africa October 23

The squad: Aaron Finch (C), Pat Cummins (VC), Ashton Agar, Josh Hazlewood, Josh Inglis, Mitchell Marsh, Glenn Maxwell, Kane Richardson, Steve Smith, Mitchell Starc, Marcus Stoinis, Mitchell Swepson, Matthew Wade, David Warner & Adam Zampa.

PT Usha's coach Nambiar no more

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kozhikode, August 19: Renowned athletics coach OM Nambiar, who nurtured one of India's greatest track and field stars PT Usha, died here Thursday due to age-related illness. He was 89. Nambiar is survived by his wife Leela, three sons and a daughter. He breathed his last at his residence in Vadakara, a coastal town in Kozhikode district.

One of the first Dronacharya Awardees and this year's Padma Shri awardee was hospitalised last week, after which he was brought back home. Usha said Nambiar, who was battling the Parkinson's disease, had a heart attack 10 days ago.

"It's a huge loss for me. He was a father figure to me and my achievements would not have been there if he was not there. I met him only last week after Neeraj (Chopra) won gold in Olympics. He could understand what I was telling him but he could not speak," said Usha.

Coe lauds India's progress in athletics

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Nairobi, August 19: World Athletics president Sebastian Coe has congratulated the Indian mixed 4x400m relay team for its bronze-winning performance at the U-20 World Athletics Championships, saying that the country is making great progress in the sport.

On the first day of competitions

Wednesday, the Indian quartet of Bharath S, Priya Mohan, Summy and Kapil clocked 3:20.60 seconds to finish third in the final of the 4x400m relay team event, clinching the country's fifth medal in the history of the tournament.

In a video tweeted by Coe, the 64-year-old was seen interacting with the Indian athletes, including the medallists. "This is what you

need at the start of the championship. Congratulations to your 4x400m mixed relay team, fantastic performance in the heats as well," he said.

The double Olympic gold medalist in 1500m is heard telling the other Indian athletes to follow the footsteps of the mixed relay team.

"That means you have got to do what they have done, there is big pressure there. I loved watching you guys perform and this is a sport and country that is really making great progress.

"You had great triumphs in Tokyo. Now this your moment to shine on the stage and then it's your chance to go for the Olympics," Coe added.

While sharing the video, Coe tweeted: "Such a pleasure to meet, discuss athletics and congratulate the talented athletes from around the world @WAU20Nairobi21. Our sport is in good hands with these promising and passionate next generation athletes #WorldAthleticsU20 #homeofheroes #nairobi #india."

