

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



It is ridiculous! How can a court let off someone who has been found guilty in our prime time show?

## 'Everyone's life precious to me'

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik launches smart health cards that will enable 3.5 crore people avail cashless healthcare services in 200 hospitals



CM Naveen Patnaik gives a smart health card of BSKY to a Bonda woman in Malkangiri, Friday, as ST Secretary VK Pandian looks on

POST NEWS NETWORK

Malkangiri, August 20: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Friday launched smart health cards under the Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana to enable around 3.5 crore people to get cashless healthcare services in 200 hospitals in the state and other parts of the country.

On the occasion, he handed over a card to Shukri Dhangada Majhi, a woman belonging to the Bonda tribal community in Malkangiri district. Around 3.5 crore people of 96 lakh families will be benefited from the new healthcare initiative as women can avail cashless treatment up to ₹10 lakh per year and other family members will get the benefit up to ₹5 lakh each, he said. "I am very happy. Our smart health card will alleviate your grief. The state government will pay for your treatment. So you can save money and spend more for educa-

tion of your children for betterment of your families," the CM said.

Describing the programme as a no-frills system, he said a cardholder can avail all the treatments without any hassle from a listed hospital. "It's a historic and paradigm shift in the system of healthcare services in India, where patients will get the best treatment without any expense from their pocket," Patnaik said.

The CM said his government is trying to make sure that money should not be a barrier to treatment. "Whether a patient is a farmer

or a miller, a small shopkeeper, or a rickshaw puller or a tribal brother or sister living far away, everyone's life is precious to me," he said.

"During a programme in 2014, a girl proposed to increase the coverage for cost of treatment for mothers under BSKY. Everyone praised her courage and intelligence that day. The girl was Mamata Padiami of Malkangiri. I really liked her proposal and decided to increase the medical treatment cost coverage for women to ₹10 lakh," he said.

## Diesel 21 paise cheaper, no change in petrol price

New Delhi: Diesel prices were reduced for the third consecutive day while petrol prices continued to remain unchanged. In Bhubaneswar, diesel was sold for ₹97.33 per litre, 21 paise lower than the previous day. In Delhi, diesel was sold for ₹89.27 per litre, 20 paise lower than the previous level.

CITY FUEL PRICES	
PETROL	₹102.72 (No Change)
DIESEL	₹97.33(-0.21)

Similarly, in Mumbai, diesel price fell 20 paise to ₹96.84 a litre, while petrol was unchanged at ₹107.83 per litre. Global crude oil prices continued to decline. The October contract of Brent crude oil on the Intercontinental Exchange was trading at \$66.72 per barrel. The fall in global oil prices should have resulted in around ₹2 per litre reduction on retail rates of fuel. However, oil marketing companies still want to see market movements before making further cuts.

## Teenage girl found dead in city farmhouse, kin cry foul

Bhubaneswar: The body of a teenage girl was found floating in a pond under mysterious circumstances on the premises of a farmhouse at Raghunathpur under Nandankanan police limits here Friday. The deceased was identified as Kamini Priyadarshini, a resident of Malisahi village in Nayagarh.

The 18-year-old was staying along with her parents at a rented house in Raghunathpur area on the outskirts of the city. Her father, Ramesh Kumar Mallik works as a professor in the Mechanical branch of the College of Engineering and Technology.

The deceased had secured 89 per cent marks in the recently declared SSC results in August. The family members claimed that she wasn't under any pressure. **MORE P3**

## Zyudus Cadila's vax for 12+ gets go-ahead

The world's first DNA-based vax against Covid to be administered to people 12 years and above in three doses

AGENCIES

New Delhi, August 20: Indigenously developed Zyudus Cadila Covid vaccine ZyCoV-D has received approval for emergency use authorisation from the Drug Controller General of India and it will be administered to people 12 years and above, the Department of Biotechnology said Friday.

This is the world's first DNA-based vaccine against the coronavirus, and this three-dose vaccine when injected produces the spike protein of the SARS-CoV-2 virus and elicits an immune response, which plays a vital role in protection from the disease as well as viral clearance, it said. The Department of Biotechnology also said that the "plug-and-play" technology on which the plasmid DNA platform is based can be easily adapted to deal with mutations in the virus, such as those already occurring. The vaccine has been developed in partnership with the DBT under Mission COVID Suraksha, the department said.

"It has been implemented by Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council and ZyCoV-D has been supported under the COVID-19 Research Consortia through National Biopharma Mission for preclinical studies," the department said.

MARKET WATCH	
INDEX	VARIATION
SENSEX	55329.32 ↓ 300.17
NIFTY	16450.50 ↓ 118.30
DOLLAR	74.61 ↑ ₹0.08
EURO	86.99 ↑ ₹0.70
GOLD	₹47,151 ↓ ₹18
SILVER	₹61,942 ↓ ₹191

WEATHER		
	BHUB	CTK
TEMP. MAX	30.7°C	30.6°C
TEMP. MIN	25.4°C	24.8°C
Humidity	97%	92%
Rainfall	25.6mm	13.0mm
Forecast	Light rain very likely	

ଓଡ଼ିଶା ସରକାର  
DSPL-122

### Shri Naveen Patnaik

Hon'ble Chief Minister, Odisha

## announces

### New Smart Health Card with New Guidelines of Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana

Ajay Kumar Das  
4189872XXXX

ଓଡ଼ିଶା ସରକାର Government of Odisha  
ବିଜୁ ସ୍ୱାସ୍ଥ୍ୟ କଲ୍ୟାଣ ଯୋଜନା  
Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana

**State Government will bear full cost of health services provided to all in Government facilities**

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**Each beneficiary family will get health coverage of Rs.5 lakhs and additional Rs.5 lakhs for the women members of the family per annum in empanelled private hospitals**

OIIPR-10001/13/0016/2122

**HEALTHY ODISHA, HAPPY ODISHA | TOLL FREE NO-104**



**DANIEL BEATS DWAYNE IN LIST OF 2021'S HIGHEST-PAID ACTORS**

Actor Daniel Craig has topped the list of highest-paid movie stars of 2021, beating actor Dwayne Johnson with whopping \$100 million in earnings. Craig topped *Variety's* highest-paid movie stars of 2021 list, reports *aceshowbiz.com*.

**BRITNEY SUED FOR ALLEGEDLY HITTING EMPLOYEE DURING DISPUTE**

Pop singer Britney Spears has been sued by one of her housekeepers for allegedly striking her during a dispute while in singer's Thousand Oaks home August 16. Captain Eric Buschow confirmed that Britney is under investigation over misdemeanour battery.



**FORTUNE FORECAST**

GaneshSpeaks.com accuracy • reliability • trust FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181

**ARIES**  
Today is just another busy day. You may remain hassled sorting out problems at office and then at home. Your bosses may allow you certain concessions and this will ease things to some extent. Ganesh says you will gain valuable guidance from elderly people.

**TAURUS**  
Today might be a day of untying and getting out of the tangles, says Ganesh. You may take the blame for the actions of another. Things may get frustrating around the afternoon and your confidence levels may stoop.

**GEMINI**  
You will spend your time figuring out other people and their motivations today. You will probably spend time discussing issues of security and finance with your family members today. You will gain love and appreciation from people owing to your caring nature, says Ganesh.

**CANCER**  
You will display a special attention towards beloved ones. This is an apt time for a frank chat on vital issues with your life part-ner, says Ganesh. You never allow heart to dictate terms to mind, yet today will be sentimental with your wife. Today is the day to feel myriad emotions, says Ganesh.

**LEO**  
Your day will be one of mixed results. On one hand you will be dissatisfied with your spouse or business partner, on the other hand you will make fantastic returns on your speculations. You will be able to maintain a balance owing to the advise of some friend, says Ganesh.

**VIRGO**  
You will take your destiny in your own hands today. You possess the vision to penetrate the masks that people wear to hide their true selves. You will carefully select the friends to spend your time with, and you will also make plans for success. You need to brush up your presentation abilities, and may have to put in some extra efforts to get your ideas approved, says Ganesh.

**LIBRA**  
Ganesh says today is a good day for government related work. Those of you who are government employees will be able to get good results for their work. Your work will be rewarded and your performance and efficiency will be praised.

**SCORPIO**  
Free your mind from negative thoughts. You need to be in high spirits to work with your team and delegate equal responsibilities to your team mates. Know their calibre and designate accordingly. Trust them with their work and the rest would fall in place.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
The morning seems to begin on a lazy note today, as your energy level is equal to zero. Thus, you may try to decentralise your activities and divide it between your co-workers. But make sure the responsibilities are delegated in the right hands or you may have to regret your decision.

**CAPRICORN**  
You will want to expand the horizon of your business. But you will be confused about the path to take for the expansion. You want to reach to the sky, but such a dilemma will keep you in a double mind. Listen to what your heart says, as it will guide you to the right direction, feels Ganesh.

**AQUARIUS**  
It's a busy day at work, and you're probably involved in some pending project work. It's advisable that you don't get complacent. Keep an eye on your opponents to have an edge over them, suggests Ganesh. Colleagues will be supportive, and so will family.

**PISCES**  
You will find yourself ecstatic now that certain important projects you have been slaving over are nearing completion. You will implement new strategies and will hope that everything goes according to plan.

**Yami is particular about regional accents**

**Mumbai:** Yami Gautam Dhar has started preparing for her role for upcoming investigative drama *Lost*, which is being shot in Kolkata. The actress says language is fundamental in giving the character a sense of belonging and that she always tries to make sure that she gets the regional accents correct.

Essaying a feisty crime reporter based out in the heartland of Bengal, Yami is going the extra mile by learning the language to get into the skin of her character.



Yami said: "Language is fundamental in giving the character a sense of belonging and look genuine on screen. I always try to make sure that I get the regional accents or the dialects correct, even for a brief dialogue."

"For *Lost*, I am conversing with the Bengali crew on the sets to understand the little nuances of their speech. It is also helping to catch its diction for my role," the actress added.

Aniruddha Roy Chowdhury is directing *Lost*, based on the issue surrounding media integrity. Yami also has *A Thursday*, *Dasvi* and *Bhoot Police* in the pipeline.



**Suriya's Soorai Pottru wins Best Film Award at Melbourne Fest**

**Melbourne:** Tamil actor Suriya's 2020 film *Soorai Pottru* has won the Best Film Award at the Indian Film Festival of Melbourne. The actor also won the Best Performance Male award for his performance in the film.

The movie is loosely based on the biography of Capt. Gopinath, founder of Air Deccan. The announcement was made through the official Twitter handle of the festival. They wrote: "Best Performance Male (feature) congratulations to Suriya Sivakumar for *Soorai Pottru*."

In another tweet they announced: "Best Film. Congratulations to *Soorai Pottru*." The film is produced by Suriya's home banner 2D Entertainment and directed by Sudha Kongara. It was recently announced that the film will be remade in Hindi with Sudha once again taking up the director's role. Australian minister Danny Pearson congratulated Suriya for the win, to which Suriya replied: "Truly an honour Sir!"

**Sanya on her shooting experience with Aamir**

**Mumbai:** Actors Sanya Malhotra and Varun Sharma will be seen as the special guests on *Zee Comedy Show* during this Sunday's episode. Farah Khan judges the show and actress Chitrashi Rawat's spoof of the movie *Dangal* is going to be the highlight of the show.

Sanya Malhotra shared a few anecdotes about the movie *Dangal* and her experience of shooting with Aamir Khan. In fact, she also revealed how Chitrashi had once auditioned alongside her for *Dangal*. Leaving everyone startled with this revelation, Sanya also went on to mention the incidents that followed between them during the audition.

As Sanya Malhotra revealed, "Not a lot of people know this, but Chitrashi and I had given the audition for *Dangal*. We had even done workshops together. We also fought in the movie during the auditions. In fact, the audition process took nearly two months, and I must say, we had a great time together."

Talking about Aamir Khan's Mr Perfectionist tag, she further added, "While Aamir Sir strives for perfection, on the sets of *Dangal*, our director Nitesh Tiwari deserved the Mr Perfectionist tag. He was the real 'baapu' for us, who used to wake us up at 5 am to wrestle and before shooting, we were trained for 10 months and only when we were ready, our shooting started."



**Priyadarsini's bamboo rakhis are in fashion this year**

*Priyadarsini provides training to unemployed youths and homemakers to help them become self-employed. She has trained 25 tribal women at Rayagada so that they can create sustainable products and become self-reliant.*

**BHUBANESWAR:** Ahead of Rakhi Poonima, a homemaker Priyadarsini Das has carved a niche for herself by making beautiful eco-friendly rakhis from bamboos. That apart, she is known for making eco-friendly handicraft, jewellery and gift items from

bamboo. She started her entrepreneurial journey four years back and in no time her handcrafted jewellery became a big hit among women.

When asked why she uses bamboo, Priyadarsini says, "Bamboo craft items are prevalent due to their eco-friendly and durability qualities. Crafts made of bamboo are a big hit in the handicraft business. As a material, bamboo is sustainable, renewable and has eco-friendly characteristics also."

Another reason why she chose to work with bamboo is that it is readily available everywhere, especially in the rural areas. "There are many bamboo jungles on the outskirts of Bhubaneswar. I procure them at very low rates. Because my investment is less, I sell all my products at affordable rates."

Keeping the global pandemic and the subsequent lockdown in mind, Priyadarsini also provides training to unemployed youths and homemakers to help them become self-employed. She says, "This is the right time to extend a helping hand to the unemployed people and create job opportunities. I have trained 25 tribal women at Rayagada so that they can create sustainable products and become self-reliant. After being trained, they have procured an order of Rs 2 lakh from the state government to produce different handicraft decors from bamboo. Many youths from the villages migrate to other places in search of jobs. I would like to train them and help them create own identity without leaving their homeland." So far, Priyadarsini has made 3,000

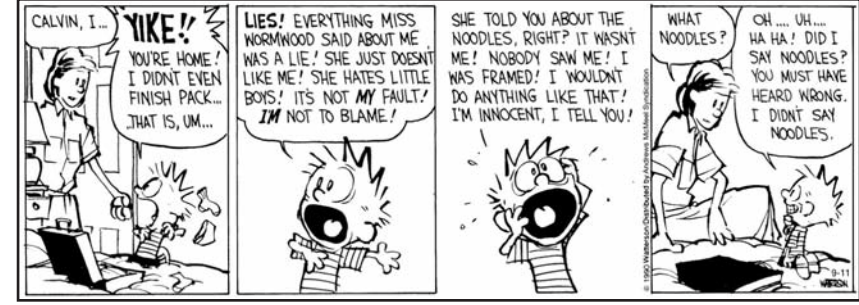
rakhis using bamboo and different eco-friendly seeds. Surprisingly, nearly all her rakhis have been sold out. Her rakhis are priced between Rs 150-300. However, she is not selling eco-friendly rakhis to earn big bucks but to create awareness about sustainable environment. "I am not selling rakhis to earn money. All I want is to create awareness about a sustainable environment", Priyadarsini says. Talking about rakhi-making process, she says, "I cut the bamboos with the help of a machine. I soak them either in boiled mehendi water, boiled onion peel water or boiled turmeric water to get different colours. Later, I put them in sunlight for drying purpose. I don't use any chemicals. I decorate them with different eco-friendly seeds of plants."



**PEANUTS**



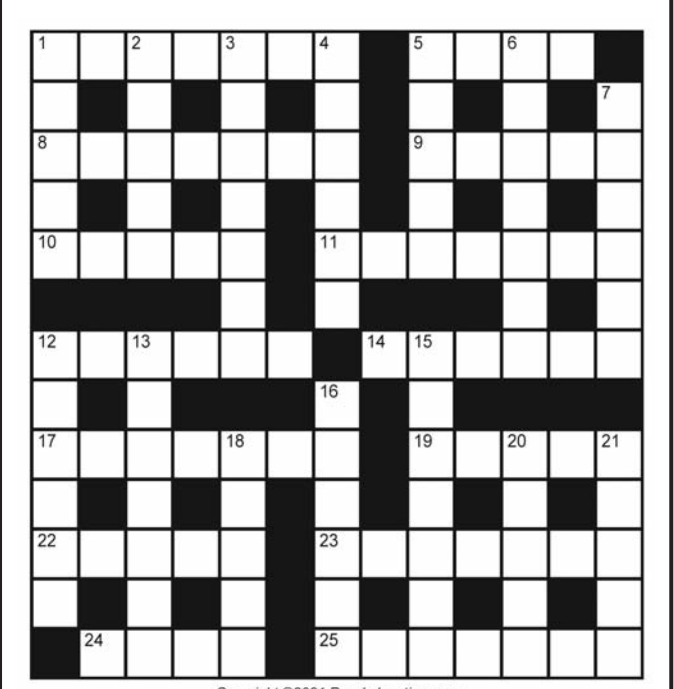
**CALVIN AND HOBBS**



**BREVITY**

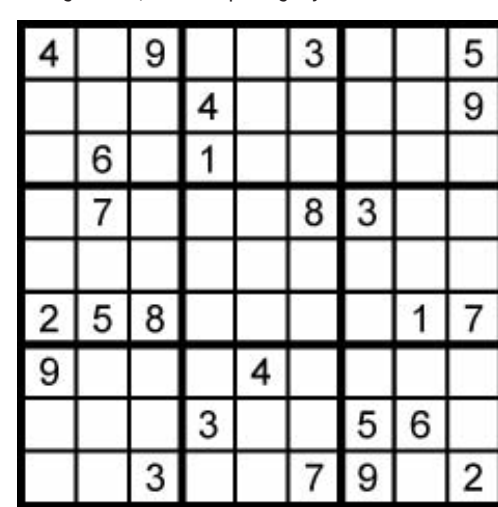


**FUN post CROSSWORD**

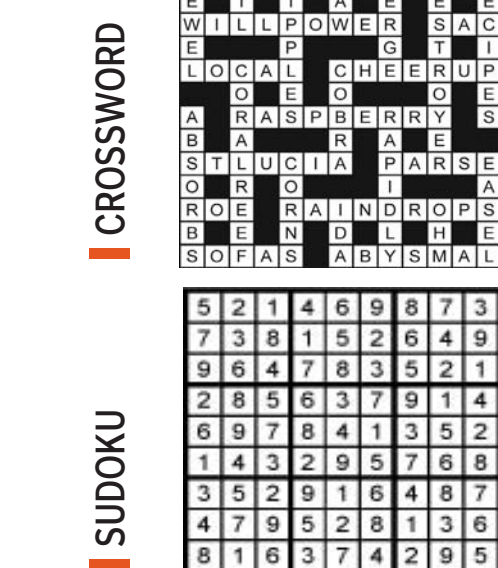


- Across**  
1 It goes around the world  
5 After ice or sugar  
8 Diameter of a gun barrel  
9 Cattle locale  
10 Doggerel  
11 Trap  
12 Gesso  
14 Protect  
17 Poisonous plant
- Down**  
19 Stair part  
22 Track events  
23 Berth  
24 They go with chips  
25 Like Cyclops (3-4)
- 5** Nursery rhyme food  
**6** Servitude  
**7** Sharp as a tack  
**12** "Get outta here!" (2,4)  
**13** Vesuvius destroyed it  
**15** Piercing site  
**16** Sitting position  
**18** Haven  
**20** Piquant  
**21** Inflexible

**SUDOKU**



**SOLUTIONS**



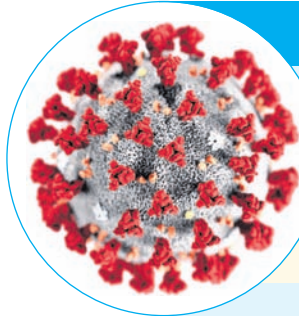
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

# downtown



## WITH DUE CARE

An artisan giving finishing touches to the clay idols of Goddess Khudurukuni in Kumbharsahi area of Cuttack, Friday



## COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	21,11,39,072	18,90,30,573	44,22,406
India	3,23,58,829	3,15,61,635	4,33,589
Odisha	9,99,173	9,82,319	7,223

# 18-yr-old girl found dead; kin cries foul

**COPS SAY THEY ARE LOOKING INTO ALL POSSIBLE ANGLES AND THAT THE AUTOPSY REPORT WILL HELP THEM GET FURTHER LEADS IN THE CASE**

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, August 20:** An 18-year-old girl was found dead under mysterious circumstances in a pond in Raghunathpur area under Nandankanan police limits here Friday, a police official said.

The deceased, Kamini Priyadarshini, had been residing with her parents at a rented house in Raghunathpur area here. Her father, Ramesh Kumar Mallik, who hails from Malisahi in Nayagarh district, is a professor at College of Engineering and Technology (CET) here.

According to family sources, Kamini had gone to bed after having her dinner around 12 in the night. Her mother was, however, taken aback to find Kamini missing from her room around 3am Friday.

The Malliks checked the footages of a few CCTVs installed at their neighbour's house just to realise that Kamini was heading towards Nandankanan Road around 1:55am.

The family called the PCR (by dialling 100) following which a team of Nandankanan police launched a search operation to find the girl's body floating in a pond on the farmhouse premises in the locality, around a kilometre from the Malliks' residence.

"As we (Nandankanan police team) were searching for the girl, we got a phone call from a man informing about a girl's body floating



The girl seen in a CCTV footage

**My daughter was a bit upset as she could not perform well in the OJEE (Mains). We motivated her to prepare for the upcoming exams and later she was very normal**

**RAMESH KUMAR MALLIK | FATHER OF THE DECEASED**

in his farmhouse pond. We alerted the parents and rushed to the spot," said an official of the team, adding Ramesh confirmed that it was his daughter's body.

Later, Nandankanan police registered a case (4/21) of unnatural death and sent the body for an autopsy.

Although police suspect it to be a case of suicide, Ramesh claimed that there is some foul play as his daughter was not under any kind of pressure.

"Kamini had secured 89 per cent

in the Plus II examination the results of which were announced recently. My daughter was a bit upset as she could not perform well in the OJEE (Mains). We motivated her to prepare for the upcoming exams and later she was very normal," the girl's father said.

"We don't understand how she scaled a 10-ft compound wall to enter the farmhouse. I suspect someone might have had persuaded her to go to the farm. We demand an impartial probe into the incident," Mallik said.

Meanwhile, police sources claimed after seeing a PCR van, a panic-stricken Kamini might have had scaled the wall. Sources also revealed that the scientific team found no injury marks on the body.

"We are looking into all the possible angles. The autopsy report will help get further leads into the case," Nandankanan IIC Biswaranjan Senapati said.

# I-T dept cyclothon spreads tax awareness

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, August 20:** The Income Tax (I-T) department Friday organised a mega cyclothon in an attempt to spread awareness about taxation and to commemorate 75 years of Indian Independence.

A large number of cyclists, including members of the I-T department, converged at the office campus here Friday morning and pedalled to the offices of the department in Puri via Cuttack.

The event was flagged off by former Indian hockey player and former Rajya Sabha MP Dilip Tirkey along with other senior officials. The department said that around 250 persons attended the



Former hockey player Dilip Tirkey flags off the cyclothon in Bhubaneswar, Friday



Cuttack Collector Bhawani Shankar Chayani, Chief Income Tax Commissioner Manoranjan Panigrahi and others participate in the cyclothon in Cuttack

cycle rally, garnering support from various organisations including the Revenue department.

Chief Income Tax Commissioner Manoranjan Panigrahi and Cuttack Collector Bhabani Shankar Chayani welcomed the rally in Cuttack. The cyclists then headed towards Puri by the National Highway and reached there at noon.

Tirkey, during his inaugural

speech at the starting point, encouraged the cyclists to take part in the event. He also took the opportunity to congratulate the Indian Hockey teams for their good performance in Tokyo Olympics.

I-T department said that the event was meant to create awareness on taxation and to celebrate the honest taxpayers. "Cyclothon was one of the events planned as

part of the celebrations of 75th year of India's Independence. We have other events too in the coming days. Those include marathon, plantation drive and some other sports programmes. We could not arrange these earlier due to Covid protocol," an official from the department said.

"The purpose of the cyclothon is to honour the honest taxpayers.

We also want to create awareness on inculcating the habit of cycling in a bid to lessen pollution," he added.

During the event, cyclists had converged at the event with different types of cycles meant to cover long distances. The participants were seen flaunting tricycles, MTB cycles, hybrid cycles and even the Mo Cycles.



The cycle rally underway in Puri

OP PHOTOS

## MALKANGIRI AIRSTRIP PROJECT

# Identify land for compensatory plantation, govt tells Collector

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, August 20:** The state government has asked the Malkangiri Collector to identify suitable land for compensatory plantation as several hectares of forest land would be diverted towards construction of an airstrip in the district, sources said Friday.

According to the sources, the state government will have to convert 13,233 hectares of forest land into non-forest land for the proposed project worth ₹15 crore.

To divert the above parcel of forest land for construction of the airstrip, the government needs to identify 26,466 hectares (two times the forest land) at a suitable place for compensatory plantation, sources said.

For this purpose, the state government had earlier identified 26,466 hectares of land and submitted the diversion proposal to the Ministry of Environment, Forests & Climate Change, sources added.

However, the ministry has recently rejected the proposal as the non-forest land identified for compensatory afforestation is not contiguous to forest area, the sources said.

Therefore, the Works depart-

The state govt will have to convert 13,233 hectares of forest land into non-forest land for the proposed airstrip project worth ₹15 crore

To divert the above parcel of forest land, the govt needs to identify 26,466 hectares at a suitable place for compensatory plantation

The state govt had earlier identified 26,466 hectares of land and submitted the diversion proposal to the Ministry of Environment, Forests & Climate Change. But the ministry rejected the proposal

ment, which is implementing the project, has once again asked the Malkangiri Collector to find out alternative land for plantation under the compensatory afforestation programme to divert the original forest land of 13.35 hectares, they added.

Once constructed, the airstrip will provide better connectivity to the district. This apart, the facility will help security forces to deal with Maoist activities. At present, the state has two operational airports at Bhubaneswar and Jharsuguda.

## THREADS OF AFFECTION



Girls buying rakhis from stalls in Sahid Nagar area of Bhubaneswar ahead of the Raksha Bandhan festival, Friday

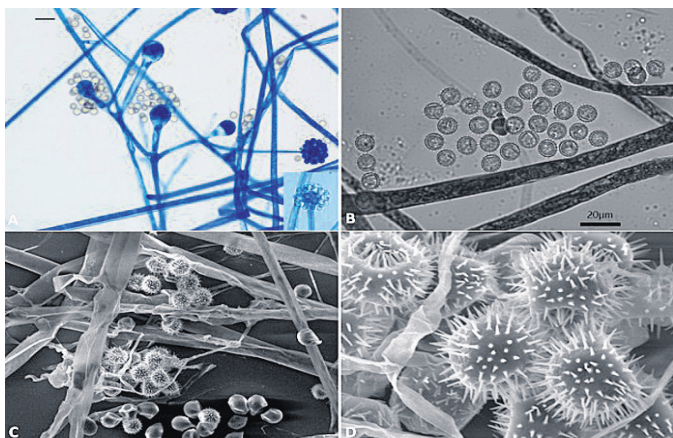
# AIIMS-Bhub discovers rare fungus causing mucormycosis

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, August 22:** A team of researchers from All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Bhubaneswar have discovered a new variety of fungus named *Cunninghamella arunalokei* in a 26-year-old youth.

The experts claimed that the rare species was responsible for mucormycosis (black fungus) in the patient. The team led by Dr Vinaykumar Hallur, a mycologist from the institute, in the paper published in 'Journal of Fungi' claimed that usually *Cunninghamella* hardly leads to invasive mucormycosis in a person with strong immunity.

However, in the present case, the team after thorough investigation and culture found that the person with normal immunity and normal blood health parameters suf-



fered invasive mucormycosis which was termed as rare.

"It is a rare discovery because we hardly see *Cunninghamella* (a variety of fungus) causing mucormycosis in healthy human beings. There are only four such cases

in the entire world. However, we found a new species of *Cunninghamella* in the present case and named it as *Cunninghamella arunalokei* after the name of my teacher," Hallur told Orissa POST. He explained that

The experts claimed that the rare species was responsible for mucormycosis (black fungus) in the patient

The team led by Dr Vinaykumar Hallur, a mycologist from the institute, in the paper published in 'Journal of Fungi' claimed that usually *Cunninghamella* hardly leads to invasive mucormycosis in a person with strong immunity

However, in the present case, the team after thorough investigation and culture found that the person with normal immunity and normal blood health parameters suffered invasive mucormycosis

usually this fungus infects people with low immunity like those with uncontrolled diabetes, having organ

transplantation, chronic diseases, cancer and other immunocompromised patients. But invasive infection from this fungus was a rare discovery done by the AIIMS, Bhubaneswar team, he added.

The species name was given by the team to honour Professor Arunaloke Chakrabarti, a leading mycologist from India. According to experts dealing with mucormycosis cases, such fungus often infects the tissues of face and orbits, and ultimately infects the eye and brain cells. In many cases it could lead to loss of vision and even death.

The research paper also claimed that *Cunninghamella* infections are rare in India as compared to other countries.

## LAXMANANANDA MURDER CASE

# SC seeks state govt's response on accused Udaya's bail petition

POST NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi, August 20:** The Supreme Court has issued a notice to Odisha government on a petition filed by one of the accused in the murder of Swami Laxmanananda Saraswati in Kandhamal district in 2008.

A two-judge bench of the apex court comprising Justices AM Khanwilkar and Sanjiv Khanna directed the state government to file its response in four weeks.

Significantly, a special leave petition (SLP) has been filed by Udaya, co-accused in the murder case of Swami Laxmanananda, seeking suspension of his sentence. The SLP has been filed against the order of Orissa High Court dated January 28 this year wherein the court had dismissed a petition seeking suspension of Udaya's sentence.

The petitioner submitted that he has been in jail for 10 years without parole. He urged the SC to grant him bail. Earlier, the apex court had granted bail to seven accused in the murder case.

Petitioner's counsel Anupradha Singh submitted to the court that Udaya has been wrongly framed in the case. The advocate pleaded that police couldn't prove the seizure of pistol, which was allegedly used in the killing of Saraswati, from the possession of Udaya. Singh further contended that the statements of witnesses, which the trial court relied upon while passing the order of life imprisonment, are contradictory.

Earlier, the SC had granted bail to seven accused namely Munda Badamanjhi, Bhaskar Sanamajhi, Durjyodhan Sunamajhi, Sanatan



**Petitioner's counsel Anupradha Singh submitted to the court that Udaya has been wrongly framed in the case**

Badamanjhi and Budhadev Naik, Bijaya Kumar Sanaseth and Garnath Challanseth in 2019.

It is to be mentioned here that Saraswati and four of his aides were killed at his Jaleshpata ashram in Kandhamal district August 23, 2008. The killing triggered communal violence in the state, in which at least 38 people were killed.

The state police had arrested seven people in connection with the incident. Although the police had filed a chargesheet against them in 2009, they filed a supplementary chargesheet in 2011 citing involvement of another seven persons, including Udaya, in the murder case.

A court in the state had convicted seven people in the murder case in 2013. In another order passed by the Phulbani court in October 2013, Udaya was convicted and imprisoned for life.

## 11,000 nursing officers to be posted soon

**BHUBANESWAR:** Following the direction of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, over 11,000 posts of nursing officers have been created in Odisha to make healthcare more efficient and effective, officials said Thursday. The posts would be filled at the main district hospitals, maternity, pediatric and community health centres, and various medical colleges, the Information and Public Relations department said. The 11,006 positions will be filled in two phases in accordance with the Odisha Nursing Service (Method of Recruitment and Conditions of Service) Rules, 2019. A total of 8,933 posts have been created at the district level, the department added.

# Draft rules out for Panchayat polls

**POST NEWS NETWORK**

**Bhubaneswar, August 20:** The state government has decided to amend the rules for the three-tier general election to Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), 2022.

The Panchayati Raj and Drinking Water department has issued three draft rules for conducting the Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti and Zilla Parishad polls. As per the draft rules, the counting of votes will be done on a date scheduled by the State Election Commission (SEC).

In the last Panchayat polls, the counting was done the same day of the poll. But this time, the counting is most likely to be done in a different date, to be fixed by the SEC. The result may be declared one day after the completion of the polls in all places of the state, sources said.

Earlier, the SEC had asked the district Collectors to ascertain the availability of ballot boxes,



**The commission has asked the Panchayati Raj department to complete reservation and delimitation of wards**

both in good as well as repairable condition. The commission further proposed to have central

counting at Block headquarters instead of counting at booth level in the next Panchayat polls.

For this purpose, the requirement of ballot boxes would be equal to the total number of booths in the district. Therefore, there will be substantial increase in the number of ballot boxes that will be used in these elections, the source said.

## Changes in a nutshell

- UNLIKE THE PREVIOUS POLLS, THE COUNTING WILL BE DONE ON A DIFFERENT DATE WHICH WILL BE FIXED BY THE STATE ELECTION COMMISSION
- THE RESULT MAY BE DECLARED ONE DAY AFTER THE COMPLETION OF THE POLLS IN ALL PLACES OF THE STATE
- CENTRAL COUNTING AT BLOCK HEADQUARTERS HAS BEEN PROPOSED INSTEAD OF COUNTING AT BOOTH LEVEL

The commission has also asked the Panchayati Raj department to complete reservation and delimitation of wards, which is necessary to conduct the polls.

## IN MEMORIAM



Congress workers pose for a photo op after paying tribute to former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi on his birth anniversary in Bhubaneswar, Friday

## Heavy rain unlikely for next 7 days: IMD



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, August 20:** The regional office of the India Meteorological Department (IMD) Friday said the state may not witness heavy rains, thunderstorms or lightning during the next one week.

This comes when the monsoon trough continued to pass through Jharsuguda, Balasore and other parts of the country and expected to pass south-eastwards to east-central Bay of Bengal.

This weather forecast from the Met department hinted at less rainfall in different parts of the state in the coming days which might lead to rain deficit. The weatherman, however, claimed that light to moderate rain could occur at several places during these days.

The IMD also claimed that the state capital might see a few spells of rain or thundershower while the maximum temperature in the City could go upto 30 degrees Celsius.

The minimum temperature in the City could go upto 25 degrees Celsius. Nevertheless, the department also said that the maximum rainfall was reported in Paralakhemundi (22.4 mm).

Boudh reported the maximum temperature of 33 degree Celsius while Phulbani reported the minimum temperature of 18 degrees Celsius.

# BJD, BJP lock horns over smart health card

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, August 20:** The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Biju Janata Dal Friday crossed swords over Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana (BSKY) and Ayushman Bharat.

This happened on the sidelines of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik distributing the BSKY smart health cards in Malkangiri.

Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, who had earlier reiterated the demand for implementation of Ayushman Bharat scheme in the state, lambasted the state government and Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik for not imple-

## Social media war

DHARMENDRA CLAIMED THAT SEVERAL PATIENTS INCLUDING THE MIGRANT POPULATION IN NEED OF HEALTHCARE COULD HAVE BENEFITTED FROM AYUSHMAN BHARAT BUT THE NAVEEN GOVERNMENT BLOCKED THE CENTRAL ASSISTANCE

menting the central health insurance scheme in the state.

He claimed that several patients including the migrant population in need of healthcare could have benefitted from Ayushman Bharat

IN STRONG REBUTTAL TO PRADHAN'S STATEMENT, BJD LEADER PRANAB PRAKASH DAS CLAIMED THAT AROUND 96 LAKH PEOPLE FROM THE STATE ARE LIKELY TO BENEFIT FROM BSKY WHEREAS THE COVERAGE OF AYUSHMAN BHARAT WOULD HAVE BEEN MUCH LESS

but the Naveen government blocked the central assistance.

In strong rebuttal to Pradhan's statement, BJD leader Pranab Prakash Das claimed that around 96 lakh people from the state are

likely to benefit from BSKY whereas the coverage of Ayushman Bharat would have been much less.

BJP's Kalahandi MP Basanta Panda also slammed the state government on the issue.

Meanwhile, another round of spat erupted between the two parties after Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw tweeted his prayers to Lord Jagannath.

While BJD leader and state Higher Education Minister Arun Sahoo took a dig at Vaishnaw on social media, BJP leader Lekhashree Samantsinghar also made counterattack against Sahoo by sharing Sahoo's picture with Srimandir servitors.

# Sanitation workers' allowances hiked



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, August 20:** The Odisha government Friday announced to classify core sanitation workers under 'skilled' and 'highly-skilled' categories with an aim to help them benefit from Garima scheme, launched by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik in September last year.

With this, core sanitation workers will now be able to get 'risk and hardship allowance' along with an increased wage of Rs. 461 per day for Grade-I category and Rs 401 for Grade-II category against the existing ₹311 per day

"The inclusion of core sanitation workers under highly skilled and skilled categories in the scheduled employment with provisions of risk and hardship allowance is a great achievement under the Garima scheme. The core sanitation workers now will get additional 15 per cent of their wages as part of remuneration, in recognition of the risky, hazardous and arduous nature of work assigned to them," said Panchayatiraj Minister Pratap Jena.

It can be mentioned that the Garima scheme envisages safety and dignity of the core sanitation workers and also provides for appropriate wage and compensation to them.

Those performing arduous work, including de-sledding of onsite sanitation systems, maintenance of sewer network, cleaning of inspection chambers, cleaning and maintenance of septic tank will now identified 'highly skilled' and will be designated as Grade I workers.

Meanwhile, those involved in cleaning of drains, operation and maintenance of public and community toilets, and operation and management of faecal sludge treatment plants (FSTPs) will be considered 'skilled' and will be designated as Grade II workers, as notified by Labour and Employees' State Insurance Department for the first time.

"Allowances will be paid along with the wage for the day(s) of work. With this initiative, the sanitation workers will earn the much-deserved title of skilled/highly skilled workers, and compensation that better appreciates their efforts in making our cities healthy and clean, thereby paving way to build Swachha Odisha Sustha Odisha," Jena added.

## FOR LORD'S SMOOTH DARSHAN



Srimandir administration puts up barricades on Grand Road, Friday, as the 12th century shrine reopens for non-Puri residents August 23

## CLASSIFIED

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# Pradhan inaugurates academic complex at IIT-Bhub

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, August 20:** Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan Friday inaugurated an academic complex at Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bhubaneswar and expressed hope that the added infrastructure will enable the students of the premier institute to strive for greater excellence.

The global fourth Industrial Revolution has necessitated the creation of new models of business and development for the world and IIT-Bhubaneswar must create such models, help generate jobs and solve modern-day problems, the Union minister said.

Pradhan was speaking after inaugurating the Pushpagiri Lecture Hall Complex and the

Rushikulya Hall of Residence at the institute here.

The present lecture hall complex has three buildings, while the Rushikulya hall of residence is an 800-single-seated hostel, the institute said in a release.

The first of the buildings is now ready for operation and a mini-complex comprising 10 flipped classrooms is under construction, the release said.

In the future, another three buildings are likely to be added to the lecture hall complex that has a circular formation.

Pradhan stressed the need for greater collaboration between institutions to address the local and environmental issues in a disaster-prone state like Odisha which will become a role model for the entire nation.



"With a focus on world-class research and innovation, our IITs have indeed become the symbol of the progress of India and success in higher education. Our IITs are among the world's top universities and are contributing to global technological needs," the Union minister said.

On this occasion, a memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between Skill Development Institute, Bhubaneswar; and IIT, Bhubaneswar for sharing of expertise and enhancing skill development activities for under-employed, unemployed, and underprivileged youth

IIT-Bhubaneswar Director Raja Kumar said the Union government had so far sanctioned Rs 1,260 crore for building the infrastructure in two phases.

The present complex - which has facilities for lecture halls having seating capacities of 60, 120, and 240 - can be used for conventional classes and also serve as e-classrooms, Kumar said.

The flipped classroom complex is one of the foremost in the country and it can be used for conventional lectures, group or individual tasks comprising design, analysis, and assignment, Kumar said.

The lecture hall complex has been named taking inspiration from the historical Pushpagiri Vihara, an important Buddhist site which was a major centre of learning.

The residential hall is named after the Rushikulya river, well-known for the nesting of Olive Ridley turtles near its mouth.

Pradhan also dedicated the model Skill Development Institute (SDI), Bhubaneswar to the nation in the presence of Chief minister Naveen Patnaik on virtual mode, Friday.

The Union minister laid the foundation stone for the permanent campus of Institute of Chemical Technology - Indian Oil Corporation (ICT-IOC) Bhubaneswar.

The Chief Minister said, "I am happy to note that the SDI Bhubaneswar is going to start operating from their new permanent campus in Bhubaneswar. The state government has been stressing skill development while adhering to global standards to facilitate industrial growth."

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# CM to unveil 50 smart high schools in Ganjam today

TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME OF 133 GOVERNMENT-RUN HIGH SCHOOLS HAS BEEN UNDERTAKEN IN THE DISTRICT

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Chhatrapur, August 20:** Work on 50 smart high schools under the school transformation programme of the state government's 5T initiative is ready in Ganjam district. Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik will inaugurate those high schools in Hinjilicut and Sheragad blocks in the first phase Saturday.

Inauguration programme of the smart schools will continue till August 30 every alternate day. This was informed by the district information and public relations officer Friday here.

As many as 108 MLAs will take part in the inauguration programmes in different days.

Notably, 5T Secretary VK Pandian has been routinely monitoring the high school transformation programme in the district over last few months.

Reports said, the transformation programme of 133 government-run high schools, including 22 Odisha Adarsha Vidyalayas, in the district has been undertaken.

It was learnt that the work of other schools identified in 22 blocks of the district is in progress. The administration aims at completing them as soon as possible. District Collector Vijay Amruta Kulange has



been regularly reviewing the progress of the project every week to ensure its timely completion.

The government has set a target to start functioning of these schools from October 2. It was said that now 133 schools have been included in the programme, but the district administration has set its eyes on 274.

Under the programme, the district administration is improving the quality of infrastructure. World-class interactive and smart class-

rooms, e-library-cum reading rooms and modern science laboratories are being set up in each of the selected schools. Students of Classes IX and X will be given priority as far as e-learning is concerned.

Apart from safe and pure drinking water and clean toilets in schools, the project also envisages better playgrounds for children complete with sports facilities.

The walls of these schools will be painted with educative and interesting themes.

The objective is to instil a sense of pride and aspiration among students. Students will be motivated to attend classes regularly.

The project was undertaken with the involvement of the local communities, including gram panchayats, school management development bodies and alumni associations.

The community involvement is expected to ensure the sustainability of the improved infrastructure in these schools. Experts

Under the programme, the administration has been improving the quality of infrastructure. World-class interactive and smart classrooms, e-library-cum reading rooms and modern science laboratories are being set up in these schools

hope that the school transformation will definitely ensure quality education for rural children.

It was learnt that around ₹50 lakh to ₹60 lakh is being utilised for each of these schools for the infrastructure overhaul with the major contribution from the 'Mo School' funds.

The remaining amounts will be utilised from the gram panchayat development (GPD) funds, the corporate social responsibility (CSR) funds, and other sources.

## NHAI readies DPR to expand NH-49 at Dwarasuni ghat

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Baripada, August 20:** The National Highway Authorities of India (NHAI) has decided to take up expansion of NH-49 at Dwarasuni ghat in Bargarh district. The narrow stretch has reportedly been witnessing frequent accidents.

Union Minister Bishweswar Tudu held talks with Project Director of NHAI (Balasore project) JP Burma Thursday. A survey on the stretch of the NH-49 was conducted earlier. A detailed project report (DPR) was prepared July 2. Burma said the DPR will be sent to the forest department for approval before widening the road in the hilltop terrain.

Rs 9 crore has been estimated for the expansion work. Burma visited the area Thursday and took stock of the accident-prone spots of the NH-49.

A report said, 52 people have died over last seven years at the spot. Locals had been urging the forest department and the NHAI to widen the road. Dwarasuni ghat has also been witnessing traffic snarls most of the time.

## 6 held with 50 kg ganja in Jharkhand

AGENCIES

**Ranchi, August 20:** Six persons from Odisha have been arrested along with 50 kg of marijuana in Jharkhand's Simdega district. "There was information that a big consignment of marijuana was coming towards Jharkhand from Odisha. We spotted a Swift Dzire car and arrested six people along with the contraband. The market value of the seized drug is ₹25 lakh," said Shams Tabrez, SP, Simdega.

During interrogation, the arrested persons told the police that the contraband was to be delivered at Koderma district in Jharkhand.

The arrested persons have been identified as Sudhakar Naik, Clayment Nayak, Deepak Behera, Pankaj Nayak, Ajay Nayak and Pradeep Das. Except Pradeep, all the others belong to Gajapati district in Odisha. Pradeep is from Sundargarh.

## People stage rail roko for jobs at DPCL

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Padmapur, August 20:** Demanding jobs at Dhamra Port Company Limited (DPCL), hundreds of people of Sadar block Friday staged a rail roko at Bhatatira-Ichhapur in Bhadrak district.

The agitating people demanded jobs to at least one member of their families. The rail roko disrupted rail traffic on the line for few hours.

Block development officer Manoj Kumar Behera, Satyabrata Nayak from DPCL and Sabarang police station IIC Manorama Barik along with police force reached the spot and tried to convince the agitators. They called off the strike.

## SAVING ECOLOGY



Women undertake a plantation drive at Parbatipur under Biridi block in Jagatsinghpur district, Friday

## Sundargarh: 4 blocks reel from drought

FARMERS' OUTFITS DEMAND DROUGHT DECLARATION

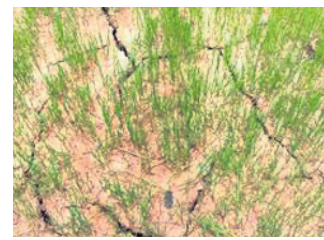
POST NEWS NETWORK

**Sundargarh, August 20:** Owing to deficit rainfall, paddy farming has been extensively damaged in Sundargarh Sadar, Tangiripalli, Lefripada and Hemagiri blocks in the district. Farmers and various outfits have demanded the administration declare their areas as drought-affected.

A delegation of farmers from these areas led by MLA Kusum Tete has discussed the drought issue with Agriculture Minister Arun Sahu and Cooperation Minister Ranendra Pratap Swain in Bhubaneswar.

According to reports, the kharif farming has been completely affected by deficit rainfall in July and August in four blocks in Sundargarh Assembly constituency. The areas have recorded rainfall much less than the normal. Farmlands have cracked wide open due to shortage of rainfall. Given the condition of paddy, farmers in most parts have lost their hope for harvest this year.

Poor and marginal farmers are already in distress due to Covid difficulties. They said, drought has added to their worries when they have to repay loans and borrowings. "Paddy saplings have died in



Poor and marginal farmers are already in distress due to Covid difficulties. They said drought has added to their worries when they have to repay loans and borrowings

farmlands. The situation is worse," some farmers lamented.

Another problem is that many farmers have not registered them for crop insurance. In case of drought, they will not be able to get financial help. They have demanded extension of deadline for the crop insurance registration. The farmers have raised several demands like loan waiver, quick disbursement of loans, restoration of dams and minor irrigation projects.

## Second AIIMS sought for Sundargarh

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Sundargarh, August 20:** The demand for setting up of the state's second AIIMS unit in this district grew louder with locals united under Sundargarh Citizens' Forum demanding the NTPC Hospital be upgraded as the second AIIMS.

The outfit held a meeting at the Dak Bungalow office of the Works Department. Locals said, the central government should upgrade the NTPC hospital as the second AIIMS in Odisha and make it operational as soon as possible.

In the meeting, members urged Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik to intervene in this issue as the Odisha government has already submitted



a proposal to the Centre to set up the state's second AIIMS in Sundargarh district. They also requested the State Assembly to pass a resolution to this effect in the next session.

The committee urged all political parties, intellectuals, daily wageers, youth and social organisa-

tions to come forward and push the demand. It said, in the coming days it will work together with different organisations to build a huge consensus for the second AIIMS.

At the same time, the committee also demanded a Central University status to Sundargarh Government College. The committee's other demands included a railway line from Jharsuguda to Sundargarh via Ambikapur and early completion of construction work on 'Bijuli Bandh', a water body in Sundargarh town. Money from District Mineral Foundation (DMF) is being spent on it. A close inspection of the on-going construction work will make one doubtful if the DMF money is being utilised properly, it said.

## Water released from Baghua dam

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Buguda, August 20:** Even as paddy farming was affected by scant rainfall in Buguda area in Ganjam district, farmers have been struggling to save paddy saplings.

Meanwhile, water was released from Baghua reservoir Friday for kharif crops. The release of water brought cheers among farmers.

Baghua reservoir has a stock of 214 hectometre of water. Given the deficit rainfall and bad condition of paddy plants, the authorities concerned decided to release water through two canals. Earlier, the reservoir was almost dry as water was released for farming between July 22 and July 30.

## ACF'S DEATH

# Crime Branch records statements of Gurandi OIC



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Paralakhemundi, August 20:** Amid a demand for CBI probe into the death of Assistant Conservator of Forest (ACF) of Paralakhemundi, Soumya Ranjan Mohapatra, Crime Branch officials recorded statements of Mamata Panda, the officer in-charge of Gurandi police station in Gajapati district here Friday.

Crime Branch DSP Gyana Ranjan Mishra said, "The investigation is progressing appropriately. We had a discussion with local IIC who was leading the investigation Friday, before the Crime Branch took over."

"We interrogated Gurandi OIC about the sequence of events on the fateful day. So far, the statements and the examination have been satisfactory. As per requirements we will interrogate others," he added.

A couple of days ago, ACF Soumya Ranjan Mohapatra's father Abhiram Mohapatra had expressed his unhappiness over the CB probe, saying the investigation is not reliable. Abhiram has urged President Ramnath Kovind to intervene and order a CBI investigation into his son's death. He posted a letter to the President a couple of days ago, seeking an investigation into the death.

He pointed out that 35 days have passed, but no one has been arrested. "If the CBI is handed over the investigation, many accused

will be arrested. I can only rely 50 per cent on the Crime Branch. But the CB is working under pressure from the state government and getting justice is remote," he noted.

"Gajapati DFO Sangram Behera and IIC Mamata Panda have not been suspended. Bidyabharati and the cook are not taken into remand," Abhiram wrote in the letter.

The CB officials have interrogated three doctors who had treated the ACF July 12 night after he sustained burn injuries.

Four others, who were also grilled, included two ACFs and two forest guards. The CB officials interrogated them at a special cell in Paralakhemundi police station to ascertain as to how a fire mishap took place at Soumya's government quarter.

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Online submission of the application for the above said posts would be allowed for two (2) weeks from the date of publication of this advertisement. Duly signed Hardcopy of the completed applications should also be sent to 'The Project Director, Borehole Geophysics Research Laboratory (BGRL), Ministry of Earth Sciences, Karad-Vita Road, Hazarmachi, Karad-415105, Maharashtra', by Registered Post in a cover superscribed "APPLICATION FOR THE POST OF".

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FOCUS SPORTS

# KINGS & QUEENS OF CHESS



**Though India has little to be hopeful about nowadays, one bright spot is chess, where the country has surpassed the United States and China and emerged as a rival to Russia**

Over the last decade, India's political and economic progress has faltered. Its once-plausible aspirations of becoming a global power on par with China now seem fanciful. The COVID-19 pandemic has taken a devastating human and economic toll. In such circumstances, sports can be a national balm.

This year's Tokyo Olympic Games brought a slight reprieve. India took home its first gold medal in track and field, achieved a partial return to past glory in men's field hockey, and saw its women's field hockey team display heart-wrenching grit and determination, even as it fell short of winning a medal. Ultimately, though, a ranking of 48th in overall medals – for a country with 1.4 billion people – only reinforced the sense of underperformance.

Against this backdrop, a game of the mind may be one of the brighter spots. India is quickly becoming a legitimate global chess superpower, leading the United States and China on key metrics, and running neck and neck with Russia, the historically dominant chess power. Since 2012, 44 Indians have been anointed as grandmasters (GMs) – the highest achievement in chess – compared to 18 for China and 22 for the US. Even Russia added just one more than India.

This is no small achievement, considering that an Indian first attained GM status only in 1988 – a full 41 years after independence. Reflecting this ascendancy, the Indian team of men and women tied for first place with Russia in the 2020 FIDE Online Chess Olympiad.

Just as heartening as the overall tally of GMs is the age profile and regional distribution of India's chess talent. Nearly half of the last 20 GMs – and some of the most promising of them – are in their teens, and several players come from outside the metropolises that usually account for chess champions. Just as India's proficiency in cricket improved as opportunities broadened beyond the English-speaking elite, chess has flourished by drawing in talent from smaller cities and towns.

Why is this explosion of talent

happening now? National sporting success is not easily explained; but, in India's case, a "superstar effect" cannot be ruled out. We can never know why 1970s Sweden produced tennis great Björn Borg, the winner of 11 Grand Slam titles. But we do know that there was an explosion of Swedish talent in subsequent decades as Borg became a role model that young Swedes wanted to emulate.

Similarly, India's excellence in chess today is almost certainly tied especially to its first GM, Viswanathan Anand, and also to female players like Koneru Humpy. Anand came out of the blue in the late 1980s to become the world's leading player, winning five world championships and remaining at the top – in both the traditional and more rapid versions of chess – for nearly 25 years. Humpy is the reigning women's world rapid chess champion and was the youngest woman ever to become a GM when she attained the rank in 2002. With a lag of a decade or two, the current crop of GMs appears to have burst onto the scene as a result of the Anand and Humpy effects.

But other factors are also at play. In the pre-digital world, learning, playing, and competing at the top levels of chess often required an organisational infrastructure

(not always India's strong suit). But now, every player is connected to the internet, and chess students can avail themselves of chess engines and databases as well as virtual access to experts. Online tournaments allow players to compete from the remotest places. As the digital revolution has unfolded, India's hundreds of millions of young people have become a deep pool for chess talent. At this scale, the probability of producing excellent players has risen exponentially.

Another hypothesis is that the advent of sophisticated chess machines has tilted the skill set in favor of memory relative to brute calculation over the board. These machines establish winning and losing patterns of play that a player can memorise and then recall during a match. In this new era of chess, the Indian education system's over-emphasis on rote learning may offer a distinct advantage, as it does in spelling bee contests, where Indian-Americans also tend to dominate.

But India's chess revolution is not complete. For all of its GMs, none are in the world's top ten, and none pose a serious threat to Magnus Carlsen, the Norwegian reigning world champion who took the title from Anand in 2013. Moreover, there is a harsher side to the digital era's democratisa-

tion of opportunities in chess. Indian parents have gambled their life savings to send their sons to international tournaments; girls have put aside their own dreams so that their male siblings can access limited resources; and players themselves must make hard choices between career preparation and the pursuit of the game. Even with the new digital tools, success at the highest levels requires resources and a team of other players, psychologists, managers, and fitness coaches.

Most critically, while chess opportunities are expanding, there are still hard limits in place. Sadly, all of the major axes of exclusion in Indian society – group identity, geography, and gender – seem to carry over into the game. Disadvantaged minorities such as the Dalits and Muslims are thinly represented, if at all, among the top players, as are players from the poorer regions of the Hindi-speaking heartland. Among India's expanding roster of GMs, there are only two women (whereas China has nine).

Still, India is churning out GM-level chess talent at a ferocious pace. If its problems of still-limited resources and exclusion can be addressed, its future as a chess superpower will become only brighter. This would make for a fitting historical irony. In the 20th century filmmaker Satyajit Ray's "The Chess Players", two self-centered noblemen, neglecting their spouses and official responsibilities, obsessively play chess even as their kingdom is being annexed by the British. Successful colonization is portrayed as Britain's superior ability at the metaphorical chess game of imperial strategy. Today, in the more literal version of the game (reputedly invented in India centuries ago), that history is being reversed: Indians are gradually becoming the grandmasters of the world.

*The writer, a former Chief Economic Adviser to the Government of India, is the author of 'Eclipse: Living in the Shadow of China's Economic Dominance'.*

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Pain is the hammer of the Gods to break a dead resistance in the mortal's heart.

SRI AUROBINDO



## Babus reassess Afghan setback

Did India miss a bus in Afghanistan? With the Taliban takeover of the country complete, the ominous silence from the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), except for the routine statement on protecting Indian interests and giving temporary visas to Afghan refugees, was however broken by global outcries. While Western powers were expected to do this, for India whose relationship with Afghanistan goes back a few millennia, the speed at which events have occurred in Afghanistan has come as a bit of a shock for some *desi* mandarins.

There are some whispers that External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar's policy framework is now in shambles. This aside, babus worry that both the Pakistan angle as well as the China threat gets to grow into a bigger thorn in India's vulnerable North-West. Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla and his cohorts at the Afghan desk may have some massive round robin-ing to do, and our encirclement worry is on the front burner yet again.

Some in the MEA feel that we clearly missed the signals emanating from the Doha meet last August, to which India, incidentally, was not invited, and some believe that we left starting direct talks with the Taliban leadership far too late. We now may have to stand along the sidelines as a spectator than a player in this episode of the fast-paced 'Great Game'. But at least one source of comfort is that our Embassy evacuation was executed well in the nick of time.

### When repatriation raises eyebrows

Frequent lateral shifts are par for the course. You may feel they happen more often in the Modi sarkar, but there are no stats readily available. But seasoned babus are usually not fazed by such disruptions. Yet in a recent major reshuffle of over a dozen senior IAS officers, one move by the government seems to have raised eyebrows. 1989-batch IAS officer Shubhra Singh was certainly caught by surprise. She was removed as chairperson of the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA), the independent regulator responsible for drug pricing and availability. She has been repatriated to Rajasthan, her cadre state and replaced by KK Pant, a 1993-batch officer of the Himachal Pradesh cadre.

Sources tell DKB that the repatriation was unexpected since she was widely expected to be empanelled for a Secretary-level post in the government, having missed out her chance in the first list. Usually while shifting or repatriating senior officers, the government takes them into confidence, but like many administrative norms, this convention too may be heading for oblivion. Any examples you can think of?

### Return of the native

It seems that Shah Faesal, the IAS officer from Jammu and Kashmir who resigned in 2019 in protest against the Centre's policies towards the region may rejoin the civil service. Sources have told DKB that the Centre has still not taken on any decision on Faesal's resignation, and the rules state that in such a scenario the resignation is considered withdrawn automatically! The official stance, according to the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT), is that the resignation "is still under consideration". Faesal controversially quit the IAS and formed a political party in Kashmir, the Jammu and Kashmir People's Movement. He was a strident critic of the Centre's decision to make Article 370 inoperative in J&K. But his stint in politics was largely uneventful and he announced that he was done with political life. Apparently, after his resignation, Faesal's request to be allowed to travel and settle in the US was denied. Rejoining the IAS may be his best option, sources say. But will he take it?

Share a babu experience! Follow [diliptheherian@twitter.com](https://twitter.com/diliptheherian). Let's multiply the effect.

### WISDOM CORNER

By three methods we may learn wisdom: First, by reflection, which is noblest; second, by imitation, which is easiest; and third by experience, which is the bitterest. **CONFUCIUS**

Never let your head hang down. Never give up and sit down and grieve. Find another way. And don't pray when it rains if you don't pray when the sun shines. **RICHARD M. NIXON**

When I was 5 years old, my mother always told me that happiness was the key to life. When I went to school, they asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up. I wrote down 'happy'. They told me I didn't understand the assignment, and I told them they didn't understand life. **JOHN LENNON**

### WORDSWORTH

#### Caltrop

The military mind is often both twisted and ingenious. A caltrop consists of four pointed legs or spines splayed out at the points of a tetrahedron so that whoever it falls it will sit on three of the points with the fourth uppermost. It was apparently thought up in medieval times as a way of slowing pursuit, and was updated for the motorised age earlier this century. Scatter some behind you, and pursuit becomes instantly more difficult, whether it's on horseback or in a vehicle with pneumatic tyres. The military device, sometimes written and said caltrap, appears to have been named after one of a number of plants with spiny burrs. For obvious reasons it's another name for the star thistle (Centaurea calcitrapa). It's a local name for the curled pondweed (Potamogeton crispus), which produces lots of winter seeds that are hard and burr-like. A plant called the water chestnut (Trapa natans) is also known as the water caltrop, which has fruit with two spines that are hard enough to penetrate the hooves of stock as well as human feet. The word derives from the Old English calketrippe, for any plant that tended to catch the feet. In turn this comes from the medieval Latin calcatrippa, a compound either of calx, "heel" or calcare, "to tread", with a word related to "trap" that came from one of the Germanic languages. The military sense of the word probably came into English from French.

### LOL

#### Get my red shirt

A Spanish captain was walking on this ship when a soldier rushes to him and exclaims, "An enemy ship is approaching us!" The captain replies calmly, "Go get my red shirt." The soldier gets the shirt for the captain. The enemy ship comes in and heavy rounds of fire are exchanged. Finally, the Spaniards win. The soldier asks,



"Congrats sir, but why the red shirt?" The captain replies, "If I got injured, my blood shouldn't be seen, as I didn't want my men to lose hope." Just then, another soldier runs up and says, "Sir, we just spotted another twenty enemy ships!" The captain calmly replies, "Go bring my yellow pants."



Arvind Subramanian

**NEARLY HALF OF THE LAST 20 GMS – AND SOME OF THE MOST PROMISING OF THEM – ARE IN THEIR TEENS, AND SEVERAL PLAYERS COME FROM OUTSIDE THE METROPOLISES THAT USUALLY ACCOUNT FOR CHESS CHAMPIONS**

### SPECTRUM CURRENCY

## The Taliban and the dollar



Jim O'Neill

**SINCE THE US PRESIDENT RICHARD NIXON CLOSED THE CURTAIN ON THE BRETTON WOODS SYSTEM, THE US DOLLAR HAS BEEN THE DOMINANT GLOBAL CURRENCY**

This month marks the 50th anniversary of the end the Bretton Woods system, when US President Richard Nixon suspended the US dollar's convertibility into gold and allowed it to float. We are also approaching the 20th anniversary of the Taliban's removal from power in Afghanistan at the hands of US-led coalition forces. Now that the Taliban has again prevailed, we should consider whether its victory over the world's most powerful military and largest economy will have any implications for the dollar and its role in the world.

Looking back over the 50 years since Nixon closed the gold window; the biggest takeaway is that the floating-exchange-rate system, and the dollar's dominant role in it, has turned out to be more robust than initially expected. Even knowing what we know now about the evolution of the world economy, most experts would have doubted that the system could survive for as long as it has.

Given this resilience, it is tempting to dismiss America's failure in Afghanistan as inconsequential for the dollar. After all, the greenback weathered the fall of Saigon in 1975 and the debacle in Iraq following the US invasion in

2003. Why should this time be any different? Ultimately, the answer depends on one's expectations about the evolution of the world economy and the behavior of its principal financial players, namely China and the European Union.

To understand the dollar's prospects, consider three key reasons why the current system has persisted. First, most countries did not choose to have their currencies float freely against the dollar. Even though more countries have floated their currencies in recent decades, others have maintained fixed exchange rates, devised their own regional exchange-rate relationships, or launched a common currency – as in the case of the euro.

Second, and on a related note, the few countries that had enough economic heft to influence the global monetary system – Japan, Germany (previously West Germany), and, more recently, China – made a conscious decision not to do so. True, the German Deutsche Mark played a regional role from 1973 until the establishment of the European Monetary Union in 1992 and the introduction of the euro in 1999. But beyond that, Germany consistently took steps to keep its currency from assuming a larger global role.

Finally, despite its frequent objections to the current global monetary system, China has long been reluctant to expand the renminbi's footprint in financial markets – both internally and internationally. Instead, China has indicated occasionally that it would prefer a global monetary order centered more around the special drawing rights (SDRs), the International Monetary Fund's reserve asset, whose value is based on a basket of five currencies (the US dollar, the euro, the renminbi, the yen, and the British pound).

This idea has some appeal, especially in terms of global fairness. But it would be difficult to implement in practice. Not only would it depend on China allowing for more free use of the renminbi; an SDR-based monetary system also would have to be embraced by the US, which is probably a non-starter – at least for now.

That brings us to the third reason why the current system has lasted: the US wanted it to. As we saw during Donald Trump's presidency, the US enjoys the benefits conferred by issuing the dominant global currency, not least its potential as a tool for pursuing diplomatic and security objectives. The Trump administration's use of secondary sanctions

against countries that did business with Iran was a perfect example of this. If current or future US leaders choose to use the dollar's dominance in a similar fashion – perhaps against countries doing business with a hostile Afghanistan – that could have a significant bearing on the currency's future.

While the world marks the 20th anniversary of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in the US, the IMF will be working on its mandated five-year review of the composition and valuation of the SDR basket. To the extent that the exercise increases the share allocated to renminbi, that will be taken as a sign that the world's currency system is slowly but ineluctably evolving.

Just as China's growing share of the global economy implies the need for a fundamental rebalancing, the renminbi's share of the SDR basket cannot continue to grow without that increase meaning something for the future of the world financial system.

*The writer, a former chairman of Goldman Sachs Asset Management and a former UK Treasury Minister, is a member of the Pan-European Commission on Health and Sustainable Development.*

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### The wizard of hockey

Sir, The 1936 Olympic Games were held in the German capital, Berlin. It was the final match between India and Germany India had a special player Dhyan Chand. In this game Germany could score only one goal, but India scored 8 goals against Germany – three of them scored by Dhyan Chand. Impressed by Dhyan Chand's performance, Adolf Hitler offered German citizenship to Dhyan Chand, going as far as saying that he would be given a position in the German army. But Dhyan Chand wasn't one to bow down a dictator. He did not hesitate to tell Adolf Hitler that India is not for sale. It was in fact the prize distribution ceremony. The whole stadium went silent. People were afraid that the fearless reply might lead to Hitler shooting Dhyan Chand. But fortunately, it was not so. Rather, Hitler was even more impressed by Dhyan Chand. In fact, the "wizard of Hockey" title to Dhyan Chand, was given by Hitler. This was our third consecutive Olympics Gold medal in hockey. Perhaps what may be even more unbelievable is that – the Indian hockey team went on to win five more gold medals. The Wizard's story reached schools, were told to kids at their homes. His stories reached far and wide in the country. Dhyan Chand was not only a hockey player, but also a true patriot. How reasonable is it to rename the Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna Award to Major Dhyanchand and Khel Ratna. In fact, such a brave and courageous patriot deserves Bharat Ratna.

Asit Mohanty, JAJPUR

### Doors to our past

Sir, Everyone wants to etch our name in the pages of history. But some are doing it wrong. Scribbling and etching names, symbols, slogans, curses for political leaders in historical monuments is not the way to etch our names in the pages of history. We are inflicting serious harm not only on these monuments but also on our culture and heritage. Through these uncivilised acts they are portraying a maligned image of India in front of the world. It pains us when we see our beautiful monuments being chiseled out to write names, draw symbols and other such ruthless attacks on them. Lately people have also started spitting paan and gutka juices on the walls of our monuments. Clearly this shows that we do not deserve these beautiful monuments. It is time the government wakes up to this menace and punishes the culprits.

Noopur Baruah, TEZPUR

## Letters

### TO THE EDITOR

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

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# Mangroves to be raised on encroached govt land



For a long time, the prawn mafia has been ruling the roost in coastal pockets of Jagatsinghpur while mangrove forests have been declining. The administration has decided to remove the prawn gherries. It has given three months of time to the prawn gherri owners

In a bid to protect environment and regenerate forest along the coast, a decision was taken to plant trees after removal of prawn gherries. A decision to this effect was taken at a meeting attended by Rajnagar ACF, Kujang ranger officer, SDPO, Balikuda tehsildar and police officials

As mangrove forests keep on vanishing from the coast, the district administration and the forest department have woken up to the challenge and have determined to stop such illegal activities after five decades. The administration had taken up steps to remove prawn gherries at Tentulibelari a few days ago, but the occupants and gherri owners had opposed it

Meanwhile, officials of the revenue and forest departments will conduct a joint survey on the encroached land and eviction drive will be taken up in a phased manner.

Till date, the administration has identified encroachments on 1700 acres of land under Erasama and Balikuda tehsil. The administration has served 813 eviction notices. In two EI circles under Balikuda tehsil, 511 acres of land have been encroached for prawn gherries.

The administration has registered 223 cases against land encroachments.

The administration had taken up steps to remove prawn gherries at Tentulibelari a few days ago, but the occupants and gherri owners had opposed it. The administration has given them three-month time to leave the place so that plantation will be taken up.

It was alleged that prawn gherries are adversely affecting the ecosystem in coastal areas. For a long time, various outfits and environmentalists had been demanding removal of prawn gherries and encroachments of government and forest lands.

According to the Coastal Aquaculture Authority Act, it is illegal to set up prawn hatcheries. However, violations are rampant. The prawn gherri owners earn in crores.

"People living around the farms are exposed to chemicals and antibiotics used in those farms. The hatcheries pose threat to the marine ecology," said environmentalists

Prawn gherries have mushroomed in 32 areas under Rajnagar forest division. As per decision, mangroves will be generated at these places after prawn

## Old ponds in Silk City crying for renovation



# Inter-state mafia loots seized minerals in Joda mining area

Joda, August 20: Despite state and district level squads, illegal mining and transportation has not been curbed in Joda mining circle of Keonjhar. Over last few months, forest officials and police have caught cases of mineral loot and transportation in the area.

In the latest case, the forest department has seized two trucks with illegally extracted iron ores in Bamebari section Thursday night.

Forest officials got a tip-off that iron ore is being loaded in two trucks near Pidhapokhari. A team of forest officials raided the area at 1 am and seized two trucks. However, mineral mafia managed to escape under the cover of darkness.

Champura range officer Sanjib Kumar Rout said that mafia used to plunder the already seized mineral from different forest areas and stock it at Pidhapokhari area. From there, they transported the mineral to parts of Chhattisgarh, West Bengal and Jharkhand.

An official of the mines department on condition of anonymity said the department has no idea how much iron ores and manganese have been seized and stocked at different places

they have long stopped using the pond. They said it has been a bane of their existence. "Due to lack of maintenance for a long period, it gives out a stench making our lives a living hell," they observed.

As there are no public toilets nearby, people opt for open defecation. There is a cremation ground nearby. It has been resurrected, but what worries people is that nothing has been done to rejuvenate the pond.

Holding the public representatives and the BeMC responsible for the pond's pathetic condition, local residents alleged they are little concerned about the pond. "We have met the BeMC officials and public representatives and brought their attention to the poor condition of the pond. But nothing has so far been done in this regard," they alleged.

They urged the BeMC authorities to take immediate steps to resurrect the pond.

According to nearby residents,

## AWARENESS DRIVE



Locals along with police officials taking part in an awareness campaign on dengue prevention in Kuduluguma area of Malkangiri district Friday



A large number of tourists thronging Udaypur beach in Balasore Friday

## Ashwini urged for development of Chhatrapur railway station

Chhatrapur/Koraput, August 20: Union Minister for Communications, Electronics & Information Technology and Railways Ashwini Vaishnav was urged for development of Chhatrapur railway station in Ganjam. Various social and political outfits submitted memoranda to the Union Minister Thursday.

In a memorandum, local BJP leaders and residents demanded upgradation work of Chhatrapur station and court station, apart from level crossings at Sikapalli and Jagannathpur.

It was learnt that the Railways Board has sanctioned ₹8.72 crore for expansion of the Chhatrapur rail-

way station in 2018-19. However, its work has been at a snail's pace. Locals urged the minister to direct hastening of the work.

As part of the BJP's 'Jan Ashirwad Yatra', Vaishnav visited Koraput and Rayagada districts Friday. He was accompanied by many party leaders.

Ashwini received a welcome by local party workers at Rayagada with a traditional tribal dance. Following it, he visited the temple of Maa Majhighariani, the presiding deity of Rayagada, and sought blessings for the Yatra.

The Cabinet minister has been taking out the yatra from August 19 to 21 to explain to people about the welfare measures adopted by the Modi government.

# Sand-mining raises submergence fear for Balasore GPs



Balasore, August 20: Rampant sand lifting from the Budhabalanga riverbed will prove disastrous for riparian villages of Dahapada and Nizampur panchayats under Remuna block in Balasore district. It's only a matter of time before the river devours the villages.

The villagers living in fear and apprehension said they have taken the matter up with the administration on several occasions, informing it in writing how the sand mining is posing threat to the villages and the government is losing revenue, but to no avail.

According to sources, permission for lifting sand from 2 acres 37 decimals of plot no-574 sand sairat of Gambharia mouza, 10 acres 37 decimals of plot no-1 sand sairat and 48 acres 62 decimals of plot no-510 sand sairat of Naharpatna mouza of the Budhabalanga river from June 2, 2017 to July 1, 2022 has been given.

While use of machines has been prohibited, permission is given only to mine sand from maximum three metres deep and from places 40 metres from the river bed.

But the leaseholders flout the rules with impunity. They are mining not from the riverbed but from the river itself engaging JCB machines and sump pumps fitted on boats.

They are excavating sand from the river digging over 50 metre deep, resulting in the river flowing at a great speed and swallowing chunks of its both shores.

## Leaseholders flout the rules with impunity while excavating sand from Budhabalanga by engaging JCB machines and sump pumps fitted on boats

Over last couple of years, large chunks of Rudragopalpur, Gambharia, Naharpatna, Dahapada, Kantabania and Kasimpur areas have already submerged in the river water. As of now, the river is flowing menacingly close to the backyards of villagers' houses.

Villagers have met the administrative officials on several occasions in the past, requesting them to take steps to save the villages from extinction.

"The administration is yet to take any measures to save us. It seems the officials are putty in sand mafias' hands," alleged villagers including Sheikh Abdul Rehman, Sheikh Hetaj, Harikrushna Nayak, Gurubari Singh, Rabi Das, Ramesh Majhi and Bapi Tudu.

When contacted, Remuna assistant tehsildar Manoj Senapati said they raided the sand sairats recently and seized boats and pipes. "This apart, cases have been registered against the lease holders," he informed.



under Joda mining circle. The seized minerals have not been handed over to OMC.

As a result, the mafia continues to loot these seized minerals while the demand for the mineral is up in the market.

If the OMC auctions the seized minerals, the government would get huge revenue, he said. At this time, inter-state mineral mafia has set their eyes on mineral in Joda and Koida areas due to apathy of the mines department.

It was alleged that the department has failed to check illegal loot

of seized minerals, even though various monitoring bodies have been put in place in Joda mining circle.

A few months ago, huge quantities of illegally mined manganese loaded in a truck was seized in Nayagad forest. A team of forest officials made surprise raids in the forest and seized the vehicles.

Recently, mines officials had seized over 50 tonnes of iron fines stocked at Serenda under Barbil police limits. Sources said, mineral mafia had been pilfering iron ores from various rail sidings and stocked it there.

# Tourist spot tag eludes Balilokanath temple

Ganjam, August 20: The demand for naming the Baba Balilokanath temple as a tourist spot has gathered fresh momentum. The renowned temple is located in a forest on the banks of the Rushikulya river at Malijagannathpur village under Kainchapur panchayat in Ganjam district.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik had once termed the temple's park as the best in the district in a tweet. Referring to it, the temple's management committee has asked why the government is yet to give 'tourist spot' status to this Shaivite shrine.

At a press meet here recently, the committee informed that in 2015, the temple's chief manager B Banamali took the initiative to develop the shrine. For this, he brought the villagers together and incurred the initial expenses from his own pocket. In an effort to beautify the temple and attract visitors, he got built a park near the temple, planting flower and medicinal plants.



Later, an outdoor gym for youths, a toilet and a rest house for visitors coming from distant places were constructed. Two gardeners have been appointed to maintain the park. Their salaries are also being paid by Banamali. A Kalyan Mandap, a public kitchen, a store room and a puja mandap have also been built with contributions from locals and those who visit the temple. A reputed cloth company has constructed the 'prasadalaya'.

The committee also said that the district administration only provided some money under MGN-REGS for the development of the park. But it is least bothered about its maintenance.

"In 2019, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik was all praise for the park, terming it as the best in the district. He thanked the local sarpanch for making such a beautiful park, the committee said quoting the Odisha CM.

## Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik had once termed the temple's park as the best in the district in a tweet. Referring to it, the temple's management committee has asked why the government is yet to give 'tourist spot' status to this Shaivite shrine

Sarpanch G Santosh Reddy informed journalists that the district administration spent ₹30 lakh for the development of the park. Discussions are also on with officials of the Culture department so that the 'tourist spot' status can be granted soon. Lack of apathy on the part of the officials have prevented the shrine from getting the 'tourist spot' status.

## Probe panel gives clean chit to police

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Lucknow, August 20:** A three-member commission probing the encounter of gangster Vikas Dubey has given a clean chit to police, stating their version of events about his death was supported by evidence.

The commission said that Kanpur ambush in which eight cops were killed occurred because of "poor planning" by the police as it did not assess the situation correctly and there was "total failure" of Kanpur local intelligence. Parliamentary Affairs Minister Suresh Khanna tabled the report in the Uttar Pradesh Assembly Thursday.

"The evidence adduced in the (Dubey encounter) case supports police's version of the incident. The injuries suffered by policemen could not be self-inflicted or fabricated. Dr RS Mishra, who was on the panel of doctors, conducted the post-mortem and clarified that the injuries found on his person (Dubey) could be caused as per the version of police," the report said.

"Nobody came forward from the public and media to controvert the police version and no evidence is filed in rebuttal. Richa Dubey, wife of Vikas, filed an affidavit calling the incident a fake encounter but she did not appear before the commission," it said, adding that in such eventuality, no suspicion or doubt arises about the police version of the incident.

A magisterial inquiry conducted by Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Kanpur Nagar has a similar finding.

Eight police personnel, including deputy superintendent of police, were killed during a raid on Dubey's house at Bikru village in Kanpur district on the night of July 2-3, 2020.

Later, Dubey was killed in an encounter when a police vehicle carrying him from Ujjain to Kanpur met with an accident and he tried to escape from custody, the police had said.

The commission comprised Justice (Retd) BS Chauhan, Justice (Retd) SK Agarwal and former UP director general of police KL Gupta. It had submitted a 824-page report to the state government April 21.

The commission said there is "sufficient material on record" to show that Vikas Dubey and his gang were patronised by the local police, revenue and administrative officials.

"He (Vikas) and his associates had been in touch with such officials, and the officers were also communicating with them. If any person lodged any complaint against Vikas or his associates, the complainant was always humiliated by the police. Even if higher authorities gave directions to lodge a complaint, the local police dictated the terms," it said.

Though his name appeared in the list of top 10 criminals in the circle, he did not feature among top 10 criminals of the district, it said, adding that the members of his gang were included in a peace committee to resolve communal disputes.

"His wife was elected as a Zila Panchayat member and his brother's wife was elected as Bikru

### VIKAS DUBEY'S ENCOUNTER



A magisterial inquiry conducted by Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Kanpur Nagar has a similar finding

The commission said that Kanpur ambush in which eight cops were killed occurred because of "poor planning" by the police

Eight police personnel, were killed during a raid on Dubey's house at Bikru village in Kanpur district on the night of July 2-3, 2020

village's pradhan. They were both living in Lucknow. If any person of the area wanted help from them, he would contact Vikas Dubey and he would resolve their problem. The elected people never came into the picture," the report said.

Most of his family members had arms licences, and recommendations for them had been made by competent authorities by concealing material facts of their involvement in criminal cases. Their position was the same when it came to issuance of passports in their favour and/or grant of fair price shop licences, the commission noted.

"Investigation in any case lodged against them (Dubey's gang) was never impartial. Sections relat-

ing to serious offences were dropped before filing the chargesheet. During the trial, most of the witnesses turn hostile. Vikas Dubey and his associates got bail orders from courts easily and quickly as there was no serious opposition by state authorities or government advocates," it added.

"He was involved in 64 criminal cases. State authorities never considered it appropriate to engage a special counsel for his prosecution," it said, adding the state never moved any application for cancellation of bail or approached a superior court for cancellation of any bail orders.

In most of the cases, the high court had granted interim relief to Dubey, staying the proceedings before subordinate courts in crim-

inal cases, and he remained under the protection of such orders for 13-14 years, it said.

The commission said the HC granted bail to Dubey and his associates mainly on the ground that he had been acquitted in a large number of cases, without attempting to know under what circumstances he was acquitted and how and why the witnesses turned hostile in most of the cases.

About the ambush, it said some police personnel posted in Chaubeypur police station had intimidated Dubey about the impending raid which gave him an opportunity to call his associates with arms.

"There was a total failure of intelligence unit in Kanpur in collecting information about criminal activities and possession of sophisticated weapons (legal and illegal) by Vikas Dubey and his gang. No proper caution was taken while preparing for the raid, as 38/40 police personnel reached village Bikru and none of them was wearing a bulletproof jacket. Only 18 of them had arms, the rest had gone empty-handed or with sticks," the report said.

The incident occurred because of "poor planning" by the police as it did not assess the situation correctly.

"In fact, it did not expect that Dubey would retaliate with sophisticated weapons and his associates would take positions on the roofs of houses. They were unaware that some police officials of Chaubeypur had already informed Dubey about the raid," it said.

### GLOBAL WARMING DEBATE

## Bangalore to face acute shortage of drinking water

*High carbon economy has resulted in rise of temperature by one degree Celsius, which in turn cost around 5 per cent of the GDP*

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Bangalore, August 20:** Expressing deep concerns about the findings of The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report, climate and socio-economic experts Thursday observed that Bangalore city will face acute drinking water shortage in the coming years.

Participating in a webinar entitled "Responding to Climate Change: What should Karnataka and India do?" was organised by the Institute for Social and Economic Change (ISEC) here, Centre of Economic Studies and Policy, ISEC, Professor Krishna Raj highlighted the issue of high carbon economy that has resulted in rise of temperature by one degree Celsius, which in turn cost around 5 per cent of the GDP.

"If the same trend continues at such alarming levels in change of temperatures, Bangalore city will face acute drinking water shortage in the coming years with the reduction in water availability in the Cauvery River basin mainly due to variation in precipitation levels," he said.

He also cautioned that though India wants to increase its forest cover aimed at reducing CO2 levels by 2030, deficient climate finances may limit realising the climate targets.

"As per the Climate Policy Initiative on Global Climate Finance, 2019, 44 per cent and 56 per cent respectively constitute public and private finances. And the main concern is that about 93 per cent of the total public and private finances flow to mitigation activities and adaptation activities receive less

than 7 per cent. Therefore, it would be difficult to achieve the desired results," he said and added that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) AR 6 report has concluded that the Earth's climate is getting so warm that temperatures in about a decade will probably go past the warming level.

Centre for Ecological Economics and Natural Resources, ISEC's Assistant Professor Balasubramanian warned that in Karnataka, 65 per cent of the households were highly vulnerable to rising temperatures.

"Global warming's worst affected population in Karnataka will belong to scheduled caste, scheduled tribe, elderly population, women, and children," he said.

Centre for Research in Urban Affairs, ISEC Professor Kala S Sridhar debunked the theory that urbanisation leads to global warming using time series data from World Development Indicators.

According to her, urbanization does not affect agricultural income and in some specifications, urbanisation has actually led to increased agricultural income.

"Only way forward to reduce climate change is to increase the need to depend on renewable sources of energy and reduce vehicle emissions in cities by encouraging public transport," she said.

Associate Professor, Centre for Research in Urban Affairs, ISEC Manasi said that over exploitation of ground water in peri urban areas given their positioning since they belong either to rural or urban areas, thus being vulnerable to climate change risks. Drawing from a micro level study conducted on vulnerabilities in Karnataka, reference was made to land use change and groundwater overuse resulting in an increase in defunct borewells and negligence of water bodies. She also indicated the need for micro level studies for better understanding of local problems and finding innovative solutions to achieve Climate Action.



## Venkaiiah calls for 'Made-in-India' tech to boost Defence

### VICE-PRESIDENT M VENKAIHAH NAIDU PAID HIS MAIDEN VISIT TO HINDUSTAN AERONAUTICS LIMITED, ACCOMPANIED BY KARNATAKA GOVERNOR THAAWARCHAND GEHLOT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bangalore, August 20:** Vice-President M Venkaiah Naidu Friday said all efforts should be made to develop cutting-edge technologies indigenously to strengthen India's defence, against the backdrop of the complex geo-politics.

Naidu paid his maiden visit to Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) facilities, accompanied by Karnataka Governor Thaaawarchand Gehlot, the state-run aerospace company said.

"I am assured of our nation's security and safety, after seeing this impressive infrastructure in Aerospace and Defence," Naidu said in his address to senior officers of HAL and Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA).

According to the release, he hailed the ongoing public-private partnership in various defence projects of HAL and said all efforts should be made to develop cutting-edge technologies indigenously to strengthen India's defence against the background of the complex geo-politics.

Stating that HAL has attributes of a global leader and that he envisaged the company to play a greater role in realising India's dream of self-reliance in aerospace and defence in the future, the Vice-President said, "I am proud of the role the Company has played for the past 80 years ever since its inception."

"I am happy that India's home-grown fighter LCA Tejas will be produced in large numbers and the gov-



Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu during his visit to HAL's LCA Tejas Division in Bengaluru, Friday

ernment has taken initiatives to galvanise the Indian Defence Industry," he added.

The Vice-President and the Governor visited LCH, ALH Hangars, and LCA Tejas division.

Hailing the company's contributions, Governor Gehlot said HAL is a unique aerospace company with a diverse range of prod-

ucts and is transforming itself as a lead integrator on most of the projects. "There are a lot of expectations as the Company steps into the future," he added.

HAL Chairman and Managing Director R Madhavan said that the Company would further the cause of initiatives taken by the government.

### UP govt allows markets to open Sundays

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Lucknow, August 20:** The Uttar Pradesh government Friday allowed markets to open Sundays in view of the improved coronavirus situation in the state.

The decision was taken at a meeting held by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath to review the COVID-19 situation.

"Now markets can open from Monday to Sunday from 6 am to 10 pm. Night curfew from 10 pm to 6 am will remain in force. The markets will now be closed as they used to be before restrictions were imposed due to COVID," Additional Chief Secretary, Home, Awasthi said in an order.

Earlier at the meeting, Adityanath said, "In view of the improving COVID-19 situation in the state, doing away with the system of statewide weekly closure (of markets) Sundays can be considered."

## Varanasi: 5 women seek rights to worship in old temple complex



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Varanasi, August 20:** After five Hindu women filed a plea seeking restoration of their rights to worship inside the old temple complex that is now a mosque, a Varanasi court has sought the response of the District Magistrate or commissioner of police on the matter.

In the plea, filed Wednesday, it has been mentioned that the temple complex was converted into a mosque during Mughal rule in the region.

The plea, led by a Hindu woman Rakhi Singh, said that the devotees have the right to worship the deities, visible or invisible, inside the complex of Old Kashi Vishwanath Temple.

Their advocates, Hari Shankar Jain and Vishnu Shankar Jain, argued in court that the original Kashi Vishwanath temple complex was destroyed by Mughal emperor Aurangzeb during his regime.

Jain further added that the defendants should be ordered not to interfere in the fundamental reli-

gious rights of the plaintiffs' which included decorating idols of Lord Ganesh, Lord Hanuman, Devi Gauri and Nandi in the temple.

He requested the court to pass a temporary injunction directing defendants not to damage the idols.

Justice Ravi Kumar Diwaker, Senior Civil Judge, has set September 10 for resolution of objections.

"In the present case, the government of UP has been made a defendant by the plaintiffs. Therefore, it is necessary to hear the defendant. The plaintiffs should plead for notice on the defendants within three days," he said.

The fight to reclaim the temple land on which Gyanvapi Mosque stands has been going on for decades. In February 2021, a suit was filed to restore the worshipping of deities in the mosque complex.

In April, the court allowed an ASI survey of the mosque. A five-member team, including two Muslims, was appointed for the same.

A petition seeking a stay on the survey was later filed in Allahabad High Court.

## NATO crew member recalls Afghan stint

**UNTIL THE AMERICAN ARMY WAS PRESENT, THE TALIBAN NEVER WAGGED ITS TAIL. BUT, THE TALIBAN WAS READY WITH MODERN AMMUNITION TO DECLARE WAR**

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Mangalore, August 20:** Deepak Kumar U, a 35-year-old man who worked in the rescue fire fighting crew team of the US and NATO army base in Herat, Afghanistan, shared his experience of horror with the Taliban during his stint in the war-torn country.

"I am in touch with locals of Herat city who worked with me. There is a curfew kind of atmosphere in the entire city. People are not coming out of their houses," he told this news agency.

Only the Kabul airport is operating and all the others are closed.

"When we were evacuated, there was no mad rush like it is happening in Kabul. Our base was handed over to the local government after evacuation," he says.

Deepak Kumar from Puttur in Dakshina Kannada worked at the Herat army base on the Iran border for six years.

"We worked with Portuguese and British nationals. Some have joined from Maharashtra and Kerala states also," he says.

"If everything went well I was planning to stay in Afghanistan for two more years," he says.

However, he returned June 22 from Afghanistan with his colleagues Mithun Shetty, Shekar, Hyder and others.

"The military bases were established in the areas where terrorists were highly active. When I worked at a military base, rockets launched by the Taliban used to fall



right inside the premises. The radar was used to identify it and give a signal before it fell. We used to run into the well-built bunkers. Until I was there, no casualty was reported due to rocket firing."

"Military personnel never shared any information with us, however, we used to observe their operations with curiosity," he said.

"Those who went to fight against the Taliban in fighter jets returned with dead bodies and injured soldiers. They were treated at the base hospitals," he adds.

Until the American army was present, the Taliban never wagged its tail. But, the Taliban was ready with modern ammunition to declare war, according to Deepak Kumar.

When America decided to withdraw its armed forces, Afghanistan locals who were in touch were

scared. They used to say that the Taliban would occupy the whole country in one month after the withdrawal of American forces, this has come true, he explains.

When Americans left, they had trained the Afghanistan military. However, the Afghan army, about 3 lakh strong, could not defend against the 50-60,000 Taliban army. Afghans predicted this and the nature of Afghan people is really good, he says. There were many Indians in the military system established by America and NATO countries. Most of them have returned after the withdrawal of American forces. All my friends have also returned to the country safely.

When the American army was present, the Taliban was pushed to remote villages. The local villagers

## ALLAHABAD HC OMTS 2 SUB-CASTES IN ST CATEGORY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Prayagraj (Uttar Pradesh), August 20:** The Allahabad High Court has set aside the order of the Uttar Pradesh government under which two Gond sub castes - Nayak and Ojha - were designated in the category of Scheduled Tribes (STs).

While allowing the writ petition filed by Nayak Jan Seva Sansthan, a bench of Acting Chief Justice Munishwar Nath Bhandari and Justice Rajendra Kumar held that the UP government was not empowered to refer to sub caste Nayak and Ojha of Gond caste as falling in the category of Scheduled Tribe (ST), thereby interpreting or substituting the 2003 notification of the Central government notifying certain castes as STs.

In the writ petition, the petitioner's plea was that the power to issue a notification declaring castes to fall in the Scheduled Tribe (ST) category lies with the Central government under Article 342 of the Constitution of India and in pursuance to this, a gazette notification was issued on January 8, 2003, to notify certain castes to be STs for 13 districts of the state of Uttar Pradesh.

On July 15, 2020, a notification was issued by the state government while naming some castes in 13 districts of the state as per a notification of 2003. It further added that the two sub-castes of Gond, i.e., Nayak and Ojha included in category of STs.





It is a burden; you know, once you come to the court... how many years it takes and of course, hierarchy starting from civil courts to Supreme Court. How many years it takes... we have eminent arbitrators in this country, some of the international arbitrators, who are world famous, also willing to participate in this arbitration centre

NV RAMANA | CHIEF JUSTICE OF INDIA

FB REMOVES RAHUL'S POST

After Twitter, Facebook has removed a content posted by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi that identified the family of a nine-year-old victim of alleged rape and murder in Northwest Delhi, saying it violated the social media platform's policies



of the day quote

Creating a synergy between academia and industry for developing an 'Aerospace Hub' is the need of the hour to promote innovation and address the issue of skills shortage in this key sector

Many feel that we have started the mining corporation just for the purpose of show. The mining corporation will work towards starting mining activities in the next three months

In Kanpur, a nine-year-old girl was begging for mercy when her father was being beaten up in the presence of police. These so-called human rights supporters are concerned about girls in Kabul and are talking about atrocities on women there but nobody is bothered about the Kanpur girl

Delta variant driving infections in India

Globally, there are believed to be 13 sublineages of Delta with characteristic genetic mutations

AGENCIES

New Delhi, August 20: The Delta variant remains most responsible for the continuing spread of infections in India, according to a weekly update from the India Sars Cov2 Genome Consortium (INSACOG), a repository of labs tasked with monitoring the coronavirus variants.

The continuing Covid-19 outbreaks across India are attributable to the Delta variant, a susceptible population and reduced vaccine effectiveness in blocking transmission, the INSACOG added.

However, vaccination continues to be very effective in reducing severe disease and death, and public health measures to reduce transmission and inoculation remain critical, the INSACOG stressed in its latest bulletin dated August 16.

"As of now, sequencing of vaccination breakthroughs in India is also showing a very high proportion of Delta variant.



Investigations for any new variants are ongoing," the INSACOG said. Of the 30,230 samples of Variants of Concern and Variants of Interest sequenced by the INSACOG, 20,324 were of Delta, it said.

The Delta variant is currently driving the pandemic across several countries with China and Korea seeing new highs. Korea has reported that the new surge is due to Delta plus K417N mutation.

The Delta variant resulted in a deadly second wave in the country between March to May that wreaked

havoc on the health infrastructure, overwhelming hospitals. It infected lakhs and killed thousands. In India, new cases of AY.1, AY.2, AY.3 (Delta Plus) are being seen in July samples from Maharashtra at a frequency of about 1 per cent. However, at this time none of these sub-lineages has been found to have a growth advantage over the Delta parent lineage, it noted.

According to INSACOG (the Indian SARS-CoV2 Genomics Consortium), 61 samples of Delta Plus variants have been detected in the country so far. "Delta vari-

J&J SEEKS NOD

Bangalore: Johnson & Johnson (JNJ) has sought approval from Indian drug regulators to conduct a study of its Covid-19 vaccine among 12- to 17-year-olds, the company said Friday. Conducting vaccine clinical trials among adolescents is imperative to achieve herd immunity against the coronavirus, J&J said in an emailed statement. The US pharma giant had received emergency use approval for its single-dose vaccine in India earlier this month, making it the fifth authorised vaccine in the country.

ant is the major VOC in India at this time. Continuing outbreaks across India are attributable to Delta, a susceptible population, reduced vaccine effectiveness in blocking transmission, and opportunities for transmission," the INSACOG said. Daily coronavirus cases have seen a significant plunge since the

second wave which peaked in May. The active cases have declined to 3,63,605, the lowest in 150 days, and comprise 1.12 per cent of the total infections, the lowest since March 2020, the Health Ministry said on Friday. Over 57 crore jabs have been administered in the country so far, the Health Ministry added.

The R-Value, or the Reproduction rate in the country has also dipped to 0.89 from August 14-16. But country continues to post over 25,000 cases everyday. There has been a concern whether an increasing vaccination breakthroughs in India are because of a new variant, the INSACOG said.

It also cited an example of the UK. With a population of about 6.7 crore, the UK has reported about 18 lakh cases and 1.2 lakh vaccination breakthroughs with Delta since April 2021. "Thus, vaccination breakthroughs are common during Delta outbreaks and are expected in India as well," it said.

POST-POLL VIOLENCE CBI seeks details from Bengal DGP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, August 20: The CBI has written to the West Bengal director general of police to provide details of all cases of murder, attempt to murder and rape reported during post-poll violence in the state, officials said Friday.

The agency sought the details of such cases from the director general of police in line with a Calcutta High Court order that directed the CBI to take over cases related to murder, rape and atrocities against women during the violence.

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has set up four teams, each headed by joint directors Ramnish, Anurag, Vineet Vinayak and Sampat Meena, to probe the political violence which ensued after the victory of the Trinamool Congress (TMC) May 2 in a bitterly fought eight-phase assembly poll in West Bengal. Each team will have about seven members, including a deputy inspector general and about four superintendents of police, called from across the country, the officials said.

The overall probe will be supervised by Additional Director Ajay Bhatnagar. The Calcutta High Court on Thursday had ordered a CBI inquiry into alleged killings, rape and crimes against women during post-poll violence in West Bengal. A five-judge bench, passing a unanimous judgment on a batch of PILs seeking an independent probe into incidents of alleged violence after the polls which the ruling TMC won by an overwhelming majority, also ordered constitution of a special investigation team (SIT) to probe all other cases.

Taj to reopen for night viewing from today

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Agra, August 20: After remaining closed for over a year for night viewing, the Taj Mahal will open from August 21 for visitors who want to explore the marble monument under moonlight, officials said Friday.



Night viewing of the monument had closed March 17, 2020 during the first lockdown due to Covid-19. ASI Superintendent Archaeologist (Agra Circle) Vasant Kumar Swarnkar told PTI that night viewing will be allowed August 21, 23 and 24 as the monument is closed every week Friday and the lockdown is in effect Sunday.

He said there are three time slots for visitors. From 8:30 pm, 9:30 pm and from 9:30-10 pm. "In every slot, 50 tourists would be allowed as per guidelines of the Supreme Court," he added. "The tickets can be booked a day in advance from ASI office's counter on 22 Mall Road in Agra," Kumar said.

Sonia emphasises on Oppn unity ahead of 2024 LS elections



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

The Congress leader said that the Pegasus snooping scandal that affects each and every citizen, the repeal of the three anti-farmer laws - the agitation of farmers that has been going on for the past nine months, the price rise of essential commodities and the continuing assault on federalism and the institutions of our democracy needed to be discussed.

Sonia Gandhi said that in spite of this, the session was marked by the "determined unity" that all Opposition parties demonstrated for over 20 days in both the Houses.

"We functioned in a coordinated manner with daily discussions among our floor leaders," she said, adding that it was entirely due to the opposition parties that the Constitutional Amendment Bill was passed to restore the long-standing rights of states to identify and notify OBCs.

Mentioning the role of West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, Sonia Gandhi said, "Mamataji and Uddhavji emphasised the discrimination against non-BJP ruled states in vaccine supply, as have some other chief ministers."

The meeting was attended by leaders of the Trinamool Congress, the Nationalist Congress Party, the DMK, the Shiv Sena, the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, the Communist Party of India, the Communist Party of India-Marxist, the National Conference, the Rashtriya Janata Dal, the All India United Democratic Front, the VCK, the Loktantrik Janata Dal, the Janata Dal-Secular, the Rashtriya Lok Dal, the Revolutionary Socialist Party, the Kerala Congress-Mani, the Peoples Democratic Party, and the Indian Union Muslim League.

However, the Samajwadi Party, the Aam Aadmi Party, and the Bahujan Samaj Party stayed away

New Delhi, August 20: Congress interim President Sonia Gandhi Friday said that the Monsoon Session of Parliament was a complete washout entirely due to the governments obstinate and arrogant unwillingness to discuss and debate urgent issues of public importance.

She also emphasised on opposition unity ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections to give the country a government that believes in the values of the freedom movement and in the principles enshrined in the Constitution.

She made the remarks at the meeting of the 19 opposition parties which was chaired by her.

Speaking at the meeting, Sonia Gandhi said, "Monsoon session of Parliament was a complete washout entirely due to the government's obstinate and arrogant unwillingness to discuss and debate urgent issues of public importance."

SHORT TAKES

2 ultras killed in gunfight

Srinagar: Two Hizbul Mujahideen militants -- part of a hit squad of the outfit and responsible for civilian killings -- were gunned down in an encounter with security forces in Jammu and Kashmir's Pulwama district Friday, police said. Security forces launched a cordon and search operation at Khrew in the Pampore area of the district following information about the presence of militants there, a police spokesman said.

13 labourers killed as truck overturns

Mumbai: Thirteen labourers were killed and two others injured after a tipper truck carrying them along with steel overturned due to a pothole in Buldhana district of Maharashtra Friday, police said. The incident occurred near Dusatbird village at Tadegean Phata on Sindkhedraja-Mehkar Road around 12 noon when the labourers were being taken to work of the Nagpur-Mumbai Samruddhi Expressway project, an official said. A total of 16 labourers, including a girl, were travelling in the vehicle.

Saini released from custody

Chandigarh: Former Punjab DGP Smedh Singh Saini was released from vigilance custody early Friday on the directions of the Punjab and Haryana High Court, which termed his arrest in a cheating and forgery case as illegal. Saini was arrested by the state's Vigilance Bureau Wednesday night in connection with a case registered in September 2020 for cheating, forgery, corruption and other offences.

Fresh 36,571 Covid cases

New Delhi: India logged 36,571 new coronavirus infections, taking the total tally of Covid-19 cases to 3,23,58,829, while the national recovery rate improved to 97.54 per cent, the highest since March 2020, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated Friday.

Anil Vij put on oxygen support

Chandigarh: Haryana Health Minister Anil Vij, who earlier contracted coronavirus, was put on oxygen support Friday after his oxygen levels dipped alarmingly, a doctor said.

COVID NORMS GO FOR A TOSS



Muslims beat their chests as they take part in a Muharram procession in New Delhi

PTI PHOTO

Defence procurement to be transparent



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, August 20: In an attempt to make defence procurement more transparent, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh has approved a proposal to publish all relevant details on the ministry's website, barring those which are sensitive, a statement said Friday.

The defence industry has reg-

ularly pitched for providing greater access to the details of procurements planned by the Defence Ministry, especially with regard to cost, quantity, offsets, trials, transfer of technology and others which are being envisaged at the Acceptance of Necessity (AoN) stage.

To promote 'Ease of Doing Business' and provide more transparency in capital acquisition

process, and aligning with the aspirations of industry, the Minister has approved a proposal mandating the service headquarters to publish the relevant details on their and the ministry websites, within one week of receipt of approvals.

"The details shared will be subject to sensitivities keeping the security aspect in mind," the ministry statement said.

This is an important step towards greater transparency and information symmetry and will provide an opportunity to the additional vendors, who did not respond to the Request for Information but wish to express interest for receipt of Request for Proposal and submission of bid, it said. This timely visibility will enable the industry to plan technology tie-ups with original equipment manufacturers (OEMs), initiate the process to set up production lines, and augment production capacity in anticipation of the orders likely to be placed.

Kabul airport images like Kandahar horror: IC814 pilot

IC814 WAS HEADING FROM KATHMANDU TO NEW DELHI DECEMBER 24, 1999 -- WITH 179 PASSENGERS AND 11 CREW MEMBERS ON BOARD -- WHEN IT WAS HIJACKED AND TAKEN TO TALIBAN-CONTROLLED KANDAHAR BY FIVE PAKISTANI TERRORISTS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, August 20: The images of Kabul airport in the past few days remind him of the horror he experienced 22 years ago, according to Devi Sharan, who was captain of the Indian Airlines flight IC814 that was hijacked in December 1999 and taken to Kandahar in Afghanistan.

Various images and videos have come out where people can be seen crowding inside as well as outside the Kabul airport and scrambling to enter into the planes on the runway in order to escape from the Taliban that took control of Afghanistan's capital city Sunday.

"It was like I have gone 22 years back. Over 20 years have passed, but the images (of today) are the same," Sharan, 59, told PTI in an interview.

"The difference is that we were the only people at that time in Kandahar but now you can see a crowd at the (Kabul) airport. But definitely, these people are desperate to come out just like we wanted to come out," he added.

The hijackers executed one passenger, Rupin Katyal, and finally negotiated the release of terrorists Masood Azhar Alvi, Syed Omar Sheikh and Mushtaq Ahmad Zargar from Indian jails on December 31, 1999, in exchange for the hostages.



On Friday, Sharan said: "I find the images to be quite like of that time. Definitely, it gives us all the memories of horror of that time. It reminds us of that." He said

there were two kinds of Taliban forces that they encountered at the Kandahar airport in December 1999. "One was Kabali. You can see these Talibanis with turbans and

civil clothes and rocket launchers and all. So one force was this one which was type of a moral police. The other one was commandos," he stated. "These Kabalis, I would say they were quite in favour of our hijackers. The commands were there only to ensure that there is no bloodshed there. They might be with the hijackers but they were definitely not with us," he added.

Sharan said no direct threat was issued by Taliban to him but you can see the "threat" as these Kabalis had surrounded the aircraft with rocket launchers and all.

"So, you can see that threat that they would not let us go without agreeing to the demands (of the hi-

jackers)," he said in a statement. On December 24, 1999, Sharan was first asked by hijackers to take the IC814 plane to Lahore. After Pakistan refused to let the flight land there, the aircraft was taken to Amritsar airport.

Then, it was taken to Lahore airport, which allowed the plane to land this time at the last moment. Later, it departed from there and went to the Dubai airport, from where it was taken to the Kandahar airport. Sharan said he retired last year from Air India. Indian Airlines was merged with Air India in 2007. He said Jagjia passed away 7-8 years ago while Kumar is still with Air India.



The whole of government has been working tirelessly over the last week to help as many people evacuate from Afghanistan as possible

HELPING HAND

The US informed Lebanon that it has decided to help the country draw electricity from Jordan through Syria, a statement by Beirut Presidency said



of the day quote

The announcement of cabinet changes followed the selection of several ministers as candidates of the ruling United Socialist Party of Venezuela for regional and municipal elections scheduled for November 21

The UNSC members endorsed in one voice a "zero tolerance" approach to terrorism in all its forms and manifestations

The progress by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in Myanmar has not been as effective as hoped

Taliban killed minorities, fuelling Afghans' fears

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Kabul, August 20: Reports of targeted killings in areas overrun by the Taliban mounted Friday, fuelling fears that they will return Afghanistan to the repressive rule they imposed when they were last in power...



RAGING TERROR

Terrified that the new de facto rulers would commit such abuses, thousands have raced to Kabul's airport and to border crossings, desperate to flee following the Taliban's stunning blitz through the country.

Many Afghans are skeptical, fearing that the Taliban will erase the gains, especially for women, achieved in the past two decades

they have changed. The rights group said that its researchers spoke to eyewitnesses in Ghazni province who recounted how the Taliban killed nine ethnic Hazaras men in the village of Mundarakht July 4-6.

The brutality of the killings was "a reminder of the Taliban's past record, and a horrifying indicator of what Taliban rule may bring," said Agnes Callamard, the head of Amnesty International.

achieved in the past two decades. Reports of abuses are growing, and an Amnesty International report provided more evidence Friday that undercut the Taliban's claims

Tesla will launch prototype of humanoid robot next yr: Musk

REUTERS

San Francisco, August 20: Tesla Inc Chief Executive Elon Musk has said the electric automaker will probably launch a "Tesla Bot" humanoid robot prototype next year, designed for dangerous, repetitive, or boring work that people don't like to do.

Speaking at Tesla's AI Day event, the billionaire entrepreneur said the robot, which stands around five foot eight inches tall, would be able to handle jobs from attaching bolts to cars with a wrench, or picking up groceries at stores.

The robot would have "profound implications for the economy," Musk said, addressing a labour shortage. He said it was important to make the machine not "super-expensive."

Musk didn't comment on that scrutiny over the safety of Tesla technology but said that he was confident of achieving full self-driving with higher safety than

humans using current in-car cameras and computers. US safety regulators earlier this week opened an investigation into Tesla's driver assistant system because of accidents where Tesla cars crashed into stationary police cars and fire trucks.

Two US senators have also called on the Federal Trade Commission to investigate Tesla's claims for its "Full Self-Driving" system.

At the event held Thursday Tesla also unveiled chips it designed in-house, to help develop its automated driving system. Musk said Dojo would be operational next year. He said Tesla will also introduce new hardware for its self-driving computer for its Cybertruck electric pick-up truck in "about a year or so."

On Thursday some questioned whether Musk, who has frequently touted technology advances at showpiece events only to scale plans down later on, would be able to come good on his aims for the robot.



SHORT TAKES

Malaysia gets new leader

Kuala Lumpur: Malaysia's longest-governing political party reclaimed the premiership it lost in a shock 2018 election defeat, after the king Friday named its candidate, Ismail Sabri Yaakob, as the country's new leader.

47 migrants found dead

Nouakchott: Forty-seven migrants were found dead off the coast of Nouadhibou, northwest Mauritania, the International Organisation for Migration and UNHCR announced in a joint statement.

Navalny marks anniv of poisoning

Moscow: Imprisoned Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny marked the anniversary of a poisoning attack against him by urging global leaders Friday to put more attention on combating corruption and to target tycoons close to Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Israel approves booster shots

Kfar Saba (Israel): Israel has made third booster shots against Covid-19 available to people age 40 and older in an effort to fight a surge of the delta variant.

Sydney extends lockdown

Sydney: A lockdown in Australia's largest city was extended through September and tougher measures to curb the coronavirus's delta variant were imposed Friday, including a curfew and a mask mandate outdoors.

'Russia, Germany need to talk despite deep differences'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Berlin, August 20: German Chancellor Angela Merkel told Russia's Vladimir Putin that Moscow and Berlin should talk despite "deep differences", in her final working visit to Russia before stepping down as leader next month.

Merkel's trip to Moscow coincides with the anniversary of a nerve-agent attack on now-jailed opposition leader Alexei Navalny, whose life was saved by Berlin doctors.

"Even if we have deep disagreements, we are talking to one another and it should stay that way," Merkel told Putin in a televised exchange before the talks at the Kremlin.

"We have a lot to talk about," she added, naming several issues on their agenda, including the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan.

They are also expected to discuss the simmering conflict in eastern Ukraine and the authoritarian crackdown in Russia-allied Belarus.

Putin greeted Merkel with flow-



Even if we have deep disagreements, we are talking to one another and it should stay that way. We have a lot to talk about

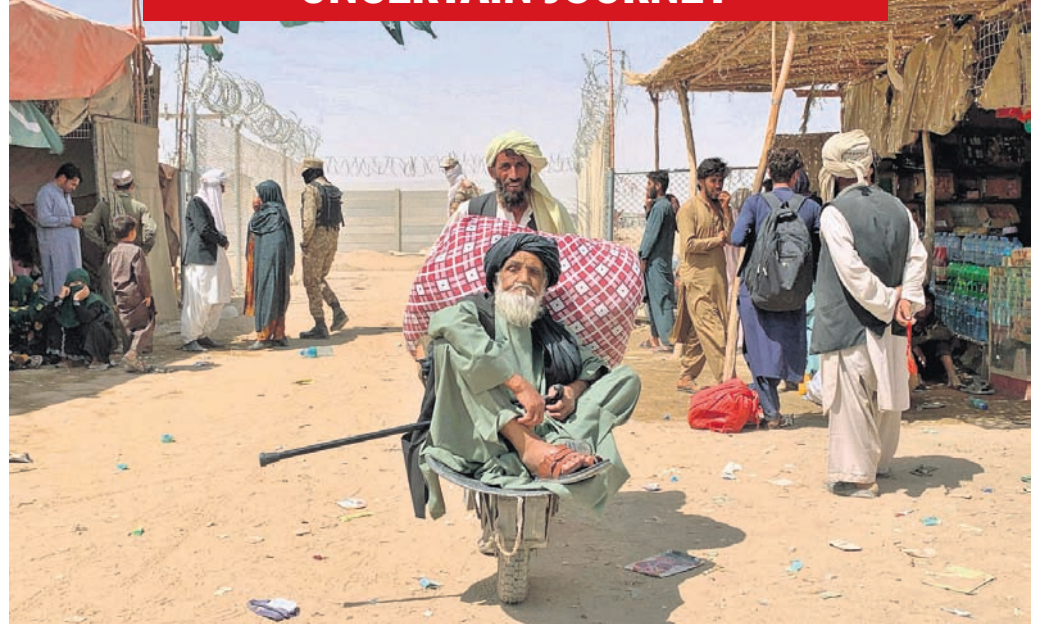
ANGELA MERKEL | GERMAN CHANCELLOR

ers, a gesture he reserves for female leaders, and said he hoped the visit will not only be a "farewell" one, but a "serious one".

Merkel, who will bow out of politics following German elections September 26, did not mention Navalny in her opening comments.

She has blamed the attack on the Kremlin after tests in European laboratories showed Navalny was poisoned using the Novichok chemical weapon, and has called for his release. Putin denies any involvement.

UNCERTAIN JOURNEY



A porter pushes a wheelbarrow carrying an elderly Afghan man as he enters into Pakistan through a border crossing point, in Chaman

LA crosses grim milestone of 25K Covid deaths

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Los Angeles, August 20: Los Angeles has crossed a grim milestone of more than 25,000 Covid-19 deaths with a daily count of 35 fatalities, local health authorities said.

The most populous county in the US home to over 10 million residents, also reported 3,239 new cases in the last 24 hours, bringing the overall tally since the start of the pandemic to 1,362,848 positive cases with 25,002 related deaths, according to the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health.

The Department said that there were 1,790 people with Covid-19 currently hospitalised in the county



in California and 23 per cent of them are in the intensive care units, reports Xinhua news agency.

The county's seven-day cumulative case rate is now 204.2 new cases per 100,000 residents, which represents a 5 per cent increase from last week. Between July 11 and August 11, hospitalisations rose by 333 percent to an average of 1,622 beds filled with people testing

positive on any given day, and deaths rose 275 per cent to an average of 15 deaths per day, said the Department.

County health officials noted they are monitoring school cases in outbreaks among staff and students as many school districts countywide are reopening this week. California Governor Gavin Newsom announced last week that the state would implement first-in-the-nation measure to require all teachers and school staff to get vaccinated as schools return from summer break amid the Delta variant spread.

"It is with much sorrow that we mark this devastating milestone of 25,000 deaths in our County.

China approves three-child policy with SOPs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Beijing, August 20: China's national legislature Friday formally endorsed the three-child policy mooted by the ruling Communist Party, in a major policy shift aimed to prevent a steep decline in birth rates in the world's most populous country.

The revised Population and Family Planning Law, which allows Chinese couples to have three children, was passed by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC).

In an apparent attempt to address the reluctance of the Chinese couples to have more children due to mounting costs, the amended law has also passed more social and economic support measures to address the concerns.



The new law stipulates that the country will take supportive measures, including those in finances, taxes, insurance, education, housing and employment, to reduce families' burdens as well as the cost of raising and educating children.

The NPC has revised the law to implement the central leadership's decision to cope with new circumstances in social and economic development, the report said.

California wildfire grows 10 times in size in 48 hours

MILLIONS OF ACRES OF NATIONAL FOREST IN NORTHERN CALIFORNIA ARE BEING CLOSED BECAUSE OF DANGEROUS FIRE CONDITIONS

AGENCIES

San Francisco, August 20: Fuelled by wind and dry conditions, the Caldor Fire burning in El Dorado county in Northern California has scorched 65,474 acres of land so far, and grew 10 times in size in just 48 hours, according to Inciweb, an interstate incident information system.

According to Inciweb, spotting and rollout continued to be the main contributor to fire spread throughout Wednesday evening and multiple new spot fires were expected Thursday, so the blaze sparked August 14 had potential to grow further, reports Xinhua news agency.

The latest data released by the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services Thursday re-

vealed that 25,000 people had been evacuated in El Dorado county due to the fast-moving fire. There are 653 firefighters battling the fire, which is zero percent contained.

As of Thursday, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal Fire) said 86 structures had been confirmed destroyed by the fire and nearly 7,000 structures remain threatened.

Meanwhile, the Dixie Fire, California's second-largest in history which has been active for more than a month, also swelled more than 60,000 acres in two days. It prompted a new round of evacuation orders on Wednesday as gusty winds helped spread the fire within about 15 km of Susanville, a town with 15,000 residents.

The Dixie Fire, the nation's largest active fire, burned down



678,369 acres with 35 percent containment as of Thursday, about three times the size of Manhattan. It had destroyed more than

Hundreds of firefighters battling Greek wildfires

Athens: A major wildfire that has decimated a pine forest and burned homes northwest of the Greek capital appeared somewhat abated Friday, although hundreds of firefighters were still working to fully contain the blaze. The fire near the village of Villa, about 60 kilometers (40 miles) from Athens, broke out on Monday, one of hundreds of wildfires that have burned across Greece this month.

1,200 structures, including 645 single residences, Cal Fire said. At least 16,085 structures were still threatened by the flames. Three first responders had been injured fighting the fire, according to officials. Cal Fire Director Thom Porter said Wednesday that the Dixie Fire was the first wildfire burned across the range of

Sierra Nevada in history. "The Dixie Fire is the first fire that we're aware of that has burned from the west side of the mountain range all the way over and to the valley floor on the east side of the mountain range. We don't have any record of that happening before," Porter said. "It is exceedingly resistant to control."



**Nifty snapped a two-week winning streak and ended lower by 0.48 per cent Friday. In the process, it formed a doji like pattern on weekly charts, suggesting indecision at higher levels**

DEEPAK JASANI | HEAD OF RETAIL RESEARCH, HDFC SECURITIES

**JEWELLERS TO GO ON STRIKE**

Jewellers across India will go on strike August 23 against "arbitrarily" implemented mandatory hallmarking process in the country by the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS). The strike has been called by the National Task Force for Hallmarking



**of the day quote**

OPDPA as the nodal agency has been relentlessly pursuing the government to bring about reforms in the sector to help create a sustainable environment for the farmers and the industry -- be it the pricing mechanism or other subsidy measures towards increasing crop cultivation

SANJAY GOENKA | PRESIDENT, OPDPA

The market has been consistently surprising even the incorrigible optimists by setting new records. The Sensex has scaled the 56,000-mark. However, the journey of the market has been volatile with sharp ups and downs unnerving the short-term investors and traders

VK VIJAYAKUMAR | CHIEF INVESTMENT STRATEGIST, GEJOIT FINANCIAL SERVICES

The new developments (at Jabalpur airport) include construction of a new 10,000 sq ft terminal building, a new ATC tower, and extension of the runway from 1,950m to 2,750m to make it feasible for bigger aircraft operations

JYOTIRADITYA M SCINDIA | CIVIL AVIATION MINISTER

**RBI Guv pitches for continued policy support to revive growth**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, August 20:** Given the uncertainties on account of the Covid-19 pandemic, Reserve Bank Governor Shaktikanta Das opined that continued policy support with a focus on revival and sustenance of growth was the most desirable and judicious policy option at the moment.

Das, according to the minutes of the MPC meeting released on Friday, also underlined the need for closely monitoring the price situation with a view to anchoring inflation expectations.

"The need of the hour is twofold: first, continue the monetary policy support to the economy; and second, remain watchful of any durable inflationary pressures and sustained price momentum in key components so as to bring back the CPI inflation to 4 per cent over a period of time in a non-disruptive manner," he said.

All members of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) -- Shashanka Bhide, Ashima Goyal, Jayanth R Varma, Mridul K Sagar, Michael Debratara Patra and Shaktikanta Das -- had unanimously voted to keep the policy repo rate unchanged at 4 per cent after the three-day meet of the panel earlier this month.

Further, except Varma, other members voted to continue with the accommodative stance as long as necessary to revive and sustain growth on a durable basis and continue to mitigate the impact of Covid-19 on the economy, while ensuring that inflation remains within



**The need of the hour is two-fold: first, continue the monetary policy support to the economy; and second, remain watchful of any durable inflationary pressures and sustained price momentum in key components so as to bring back the CPI inflation to 4% in a non-disruptive manner**

SHAKTIKANTA DAS | GOVERNOR, RESERVE BANK OF INDIA

the target going forward.

Varma expressed reservations on this part of the MPC resolution, according to the minutes. RBI Deputy Governor Patra said amid the extreme uncertainty encircling the path of the pandemic, monetary policy authorities have sought to impart some certainty by a commitment to a stance of accommodation extending into the future.

With the upsurge of inflation worldwide, this effort to anchor expectations is under scrutiny. Patra said in some countries, markets have acquiesced with the authorities' view that inflation pressures are transitory and do not

warrant a change in the policy stance. In others, central banks have pre-emptively tightened the policy stance despite assessing inflation as transitory.

"This is a razor's edge dilemma and responding to it, in my view, involves a judgment call that puts both foresightedness and inflation fighting credibility on the line," he said. Sagar, who is RBI's Executive Director, opined policy focus to revive growth on a durable basis needs to continue and should entail consideration to avoid inflation risks that may emanate when credit demand improves, likely ahead of output gap closing.

**Indian firms slip in global valuation ranking, RIL dips three places**

AGENCIES

**Mumbai, August 20:** Reliance Industries has emerged as the most valued Indian company in a global list of top-500 non-state run companies, but saw its ranking slipping by three points.

Ranking of many others Indian companies, including Tata Consultancy Services, HDFC Bank, HDFC and Bharti Airtel, declined compared with last year on the Hurun Global 500 list.

In all, 12 Indian companies made it to the list of the top-500 valued companies as against 11 in the year-ago period. Mukesh Ambani-led Reliance Industries' valuation increased 11 per cent to \$188 billion but ranking slipped by three places to 57 in the rankings which use the valuation on July 15 as the cut-off.

TCS slipped one position to be the 74th most valued company in the world with a valuation of \$164 billion, HDFC Bank was 19 positions down at 124th with a \$113 billion valuation while its parent HDFC was down 52 places at 301st despite a 1 per cent increase in valuation to \$56.7 billion.

Kotak Mahindra Bank's valuation declined 8 per cent to \$46.6 billion, which led to a fall of 96 places on the list to 380th rank, while its larger rival ICICI Bank saw its valuation rise 36 per cent to \$62 billion which resulted in its global ranking improving 48 places to 268th, as per the list.

There were three new entrants from the country in the list, in-



**In all, 12 Indian firms made it to the list of the top-500 valued companies as against 11 in the year-ago period. Reliance Industries' valuation increased 11% to \$188bn**

cluding Wipro (ranked 457th), Asian Paints (477th) and HCL Technologies (498th).

"Two-thirds of Indian companies featured in the list are from financial services and software services. In the coming years, the startup revolution in the country would help India contribute more companies to Hurun Global 500," Hurun India's managing director and chief researcher Anas Rahman Junaid said. Apple is the most valuable company in the world and saw its valuation rising by 15 per cent to \$2.4 trillion, it said.

Apple, Microsoft, Amazon and Alphabet, the 'big 4', doubled in value since Covid-19 to take their combined value to \$8 trillion, and making up 14 per cent of Hurun Global 500.

**Microsoft Corporation invests \$5mn in OYO**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, August 20:** Tech giant Microsoft Corporation has invested nearly USD 5 million (about ₹37 crore) in OYO through the issuance of equity shares and compulsory convertible cumulative preference shares on a private placement basis by the latter, according to a regulatory filing by the hospitality chain.

An extraordinary general meeting of Oravel Stays Pvt Ltd (OYO), which runs the OYO Rooms chain of hotels, on July 16 approved issue of the equity shares and Series F2 compulsory convertible cumulative preference shares (Series F2 CCCPS) for "an aggregate consideration amounting to rupee equivalent of USD 4,971,650 to Microsoft Corporation on a private placement basis", as per an RoC filing by the company.



Under the deal, OYO will issue 5 equity shares of the face value of ₹10 each for cash at an issue price of India rupee equivalent of USD 58,490 per equity share.

Moreover, the meeting approved the issue of 80 Series F2 CCCPS of the face value of ₹100 each for cash at an issue price of rupee equivalent of USD 58,490 per Series F2 CCCPS. The Series F2 CCCPS are issued at a minimum preferential dividend rate of 0.01 per cent per annum and will have priority with respect to repayment of capital vis-a-vis equity shares of the company, the filing said.

**SHORT TAKES**

**Carlsberg sales volume up 40 pc**

**New Delhi:** Danish brewing major Carlsberg's sale volume in India grew 40 per cent in the April-June quarter, helped by a lower base of the previous year. The market share gain was led by its beer brand Tuborg, the Carlsberg Group said in a post-earnings statement. "Our volumes grew strongly by 40 per cent, mainly on the back of last year's total lockdown during Q2. Led by the Tuborg brand, we saw good market share development in key states," the company said.

**Kia sells 2L units of SUV Seltos**

**New Delhi:** South Korean auto major Kia Friday said it has sold two lakh units of its flagship SUV Seltos in two years of its operations in India. Kia India has also sold 1.5 lakh units of internet-enabled 'connected cars' in this period, the company said in a statement. A connected car has its own internet connectivity and has the capability to connect with nearby devices over wireless networks offering the driver a host of useful functions, such as live traffic updates and alternative routes.

**EPFO adds 12.83L members in June**

**New Delhi:** Retirement fund body EPFO recorded net new enrolments of 12.83 lakh in June, giving an employment perspective in the country. The provisional payroll data of EPFO (Employees' Provident Fund Organization) released Friday highlights a growing trend with 12.83 lakh net payroll additions during June 2021, a labour ministry statement said.

**BoM waives loan processing fees**

**New Delhi:** State-owned Bank of Maharashtra (BoM) has announced a slew of offers, including concessional interest rates and a 100 per cent waiver on processing fees on retail loans. The bank under 'Retail Bonanza-Monsoon Dhamaka' waived the processing fee for its gold, housing and car loan and the offer is valid till September 30, 2021, BoM said in a statement Friday. The bank offers housing and car loans with interest rates starting from 6.90 per cent and 7.30 per cent, respectively.

**SBI Officers' Association celebrates 43rd Foundation Day**

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, August 20:** State Bank of India Officers' Association, Bhubaneswar Circle celebrated its 43rd Foundation day August 19 in the Circle Association Office located in the city, following all the Covid guidelines issued by the state government. The morning function was inaugurated by the President Arun Kumar Bishoyi, General Secretary Sabyasachi Swain in the presence of former General Secretary NRC Rao by garlanding to the founder of Association NN Das and PVS Murty.

The members of the Association donated washing machine and uten-



sils to SAKHA, an NGO based at Telengapetha in the morning. At 11 am a 'Blood Donation Camp' was organised by the SBI Officers' Association in the Local Head Office and inaugurated by CGM of Circle Vidya Krishnan in the presence of AK Bishoyi, President, Sabyasachi Swain, General Secretary of Association and Abhay Kishore Pandey, GM NW-I, RK Mishra, GM, AK Sinha, DGM & CDO, Pranati Satpathy, AGM, Human Resources and other members of the Association.

**US giants Microsoft, PepsiCo to invest in UP**

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Lucknow, August 20:** American tech giants Microsoft and MAQ Software, as well as PepsiCo have come forward to set up their units in Uttar Pradesh at a cost of ₹2,866 crore, giving a boost to industrial development in the state.

According to a state government spokesman, the factories being set up by the three US-based multinational companies will provide employment to 7,500 people.

Microsoft and MAQ Software will set up their units in Noida whereas PepsiCo has started construction of its factory in Mathura, said an Industrial Department official.

Encouraged by these developments, several other US investors associated with the US-India Strategic Partnership Forum are also keen to invest in Uttar Pradesh. Siddhartha Nath Singh, the MSME and Export Promotion Minister, said that the US investors associated with the forum have also contacted the UP government in this regard.

The companies including Adobe, Amazon, American Tower Corporation, Apple, Caterpillar, Delhi, Cisco, Deloitte, Emerson,



Ernst & Young, Google, Johnson & Johnson, JP Morgan & Company, Lockheed Martin, Marriott International, MasterCard, Mondelez International, Carlyle Group, Walmart, WarburgPincus, IHS Markit and USIBC are willing to invest in UP and in other parts of the country, according to Singh.

The details came to light during an interaction with the entrepreneurs associated with the US-India Strategic Partnership Forum

in which the representatives of these companies expressed particular interest in investing in the areas of medical equipment manufacturing, food processing, automobiles, IT and digital payments.

Among them, companies like Adobe, Amazon, Microsoft, Delphi New Holland, Global Logic, Excel, PepsiCo, Synopsis and Cargill are already operating in India while Microsoft, MACQ Software Noida and PepsiCo have stepped up efforts to set up their units in UP.

**Stakeholders brainstorm on power infra resiliency**

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, August 20:** Odisha State Disaster Management Authority (OSDMA) in association with GRIDCO conducted a state-level workshop August 19 at Mayfair Convention, Bhubaneswar on the outcome report of the study conducted by Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) for enhancing power infrastructure resiliency in the State.

The workshop was presided by Pradeep Kumar Jena, IAS, Development Commissioner-cum-Additional Chief Secretary (Disaster Management) and Special Relief Commissioner.

CDRI is an International Coalition of countries, UN agencies & programmes and multilateral institutions. CDRI has conducted a study to enhance the resilience of Odisha power infrastructure. The study has 3 components, out of which component-I covering im-

provement in disaster preparedness, response, recovery & management has been completed. Component-II & III will cover risk mapping, improvement of infrastructure, institutional capacity building and financing.

In his introductory remarks, Sandeep Poundrik, IAS, Director General, CDRI stated that, CDRI is conducting such studies in 4 pilot States and the support & learnings shared by Odisha are tangible. He also pointed that, resilience should not necessarily be construed as hardware, rather its soft form like SOPs, process & mechanisms are also equally important and doesn't warrant high upfront investments.

He stated that, the Ministry of Power has already brought out specific recommendations for design of coastal power infrastructure, wherein Odisha was a team constituent and the inputs from state are well incorporated in the Ministry's report.



**Af's \$3tn worth of natural assets in Taliban's control**

**IN 2010, A REPORT BY US MILITARY EXPERTS AND GEOLOGISTS ESTIMATED THAT AFGHANISTAN, ONE OF THE WORLD'S POOREST COUNTRIES, WAS SITTING ON NEARLY \$1 TRILLION IN MINERAL WEALTH, THANKS TO HUGE IRON, COPPER, LITHIUM, COBALT AND RARE-EARTH DEPOSITS**

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, August 20:** China, already Afghanistan's largest foreign investor, is seen as likely to lead the race to help the country build an efficient mining system to meet its insatiable needs for minerals. A follow-up report by the Afghan government in 2017 estimated that Kabul's new mineral wealth may be as high as \$3 trillion, including fossil fuels.

To date, the Taliban have profited from the opium and heroin trade. Now the militant group effectively rules a country with valuable resources that China needs to grow its economy, DW reported.

In 2010, a report by US military experts and geologists estimated that Afghanistan, one of the world's poorest countries, was sitting on

nearly \$1 trillion in mineral wealth, thanks to huge iron, copper, lithium, cobalt and rare-earth deposits.

Lithium, which is used in batteries for electric cars, smartphones and laptops, is facing unprecedented demand, with annual growth of 20 per cent compared to just 5-6 per cent a few years ago. The Pentagon memo called Afghanistan the Saudi Arabia of lithium and projected that the country's lithium deposits could equal Bolivia's — one of the world's largest.

Copper, too, is benefiting from the post-COVID global economic recovery — up 43 per cent over the past year. More than a quarter of Afghanistan's future mineral wealth could be realised by expanding copper mining activities.

While the West has threatened not to work with the Taliban after



it effectively seized control of Kabul over the weekend, China, Russia and Pakistan are lining up to do business with the Taliban.

As the manufacturer of almost half of the world's industrial goods, China is stoking much of the global demand for commodities. Beijing

— already Afghanistan's largest foreign investor — is seen as likely to lead the race to help the country build an efficient mining system to meet its insatiable needs for minerals. "Taliban control comes at a time when there is a supply crunch for these minerals for the foreseeable

future and China needs them," Michael Tanchum, a senior fellow at the Austrian Institute for European and Security Policy, told DW.

"China is already in position in Afghanistan to mine these minerals," Chinese state-run media, meanwhile, described how Afghanistan can now benefit from the country's massive Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) — Beijing's controversial infrastructure plan to build road, rail and sea routes through Asia to Europe.

One of the Asian powerhouse's mining giants, the Metallurgical Corporation of China (MCC), already has a 30-year lease to mine copper in Afghanistan's barren Logar province, the report said.

Afghanistan's neighbour Pakistan is also set to benefit from Afghanistan's minerals wealth.

The Islamabad government, which supported the Taliban's first takeover of Afghanistan in 1996, has maintained ties with the group and has been accused by the US of harbouring Taliban militants.

Pakistan is also set to be a major beneficiary of China's infrastructure investment — often dubbed the New Silk Road.

"Pakistan has a vested interest as the materials could potentially be transported along the commercial transit route from Pakistan to China," Tanchum told DW, adding that a deal with the Taliban would give Islamabad the incentive to support a stable security environment in the region.

The Afghan ministry of mines and petroleum has too estimated the mines and natural resources of Afghanistan worth \$3 trillion.

# Rain ruins Ashwin's chance

I was asked to be ready because of heat wave in London but then it started pouring, says the spinner

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, August 20: Senior India off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin said that he was asked to be ready for the second Test against England due to the prevailing heat wave here but the steady showers on match day put a spanner on his hopes of making it to the playing XI.

"What was the weather forecast for the match? Heatwave. The funny thing was, before the match, they were telling me, Heat wave, neenga readya irunga (meaning there's a Heat wave. You please be ready mate. You might play)."

"When we came to have breakfast, it was pouring," he said on his YouTube show 'KuttyStory' with Indian fielding coach R Sridhar, adding "weather is not in our hands."

He was apparently referring to his not being picked keeping the weather conditions in mind. Sridhar, in response to a question, said the team had a "great bowling attack" and "to keep the world's best spinner out of the XI is not easy."

Discussing the 151-run win at Lord's which gave India a 1-0 lead in the five-Test series, the two agreed that openers - Rohit Sharma and K L Rahul played a key role.

"Rahul came out and played like a dream," Ashwin said of his getting into the team following an injury to state-mate Mayank Agarwal in the nets.

Meanwhile, Sridhar said, "Rahul was the 4th opener going into the series, but his preparation



has been extraordinary. I have been feeding him a lot of throw-downs. He has found some way to score runs in England as an opener, even back in 2018 where he scored a 100 in Oval," he added.

On his part, Ashwin lavished praise on Rohit Sharma and said "Also, a word on Rohit's defence this series. Rohit has played the cover drives, pulls, etc. All those are glorious. When Rohit bats, we

all know he oozes class. But coming to his defence, it feels as though the bat is falling from his hand..."

Sridhar said Rohit practised a lot and had the drive to succeed in England. "Hands in the pocket! The hands don't come out. The hands are held so close to the body, whether it is leaving the ball or playing the ball. He had practised that a lot!"

"He practised it so much that he started getting a pain in the wrist. In ODIs, his back-lift is slightly bigger and his hands are away from the body, but he had that drive to succeed in England and to be known as a versatile opener. Technical adjustments, hands close to the body, cocking of the wrists. He's done it all."

"He's willing to go through the pain barrier, but it's paying too. What batting man! Two openers like that. I have not seen such a good opening partnership in a long time. Rohit Sharma practised it a lot. Made technical adjustments. I have not seen such an opening partnership, at least in my time," Sridhar added.

Ashwin chipped in by saying, "England generally is not a place where opening is easy. In 2014, M Vijay put up a masterclass. He would leave the ball that passed very close to the stumps..."

Ashwin and Sridhar also hailed the role played by Mohammed Shami and Jasprit Bumrah with the bat in the second innings with a spirited partnership and their role along with Mohammed Siraj and Ishant Sharma in fashioning the memorable victory.

# WT20 in mind of Kohli, BCCI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, August 20: The Indian team is fully focussed on winning the ongoing Test series in England but both skipper Virat Kohli and the BCCI mandarins are also discussing the roadmap for the upcoming ICC World T20 (WT20), which will be an acid test for the captain himself.

The Test win at Lord's has certainly released a lot of pressure off Kohli but he is well aware that his captaincy future hinges on the team's performance in UAE where they start against arch-rivals Pakistan.

It is learnt that BCCI president Sourav Ganguly, secretary Jay Shah and vice-president Rajiv Shukla had an informal meeting with the captain during the second Test match at Lord's and various aspects related to T20 World Cup came up for discussion.

"Yes, BCCI top bosses did meet Kohli but let's say that it will not be fair to divulge the finer details of the discussion. But with very little time left for the T20 World Cup and India not having any games prior to the (IPL), discussion was more about the roadmap going into the event," a senior BCCI official told this agency on conditions of anonymity.

With India playing the Test series till September 14 and then the players being busy with their respective IPL franchises, time is of essence and no wonder that officials had a chat about the big event with Kohli.

Under Kohli, India have lost in the 2017 Champions Trophy final, 2019 ODI World Cup semi-final apart from this year's WTC final. Not being able to clear ICC semi-final or final hurdle has been a



cause of concern.

During the past few ICC white ball tournaments, combination has been an issue for the Indian team, especially during the 50 over World Cup in England where they didn't even have a settled middle order with as many as three specialist wicketkeepers (MS Dhoni, Rishabh Pant and Dinesh Karthik) playing the semi-finals against New Zealand.

With the team selection slated for some time next month, there are multiple issues that needs to be sorted out including bowling workloads, all-rounder's position, wrist-spinners and the like for like replacements.

There are a few questions that chairman of selectors Chetan Sharma, skipper Kohli, coaches Ravi Shastri and Bharat Arun along with BCCI top brass need to be on same page to prepare a team that can challenge England and West Indies in the shortest format.

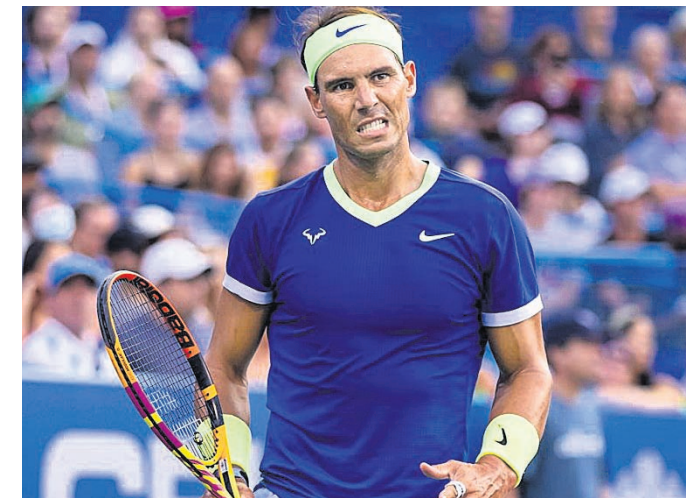
It is given that Ishant Sharma, Umesh Yadav are not in contention but how will Mohammed Shami and Jasprit Bumrah's workload be managed keeping IPL in mind? Will Mohammed Siraj's red ball form be counted?

Will both Deepak Chahar and Bhuvneshwar Kumar fit into the same XI if you also have Bumrah and Shami available?

Who among Kuldeep Yadav, Varun Chakravarthy and Rahul Chahar will join Yuzvendra Chahal and Ravindra Jadeja in the spin bowling department? Will Hardik Pandya be able to bowl his quota of four overs? Who among Suryakumar Yadav and Shreyas Iyer can make it to playing XI?

The BCCI would expect that both Kohli and Chetan Sharma would soon be on same page as India aim to win their first senior ICC title since 2013 when they annexed the Champions trophy under MS Dhoni's leadership.

# No meet for Rafa in 2021 due to injury



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Madrid, August 20: Rafa Nadal pulled out of the US Open Friday and said he will not play tennis again this year because of a nagging foot injury. The Spaniard sat out both Wimbledon and the Olympics because of fatigue after losing to Novak Djokovic in the French Open semifinals.

"I am very sorry to announce that I won't be able to keep playing tennis during the 2021 season," Nadal said in a video he posted on social media. "But as you know, I have been suffering too much with my foot for the last year now and I missed a lot of important events for me."

The 35-year-old Nadal said the pain from a chronic foot problem he has been battling most of his career is too much. "During the last

year I was not able to practice and prepare the way I need to be competitive at the standards I want to be," he said.

"The injury is nothing new. It is the same injury I am having since 2005. In that moment the doctors were very negative about my future career, but honestly I was able to have a career I was unable to ever dream about, so I am confident I will recover again."

Nadal insisted that he is "going to fight every single day" because he is convinced that he still has "a couple of beautiful years" left in his career.

Nadal has won 20 Grand Slam singles titles, tied with Djokovic and Roger Federer. Nadal, a former World No.1, is currently ranked fourth. He has won two tournaments this year, on clay in Barcelona and Rome.

# NEWS IN BRIEF

## India to face B'desh in SAFF C'ships opener

NEW DELHI: Seven-time champions India will begin their SAFF Championship campaign against Bangladesh October 3 in Male, Maldives. Igor Stimac's side will then face Sri Lanka (October 6), Nepal (October 8) and hosts Maldives (October 11) in their remaining round-robin league matches at the national football stadium in Male. The final, to be competed between the top two sides after the round-robin league, will be held October 13. Hosts Maldives play against Nepal while Sri Lanka take Bangladesh in the two matches scheduled on the opening day October 1. India had finished runners-up to Maldives, losing the final 1-2, when the last edition was held in Bangladesh in 2018.

## Aussie pacer Ellis bags IPL contract

MELBOURNE: Australian pacer Nathan Ellis has landed an IPL contract ahead of the second leg of the league in the UAE after being named as a travelling reserve in the

national team for the T20 World Cup. "Ellis was being chased by three IPL franchises for the upcoming tournament before agreeing to terms with an unnamed team Thursday night," stated a report in cricket.com.au. Earlier Thursday, the 26-year-old Ellis was named as one of three Australian reserve players for the upcoming World T20, which will follow the IPL. The development comes less than a fortnight after he picked up a hat-trick on international debut against Bangladesh in Dhaka.

## Benzema extends deal with Madrid

MADRID: Karim Benzema has signed a contract extension with Real Madrid through 2023, the Spanish club said Friday. The 33-year-old France striker has helped Madrid win four Champions League titles and three Spanish league titles since he joined from Lyon in 2009. Benzema became the main attacking threat for Madrid when Cristiano Ronaldo left in 2018. He scored two goals in Madrid's first game of the season last weekend. His new contract comes amid speculation that Madrid wants to

sign Kylian Mbappe from Paris Saint-Germain.

## Sanju, Bhateri bag silver at Junior WWC

UFA (RUSSIA): A gold medal remained elusive for India at the Junior World Wrestling Championship (WWC) as both Bhateri (65kg) and Sanju Devi (62kg) lost their respective finals rather tamely while Saneh (72kg) was stretched out of the mat after enduring a knee injury in the bronze play-off here Friday. Sanju Devi had managed comeback wins in her previous bouts but Friday was not her day as Russia's Alina Kasabieva took the gold with a technical superiority win. Bhateri also failed to put up a fight and lost the 65kg final by technical superiority to Moldova's Itina Ringaci. Bhateri's strategy to play a waiting game proved to be a mistake as she hardly attacked. Bipasha (76kg) had won a silver while Simran (50kg) and Sito (55kg) won bronze medals Thursday. The Indian women ended with five medals - three silver and two bronze - in the tournament. The men's freestyle wrestlers had won six medals with one silvers and five bronze.

## Manika-Sathiyan pair clinches title in Budapest TT tourney

BUDAPEST: India's Manika Batra and G Sathiyan tasted instant success on their return as a mixed doubles pairing by winning the title at the WTT Contender here Friday. The Indian duo, who had last played together in the 2018 Commonwealth Games, outplayed Hungary's Dora Madarasz and Nandor Ecseki 3-1 to win the mixed doubles title. They beat the 94th-ranked Hungarian pairing 11-9, 9-11, 12-10, 11-6. It was a memorable win for Manika and Sathiyan, who have reunited on a positive note and plan to take their partnership to the Paris Olympics in 2024. Sathiyan will play in the Czech Open later this week while Manika will head back home. Another big event coming up is the Asian Championships in September-October.



## Aditi starts steady at British Open golf

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Carnoustie, August 20: Indian golfer Aditi Ashok opened the women's British Open with a steady one-under 71 to lie tied 22nd at the challenging Carnoustie Links here.

Aditi, who had finished fourth at the Tokyo Olympics, scored four birdies against three bogeys and three of those birdies came in a fine stretch between 10th and 14th.

The Indian is four shots behind the three co-leaders - World No.1 and Olympic gold medalist Nelly Korda, Korean Sei Young Kim and Sweden's Madelene Sagstrom. The trio produced a matching five-under 67 each in the opening round.

Three-time Ladies European Tour winner, Aditi, showed a lot maturity and patience, so crucial while playing the Links.

Aditi, who started the tournament with a birdie turned in one-over after bogeys on sixth and seventh. After the turn she found some rhythm and it helped.

# Bengaluru FC face Bashundhara Kings



Skipper Sunil Chhetri would be keen to script a win after losing the last match against ATK Mohun Bagan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Male (Maldives), August 20: Bengaluru FC will have their task cut out as they look to return to winning ways against Bangladesh's confident side Bashundhara Kings in their penultimate AFC Cup Group D match here Saturday.

Despite coming off a 0-2 defeat to ATK Mohun Bagan in their previous game, Bengaluru FC head coach Marco Pezzaiuoli Friday maintained there was no pressure on his side as they prepare to face the Bangladesh Premier League champions.

Bashundhara Kings, who ran out 2-0 winners against Maziya S&RC in their first group stage game, will be eager to get the better of the Blues, who went down to ATK Mohun Bagan by the same scoreline.

An own-goal from Mohammed Irfan, followed by a strike from Brazilian winger Robinho, sealed three points for Oscar Bruzo's side in their opening clash against

Maziya S&RC.

Bashundhara, who made their AFC Cup debut last season in a campaign that was cut short due to the COVID-19 pandemic, retained the 2020-21 Bangladesh Federation Cup in January.

Pezzaiuoli handed starts to Ajay Chhetri and Naorem Roshan Singh in the clash against ATK Mohun Bagan, while Leon Augustine, Parag Shrivastava and Ajith Kumar came off the bench in addition to summer signings Bidyashagar Singh and Danish Farooq.

Having signed several new foreign players in Raul Becerra, Jonathan Fernandes, Khaled Shafiei and Robinho (on loan from Fluminense), the Blues will have to be wary of Bashundhara Kings' attack, with the BPL side scoring as many as 67 goals in all competitions this season.

Bashundhara Kings have never faced Bengaluru before but head coach Oscar Bruzo said his team will be prepared to contain their opponents.

# Anju's protege Shaili in long jump final

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Nairobi, August 20: Up and coming long jumper Shaili Singh lived up to the expectations as she made it to the finals after topping the qualification round with an effort of 6.40m in the U-20 World Athletics Championships here Friday.

The 17-year-old Shaili, considered one of the brightest upcoming stars in Indian athletics, achieved her best of the day in her third and final jump after starting off with a 6.34m in Group B. Her second jump recorded 5.98m.

She was one of three long jumpers who secured automatic qualification, set at 6.35m, for the final. She would have made the grade on the strength of her opening effort of 6.34m but chose to strain every sinew on her last attempt to gain the psychological edge going into Sunday's final.

Shaili is considered a medal prospect but the final is expected to be a tough affair with some of the world's best making the cut.

## U-20 WORLD ATHLETICS CHAMPIONSHIPS



Sweden's 18-year-old Maja Askag, who had won the European U-20 title last month, qualified as second best overall after winning Group A with a best jump of 6.39m. Lissandra Maysa Campos (6.36m)

of Brazil, Shantae Foreman (6.27m) of Jamaica and Mariia Horielova (6.24m) of Ukraine, who qualified as third, fourth and fifth respectively, have jumped beyond 6.40m this season. Shaili, who had won the long

jump event at the National (Senior) Inter-State Championships in June with an effort of 6.48m, is the current U-18 World No.2 and U-20 national record holder.

The Jhansi-born athlete was raised by a single mother who worked as a tailor. She currently trains at the academy of celebrated long jumper Anju Bobby George in Bangalore. She is coached by Anju's husband Bobby George.

In men's javelin throw final, Kunwar Ajai Raj Singh Rana raised hopes of winning a medal briefly with his second best throw of the year before finishing fifth.

The 19-year-old Rana rose to the bronze medal position with his 73.68m fourth round throw, his best of the day, but Nigeria's Chnecherem Nnamdi regained the third place with a 74.48m response.

In the fifth round, Poland's Eryk Kolodziejczak also bettered the Indian's best throw to nudge ahead of Rana to fourth place. Another Indian in the fray, Jay Kumar took the sixth place with a best effort of 70.74m.