



PARENTAL CONCERN

Actor Kiara Advani says her parents hashtag her every day to know what is being written about their daughter

LEISURE P2



'NO DEADLINE EXTENSION'

Ahead of G7 meet, Taliban warn there will be consequences if August 31 deadline for troop withdrawal is put off

INTERNATIONAL P10



LUKAKU LIFTS CHELSEA

Romelu Lukaku marks his second debut for Chelsea with a goal helping them beat Arsenal 2-0 in Premier League

SPORTS P12



CCI slaps ₹200cr fine on Maruti Suzuki

NEW DELHI: The Competition Commission of India imposed ₹200 crore fine on Maruti Suzuki for indulging in unfair trade practices. The fine has been slapped for "indulging in anti-competitive conduct of resale price maintenance in the passenger vehicle segment by way of implementing discount control policy vis-à-vis dealers," the CCI said Monday. Besides, the watchdog has directed the company to desist from indulging in anti-competitive practices. MSIL had an agreement with its dealers whereby the dealers were restrained from offering discounts to customers.



Tehsildar among 5 held for land fraud

BHUBANESWAR: Vigilance officials Monday arrested five revenue officials including an ex-tehsildar on charge of illegally distributing valuable government land to ineligible beneficiaries under the Vasundhara Scheme in Jagatsinghpur district. The accused were identified as Ramesh Chandra Panda, OAS, ex-tehsildar of Kujanga, Santosh Kumar Mallick, ex-RJ, Jhimani Circle, Narendra Kumar Lenka, ex-RJ, Paradeep Garh, Subash Chandra Das, ex-RJ, Kujanga and Jyoti Bhushan Barik, ex-RJ, Pandua Circle in Jagatsinghpur district. Panda is currently posted as the tehsildar of Tihidi block in Bhadrak district.

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Experts warn of 3rd wave of Covid-19

NEW DELHI: An expert panel, set up by an institute under the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), has predicted a third wave of COVID-19 hitting the country anytime between September and October and suggested significantly ramping up vaccination pace.

The committee of experts, constituted by the National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM), also said children will have a similar risk as adults since paediatric facilities, doctors and equipment like ventilators, ambulances, among others are nowhere close to what may be required in case a large number of children become infected.

The report, which has been submitted to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), observed that only around 7.6 percent (10.4 cr) people are fully vaccinated in India and if the current vaccination rate is not increased, India can witness six lakh cases per day in the next wave. **P9**



Devotees from outside Puri returned to Srimandir Monday as temple reopened for all after remaining shut for around four months in the wake of the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic. (REPORT ON P3)

3 ARRESTED FOR BUYING BABY AT ₹2K

POST NEWS NETWORK

Baripada/Saraskana, August 23: Jharpokharia police in Mayurbhanj district arrested three persons including a couple and a web reporter for allegedly selling a two-month-old baby in the area for ₹2,000, police said.

Acting on a complaint, police rescued the newborn from Rairangpur and admitted the infant to Pandit Raghunath Murmu (PRM) Medical College and Hospital at Baripada. The accused were identified as Prahallad Pratihari and his wife Liza Pratihari of Sankhabhanga area under Saraskana police limits and Tapan Dandapatra.

A case was registered in this connection and the accused were produced in a court, Monday. A sum of ₹2,080 was seized from the woman, Jharpokharia IIC Subhansu Nayak said.

According to reports, the mother of the baby, who is also the complainant and deserted by her husband, is a native of Danadar under Jharpokharia police limits in the district. She had filed an FIR with the Jharpokharia police Sunday in this regard. **MORE P7**

Govt to sell off nat'l infra

Centre has decided to sell off crucial infrastructure assets of the nation such as airports, passenger trains, rly stations and stadiums to pvt players to raise ₹6 lakh cr

AGENCIES

New Delhi, August 23: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman Monday unveiled an ambitious ₹6 lakh crore National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP) that included unlocking value by involving private companies across infrastructure sectors - from passenger trains and railway stations to airports, roads and stadiums.

As many as 25 Airports Authority of India (AAI) airports, including ones at Chennai, Bhopal, Varanasi and Vadodara, as well as 40 railway stations, 15 railway stadiums and an unidentified number of railway colonies have been identified for getting private investments.

Under the plan, private companies can invest in projects for a fixed return using the InvIT route as well as operate and develop the assets for a certain period before



transferring it back to the government agency. Some assets such as warehouses and stadiums can also be given on a long-term lease for operations.

"The asset monetisation pipeline takes the NIP (National Infrastructure Pipeline) to the next phase where you are looking at public-private partnership," Sitharaman told a press conference.

Stating that there is no transfer of ownership or land, she said "the NMP talks about brownfield infra assets where investments have already been made, where there is a completed asset which is

SELLING FAMILY JEWELS

- Passenger trains, stadiums, railway stations, airports in ₹6 lakh cr monetisation plan
- 25 airports, 40 railway stations, 15 railway stadiums targeted for private investments
- Assets like warehouses and stadiums can be given on a long-term lease for operations

either languishing or which is remaining not fully monetised or which is remaining underutilised." "So by bringing in private participation into this, you are going to be able to monetise it better, and

Govt swings into action to fight drought spell

The state govt has got into action mode to help farmers overcome hardships to arise from drought in 15 districts.

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, August 23: With the state contending with deficit rainfall, the government is putting together a contingency plan to tackle a possible drought like situation. This was informed by Agriculture Secretary SK Vashisth after attending a high-level review meeting held under the chairmanship of Chief Secretary Suresh Chandra Mahapatra Monday.

"At least 30 blocks in 15 districts are experiencing moisture stress condition. In places where paddy cultivation has suffered damage due to low rainfall, farmers would be encouraged to grow alternative crops amid the dry spell," he said.

Stressing that his department is preparing a contingency plan to help the distressed farmers, Vashisth said senior officials present at the meeting also discussed

ways to make the best use of the existing irrigation projects.

District Collectors have been instructed to organise coordination meetings between Pani Panchayats and power distribution companies (Discoms) and initiate steps to rejuvenate defunct lift irrigation points and bore wells.

Instructions were also given to expedite repairing of all canals to ensure that water reaches the tail end of the canal, he pointed out.

Vashisth said Collectors have been directed to ensure that agricultural workers get jobs under MGNREGS or other state schemes as and when necessary.

"The Chief Secretary has given directions for creation of 20 lakh more mandays in rain-deficit districts to provide employment to farmhands. The state has thus far created 10 lakh mandays under MGNREGS," he added.

All District Collectors have been asked to prepare action plans to mitigate the dry spell. Mahapatra has directed preparation of block and panchayat-wise contingency plans in all districts.

Centre calls all-party meet on Afghanistan

AGENCIES

New Delhi, August 23: The government has called an all-party meeting Thursday on the developments in Afghanistan. Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi said External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar will brief the floor leaders of political parties on the present situation in Afghanistan in the in-person meet.

The government's briefing is expected to focus on its evacuation mission from Afghanistan as well as its assessment of the situation in the war-torn country in the wake of the Taliban seizing control of almost all key Afghan towns and cities, including Kabul.

"Floor Leaders of Political Parties would be briefed by EAM @DrSJaishankar on the present situation in Afghanistan, on 26th August, 11 am in Main Committee Room, PHA, New Delhi. Invites are being sent through email. All concerned are requested to attend," Joshi tweeted. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said that representatives of her party, the Trinamool Congress, will attend the meeting. "We will definitely be attending Thursday's all-party meeting on Afghanistan," the TMC supremo told reporters at the state secretariat in Kolkata.

Earlier, Jaishankar said Prime Minister Narendra Modi instructed the Ministry of External Affairs to brief the floor leaders of the political parties. "In view of developments in Afghanistan, PM @narendramodi has instructed that MEA brief Floor Leaders of political parties. Minister of Parliamentary Affairs @JoshiPralhad will be intimating further details," Jaishankar said on Twitter.

The Taliban swept across Afghanistan this month following the withdrawal of the US forces from the country. As part of its evacuation mission from Afghanistan, India has already brought back around 730 people including members of the Afghan Sikh and Hindu communities. India Monday brought back 146 of its nationals in four different flights from Qatar's capital Doha, days after they were evacuated from Afghanistan.

Pari case: SC asks HC to hear petition afresh

The apex court has set aside HC order, which had asked Pari's parents to approach a magistrate. The SC also allowed the petitioners to amend their writ in HC to seek further relief

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, August 23: The Supreme Court Monday set aside the order of Orissa High Court that had directed Pari's father Ashok Sahoo to approach the magistrate's court for his grievances on the investigation.

The SC also restored the Ashok

Sahoo's disposed writ petition in the High Court for fresh hearing.

A two-judge bench of the Supreme Court comprising Justices AM Khanwilkar and Sanjiv Khanna disposed of the writ petition and the SLP filed by Pari's mother and father and granted liberty to the petitioner to amend the writ petition in the High Court to seek further relief.

"In peculiar facts of this case and the circumstances, we deemed it appropriate to set aside the impugned order of the Orissa High Court and remit the petitioner Ashok Kumar Sahoo to the High Court by restoring the writ petition filed by him in the High Court for being considered afresh on its own



merits and in accordance with law after giving opportunity to the petitioner to amend the writ petition including to ask for further relief as may be advised," the bench ruled.

Senior advocate Kapil Sibal argued that the state government had approached the High Court

for a court monitored investigation by SIT. He argued that the SIT has filed a chargesheet in the case and the trial will commence from September 20. Sibal also submitted that the allegations with regard to organs have been raised in the Supreme Court for the first time.

Earlier, Ashok Kumar Sahoo, father of Pari, had filed a petition in the High Court seeking a probe by the central agency in the matter. However, the High Court had disposed of the petition and asked him to approach the magistrate for his grievances. Advocate Swastik Dalai, counsel for Pari's parents submitted in the Supreme Court that the HC had made an error while passing the order as the magistrate court does not have power to direct a central agency to probe any case.

Significantly, the mother of Pari pleaded before the court to order an independent inquiry in the alleged rape and murder of Pari, a 5-year old girl, July last year in

Jadupur, Nayagarh. The petitioner also sought a direction to the CBI to investigate all cases related to missing of children in the state.

The petitioner also contended that the state police is treating the parents of Pari as criminals. The police are completely insensitive towards the family members of Pari.

The petitioner submitted that the preliminary investigation undertaken by the police, the crime branch and SIT illustrates that all of them have made attempts to sabotage the investigation and attempted all kind of subversion tactics to influence the complainant and her relatives to drop the aforesaid allegations as false and frivolous.

leisure



DANIEL CRAIG FEELS TOO OLD TO PLAY 007 NOW

Hollywood star Daniel Craig says he has grown too old to play super spy James Bond as he is required to perform demanding stunts in the Bond movies. The actor makes his fifth and final appearance as 007 in *No Time to Die*, the release of which was postponed several times during the Covid pandemic

KIDMAN ON 'FRUSTRATION' OF BEING AN OLDER WOMAN IN HOLLYWOOD

Actress Nicole Kidman says having her two youngest children helped her cope with the 'frustration' of being an older woman in Hollywood. She added that having her daughters Sunday and Faith with her husband Keith Urban helped take her life in a brand-new direction, reports femalefirst.co.uk.



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ARIES
If you are about to begin some important work, today is not the day, says Ganesh. But keep yourself motivated, despite minor problems. Do something you've never done before. Think out-of-the-box: grow your own mint, make some chocolates.

TAURUS
Prepare yourself to handle ordinary situations in an extraordinary way, foretells Ganesh. Today, you will get a lesson in how people work. Before arriving at any crucial decision, explore the pros and cons with a balanced mind, says Ganesh.

GEMINI
You will be seized by the desire to go on a short trip or picnic today. It is a conducive day for travelling. In the evening, circumstances could arise which could make you feel that people are needlessly interfering in your personal life without caring for you, says Ganesh.

CANCER
Top priority will be given to work. Your mind will be absorbed in work. You will show special interest in career and take a decision after much thought and introspection. Self-confidence will go up. Today your fortune being good, victory is on your side.

LEO
You will spend an enjoyable day with your family members today. Even at the work-place you will be thinking of ways to be with your family. You will take time out for some self-improvement projects. It is necessary to bring about some changes in life, says Ganesh.

VIRGO
First make an assessment of your situation today, and only then make your move, warns Ganesh. You may loosen your limbs in the afternoon, and relieve yourself of the burden that has piled up on your work table. However, Ganesh advises you to act wisely and use your extensive experience when it comes to sealed bids and tenders.

LIBRA
Ganesh says that if you wish to scale heights of success you should keep your feeling under control. Your life partner or your business partner may prove beneficial to you. Joint ventures will be successful for you and you will be able to experience mental satisfaction at the end of the day.

SCORPIO
Time for sharing some intimate vibes with your beloved today, says Ganesh. The day goes according to the plans. Overall, the day is likely to be calm and peaceful. Surprise your beloved with a gift or romantic dinner.

SAGITTARIUS
Lady luck is all up for you today and your stars shine bright! However, be practical in your decision making and don't let emotions affect you. Don't take up any task that is beyond your capacity. Stay away from stress and pressure as far as possible.

CAPRICORN
With your vision and intellect you have solved some of the most complicated problems. This will boost your reputation at work and colleagues will trust you for your unbiased approach. As a result, whatever you'll say will become important for others and they will follow your advice. Expect good news from foreign shores, foresees Ganesh.

AQUARIUS
You have been working your socks off; now take a stop for refuelling. Plan a get-away to a hill-station nearby or just sit in an armchair with coffee mug in one hand and a book in another, feels Ganesh. You need to rejuvenate yourself for a busy day tomorrow.

PISCES
Today you will resolve some long standing financial issues. Financial prosperity and monetary problems will haunt you and be a source of concern. If you address these issues right now then you will increase the probability of your success. Make informed decisions and think with a steady head on your shoulders, advises Ganesh.

Vaani looks forward to solidify position

MUMBAI: Vaani Kapoor has two films lined up for release - *Shamshera* and *Chandigarh Kare Aashiqui*. The actress hopes these movies position her correctly as a performer.

In *Shamshera*, Vaani, who turned 33 Monday, has been paired opposite Ranbir Kapoor and in *Chandigarh Kare Aashiqui*, she will be seen with actor Ayushmann Khurrana. "I have

an exciting year to look forward to actually! I have two big films *Shamshera* and *Chandigarh Kare Aashiqui* that are ready to be released in theatres and I'm hoping they will entertain audiences thoroughly. They are films that will hopefully position me correctly as a performer who is looking to take the risks and push myself constantly to make a mark," Vaani said.

She added: "These two films will also present me in completely different avatars and I can't wait to see the reaction from people for my performances." IANS



'My parents hashtag me every day'

MUMBAI: Actress Kiara Advani, who is receiving a lot of praise for her performance in the recently released *Shershaah*, says that her parents always read comments on social media about their daughter.

As the actress is always being scrutinised by the netizens, asked about how her family responded to that, Kiara said, "I ignore it (mean comments) as it does somewhere affect

me. I want to have a normal day and I don't want to go into reading comments...we're also humans. Sometimes I think, 'oh my mom will read it, my father will read it and they don't like it,' and they do (read it)."

"My parents hashtag Kiara Advani every day they want to know what is being written about me, what my fans are saying about me...they enjoy it. I tell my mom to ignore it, but she tells me that she wants to

know what is being said about me."

Kiara was having a conversation with actor and talk-show host Arbaaz Khan for his digital show *Pinch By Arbaaz Khan Season 2*. The episode will be releasing this week on QuPlay's YouTube Channel, on ZEE5 and on MyFM. IANS



I was always a stage baby: Anusha

NEW DELHI: Model-actor Anusha Dandekar has been mentoring models at various modelling shows, sharing her expertise in the field.

She was one of the judges at the recent *MTV Supermodel of the Year Season 2* along with Milind Soman and Malaika Arora.

Anusha, 39, shared as a child she was always interested in entertainment. She expressed, "I was very lucky. I was always a stage baby. I didn't know how to do anything else. In school, I did get out of class many times just because I used to make up stories that I need to go for rehearsals on stage."



She added, "I was really dramatic at school. My parents let me go for dance lessons, drama, anything that I wanted to do. Maybe the way they were brought up they told us studying is the most important thing."

Anusha earlier revealed that she was born in India but brought up in Australia and couldn't speak a word of Hindi in the beginning of her career as an ac-

Zoya Afroz crowned Miss India Int'l 2021

THE MODEL-CUM-ACTOR, WHO HAS DONE A LOT OF MOVIES, PROMOTES GIRL CHILD EDUCATION AND FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE OF WOMEN

Twenty-six-year-old Zoya Afroz from Mumbai was crowned as the Miss India International 2021 at Gamanand Supermodel India contest held August 21 at Kingdom of Dreams, Gurugram.

The contest is considered a national preliminary to the biggest International pageants in the world, including Miss International, Miss Multinational, Miss Earth, Miss Grand International, Miss Intercontinental, Miss Globe International, Miss and other international pageants.

Afroz will now represent India at Miss International 2021 to be held during the month of November



Zoya (in the middle) with other winners

in Yokohama City, Japan.

For the unversed, the model-cum-actor who has done a lot of movies, promotes Girl child education and financial independence

of women. She wants women to acquire basic knowledge and the right to opportunity.

Similarly, Divija Gambhir, 21, was selected Miss India

Multinational. She helps the stray dogs find shelter and food. She aims to become the voice of the voiceless, is a trained dancer and enjoys modelling.

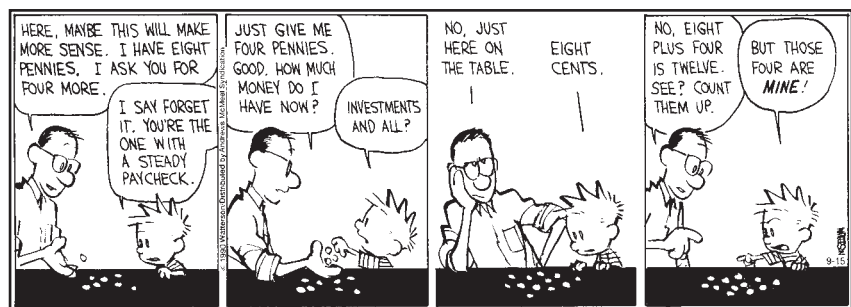
Tanya Sinha was crowned as Miss Globe India and represent India at Miss Globe International. She's 23-year-old from Jharkhand and holds the advocacy of addressing the issue of untouchability especially in rural areas.

The competition was judged by Editor-in-Chief of TMM Magazine Kartikya Arora, Businessman Yash Raj Tongia, Miss India International 2019 Simrithi Bathija and Miss India Multinational 2019 Tanvi Malhara. AGENCIES

PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

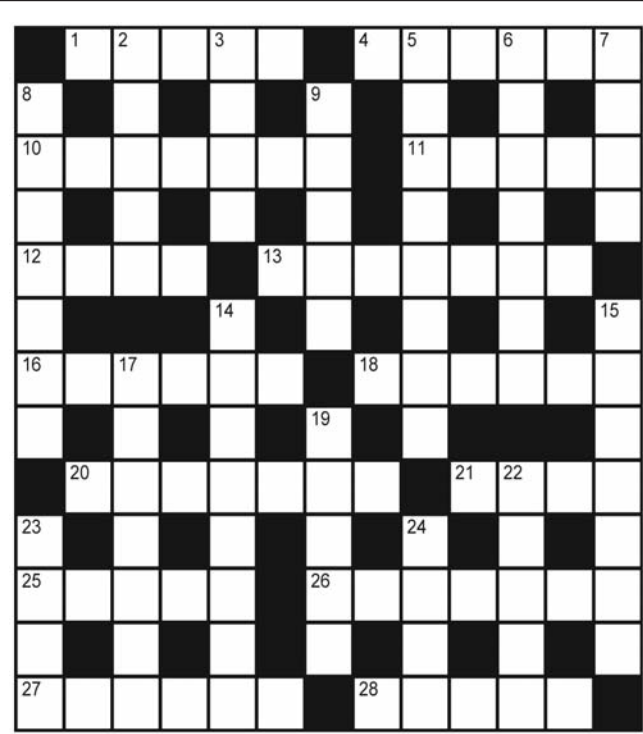


BREVITY



FUN post

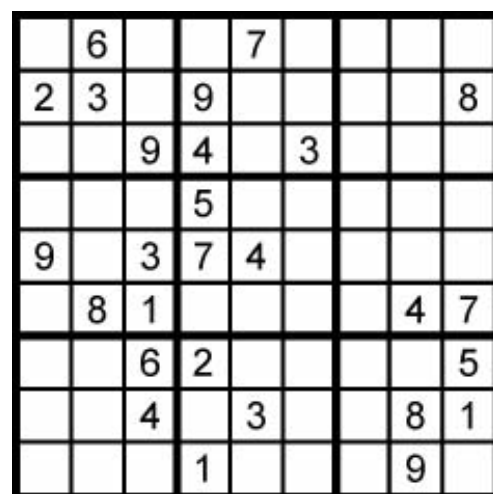
CROSSWORD



- Across
- 1 Winter warmer
 - 4 Tropical fruit
 - 10 Vulgar
 - 11 Designer's concern
 - 12 River of Hades
 - 13 Matured
 - 16 Tease
 - 18 Edge tool
 - 20 Rapacity
 - 21 Wide-eyed
- Down
- 25 Native New Zealander
 - 26 Slippery
 - 27 Step down
 - 28 Merry
 - 7 Ambience
 - 8 Gastronomic delight
 - 9 Certain singers
 - 14 Coquetry
 - 15 Hound dogs
 - 17 Jealous
 - 19 Largish combo
 - 22 Cookbook direction
 - 23 Poet Khayyam
 - 24 Martial art

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS



CROSSWORD

SUDOKU

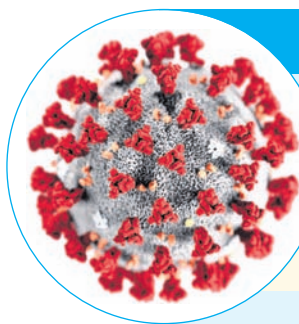
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown



NORMS TAKEN FOR A RIDE

A traffic cop intercepts a biker, along with pillion rider, for wrong-side riding near Unit-I market in Bhubaneswar, Monday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	21,28,03,287	19,04,31,913	44,48,408
India	3,24,49,306	3,16,80,626	4,34,756
Odisha	10,01,698	9,86,334	7,426

Joint marketing framework for cash crops on the cards

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, August 23: In a bid to enhance farmers' income and keep the middleman in procurement of farm produce at bay, Chief Secretary SC Mahapatra has asked the department officials concerned to create marketing facilities for cash crops.

Mahapatra gave this direction at a high-level review meeting held here Monday on the activities of National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation (NAFED) in Odisha and possibilities of further collaboration with the federation.

Considering the possibilities for joint marketing of cash crops, he directed the departments of Agriculture, Horticulture and SC&ST Development to identify cash crops which can be promoted for augmenting farmers' income.

The meeting revealed that some varieties of fruits, vegetables, pulses, oilseeds, millets could be produced and marketed on large scale in collaboration with NAFED.

Mango, jackfruit, pineapple, watermelon, pumpkin, elephant foot yam, ginger, arhar, millets, peanuts, sunflower, green gram, black gram, Bengal gram, sweet corn, bajra, maize, toor k-18, scented rice (baasmati), mustard, chilly, brinjal, turmeric, coriander, potato, onion and other crops could be marketed in collaboration with NAFED.

Managing Director of NAFED Sanjeev Chadha mentioned that the federation would provide support and assistance to farmers for cultivation, procurement, branding and marketing of the cash crops in collaboration with the state agencies. Further, the Chief Secretary ad-



AUGMENTING FARM INCOME

Departments of Agriculture, Horticulture and SC&ST Development were asked to identify cash crops which can be promoted for augmenting farmers' income

Some varieties of fruits, vegetables, pulses, oilseeds, millets could be produced and marketed on large scale in collaboration with NAFED

Chief Secretary advised the officials to promote minor millets as super food throughout the country

vised the officials to promote minor millets as super food throughout the country. Odisha produces many organic millets, fruits and vegetables. The tribal population in 119

tribal sub-plan (TSP) blocks and 22 Integrated Tribal Development Agencies (ITDAs) are mostly accustomed with production of organic varieties which could be marketed under a special brand. Organic cultivation clusters have also been created in the districts like Koraput, Rayagada and Kandhamal.

He has directed the Agriculture & Farmers' Empowerment and Cooperation departments to work out a joint marketing framework (JMF) with NAFED.

The JMF would have Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs), self-help groups (SHGs), Primary Agricultural Cooperative Societies (PACS) and ITDAs as the active partners in up-scaling the cultivation of cash crops and procurement of the produces directly from the farmers, he said. Such strategies, he added, would prevent the possibilities of distress sale and unnecessary intervention of unscrupulous middlemen.

Srimandir reopens for all after 4 months

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bhubaneswar, August 23: After a gap of four months, Srimandir has been reopened for devotees Monday, officials said.

"Devotees can have darshan from 7am to 7pm on weekdays, from Monday to Friday. The temple will remain closed for public darshan on all Saturdays and Sundays," said Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) chief Krishan Kumar. Around 50,000 devotees of the Puri municipality area have visited the temple during the past week. Now, devotees from any place can enter the 12th century shrine, he said.

"I hope all devotees will follow the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) issued in view of Covid-19," Kumar added.

Three-layer security arrangements have been put in place to ensure devotees have a smooth darshan of the Lord, said Puri Superintendent of Police Kanwar Vishal Singh. The police have set up a special centre to take feedback from the devotees, Singh said. Devotees can submit their feed-



Devotees enter Srimandir through the Lion's Gate, Monday

OP PHOTO

back on police service at the temple either manually by submitting a form or through an online QR code scanning system.

"I am very happy to have darshan of Lord Jagannath after a long time. Thanks to the officials for making all necessary arrangements," said Rabi Narayan Rath, a devotee from Ganjam district. "Very nice system has been put in

place. No devotee will face any problem while visiting the temple and no threat of Covid-19 infection also," said a devotee from West Bengal.

The temple has been closed for the entry of the general public following resurge in the Covid-19 cases April 24, 2021.

After allowing servitor families and Puri citizens, the temple reopened for all devotees Monday.

City shrines reopen, but devotees fewer

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, August 23: After more than three months of closure owing to Covid-induced lockdown, all religious institutions in the state capital, except Lingaraj and Iskon temples, re-opened to public Monday.

Due to surge in Covid cases, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) had May 5 ordered closure of all religious institutions in the city for general public until further instructions. However, observing drop in cases, the BMC allowed reopening of all temples, churches, mosques and

other such places with Covid guidelines in place.

According to the notification issued by the BMC, no devotee will be allowed inside the Garbha Gruha (sanctum sanctorum) of the temples and darshan can be allowed from a safe distance only.

The devotees are also not allowed to light diyas (earthen lamps) or offer prasad at the temples.

The civic authority also said that managements of the religious institutions should ensure a minimum 6feet social distancing among the visitors inside the shrines.

"At any point of time, not more than 25 persons will be allowed

Apart from Saturdays and Sundays, the shrine will also remain closed on major festive occasions in order to avoid any spike in transmission of Covid-19 on account of huge gatherings that are expected on such festive occasions.

A queue system has been put in place for the devotees, who will make entry through the barricades opposite to the shoe stand, situated on the northeast side of the temple complex.

As per the SOP, all devotees visiting the temple will have to produce the final certificate for Covid-19 vaccination (of having taken two doses) or Covid-19 negative certificate (RT-PCR) of testing done within 96 hours prior to their visit to the temple.

All devotees will be required to bring their photo ID card like Aadhaar or Voter ID and enter through the Lions' Gate. After darshan, the exit will be through the North Gate.

It is mandatory for all devotees to wear masks all the time, inside and outside the temple, and they should sanitise their hands before entering the temple.

10 more smart schools in Ganjam

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, August 23: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Monday inaugurated 10 more schools in Hinjilicut as part of the second phase of school transformation programme under ST initiative.

The transformation of 50 schools in Hinjili has been completed and these schools will be inaugurated in five phases. Earlier, 10 other schools were also launched.

"The children of Odisha are talented. They have a lot of potentials. If given the opportunity, they can create history," he said.

"We've a lot of potential in hockey. When the players were encouraged, they won a medal at the Olympics after 41 years. The state government is sponsoring hockey. Two players from Odisha have enhanced our reputation by playing for the country," he said. It is all about the right opportunity which and platform which needs to be facilitated, he said on the occasion.

SHOWCASING GLORIOUS PAST



Children perform Paika Akhada at 'Ama Lokakala, Ama Sanskruti', a programme organised by Odia Language Literature and Culture department, at Rabindra Mandap in Bhubaneswar, Monday

OP PHOTO

BJP, BJD cross swords over agri issues

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, August 23: The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Biju Janata Dal (BJD) Monday indulged in blame game over farmers' issues in the wake of drought-like situation in the state.

Speaking to reporters here, state BJP president Sameer Mohanty slammed the BJD government for failing to create adequate irrigation facilities for the farmers. As per a statement given by the Water Resources minister in the Assembly, irrigation facility for 35 per cent of the arable land has been created only in 251 out of 314 blocks in the state, he said.

"The BJD, in its election manifestos in 2014 (Assembly polls) & 2017 (Panchayat polls), had assured the people to create irrigation potential for 10 lakh hectares each time. However, it is yet to be achieved," Mohanty said. The BJP leader urged the state government to form a task force immediately to mitigate the imminent drought-like situation. He further said that the BJP would send four teams to

different areas, where drought looms large, to take stock of the situation.

Replying to Mohanty, Rajya Sabha MP and Biju Janata Dal (BJD) national spokesman Sasmit Patra said that the farmers in Odisha have been subjected to harassment by the insurance companies over Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY).

Lakhs of Odisha farmers are affected by PMFBY across Bargarh, Sambalpur, Sonepur, Deogarh, Bolangir, Nuapada and Kalahandi. Over the past five years, ₹1.26 lakh crore has been paid as crop insurance premium across India and ₹87,320 crore received as claims. The insurance companies made ₹40,000 crore of PMFBY money, detrimental to the interests of farmers, Patra said.

He said Odisha farmers filed crop insurance claims of ₹2,090 crore between 2018 and 2019 but the insurance companies disbursed only 50 per cent of these claims. The farmers are facing repeated harassment from insurance companies relating to the assessment of their claims and payments under PMFBY, he said.

Ouat plans flurry of activities for Diamond Jubilee Year

■ The diamond jubilee year will witness a series of lectures by scientists and faculties of international repute, mega farmers' fair, entrepreneurs' conclave, student interface, and creation of infrastructure among others

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, August 23: Odisha University of Agriculture and Technology (OUAT), the second oldest agricultural university in the country established in 1962, is going to celebrate its 60th Foundation Day Tuesday.

In a presser here Monday, OUAT Vice Chancellor (V) PK Agrawal said that the diamond jubilee year will witness multifarious activities in the Bhubaneswar as well as other campuses of the university for the benefit of students, farmers and other stakeholders. Some of those events are: Lecture se-



ries by scientists of international repute, mega farmers' fair, agri-exhibition, academia-entrepreneurs' conclave for experience sharing of successful agri-entrepreneurs and students-industry interface meetings.

Agrawal also said that the university provides quality education on agriculture and allied areas through 10 constituent colleges, a Centre for Post Graduate Studies, and 10 Agro-Polytechnics. The research activities are undertaken by eight Regional Research & Technology Transfer Stations, four Regional Research & Technology Transfer Substations, seven

Commodity Research Stations and 52 All India Coordinated Research Projects. Besides, the university takes up extension activities through 31 Krishi Vigyan Kendras and various extension projects.

He said that during last couple of years, the university has taken up innovative policy initiatives to strengthen academic, research and extension activities.

Till date, more than 29,000 students have graduated from the university in agriculture, horticulture, forestry, veterinary science & animal husbandry, agricultural engineering, community science, fishery science, basic science, bio-informatics and agri-business management

FOUNDATION DAY TODAY

Till date, more than 29,000 students have graduated from the university in agriculture, horticulture, forestry, veterinary science & animal husbandry, agricultural engineering, community science, fishery science, basic science, bio-informatics and agri-business management

The university has enhanced its rank to 20th position among all the agricultural universities of the country as per ICAR Ranking 2020

24 UG students have been sent for international exposure to University of Nebraska, USA, Asian Institute of Technology, Thailand, and International Rice Research Institute, Philippines

OUAT has received "University

of Year Award" under Agri-Education Awards-2021, instituted by Agriculture Today group of New Delhi. Similarly, the university has enhanced its rank to 20th position among all the agricultural universities of the country as per ICAR Ranking 2020.

Twenty-four under graduate students have been sent for international exposure to University of Nebraska, USA, Asian Institute of Technology, Thailand, and International Rice Research Institute, Philippines.

OUAT is taking proactive steps for production of various seeds and quality planting materials (QPM) for the benefit of farming community. During 2020-2021, the university farms have produced 429.6 quintals of breeder seed, 6,310.34 quintals of foundation seed, 425.18 quintals of certified seed, 583.57 quintals of truthfully labeled (TL) seed and 39.6 lakh quality planting materials for the benefit of farmers.

The university has so far developed 163 varieties of various crops suitable for cultivation in different agro-climatic zones of the state.

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nCoV 2nd wave claimed 29 kids & adolescents



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, August 23: Odisha Monday registered 761 new Covid-19 cases, including 101 children, taking the state's tally to 10,01,698, while 68 fresh fatalities pushed the toll to 7,426, a Health department official said. A 15-year-old girl also succumbed to the infection, taking the total number of children and adolescents who lost their lives to Covid-19 during the second wave to 29.

Of the 761 new cases, 443 cases were reported from quarantine centres and the rest were detected during contact tracing. Khurda district, of which state capital

Bhubaneswar is a part, recorded the maximum number of new cases at 289, followed by Cuttack at 117. Three districts - Kalahandi, Koraput and Nuapada - did not report any new case.

Cuttack reported 17 fresh fatalities followed by Jagatsinghpur at 15, Dhenkanal at nine, Khurda at eight and Jajpur at six. A 15-year-old girl was among the 68 patients who succumbed to the infection, raising the total number of children and adolescents who lost their lives to Covid-19 during the second wave to 29.

Odisha currently has 8,917 active cases, while 9,85,302 patients, including 1,078 Sunday, have recovered from the highly infectious disease. The positivity rate in state stands at 5.70 per cent. Over 1.75 crore sample tests have been conducted thus far, including 60,791 Sunday.

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As many as 2,04,48,414 people have been inoculated in the state with Covid-19 vaccine, 48,30,273 of them having taken both the doses

As many as 2,04,48,414 people have been inoculated in the state with Covid-19 vaccine, 48,30,273 of them having taken both the doses. Meanwhile, the Chief of the Directorate of Medical Education and Training (DMET) CBK Mohanty said the third wave is likely to strike in October, going by the prediction of the experts. "Children might be more vulnerable to the third wave as adults, many of them, have been inoculated," Mohanty said. Director of Health Service, Bijay Mohapatra, said that the state government has made elaborate arrangements for treatment of children, in case they are infected in large numbers.



A fisherman takes a nap underneath the pipeline near Jobra barrage in Cuttack, Monday
OP PHOTO

SUN-SCREENED SLUMBER

Compensate 4-yr-old rape survivor: NHRC

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, August 23: The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) Monday directed the Bhadrak Collector and District Magistrate (DM) to ensure that adequate monetary compensation is sanctioned to a four-year-old rape survivor of the district. Hearing a plea filed by rights activist Himanshu Sekhar Nayak, the commission also directed the DM to furnish a copy of the compensation disbursement as proof within six weeks. NHRC will hear

The minor girl, a resident under Naikanidih police limits in Bhadrak, was raped by a fellow villager February 22, 2020

The case again October 18, 2021. The rights activist had February 24, 2020 informed the NHRC that the minor girl, a resident under Naikanidih police limits in Bhadrak, was raped by a fellow villager February 22, 2020.

"The girl was returning from her tuition classes around 9am when Jagannath Das lured her into his house where he raped her. The incident came to the fore when the victim narrated her ordeal before her mother. The minor's family, along with fellow villagers, captured the accused and handed him over to the police," the petitioner informed the commission, quoting the police complaint lodged by the girl's father. The apex rights body had May 15, 2020 sought details of the case within four weeks.

In response, the Bhadrak superintendent of police (SP) informed NHRC that on the basis of a complaint lodged by the victim's father, a case (23/2020) has been registered with Naikanidih police under Sections 376(AB) of the IPC and 6 of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012. "Statements of the witnesses and victim have been recorded under Sections 161/164 of CrPC. The accused has been arrested February 24, 2020 and a chargesheet has been filed April 14, 2020 against the accused," read the SP's statement.

BJP hits street alleging poor road, drainage management

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, August 23: Citing deplorable conditions of the roads in the state Capital, the Bharatiya Janta Party's Bhubaneswar unit members took to streets, Monday, to protest against City administration alleging constant negligence in providing basic amenities to the denizens.

Led by unit president Babu Singh, hundreds of BJP activists took out a 'Padayatra' from Jaydev Vihar Square to Mayfair Square and staged demonstration by burning tyres on the road. The protesters raised slogans like 'Un-smart Roads In Smart City' and accused the administration over the pathetic condition of roads and leaking drainage system here. "Although Bhubaneswar has been claimed as the number one smart city in the country, the condition of the roads here tells a different story. People are scared to come out of their houses due to deteriorating road condition and commuters are facing problems while travelling. Despite complaints, neither the City administration nor the state government has taken any remedial action," alleged Babu. "Moreover, the management of

SEVERAL DENIZENS HAVE COMPLAINED ON SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS ABOUT THE CONSTANT WATERLOGGING ISSUE BETWEEN EKAMRA SQUARE TO JAYDEV VIHAR SQUARE

SIMILARLY, THE AREA BETWEEN BIJU PATNAIK SQUARE TO MAYFAIR HOTEL HAS POTHLES AND WATERLOGGING ISSUES

the drains is very poor which is why sewers get chocked with flood-water during rainy season and subsequently lead to outbreaks of vector-borne diseases like Dengue," he added. Speaking further on the issue, a fellow member of the party said, "If the administration does not take necessary steps to resolve these problems, we will intensify our protest in the coming days." It can be mentioned that several denizens have complained on social media platforms about the constant water logging issue between Ekamra Square to Jaydev Vihar Square. Similarly, the area between Biju Patnaik Square to Mayfair Hotel has severe potholes and water logging issues.

Four semester exams in 6 months rile law students

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, August 23: Students of University Law College, Capital Law College, Madhusudan Law College and The Law College (Cuttack) Monday staged a protest at Utkal University against the decision of conducting four semester exams within six months and demanded promotion of pending semester exams. They also urged the authorities to resume classes for the current semester and conduct the examinations online. The students alleged that the authorities are forcing them to sit for four semesters - 7th, 8th, 9th and 10th - in next six months which is



violation of the Bar Council of India's rules. The norms say that the students need to be promoted

Citing Bar Council of India rules, the agitating students said that they need to be promoted for each pending semester

Year University Law College student, said that he had filed a writ petition in Orissa High Court against this direction. The court had directed the Utkal University Vice-Chancellor to look into the grievance and resolve it immediately, but to no avail, he said. "Many other colleges such as KIIT Law College and Sambalpur University had already completed

their exams on time," he said. The students demanded that the university must declare results of two semesters on promotion basis by September 30 and start the online classes of current semesters from October and after that the exams should be conducted online. Meanwhile, Utkal University examination controller Sarat Majhi said that the students' demands will be examined and appropriate decisions will be taken at the meeting August 25. After the assurance from Majhi, the students called off their stir but threatened to agitate near Chief Minister's Office August 25 if their demands are not met.

12 spl trains cancelled for poor occupancy

BHUBANESWAR: To curb the spread of Covid-19 and in view of poor occupancy, the East Coast Railway (ECoR) has cancelled 12 special trains. The trains cancelled from August 23 to 31 are: Puri-Cuttack-Puri Special, Bhubaneswar-Bolangir-Bhubaneswar Special, Bhubaneswar-Bhadrak-Bhubaneswar Special, Cuttack-Bhadrak-Cuttack Special, Cuttack-Paradip-Cuttack Special and Cuttack-Bhadrak-Cuttack Special. The trains cancelled from August 28 to 30 are: Puri-Angul-Puri Special, Bhubaneswar-Palasa-Bhubaneswar Special, Bhubaneswar-Bangiriposi-Bhubaneswar Special, Bhubaneswar-Kendujhargharh-Bhubaneswar Special, Puri-Paradip- Puri Special and Puri-Gunupur-Puri Special. Some trains like Puri-Angul-Puri Special will be partially cancelled. This train will be cancelled from August 23 to 27 and August 31 between Talcher and Angul. It will run between Talcher and Puri from both the directions. Meanwhile, considering the threat of Covid-19, Passenger Reservation System (PRS) Counters will stay open till 8pm till the lockdown is in force.

SHGs roped in to provide services in unbanked GPs

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, August 23: In a bid to facilitate access of common citizens to banking services in unbanked Gram Panchayats (GPs) of Odisha, the state government has made a historic decision of engaging women self-help group (SHG) members in banking sector as business correspondent agents (BCAs). This initiative aims at furthering the financial inclusion efforts in Odisha using Information Communication Technology (ICT)-based Business Correspondence Model through community institutions such as SHGs. The Mission Shakti department has roped in two banks to engage suitable women SHG members as BCAs and has issued guidelines for the same. This initiative demonstrates effective convergence of financial inclusion strategies and the SHG movement under Mission Shakti. Matriculation qualified SHG members between 18-45 years of age with basic computer or smart-phone operating skills are being promoted to take up this innovative livelihood business solution. In partnership with State Bank of India, Yes Bank, ICICI Bank, Utkal Gramen Bank and Odisha Gramya Bank, as many as 1,252 Mission Shakti SHG members have been engaged as BCAs in the unbanked



Saraswati Mahalik, a business correspondent agent of Kathakhunta village in Narasinghpur block, Cuttack, performing her duty towards a differently abled old man

GPs across the state. The financial support for device procurement for these BCAs has been received from state government and NABARD. To ensure financial sustainability of BCAs, each BCA has been provided with an incentive of ₹2,000 per month for the first six months of engagement since inception. Chandamani Chand, a BCA in Rajendrapur GP under Bhandripokhari block of Bhadrak district, has been facilitating financial transactions relating to different government schemes such

as Kalia, Mamata, and labour card with a cumulative transaction of more than ₹67 lakh so far. Similarly, Saraswati Mahalik of Kathakhunta village in Narasinghpur block, Cuttack has generated transactions worth more than ₹73 lakh. Thanks to the initiative, beneficiaries of different social welfare programmes, do not have to walk long distances to avail banking services. The BCA provides services at the doorstep of the differently-abled persons and senior citizens too.

Black spot survey to start today

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, August 23: A team of the State Transport Authority will start inspection of black spots and vulnerable stretches in the district here Tuesday, an official said. The team will inspect five out of 38 black spots in Cuttack. Tuesday. "The team will survey Nakhara Square, Pratap Nagari Square, Balikuda Square, Gopalpur Square and Manguli Square and analyse possible causes behind the mishaps there. It is also expected to suggest ways to curb mishaps in future." Regional Transport Officer Sanjay Kumar Behera said. According to sources, the team is scheduled to survey around 74 black spots across the state. Local inspectors in-charge (IICs), backed with first information reports (FIRs) of road mishaps at respective spots in the five years, would remain present during the survey, said a source.

FACELIFT FOR CUTTACK



Areas along Taladanda Canal in Cuttack being beautified, Monday
OP PHOTO

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RALLY FOR TRIBAL STATUS



Students and members of Durua community taking out a rally in Jeypore, Monday, demanding tribal status for their community members residing in Koraput district

MUKHYA MANTRI KRUSHI UDYOG YOJANA

Even after 2 years, young farmers yet to get loan

Balasure, August 22: While two years have passed since the implementation of Mukhyamantri Kurshi Udyog Yojana in Balasure district, not a single agri-entrepreneur has been identified under the scheme in the region yet, a report said.



Fact file

The scheme was launched in the district in December 2020 and the objective behind the scheme was to identify a young farmer from each block who is interested in agriculture-oriented business and provide him/her loans from the banks to further their business.

The scheme has failed to garner any success due to alleged negligence of the Agriculture department and delay in sanctioning of loans by banks. The apathy of these two has proved to be stumbling blocks in the success of the scheme in the district, the report said.

According to reports, the scheme was launched in the district in December 2020 and the objective behind the scheme was to identify a young farmer from each block who is interested in agriculture-oriented business and provide him/her loans from the banks to further their business.

Under this scheme, the government provides financial assistance in the form of capital investment subsidy on loans to young entrepreneurs for setting up new agri-industries in the state.

Sources said that many youths in the district returned home during the pandemic after losing their jobs and the scheme held promise for them. The state government had launched the scheme to provide livelihood opportunities to such young farmers.

The Agricultural Promotion & Investment Corporation of Odisha Limited (APICOL) was assigned the task of identifying young farmers in the block-level, especially those whose annual income is more than ₹2 lakh. The youths identified under the scheme should have the capacity to invest ₹2 lakh to ₹10

lakh, while banks would provide loans over ₹10 lakh.

The government, while launching the project, announced 50 per cent subsidy for youths belonging to general category and 40 per cent subsidy to women, Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe categories.

Later, the government issued guidelines to include the identified youths in various sectors such as agriculture, fisheries and animal resources.

Over 22 young farmers had applied for loans under the scheme in 2020 and another 12 applied this year. However, not a single applicant has been able to reap the benefits of the scheme due to alleged negligence of Agriculture department and delay in sanctioning of loans by the banks.

The Balasure district Collector

The government, while launching the project, announced 50 per cent subsidy for youths belonging to general category and 40 per cent subsidy to women, Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe categories. The government had also announced to reduce the rate of interest on bank loans by three per cent.

Over 22 young farmers had applied for loans under the scheme in 2020 and another 12 applied this year. However, not a single applicant has been able to reap the benefits of the scheme due to alleged negligence of Agriculture department and delay in sanctioning of loans by the banks.

has reviewed the scheme and directed the banks to immediately provide loans to all eligible applicants. However, the bank officials are allegedly delaying the process of sanctioning loans to the applicants on the pretext that they are yet to receive all the documents required to provide loans to the applicants.

Two decomposed bodies recovered; murder suspected

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sundargarh, August 23: Mystery shrouds the death of two unidentified persons whose highly decomposed bodies were recovered from near the Chotbanga-Jhargaon road under Lefripara police station limits in Sundargarh district, Monday.

According to reports, the unidentified decomposed bodies were found dumped at a place around a kilometre from the Sargipalli police outpost in the district. The matter came to the fore after locals noticed the bodies and informed the Sargipalli police outpost.

Sargipalli officer-in-charge (OIC) Kashinath Barik rushed to the spot and started an investigation.

A scientific team was also pressed into service. While both the corpses are in a highly decomposed state, both hands of one of the deceased was found missing.

Preliminary investigation indicated that the two could have been dumped there after being murdered elsewhere. Further investigation is underway to establish the identities of the deceased and the reason behind their deaths.

Pradeep Panigrahi moves SC against Odisha Lokayukta

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, August 23: Pradeep Kumar Panigrahi, the former legislator from Gopalpur Assembly constituency in Ganjam, filed a writ petition Monday in the Supreme Court seeking registration of a criminal case against Odisha Lokayukta, the former lawmaker's lawyer Pitambar Acharya informed.

In his petition, Panigrahi alleged that the Lokayukta had submitted a forged copy of the Orissa High Court's order in connection with a case which is sub-judice in the apex court.

Significantly, the Odisha Lokayukta had filed a special leave petition in the Supreme Court challenging the orders of the Orissa High Court, which ruled that the Lokayukta cannot order preliminary enquiry against Pradeep Panigrahi by the Vigilance department as the Vigilance department is the complainant in the case. The Supreme Court had stayed the Orissa High Court order



Panigrahi had filed a contempt of court petition against the Odisha Lokayukta in the Orissa High Court alleging tampering of the High Court's order

of restraining the Vigilance department from conducting an enquiry against Pradeep Panigrahi in a corruption case and had issued a notice in this connection in April.

On August 11, Panigrahi had filed a contempt of court petition against the Odisha Lokayukta in the Orissa High Court alleging tampering of the High Court's order by the Lokayukta.

It may be mentioned here that in December last year the Lokayukta had directed the state Vigilance

probe into the corruption charges against Pradeep Panigrahi. The Lokayukta had also asked the Vigilance Directorate to conduct a preliminary inquiry against Panigrahi and submit a report within two months.

The anti-corruption ombudsman had issued the direction after accepting the recommendation of the Chief Minister, Naveen Patnaik, who had referred the corruption charges leveled against the former lawmaker December 7 last year.

STAFF CRUNCH HITS EDUCATION

Primary school teachers deputed to high schools



'FILLING UP OF VACANT POSTS IN SCHOOLS SHOULD TAKE PRECEDENCE OVER DEVELOPING INFRASTRUCTURE'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhanjanagar, August 23: Three schools in Bhanjanagar block in Ganjam district will be converted into smart schools and a sum of ₹1.65 crore will be spent on their infrastructure development.

However, local residents are not in favour of the government spending so much money on the schools' infra development. According to them, filling up of vacant posts in schools should take precedence over developing infrastructure.

Badakodanda Jawahar High School, Gallery High School and Bhanjanagar Adarsha Vidyalaya in Bhanjanagar block will be transformed into smart schools. For this, each school has received ₹45 lakh under the Mo School Abhiyan. Badakodanda Jawahar High School and Gallery High School have received an additional sum of ₹15 lakh each, thanks to the efforts of Forest, Environment and Climate Change Minister Bikram Keshari

Arukh. This assistance was provided from the grant Bhanjanagar block received from the state Finance Commission. A total of ₹1.65 crore will be spent on the three schools' infrastructure development. If required, there is possibility of more money being pumped in.

Once completed, these smart schools will have two special classrooms, one e-library, modern toilets and a play ground. The construction work is going on in full swing. In phases, other schools will also be converted into smart schools.

According to local residents, the state government is not concerned about filling up vacant posts of teaching staff as it is about developing the infrastructure of the schools.

Substantiating their view, the villagers said that there are 27 such high schools in Bhanjanagar block that do not have adequate teaching and non-teaching staff.

Upendra Bhanj High School, the oldest institution in Bhanjanagar block established in 1884, has only eight teachers. A high school should have a minimum of 12 teachers. Such shortage of teachers is proving to be detrimental for students' education and learning process.

While the process of filling up of vacant posts has reportedly been started, a stop-gap arrangement has been made for the time being. Primary school teachers are going to staff-

starved high schools on deputation. As of now, primary school teachers with BEd qualification have been sent to high schools. Once the vacant posts are filled up, they will return to their own schools.

In the event of no third wave of Covid-19, offline classes will be allowed at primary schools. And if they are allowed to hold physical classes and their teachers do not return from the high schools by that time, it will give rise to another problem.

Local residents have urged the government to fill up the vacant posts on a priority basis.

Dengue cases rise to 18 in Ganjam

POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, August 23: Dengue fever is spreading its tentacles in Ganjam district with more and more people being affected by the viral infection, a report said.

The total number of persons affected by dengue in the district has gone up to 18 with the blood samples of two more persons testing positive for the disease, Sunday.

This viral infection spreads through infected Aedes mosquitoes.

One of the persons affected by dengue recently is an 18-year-old youth from Gajapati Nagar under

Berhampur Municipal Corporation, while the other patient is a 52-year-old man from Lochapada village under Kukudakhandi block in the district. They have been suffering from fever and tested their blood samples August 22. The reports of both the persons were positive, officials of district Health department said.

Among the 18 dengue patients in the district, eight are from Berhampur, two from Kukudakhandi block, two from Sorada block, two from Rangeliunda block and one each from Kabisuryanagar, Chhatrapur;

Chikiti, and Aska blocks. Last year, nine persons were affected by dengue, while this year the number of patients is higher.

As many as 307 persons were identified as dengue positive in 2019 and 155 in 2018. The disease was detected for the first time in 2011 when 70 persons were identified as dengue positive. In 2012, 533 persons were identified as dengue positive, which is an all

time record for the district. The disease is spreading every day prompting the district Health department to take various steps to sensitise the people about dengue. ASHA and Anganwadi workers are visiting the households and urging people to take preventive steps and not allow water to stagnate in their houses as stagnant water is the breeding ground of Aedes mosquitoes.

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FOCUS AMERICA IN AFGHANISTAN

BUSINESS OF DEMOCRACY

In December 2019, the Washington Post published its investigation into an 18-year-old propaganda by the US government about military successes in Afghanistan, while “hiding unmistakable evidence the war had become unwinnable.” The Post mentioned that it could only publish after a three-year-long legal battle under the US Freedom of Information Act.

The story revealed that piling frustration among generals and experts finally breached the US government’s information smoke-screen. By 2019, a conservative estimate of US expenditure in Afghanistan was at around \$978 billion over 17 years. At the same time, the occupation failed in achieving three critical goals - reducing corruption, training and organising indigenous army and police, and gutting the country’s opium trade that financially sustained the Taliban. The failure and the lies of the Afghan war were traced to three successive administrations - under George Bush, Barack Obama, and Donald Trump.

This story was largely ignored by most US media. But in the little coverage it received, the US government was made to appear well intentioned. The Post itself wrote that the US government could not settle on clear objectives and was also unable to “tell friend from foe.” It added that ushering in a culture of democracy was stymied by the indigenous culture’s stubborn strands of “tribalism, monarchism, communism, and Islamic Law.”

The US media tried to spin large-scale corruption of enormous US government expenditure in Afghanistan as a problem only among Afghans. However, it is hard to believe that the US intelligence and politicians had absolutely no idea about thousands of ghost Afghan soldiers that were supposedly being paid for training, but never existed. High-grade military equipment often disappeared without a trace. With its military-technological prowess, the US



America’s Military Industrial Complex is a trillion dollar business through an alliance between its defence industry and top military-security establishment, seeking to determine foreign policy

could not locate and uproot opium trade - the economic lifeline of the Taliban - to a large extent.

The discomfiting explanation is that many representatives and affiliates of the US government participated in this elaborate corruption. Loot of this magnitude had to have the blessings of American bureaucrats, military contractors, intelligence operatives, politicians, and even some senior military personnel. However, a reading of the US history and its ‘nation building’ projects point to a deeper problem - this corruption is merely a consequence of a structural problem in the American economy - the Military Industrial Complex (MIC).

America’s MIC is a trillion dollar business through an alliance between its defence industry and top military-security establishment, seeking to determine foreign policy. The MIC generates huge profits and high-paying jobs from the invasion and occupation of other countries. But the project is presented as “protecting or ushering in democracy,” “nation building,” “protection of religious and sexual minorities.” To earn legitimacy around the globe, the MIC playbook was also deployed

in Afghanistan to bring forward some women and minorities to token positions of power.

The MIC’s “permanent wars” are unpopular among the majority of Americans, who noted that in Afghanistan alone there were around 2,500 deaths of their troops, physical and mental trauma of thousands from among 775,000 American soldiers. Most of these soldiers come from the working and lower middle classes. Americans understood how Afghanistan, by 2020, drained \$2 trillion in expenditure, while benefiting select corporations. As a recent article analysed, “if you purchased \$10,000 of stock evenly divided among America’s top five defense contractors (Boeing, Raytheon, Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, and General Dynamics) on September 18, 2001 — the day President George W. Bush signed the Authorization for Use of Military Force in response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks — and faithfully reinvested all dividends, it would now be worth \$97,295.”

The threat of the MIC was flagged as early as 1961. Outgoing President Eisenhower had then spoken of “a permanent armaments industry of vast propor-

tions... the total influence - economic, political, even spiritual - is felt in every city, every State house, every office of the Federal government.” Anti-war activists have been warning that the MIC hand is seen in America’s forays into Iraq, Libya, Syria, Yemen, and Somalia. Every new country that America steps into attracts fresh orders for choppers, armoured vehicles, bombs, guns, and assorted weapons. With a military budget of an estimated \$778 billion, the USA was the world’s largest spender in 2020, accounting for 39 per cent of global military spending or as the next 12 largest spenders combined, as per an analysis by Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).

Despite its war profiteering, the MIC has been largely flying under the radar of American political discourse. Mainstream media, heavily dependent on advertisements from defence manufacturers, actively works to suppress dissenting voices. As America withdrew from Afghanistan, media houses and vested interests have been exploiting the anguish of Afghans. Despite 20 years of failure, the Biden administration’s decision to exit is being portrayed as “sudden,” “irresponsible,” and “selfish.” Afghanistan has demonstrated a poor human rights record even during the height of American occupation. But the record is amplified or muted by US media depending on how profitable the war is for its defence advertisers.

America’s longest war may have ended, but Afghanistan is just one box on the chessboard. Ordinary Americans are helpless as the mighty alliance of the MIC, political class, military-security elite, and corporate media continue to recruit and sacrifice their children and their tax dollars to plunder countries in the Middle East and Africa. In capitalism’s holy ground, even democracy is a business.

The writer is an Oxbridge scholar and former journalist.



Sampad Patnaik

EVERY NEW COUNTRY THAT AMERICA STEPS INTO ATTRACTS FRESH ORDERS FOR CHOPPERS, ARMoured VEHICLES, BOMBS, GUNS, AND ASSORTED WEAPONS

Tibet & Taliban

The sweeping and lightning control of Afghanistan established by the Taliban during the past few days has injected a new significance into the celebration of the 70th anniversary of the takeover of Tibet by China through the invasion by the People’s Liberation Army. China, which has always remained in touch with the Taliban, has been one of the first nations to suggest that it will be willing to officially accept the Taliban government. China would need the support of the Taliban in keeping fundamentalist forces from creating trouble in the Xinjiang region where China has incarcerated more than a million Uyghur Moslems. The development in Afghanistan, China seemingly fears, might give a fillip to resistance movements by religious minorities in its Xinjiang province and Tibet. The top leadership of the Chinese Communist Party has already held talks with a Taliban delegation, led by key leader Abdul Ghani Baradar in China.

Tibet is important to the Chinese scheme of things as the religious head of the Buddhists in Tibet, the Dalai Lama, commands global respect for his untiring efforts to retain the religious and cultural freedom of Tibetans even within the framework of Chinese rule. This is the reason why a senior Chinese official emphasised at an event that all Tibetans should embrace the Communist party rule and share the “cultural symbols and images of the Chinese nation.” Wang Yang, a member of the politburo standing committee, China’s most powerful political body, made the remarks during a ceremony marked by extravaganzas and glorification of the leadership of President Xi Jinping in front of the Potala Palace in Lhasa, the sacred home of Tibet’s traditional Buddhist leaders. Propagandists in the 1950s and 1960s used to extensively display Mao Zedong’s portraits at rallies and celebrations to promote a personality cult around him. However, most leaders after Mao eschewed the practice. This is now being revived to help Xi consolidate his position in all parts of China.

Accordingly, China’s official media has reported in detail Wang’s claim that all religions in China were “Chinese in orientation.” He appealed to Tibetans to make sure Tibetan Buddhism gets guidance in adapting to the socialist system. He chose the occasion to send the message to religious minorities in Tibet, Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia. In these three regions, repression and punitive measures are reportedly resorted to regularly to reduce the presence of local languages and cultures and also deal with separatist activities with an iron hand. In Tibet, authorities have allegedly jailed and beaten monks and nuns, subjected villages to political education sessions, imposed restrictions on daily life, including education and jobs, and mounted mass surveillance. Mandarin is being forcibly promoted as the medium of instruction in Tibetan schools, while the Tibetan language is taught merely as a subject. This is apparently intended to erase Tibetan culture.

The 70th anniversary has been taken very seriously in the wake of the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan to stem the tide of religious upsurge within Chinese regions. The anxiety of the Chinese leadership was reflected in the planning of the event attended by 10,000 select people. The CPC’s position on the invasion and takeover of Tibet is that it was a peaceful liberation of Tibetans from an oppressive theocracy practised by the Dalai Lama. The event was, predictably, showcased as a gala affair through live coverage for both the national and international audience. A massive four-storey portrait of Xi Jinping was put up at the venue. In fact, Xi’s recent visit to Tibet was the first ever by any Chinese President. It also seemed to send the message to India about China’s intentions to mobilise its forces and strategic powers close to Indian borders from Ladakh to Arunachal Pradesh.

China has launched a massive propaganda on its “achievement” in transforming Tibet from a “medieval, exploitative society” to a modern, socialist system. Its official media claims Tibet today has entered a stage of rapid economic development and despite the COVID-19 pandemic, it has registered GDP growth of 9 per cent. It showcases the numerous modern residential buildings, shopping malls, trendy bars, Tibetan-style night clubs, restaurants, theatres, museums, and art galleries in Lhasa as visible signs of the growth story.

China is also reportedly worried over a leadership change in the Tibetan government in-exile operated from Dharamshala. Penpa Tsering, former speaker of the “parliament-in-exile,” was declared in May the Sikyong, i.e. the leader of the “Central Tibetan Administration.” He took over from Lobsang Sangay, who had served in the position for 10 years. China calculates the new leadership will continue to seek Tibetan independence aggressively.

Apart from keeping its hold strong on Tibet, China has lofty plans to get a grip on Afghanistan after the exit of the United States. Instead of a military approach, as practised by the US, China wants to induce the Taliban to cooperate by offering legitimacy and financial support to its government. Russia is already towing the Chinese line in relation to Afghanistan, as also Pakistan and Iran. India, considered a US ally, needs to tread softly and strategically in this changing scenario in its neighbourhood.

WISDOM CORNER

- “The world is the great gymnasium where we come to make ourselves strong.” — SWAMI VIVEKANANDA
- “We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.” — ALBERT EINSTEIN
- “If you love life, don’t waste time, for time is what life is made up of.” — BRUCE LEE

WORDSWORTH

■ Painient

This and the related words painism and painience are creations of Dr Richard Ryder, a British psychologist, ethicist and retired professor. He has a long-standing concern for animal rights — he claims to have coined speciesism in the 1970s to refer to what he called in 1975 “the widespread discrimination that is practised by man against other species.” He made painient and painience from pain by analogy with sentient and sentence, so that painient means being able to feel pain, while painience is the quality or state of being painient. Painism is his term for the moral theory that requires us to reduce the pain of others who suffer the most, especially that of individuals. All three words have been known since the middle 1990s, though they remain rare. Painism gained attention in 2001 through his book Painism: A Modern Morality; in it he argues that anything that can feel pain can suffer and so must have rights, specifically in the case of animals to be protected from human use and abuse. He wrote recently in a newspaper article: “Our concern for the pain and distress of others should be extended to any ‘painient’ being regardless of his or her sex, class, race, religion, nationality or species. Indeed, if aliens from outer space turn out to be painient, or if we ever manufacture machines who are painient, then we must widen the moral circle to include them.”

LOL

Rookie on the job

A few glances, but no one moved, so he barked again, “Let’s get off that corner... NOW!” Intimidated, the group of people began to leave, casting puzzled stares in his direction. Proud of his first official act, the young policeman turned to his partner and asked, “Well, how did I do?” “Pretty good,” chuckled the veteran, “especially since this is a bus stop.”



SPECTRUM PANDEMIC RESPONSE

The BRICS’ lagging vaccine diplomacy

The BRICS countries — Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa — collaborate in a number of areas and have emerged as a forceful voice for global governance reform. But with their lukewarm cooperation on COVID-19 vaccines, they have missed an important opportunity to demonstrate their ability to mount a strong collective response to a global crisis.

The pandemic has hit the BRICS hard. India has recorded the highest number of infections within the group (and the second most globally, after the US), with 32.2 million at the time of writing. Brazil has reported 20.3 million cases, Russia 6.6 million, South Africa 2.6 million, and China — where the pandemic originated — fewer than 100,000. Total COVID-19 deaths across the five countries now stand at 1.25 million, with Brazil and India accounting for 80 per cent of these.

This heavy toll — and the fact that the rich countries of the G7 have purchased over one-third of the world’s COVID-19 vaccine supply, despite accounting for only 13 per cent of the global population — should have provided an impetus for stronger cooperation among the BRICS countries. But as the University of the Witwatersrand’s Vishwas Satgar noted recently dur-

ing a webinar hosted by the BRICS Policy Center; the BRICS countries “have seen a divergence, inconsistency, and lack of cooperation on COVID-19 vaccination.”

Even some of the vaccines developed by BRICS countries themselves have received a mixed reception within the bloc. In August 2020, Russia became the first country in the world to register a COVID-19 vaccine candidate, and three months later, it became the first among the BRICS to announce a high-efficacy vaccine: Sputnik V. The vaccine is reportedly 92 per cent effective against the coronavirus. But scientists have criticised the rapidity of the Sputnik V trials and lack of transparency regarding the raw data, and the WHO has yet to approve the vaccine.

Among the other BRICS countries, the Brazilian Health Regulatory Agency initially blocked Sputnik V in response to data indicating adverse side effects. It reversed this decision in June 2021 and allowed the import of 928,000 doses. India received 125 million doses of the vaccine in May 2021.

The South African Health Products Regulatory Authority has not approved Sputnik V for use and is awaiting further data from the Russian Gamaleya Research Institute, which developed the vaccine. In contrast, the WHO granted

property rights for COVID-19 technologies and vaccines. The Chinese Sinopharm and Sinovac vaccines emergency-use listings in May and June 2021, respectively. Brazil participated in Sinovac trials and, following positive results, has continued to use this vaccine. But although the Drugs Controller General of India announced in June that WHO-approved COVID-19 vaccines will no longer require post-approval bridging trials and batch testing in India, it is unclear whether the country will include the Sinovac and Sinopharm vaccines in its immunisation programme. Likewise, South Africa gave the Sinovac vaccine the green light for use in July 2021, but has yet to announce any procurement plans.

Then there is vaccine manufacturing. India accounts for 50 per cent of all global vaccine supplies, and the Serum Institute of India — the world’s largest vaccine producer — has worked with the Oxford Vaccine Group to produce Covishield, a local version of the AstraZeneca Oxford COVID-19 vaccine. The Indian and South African vaccine producers have entered technology-centered agreements with their Western partners, but do not own any COVID-19-related patents. In an attempt to address this issue, even before concluding these agreements, the two countries’ governments led a push at the WTO in October 2020 to waive intellectual-

But BRICS foreign ministers did not collectively support this proposal until June 2021, eight months after it was first submitted. China and Russia had previously remained silent on the issue, while Brazil, as BRICS expert Karin Costa Vazquez notes, was the only member of the group openly to oppose this idea, in direct alignment with former US President Donald Trump. Brazil’s position became more supportive only in early 2021, after India said it would start sending COVID-19 vaccines to key partner countries, and US President Joe Biden’s administration announced its support for the proposed IP waiver.

The pandemic has tested the BRICS countries’ collective strength, and found them largely wanting. The bloc has therefore missed a chance to bolster its advocacy of international governance reform, and cast doubt on its fitness for purpose in responding to arising critical global challenges.

The writer is Programme Officer at the African Governance and Diplomacy Programme at the South African Institute of International Affairs.



Luanda Mpungose

EVEN SOME OF THE VACCINES DEVELOPED BY BRICS COUNTRIES THEMSELVES HAVE RECEIVED A MIXED RECEPTION WITHIN THE BLOC

Begging is not a crime

Sir, According to an estimate, there are more than four lakh men and women who beg for a living in India. Arguably, beggars are not a sight for sore eyes. Disheveled men and women running after people asking for alms can be repulsive. But does that mean beggars must be isolated and put behind the bars? In other words, are beggars criminals? Different courts have regularly addressed the issue. Some high courts have had divergent views on begging. The Delhi High Court, for example, had questioned how begging can be seen as a crime when it is a direct offshoot of the failure of a government to provide food and shelter to its citizens. Recently, the Bombay High Court adopted an opposite view. Like any other citizen, those who beg should also “work for the country,” it had said. The court went on to say that everything cannot be handled by state governments. However, the Supreme Court, while hearing a petition said that beggars were products of socioeconomic depravity and begging is a source of livelihood to people who are robbed of education or employment. While a final judgement in the case is yet to come, the court’s observation is sympathetic. Control of begging is a state subject, and many states have taken a strong view on begging. Some have viewed begging as a social crime. But all are dictated by the Bombay Prevention of Begging Act, 1959. Some stringent penal provisions are provided in the Act. Those defined as beggars under the Act can be rounded up without warrant and subjected to ‘summary trials’ with a punishment ranging from one year to 10 years. Certain mafia syndicates are active in recruiting beggars to suit their needs. Therefore, states should tread carefully on the larger problem. **Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA**

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

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Commendable effort

Sir, We must commend the Indian government for evacuating 392 people, including two Afghan lawmakers, Sunday. As many as 146 more Indians, evacuated to Doha and who worked for foreign companies in Afghanistan, could also be airlifted to India soon. But Afghan Sikhs and Hindus who landed in India worry gains made against fanaticism would be lost. The presence of many Pakistanis among the Taliban fighters also raises concern. With the situation in Afghanistan deteriorating by the day, resulting in the displacement of hundreds and thousands of people, there is no guarantee that the Taliban will stick to their promise of peace and women’s rights. **NJ Ravi Chander, BANGALORE**

BHITARKANIKA NATIONAL PARK

Boost to protests against drinking water project

'WATERMAN OF INDIA' RAJENDRA SINGH TO VISIT KENDRAPARA TODAY

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kendrapara, August 23: Magsaysay award winner Rajendra Singh, the water conservation activist who is known as 'Waterman of India', will visit the construction site of the controversial mega drinking water project on Kharasrota River at Barunadiha village under Rajkanika block in Kendrapara district, Tuesday.

While Singh is expected to put forth his opinion on the project, his visit has become the topic of hot discussion here as people are of the view that Singh would help turn the controversy into a national issue.

Meanwhile, Srikant Nayak, a member of Bhitarkanika Eco-sensitive Zone Committee who has been staging a sit-in protesting against the project for 14 days now, has again written to the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF) demanding that the latter stop the construction work on the project and protect Bhitarkanika by sending a team to study the project's impact on the region.

Nayak further said that a water treatment plant is under construction at Nuahat under Chandbali block in Bhadrak district for supplying water to four blocks and three NACs of the district. Water from Kharasrota river is being drawn from near Barunadiha for this treatment plant. These two places come under Bhitarkanika's eco sensitive zone. Moreover, the report and resolution prepared for the project are based on false information, he alleged.

To substantiate his claim, he provided proof in the letter, it was learnt. Even various environmentalists in the state have expressed their concern over the project.

"A nature's gift, Bhitarkanika is not just a place to enjoy nature's



A water treatment plant is under construction at Nuahat under Chandbali block in Bhadrak district for supplying water to four blocks and three NACs of the district. Water from Kharasrota river is being drawn from near Barunadiha for this treatment plant. These two places come under Bhitarkanika's eco sensitive zone

A nature's gift, Bhitarkanika is not just a place to enjoy nature's beauty but also an ideal habitat for wild animals, birds and marine creatures. The saline jungle helps reduce the impact of natural disasters

beauty but also an ideal habitat for wild animals, birds and marine creatures. The saline jungle helps reduce the impact of natural disasters. Once the coast is damaged, its resurrection will be impossible. In addition, the sweet water has a vital role in saving this biodiversity.

"Studies need to be undertaken to ascertain the impact of the project on Bhitarkanika after drawing of water from Kharasrota river. Local residents should write to the state government mentioning how the project would affect the bio diversity of the region and their livelihood," observed Devi Priyadarshini, a scientist at the Regional Museum of Natural History, Bhubaneswar.

Similarly, Saroj Kumar Pattanayak, a retired PCCF, said, "There are 410 villages in Bhitarkanika area. The villagers need sweet water for agriculture. This apart, sweet water is also required for sustenance of different varieties of trees in saline forest. During monsoon, there is no dearth of sweet water in the area. But, during the remaining part of the year, supply of sweet water diminishes. In search of sweet water, wild animals often sneak into human habitations. Keeping these factors in view, a special report needs to be prepared. The eco sensitive zone monitoring committee can take a decision whether to give permission for the project or not."

Citing the example of Sundarbans, Suresh Kumar Mishra, a wildlife expert and retired DFO, said, "The number of 'Sundari' trees in Sundarbans is next to nothing. This has happened only due to lack of sweet water. If Bhitarkanika does not get enough sweet water, several trees would disappear and there would only be trees that can withstand saline water."

At the same time, crocodiles inhabiting the region would migrate elsewhere for sweet water, resulting in frequent man-crocodile conflicts. Without sweet water, the natural resources at Bhitarkanika can't be saved. A chance should be given to a technical team to assess the adverse impact of the project on Bhitarkanika National Park."

BEST PRACTICE



Women self-help group workers presenting a demonstration on sattu preparation for children and pregnant women in the presence of ICDS officials in Krushnaprasad of Puri district, Monday

Annual bird census begins at Bhitarkanika

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kendrapara, August 23: Counting of migratory birds arriving at Bhitarkanika National Park in Kendrapara during monsoon began Monday. The annual census drive will continue for seven days.

According to a spokesperson, two separate teams, each comprising seven members, including Forest officials, wildlife enthusiasts and ornithologists, have been formed for the purpose.

It is pertinent to mention here that the bird count reported from Bhitarkanika witnessed a spike of 9,252 last year, as a total of 97,866 winged guests belonging to 10 different species were spotted in the national park during the previous census.

Usually, the birds arrive at Bhitarkanika and return every year by the end of October; prior to arrival of birds migrating from Russia, Central Asia, Ladakh and Greater Himalayas during the winter.

Species like *khaparkhai*, *anjana*, *rani baga*, *panikua*, *gendalia* and *khaira* through Bhitarkanika during the monsoon. These migratory birds build nests on *guan*, *bani* and *kerua* trees.

Akhandalamani temple reopens

POST NEWS NETWORK

Aradi, August 23: After remaining out of bound for devotees for nearly four months, the famous Baba Akhandalamani temple at Aradi village in Bhadrak district reopened Monday. The temple was closed since May 2.

After completion of all the rituals started at 5:00 am, devotees who were eagerly waiting for darshan of the deity were allowed to enter the temple from 6:00 am onwards. The devotees entered into the

temple in queue following the Covid-19 guidelines.

Since the day of the temple's reopening coincided with Monday, devotees were doubly excited. The environment in the entire temple reverberated with chants.

After coming out of the temple, the devotees shared their feelings, saying they felt uplifted after having a glimpse of Baba Akhandalamani. Similarly, the servants too were happy for having devotees at the shrine after a long time.

The temple and district admin-

istration made elaborate arrangements for devotees to have free and hassle-free darshan of the deity, which continued till 8:00 pm.

While Chandbali tehsildar Sushant Kumar Sutar and manager of Baba Akhandalamani temple Bidyadhar Palai were present at the temple to monitor the situation, two sections of police force under led by Dhushuri police station IIC Prafulla Kumar Singh and Aradi outpost officer Kulamani Patra were deployed to maintain the law and order.

Three, including scribe, held for 'buying' infant for ₹2,000

THE ACCUSED INCLUDE A CHILDLESS COUPLE AND A WEB REPORTER

POST NEWS NETWORK

Baripada/Sarakana, August 23: Jharpokharia police in Mayurbhanj district arrested three persons, including a couple and a Web reporter, for allegedly selling a two-month-old newborn in the area for ₹2,000, police said.

Acting on a complaint, police rescued the newborn from Rairangpur and admitted the infant to Pandit Raghunath Murmu (PRM) Medical College and Hospital at Baripada.

The accused were identified as Prahallad Pratihari and his wife Liza Partihari of Sankhabhanga area under Sarakana police limits and Tapan Dandapata.

A case was registered in this connection and the accused were produced in a court, Monday. A sum of ₹2,080 was seized from the accused woman, Jharpokharia IIC Subhansu Nayak said.

According to reports, the mother of the baby, who is also the complainant and deserted by her husband, is a native of Danadar under Jharpokharia police limits in the district. She had filed an FIR with the Jharpokharia Police Sunday in this regard.

As per sources, the woman was staying at Kundalbari area with the baby. However, as the baby was not keeping well, she decided to take him for treatment to Sirsa



Community Health Centre (CHC).

She was returning home after getting her baby was examined by a doctor from the CHC when the Web reporter Dandapata waylaid her forcibly picked her and her baby on his vehicle and fled with them. He tried to lure her by offering money and other things and asked to hand over the infant to him. The accused even threatened her of dire consequences if she did not hand over the baby to him.

The woman refused to oblige when Dandapata called the couple to the spot. The childless couple reportedly lured her with ₹2,000 and took the baby with them assuring her to get him treated by a doctor.

The woman was very disturbed and alerted others about the incident as the couple did not re-

turn with the baby by evening. Soon people gathered at the spot, while police also reached the place and took stock of the situation. Meanwhile, Dandapata also reached the spot and tried to suppress the matter. However, the locals nabbed him and beat him up black and blue in the presence of police.

Police rescued Dandapata and, on the basis of his information, rescued the baby from the house of the couple in Rairangpur. Police arrested Dandapata and the couple in this connection. However, the three have rejected the charges.

Meanwhile, the infant has been admitted to the Paediatric Intensive Care Unit at PRM Medical College & Hospital for treatment. Further investigation into the matter is underway.

Red Cross Society struggles for funds

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, August 23: Monetary collection for Red Cross fund in Sambalpur district has decreased owing to the alleged apathy of the government officials.

The members of District Red Cross Society expressed their concern over the poor collection of funds at their annual meeting held at DRDA conference hall Saturday.

The members raised various issues at the meeting. They said Red Cross' main job is to provide financial assistance to the helpless and this requires funds. An annual target is given to government offices to raise the necessary funds, but since last couple of months, not a single pie has been received from any of the government offices.

It was informed at the meeting that this year a sum of ₹71.10 lakh expected from 57 government of-

SAMBALPUR DISTRICT



fices. However, so far only ₹18,57,141 has been received from 16 offices. "If this situation continues, how will the Red Cross undertake its regular activities," the members asked.

"Red Cross has not received even a rupee from 41 government offices. The meeting decided to write to these departments asking them to send their shares failing which steps would be taken

against them. The society also decided that the management of hearse vehicles provided by Red Cross to various hospitals will be given to women self-help groups. Red Cross has provided two hearse vehicles to VIMSAR in Burla and one each to Sambalpur, Kuchinda and Redhakhol hospitals. The decision to take back the vehicles from the hospitals was taken because the

An annual target is given to government offices to raise the necessary funds, but since last couple of months, not a single pie has been received from any of the government offices

latter have failed to utilise them effectively.

This apart, it has been decided that Youth Red Cross and Junior Red Cross will work jointly with the District Red Cross. A proposal has been passed at the meeting that at least two meetings will be convened annually to ensure smooth management of blood banks in the district.

Housing benefits elude Juangas

35 JUANGA FAMILIES INHABIT THE REMOTE BARAGADA VILLAGE AND THEIR LIVING STANDARD HAS REMAINED WHAT IT WAS TEN YEARS AGO

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, August 23: Despite a host of welfare schemes and measures undertaken to bring about a change in the lives of tribals, many from the Juanga tribe have been leading a miserable life in the hilly areas of Bansapal block in Keonjhar district.

According to reports, 35 Juanga families inhabit the remote Baragada village and their living standard has remained the same as it was ten years ago. They live in mud houses with thatched roofs as none of the various housing schemes of the state and the Central government has remained out of bounds for them.

Although 10 Juanga families in the region were to receive houses under a scheme, construction of those houses has been left half way for years. The authorities concerned have not taken any step to get these housing units completed,



it was alleged.

Besides, elderly persons of the village, including Sana Juanga, Saibani Juanga, Bansidhar Juanga, Chanda Juanga, Sidhha Juanga and Kansla Juanga, have been left out of social security schemes like pensions and others.

The Juanga-dominated village is tucked away in the hilly terrains where the livelihood of people is solely dependent on minor

forest produce. The village is 50 kilometres away from the block headquarters. In the absence of proper communication facility, people are compelled to suffer a lot, it was alleged.

This village has a drinking water project, but all taps do not work. In such a situation, the tribals are forced to consume water collected from a nearby stream.

"Though the village has elec-

tricity, low voltage has been a major problem. We are clearing all the dues, but do not receive receipts," said Yadav Juanga.

Some conscious residents alleged that a number of welfare schemes for the tribals are not reaching them. "The village development has been given a short shrift despite funds coming from the government. Moreover, there is no proper road to the village. As a result, access to ambulance and fire tenders is almost impossible," some villagers lamented.

Owing to lack of any means of livelihood, tribals here have resorted to shifting cultivation by burning trees to clear the forest. For them, working in MGNREGS has been a dream, they alleged.

"As they have no sources of livelihood, they are bound to destroy the forest to make space for cultivation. This has led to the loss of natural environment," observed Pradip Rout, a social activist.

EVICION DRIVE



An eviction drive underway in Kesinga of Kalahandi district

OP PHOTO

Umar Khalid calls Delhi riots case 'cooked up'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, August 23: Former JNU student leader Umar Khalid, arrested under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act in the north-east Delhi riots conspiracy case, told a Delhi Court Monday that there were various contradictions in the police's claims and called it a 'cooked up' case.

Khalid, along with several others, has been booked under the stringent anti-terror law UAPA. They are accused of being the 'masterminds' of the February 2020 violence, which had left 53 people dead and over 700 injured. He has sought bail in the case.

Trideep Pais, Khalid's lawyer, told Additional Sessions Judge Amitabh Rawat that the FIR was cooked up and unnecessary, and was used selectively to target and frame them. The counsel pointed to two contradictions in Delhi Police's claims. Firstly, he showed the court a 21-minute video clip of Khalid's speech in Maharashtra, which the prosecution had allegedly labelled inflammatory.

The lawyer, pursuant to showing the video, apprised the court that his client did not give any call for violence through the speech and in



fact gave a message of unity to the people. "A message of unity based on Gandhi ji was given by Umar Khalid that day. It was termed as terror. Content is not seditious. He is talking about democratic power. He referred to Gandhi," Pais added.

Secondly, he argued that as per the police case, Khalid conspired with other accused January 8 to cause riots during former US President Donald Trump's visit, however, the news about his visit was announced only in February. "These are the kind of lies they are peddling. This is a joke. This FIR is a cooked-up theory. Is it that easy to prosecute people? Do you have no responsibility as a prosecu-

tion?" Pais said. Delhi Police had recently said that the bail plea has no merit and that it will demonstrate the prima facie case against him before the court by referring to the charge sheet filed in the case.

In April, the former JNU student was granted bail in one of the riot cases. The court while granting him bail noted that he was not physically present at the scene of the crime on the date of the incident. Besides him, JNU students Natasha Narwal and Devangana Kalita, Jamia Coordination Committee members Safoora Zargar, former AAP councillor Tahir Hussain and several others have also been booked under the stringent law in the case.

India's first smog tower comes up in Delhi

THE NATIONAL CAPITAL IS AMONG THE MOST POLLUTED CITIES IN THE WORLD

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, August 23: Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal inaugurated the "country's first smog tower" at Connaught Place in Delhi, one of the most polluted cities in the world, Monday and said it will prove to be a path-breaking milestone and many such structures can be installed in the capital if the pilot project yields results.

"This is the first such smog tower in the country. It's a new technology. We have imported it from the US. The structure will suck polluted air from above and release clean air from below. It will purify 1,000 cubic metres of air per second," Kejriwal told reporters.

The smog tower has 40 fans and 5,000 filters developed by experts at the University of Minnesota which also helped design a 100-metre-high smog tower in Xian, China.

According to reports, the experimental tower in northern China has brought a noticeable improvement in air quality.

A Delhi government statement said the 24-metre-high smog tower at Connaught Place, one of the biggest commercial centres in the capital, is based on a downdraft air-flow model.

Its 40 huge fans will suck air from the top of a special type of canopy structure and release clean air filtered through novel geomet-



try filters, it said. Since it's a new technology, it is being implemented on an experimental basis. Tata Projects Limited

(TPL) built the smog tower with technical support from IIT-Bombay and IIT-Delhi, which will analyse its data. NBCC India Ltd. is the

This is the first such smog tower in the country. It's a new technology. We have imported it from the US. The structure will suck polluted air from above and release clean air from below. It will purify 1,000 cubic metres of air per second

ARVIND KEJRIWAL | CHIEF MINISTER

project management consultant, Kejriwal said.

"The experts will analyse the functioning of the smog tower and tell us if it is effective. If it is successful, many such smog towers can be installed across Delhi. If not, we will work on some other technology... I think it will prove to be a path-breaking milestone," he added. In November 2019, an expert panel estimated that the capital will need 213 such anti-smog towers. "Data analysis will start immediately. The initial trends will be available within a month... I am also excited to know if we succeeded or not," the chief minister said, adding that a detailed performance report will be ready within two years.

Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai said the smog tower will "operate at full capacity" after the monsoon season.

Delhi outfits express solidarity with Afghans

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, August 23: Various organisations here came together Monday to express solidarity with the people of war-torn Afghanistan and urge the international community to ensure that their rights are protected.

Amid deepening crisis in Afghanistan after the Taliban took over the nation, the organisations, including the National Federation of Indian Women, had given a call for solidarity with Afghans in their struggle for freedom, democracy and human rights.

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

August 15, the capital city Kabul also fell to the Taliban, even as a large number of Afghans attempted in vain to flee the war-torn nation.

Raising anti-Taliban slogans, the organisers said, "Stop atrocities against women and children in Afghanistan. We will fight, we will win. We are with Afghanistan people in their times of struggle."

Over 50 representatives of various bodies gathered near the Nepal Embassy here on Barakhamba road to press for the rights of Afghan nationals.

The participants carried posters that read 'No to imperialism - No to Taliban - No to Fascism', 'We do not acknowledge the Taliban as the ruler of Afghanistan', 'With Afghan women in their struggle for freedom equality and justice' and 'the Government of India must ensure



Afghan refugees protest outside the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, demanding refugee status/cards for all Afghans, resettlement option to a third country, and security from UNHCR & the Indian government, at Vasant Vihar in New Delhi, Monday.

sure the safety of all Afghan nationals residing in India.

"We are appealing to the international community to ensure that the human rights along with other rights of people of Afghanistan are protected in their nation. Under Sharia law, boys and girls will not be able to have co-ed education. Confidence should be created among Afghan women and their children that they will be protected," said Annie Raja, general

secretary of the National Federation of Indian Women.

She urged the international community to ensure gender equality and gender justice and to the save the life and livelihood of people of Afghanistan.

All India Students' Association (AISA), Krantikari Yuva Sangathan (KYS), All India Mahila Sanskritik Sangathan (AIMSS) and Muslim Women's Forum were among the other organisations which took

part in the march.

Social rights activist Shabnam Hashmi appealed to the Indian government to allow all refugees to return to India irrespective of their caste and religion.

"We also want single window for the Afghan students here who are facing trouble from their landlords, their visas should be extended and fellowships should be granted to them as well," Hashmi said.

Will Poonia lead Raj BJP in next Assembly polls?

Stories of factionalism keep circulating with former CM Vasundhara Raje maintaining a distance from state party office, while her followers have been openly speaking against the current state leadership

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Jaipur, August 23: Will the present BJP leadership in Rajasthan lead the next assembly polls in 2023?

This million dollar question, being asked in political corridors of the desert state amid factionalism in the party, it seems has finally been answered during the recently organised 'Jan Ashirwad Yatra' in which BJP national general secretary Bhupender Yadav announced that BJP will form the next government in Rajasthan with three-fourth majority under the present state president Satish Poonia.

Addressing the rally, Yadav said, "I am saying it with full confidence that in 2023, BJP government will be formed with three-fourth majority under the leadership of Satish Poonia and the face of the Chief Minister will be decided by the parliamentary board of the party."

The statement has triggered a fresh debate as it was made at a time when the stories of factionalism keep circulating with former chief minister Vasundhara Raje maintaining a distance from state party office and office bearers while her followers have been openly speaking against the current state leadership.

Also, Poonia's tenure will be com-



pleted in 2022 and he will be given an extension and the state BJP will contest elections under his leadership. Sources said that the central leadership is quite happy with the performance of Poonia as he has been successful in bringing out issues like crime, false promise of loan waiver for farmers and pending recruitment under Ashok Gehlot government, on national platform.

Also, in the recent 'Jan Ashirwad Yatra' covering a distance of over 400 kilometre, a huge crowd was seen with farmers and OBCs in

attendance. Farmers were present in large numbers who thanked Poonia and Yadav in this rally.

The central leadership was also happy to see a strong chemistry between union minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Gulabchand Kataria, Rajendra Rathore, CP Joshi and other senior leaders of the state party unit.

Political experts say it seems that the central leadership has moved ahead to leave issues of factions and now fully trusts the current state leadership.

Deaths due to O2 shortage: HC grants Centre, Delhi time to reply

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, August 23: The Delhi High Court Monday granted additional time of six weeks to the Centre and Delhi government to file replies on a plea seeking CBI probe into the death of 21 COVID-19 patients at Jaipur Golden Hospital here in April allegedly due to oxygen shortage.

The court, which was hearing the plea filed by the families of some patients who died on the intervening night of April 23 and 24, also permitted the petitioners to file a rejoinder to the governments' responses.

"By that time things will be clearer. We will see. You have approached the MM (Metropolitan Magistrate) also," said Justice Rekha Palli as the matter was listed for further hearing on December 9.

Senior advocate Rahul Mehra and standing counsel Kiritman Singh, appearing for Delhi government and the Centre respectively, sought to file their responses to the petition.

The aspect of criminal investigation was pending consideration before a magisterial court, Mehra said.

Advocate Utsav Bains, appearing for the petitioners, said that the aggrieved families before the high court and the magisterial court were not the same.

Singh said the Supreme Court was also seized of the issue of granting ex gratia compensation. "File your counter. I'm not passing any interim order anyway," the judge said.

June 4, the court had issued notice to the Centre and Delhi government on the plea which contended that the cause of death of the patients was respiratory failure due to insufficient supply of oxygen and not comorbidities as stated by a Delhi government committee in its report.

The petitioners claimed that the committee came out with an "erroneous" report that those who died did not suffer suffocation due to lack of oxygen supply.

The petition thus sought quashing of the committee's report and a direction for a probe by CBI or an independent agency into the deaths "so that the truth can be brought to light and justice be given to the deceased persons and their families" and they be provided compensation.

It rains when farmers sing; Cambridge to pursue research

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Jaipur, August 23: Believe it or not! It always rains when Rajasthan farmers take umbrellas to their fields and sing Raga Megh Malhar under the open sky when there is scanty rain.

This is a rare event and is said to date back around 1,000 years - it is followed by farmers singing songs in glory of Veer Tejaji, a local hero who sacrificed his life to protect cows. Rajasthan's 'Teja songs' sung in glory of Veer Tejaji, a Jan Nayak also known as people's hero, will soon be researched by PhD students in the UK, historians say here.

Seeing the popularity of Teja singing, a 300-page book was written on this singing format 11 years back by Madan Meena who hailed from the eastern belt of Rajasthan with the support of Cambridge University. The book has been made available to researchers there. Now the students will be pursuing a PhD there and will research Teja songs. All the documents related to the Teja singing book 'Teja Gatha' and complete information along with files of audio and video recordings are also available on the website of Cambridge University, says Ashok



Chaudhary, a veteran historian.

"In 2008, we made an attempt to revive this centuries-old tradition and connected with artists. We were taken to forts, palaces and villages and now the art is known to everyone in Rajasthan," he said.

Locals in the desert state have seen a strong connection between this music and rain. When this music is sung by farmers in the

desert state during scanty rainfall, Lord Indra blesses the earth in the form of rain, say Dr Rajni Gawadiya, state president of the Karmabai Jaat Women Institute.

These heroic songs, being sung since the 10th century in different ways in different parts of the state, are believed to be similar to what foreigners call Opera in their countries.

As the Opera style of music in foreign countries holds a special place in its own way, similarly Teja songs of Rajasthan also hold a special place for its different type of singing, says Rajni adding that Teja songs are mostly sung in Nagaur district of Rajasthan to please the folk deity 'Tejaji' for rain.

Farmers generally leave the house with an umbrella even when

there is no sign of rain and sing Tejaji songs. They believe that when they sing non-stop, it rains without a miss.

IANIS tried to find out how Cambridge University and this folklore story are connected and found that the Cambridge University's repository also mentions this folklore and says: "Archived here is the book to accompany the Tejaji Gatha Collection from Thikarda. In addition to this an English translation of the Tejaji Ballad from the village of Dugari, near Bound is included in order that non Hadoti readers can learn more about the content of the Ballad."

In its abstract column, the website says: "The collection consists of audio recordings along with related photographs and videos. The project was mainly based on recording 20 hours of the Tejaji Ballad sung by the Mali (gardeners) community of the village Thikarda. But along with Thikarda, night-long recordings were also done in some 23 other villages of Hadoti and surrounding region for a comparative study."

Chaudhary says that the students from Cambridge shall soon start their research on the form of singing.

national

of the day quote

Schools in Bengal will reopen after the puja (vacations), provided the situation is favourable. If the third wave does not turn out to be dangerous, we will sanitise the school buildings and reopen them

MAMATA BANERJEE | WEST BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER

Met students from the All India OBC Students Association. They expressed their gratitude to PM @narendramodi for implementing 27% OBC reservations in the All India Quota of NEET examinations and for his commitment for ensuring dignity, justice & opportunities to OBC communities

DHARMENDRA PRADHAN | UNION EDUCATION MINISTER

CAA only applies to UNDOCUMENTED immigrants. It also does not apply beyond 2014. How does it help people who are now coming in to India WITH proper visas. Did you not read the law your govt enacted with such bravado? Or are you deliberately misleading?

ASADUDDIN OWAISSI | HYDERABAD MP

SHORT TAKES

Two militants killed in J&K

Srinagar: In a swift operation, the Jammu and Kashmir Police Monday eliminated two top commanders of the Resistance Force (TRF), a shadow outfit of Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT), who were responsible for several killings in the city and motivating the youth to join terror ranks, a senior police official said.

Kalyan Singh cremated

Aligarh/Lucknow (UP): Former Uttar Pradesh chief minister Kalyan Singh was cremated with full state honours Monday at Bansi Ghat in Bulandshahr's Narora town, where senior BJP leaders and a large number of people congregated for the last rites.

Nitish Kumar, Tejashwi meet PM

New Delhi: Stepping up their campaign for a caste-based census, a delegation of 10 parties from Bihar headed by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar met Prime Minister Narendra Modi Monday in support of the demand. Kumar said after the meeting that all parties from Bihar spoke in one voice on the need for a caste-based census, and asserted that statistics about different castes will help in formulating development schemes effectively as many of them have not benefitted so far in line with their actual population.

K'taka: Schools, colleges reopen

Bengaluru: Schools and Pre-University (PU) colleges here and in other districts of Karnataka where Covid test positivity rate is less than two per cent reopened for students of classes 9-12 Monday after a gap of five months. Chief minister Basavaraj S Bommai likened the reopening to freedom for students from Covid-19.

'3rd wave to hit India in Sept-Oct'

The vaulting relief over seemingly petering off of the second wave of Covid-19 is watered down by reports that India is headed for a third wave of Covid-19 in Sept-Oct

AGENCIES

New Delhi, August 23: An expert panel, set up by an institute under the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), has predicted a third wave of Covid-19 hitting the country anytime between September and October and suggested significantly ramping up vaccination pace.

The committee of experts, constituted by the National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM), also said children will have a similar risk as adults since paediatric facilities, doctors and equipment like ventilators, ambulances, among others are nowhere close to what may be required in case a large number of children become infected.

The report, which has been submitted to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), observed that only around 7.6 percent (10.4 cr) people are fully vaccinated in India and if the current vaccination rate is not increased, India can witness six lakh cases per day in the next wave. "Leading experts have repeatedly warned of an imminent third Covid-19 wave in India. Epidemiologists predict a series of surges till we achieve herd immunity through infection or vaccination and the disease becomes endemic," the report said.

The NIDM report quoted the prediction of experts from IIT Kanpur which suggested three likely scenarios for the third wave based on the level of un-lowering. In scenario one, it said that the third wave could peak in October with 3.2 lakh positive cases per day.

In scenario two, with the emergence of new and more virulent variants, the third wave could peak in September with likely five lakh positive cases per day.

In scenario three, the experts predicted that the third wave could peak in late October with two lakh positive cases per day. According to the report, earlier, it was proposed that if 67 percent of the population became immune (a few by infection and rest through vaccination), herd immunity could be achieved. But this has now been complicated by the new and more virulent mutated variants of SARS Cov-2 that have the ability to escape immunity from earlier infections and in some cases even the prevalent vaccines, it said.

This has pushed the target immune population for achieving herd immunity to 80-90 percent. Hence, our health system and vaccines are caught in a race against the virus and are trying to catch up with risks that are evolving every day creating uncertainty all over the world, it said.

The NIDM is now taking a clue from several warnings indicating an imminent third wave, trying to understand them and prepare for the third wave. With this backdrop, it engaged with multiple stakeholders from diverse backgrounds in an attempt to formulate consolidated recommendations for actions that can prevent or mitigate an impending surge. The report said there isn't sufficient data to back widespread fears that children will be hit more severely in the anticipated third wave of the pandemic.



India continues evacuation; brings back 146 from Doha

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, August 23: India Monday evacuated over 70 people, including its citizens and a group of Afghan Sikhs and Hindus, from Kabul to Dushanbe in Tajikistan in an IAF aircraft while another batch of near-equal strength is planned to be taken out of the Afghan capital to the Tajik city at the earliest, people familiar with the developments said.

Separately, India brought back 146 of its nationals to Delhi in four different commercial flights from the Qatari capital Doha, days after they were evacuated from Kabul by NATO and American aircraft.

With Monday's evacuation, the number of people brought back to Delhi has gone up to around 730 since August 16 when the first group was airlifted from Kabul, a day after the Taliban seized control of the Afghan capital city.

The people cited above said the evacuees, who were taken to Dushanbe, are likely to be brought back to Delhi from the Tajikistan capital in a civilian aircraft Tuesday.

India has stepped up efforts to evacuate its citizens as well as its Afghan partners from Kabul in view of the deteriorating security situation in the Afghan capital and other parts of the country after the Taliban swept to power last week. Thousands of Afghans have been crowding around the Kabul airport for nearly a week.

The people cited above said most of the 146 Indians brought back from Doha were employees of western companies and organisations that were operating in



What triggered the debate?

An innocuous question posed by a 10-year-old Maharashtra school girl stumped the Prime Minister the other day. She asked Prime Minister Narendra Modi when he will become the President of India.

After all, the office of the President of India is supreme though politically, the PM is considered the most powerful person in the affairs of the state. The girl had no clue of the political implications of her simple question. According to eye-witness accounts available, the PM merely smiled and her family members dissuaded her not to put probing questions any further. The illustrious family comprised Radhakrishnan Vikhe Patil, his son, who is a sitting BJP MP, and others. They were hugely embarrassed too as they had no clue as to what was cooking inside the girl's mind. The meeting ended but it brought to the fore what was going on among the political parties about the Presidential and Vice Presidential polls slated for next year.

A DAY TO REMEMBER



Andaman & Nicobar Command personnel hoist the National Flag marking 50th year of India's victory over Pakistan in 1971 war as Swarnim Vijay Victory Flame reaches Indira Point in Port Blair

NHRC issues notices to Centre, Assam, Mizoram

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Guwahati, August 23: The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) issued notices to the Centre, Assam and Mizoram over the deadly border clash between the two Northeastern states in July, stating that "grave violation of human rights" took place.

Acting on a complaint by one Md Injamul Haque of Assam, the NHRC on Sunday issued notices to the Union home secretary and the chief secretaries of Assam and Mizoram, and asked them to file their reports within four weeks.

"The Commission has considered the matter. Facts of the case are disturbing. The allegations made in the complaint are serious in nature involving deaths and injuries to the public servants. The case therefore involves grave violation of Human Rights of the deceased and injured. Such types of cases are viewed very seriously by the Commission.

BORDER CLASH



In these circumstances, let a Notice be sent," as per the details of the proceedings. Accordingly, notices were issued and the matter will be put up before the full commission after four weeks. At least six Assam Police personnel and one civilian were killed and more than 50 people injured as the festering border dispute between the two Northeastern states erupted into a bloody conflict July 26. The NHRC said that it had received the complaint from Haque on July 30, alleging attack on senior police officers of Assam, officers of the

Cachar district administration and others by a mob and Mizoram Police. "The petitioner has also given details of the incident that occurred on 26.7.2021 on the Assam Mizoram border wherein public servants lost their lives, got injured in the firing and has prayed for intervention by the Commission in the matter," it added. During a meeting on August 5 in Aizawl, representatives of the two state governments had agreed to maintain peace and amicably resolve the border dispute through dialogue.

JNU, TISS STUDENTS WERE DRAFTED FOR TERROR: NIA

AGENCIES

Mumbai/New Delhi, August 23: In stunning revelations, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) has said that the 22 main accused in the Bhima-Koregaon and Elgar Parishad cases had allegedly recruited students of at least two top Indian universities for terror activities in the country, including Maharashtra.

The NIA statement comes in the draft charges filed in the twin cases against 16 arrested accused and six other absconders in the sensational cases that have rocked the Indian polity for the past four years. As per the NIA, the accused had "recruited students from various universities, including the reputed Jawaharlal Nehru University (New Delhi) and Tata Institute of Social Sciences (Mumbai), for the commission of terrorist activi-

BHIMA-KOREGAON CASE

ties". The draft charges were filed before the NIA special court last week after its main and supplementary chargesheets were filed earlier, after long investigations into the two cases. When contacted, NIA sources declined to comment, saying the agency has already filed its chargesheet in the case.

Among other things, the accused are charged with promoting the activities and ideologies of banned outfits, and mobilising and training people and students in handling sophisticated arms and explosives. The NIA's draft charges say the larger objective was to conspire against and destabilise the governments of India and Maharashtra and threaten their sovereignty with large-scale violence.

Army promotes 5 women officers to Colonel rank

AGENCIES

New Delhi, August 23: The Indian Army cleared the way for the promotion of five women officers to Colonel rank, post completion of 26 years of reckonable service.

This is the first time that women officers serving with the Corps of Signals, Corps of Electronic and Mechanical Engineers (EME) and the Corps of Engineers have been approved to the rank of Colonel.

Previously, promotion to the rank of Colonel was only applicable for women officers in the Army Medical Corps (AMC), Judge Advocate General (JAG) and the Army Education Corps (AEC).



The widening of promotion avenues to more branches of the Indian Army is a sign of increasing career opportunities for women officers. Combined with the decision to grant permanent commission to women officers from a majority of branches of the Indian Army, this step defines the Indian Army's approach towards a gender-neutral Army. The five women officers selected for Colonel Time Scale rank are - Lt Col Sangeeta Sardana from the Corps of Signals, Lt Col Sonia Anand and Lt Col Navneet Duggal from the Corps of EME and Lt Col Reenu Khanna and Lt Col Ritcha Sagar from the Corps of Engineers. In a big development, the Supreme Court last week passed an interim order allowing women to take the admission exam to National Defence Academy (NDA) where earlier only men could join.

Kamal new Cong working prez!

If all goes as per plans being finalised by Congress interim president Sonia Gandhi, the entire organisational structure may be overhauled sooner than expected. The grapevine has it that former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Kamal Nath may be brought in as party's vice-president. He is the senior-most in the party and Sonia seems to have decided to go with the tested family loyalist. He desperately needs someone to help her after

the untimely demise of Ahmad Patel. The Congress may have four vice-presidents, including Priyanka Gandhi Vadra. The reshuffle is a part of Mission-2024.

Ghulam Nabi in race for TN RS seat?

With the announcement of a by-poll for one Rajya Sabha seat in Tamil Nadu, political circles are buzzing about whether senior Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad will get the seat. Though there are three Rajya Sabha seats vacant in Tamil Nadu but the EC decided to hold a by-poll for one

seat only. The seat fell vacant due to the demise of A Mohammedjan (AIADMK) who died during campaigning in March this year and tenure will end July 2025. DMK leader and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin is willing to offer it to the Congress party for Azad. The Congress party and DMK are in alliance though the DMK can win the seat on its own. Sources say that MK Stalin has perfect rapport with Azad and Congress high command is not averse to utilise his services. The by-poll for two other seats vacated by R Vaithilingam and KP Munusamy of AIADMK has not been announced. These two had quit RS to become MLA. Sources in the Commission explained that a bye-poll for Vaithilingam seat could not be held as tenure is less than one year. But

the bye-poll for the third seat of Munusamy will be announced shortly separately. The tenure for the other seat is until April 2026. If Azad doesn't get the nomination now, he may get the nomination for Munusamy seat later. Why is EC holding a by-poll for pending Rajya Sabha seats on a piecemeal basis? No one knows. Earlier, it held a by-poll for one Rajya Sabha seat in West Bengal leaving the other seat unfilled. The polling was held for the seat vacated by Dinesh Trivedi who quit TMC to join the BJP. But no by-poll is for the seat vacated by Manas Bhunia (TMC), who also quit around the same time after being elected as an MLA. The by-polls are also due in Maharashtra, Assam and Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and J&K. But no by-poll can be held in J&K as there is no Assembly.

international

of the day quote

The United States is the root cause and the biggest external factor in the Afghan issue. It cannot just run away like this



WANG WENBIN | FOREIGN MINISTRY SPOKESPERSON, CHINA

In contrast, we all know that Pakistan and particularly its intelligence services played a key role fostering the Taliban and allowing them to eventually take over. It's just disgusting to watch Pakistani officials celebrate the victory of this group that will bring untold brutality to the Afghan people



STEVE CHABOT | US CONGRESSMAN

Lockdowns cannot go on forever. This is not a sustainable way to live in this country. This Groundhog Day has to end, and it will end when we start getting to 70% and 80% vaccination rates



SCOTT MORRISON | PRIME MINISTER, AUSTRALIA

SHORT TAKES

Taiwan rolls out own Covid vax

Taipei: Taiwan Monday started administering its first domestically developed Covid-19 vaccine amid fierce criticism over the approval process. The vaccine Medigen, meaning 'high-end' in Chinese language, is a recombinant protein vaccine developed by Medigen Vaccine Biologics Corp in collaboration with the National Institutes of Health in the US, the BBC reported.

Greece wildfires: Two new blazes break out

Athens: Greece's fire department scrambled firefighting aircraft and ground forces as at least two new blazes broke out in areas already scarred by wildfires this summer, with strong winds complicating efforts to contain them. The first broke out Monday morning in the south of Evia, Greece's second-largest island, whose north was decimated earlier this month by a blaze that burned for more than 10 days. The second was burning in the Villa area northwest of Athens, where a major blaze was brought under control Friday after burning for five days.

21 dead, 20 missing in Tennessee floods

Washington: At least 21 people died and 20 others were reported missing after severe floods hit Humphreys County in the US state of Tennessee August 21, authorities said. "Today, we are trying to get a good evaluation picture," County Sheriff Chris Davis said Sunday. "The ones we have missing are mainly from the area of the greatest impact of the watcher when it first came up," Davis said, adding that "from children to elderly is what our deceased is ranging from".

German loco pilots on 2nd 2-day strike

Berlin: Many train drivers with Germany's national railway walked off the job Monday as their union embarked on its second two-day strike this month in a bitter dispute with the company. The GDL union called on passenger train drivers to strike from 2 am Monday to 2 am Wednesday. Freight train drivers already started their strike Saturday afternoon. Railway operator Deutsche Bahn planned to run about one-quarter of long-distance trains, while about 40% of regional and local services were expected to go ahead.

It's a red line, say Taliban

TALIBAN THREATEN CONSEQUENCES IF THE AUGUST 31 DEADLINE FOR THE TROOP WITHDRAWAL IS EXTENDED

DEADLINE EXTENSION



AGENCIES

London, August 23: Ahead of an emergency G7 meeting on Afghanistan, the Taliban Monday warned that there will be consequences if the US and UK sought an extension to the August 31 deadline for the US-led troop withdrawal from the war-torn country. Speaking to 'Sky News' in Doha, Qatar, Taliban spokesperson Dr Suhail Shaheen stated that the month-end deadline was a red line, as any extension would imply an extended occupation of the country. He said the timeline had been laid out by US President Joe Biden and threatened consequences if the US and UK sought an extension to that deadline. It's a red line. President Biden announced that August 31 they would withdraw all their military forces. So if they extend it that means

they are extending occupation while there is no need for that, Shaheen said. If the US or UK were to seek additional time to continue evacuations - the answer is no. Or there would be consequences. It will create mistrust between us. If they are intent on continuing the occupation it will provoke a reaction, he said. The warning came as British Prime Minister Boris Johnson convened an emergency G7 meeting Tuesday in his role as current Chair of the Group of Seven countries - Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United States and the UK. On the agenda for the world leaders is expected to be a push for the US to seek an extension of the August 31 deadline, as time is running out for the evacuation of foreign nationals from the Taliban controlled region.

Gunfire at Kabul airport kills one

KABUL: A firefight at one of the gates of Kabul's international airport killed at least one Afghan soldier early Monday, German officials said, in the latest chaos to engulf Western efforts to evacuate those fleeing the Taliban takeover of the country. The shooting at the airport came as the Taliban sent fighters north of the capital to eliminate pockets of armed resistance to their light-



Suhail Shaheen | Taliban spokesperson

ning takeover earlier this month. The Taliban said they retook three districts seized by opponents the day before and had surrounded Panjshir, the last province that remains out of their control.

UK struggles for influence

The messy exit of Western military forces from Afghanistan and the swift takeover of the country by the Taliban has stunned officials in Britain and strained the UK's "special relationship" with its most important ally, the United States. London's powerlessness, so far, to change Washington's course also is a blow to UK hopes that an assertive "Global Britain" will be a major global player in the wake of its exit from the European Union. The main stumbling block ahead of an emergency summit of Group of Seven leaders Tuesday is a deadline for the US effort to evacuate thousands of Americans, Afghans and others from Kabul. US troops are scheduled to end their mission August 31, and Britain wants an extension.

US troops rush evacuations

The US military reported its biggest day of airlifts out of Afghanistan by far Monday, but deadly violence that has blocked many desperate evacuees from entering Kabul's airport persisted, and the Taliban signaled they might soon seek to shut down the evacuation. Twenty-eight US military flights ferried about 10,400 people to safety out of Taliban-held Afghanistan over the 24 hours that ended early Monday morning, a White House official said. After more than a week of evacuations plagued by major obstacles, the number of people flown out met and exceeded US Projections for the first time. The count was more than twice the 3,900 flown out in the previous 24 hours on US military planes.

SL faces 4 mutants of Delta

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Colombo, August 23: Sri Lanka's medical experts Monday said the Delta variant of the Covid-19 which is spreading across the country has acquired four mutations due to the high transmission rate but did not have any effect on vaccine efficacy. Head of the Department of Immunology and Molecular Sciences of the Sri Jayawardenapura University, Professor Neelika Malavige said while the four mutations were found following gene sequencing, there was no urge to panic until the implications of the mutations were established, reports Xinhua news agency. One of the Delta mutations (A-222V) is seen in many countries, another (A-1078S) is found in Sri Lanka and Malaysia, while the other two (A-701S and R-24C) are



only found in Sri Lanka. These are just mutations in the virus and that does not make these viruses new variants, Malavige was quoted by a local newspaper as saying. We had identified many other mutations in the previous Alpha variant and in our variant of the Sri Lankan lineage (responsible for the second wave), which were of no significance. Therefore, although some of the Delta variant

Lanka lauds India's 'continuous support'

Sri Lanka's newly-appointed foreign minister GL Peiris Monday appreciated India's "continuous support" for combatting the Covid-19 pandemic and also the USD 15 million offer to preserve and promote Buddhist cultural sites in the island nation. During a meeting between Peiris and Indian High Commissioner Gopal Baglay here, the two sides highlighted the pivotal importance of relations between Lanka and India which have stood the test of time as close neighbours and expressed satisfaction at the current level of cooperation and resolved to raise bilateral relations in multiple sectors to even higher levels, the foreign ministry said in a statement.

Highest 1-day spike

Sri Lanka's Health Ministry said Monday that the country recorded its highest single-day Covid-19 tally of 4,282 cases Sunday, taking the total infections to 390,000 since March last year. According to official figures, Sri Lanka surpassed the 4,000-mark in daily infections Sunday and now its total active patient count stood at 40,475. The death toll from the virus has reached 7,366. Sri Lanka is witnessing a rapid spike in Covid-19 infections due to the Delta variant and Friday, the country declared a 10-day nationwide curfew to minimise the spread, the Xinhua news agency reported.

viruses seen in Sri Lanka might have certain unique mutations, there is no reason to be alarmed, Malavige added. Malavige said that these mutations were highly unlikely to have any effect on vaccine efficacy and requested people to get vaccinated against Covid-19. Sri Lanka is presently facing a rising wave of Covid-19 infections, suspected to be caused by the Delta variant with authorities declaring a nationwide quarantine curfew since August 20 which will be lifted August 30.

RUSSIA TO START BUILDING WARSHIPS AMID TENSIONS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Moscow, August 23: Russian President Vladimir Putin Monday launched the construction of new nuclear submarines and other warships, part of a sweeping military modernisation effort amid tensions with the West. Speaking in a video call, Putin gave orders for two nuclear submarines armed with intercontinental ballistic missiles along with two diesel-powered submarines and two corvettes at shipyards in Severodvinsk, St Petersburg and Komsomolsk-on-Amur. "We will continue to boost the potential of the Russian navy, develop its bases and infrastructure, arm it with state-of-the-art weapons," Putin said. "A strong and sovereign Russia needs a powerful and well-balanced navy." The Kremlin has made military modernisation a top priority as relations with the West have plunged to post-Cold War lows after Russia's 2014 annexation of Ukraine's Crimea. Moscow has sought to reestablish a regular naval presence in parts of the world that the Soviet Union had during

BUCKINGHAM GUARD CEREMONY RETURNS

British soldiers in scarlet tunics and bearskin hats paraded outside Buckingham Palace Monday as the Changing the Guard ceremony resumed after a pandemic-induced 18-month gap



'SE Asia, Indo-Pacific to dictate future of world'



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Singapore, August 23: US Vice President Kamala Harris Monday said she believes that Southeast Asia and the Indo-Pacific will dictate the future of the world as she held talks with Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong as part of her Southeast Asia visit aimed at bolstering America's engagement in the region. Harris, at a press conference here with Lee, pointed out that the agreements the US has inked with Singapore and the Southeast Asian region are evidence of its strength and enduring relationships around the globe. These are not only priorities that relate to the US security or economic interests but they also relate to challenges the world faces going forward - such as future pandemics and what countries can do together to research on and stop them, she said. "This is a relationship that is based on a shared vision, both in terms of the challenges we face, and also the opportunities that we face... It is about the future in terms of our mutual commitment, curiosity and interest," said Harris, who arrived here on Sunday but was given a formal welcome on Monday

US offered tanker aircraft for Afghan evacuation

Singapore Monday offered America one of its tanker aircraft to airlift stranded civilians from war-torn Afghanistan, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said as he held talks with US Vice President Kamala Harris during which the two countries signed a number of key agreements to enhance cooperation, including in defence and cybersecurity. Vice President Harris' visit to Singapore is part of a diplomatic charm offensive by the Biden administration in Southeast Asia, a region that is crucial to the future prosperity and security of the United States, amidst China's aggressive actions in the region. Harris thanked Lee for the "very generous offer" to assist the US in its evacuations from Afghanistan.

at Singapore's Presidential Palace, the Istana. "It is about what we have in terms of shared values for the need for universal norms on the issue of cybersecurity. It is about the interest that we have in being a global partner on the issue of vaccines, for example, and our shared commitment - understanding that when we have the resources, we will share them with the world, she said.

126 arrested in assault case of YouTuber girl

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lahore, August 23: Police in Pakistan have arrested 126 people allegedly involved in the sexual assault of a YouTuber girl Independence Day at the historic Minar-i-Pakistan, after the incident sparked nationwide outrage and drew international condemnation. The incident took place August 14 when hundreds of youngsters were celebrating Independence Day at Azadi Chowk near Minar-i-Pakistan in Lahore. Hundreds of young men can be seen in the videos throwing the girl in the air for fun, dragging her, tearing her clothes and molesting her. Police had registered a case Tuesday against 400 unidentified men for assaulting the girl and her companions. Police have arrested 126 suspects so far in this case after identifying them through video footage and sent them to jail for identification parade. The victim will identify the suspects in the jail, Punjab IGP Inam Ghani said in a statement Monday. He said most arrests came from the surroundings of the Minar-i-Pakistan from where a large number of people had participated in the Independence Day celebration.

MIDEAST WATER CRISIS

Aid groups: Millions in Syria, Iraq losing access to water

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Beirut, August 23: Millions of people in Syria and Iraq are at risk of losing access to water, electricity and food amid rising temperatures, record low water levels due to lack of rainfall and drought, international aid groups warned Monday. The two neighbouring countries, both battered by years of conflict and mismanagement, are in need of rapid action to combat severe water shortages, the groups said. The drought is also disrupting electricity supplies as low water levels impact dams, which in turn impact essential infrastructure, including health facilities. More than 12 million people in both countries are affected, including 5 million in Syria who are directly dependent on the Euphrates River. In Iraq, the loss of access to water from the Euphrates and Tigris River, and drought, threaten

at least 7 million people. Some 400 square kilometers (154 square miles) of agricultural land faces drought, the groups said, adding that two dams in northern Syria, supplying power to 3 million people, face imminent closure. Carsten Hansen, regional director for the Norwegian Refugee Council, one of the aid groups behind the warning, said that for hundreds of thousands of Iraqis still displaced and many more still fleeing for their lives in Syria, the



unfolding water crisis "will soon become an unprecedented catastrophe pushing more into displacement." Other aid groups included Mercy Corps, the Danish Refugee Council, CARE international, ACTED and Action Against Hunger. They warned that several Syrian provinces - including Hassakah, Aleppo and Raqqa in the north and Deir el-Zour in the east - have witnessed a rise in water-borne diseases. The areas include displacement settlements housing tens of thousands of people displaced in Syria's 10-year conflict. CARE's regional chief for Mideast and North Africa, Nirvana Shawky, urged authorities and donor governments to act swiftly to save lives. The latest crisis comes on top of war, Covid-19 and severe economic decline, she said. "There is no time to waste," said Gerry Garvey of the Danish Refugee Council, adding that the

water crisis is likely to increase conflict in an already destabilized region. Severe water shortages have also hit Lebanon, which is mired in the worst economic and financial crisis in its modern history, where more than 4 million people - mainly vulnerable children and families - face critical water shortages in the coming days, the UN's children agency warned last week. In Lebanon, severe fuel shortages have also halted the work of thousands of private generators long relied on for electricity in the corruption-plagued country. UNICEF called for urgent restoration of the power supply to keep water services running. Lebanon's rivers are also heavily polluted. Activists have long warned about pollution levels caused by sewage and waste in the Litani River, the country's longest and a major source for water supply, irrigation and hydroelectricity.

business

of the day quote

The past two years have been filled with challenges but the market has shown resilience, and phone sales picked up after the lockdowns were lifted

SANMEET SINGH KOCHHAR | GLOBAL VICE PRESIDENT, HMD

There was a very strong and overwhelming response to a nationwide strike against the HUD system. Big corporates in the jewellery sector never participate in such strikes. Mostly individual and family-run jewellery shops in all four zones were shut for a day

DINESH JAIN, DIRECTOR | ALL INDIA GEM AND JEWELLERY DOMESTIC COUNCIL

The potential models of road assets monetisation would be Toll Operate Transfer (TOT) and InvIT

AMITABH KANT | CEO, NITI AAYOG

SHORT TAKES

DIAL signs MoU with Medanta

New Delhi: The Delhi International Airport Limited (DIAL) has signed a memorandum of understanding with Medanta hospital to set up a Covid-19 care centre at the Delhi airport for its employees and their family members, a statement said Monday. The Covid Care Centre, which is being established at Terminal 2 of the airport in anticipation of "the third wave of the Covid-19 pandemic", is expected to be operational early September, said the statement of GMR-group led DIAL.

Myntra ropes in top fashion icons

New Delhi: In one of India's biggest celebrity-led marketing associations for an e-commerce brand, Myntra has signed up Hrithik Roshan, Vijay Deverakonda and Dulquer Salmaan as its newest brand ambassadors, alongside the existing celebrity ambassadors, Kiara Advani, and Samantha Akkineni, to emphasise its hold on the Indian fashion sphere. With the combined star power of the most sought-after celebrities from different regions, who are loved and admired for their acting prowess and fashion quotient, Myntra is set to unleash its biggest-ever line up of star-studded brand commercials.

'No impact of jewellers' strike'

New Delhi: The Centre Monday said there was "no impact" of a nationwide strike called by a "very small section of jewellers" against gold hallmarking rules. However, 350 associations and federations including All India Gems and Jewellery Domestic Council which supported the strike said they received a "strong response" as most shops barring big corporates remained shut for the day. "The strike called by a very small section of jewellers has had no impact," the Consumer Affairs Ministry said.

Fuel prices remain static

New Delhi: A day after reducing petrol and diesel prices by up to 20 paise per litre, the OMCs Monday kept auto fuel prices unchanged to further review global oil price movement before making any changes in the domestic market. Accordingly, petrol continues to be priced at ₹101.64 a litre and diesel ₹89.07 a litre in Delhi, the same level as Sunday.



With the further easing of the state-wise restrictions, the roots of economic recovery deepened in July 2021. Despite a normalising base, eight of the 15 high-frequency indicators recorded an encouraging improvement in their Y-o-Y growth

ADITI NAYAR | CHIEF ECONOMIST, ICRA RATINGS

LIC LAUNCHES CAMPAIGN

To provide continued risk cover to its policyholders, state-run insurer Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) Monday launched a special campaign for the revival of lapsed individual policies



'IMF's allocation is shot in arm for global economy'

REUTERS

Washington, August 23: The IMF will distribute about \$650 billion in new Special Drawing Rights to its members Monday, providing a "significant shot in the arm" for global efforts to combat the Covid-19 pandemic, Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said.

The International Monetary Fund's largest-ever distribution of monetary reserves will provide additional liquidity for the global economy, supplementing member countries' foreign exchange reserves and reducing their reliance on more expensive domestic or external debt, Georgieva said in a statement.

"The allocation is a significant shot in the arm for the world and, if used wisely, a unique opportunity to combat this unprecedented crisis," she said.



Countries can use the SDR allocation to support their economies and step up their fight against the coronavirus crisis, but should not use the fiscal space to delay needed economic reforms or debt restructuring, the IMF said in separate guidance document.

IMF member countries will receive SDRs - the fund's unit of exchange backed by dollars, euros, yen, sterling and yuan - in proportion with their existing quota shareholdings in the fund.

Georgieva said about \$275 billion of the allocation will go to emerging market and developing countries, with some \$21 billion to flow to low-income countries.

Georgieva said the IMF was encouraging rich countries that receive SDRs to channel them to poorer countries that need them more.

One key option is for wealthier

The allocation of \$650bn is a significant shot in the arm for the world and, if used wisely, a unique opportunity to combat this unprecedented crisis

KRISTALINA GEORGIEVA | MANAGING DIRECTOR, IMF

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One key option is for wealthier

countries to contribute SDRs to the IMF's existing Poverty Reduction and Growth Trust for low-income countries, she said.

The IMF was also continuing to work on a possible Resilience and Sustainability Trust that could use channelled SDRs to help the most vulnerable countries with structural transformation, including dealing with climate change, she said.

Another possibility, she said, could be to channel SDRs to support lending by multilateral development banks.

The IMF's last SDR distribution came in 2009 when member countries received \$250 billion in SDR reserves to help ease the global financial crisis.

To spend their SDRs, countries would first have to exchange them for underlying hard currencies, requiring them to find a willing exchange partner country.

Bitcoin price rises above \$50,000 as rebound continues



REUTERS

New York, August 23: Bitcoin's price surged past \$50,000 on Monday for the first time since May, continuing its rebound from a months-long slump. The world's largest cryptocurrency rose to \$50,341, as investors bet that the prospect of more US stimulus spending would lead to further gains, and more mainstream financial services firms made moves in the nascent asset class.

Bitcoin has risen 81 per cent since hitting a yearly low of \$27,700 in January.

Meanwhile, the price of rival cryptocurrency ether rose 2.8 per cent to \$3,337. The virtual coin has risen 91 per cent since slumping to below \$1,740 last month.

The cryptocurrency recovery comes as some more established financial services companies offer their customers access to virtual coins. PayPal Holdings Inc said on Monday it would allow customers in the UK to buy, sell and hold bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies starting this week.

Some traders believe the bitcoin market has yet to see the full return of retail investors, suggesting the current upswing could have further to go.

Pfizer to buy drug developer Trillium in \$2.3 billion deal



REUTERS

Ottawa, August 23: Pfizer Inc said Monday it would buy Canadian drug developer Trillium Therapeutics Inc in a \$2.26 billion deal to strengthen its arsenal of blood cancer therapies.

Pfizer, which acquired a \$25 million stake in Trillium last year, will buy the remaining outstanding shares for \$18.50 apiece, representing a 203.8% premium on the stock's last closing price.

Pfizer expects to benefit from Canada-based Trillium's blood-cancer therapies that target a "don't eat me" signal used by cancer cells to evade the immune system.

Forty Seven Inc, which is also developing drugs that target the same antibodies, was bought by Gilead Sciences Inc (GILD.O) for \$4.9 billion last year. More than 1 million people worldwide were diagnosed with blood cancer in 2020, representing almost 6% of all cancer diagnoses. The same year, more than 700,000 people worldwide died from a form of blood cancer.

Trillium's U.S.-listed shares were trading at \$17.73 before the bell on Monday, having fallen 59% in 2021 as of their last close. Pfizer bought nearly 2.3 million Trillium shares at \$10.88 each in September.

I-T PORTAL GLITCHES

FM sets Sept 15 as deadline for Infosys to resolve issues

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, August 23: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman Monday conveyed to Infosys CEO Salil Parekh in no uncertain terms the government's "deep disappointment and concern" over the continuing glitches in the new income tax filing portal and set September 15 as the deadline for the software major to resolve all snags.

As glitches continued to mar the functioning of the portal even after over two months of its launch, Sitharaman summoned Infosys MD & CEO Parekh at her office here to know the reasons for not resolving the snags in the portal.

A statement issued by the Income Tax Department said that during the meeting the finance minister emphasised that there is a need for putting in more resources and efforts on the part of Infosys so that the much delayed delivery of agreed services is ensured.

"Hon'ble Finance Minister demanded that the issues faced by taxpayers on current functionalities of the portal should be resolved by the team by 15th September 2021 so that taxpayers and professionals can work seamlessly on the portal," the I-T department said in a statement after the meeting.

Sitharaman, the statement said, conveyed "the deep disappointment and concerns of the government and the taxpayers" about the continuing glitches in the e-filing portal.

"She sought an explanation from Infosys for the repeated issues faced by taxpayers," it added.

During the meeting, Parekh was also sensitised on the difficulties that the taxpayers were facing and the problems that are arising on account of the delays in the functioning of the portal.

"Parekh explained that he and his team are doing everything to ensure the smooth functioning of the portal. Further, he said, over 750 team members are working on this project and Pravin Rao, COO of Infosys, is personally overseeing this project.

He also assured that Infosys is working expeditiously to ensure a glitch-free experience to the taxpayers on the portal," the statement added. The portal which went live June 7, was not accessible August 21 and 22 till late evening.

It came back after what the tech major described was an "emergency maintenance".



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Ongoing projects in state being prioritised: Rly Min

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, August 23: Union Minister of Railways Ashwini Vaishnaw reviewed the ongoing projects and traffic facilities works to ports and industries with Divisional Railway Manager of Khurda Road Division.

During his visit to Balangir and Bhawanipatna, August 22, Vaishnaw also reviewed the ongoing projects with railway officials and said that the projects in Odisha are being given priority for speedy construction work and completion.

The work for Khurda Road-Balangir Rail Line is being constructed from both the end for an



early completion. Meanwhile, construction work from Bichhupalli to Sonepur and from Mahipur to Nuagaon/Dasapalla is in full swing.

The Railway minister said, "We need cooperation from all agencies (involved) to complete the project." On a demand on Balangir-Nuapada Rail Line, Vaishnaw said that it will be reviewed in appropriate level and keeping with the feasibility on this, further action will be taken. He also said that loco overhauling at Norla will be given priority.

Vaishnaw also interacted with trackmen at Balangir railway station and praised their works amid the pandemic situation. He also inspected the 'ladies waiting room', interacted with station master, enquired about land on other side of PF3 and reviewed other amenities.

Inspecting the toilets at Second Class waiting hall and reviewing the cleanliness at the station, the Railway minister praised the station authorities for maintaining cleanliness.

India can become world's 2nd-largest cloud talent hub: Study

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, August 23: India has the potential to become the world's second-largest cloud talent hub with the combined effort of government bodies, education and skilling organisations and technology providers, IT industry body Nasscom said Monday.

Nasscom, in an association with Draup, said in a report that India currently ranks third globally with an installed talent pool of 608,000 (FY2021) cloud professionals.

"By 2025, India would have an estimated 1.4-1.5 million cloud professionals (baseline growth). However, with an estimated demand for over 2 million professionals by 2025, India could reach 1.7-1.8 million cloud talent pool with a fairly aggressive skilling

roadmap," the report titled 'Cloud Skills: Powering India's Digital DNA' said. Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) and Accenture were strategic partners for the research effort. With rapid digital acceleration and everything becoming on-demand and need-based, migration to cloud-based services will provide a significant competitive advantage for SMEs and enterprises in the new normal. This is further expected to grow exponentially with accelerated cloud adoption across sectors.

Infrastructure agility, flexibility, and resilience on cloud with significantly lower costs, especially post the pandemic, have been the key growth drivers for such a shift, the report said.

The Indian SaaS (software as a service) startup ecosystem is an

SKILLING ROADMAP

INDIA CURRENTLY RANKS THIRD GLOBALLY WITH AN INSTALLED TALENT POOL OF 6,08,000 (FY2021) CLOUD PROFESSIONALS

Country's cloud market is estimated to reach \$5.6bn by 2022, a 26% y-o-y growth

SaaS companies in India employ over 40,000 professionals across job domains, more than any other tech startup segment, Nasscom said

other driver of cloud demand, it added. SaaS companies in India employ over 40,000 professionals across job domains, more than any other tech startup segment, Nasscom said. With a baseline growth of 24 per cent CAGR, India's cloud talent pool is expected to grow 2.4X to nearly 1.5 million by 2025.

The report estimates that with a more aggressive talent building roadmap (30 per cent-plus growth rate), India can increase its cloud talent pool to between 1.7 to 1.8 million and in the process, become world's second largest cloud talent hub. "Cloud adoption has witnessed an accelerated adoption during the pandemic as enterprises focused on building hybrid work models, collaborative infrastructure and business continuity.

"Cloud has moved from being a relative back-end to a front-end (business-facing) technology, enabling on-demand access to resources," Nasscom President Debjani Ghosh said. For India to carve itself a

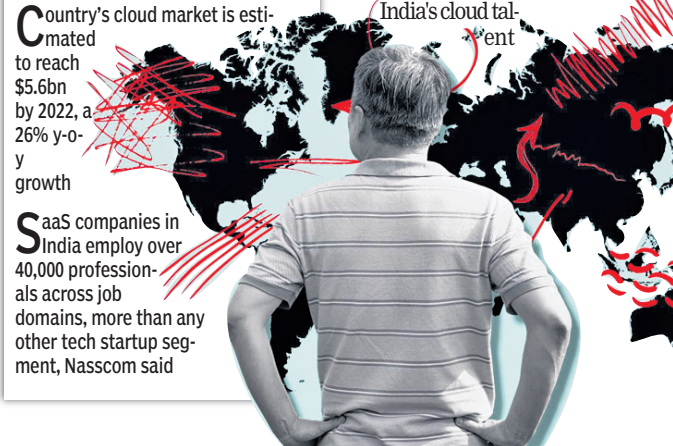
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"Cloud has moved from being a relative back-end to a front-end (business-facing) technology, enabling on-demand access to resources," Nasscom President Debjani Ghosh said. For India to carve itself a

unique identity as a global hub for cloud solutions, a concentrated public-private partnership and large-scale skilling is the key, she added. Nasscom has set up its FutureSkills PRIME initiative in partnership with the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) to upskill talent in emerging technologies and cloud skills are a key area of focus on this platform, she said.

The report said the demand for cloud solutions is growing exponentially, both in India and worldwide, leading to a higher demand for cloud talent as well. India saw about 380,000 job openings for cloud roles in 2020, a 40 per cent growth over 2019. The demand for cloud skills far outweighs the current supply and needs focus across stakeholders on upskilling, it added.



LUKAKU BACK WITH A BANG

REUTERS

London, August 22: A goal by Romelu Lukaku on his second Chelsea debut and a strike by defender Reece James earned the Blues a comfortable 2-0 win against London rivals Arsenal Sunday, their second victory in as many games at the start of the Premier League season.

An almost unstoppable Lukaku needed only 15 minutes to get off the mark for the European champions following his reported 97.5 million pounds (USD 132.8 million) transfer from Inter Milan, tapping in a cross played into his path by James.

The wing-back scored Chelsea's second goal himself 20 minutes later, taking his time to fire past goalkeeper Bernd Leno after being found in acres of space by Mason Mount.

Lukaku, who never scored a league goal for the Blues in his first spell at Stamford Bridge, showed why Chelsea were prepared to break their spending record to bring him back to the club seven years after he left London.

The Belgian international provided the Blues with the kind of muscular presence in attack they have lacked since the departure of Diego Costa in 2017, both when running at Arsenal's defence and holding the ball up with his back to goal.

He was involved in the move that led to his goal and only a reflex save by Leno denied him a second when the German palmed Lukaku's point-blank header onto the bar with 15 minutes left.

Asked to describe his performance, Lukaku told 'Sky Sports': "Dominant, I would say. Dominant but like, you know, like I said, I try to improve every time, I have a long way to go, but today it was good, to win and to start well."

Chelsea coach Thomas Tuchel said he was very happy with the way Lukaku had settled into the team so quickly. "He gives something to our game that we did not have so much, like to protect balls and to play very direct in front and to the last line," Tuchel told 'Sky Sports'.

"You cannot start better than with a goal. He almost scored a second one - it was a big save by Bernd Leno - and he assisted some half chances and chances. It's a good start and we have to improve from here."

Arsenal, who lost their opening game to promoted Brentford, were lacking several key players through injury and illness and rarely threatened to disrupt Tuchel's well-drilled side.

The Blues, who kept another of their trademark clean sheets, could afford to start with star names such as N'Golo Kante, Timo Werner and Hakim Ziyech on the bench.

Sloppy Juve play out stalemate



Gerard Deulofeu (No.10) reacts after Udinese's equaliser, while Juventus players look disappointed, Sunday

Milan: Cristiano Ronaldo started on the bench as Massimiliano Allegri's return to Juventus got off to a disappointing start. Two mistakes from goalkeeper Wojciech Szczesny saw his side relinquish an early two-goal lead to draw 2-2 at Udinese in the Italian league.

Ronaldo didn't start amid reports he had asked to be on the bench and that he could still leave Juventus with a year remaining on his contract. When he did come on in the second half, Ronaldo thought he had scored a stoppage-time winner but it was ruled out for offside after he had ripped off his shirt in celebration and been embraced by teammates.

Paulo Dybala scored and set up another goal to give Juventus what looked like a comfortable

advantage a quarter of the way through the match. But Szczesny conceded a penalty, which Roberto Pereyra struck the into the bottom right corner. And another mistake from him allowed Gerard Deulofeu to score the equaliser with seven minutes remaining.

Allegri was rehired by Juventus in the offseason - just two years after he was fired by the club - after the Bianconeri's worst season in 10 years ended their nine-year grip on the league title and saw the end of Andrea Pirlo's brief tenure.

Jose Mourinho has also returned to Serie A and his Roma side beat Fiorentina 3-1. New Roma forward Tammy Abraham had a fantastic debut as he set up both his side's goals and hit the crossbar.

Odisha FC sign Krasniqi on loan

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, August 23: Odisha FC Monday announced that they have reached an agreement with Malaysian side Johor Darul Ta'zim FC over a loan deal of midfielder Liridon Krasniqi ahead of the upcoming eighth edition of the ISL.

The 29-year-old attacking midfielder started his career in Europe and made his senior professional debut for FK Mlada Boleslav in Czech Republic in 2011 before signing for Turkish club Ankaraspor. He was loaned out to another club in Turkey - Fethiyespor.

Krasniqi moved to Malaysia in 2015 and played for Kedah Darul Aman Football Club. He also won the 2016 Malaysia Cup and 2017 Malaysia FA Cup titles for Kedah before signing for Melaka United in 2019.

In the previous season, Krasniqi was roped in by current Malaysia Super League champions Johor Darul Ta'zim and then represented Australian side Newcastle Jets in the A-League on loan in early 2021.

Krasniqi has a unique achievement of representing three national teams. After playing for the Albanian U-21 side and Kosovo senior team, he made his debut for the Malaysian senior national team earlier this year.

"I hope it will be a great season ahead under head coach Kiko Ramirez. I can't wait to get started and meet my teammates at OFC. We will try and bring joy for all the Odisha fans in the upcoming ISL tournament," Krasniqi said with delight.

FAN VIOLENCE AT NICE MARS FRENCH LEAGUE

PARIS: Boosted by the recent arrival of Lionel Messi at Paris Saint-Germain, the French league was attracting attention for the wrong reasons. The league match between home side Nice and Marseille was abandoned when Marseille refused to restart the game over safety concerns. The game had been interrupted with players leaving the field after home fans threw projectiles and invaded the pitch. Unverified photos on social media showed at least three players were injured. When it was decided to restart play, with Nice 1-0 ahead, Marseille refused to return to the field. Nice warmed up and the match was meant to restart with a Marseille corner. No visiting players were present to take the corner, the referee blew his whistle and the match was abandoned. If usual French league rules are applied, an automatic 3-0 victory will be awarded to Nice. Nice supporters had already been warned against throwing objects by the stadium announcer when, with about 15 minutes remaining, Marseille midfielder Dimitri Payet was hit on the back by a bottle thrown from an area with Nice fans. Payet threw the bottle back into the crowd, prompting a significant number of Nice fans to rush the field.

REAL HELD BY 10-MAN LEVANTE

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Madrid, August 23: After defending champion Atletico Madrid edged Elche to add to its winning start in the Spanish league, Real Madrid couldn't overcome a Levante side that was forced to finish the match with a defender as its goalkeeper.

Atletico won 1-0 at home in the return of fans to the Wanda Metropolitano Stadium Sunday, becoming the only team with two wins to begin the league. Then Madrid couldn't manage more than a 3-3 draw even though Levante played nearly 10 minutes without a true goalkeeper.

Madrid failed to get a shot on target after Levante goalkeeper Aitor Fernandez was sent off in the 87th minute for using his hands outside the area to stop a breakaway.

Defender Ruben Vezo took over as goalkeeper because the hosts had already made all five substitutions, but he didn't have to make any saves in the remainder of regulation and stoppage time.

Madrid had opened the scoring in the first half with Gareth Bale, but the visitors had to come from behind twice after halftime to salvage the draw with a pair of goals by Vinicius Junior.

Levante had been the last team to defeat Madrid in the league. Madrid won only two of its

PICKING THE RIGHT SPOT: Vinicius Junior scores past a diving Levante defender and their goalkeeper, Sunday



last five league matches against Levante.

Bale scored his first goal of the season in the fifth minute with a low shot from inside the area after a set up by Karim Benzema, who made a run from near midfield before passing the ball to the Wales forward, who had been on a loan with Tottenham last season.

Bale hadn't scored for Madrid since January 2020. He finished that season with only three goals, his lowest-ever

tally with the Spanish club.

Roger Marti equalised about 30 seconds into the second half, and Jose Campaña put the hosts ahead with a shot into the top corner in the 57th.

Madrid evened the match in a 73rd-minute breakaway, with Vinicius finding the net after a nice pass by Casemiro from Madrid's own field.

But six minutes later Rober Pier gave Levante the lead again from close

range off a set piece. Vinicius pulled Madrid even again with a neat angled shot that struck the far post before going in.

At the Wanda Metropolitano, Atletico won with Angel Correa again playing a leading role in Luis Suarez's absence. Correa scored a first-half winner for his third goal in two matches while starting in place of Suarez, who began on the bench again.

Ligament tear rules Bajrang out of Worlds India at Paralympics: Meet the past medallists



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, August 23: Olympic bronze medallist Bajrang Punia will not compete in the upcoming wrestling World Championships after being advised a six-week rehabilitation to treat the ligament tear he suffered in his right knee in run up to the Tokyo Games.

The World Championships will be held in Oslo, Norway from October 2-10 and Bajrang will not be able to begin his mat training until the rehabilitation programme is complete.

Bajrang recently underwent an MRI scan to know the extent of the injury he suffered in Russia

in June before the Olympics and consulted Dr Dinshaw Pardiwala, who heads the Centre for Sports Medicine at Mumbai's Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital.

"It's a ligament tear and I have been asked to follow a rehabilitation programme for six weeks by Dr Dinshaw. I won't be able to compete at the World Championship," Bajrang told this agency.

"The Worlds was the only major championship in the calendar for this year. I don't see myself competing in any other tournament this season," he added.

Bajrang had suffered the injury in the run up to the Tokyo Games when he competed at a Russian tournament - Ali Aliyev in June. Bajrang had forfeited his semifinals against Abulmazzhid Kudiev, who got hold of the Indian's right leg and pulled him abruptly in the first period of the bout.

The impact had an effect on Bajrang's right knee and the limping grappler immediately quit the mat but competed at the Olympics and won a bronze in 65kg category.

HEIDELBERG PARA GAMES, 1972 MURLIKANT PETKAR: GOLD

Petkar won the country's first ever medal at the Paralympics when he clinched the gold in the men's 50m freestyle swimming event, clocking a world record time of 37.33 seconds. Originally a boxer in the Indian Army, Patekar switched to swimming and other sports after losing his arm in the 1965 Indo-Pak war. He was India's first-ever individual gold medallist at the Paralympics and Olympics.

NEW YORK (US), STOKES MANDEVILLE (UK) PARA GAMES, 1984 JOGINDER SINGH BEDI: 1 SILVER, 2 BRONZE

Bedi won the silver medal in the shot put event while bagging a bronze each in discus and javelin throw events. He holds the record of being the Indian with the most Paralympic medals.

BHIMRAO KESARKAR: SILVER Kesarkar clinched the silver medal in the men's javelin throw event at the 1984 Paralympics, co-hosted by Stoke Mandeville, UK, and New York, US. He finished ahead of compatriot Joginder Singh Bedi, who claimed the bronze medal in the same event.

With the Tokyo Paralympics opening Tuesday, let's take a look at all the past Indian medallists. India have won 12 medals, including four gold, and as many silver and bronze medals in the Summer Paralympics since its debut at the 1968 Games...

ATHENS PARA GAMES, 2004 DAVENDRA JHAJHARIA: GOLD

Jhajharia ended India's 20 year wait for a Paralympic medal by clinching the gold in the men's javelin throw at the Athens Games. With his throw of 62.15m in Athens, Jhajharia set a new world mark, a record that he would rewrite 12 years later. Hailing from a small village in Rajasthan's Churu district, Jhajharia was around eight years old when his left hand had to be amputated immediately after he accidentally touched a live electric cable entwined in a branch of tree he had climbed. Jhajharia would be in action in Tokyo as well.

RAJINDER SINGH RAHELU: BRONZE The second Indian medallist at the Athens Games, Rahelu, competed in the 56kg men's powerlifting event. He bagged the bronze with an effort of 157.5kg. Born in Mehampur village, Jalandhar district, Punjab, Rahelu suffers



from infantile paralysis. He contracted polio when he was eight months old.

LONDON PARA GAMES, 2008 GIRISHA NAGARAJEGOWDA: SILVER The lone Indian medallist in the

London edition of the Games, Nagarajegowda grabbed the silver in the men's high jump with a jump of 1.74 metres. With the feat, Nagarajegowda, who has an impairment in his left leg, became the first Indian to win a medal at that event.

RIO PARA GAMES, 2016 DAVENDRA JHAJHARIA: GOLD

Jhajharia etched his name in history books when he sent the spear to a distance of 63.97 metres in the men's javelin throw event in Rio, becoming the first Indian to clinch two gold medals at the Paralympics. One of India's most decorated athletes at the Paralympics, Jhajharia also bettered his world record that he had set 12 years earlier at the Athens Games. He is also competing in the Tokyo Games with an aim of clinching his third gold medal.

MARIYAPPAN THANGAVELU: GOLD Thangavelu bagged the gold in the high jump event at the Rio Games by

clearing 1.89m. He is one of only three gold medal-winning Paralympians in the country. Hailing from Salem district in Tamil Nadu, his brilliant effort saw him obliterate the previous Asian record. Thangavelu, who suffered a permanent disability at the age of five when a bus crushed his right leg below the knee, will be defending his gold at the Tokyo Games.

DEEPA MALIK- SILVER Malik became the first woman from India to win a Paralympic medal when she won the silver in the shot put event in Rio with a best throw of 4.61m. A paraplegic, paralysed from waist down, Malik was consigned to the wheelchair after being operated for a spinal tumour. She currently serves as the President of the Paralympic Committee of India.

VARUN SINGH BHATI- BRONZE Bhati clinched the bronze medal in high jump at the Rio Games, accompanying compatriot Mariyappan Thangavelu, who won the gold, on the podium. Afflicted by poliomyelitis at a young age, Bhati had produced a personal best mark of 1.86 metres, capping off India's most successful Paralympics till date.