

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



I didn't use foul language against the minister, Milord. I was merely quoting the minister!

40 killed in Kabul blasts

The US said the attacks were carried out by the IS and came hours after western nations had issued warnings while the Taliban distanced themselves from the blasts

AGENCIES

Kabul, August 26: Twin blasts outside the airport here Thursday evening left at least 40 dead, including children and more than a 100 injured, sources said. Among the dead are US Marines and Taliban fighters also. The Taliban and other western nations were quick to condemn the suicidal attacks allegedly carried out by the Islamic State (IS).

Even though officially the death toll has been stated to be 13, various sources confirmed that the toll is at least 40 in the twin blasts. Four of the deceased are said to be US Marines.

Earlier in the day western nations had warned of a possible attack at the airport. One of the explosions took place among a crowd of people waiting to enter the airport, according to Adam Khan, an Afghan. He said several people appeared to have been killed or wounded, including some who lost body parts.

The attacks came after the US and allies urged Afghans to leave the area because of a threat by IS militants. A source familiar with US congressional briefings said the officials strongly believe that the Afghan affiliate of IS, known as Islamic State Khorasan (ISIS-K), after an old name for the region, is responsible for the attack. ISIS-K is opposed both by the US and the Taliban.



Locals carry an injured person in a makeshift trolley to the hospital. REUTERS PHOTO

Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said one blast occurred near the airport's Abbey Gate and the other close to the nearby Baron Hotel. Two US officials said at least one of the explosions appeared to be from a suicide bombing.

"We can confirm that the explosion at the Abbey Gate was the result of a complex attack that resulted in a number of US & civilian casualties," Kirby said on Twitter. "We can also confirm at least one other explosion at or near the Baron Hotel, a short distance from Abbey Gate," he added.

Over the last week, the Hamid Karzai International airport here

has been the scene of some of the most searing images of the chaotic end of America's longest war and the Taliban's takeover, as flight after flight took off carrying those who fear a return to the militants' brutal rule.

Already, some countries have ended their evacuations and have begun to withdraw their soldiers and diplomats, signalling the beginning of the end of one of history's largest airlifts. The Taliban have pledged not to attack Western forces during the evacuation, but have insisted the foreign troops must be out by America's self-imposed deadline of August 31.

PLUS-II SYLLABUS REDUCED BY 30%

BHUBANESWAR: The Council of Higher Secondary Education (CHSE) announced Thursday that the syllabus for Plus-II students will be reduced by 30 per cent for the academic year 2021-22. The CHSE had implemented a similar reduction of the syllabus last session also.

"Though physical teaching has resumed for Classes IX, X, XI and XII in school and colleges, the number of teaching days has decreased. So, it has been decided to continue with the 30 per cent reduced syllabus this year as well," said Tushar Kanti Tripathy, vice-chairman, CHSE. "We hope that the Covid-19 situation will improve in the days to come. However, if it doesn't and the CHSE is not able to conduct the annual Plus-II exams, the alternative evaluation process will come in handy for assessment and publication of the results," Tripathy added.

The CHSE has also decided to introduce internal examinations for first and second-year students. Authorities will conduct three internal tests and one final exam for students of Class-XI.

SC gets 9 new judges

NEW DELHI: Nine new judges, including three women, were Thursday appointed to the Supreme Court. Among them was Justice BV Nagarathna, who is in line to be the first woman Chief Justice of India (CJI) in September 2027. President Ram Nath Kovind signed their warrants of appointment.

The other women judges who have been appointed to the apex court are Justice Hima Kohli, the CJ of Telangana HC, and Justice Bela M Trivedi, the fifth senior-most judge of the Gujarat HC. The men judges who have been elevated to SC are Justice CT Ravikumar (Kerala HC), Justice MM Sundresh (Madras HC), PS Narasimha (former Additional Solicitor General), Justice Abhay Shreeniwas Oka (CJ of Karnataka HC), Vikram Nath (CJ of Gujarat HC) and Jitendra Kumar Maheshwari (CJ of Sikkim HC).

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13L MISS SECOND VACCINE DOSE

Against the backdrop of the impending 3rd wave of Covid-19, a large number of people in Odisha are yet to complete their double dose of vaccination

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, August 26: The Health department of the Odisha government revealed Thursday that close to 13 lakh people in the state are yet to receive their second dose of vaccine against Covid-19. Coming in the backdrop of the news of a possible third wave of, this is indeed an alarming revelation.

According to the Health and Family Welfare department a total of 12,95,000 have missed their second vaccination date. The department is trying to ascertain as to why these ben-

Jabs for teachers on priority basis

BHUBANESWAR: The Odisha government Thursday instructed all district collectors to carry out vaccination of teachers and other staff of educational institution on a priority basis. The government directed all the district education officers (DEOs) and block education officers (BEOs) to prepare a list of vaccinated and non-vaccinated teachers at the earliest.

eficiaries missed their prescribed schedule.

Against this backdrop of missing vaccination, the rate of daily infections increased with 849 persons, including 130 children, testing positive for the disease in the last 24 hours. There were 66 new fatalities, including a three-month-old infant in Bolangir district.

MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VAIATION
SENSEX 55949.10	↑ 4.89
NIFTY 16636.90	↑ 2.20
DOLLAR 74.41	↓ ₹0.07
EURO 87.18	↓ ₹0.04
GOLD ₹47,344	↑ ₹165
SILVER ₹62,978	↓ ₹294

WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK
TEMP MAX	33.2°C	33.0°C
TEMP MIN	24.9°C	25.4°C
Humidity	98%	75%
Rainfall	7.8mm	Nil

Forecast: Light rain very likely

Shri Naveen Patnaik
Hon'ble Chief Minister, Odisha
announces
New Smart Health Card
with New Guidelines of
Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana

Ajay Kumar Das
4189872XXXX

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

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

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

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leisure



AWKWAFINA CONNECTS WITH HER SHANG CHI CHARACTER

Actress Awkwafina, who will be seen in superhero film *Shang Chi* and the *Legends of the Ten Rings*, says that she associates with her character in a strong way. The much-awaited film is the first Asian superhero film by Marvel.

SHARON STONE TO GET GOLDEN ICON AWARD

Basic Instinct star Sharon Stone will receive the Golden Icon Award at the 17th Zurich Film Festival, event's highest accolade. The star will be in Zurich to accept the honour in person September 25, according to *The Hollywood Reporter*.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
Think positive today and watch the world around you changing. Regardless of how difficult things may seem, Ganesh advises you to take it without getting upset. If you set your mind to something, you can do it. You have the Midas touch today, so it is a good time to introduce a new strategy.

TAURUS
Ganesh urges you to be prepared for setbacks and disappointments today. Your efforts may end in being a waste of precious time and energy. The results you get are likely to be far below your expectations. Falling short of your target is likely to weigh you down with stress and anxiety.

GEMINI
You will be in a state of heightened sensitivity today. Therefore you need to curb down on your emotions. You will be able to successfully express your feelings to someone, and your feelings will play a vital part in your life, says Ganesh.

CANCER
Ganesh suggests you not to be sentimental or hasty. Try to handle things deftly in stead of dodging bad episodes or turning a blind eye to them. You will give priority to domestic and private life in stead of career or business aspects.

LEO
You will feel more emotional today and share your feelings with your friends and near ones. For those who are searching for a life-partner, this might be the time when you will get hitched. You will develop a new perspective on some issues in the office. Your day will be different than normal, says Ganesh.

VIRGO
It is more than likely that you will reap financial profits from foreign contacts, predicts Ganesh. You will excel in all the activities that you undertake today. Your dream of establishing a mammoth business enterprise in a foreign country will take flight today.

LIBRA
Ganesh says today will be the start of a new love story for you and you will be able to spend time with someone very dear to you. You will be more conscious today about your appearance and may even go to the beauty parlor. Do remember the saying - beauty lies in the eye of the beholder.

SCORPIO
There are strong indications that today you will be receptive and sensitive towards the needs of other people. Negative vibes will disrupt your thinking, and you will rely on the company of close friends to keep you in good cheer. Do not succumb to the pessimism that might cloud your thought today as it is only a passing phase, advises Ganesh.

SAGITTARIUS
Ganesh foresees business expansion on your cards. Your friends, relatives and other contacts across seven seas will lend a helping hand to develop your business. And thanks to your super communication skills that make the task easier. The leader in you is all set to conquer the world. Way to go!

CAPRICORN
Some people do backbreaking work throughout their life, and still don't taste the sweet taste of success. While in your case, success will be easy as pie. You are already loaded with work and some new projects - assignments will be added to that. Today, but, you are not complaining as some recreational activities will refresh your mood and energy.

AQUARIUS
You will not need a reason to party today. Be it the news of a friend getting married or you buying a new car, you are in a mood to celebrate life like anything! Apart from this, you will have a smooth sailing through out the day, foresees Ganesh. If you are a businessman or a professional, you will move one step closer to your target.

PISCES
A day of mixed fortunes awaits you, where taking risks could prove to be your undoing, or provide you with handsome returns, says Ganesh. This is because you could come out on top by treading cautiously, but uncalculated risks will probably throw your calculations out of gear. Your success rate is unlikely to be too high; hence it may be a tough day for you. However, it will end on a promising note.

Sonakshi's epic reply to fan on weight loss

Mumbai: Actress Sonakshi Sinha, who is currently shooting for her film *Kakuda*, hosted an *Ask Me Anything* session for fans Wednesday, where she replied to some of the questions.

On her day off from the shoot, the *Dabangg* actor took time to have a short chat-session with her fans on Instagram.

One of her IG followers asked her to give tips on what to eat to lose weight.

Quick to reply, Sonakshi hopped on to her Instagram stories and shared a video message saying, "*Hawa khaiye ap! Hmmm. (You just eat air! ok)*"

For the unversed, Sonakshi is one of the Hindi film actors who has inspired her fans with her fitness journey. According to her earlier interviews, before making her debut with *Dabangg* alongside superstar Salman Khan, she had to lose nearly 30 kgs.

Meanwhile, on the work front, Sonakshi is currently shooting for her upcoming film, *Kakuda*. The film, directed by Aditya Sarpotdar, also stars Riteish Deshmukh and Saqib Saleem in lead roles. IANS



'Don't want my family to get trolled because of me'

Actress Kiara Advani knows that trolling is a part of social media. However she protects her family by not posting about them.

"I have cousins who are younger, they're on social media and sometimes I worry about them. I refrain from posting their birthday pictures on my handle, as I don't want my followers or trolls to attack them," Kiara points out the possibility and affirms that it hits her. Advani further warned to stay away from her family, "I don't want my family to start getting trolled because of me. I'll form my thick skin and take it but don't drag them."

Even after starring in successful films like *Shershaah*, Kiara has been trolled for being part of duds like *Indoo Ki Jawani* and not doing 'serious' cinema. Kiara responded to such trolls by saying, "Watch *Good Newwz* or *Guilty*, they are serious films." Advani further added that rather than giving her free advice, she would like to receive a meaty script from them. IANS



MATRIX 4 TRAILER WITH PC, KEANU REEVES UNVEILED

Las Vegas: The trailer of *The Matrix: Resurrections*, the fourth chapter of the *Matrix* sci-fi film series, was unveiled recently at CinemaCon in Las Vegas.

The film stars Priyanka Chopra Jonas and Keanu Reeves in prominent roles along with Carrie-Anne Moss, Jada Pinkett Smith, Yahya Abdul-Mateen II, Jonathan Groff, and Neil Patrick Harris.

Lana Wachowski, one-half of the Wachowskis who directed all the three films in the franchise with sister Lilly, has penned and directed the fourth *Matrix*.

According to *The Hollywood Reporter*, the fourth chapter of the franchise is titled *The Matrix: Resurrections*, studio Warner Bros announced. The film's trailer was screened at CinemaCon - the largest gathering of movie theater owners from around the world in Las Vegas, but not online. IANS



RHEA'S inspiring note about gratitude

Mumbai: Actress Rhea Chakraborty, who was under the scanner last year after the death of her actor-boyfriend Sushant Singh Rajput, has penned an inspiring note about gratitude.

Rhea, who is currently gearing up for the release of her upcoming film, *Chehre* starring Amitabh Bachchan and Emraan Hashmi, took to her Instagram handle Wednesday to share the note. On Instagram stories, Rhea wrote: "Take a minute and say 'Thank you. Thank You'. Gratitude is powerful."

Rhea made headlines after she was accused by Sushant's family for abetment to suicide and also siphoning off funds from the late actor. She was also named in a Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) chargesheet along with her brother Showik in a drug-related probe into Sushant's death case.

The 29-year-old actress was arrested last year after she spent a month in Mumbai's Byculla jail last September. Details about Rhea's role in the film have not been discussed much.

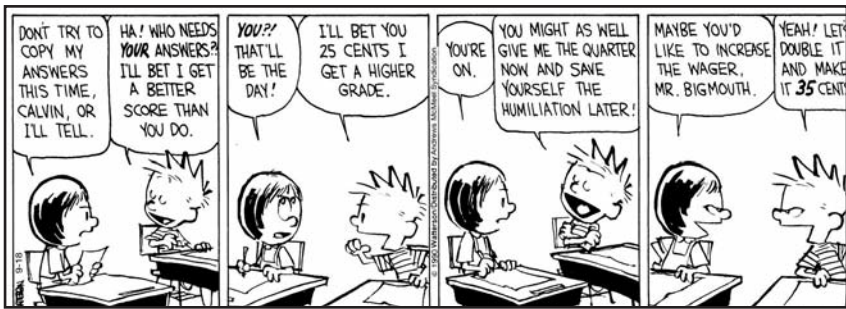
The actress has also been missing from the posters and teaser of the forthcoming film. IANS



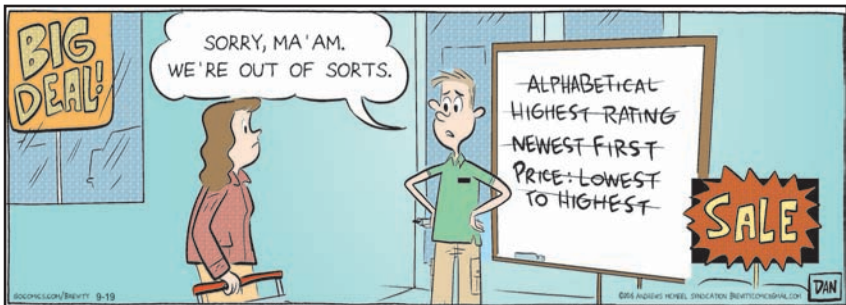
PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

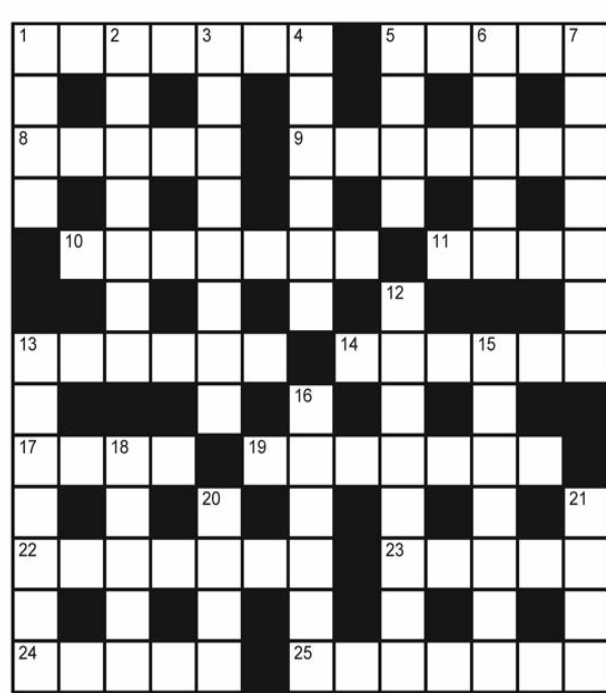


BREVITY



FUN post

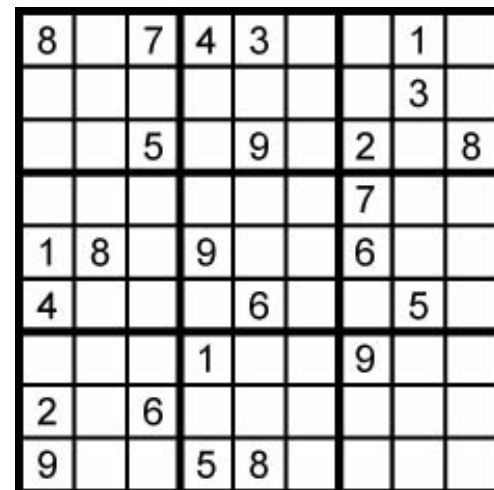
CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 1 Nonsense talk
 - 5 Popular wedding gift
 - 8 Repair a ship
 - 9 Theme park
 - 10 Parachute part
 - 11 Four-wheel vehicle
 - 13 Worker with a kiln
 - 14 Hummocks
 - 17 Begrudge
 - 19 Masquerade wear
 - 22 Non-religious messages (1-4)
 - 24 Atlanta-based airline
 - 25 Sharpshooter
 - 4 Elbow grease
 - 5 Sugar source
 - 6 Picture
 - 7 Pertinent
 - 12 Excretion
 - 13 Delighted
 - 15 Citrus drink
 - 16 Berthed
 - 18 Outspoken
 - 20 Cantina cooker
 - 21 Sheltered, at sea
- Down**
- 1 Mountain pool
 - 2 Cause suffering
 - 3 Separated

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

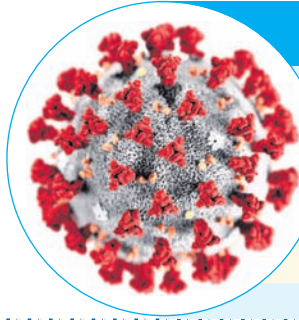


CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



NEW LOOK

A worker paints a structure of the National Emblem installed atop Odisha Assembly ahead of the Monsoon Session, Thursday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	21,50,59,727	19,23,86,417	44,81,887
India	3,25,58,530	3,17,88,440	4,36,365
Odisha	10,04,059	9,88,854	7,628

POLITICKLE BY MANJUL



Tiger, elephant census together

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, August 26: The state Wildlife department has decided to conduct elephant and tiger census simultaneously from the next year with new directions from the Union government.

"The Union government has decided to conduct the elephant census and the tiger census together from 2022. We have been informed about this and steps will be taken accordingly," Shashi Paul, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF)-Wildlife said.

This comes after a new protocol was released to conduct the census in a joint exercise. It has been envisioned that such exercise could reduce human-animal conflict.

During last elephant census, the number of jumbos stood at 1,976 while the tiger census revealed presence of 28 big cats in the state.

Customer safety our top priority: Ekalavya Mahapatra

The second wave of Covid-19 has taken a heavy toll on the finances of the state's shopping malls that had remained closed for several months to keep the infections at bay. Now, the Odisha government has permitted the malls to reopen in adherence to Covid protocol and people have started visiting the malls as the second wave is subsiding. It seems shopping malls have started recovering faster as compared to the first wave. During an interaction with **Orissa POST**, **Symphony Mall Director Ekalavya Mahapatra** shared his experiences of handling the once-in-a-century challenge. Excerpts:

■ Since safety takes precedence over every other thing now, what are the precautions your mall is taking to avoid infections?

■ We are very much concerned about safety of our customers. We ensure all possible measures to avoid spread of infections. First, we have set thermal screening at every entry point in our shopping mall. Second, as per the state government's guidelines, we allow entry of those customers who have received both the vaccine doses. We are ensuring sanitisation at every touch point such as knobs, accelerators, doors and others. We also collect contact details of visitors for safety purposes. Thanks to state government's drive-in vaccination centre at our mall, we have vaccinated over 1,000 people every day in last two and half months.

■ The pandemic has had devastating impact on every sector of the economy. How did you handle the challenges?

■ Of course, the challenge was immense but I think the worst is over. See, all shopping malls run when there are customers. We faced the same situation last year and this year too. We are also prepared to face it the next year as well, but hope we won't.

■ How, according to you, would the current financial year pan out?

■ Well, we faced huge obstacles as we witnessed lockdowns and shutdowns owing to the pandemic. We saw drop in our business. Last year, we registered only 40 per cent of our average target. We are now recovering. We hope by this entire festivity season, we may be doing double what we are doing now. I have requested Inox to host old film festivals like special weeks on Amitabh Bachchan or James Bond that would fetch a good number of customers. We expect a promising future.



OP TALKS

age target. We are now recovering. We hope by this entire festivity season, we may be doing double what we are doing now. I have requested Inox to host old film festivals like special weeks on Amitabh Bachchan or James Bond that would fetch a good number of customers. We expect a promising future.

■ How important is location for opening a mall?

■ For opening a mall, location holds utmost significance. I and my team always believe in making something that can last for at least 12 years. We set up this Symphony Mall with a target that it will be successful for next five years down the line. The area here is growing. We have seen big changes since our mall's inception. If we have

3,000 footfalls at the mall, 2,999 are shoppers. I believe that this mall is doing well and will continue to do so.

■ Tell us about family entertainment centres (FECs) and their significance in malls?

■ FECs play a big role in mall business. Malls encompass three words – shopping, food and entertainment. In India, FECs came to the scenario in the recent few years when a few malls invested a sizeable amount in the segment. FECs help in generating a lot of revenues because families love to bring their kids to malls for their entertainment. We spent a lot of time in planning for the same. We have been planning a joint entertainment zone that comprises movies, books, games, food and social bar experience. Malls now leverage technology to boost FECs.

Free housing for Srimandir servitors

PNN/AGENCIES

Puri, August 26: The first meeting of the reconstituted Srimandir Managing Committee headed by Gajapati king Divyasingha Deb Thursday approved free of cost houses for the temple's servitors.

After the meeting, Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) chief administrator Krishan Kumar said, "We have identified 8 acres of land for the purpose and each family will get a plot of around 600 sq ft and ₹2 lakh for the construction of house."

The selection will be made based on the financial condition of the beneficiary servitors and those who are engaged in the daily rituals of Srimandir, said Kumar.

Applications will be sought from the servitors and in the first phase 400 servitors are likely to be allotted houses, he said. The committee also approved establishment of an 'Adarsh Gurukul' in the Pilgrim town for overall development of students at an initial estimated investment of ₹20 crore.

A Srimandir Adarsh Gurukul Society will be formed to establish and manage the proposed institution. The Gajapati king will be the chairman or president of the proposed Gurukul, for which the SJTA has already identified 17 acres, Kumar said.

The proposed Gurukul will be registered under the Society Registration Act of the state government and efforts are on to start



The members of Srimandir Managing Committee with Puri king Divyasingha Deb

THE TEMPLE ADMINISTRATION HAS IDENTIFIED 8 ACRES OF LAND FOR THE PURPOSE AND EACH FAMILY WILL GET A PLOT OF AROUND 600 SQ FT AND ₹2 LAKH FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF HOUSE

THE COMMITTEE ALSO APPROVED ESTABLISHMENT OF AN 'ADARSH GURUKUL' IN THE PILGRIM TOWN FOR OVERALL DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENTS AT AN INITIAL ESTIMATED INVESTMENT OF ₹20 CRORE

it from the 2022-23 academic year, said the SJTA chief.

A Gurukul Fund will be set up

for the purpose of establishment and management of the institution, he said, adding Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has announced that the state government would provide ₹20 crore for the purpose.

"We had earlier received some money from Supreme Court to set up the Gurukul. The money will be used for the purpose," said Kumar.

He said the SJTA will transfer the land to the society and legal angles are being looked into before making any deal in this regard. Apart from the Gajapati Maharaja, the Chief Minister, Puri district Collector, SJTA administrator and some other prominent persons will be members of the society that will look after the setting up and running of the Gurukul.

A chartered accountant and member from the servitors' community will also be members of the society, he said adding that a non-profit organisation will be tagged for the running of the Gurukul and an MoU will be signed for the purpose.

Kumar said the 12th century shrine's repair, maintenance and conservation work will be done on a five-year restoration plan.

Work for Srimandir heritage corridor project would begin in September, said Chief Secretary SC Mahapatra after reviewing several developmental and beautification projects at the 12th century shrine here Thursday.

JEE Main Session 4 starts at 41 centres



Students coming out of an examination centre after appearing for JEE Main

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, August 26: The fourth session of the Joint Entrance Examination (Main) – 2021 began Thursday at six examination centres in the Capital city. The National Testing Agency (NTA) is conducting the exam in computer-based test (CBT) mode.

Apart from the six centres here, the exams are being conducted at 41 centres in 20 cities of Odisha. In total, the exams are being conducted in 334 cities across the country and abroad August 26, 27, 31, and September 1 and 2. The exams are in 13 languages –English, Hindi, Gujarati, Assamese, Bengali, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Odia, Punjabi, Tamil, Telugu and Urdu.

The JEE Main 2021 Session 3 was successfully conducted July 20, 22, 25, and 27. Around 7 lakh candidates, including around 1 lakh from the state, are appearing for the fourth session.

Candidates entered the exam hall Thursday morning amidst strict Covid norms at the centres. The exam was held in two shifts

first shift from 9am to 12 noon (Paper-1) and second shift from 14:30pm to 17:30pm (Paper-2). The officials at the exam centres are providing masks to the students and are asking them to wear the new masks at the exam centres.

"Exams like JEE main are very important in terms of career of the students and such examination can't be cancelled," said a parent.

Once the result is declared, NTA will release the All India Rank (AIR) list of the candidates. The JEE Advanced exam, the qualifying test for admission to the Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT), will follow October 3 for the students qualified in JEE Main. Around 2.5 lakh students will be eligible for the JEE Advanced 2021.

Meanwhile, the Odisha Joint Entrance Examination (OJEE), for admission into various engineering and professional courses in the state, will commence September 6 and continue till September 18. Also, the special OJEE for admission into vacant B.Tech seats in engineering colleges will also be held September 16.

5K on the run for years held during 10-day drive

DARGHABAZAR AND CANTONMENT POLICE IN CUTTACK ARRESTED TWO PERSONS WHO WERE ON THE RUN FOR 20 AND 30 YEARS RESPECTIVELY

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, August 26: Odisha Police has arrested as many as 4,945 persons as part of a 10-day special drive to execute non-bailable warrants (NBWs) pending for years now, said an official familiar with



the development Thursday.

According to the state police sources, the highest of 850 persons have been arrested in Ganjam, followed by 645 in Balasore, 547 in Khurda and 278 in Kandhamal and as many in Cuttack during the special drive that began August 16 and concluded August 25 this year.

Director General of Police (DGP) Abhay has issued appreciation letters to the superintendents of police (SPs) of Ganjam, Balasore, Khurda, Cuttack and Kandhamal districts for it.

"Odisha Police had spl drive from 16.8 to 25.8 to arrest persons wanted by courts, 4,945 persons have been arrested on the strength of NBWs n produced before courts, many in old n heinous cases. My compliments to officers and men of Odisha Police," director general of police (sic)," the police top brass wrote on Twitter Thursday.

Among the major cases, Darghabazar and Cantonment police in Cuttack arrested two persons who were on the run for 20 and 30 years respectively, while Attabira police in Bargarh has executed an

NBW against a property offender who was on the run for 16 years now. A man wanted in a seven-year-old sensational murder case in Pipili has also been arrested.

Similarly, Buguda police in Ganjam has executed seven NBWs pending for more than 15 years, while Purusottampur police also in Ganjam has executed an NBW relating to an 11-year-old sensational murder case.

Bheden police in Bargarh, on the other hand, has arrested a man wanted in a murder case. He was on the run for at least 11 years. Odisha Police is determined to arrest warrantees and produce them before the court to face trial. The warrantees are therefore advised or warned to surrender before the court or police, read a statement from the state police.

IT RAINED CATS & DOGS IN CITY

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, August 26: The Capital city Thursday witnessed heavy downpour leading to severe waterlogging in low-lying areas.

As per IMD sources, the city received 7.8 mm rainfall till evening. The rainfall was second highest in the state following Nayagarh which received 8.4 mm rainfall. While hot and humid conditions were observed during the daytime, heavy rains lashed the city late in the evening for two hours with drizzle continuing till late night. Severe waterlogging was reported from near Iskon, Nayapalli, Rasulgarh, Acharya Vihar and other low-lying areas affecting vehicular movement. Several vehicles parked in these areas were submerged in rainwater.

No delimitation of panchayats this year

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, August 26: Ahead of the Panchayat polls, the state government Thursday said that it is not going to delimit or restructure gram panchayats (GPs) this year.

Speaking to reporters here, Panchayati Raj and Drinking Water Minister Pratap Jena said that delimitation of panchayats will not be carried out this year. It means elections will be held for 6,801 GPs. Prior to the last panchayat polls, the state had re-organised and added 595 new GPs.

The State Election Commission (SEC) had earlier written to the state government twice to complete the delimitation process and



seat reservation for timely conduct of the polls.

Asked about the reservation of seats for rural polls, Jena said the government has initiated the process of making amendments

The Orissa Grama Panchayats Act-1964, the Orissa Panchayat Samiti Act-1999 and the Orissa Zilla Parishad Act-1991 will be amended to make suitable provision for reservation of seats for SC, ST, OBC and women candidates

Elections will be held for 6,801 GPs. Prior to the last panchayat polls, the state had re-organised and added 595 new GPs

to the existing laws to limit reservation of seats to 50 per cent, as per the directive of the Supreme Court. The current set of reservations exceeds the ceiling. The Bills to make amendment in the Acts will

be placed before the Assembly in the next session, he said.

According to sources, the Orissa Grama Panchayats Act-1964, the Orissa Panchayat Samiti Act-1999 and the Orissa Zilla Parishad Act-1991 will be amended to make suitable provision for reservation of seats for SC, ST, OBC and women candidates. "We have been making demands before the Centre to conduct caste-based census. But, no step has been taken so far. Even if the Centre doesn't consider our demand, we will still pitch for 27 per cent OBC candidates in the panchayat elections," the minister said.

The polls are due in February 2022 as the tenure of all the PRIs—panchayats, panchayat samitis and

zilla parishads—ends March 10, 2022.

Meanwhile, state BJP leader Bhrugu Baxipatra criticised the state government for not conducting the urban polls. "The government should first conduct Urban Local Bodies (ULB) polls and then consider holding the panchayat elections," he said. "Fearing defeat in the urban elections, the government is trying to organise panchayat polls first," alleged Baxipatra.

BJD spokesperson Lenin Mohanty said, "The BJP leader is making such a statement as he has little knowledge about the issue. The fact is that the matter is pending in the High Court. The BJP leader should, at least, have faith in the judiciary."

HC nixes Anubhav's plea for speedy trial of divorce case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Cuttack, August 26: The Orissa High Court Thursday rejected a plea by BJD MP Anubhav Mohanty for a speedy hearing of his divorce case involving actress Varsha Priyadarshini.

The actor-turned-politician is embroiled in a marital dispute with Varsha and the divorce petition is currently being adjudicated by the Cuttack family judge.

In a writ petition before the HC, the Kendrapara MP had prayed for a directive to the lower court for an expeditious trial and fixing a date for the final hearing of his divorce case.

He submitted that the mediation sessions and the conciliation exercises conducted by the judge had failed. The single-judge bench of Justice B R Sarangi, however, refused to intervene in the ongoing trial at the moment saying substantial progress has been made in the case during the last six months.

Varsha, who had married Mohanty in 2014, has filed a case seeking maintenance from her estranged husband. She has also filed a domestic violence case against Mohanty, accusing him of physical and mental torture and violence, including financial treachery.

'3rd wave' may see 1.5 times rise in cases

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, August 26: Daily Covid-19 cases in Odisha during the possible third wave of the pandemic could be 1.5 times than that at the peak of the second surge, a senior Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) Department official said.

According to the official, the projection was based on a report submitted by an expert panel, set up by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), to estimate the impact of a likely third wave.

Additional Chief Secretary of the department P K Mohapatra, in a 25-page note to district Collectors, has detailed the modalities of tackling the next wave, should it arrive.

A table included in the annexure of the document stated that the infected persons might include 12 per cent children and adolescents in the age group of 0 to 18 years, and the anticipated third spell could last for around 75 days.

The caseload during that period is expected to be 7.66 lakh as against 5.22 lakh from April 1 to June 15, the estimate said, adding, the highest number of single-day cases, which was 12,852 May 22 in the second wave, could be 19,278 if the



third surge strikes, it said.

Mohapatra also mentioned the Emergency Covid Response Plan-II (ECRP) for dealing with the anticipated third wave. The key measures approved under ECRP include activities related to Covid essential diagnostics and drugs, establishment of dedicated pediatric care units, and provision of additional ICU beds in the existing establishments.

The state government also remarked that support for setting up liquid medical oxygen (LMO) & medical gas pipeline systems (MGPS), provision for engagement of additional human resources

and strengthening Covid care centres for tele-consultation services should be kept ready before the possible next surge.

All the above activities need to be completed latest by December 2021, Mohapatra said in the letter. Odisha reported 849 new Covid-19 cases and 66 more deaths Thursday.

Meanwhile, in another letter to the district Collectors, Mohapatra urged them to start a special campaign for those awaiting the second dose, and for the inoculation of teachers and their family members (1st/2nd dose).

130 kids in 849 new infections

Odisha reported 849 new Covid-19 cases and 66 deaths Thursday, a Health department official said. Among the new patients 130 are children, he said.

The state has so far reported 10.04 lakh Covid-19 cases and 7,628 deaths.

The new cases were reported after testing 71,231 samples, recording a positivity rate of 1.19 per cent.

The rate of infection among those below 18 years was 15.31 per cent as against 14.76 per cent reported Wednesday.

Khurda district, of which the state capital Bhubaneswar is a part, reported the highest 313 new cases. Cuttack district recorded the highest 15 fatalities.

The state at present has 8,288 active cases, while 9.88 lakh patients recovered, including 721 Wednesday.

The Health department said that over 50 lakh people of the state have received both doses of the Covid vaccines.

Naveen launches 10 more smart schools in Hinjili



CM Naveen Patnaik has inaugurated 20 such schools in two phases

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, August 26: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Thursday inaugurated another 10 transformed schools in his Assembly constituency of Hinjili in Ganjam district.

The Chief Minister virtually inaugurated the schools in the third phase. Earlier, 20 such schools have been inaugurated by the Chief Minister in two phases. He will also dedicate another 20 schools in the constituency in next two phases, sources said.

Stating that school days are the best time of everyone's life, Patnaik urged the students to make proper use of this opportunity for betterment of their future. The school transformation programme, which was kicked off from Hinjili, will be

extended to all the schools across the state, he said. Patnaik urged everyone to take care of the schools as their own properties.

Special events have been organised in the 10 schools on the occasion. Several ministers, legislators, sarpanchs, panchayat members, alumni of the schools and current students & their parents along with locals attended the events.

Under the programme, state-of-the-art facilities like e-library, smart classrooms, computer rooms, science laboratories, sports facilities, reading rooms, laboratory, drinking water facilities, hygienic toilets and above all conducive study environment, have been created in the government schools. The walls of these schools have also been painted based on educational and interesting themes.

Ex-CBI dir Umashankar Mishra passes away

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, August 26: Former Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) director Umashankar Mishra breathed his last in Delhi Thursday at the age of 77, family sources said.

A 1968-batch Odisha cadre IPS officer, Mishra was undergoing treatment at a private hospital in Delhi for age-related complications.

Born at Banpur in Khurda, Mishra was the main strategist in the arrest of underworld don Abu Salem and his girlfriend Monica Bedi. He had also served as special director to CBI before taking charge as the director of the premier investigating agency in 2003.

Besides, he was a member of Meghalaya's Planning Commission and an adviser to Microsoft India.

2-day training begins for FRA personnel

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, August 26: A two-day capacity building training programme for the personnel engaged in Forest Right Act (FRA) cells in tribal dominated districts was inaugurated Thursday by Ranjana Chopra, Principal Secretary of the ST & SC Development Department. The two-day training is being organised by Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Research and Training Institute (SCSTRIT), Govt. of Odisha.

Ride Mo Cycles for free every Thursday



USERS WILL BE ALLOWED TO RIDE BICYCLES FROM 6AM TO 8PM EVERY THURSDAY

RESIDENTS CAN AVOID THE RIDES FREE OF COST DURING THE STIPULATED TIME WITHOUT ANY CHARGES FROM THE CYCLE STATIONS SITUATED ACROSS THE CITY

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, August 26: In a bid to promote cycling in the Capital city, the Bhubaneswar Smart City Limited (BSCL) has decided to allow people to ride bicycles from its Mo Cycle fleet free of cost for one day a week.

As per the Go Green initiative, the BSCL will allow people to ride Mo Cycles without paying anything every Thursday. While the initiative is aimed at promoting eco-friendly transport system in the city, it is expected that the move will boost Mo Cycle ridership which has taken a beating in the wake of Covid-19 pandemic.

"Users will be allowed to ride bicycles from 6am to 8pm every Thursday. Residents can avail the rides free of cost during the stipulated time without any charges from the cycle stations situated across the city. However, it is mandatory to install the Yana/Yulu application on a person's device to avail the service," said the BSCL. It can be mentioned here that Mo

Cycle is Odisha's first public bike sharing (PBS) initiative. The service was launched in 2018. The BSCL procured about 2,500 bicycles for the purpose. Three agencies were engaged to operate the service. While the first 30 minutes of each ride is free, one has to pay Rs 5 for subsequent rides. Moreover, monthly passes can be availed at Rs 99 and one can enjoy unlimited rides for a day at Rs 23.

The Mo Cycles, which initially received good response from the denizens, saw a decline in its ridership due to Covid-19 pandemic and rift between the BSCL and agencies. As per sources while 37,008 users were registered for the service in December 2018. However, the ridership plummeted to less than 100 per day in the wake of Covid.

Despite fall in ridership, Bhubaneswar was adjudged the second best city in the country under 'Cycles4Change' challenge initiative by the Centre and was provided Rs 1 crore aid to further promote such initiatives.



The newly-installed ECMO unit at the Cardiology department of SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack. Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik is scheduled to unveil the facility Friday

RSS chief meets Shankaracharya

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Puri, August 26: Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) Chief Mohan Bhagwat Thursday met Puri Shankaracharya Swami Nischalananda Saraswari here on the third day of his visit to Odisha.

Bhagwat visited Govardhan Peeth in the afternoon and held discussion with the seer.

Visva Sambad Kendra (VSK), the RSS's publicity wing described the meeting in a statement as "courtesy call" and added that Bhagwat had sought Shankaracharya's blessings.

After the meeting, Bhagwat visited Srimandir to pray before the divine siblings Lord Balabhadra, Devi Subhadra and Lord Jagannath.

RLH documents 1,100-year-old temple in Cuttack's Badamba

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, August 26: A four-member archaeological survey team of 'Rediscover Lost Heritage' (RLH) group has documented a 1,100-year-old ancient temple situated at Gurudipala village in Badamba block of Cuttack district. The survey team included team members Rabintra Kumar Rana, Subhasish Dash, Hrudananda Praharaj and project coordinator Deepak Kumar Nayak.

The temple of Goddess Ramchandi, as per the survey team, was built in unique Khakara style of architecture and the construction period of it may predate 9th Century AD. The team is currently in the process of listing the lesser known archaeological monuments of different ancient river valleys like Mahanadi, Prachi, Bhargavi & Ratnachira.

One of the team members, Rabintra Kumar Rana, said, "The ancient temple is situated just on the outskirts of Hindol-Badamba forest ranges. During our conversation with locals, we learnt that the temple was built by the kings of Badamba state. However, considering the construction style and the antiquities found near the temple premises, it appears the temple was built much earlier. It may have been renovated later by subsequent rulers of Badamba. Among the temples found in the state, only a few are built in Khakara style of architecture. Baitala Deula of Bhubaneswar, Varahi temple at Chaurasi, Puri and Durga temple at Baideswar, Cuttack can be taken as prime examples of Khakara style of architecture. In fact, Khakara styled Durga temple of Baideswar is situated just on the



THE 'GRAHA PAATA' OVER THE DOOR JAMBS HAS EIGHT GRAHAS (PLANETS) INSTEAD OF TRADITIONAL NAVA GRAHAS FOUND IN LATER ERA TEMPLES

The team has found some early archaeological antiquities near the temple premises, the most notable one among them being a Sahasralinga

Sahasralinga, a scientific pillar device, contains 1,020 miniature Shiva Lingas carved on it and has deep connection with 'Vedic Archaeoastronomy'



other side of Mahanadi River of this place. So, there is every possibility that this temple may be contemporary to Durga temple."

RLH's project coordinator Deepak Kumar Nayak said, "Our team has found some early archaeological antiquities near the temple precincts. The most notable one among them is the presence of a Sahasralinga. A Sahasralinga contains 1,020 miniature Shiva Lingas carved on it. It is actually a scientific pillar device. It is an old gnomon and has deep connection with 'Vedic Archaeoastronomy'. The 'Graha Paata' over the door jambs has eight Grahas (planets) instead of traditional Nava Grahas found in later era temples. On the outer walls of the temple, some early sculptures of Gangadhara

Shiva, Bhikshatana Shiva, Kartikeya in Mayurasana, Goddess Parvati in her Jogeswari form are seen. All the above mentioned antiquities may predate to 9th century AD."

The survey team also raised their concern over the lime paint applied to the outer walls and sculptures by locals. They suggested the removal of the paint by professionals or experts from state Archaeology department, to bring back the lost grandeur of the monument.

The original 10-armed Mahisamardini Durga image was stolen from the temple a few years ago. Now, a subsidiary detached image from the temple is being worshiped as the presiding Goddess Ramchandi.

NORMS GO FOR A TOSS



Throwing social distancing norms to winds, people make a beeline at the vaccination centre at Capital Hospital in Bhubaneswar, Friday

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A dozen babies infected with Covid in Balasore



REPRESENTATIONAL PICTURE

Two infants, who tested Covid-19 positive, were discharged from the hospital Wednesday, when their parents sought to shift them out

will be reviewed to ascertain the status of infection in the district. "We are creating special facilities for the treatment of children diagnosed with Covid-19. A provision of 40 beds including five in neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) and 5 beds in Pediatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU) is being made here," Jagdev added.

He added that the children infected with Covid-19 are not so serious and have mild symptoms. The district health officials are keeping a close eye on them, added the official. Meanwhile, the state has reported 849 fresh Covid-19 cases, of which 130 are below 18 years.

The state government has confirmed the death of another 66 persons due to Covid-19, taking the toll to 7,628.

Jagdev. Among the six kids, three are under one year and three above one year, he informed. Besides, two infants, who tested Covid-19 positive, were discharged from the hospital Wednesday, after their parents decided to shift them to Cuttack, Jagdev said.

Asked whether the rise in the number of Covid infection among children can be attributed to the third wave, Jagdev said that it is too early to draw any conclusion. However, the data in past few days

Bhubaneswar, August 26: As many as 12 babies have tested Covid-19 positive in Balasore district, officials said Thursday. Out of these, four infants (under one month) are under observation at the Sick Newborn Care Unit (SNCU) at the District Headquarters Hospital (DHH), while another six kids are under treatment at the hospital, said Chief District Medical and Public Health Officer, Dulal Sen

Confectioner in Bhadrak receives ₹72 lakh GST evasion notice from AP

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhadrak, August 26: A Bhadrak-based confectioner has received a tax evasion notice from Andhra Pradesh Sales Tax Department that accused him of evading GST amounting to ₹72 lakh.

Meanwhile, acting on the direction in the notice, the confectioner's UCO Bank savings account has been frozen.

The confectioner in question is Abhijit Puntia, a small sweet stall owner from Kothar village under Dhamnagar block in Bhadrak district. A small-time confectioner, Abhijit was taken back after receiving the notice. The Asurani branch of UCO Bank had received the notice from the GST Department in Andhra Pradesh. In the notice, it was mentioned that Abhijit Traders and Priya & Co has evaded tax to the tune of ₹72,19,627. In the letter, the bank had been directed to freeze his bank accounts. Unaware of GST, he immediately contacted UCO Bank officials. Abhijit then contacted the Bhadrak GST officials about the issue.

MAHANGA DOUBLE MURDER CASE

Court seeks fresh probe against min Jena

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nischintakoli, August 26: A local court has directed Mahanga police to launch a fresh probe into the charge of involvement of Panchayati Raj and Law Minister Pratap Jena in the Mahanga double murder case.

The judicial magistrate first class (JMFC) at Salipur directed a fresh probe into the matter. The court was hearing a petition by the complainant.

Hearing the case filed by Ramakant Baral, son of deceased BJP leader Kulamani Baral, the magistrate directed Mahanga police to start a fresh probe into the double murder case.

The court also directed the police to investigate the alleged involvement of the law minister in the case. Ramakant had alleged that despite complaint, police had struck off the name of the minister and Mahanga MLA as accused no-13 while submitting the chargesheet in the court.



REPRESENTATIONAL PICTURE

The court has also directed the police to investigate the alleged involvement of the law minister in the case. Ramakant had alleged that despite complaint, police had struck off the name of the minister and Mahanga MLA as accused no-13 while submitting the chargesheet in the court

BJP leaders Kulamani Baral and his associate Dibyasingh Baral of Nrutanga panchayat under Mahanga police limits were brutally hacked to death at Jankoti January 2, this year

The double murder of the two senior leaders then triggered an uproar in the state as BJP and Congress targeting Jena staged agitations at various places in the state demanding arrest of the accused

BJP leaders Kulamani Baral and his associate Dibyasingh Baral of Nrutanga panchayat under

Mahanga police limits were brutally hacked to death at Jankoti January 2, this year. The two were

PASTIME ACTIVITIES



Youths from Chaurpur village in Sambalpur carrying fishing rods to catch fish in the river Mahanadi, Thursday

OP PHOTO

Kalahandi: Principal held for fraud

POST NEWS NETWORK

Lanjigarh, August 26: Lanjigarh police in Kalahandi district arrested the Principal of Maa Hiranila Degree College for allegedly cheating a man of ₹2.5 lakh on the pretext of providing him a job in the college. The accused principal was identified as Ramesh Chandra Sahoo.

Sahoo was arrested after Lachhman Behera of Jodabandha

village under the police limits filed a written complaint against him at Lanjigarh police station. Sahoo had asked him to pay ₹2,50,000 for giving him the job. Police said the victim sold his land and arranged ₹2,50,000 and paid the money to Sahoo in his residence. Sahoo, however, issued him an appointment letter and assured him that if he does not get the job, he will return the money. However, he went back on his promise.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, SAMBALPUR (R&B) DIVISION NO. 1, SAMBALPUR
e-procurement notice
No.B-337
BID IDENTIFICATION No. EE/ R&B/ SBP/ 11/ 2021-22
E-mail - exeengsbp@rediffmail.com, Phone/Fax -0663-2548013
No.5536/ Dated 24.08.2021
1. The Superintending Engineer, Sambalpur (R&B) Division No.-I, Sambalpur on behalf of Governor of Odisha, invites Percentage Rate bids in Single Cover System in ONLINE MODE for construction of Civil Work as detailed in the DTCN from the eligible Class of Contractors.
2. No. of works :- 06 (Six)
3. Tender Cost :- Rs.6,000/-, Rs.4,000/-, Rs.2,000/- (On Line)
4. Class of Contractor :- 'B' & 'C' & Electrical Contractor / 'C' & 'D' & Electrical Contractor
5. Date and time available in Website & receipt of Bids :- 16.00 hrs. 06.09.2021 to 17.00 hrs. of 13.09.2021
6. Date of Opening of Tender :- 12.09.2021 at 11.30 hrs.
7. The Bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the Website
8. Any Corrigendum / Addendum will be displayed in the website www.tendersodisha.gov.in only.
Sd./- Superintending Engineer, Sambalpur (R&B) Division No.1
OIPR-34042/11/0031/2122

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA No. O-603
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER RURAL WORKS DIVISION-I, BHADRAK
E-mail: ee_rwbdk@yahoo.com
e-Procurement Notice for Road Works
BID IDENTIFICATION NO. Online Tender 10 of 2021-22
1. Name of the Work : Roads
2. Total No. of Works : 24 Nos.
3. Estimated Cost : Rs.0.51 Lakh to Rs.24.78 lakh
4. Class of Contractor : "D", "C" & "B" Class
5. Period of Completion : One to Two Months
6. Type of Tender : Single Cover
7. Other details :
Procurement Officer Bid Identification No. Availability of Tender Online for bidding From To Date & Time of opening of tender
1 2 3 4
Executive Engineer, Rural Works Division-I, Bhadrak Online-10 of 2021-22 31.08.21 At 10.00 A.M. 13.09.21 At 4.00 P.M. 14.09.2021 At 11.00 A.M.
Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal "https://tendersorissa.gov.in"
Sd./- Er. Kishore Chandra Khatua,
OIPR-25060/11/0010/2122 Executive Engineer, R.W. Division, Bhadrak

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF RURAL WATER SUPPLY AND SANITATION DIVISION, BOUDH
No.O-585- E-mail ID- rwssboudh@gmail.com
National competitive Bidding through E-Procurement
Tender Identification No. 05 / RWSS, Boudh of 2021-22
The Superintending Engineer, RWS&S Division, Boudh, on behalf of the Government of Odisha invites Percentage Rate Bids in single cover (p, contact) from the eligible class of experienced registered contractors through e-Tendering system for the piped water supply works as detailed in DTCN. The bid should be submitted on-line in the website www.tendersorissa.gov.in separately for the work.
1. Nature of work : Office building
2. Estimated cost : 13.29 lakhs
3. No. of works : 01 No.
4. Tender cost : 6000.00
5. Class of contractor : "D" & "C"
6. Availability of bid document in the website : Dt. 27.08.2021, 11 hours to 06.09.2021 17 hours
7. Date of seeking clarification : During the office hours of 27.08.2021 to 04.09.2021
8. Date of opening of bid : 07.09.2021 at 12.00 hours
Further details can be seen in the bidding documents which is available in the e-procurement portal https://www.tendersorissa.gov.in. Subsequent corrigendum if required shall be appeared in the website. Authority reserves the right to reject any or all tenders without assigning any reason therefor.
Sd./- Superintending Engineer, RWS&S Division, Boudh
OIPR-25039/11/0001/2122

Leopard population on rise in Dhenkanal

POST NEWS NETWORK

Dhenkanal, August 26: Good news for animal lovers! The population of leopards in Dhenkanal district has increased. Wildlife experts have claimed that their number would further increase if steps to ensure their safety and the availability of food in their habitats are taken.

Ten years ago, only one or two leopards were spotted in the jungles of Dhenkanal district. Their appearances were very rare. Then trap cameras were not installed in the jungles. So, it was then believed that the big cats had strayed into the district from neighbouring districts.

Over the years, the forest department has taken a slew of steps to minimise poaching and illegal felling of trees. Because of this, the population of wild animals and the forest cover in the district have increased.

From the satellite survey in 2015, the district's forest cover was 1,40,300 hectares. In 2021-22, it increased to 1,44,561 hectares. The increase in the area of forest has consequently helped increase the number of wild animals.

According to wildlife experts, the increase in the number of wild animals such as deer, boars, barking deer, among others will also help increase in big cats' population.

Anantapur Reserve Forest under Kamakhyanagar western range and Kandhara Reserve Forest under Hindol range have leopards.

Meanwhile, the forest department has started preparation for leopard census. It has also taken a slew of measures to keep a tab on poaching.

Yet, the district has earned notoriety for tiger poaching. Cases of smuggling of big cats' body parts including its nails and skins are frequently reported. In one of such cases, the forest department staff from Kapilas range busted a racket by arresting three persons including a teacher February 7. They were arrested while smuggling skins of two leopards that were poached in Anantapur Reserve Forest under Kankadahada block under Kamakhyanagar western range and sending it to other states.

"The increase in the population of wild animals such as deer and barking deer plays a crucial role in increasing the population of big cats. The forest department is taking steps to contain poaching. To get good results, more safety measures are to be taken to protect the reserve forests," said wildlife expert Arabinda Majhi.

Termining the increase in leopard population a good omen for forests, Rajendra Panigrahi, a member of 'Jibajantu Kalyan and Thaitan Samiti' said, "There has been a considerable decrease in poaching cases. The number of wild animals will go up only when they get an atmosphere where they can move freely."

When contacted, DFO Prakash Chand Gogineni said the department is taking every possible step to protect wild animals including the leopards from poachers. "The department is ready to start leopard census and soon it will be started," he added.

Drought situation grim in Mayurbhanj

OFFICIALS GO INTO A HUDDLE; 2,393 HA IN 10 BLOCKS AFFECTED BY DEFICIT RAINFALL



POST NEWS NETWORK

Baripada, August 26: As June, July and August recorded rainfall much less than the usual, the possibility of drought is getting real in 10 blocks of Mayurbhanj district. The district administration is now thinking how to deal with the situation.

The administration held an emergency meeting over the drought situation in the district under chairmanship of Collector Vineet Bhardwaj. The Collector directed agriculture officials and officials of the irrigation and lift irrigation departments to take necessary measures to alleviate the situation in the areas sans irrigation facilities.

The meeting revealed that out of 26 blocks in the district, paddy farming in 10 blocks has been severely affected by deficit rainfall and the situation in these blocks is gradually turning grim by the day.

According to officials, there is little hope for paddy harvest in Shyamakhunta, Kaptipada, Bangiriposi, Kuliana, Saraskana, Jashipur, Raruan, Bahalda, Tiring and Jankuda blocks where hectares of farmlands have cracked open for want of rain over last three months.

As per field surveys, paddy farming in 2,393 hectares in 54 panchayats under the 10 blocks has been affected by poor rainfall.

The Collector has directed the officials of the superintending engineer of the irrigation department, engineers of the mega irrigation projects, minor irrigation department and watershed mission to take necessary measures for irrigating the land and look for other alternative measures to save crops wherever possible. Officials were also asked to operationalise defunct irrigation projects on a war footing and submit reports about it to the administration. Hundreds of acres of farmland have remained fallow in the district. The Collector asked the agriculture officials to take steps to encourage farmers to raise non-paddy crops in the fallow land so that farmers would get a reprieve from the current situation.

According to reports, the district should have received an average of 360 mm rainfall in the monsoon, but 10 blocks have received rainfall much less than the normal. It is said only 60 mm rainfall was received by the district by the third week of August. Hence, the situation in 10 blocks is grim, it is said.

TEN YEARS AGO, ONLY ONE OR TWO LEOPARDS WERE SPOTTED IN THE JUNGLES OF THE DISTRICT. THEIR APPEARANCES WERE VERY RARE. IT WAS THEN BELIEVED THAT THE BIG CATS HAD STRAYED FROM NEIGHBOURING DISTRICTS

OVER THE YEARS, THE FOREST DEPARTMENT HAS TAKEN A SLEW OF MEASURES TO MINIMISE POACHING AND ILLEGAL FELLING OF TREES. BECAUSE OF THIS, THE POPULATION OF WILD ANIMALS AND THE FOREST COVER IN THE DISTRICT HAVE INCREASED

DFO PRAKASH CHAND GOGINENI SAID THE DEPARTMENT IS TAKING EVERY POSSIBLE STEP TO PROTECT WILD ANIMALS INCLUDING THE LEOPARDS FROM POACHERS. THE DEPARTMENT IS READY TO START LEOPARD CENSUS AND SOON IT WILL BE STARTED

The soul attracted leaned to the Abyss: It longed for the adventure of Ignorance.

SRI AUROBINDO



Power of Early Education

In the small northern Croatian town of Orehovica, preschoolers get together twice a week to play and learn. The classes, which include children of Roma background, are full of energy. Activities adapted to everyone's needs have created a sense of belonging for every child, regardless of their identity. The teachers are trained in inclusive education practices, and know how best to support these young children before they enter primary school. Most important, parents play a central role at the preschool and feel supported and valued. The positive impact on the children has spilled over into the local community and improved social cohesion.

The Orehovica programme's success underscores the longstanding truth that the period from birth to the age of five is vital to a person's long-term development. The brain grows rapidly during this time and develops important skills that influence our health, how well we do at school, and how good we are at our jobs.

Access to high-quality early education helps nurture these skills and can yield remarkable benefits. US researchers have spent the past 50 years studying the impact of such programmes on children who had attended them in the 1960s. They found that participation in early childhood education reduced the likelihood of children being placed in special education and increased high-school graduation rates by as much as 11 percentage points. These children experienced fewer suspensions from school, had better employment outcomes and overall mental well-being, and were less likely to receive criminal convictions.

Evidence from other countries points to a similarly clear pattern. In Chile, an analysis of fourth-grade students showed that children who had attended preschool – and poorer children in particular – did

better in reading and mathematics than those who had not. In Indonesia, early childhood education reduced gaps between poorer and richer children in language, cognitive development, communication, general knowledge, and pro-social behaviour.

Despite the importance of these early years, a recent study by UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring Report, 'Right from the Start', estimates that two in five children, mostly in low- and lower-middle-income countries, are still completely missing out on pre-primary school. Children disadvantaged as a result of disability, ethnicity, language, poverty, migration, or displacement are not only already disproportionately more likely to suffer from malnutrition and poor health; they are also more likely to be unable to access preschool educations.

The preschool participation gap between children from rich and poor households is stark; in some African countries, it exceeds 60 percentage points. Ethnic gaps also can be large. In Greece, for example, only 28% of Roma children are in pre-primary education, compared to an overall enrollment rate of 84%.

'Right from the Start' argues that giving everyone the same educational opportunity from the beginning can play a powerful role in fostering inclusion. Giving all children access to pre-primary education,

regardless of their background, identity, or ability, would level the playing field later in life. But most countries leave this up to chance.

Only 28% make pre-primary schooling compulsory for all children. Access is only part of the picture. In the poorest countries, many preschools are underfunded and not equipped to provide high-quality

inclusive education. Children need safe schools, engaging activities, and support from adequately trained teachers to thrive, but too many early-education environments ultimately fail them.

In Malawi, a survey of staff at childcare centers found that only one in three had a relevant qualification. But quality concerns exist in high-income countries, too. In the Italian region of Tuscany, for example, about 60% of teachers said they were unfamiliar with the needs of immigrant, refugee, and Roma students.

The COVID-19 pandemic has worsened existing inequalities, making the case for an inclusive start in education even stronger. During the G7 summit in the United Kingdom in June, US First Lady Jill Biden and Catherine, the Duchess of Cambridge, championed the transformative power of universal early childhood care and education. To intensify efforts and galvanise cooperation, governments and international organisations will launch a new Global Partnership Strategy on early education this fall, with the aim of ensuring that every child can go to pre-primary school.

It is vital that countries prioritise early education appropriately. They must ensure teachers are trained in inclusive education and that curricula take into account children's diversity. More should be done

to collect data on those excluded, and governments must increase investment in early education programmes.

World leaders have repeatedly promised to "build back better" after the pandemic. When it comes to education, they need to get it right from the start.

The writer is Director of the UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report.

©PROJECT SYNDICATE

WISDOM CORNER

When it is obvious that the goals cannot be reached, don't adjust the goals, adjust the action steps. **CONFUCIUS**

When something is important enough, you do it even if the odds are not in your favour. **ELON MUSK**

I don't believe you have to be better than everybody else. I believe you have to be better than you ever thought you could be. **KEN VENTURI**

LOL

God is missing

Two little boys were known troublemakers, stealing everything they could get their hands, even from the church. One day a priest stopped one of the boys and asked, "Where is God?" The boy shrugged and the priest repeated, "Where is God?" The boy ran out of



the cathedral crying to his home where he hid in a closet. Eventually his brother found him and asked, "What's wrong?" The crying boy replied, "We're in trouble now! God is missing and they think we took him!"

DISCONSONANT WITH NATURE

FOCUS ENVIRONMENT

Our planet is experiencing extreme chaos and tragedy on account of our fractured relationship with nature. A virus has spilled over from wildlife to humans, causing a catastrophic global pandemic. It is apprehended that the COVID-19 crisis will augment extreme poverty globally. Climate change is fueling weather events that are unprecedented in scale and devastation leading to drastic alterations to our natural, man-made and social environments. The erosion digging away at our coastal beaches and river bends is a serious threat to the people living near the coasts.



Dr. Debapriya Mukherjee

WITH THE ADVANCEMENT OF TECHNOLOGIES AND MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES, WE HAVE CONTROLLED SOME FORMS OF POLLUTION BUT APPROXIMATELY 19 MILLION PREMATURE DEATHS ARE ESTIMATED TO OCCUR ANNUALLY AS A RESULT OF THE WAY SOCIETIES USE NATURAL RESOURCES

The Earth's ecosystem that supports our life is in a severe state of degradation. The achievement of economic growth over the past few decades has been accompanied by large amounts of pollution, with significant impacts on human health and ecosystems and the ways in which some of the major Earth system processes, such as the climate, are functioning.

With the advancement of technologies and management strategies, we have controlled some forms of pollution but approximately 19 million premature deaths are estimated to occur annually as a result of the way societies use natural resources. The existing pattern of consumption and production - the linear economic model of "take-make-dispose" will seriously burden an already polluted planet, affecting current and future generations.

Presently, the degradation of land and marine ecosystems destabilises the well-being of 3.2 billion people and costs about 10% of the annual global gross product in species loss and ecosystem services. Of the estimated eight million species on earth, around a million face extinction, according to biodiversity specialists from around the world. Many of these are now threatened with extinction within decades leading to a biodiversity collapse. The average abundance of native species in major land-based habitats has fallen by at least 20%, mostly since 1900. More than 40% of amphibian species, almost 33% of reef-forming corals and more than a



The achievement of economic growth over the past few decades has been accompanied by large amounts of pollution, with significant impacts on human health and ecosystems and the ways in which some of the major Earth system processes are functioning

third of all marine mammals are now threatened. All over the world, the priority is to provide more food, energy and materials to people to improve their lifestyle at the cost of nature's ability without considering severe adverse impact on nature and human

health. Researchers have ranked the five direct drivers of change in nature with the largest relative global impacts so far. In descending order of importance, they are changes in land and sea use; direct exploitation of organisms; climate change; pollution and invasive alien species. As key ecosystems that deliver services essential to food and agriculture rapidly decline, we are clearly living out of harmony with nature.

Millions of young people in many countries demand climate action but there is no easy cure for what ails the environment. No silver bullet can restore the natural world overnight. But preventing the ongoing loss of natural ecosystems must be the top priority for limiting future emissions and the loss of vital biodiversity. In parallel, the restoration and sustainable management of degraded regions can contribute to the drawdown of additional carbon and the recovery of local species. At the same time, we must avoid perverse negative consequences, such as the loss of natural ecosystems or the re-vegetation of degraded lands with non-native species, which could risk their becoming inva-

sive. Such cases are not restoration and should not be tracked as progress toward restoration goals.

Restoration is an inherently local challenge requiring intricate knowledge of the specific social and ecological context. In different regions around the world, and it encompasses a range of land-management strategies, including the conservation of existing ecosystems, the protection of land to support natural recovery, assisted restoration in degraded regions, sustainable ecosystem management, and holistic agricultural practices to promote local biodiversity and human well-being. Providing unifying social and ecological insights to inform local land-management decisions - assessing the trade-offs and synergies among different land-use approaches - will be a major scientific challenge in supporting restoration efforts over the coming decade.

Restoration targets need to be formulated as contributions to biodiversity and climate and not a percentage of area. In addition to these, restoration targets need inclusive scope beyond restoring the vegetation structure of forest ecosystems. They should, therefore, also encompass other ecosystems, biodiversity elements, and drivers. Above all there is emergent need to "bend the curve" of both biodiversity loss and climate change and restoration must be targeted hand in hand with threat abatement. Averting loss now is eas-

ier, cheaper, faster and less uncertain than restoration. Indigenous peoples' knowledge and practices are important to increasing the effectiveness of restoration activities in degraded ecosystems. Such contributions can be amplified, ensuring their full involvement in the co-design of restoration activities affecting their territories and recognising their visions of healthy and productive ecosystems. Many examples demonstrate that indigenous peoples' active involvement in restoration activities substantially increases their success and legitimacy. Most glorious example is sacred forest in Meghalaya.

In view of the above, it may be mentioned that ecosystems are unique capital assets for humankind. If properly managed, they yield a flow of vital services. These include the production of goods, such as food and raw materials, and support for economic activity and welfare through pollution, recycling pollutants, natural protection and other important processes. Most importantly, the ecosystems are not only fixed in supply and subject to irreversible loss; they are prone to abrupt collapse if sufficiently disturbed or degraded. On a global scale, the uncertainty about unforeseen future impacts, coupled with irreversible and substantial environmental losses, is exacerbating global environmental risks—from climate change to biodiversity loss to natural disasters. We need to ensure that the rising scarcity of

ecosystems and their services is reflected in our market, business, and public decisions. These decisions must recognise that the benefits - or the valuable goods and services - that are generated by ecosystems are wide ranging but generally not marketed. This is why they are frequently misused or overused, and such irreversible conversion can increase the risk of ecological collapse. Only by taking on the economics of ecosystems we will be on the path to global restoration.

The writer is a former Senior Scientist with the Central Pollution Control Board. Views are personal.

SPECTRUM LOCAL GOVERNANCE

Role of panchayats in dispute resolution



Pradeep Kumar Panda

SELF-GOVERNANCE ENVISAGED BY THE CONSTITUTION MUST INCLUDE JUDICIAL POWERS TOO AND THAT IS THE RATIONALE OF 'NYAYA PANCHAYATS'

Since ages panchayats have been arbitrating on property disputes, torts and even criminal offences like murder and rape. The age-old institutions of local self-governance have found new vigour with the introduction of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act. Strengthening the panchayats and empowering people at the grassroots to resolve their minor disputes amicably would solve many of the problems that are faced by conventional justice dispensation system. This would also solve the problems of accessibility to the courts for those living in remote regions.

Self-governance envisaged by the Constitution must include judicial powers too and that is the rationale behind 'Nyaya Panchayats'. Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala and West Bengal have not made any statutory provisions for Nyaya Panchayats in their state Panchayati Raj Acts. But even where laws are enacted, as in Bihar, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha, they are non-functional. In the present scenario, neither judicial functions have

been enforced properly nor have Nyaya Panchayats established themselves as effective instruments for resolving disputes. In fact, Kerala has not included any judicial provision in the Kerala Panchayati Raj Act, 1994. However, there are cases of 'Neeti Melas' where local issues have been resolved. Similarly, states like Maharashtra have also implemented such legal aid camps to resolve disputes at the panchayat level. Some panchayats have also taken up measures for 'litigation free' panchayats.

Generally, it is observed that in few states where Nyaya Panchayats have been performing, their potential has not been exploited fully. There has also been no uniformity among the states on its functions. Most of the Nyaya Panchayats were formed through a system of nomination or a combination of election and nomination. The nomination system by District Magistrate, who would act on the recommendations of lower functionaries, may lead to influential persons being nominated to serve on Nyaya Panchayats, thus impinging upon the neutrality. The working of Nyaya Panchayats may also be affected due

to the members being subjected to influences and pressures.

The Gram Nyayalayas Act, 2008, has been enacted by the Government of India to facilitate establishment of the Gram Nyayalayas at the grassroots level to provide access to justice to the citizens at their door steps. Presently, only a few states have Gram Nyayalayas, which almost have a formal character, making them complicated. They also tend to be more expensive for the litigants. Hence, people have restricted access to justice as compared to the Nyaya Panchayats. The Gram Nyayalayas with a Nyayadhikari and lawyers representing the parties are still not reaching the common man.

Acting on the advice of the National Advisory Council, the Government of India constituted a committee on June 25, 2006, under the chairmanship of Upendra Dahi. The panel submitted a draft Bill proposing setting up Nyaya Panchayats at panchayat level to resolve disputes before they reach the formal judicial system. However, the Bill could not be taken to its logical end due to various reservations expressed by the Ministry of Law and Justice, Ministry of Finance and the state governments.

As the subject of Nyaya Panchayats raises a number of pertinent questions, which need to be tackled through discussions for a wider acceptability, a study on the institutionalisation of Nyaya Panchayats gains importance. Some states such as Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra have adopted pilot projects in some districts with a view to adjudicating cases in the rural sector speedily. Under the Karnataka model that came into effect in April 1993, special judicial magistrates adjudicated rural cases at the spot of the dispute. In Jammu and Kashmir Adalat offices are attached to the panchayat and the panchayat organisations conciliatory meetings. In Bihar there is a separate institution namely "Gram Kacheri".

The Nyaya Panchayats are a necessity with intent to providing justice to the common man in a cost effective manner, making impartial decisions, maintaining social harmony, reducing the burden of courts and settling disputes through conciliation. This will lead to the creation of litigation-free panchayats in India.

The writer is an economist with IIPA, New Delhi.

Caste census conundrum

Sir, The piercing clamour and fervent demand have led the Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and some of the MPs to press for a caste census. Now, even the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) in Odisha has joined the bandwagon for a caste census. However, according to me, it is more of a political gimmick rather than a social strategy to uplift the downtrodden classes. It is obvious that politicians leave no stone unturned to win their political vote bank. However, caste census seems to be imperative but it would have negative repercussions of vehement assertions of each group against the other; thus leading to friction and destabilising the unity and harmony of already polarised India. Most importantly, caste census exercise could win elections for political parties, but not really help the socio-economic development of the people. The question is: would we be talking of caste if basic necessities of people like health, education and job opportunities were provided efficiently? Do the demands of politicians really represent the current needs and aspirations of the people? Perhaps they actually do not. Thus the narrative and focus should be on development in a real sense.

Aswino Gomango, RAYAGADA

Privatisation of airports

Sir, The Ministry of Civil Aviation and the Airport Authority of India (AAI) have decided to privatise 25 Indian airports (domestic as well as international) on the instructions of the Union government. According to the government, new airports will be built with the money raised from the privatisation process. Is the government a contractor which will build airports and sell them to industrialists? Will the privatisation of airports benefit the people? Moreover, questions are being raised on whether the fliers would receive the same service, facilities and security once the airports are handed over to the Adani Group. Will the prices of tickets also remain same and no additional tax burden would be imposed on the fliers? Most importantly, who will provide the security to the airports and the fliers? In addition, what will be the future of the existing employees of AAI? The Adani Group is not a charitable trust that will provide generous services to the fliers. Their main objective is to earn more profits and as a result of this fliers will suffer. I, therefore, urge the Union government to re-consider the privatisation process and save the country from being sold out to few businessmen.

Bishnu Prasad Das, CUTTACK

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

Orissa POST

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POLITICAL STIR



Members of Socialist Unity Centre of India, demanding to declare Kishorenagar block in Angul district as drought affected region, gheraoing the block office, Thursday

Urea black marketing adds to woes of Sambalpur farmers

A 50-KG PACKET OF UREA IS SOLD FOR ₹600, DOUBLE ITS MSP

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, August 26: While deficit rainfall has affected paddy farming in some parts of Sambalpur district, farmers have alleged that black-marketing of fertilizers has become a cause of concern for them when farming activities are peaking up. They have demanded raids on dealer points and regular checking of fertiliser stocks.



REPRESENTATIVE PIC

According to reports, price of a packet of urea is officially fixed at ₹267 while the same is sold for ₹600 in the market. Black marketers are raking in the moolah.

According to reports, price of a packet of urea is officially fixed at ₹267 while the same is sold for ₹600 in the market. Black marketers are raking in the moolah.

They alleged that unscrupulous dealers are creating a shortage of fertilizers with tacit support from the department while agriculture and civil supplies officials do not take stock of the situation. Farmers have to return empty-handed from primary agriculture cooperative societies and large area primary agriculture cooperative societies where urea is not available now.

when they need it. PACSs and LAMPs do not have fertilisers while traders sell the same at high price. Farmers can't wait for government supply of urea at this critical time. Hence, they are bound to buy the fertiliser at high price," Pradhan observed.

Ashok Pradhan, convener of Paschima Odisha Krushak Sangathan, said both the state and the central governments have been doing their own publicity through various platforms about welfare programmes and schemes for farmers.

Ashok Pradhan, convener of Paschima Odisha Krushak Sangathan, said both the state and the central government have been doing their own publicity through various platforms about welfare programmes and schemes for farmers

"But their claims stands in sharp contrast with the current situation. In fact, farmers have to face a tough time without getting urea

DRCS Lingaraj Nayak said there is no allegation about shortage of urea in cooperative societies. Fertilizer is distributed as per official guidelines. If more fertilizer is required, there will be provision for it, he added

NCST team takes stock of project impact in Malkangiri

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kalimela, August 26: A delegation of the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) Thursday visited Motu in Malkangiri district to take stock of the situation arising out of the Polavaram project being executed by the Andhra Pradesh Government.



POLAVARAM ROW

The team, led by its member Ananata Nayak, is on a three-day visit to Odisha, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. On reaching Motu, the team held talks with local people about the project. It has always been alleged that scores of villages spread over four states including Chhattisgarh will be affected by the Indra Sagar multi-purpose project. Besides, large tracts of farmland will be submerged by its water while thousands of people will lose their livelihood. Notably, the central government has granted national status to the project. The state government has opposed the

project while various outfits have been strongly opposing it by organizing agitations, rallies in the affected areas.

Tandabai panchayats on how far they will be affected by the project. Officials of the district administration and various departments were present.

Over 30 people from three neighbouring states were present during the visit. The members of the commission sought opinion of people of Motu, Pusuguda, Malabharam, Lachhipata and

The team visited various riparian areas where farming is said to be affected by the project. They talked to the Collector and local MLA about the issue.

Youth's hanging body spotted in Jajpur district

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur, August 26: A youth's body was found hanging from a blackberry tree at Sisirana village under Binjharpur police limits in Jajpur district Thursday.

The deceased was identified as Anjan Mallick, son of Ramakant Mallick from Sisirana village. A domestic dispute is said to be the reason behind his taking the extreme step. Anjan worked in a private company in Andhra Pradesh. He came to his village a few months back and during the period, his marriage was solemnised.



Family members found Anjan missing at around 4 am Thursday. They launched a frantic search for him but failed in tracing him

However, a few days into the marriage, the relationship between the couple started souring over some issues. They used to quarrel frequently. A few days back, Anjan had dropped his wife at her parents' house.

Anjan's family members found him missing at around 4 am Thursday. They launched a frantic search for him at every possible place but failed in tracing him out. Later, some villagers spotted his body hanging from a blackberry tree in the village Thursday morning.

They immediately informed the deceased's family members and the police as well. Later, a team from Binjharpur police station reached the spot, brought down the body and sent it for postmortem.

A detailed investigation is underway to find out the cause behind the death and what could have prompted him to do so. The cops are probing the issue from all possible angles, it was learnt.

ACF SOUMYA'S DEATH

NHRC seeks status report in 6 weeks

POST NEWS NETWORK

Paralakhemundi, August 26: The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) Wednesday sought a status report of the ongoing probe into Assistant Conservator of Forests (ACF) Soumya Ranjan Mohapatra death incident.



More people are likely to be quizzed by the Crime Branch in connection with the case

Odisha Police DG Abhay and Additional Chief Secretary, Forest and Environment Department Mona Sharma has been asked to submit their reports within next six weeks, the NHRC notice stated.

Abhimohapatra has alleged that sudden transfer of the PS to Koraput has strengthened the doubt that he was giving protection to key accused Gajapati DFO.

Meanwhile, more persons are expected to be quizzed in connection with the case. Forest Minister's former private secretary Dipti Ranjan Behera would be quizzed in this connection soon, a senior official of Crime Branch said.

The probing agency is also likely to question the deceased ACF's wife Bidyabharati Panda once again, the senior Crime Branch official added.

Father of the deceased ACF

Keonjhar: 100 high schools, OAVs put under 5T ambit

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, August 26: As the state government has emphasised 'High School Transformation' programme under 5T initiative across the state, 100 state-run high schools and Odisha Adarsha Vidyalayas (OAVs) have been included in the programme in Keonjhar district, a report said.



These schools are now being upgraded with various facilities in 13 blocks while Collector Ashish Thakare, PD(DRDA), all sub-collectors, the district education officer, all BDOs, tehsildars and BEOs have been routinely reviewing the progress of the work under the programme.

district will be included in the programme in the next phase. The fund for the project is being provided from the district mineral foundation (DMF).

rooms, computer rooms, science laboratories, sports facilities, reading rooms, labs, drinking water facilities, hygienic toilets and above all a conducive study environment to ensure that rural children get exposure to various innovative ideas.

The High School Transformation programme aims at giving a complete facelift to the state-run high schools. These schools are being equipped with state-of-the-art facilities like e-library, smart class-

It was learnt that Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik will inaugurate these schools October 2. Notably, it is the dream project of the Chief Minister.

10-YR OLD DROWNS IN BALASORE

POST NEWS NETWORK

Khaira, August 26: Tension gripped Bateswar on Soro-Kupari road under Khaira police limits in Balasore district after hundreds of local people staged a road blockade following death of a 10-year-old boy Thursday.

village. According to sources, Dhananjay had gone to his uncle's house in nearby Kantapada village for a visit. He was playing with his friends Thursday morning near a nullah. While playing, his feet slipped and he fell into the water. He was immediately rescued by the villagers and rushed to Khaira government hospital. But it was too late. The doctors declared him received dead.

Hundreds of villagers from Kantapada and Bateswar laid siege to Soro-Kupari road. Putting burning tyres on road, they staged a road block, demanding ₹10 lakh compensation to the deceased's family and a bridge across the nullah. Police officials tried to pacify the agitating villagers. However, angry villagers refused to budge from the spot, demanding the compensation.

Solar power project singses under local fury

POST NEWS NETWORK

Saintala, August 26: With focus on carbon-neutral green energy, the state government is making efforts to enhance solar power production in the state. However, an ambitious solar power project proposed by the Aditya Birla group is facing local opposition at Dunguripalli under Saintala block of Bolangir district.



Notably, the state government wants to increase the solar power production capacity to 1,500MW by 2022. Green Energy Development Corporation (GEDCOL) has been working on a detailed roadmap for enhancing solar power production on a commercial basis and to adopt the latest technology for reducing the cost of production.

Hundreds of people opposed the plant Wednesday and gheraoed the tehsil office for hours.

authorities are planning to hand over hundreds of acres of pasture, cremation and forest land at Dunguripalli, Turjauper, Saraphapada and Kuanrgaon to the company.

According to reports, the company has set a target to acquire 1200 acres in 10 pachayats under Saintala block to set up its solar plant. The IDCO has directed revenue officials to provide land for the project.

Locals had earlier met the tehsildar June 8, opposing the land acquisition for the company. However, the tehsil administration has initiated the process to

■ The company has set a target to acquire 1200 acres in 10 pachayats under Saintala block to set up its solar plant. The IDCO has directed revenue officials to provide land for the project

■ The tehsil administration has initiated the process to convert the land before handing it over to the company. Locals alleged the tehsil authorities are planning to acquire hundreds of acres of pasture, cremation and forest land at Dunguripalli, Turjauper, Saraphapada and Kuanrgaon

convert the land before handing it over to the company. Hundreds of local people along with ZP vice chairperson Pandab Sahu, Saintala sarpanch Bhimsen Swain, social activist Santanu Nayak and youth leader Gajapati Sahu staged protests at the tehsil office. They also submitted a memorandum addressed to the Chief Minister through the tehsildar.

PONZI FRAUD



Investors of non-banking finance firm Sahara India Pariwar staging a demonstration outside the company's Berhampur city office, Thursday, demanding return of maturity payments under various deposit schemes

Ker govt faces flak over rising Covid cases, TPR



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thiruvananthapuram, August 26:

The Kerala government Thursday faced flak from its political opponents and public health experts for its alleged carelessness and foolish decisions regarding Covid-19 management, which according to them has led to the rise in cases and TPR in the southern state which is presently accounting for nearly 70 per cent of the national total of daily infections. Kerala Wednesday recorded 31,445 fresh cases, which is 68.11 per cent of the national total - 46,164 - of new infections in the last 24 hours. The TPR was 19.03 per cent Wednesday. The last time it had crossed the 19 per cent mark was three months back May 26 when it was 19.95 per cent. Union Minister of State for External Affairs and Parliamentary Affairs V Muraleedharan attributed this to the carelessness of the Kerala government, which according to him was more focused on celebrating the anniversary of

the Moplah riots rather than managing Covid-19.

Carelessness of the state government was the reason for this, he said and added that the Left government was more focused on celebrating the anniversary of the Moplah riots.

That is not the priority. Dealing with Covid-19 should be the priority, he said while addressing the media in New Delhi.

A similar view was expressed by Congress MLA Ramesh Chennithala who Thursday told the media that the state government has failed to prevent spread of Covid-19 in the state and demanded that Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan apologise to the people.

He also alleged that the carelessness of the state was the reason behind the rise in Covid-19 cases in Kerala.

The senior Congress leader said that presently the state was accounting for around 70 per cent of the daily national total of fresh infections.

Well-known public health ex-

Another day of over 30K cases

Kerala posted 30,007 fresh Covid-19 cases Thursday, the second consecutive day it reported more than 30,000, and 162 deaths which pushed the total infection count in the state to 39.13 lakh and the toll to 20,134. According to the central government, 58.4 per cent of the total Covid-19 cases last week were reported from Kerala. On Wednesday, the state recorded 31,445 fresh cases, which was 68.11 per cent of the national total - 46,164 - of new infections in the last 24 hours. In the last 24 hours, 1,66,397 samples were tested and the TPR was found to be 18.03 per cent. So far, 3.07 crore samples have been tested, it said.

pert Dr SS Lal blamed the absence of a clear-cut Covid management strategy, the keeping of the scientific community away from decision making and the foolish decisions taken at the bureaucratic level for the present fast spreading of the disease.

Lal, who unsuccessfully contested in the recent Assembly election on a Congress ticket, also urged the Left government to release the health data related to the virus infection to evaluate the actual situation prevailing in the state.

The government is hiding all data related to the Covid-19. We are unable to analyse the actual Covid situation in the state due to the unavailability of the data. If we are able to access it, we can figure out the basic facts like which age group is most affected and so on, Lal told PTI.

Villagers meet to bring normalcy along border

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Silchar (Assam), August 26: At a time Assam and Mizoram governments are trying to find solutions to a vexed border dispute, common people from both states have come forward to try normalise the situation.

A team from Mizoram's Vairengte Village Council, visited Lailapur in Cachar to hold people-to-people discussions. Vairengte is a border village in Mizoram's Kolasib district.

The village council is equivalent to the village panchayat on the Assam side and the local village bodies of both sides were engaged in the talks, officials said.

The Vairengte team had taken this step keeping Mizoram Chief Minister Zoramthanga, informed, Vairengte Joint Village Council leader Lalfangkima said.

After a deadly gun battle between police forces of the two states exactly a month ago despite a peace brokered by the Union home ministry, the situation had remained

ASSAM-MIZORAM BORDER ROW



tense with truckers refusing to travel from one state to another creating artificial shortages. The meeting decided that people from both sides would be able to go to villages on the other side of the state border on business or to visit friends and relatives without any hindrance.

If anybody wants to enter Mizoram for any business or any other genuine needs, he or she may go. The entire responsibility will be borne by the Mizo villagers. However, the visitor should return

within the day, Lalfangkima said.

For entering Mizoram, one needs an Inner-Line-Permit (ILP). The village Council is allowed to give permission to enter without ILP for a day only.

Both the village parties have formed a committee to oversee movement on a regular basis and have exchanged their personal phone numbers, to facilitate coordination.

Lalfangkima said that both the states depend on each other in

many areas, especially in business and labour exchange.

So, we have decided to run the business in our own way till a permanent solution comes. We would like to run our life as we used to have, he added.

When contacted, Cachar Superintendent of Police Ramandeep Kaur said it was an initiative at the local level and the administration was aware of the development.

It was not a formal official meeting, but an initiative by common people. This is a positive development to build a good long-lasting relationship between the two neighbours, she told PTI.

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 on July 26. Assam's Barak Valley districts of Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi share a 164.6 km long border with Mizoram's three districts of Aizawl, Kolasib and Mamit.

2,500 rhino horns, ivory to be destroyed

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Guwahati, August 26: Following a Gauhati High Court order, Assam Environment and Forest Department is likely to destroy around 2,500 rhino horns, ivory and body parts of other protected animals stored in various treasuries in different districts.

Assam's Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forest (Wildlife) Mahendra Kumar Yadav said the process to verify the rhino horns, ivory and body parts of various protected animals seized from poachers, smugglers or extracted from dead animals over the last four decades and kept in government treasuries in districts, is now underway.



The Forest Department would take a final decision on destroying the horns, ivory and other animal parts after a public hearing August 29 at Assam Forest School Campus at Jalukbari in Guwahati. Recommendations of a state-

level committee constituted last month for the purpose and the state government's advice would be considered before the burning of these remains, Yadav, who is also the Chief Wildlife Warden (CWW), told IANS.

He said that around 5 per cent of the specimens would be preserved for education, awareness, scientific purposes and required as exhibits in certain court cases.

The destruction of the rhino horns and other animal parts would be conducted in conformity with the relevant provisions of the Wildlife (Protection) Act of 1972 and to comply the Gauhati High Court's December 13, 2010 order, that was passed following public in-

terest litigation.

Principal Chief Conservator of Forest (Wildlife) Amit Sahai said that verification of rhino horns stored in Kamrup (Metro), Barpeta and Morigaon districts has been completed while it is underway in Sonitpur, Nagaon, Golaghat and other district treasuries. Of the 261 horns verified so far, 241 have been marked for destruction and 18 for preservation.

Sahai said that various stakeholders, including media persons and NGOs are involved in the ongoing verification of rhino horns, elephant tusks (ivory) and body parts of other protected animals to ensure transparency in the whole exercise.

Kerala's Covid lessons for India and its govt

Kerala has so far reported 3.8 million infections, or 12% of India's total of 32.5 million. Its 19,757 deaths, however, account for only 4% of the overall nationwide fatalities



REUTERS

Malappuram, August 26: Vilified by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's party for its high Covid-19 cases, Kerala's apparent poor record may actually hold crucial lessons for the country in containing the outbreak as authorities brace for a possible third wave of infections.

The opposition-ruled, densely populated southern state is currently reporting the most number of coronavirus cases in the country and accounts for the second-highest national tally - unflattering headline numbers that Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has seized upon as a reflection of bungled local leadership.

However, a Reuters analysis of national and state data, and interviews with epidemiologists and Kerala health authorities paint a different picture.

It shows the state's containment measures have helped to catch infections early, allowing authorities to better manage the illness and dramatically lower the death rate - a stark contrast to people dying in carparks and outside hospitals for lack of oxygen and beds in big cities like Delhi at the height of the health crisis a few months earlier.

While the federal government may have its views on rapid antigen tests, it is important to consider that the state's strategies have by and large succeeded in not just keeping mortality low but also in being able to detect one in six cases compared to one in 33 nationally, said Rajib Dasgupta, head of the Centre of Social Medicine & Community Health at New Delhi's Jawaharlal

Nehru University.

The efficient detection rate and its population density at more than twice the national average explain the high number of cases in Kerala.

All the same, at 0.5%, Kerala still has the lowest fatality rate among all but one thinly populated state. The national figure is 1.4% and it is 1.3% for the country's most populous state, Uttar Pradesh.

The difference comes down to Kerala's reliance on rapid antigen tests to detect and strictly isolate infected people at home, an approach the federal health ministry has sharply criticised but which state officials argue has helped them to better allocate hospital beds and oxygen supplies for those who really need them.

The government-recommended RT-PCR tests are more accurate but take longer to produce results, meaning by the time a positive Covid-19 case is confirmed the infected person is more likely to have developed severe symptoms and passed it on to others in a vicious cycle of more infections and deaths.

Kerala's rapid test results allow for early treatment in home isolation which then narrows the virus' path to infections, state officials say. These factors, along with the strained medical resources across much of India, largely explain why the overall national death rate is much higher than in the Communist-run state.

Kerala officials also say a state-run support service that includes phone consultation, provision of drugs and pulse oximeters that detect blood oxygen levels for people recovering at home provide a bulwark in the battle against the disease.

AI-BASED ATTENDANCE IN 48K ASSAM SCHOOLS

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Guwahati, August 26: To capture the automatic attendance and management, the state-owned RailTel Corporation of India has completed the work of deploying Artificial Intelligence (AI) based Identification System for 48,000 government schools across Assam, officials said Thursday.

The RailTel, a Central Public Sector Enterprise, has completed the Rs 19.20 crore work of Student Database Management Information System (SDMIS) for government schools in Assam, the company official said.

The official said that the RailTel has completed this project in four months in Assam's 33 districts.

RailTel chairman and Managing Director Puneet Chawla said that with the Covid-19 pandemic rapidly changing the world, all important sectors including health, education and services are leaning towards cutting edge digital tech-



nologies to adjust with the new normal.

RailTel has provided this AI based solution to schools in Assam and has also provided end user training for smooth implementation.

RailTel is also capable of rolling

out a number of technology-based services like AI based Cloud platform solution for Smart Classroom solution, Learning Management System etc which are the need of the hour, Chawla said.

According to Assam Education Department officials, Axom Sarba Shiksha Abhijan Mission, has initiated several reforms to modernise the education department through user friendly digital reforms and extensive adoption of Information and Communication Technology tools.

PHYSICAL CLASSES FOR HS, PG COURSES TO START FROM SEPT

Physical classes for Class 12, final-year degree and post graduation courses will begin from the first week of September in Assam with relaxation of Covid-19 restrictions, officials said Thursday. During a meeting of the Assam Cabinet chaired by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, it was decided that the first dose of Covid-19 vaccine will be mandatory for attending the classes. "The cabinet decided to start classes for HS final, Degree final and PG final year from 1st week of September, 2021," a communique from the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) said.

SOLEMNISATION OF MARRIAGE VIA VIDEO CONFERENCING

Law must recognise tech advancements: HC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kochi, August 26: Law must not only change with changing social needs, it must recognise technological advancements, the Kerala High Court has said while referring to a larger bench the question - whether a wedding under the Special Marriage Act (SMA) can be solemnised online via video conferencing.

Justice PB Suresh Kumar said that the Supreme Court in National Textile Workers' Union vs PR Ramakrishnan case had observed that if the law fails to respond to the needs of changing society, then either it will stifle the growth of the society and choke its progress, or if the society is vigorous enough, it will cast away the law, which stands in the way of its growth.

The high court said it was constrained to quote the apex court's observation as there were large number of cases before it involving situations where one or both the parties to an intended marriage had to leave the country, after giv-



ing notice of the wedding as required under the SMA, on account of inevitable social requirements and could not, consequently, solemnise the marriage.

Cases involving situations where parties to the marriage who have left India after giving notice of the intended marriage, could not come back to India due to reasons beyond their control and could not consequently solemnise the marriage, have also come to the notice of this

court, Justice Kumar said.

The high court said a pragmatic interpretation of the provisions of the SMA would redress the grievances of many such people.

It also termed as incorrect the views expressed by two other single judge benches of the high court that solemnisation of marriages under SMA via videoconferencing would dilute the provisions of the Act and that physical presence of both parties is mandatory.



If a witness in a criminal case can be permitted to depose before the court under oath through video conferencing, according to me, the parties to an intended marriage can certainly be permitted to solemnise the marriage by exchange of words through video conferencing

JUSTICE PB SURESH KUMAR JUDGE, KERALA HIGH COURT

ties to a marriage through videoconferencing cannot be said to be invalid. If it is valid and permissible, there is absolutely no reason why the parties to a marriage under the Act (SMA) shall not be permitted to solemnise the marriage by exchange of words through video conferencing, it said.

The high court also said that the SMA does not prescribe the formal act to be performed by the parties for solemnisation of the marriage and the parties are given the freedom to choose the act.

In other words, the act to be performed for solemnizing the marriage need not be a physical act. The marriage can be solemnised by exchange of words as well, the high court said.

The order came on the pleas by several petitioners who have contended that personal physical presence of the bride and groom is not necessary for solemnisation of nuptials under the law. The state government, on the other hand, is not in favour of online solemnisation of marriages under the Act.

national

of the day quote

Haryana government has delivered another blow to the rights of farmers, claiming that a recent Bill passed by the Assembly will allow the administration to acquire land without their consent

I am worried about my Goans, I am working on the antyodaya principle

Strategic planners in India need to work out a suitable format before implementing the Theatre Command structure, which integrates all services in an area under a unified command

SHORT TAKES

Covid 2nd wave not yet over: Govt

New Delhi: Asserting that the coronavirus second wave was not yet over, the central government Thursday said the months of September and October would be crucial in pandemic management and cautioned that festivals should be celebrated in accordance with Covid-19-appropriate behaviour.

Sekhwan joins AAP

Chandigarh: Former Punjab minister Sewa Singh Sekhwan joined the Aam Aadmi Party in the presence of its national convener Arvind Kejriwal in Gurdaspur Thursday. Sekhwan was a minister in the Shiromani Akali Dal-led government and currently the senior vice-president of the SAD (Sanyukt), formed earlier this year after the dissolution of the SAD (Taksali) and the SAD (Democratic). Sekhwan (71) had quit the Shiromani Akali Dal in 2018 after revolting against the party leadership and formed the SAD (Taksali) with former MPs Ranjit Singh Brahmputra and Rattan Singh Ajnala.

20 missing after boat capsizes

Patna: At least 20 persons were reported missing in a boat mishap in Bihar's Bagha in West Champaran district Thursday. According to an official of the state disaster response force (SDRF), 25 persons were in the boat at the time of the mishap.

Student sends paintings to PM

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi praised a 20-year-old Bengaluru student after he sent him two beautiful paintings of his and a letter as well. Expressing happiness at the interest and devotion of young people in creative fields, Modi wrote to Steven Harris that the paintings showed his talent for experiencing things deeply, a PMO statement said, sharing the paintings.

Security for CBI teams

New Delhi: The Centre has provided security cover by CRPF to the CBI teams probing cases of post-poll violence in West Bengal, sources in the security set up said here Thursday. According to the sources, four companies of Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) have been deployed for providing security to the CBI teams probing the matter.



Demonetisation was a foolish decision. The flawed GST was a foolish decision. The refusal to give cash doles to the poorest 20-25 per cent of India during the pandemic, was the most foolish decision. The refusal to increase public expenditure in a year of pandemic was very foolish decision
P CHIDAMBARAM | FORMER UNION FINANCE MINISTER

NEW VAX COMING SOON

The Union government is expecting Zydus Cadila's needle-free COVID-19 vaccine ZCoV-D to be available from the first week of October



ALL-PARTY MEET ON AFGHAN CRISIS

Evacuating Indians top priority: Govt

AGENCIES

New Delhi, August 26: The Centre Thursday said that the situation in Afghanistan is very critical after the Taliban's seizure of power on August 15 and evacuating the remaining Indians was the top priority of the government.

Briefing an all-party meeting on the situation in Afghanistan, Jaishankar said the government has adopted a "wait and watch" approach in dealing with the Taliban, depending on the evolving situation, and later told reporters in an answer to a similar question that let the situation settle down there. "Let the situation settle... You will have to keep patience on the question of our future policy," he said when asked about the government's approach towards the Taliban. Besides Jaishankar, Union minister and Leader of the House in Rajya Sabha Piyush Goyal and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi were also present during the nearly three and a half hour briefing on the latest situation in Afghanistan after the Taliban captured power there last week.

Senior officials of the external affairs ministry, including Foreign Secretary Harsh Shringla also participated in the meeting.



As per the evacuation data shared among the participants at the meet, the government has evacuated -175 Embassy Personnel, 263 other Indian Nationals, 112 Afghan Nationals including Hindus and Sikhs, 15 third country nationals and the total figure stood at 565.

The document further said the government also facilitated the evacuation of Indians by other agencies. NCP leader Sharad Pawar, Leader of the Opposition in Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge, Leader of Congress party in Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, DMK's T R Baalu, former prime minister H D Deve Gowda, Apna Dal's Anupriya Patel were among those who attended the meet.

"We have a strong national position on Afghanistan. The friend-

ship with the Afghan people is something which matters to all of us. So we (all parties) approached this situation very much in a spirit of national unity," he told reporters. Under Operation 'Devi Shakti', the government has undertaken six flights and brought back most of the Indians but not all of them, he said, noting that a few Indians are still there. "Some of them could not make the flight yesterday. But definitely we will try and bring everybody. We have also brought out some Afghan citizens who wanted to come to India at this point of time. We have tried to address many of the other issues by instituting an E-visa policy. So the overall sense was that the government is very very strongly committed to ensuring the full evacuation as soon as possi-

ble," he said. With the situation in Afghanistan fluid, he said there will be a lot of activity on this front but at the moment India's "focus is on evacuation and the government is doing everything to ensure that we bring back our people". On the all-party meet, he tweeted "briefed the floor leaders of all political parties today on Afghanistan and 37 leaders from 31 parties attended. Thank them all." He said India's strong friendship with the people of Afghanistan is reflected in the more than 500 projects it has there and that the friendship will continue to guide New Delhi.

Jaishankar said India's footprint and activities naturally keep in mind the ongoing change. "We have undertaken evacuation operations in extremely difficult conditions especially at the airport. Our immediate concern and task is evacuation and long term interest is the friendship for the Afghan people," the minister tweeted after the meeting. Sources said Jaishankar apprised the floor leaders about the pre-emptive measures taken by India including the temporary withdrawal of Indian personnel from its consulates in Herat and Jalalabad in April last year, scaling down of the strength of the embassy in Kabul in June this year.

India liberalises UAS operations via Drone Rules, 2021

PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI SAID ON TWITTER THAT THE NEW DRONE RULES USHER IN A LANDMARK MOMENT FOR THE SECTOR IN INDIA

AGENCIES

New Delhi, August 26: The Ministry of Civil Aviation has eased the rules regarding drone operations in the country by reducing the number of forms that need to be filled to operate them from 25 to 5 and decreasing the types of fees charged from the operator from 72 to 4.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Twitter that the new drone rules usher in a landmark moment for the sector in India.

"The rules are based on the premise of trust and self-certification. Approvals, compliance requirements and entry barriers have been significantly reduced," he stated.

The Drone Rules, 2021, were issued on Wednesday. They supersede the Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) Rules, 2021, which had come into force March 12.

The Prime Minister said the new rules will tremendously help start-ups and youth working in this sector.

"It will open up new possibilities for innovation and business. It will help leverage India's strengths in innovation, technology and engineering to make India a drone hub," he mentioned.

The fee, according to the new rules, has been reduced to nominal levels and de-linked from the size of the drone. For example, the fee for a remote pilot license has been reduced for ₹3,000 (for a large drone) to ₹100 for all categories of drones and it is valid for 10 years.

The rules have also abolished the requirement of various approvals, including certificate of conformance, certificate of maintenance, import clearance, acceptance of existing drones, operator permit, authorisation of R&D organisation and student remote pilot licence.

Other approvals such as unique authorisation number, unique prototype identification number and certificate of manufacturing and airworthiness have also been abolished, according to Drone Rules, 2021. No flight permission will be re-



quired for up to 400 feet in "green zones" and up to 200 feet in the area between 8 and 12 km from the airport perimeter, the new rules stated. "Green zones" are the airspace up to a vertical distance of 400 feet that have not been designated as red zone or yellow zone in the airspace map.

An interactive airspace map with green, yellow and red zones shall be displayed on the digital sky platform within 30 days of publication of these new rules. No pilot licence will be required for micro drones (for non-commercial use) and nano drones, the rules mentioned, adding that the maximum penalty for violations have been reduced to ₹1 lakh.

According to the new rules, the type certificate and unique identification number will be required only when a drone is to be operated in India.

If a drone is being imported or manufactured only for export purposes, it will be exempted from type certification and the requirement of unique identification number.

Drone corridors will be developed for cargo deliveries and a drone promotion council will be set up to facilitate drone-friendly regulatory regime in the country, according to the draft rules.

The rules also stated that there would be no restriction on drone operations by foreign-owned companies registered in India. Digital sky platform will be developed as a business-friendly single-window online system, the new rules mentioned.

POST-POLL VIOLENCE IN WB

CBI registers nine cases

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, August 26: The CBI has registered nine cases related to post-poll violence in West Bengal, sources said Thursday.

All the four special units of the investigating agency tasked to probe the cases of violence have moved their units from Kolkata to crime scenes across the state, they said. More cases are under the process of registration with some of them being handed over by the state government, sources said.

The CBI has taken over the cases on the instruction of a five-judge bench of the Calcutta High Court that had entrusted the agency with the task of investigating the alleged murder and rape incidents reported during post-poll violence in West Bengal.

The High Court directives came after a committee of the National Human Rights Commission submitted a report on the violence in the state after Assembly poll results May 2. The Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress achieved an astounding victory humbling the BJP in a bitterly fought eight-phase electoral battle.

Passing a unanimous judgement on a batch of PILs seeking an independent probe, the High Court Bench also ordered the constitution of an SIT of state police officers to probe all other cases.

The SIT will include Suman Bala Sahoo, Soumen Mitra and Ranveer Kumar, all IPS officers of the West Bengal cadre. The bench will monitor the investigations by both the CBI and the SIT and asked the two agencies to submit status reports to the court within six weeks.

GODLY TOUCH



A woman paints an idol of Lord Krishna at a workshop ahead of the Janmashtami festival in Amritsar

'Absolutely shameless': SC slams Tihar officials

THE SUPREME COURT SLAMMED THE TIHAR JAIL AUTHORITIES FOR COLLUDING WITH FORMER DIRECTORS OF UNITECH, WHO WERE ALLEGEDLY ENGAGING IN ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES FROM INSIDE THE JAIL

AGENCIES

New Delhi, August 26: The Supreme Court Thursday directed that former Unitech promoters Sanjay Chandra and Ajay Chandra be shifted from Tihar Jail here to Mumbai's Arthur Road Jail and Talaja prison in Maharashtra after the ED said they were conducting business from the premises in connivance with the staff.

The top court, which perused two status reports of the Enforcement Directorate, said Tihar Jail Superintendent and

other staff are "absolutely shameless" for conniving with the Chandra brothers to flout the court orders and undermine its jurisdiction. A bench of Justices D Y Chandrachud and M R Shah said the brothers will be lodged separately in Arthur Road and Talaja prisons.

"We are of the view that materials on record indicates that despite the orders of this court, activities are taking place within the premises of Tihar Central Jail, where the two accused are lodged, which have the propensity to un-



determine the authority of the court, as also to derail the investigations

which have been ordered to be done by the ED including but not confined to the PMLA.

"In the circumstances, we direct that both the accused Ajay Chandra and Sanjay Chandra be shifted from Tihar Central Jail to the premises of Arthur Road Jail, Mumbai and at Talaja Central Jail," the bench said in its order.

During the hearing, the bench told Additional Solicitor General Madhavi Divan, appearing for ED, "Tihar jail officials have actively connived with the accused to flout the orders of this court. We have

to say that the Tihar Jail superintendent and his staff are absolutely shameless. But we don't want to miss wood for the trees.

"All we have to say is that Tihar Jail staff are shameless. Can you imagine it is happening right in the Centre and in the capital? We will certainly take them to task. We will first shift the accused from this jail".

The two ED reports have raised some "serious and disturbing" issues for consideration and will be dealt with accordingly, the top court said.

INDIA, US, Oz, JAPAN BEGIN MALABAR WARGAME

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, August 26: The high-voltage Malabar exercise featuring the navies of all four Quad countries - India, the US, Australia and Japan - began Thursday off the coast of Guam in the backdrop of a resolve by the four nations to solidify cooperation for a free and open Indo-Pacific in view of China's rouge behaviour in the region.

A range of complex drills involving warships, aircraft and helicopters will be carried out during the four-day exercise, being hosted by the US Navy in the Western Pacific, officials said.

The US Seventh Fleet, in a statement, said the exercise demonstrated the commitment among the like-minded nations to uphold a rules-based maritime order in the Indo-Pacific.

The US Pacific Fleet's Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Barry, naval special warfare forces, maritime patrol and reconnaissance aircraft from Task Force 72, and military sealift command's Henry J Kaiser-class underway replenishment oiler USNS Rappahannock are among the assets deployed by the US Navy in the exercise.

Under Commander, US Pacific Fleet, 7th Fleet is the US Navy's largest forward-deployed numbered fleet and routinely interacts and operates with 35 maritime nations in preserving a free and open Indo-Pacific region.

The US 7th Fleet said the first phase of the exercise is an opportunity for the four Indo-Pacific navies to operate together to strengthen their skills in "combined maritime operations, anti-



submarine warfare operations, air warfare operations, live-fire gunnery events, replenishments-at-sea and cross-deck flight operations."

"Malabar 21 is an excellent opportunity to conduct multi-national training to hone warfighting and

maritime security skillsets," said Capt. Chase Sargeant, Commander, Task Force (CTF) 71 of US 7th Fleet.

"US destroyers closely integrating with our partners and allies builds the foundation for regional security and stability that benefits all Indo-

EYE ON CHINA

The Indian Navy has deployed its stealth frigate INS Shivalik, anti-submarine warfare corvette INS Kadmat

China has been suspicious about the purpose of the Malabar exercise as it feels that the annual wargame is an effort to contain its influence in the Indo-Pacific region

The Malabar exercise started in 1992 as a bilateral drill between the Indian Navy and the US Navy in the Indian Ocean

Pacific nations," he said.

In an interactive session at the Observer Research Foundation (ORF), Commander of the US Indo-Pacific Command Admiral John

Aquilino on Wednesday spoke about key challenges facing the Indo-Pacific and delved into China's rapid military build-up including in the maritime domain.

Admiral Aquilino also hinted at the possibility of increasing the number of participants at the Malabar naval exercise if leaders of the four participating countries concur with it.

Following India's invitation, Australia participated in the Malabar exercise last year that effectively made it a drill by all four member nations of the Quad.

There have been mounting global concerns over China's growing military assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific region. India, the US, Australia, Japan and many other like-minded countries are working towards ensuring a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific.

international

of the day quote

If they want to baselessly accuse China, they better be prepared to accept the counterattack from China. If Dr Tedros believes that we should not rule out the hypothesis of a lab leak, well, he knows where to go. He needs to go to the US labs

We are very hopeful that the North would respond to our calls to form the joint military committee. A committee would allow both sides to move forward with the agenda agreed to in 2018 and also explore other agendas to strengthen trust between the militaries

No one wants to use lockdowns forever and that is not our intention... but for now, while we vaccinate, elimination is the goal and we can do

SHORT TAKES

US, Israel seek to reset relations

Washington: President Joe Biden and Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett Thursday will seek to reset the tone of US-Israeli relations in their first White House meeting and find common ground on Iran despite differences on how to deal with its nuclear program. In talks overshadowed by the chaotic US withdrawal from Afghanistan, the two leaders will try to turn the page on years of tensions between Bennett's predecessor, Benjamin Netanyahu, who was close to former President Donald Trump, and the last Democratic administration led by Barack Obama with Biden as his Vice President.

India gifts medical O2 plant to Nepal

Kathmandu: India Thursday donated a medical oxygen plant to Nepal as part of New Delhi's continued commitment to the Himalayan nation in tackling the Covid-19 pandemic. India's Ambassador here Vinay Mohan Kwatra handed over the 960 Litres Per Minute (LPM) medical oxygen plant to Minister of State for Health Umesh Shrestha at a ceremony at the Ministry of Health and Population, as part of India's robust partnership with Nepal in tackling the coronavirus pandemic.

Beirut judge issues subpoena for PM

Beirut: The judge leading the investigation into last summer's Beirut port blast issued a subpoena for caretaker Prime Minister Hassan Diab Thursday after he failed to show up for questioning, Lebanon's state news agency reported. Judge Tarek Bitar, who is leading the inquiry into the explosion, issued requests in July to question Diab and other top officials, including Major General Abbas Ibrahim, head of the powerful General Security agency, and several former ministers.

Eight killed over land dispute in Pak

Peshawar: Eight people were killed and 12 others injured in a firing between two rival groups over a land dispute in Pakistan's northwest Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, police said. The firing between the two groups occurred in Lower Kurram tribal district of the province, killing eight people. Police said that the firing has stopped following a ceasefire between the two groups.



Since August 14th, more than 82,300 people have been safely flown out of Kabul. In the 24-hour period, approximately 19,000 people were evacuated. Only the US could organise and execute a mission of this scale and this complexity

ANTONY BLINKEN | SECRETARY OF STATE, US

MOTHER TERESA'S 111TH BIRTH ANNIV

Today marks Mother Teresa's 111th birth anniversary. The United Nations has paid a glowing tribute to Mother Teresa by releasing a definitive postage stamp August 12, to mark her birth anniversary



Stalin's Great Terror mass graves unearthed

The bones of between 5,000 to 8,000 people were found in over two dozen graves, making it one of the largest mass graves unearthed in Ukraine so far

Kiev, August 26: The remains of thousands of people believed to be victims of Joseph Stalin's Terror have been discovered in Ukraine's southern city of Odessa, local authorities said Wednesday. Sergiy Gutsalyuk, the head of the regional branch of the National Memory Institute, believes they were executed in 1930's by Stalin's notorious NKVD secret police unit, a precursor to the late Soviet-era KGB. Gutsalyuk told AFP that the

number of victims may increase as the excavations continue. The prisoners' nationalities and the crimes for which they were sentenced to die remain unknown. But the historian said that the executions date back to 1937-39, the time known as Stalin's Great Terror. Gutsalyuk said it would be impossible to identify the victims as documents of that era are classified and kept in Moscow. "These documents will never be handed over to us under the current government in Russia," he said.



Ties between the ex-Soviet countries have deteriorated sharply since Russia annexed Crimea in 2014 and threw its weight behind



armed separatists in eastern Ukraine.

According to estimates made by Ukrainian historians, hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians were imprisoned or executed in Gulag camps during the Stalinist repressions in the 1930s. One of the best-known execution sites is the forest near the village of Bykivnia on the outskirts of Kiev, where tens of thousands of victims were buried in 1937-1941. Millions of Ukrainians also died in the great famine of 1932-1933, which Ukraine regards as a genocide orchestrated by Stalin.

NATO chief slams bombings



ASSOCIATED PRESS

The Hague, August 26: Two suicide bombers and gunmen targeted crowds massing near the Kabul airport Thursday, in the waning days of a massive airlift that has drawn thousands of people seeking to flee the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan. At least 40 people were killed and dozens wounded, Russian officials said. A US official said the complex attack was "definitely believed" to have been carried out by the Islamic State group, whose affiliate in Afghanistan grew out of disaffected Taliban members who hold an even more extreme view of Islam. NATO chief has condemned the twin suicide bombings at the Kabul airport as a "horrific terrorist attack" that targeted desperate Afghans trying to leave the country and the alliance's efforts to

evacuate them from Afghanistan. Jens Stoltenberg said on Twitter after the explosions Thursday: "I strongly condemn the horrific terrorist attack outside #Kabul airport. My thoughts are with all those affected and their loved ones. Our priority remains to evacuate as many people to safety as quickly as possible." The bombings struck outside Kabul's airport, where large crowds of people trying to flee Afghanistan have massed, according to Russian officials. Western nations had warned earlier in the day of a possible attack at the airport in the waning days of a massive airlift. French President Emmanuel Macron said "the situation has se-

riously deteriorated" near the Kabul airport after "several explosions happened in the last hours." Speaking in a news conference during a visit to Dublin, Ireland, Macron said "we are facing an extremely tense situation that makes us coordinate obviously with our American allies and call for the utmost caution in a context we don't control." He added France will seek to protect and evacuate French nationals, people from allied countries and Afghans "as long as the conditions will be met" at the airport.

placement of countless Afghans from their homes who the Taliban then use force to prevent from fleeing Afghanistan, and a power vacuum that China seeks to fill by increasing its ties to the Taliban, they said. "Dealing with these consequences means that we must take action now to chart the course for American strategy, while we manage the immediate repercussions of this self-inflicted crisis in Afghanistan. To this end, we write to ask you to outline what your plan is to move America forward," they wrote.

'Ensure Taliban do not acquire nuclear weapons'

Washington: A group of US lawmakers has urged President Joe Biden to ensure that the Taliban, which is now the de facto ruler of Afghanistan, do not destabilise Pakistan and acquire nuclear weapons. The lawmakers demanded that Biden should answer critical questions on what happened in Afghanistan and what are his plans to move forward. "Are you prepared to support regional allies militarily in the event that the Taliban militarise the Afghanistan border What is

your plan to help to ensure that the Taliban do not destabilise its nuclear neighbour Pakistan" the group of 68 lawmakers from the Senate and the House of Representatives asked in a letter addressed to Biden Wednesday. "Do you have a plan to ensure that Afghanistan, under Taliban occupation, will never acquire a nuclear weapon" they asked. The situation in Afghanistan has rapidly metastasized into Taliban rule with reinstated oppression of women and girls, the repression of civil society, the dis-

placement of countless Afghans from their homes who the Taliban then use force to prevent from fleeing Afghanistan, and a power vacuum that China seeks to fill by increasing its ties to the Taliban, they said. "Dealing with these consequences means that we must take action now to chart the course for American strategy, while we manage the immediate repercussions of this self-inflicted crisis in Afghanistan. To this end, we write to ask you to outline what your plan is to move America forward," they wrote.

Capitol Police officers sue Trump, allies over Jan 6 insurrection

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Washington, August 26: US Capitol Police officers who were attacked and beaten during the Capitol riot filed a lawsuit Thursday against former President Donald Trump, his allies and members of far-right extremist groups, accusing them of intentionally sending a violent mob Jan 6 to disrupt the congressional certification of the election. The suit in federal court in Washington alleges Trump "worked with white supremacists, violent extremist groups, and campaign supporters to violate the Ku Klux Klan Act, and commit acts of domestic terrorism in an unlawful effort to stay in power."

TOP OF THE WORLD



A hiker walks up to the Moleson summit during a cloud inversion in Gruyeres, Switzerland

Japan's Suga faces challengers in ruling party leadership race

THE WINNER IS VIRTUALLY ASSURED OF BEING PRIME MINISTER BECAUSE OF THE LDP'S MAJORITY IN PARLIAMENT'S LOWER HOUSE



AGENCIES

Tokyo, August 26: Japanese former foreign minister Fumio Kishida challenged Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga Thursday for the leadership of the ruling party, as the premier struggles with crumbling approval rates ahead of a general election. Suga repeated he would seek reelection in the Sept 29 race for Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) president, while ex-internal affairs minister Sanae Takaichi also threw her hat in the ring. "The people feel that their voices are not reaching the LDP," Kishida,

Japan halts 1.63M doses of Moderna

Japan suspended use of about 1.63 million doses of Moderna vaccine Thursday after contamination was found in unused vials, raising concern of a supply shortage as the country tries to accelerate vaccinations amid a Covid-19 surge. The health ministry said contamination was reported from multiple vaccination sites. Some doses might have been administered, but no adverse health effects have been reported so far, officials said. Takeda Pharmaceutical Co, a Japanese drugmaker in charge of sales and distribution of the vaccine in Japan, said it decided to suspend use of doses manufactured in the same production line as a safety precaution.

64, told a news conference. "I am running ... to show that the LDP listens to the people and is a party that offers broad choices, and to protect our nation's democracy," said Kishida, adding he would aim for a more equitable, diverse society. The challenges to Suga may not topple him as leader, said Hiroyuki Ueno, senior strategist at Sumitomo Mitsui Trust Asset Management. "My sense is, most people in markets expect Suga to win unless he decides to quit by himself." The LDP-led coalition is not expected to lose its majority in the powerful lower house, but forecasts suggest that Suga's party could lose the majority that it holds on its own, an outcome that would weaken whoever is leading the LDP. Suga, 72, took office last September with support of about 70% but his ratings have sunk below 30% as Japan battles its worst wave of Covid-19 infections and many of his LDP lawmakers fear for their seats.

Newly found exoplanets indicate possibility of alien life

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

London, August 26: Astronomers have identified a new class of habitable planets, which could greatly accelerate the search for life outside our Solar System. Dubbed as 'Hycean' - hot, ocean-covered planets with hydrogen-rich atmospheres, the new class of exoplanets are more numerous and observable than Earth-like planets, and can support life, said astronomers from the University of Cambridge in the UK. The results, reported in The Astrophysical Journal, could mean that finding biosignatures of life outside our Solar System within the



next two or three years is a real possibility, they added. "Hycean planets open a whole new avenue in our search for life elsewhere," said Dr Nikku

Essentially, when we've been looking for these various molecular signatures, we have been focusing on planets similar to Earth, which is a reasonable place to start. But we think Hycean planets offer a better chance of finding several trace biosignatures

NIKKU MADHUSUDHAN | CAMBRIDGE'S INSTITUTE OF ASTRONOMY

Madhusudhan from Cambridge's Institute of Astronomy, who led the research. Hycean planets can be up to 2.6 times larger than Earth and have atmospheric temperatures up to

nearly 200 degrees Celsius, but their oceanic conditions could be similar to those conducive for microbial life in Earth's oceans. Such planets also include tidally locked 'dark' Hycean worlds that may have habitable conditions only on their permanent night sides, and 'cold' Hycean worlds that receive little radiation from their stars. Planets of this size dominate the known exoplanet population, although they have not been studied in nearly as much detail as super-Earths. Hycean worlds are likely quite common, meaning that the most promising places to look for life elsewhere in the Galaxy

may have been hiding in plain sight. However, size alone is not enough to confirm whether a planet is Hycean: other aspects such as mass, temperature, and atmospheric properties are required for confirmation, the researchers said. "It's exciting that habitable conditions could exist on planets so different from Earth," said co-author Anjali Piette, also from Cambridge. Madhusudhan and his team found that a number of trace terrestrial biomarkers expected to be present in Hycean atmospheres would be readily detectable with spectroscopic observations in the near future.

of the day quote

The pandemic has changed the outlook towards ownership of homes. Our survey confirms that across the spectrum of Indian homebuyers, 32 per cent showed interest in relocating from their pre-pandemic homes



SHISHIR BAJAJ | CHAIRMAN AND MD, KNIGHT FRANK INDIA

The robust growth in wearable is attracting brands that have businesses around devices and accessories to expand their presence across all wearable categories. Thus, the influx of new entrants remains a key driver of growth



JAIPAL SINGH | RESEARCH MANAGER (CLIENT DEVICES), IDC INDIA

With the growing adoption of electric mobility, semiconductors are going to become more and more critical. It's important for us as an ecosystem, as a country, as an industry, collectively or individually, to invest in creating these capabilities in India



TV NAREDRAN | PRESIDENT, CII

SHORT TAKES

Barclays infuses ₹3K cr into India ops

Mumbai: British lender Barclays Bank Thursday announced a 3,000-crore capital infusion into India operations to aid its growth in the country. The bank, which is into corporate and investment banking as well as wealth management, will be able to take significantly higher exposures to a borrowing entity or a group as the capital base has increased by 55 per cent. Barclays has 600 employees working in the India operations across four branches.

Yahoo shuts down news sites in India

New Delhi: Yahoo has shut down its news websites in India due to the new FDI rules that limit foreign ownership of media companies that operate and publish digital content in India. This includes Yahoo News, Yahoo Cricket, Finance, Entertainment and MAKERS India. This, however, will not affect users' Yahoo e-mail, and search experiences in India.

Hindware launches second-leg campaign

New Delhi: Renowned bathware brand Hindware launched the second-leg of its successful campaign "Thoughtful is Beautiful". The campaign features the newly launched touch-free products including sensor-based faucets and water closets that have been designed to enable better safety and hygiene in households across India amidst the ongoing pandemic. Featuring touch-free products, the new TVC focuses on showcasing innovative performance-led product solutions that offer convenience to consumers.

EdelGive Foundation launches GROW fund

New Delhi: EdelGive Foundation launches the Grassroots, Resilience, Ownership and Wellness (GROW) Fund, a first-of-its-kind initiative aimed at building the capabilities, resilience and future readiness of grassroots organisations. The GROW fund aims to strengthen 100 high-impact grassroots organisations in 24 months, through capacity building, and by support of key organisational functions. Earlier, EdelGive hosted the first roundtable on GROW which produced an array of invaluable insights that are helping to frame our ideas and ambitions for the Fund.

'India's GDP growth likely touched a record in April-June'

REUTERS

Bangalore, August 26: Indian economic growth likely touched a record high in the quarter through June, reflecting a very weak base last year and a rebound in consumer spending, a Reuters poll found.

The August 20-25 Reuters poll of 41 economists showed gross domestic product rose 20.0% in the three-month period, compared with a record contraction of 24.4% in the same quarter a year earlier. Forecasts in the poll ranged from 10.5% to 31.6%, showing the considerable uncertainty around those base effects.

The rebound came despite the drag from the deadly second wave of

The August 20-25 poll of 41 economists showed the GDP rose 20% in the three-month period, compared with a record contraction of 24.4% in the same quarter a year earlier

the coronavirus, which forced states across India to reimpose localised lockdowns and stop mobility completely from late April to early June.

But unlike during the nationwide lockdown last year, repeat state-level lockdowns had a less

The RBI has come out with a guidance on inflation and said that the inflation, which is a little on the up, will cool down in some time, and we also feel that once the crops come out, inflation should come down

TARUN BAJAJ | REVENUE SECRETARY



pronounced impact on the economy as they left more room for consumers to spend.

India's second Covid-19 wave acted as a stumbling block to the robust recovery that was underway. Still, the economic damage

appears to be less than previously expected," said Rahul Bajaria, chief India economist at Barclays.

If the poll median is realised, it would be India's fastest growth since official quarterly data started being released in the mid-1990s. That's up sharply from 1.6% in the previous quarter, but a bit slower than the Reserve Bank of India's 21.4% projection.

The second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic began in April just as the economy was beginning to rally from a lull at the start of the year, throwing the recovery off course, although not as much as many feared.

"Humanitarian costs of the health crisis were high, but the

economic impact was less severe than the first wave and activity rebounded faster," said Radhika Rao, economist at DBS Bank.

A separate Reuters poll a month ago predicted India's GDP would expand 19.8% in the April-June quarter, little different to the latest median, and 9.4% for the current fiscal year. However, the spread of potential new virus variants poses a threat.

"The recovery remains uneven," said Aditi Nayar, chief economist at ICRA. "The risks to watch out for are a third wave of Covid-19, a slower than expected pace of vaccinations, and lastly, new variants that may emerge which may not be very amenable to the vaccines which exist right now."



AFCONS BAGS \$530MN CONNECTIVITY PROJECT

Afcons, the engineering and construction arm of the Shapoorji Pallonji Group, has won a \$530mn contract to construct the largest-ever infrastructure project in the Maldives. The Greater Male connectivity project is funded by the Exim Bank of India under the Indian grant and line of credit

Strong buffers to help Indian banks withstand asset risks: Moody's



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, August 26: India's second coronavirus wave is increasing asset risks for banks, but the country's economic recovery, a tightening of loan underwriting criteria, and continued government support will prevent a sharp spike in problem loans, according to a Moody's Investors Service report.

"A severe deterioration of banks' asset quality is unlikely, despite an expected rise in new loan impairments, particularly among individuals and small businesses that were hit hardest by the virus outbreak.

This is because government initiatives like the emergency credit linked guarantee scheme (ECLGS) have been effective in providing immediate liquidity for businesses," Moody's Vice President and Senior Credit Officer Alka Anbarasu said.

In addition, accommodative interest rates and loan restructuring schemes will continue to mitigate asset risks, such that the coronavirus resurgence will delay but not derail the improvements in banks' balance sheets that had begun before the pandemic.

Moody's rated banks also have stronger loss-absorbing buffers, which will help them withstand the asset quality decline and maintain their credit strength.

Banks had reinforced these buffers in the past year through increases in capital, loan-loss reserves, and profitability.

Moody's baseline expectation is that newly formed nonperforming loans (NPLs) at public sector banks will increase nearly 50% to about 1.5% of gross loans annually in the next two years.

Central banks should not mandate green investments: Rajan



AGENCIES

New Delhi, August 26: The onus of promoting sustainable investments should lie with governments and not central banks, which already have significant other policy commitments, said Raghuram Rajan, former Reserve Bank of

The central banks should steer clear of politically-driven unlegislated areas such as green investments, as their mandates of providing financial and monetary stability are already quite wide, Rajan said at a Global Markets Forum Wednesday.

RAGHURAM RAJAN | FORMER RBI GOVERNOR

India (RBI) governor.

Central banks should steer clear of politically-driven unlegislated areas such as "green" investments, as their mandates of providing financial and monetary stability are already quite wide, Rajan said at a Global Markets Forum Wednesday.

"Asking the central bank to say you should buy only green bonds, not brown bonds, etc., is asking the central bank to impose its own views on something which is primarily a fiscal matter," he said.

Rajan, who earlier served as chief economist for the IMF, said central banks should instead turn their focus to the financial stability of these green investments and other threats such as crypto currencies and cyber security.

Crypto currencies have a "potential future," particularly well-regulated stablecoins, Rajan said, but it wasn't clear what funda-

mentals were backing their valuations other than a "heady environment," with easy monetary policy fuelling all asset prices.

Cryptos won't be "your last resort" in a doomsday scenario, he said. "I would be much more confident about the value of these cryptos once they find proper use cases," such as an effective means of payment, especially in cross-border transactions.

ON TRACK

Rajan, who is professor of finance at the University of Chicago Booth School of Business, did not expect markets to react in a 2013-style "taper tantrum" as the US Federal Reserve unveils its plan to withdraw stimulus, which he said was unlikely to happen at Jackson Hole Friday.

"Ideally, the Fed would like to observe as long as possible, and make sure that the economy is well on track towards growth, he said. "Of course, the problem is the Delta variant, plus whatever variants are lurking in the background."

He expected inflationary pressures in the US to be transitory, but said prices may remain elevated for longer than expected due to strong wages, unavailability of workers, and additional fiscal stimulus measures. "Firms are feeling confident enough to pass through price increase... they don't do that until they think that these higher prices are to stay," Rajan said.

Rajan said inflation in India could rise in short-term as pent-up demand takes hold, resulting in supply-side bottlenecks, but demand will fall over the medium-term due to stressed households and economic scarring from the pandemic.

Boeing 737 Max to return to Indian skies after 2.5 yrs

AGENCIES

New Delhi, August 26: India's aviation regulator DGCA Thursday lifted the ban on Boeing 737 Max planes' commercial flight operations after almost two-and-half years. On March 13, 2019, all Boeing 737 Max planes were grounded in India by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) after the crash of an Ethiopian Airlines 737 Max plane March 10 near Addis Ababa which had left 157 people, including four Indians, dead.

Currently, in India, only SpiceJet airline has Boeing 737 Max aircraft in its fleet. The budget carrier, in a statement on Thursday, said it expects to start operations of Max planes around the end of September, subject to regulatory approvals.

Aircraft manufacturer Boeing has been modifying the 737 Max plane since March 2019 so that various countries' regulators, including the DGCA, permit its commercial flight operations again.

The European Union Aviation

DGCA LIFTS BAN

All Boeing 737 Max planes were grounded in India, March 13, 2019, by the DGCA after the crash of an Ethiopian Airlines 737 Max plane March 10

Currently, in India, only SpiceJet airline has Boeing 737 Max aircraft in its fleet

The aviation regulator stated that the operation of Boeing 737 Max planes in India are permitted only upon satisfaction of applicable requirements for return to service

Safety Agency (EASA) had in October last year declared the Max aircraft safe to fly. A month later, US aviation regulator FAA cleared Max aircraft to fly.

In its order dated August 26, 2021, the DGCA said that since the orders issued by FAA and EASA in October and November last year, it "has been closely monitoring the

global trend with regard to ungrounding" of 737 Max planes.

Total 34 airlines across the world have operated 1.22 lakh flights using 345 Max aircraft - since the plane was un-grounded in late last year - without "untoward reporting", India's aviation regulator said.

Therefore, the DGCA stated that the operation of Boeing 737 Max planes in India are permitted "only upon satisfaction of applicable requirements for return to service".

A senior DGCA official confirmed that the ban on 737 Max planes' commercial flight operations has been lifted Thursday.

The March 10, 2019 accident near Addis Ababa was the second in a period of five months. On October 29, 2018, a 737 Max plane operated by Lion Air had crashed in Indonesia, killing 180 people.

On March 13, 2019, SpiceJet had to ground 12 Max planes, forcing it to cancel a significant number of flights on that day as well as on the next day.

Global energy giants may join BPCL privatisation race

AGENCIES

New Delhi, August 26: Global oil companies are likely to partner with major investment funds which already have submitted Expressions of Interest (EoI) for the state-run BPCL.

Along with Anil Agarwal-led Vedanta, Apollo Global Management, and Think Gas (promoted by I Squared Capital) are reportedly among parties who have submitted bids for the state-run energy major. Major energy giants including Reliance Industries, Saudi Aramco, the UAE's Adnoc, and the UK's BP, have not placed interest for the state-run oil major so far.

It is now anticipated that some among these energy giants may team with global funds in a bid to acquire the state-owner refiner, said people in the know of things. Recently, the Centre proposed to further sugarcroft the BPCL strategic sale deal for the interested investors by giving few more clarifications.

Union Mins to lay foundation stone of common user facility tomorrow

THE FACILITY, WITH AROUND ESTIMATED COST OF ₹394 CRORE, WILL MEET THE DEMAND OF CENTRAL AND NORTH ODISHA

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, August 26: Union ministers Dharmendra Pradhan and Hardeep Singh Puri will lay the foundation stone of Common User Petroleum Facility (CUF) at Sadashibpur in Dhenkanal district August 28, 2021. CGM and state head of Indian Oil Subhajt Ghosh informed the media in this regard during a press conference held in the city, Thursday.

CUF will help reduce cost of frequent transportation of petroleum products from Paradeep Terminal. The project will help in meeting the demands of Central and North Odisha. Districts such as Angul, Keonjhar, Deogarh and Dhenkanal will be major beneficiaries from this facility.

It was said that the approximate cost of the project will be around



₹394 crore and it will be shared as per the mutual agreement by all three oil marketing companies viz. IOCL, BPCL and HPCL. Around 50 acres of land has been purchased or leased from the Odisha government for the project. The project is likely to be completed by August 31, 2023.

A state of the art, fully-automated depot having storage capacity of about 42,000 Kilo Litre (KL), has been planned for storing

MS, HSD, ethanol and bio-diesel. The project will generate approximately 2 lakh man-days employment during the construction period and many more during operation.

"An integrated 1G and 2G bio-ethanol refinery in Bargarh by BPCL with a production capacity of 200 KL per day of 2G ethanol using approximately 400 MT/day of biomass as the feedstock is scheduled to be completed by March 2023," informed during the press meet.

Rent-a-robot: Silicon Valley's new answer to labour shortage

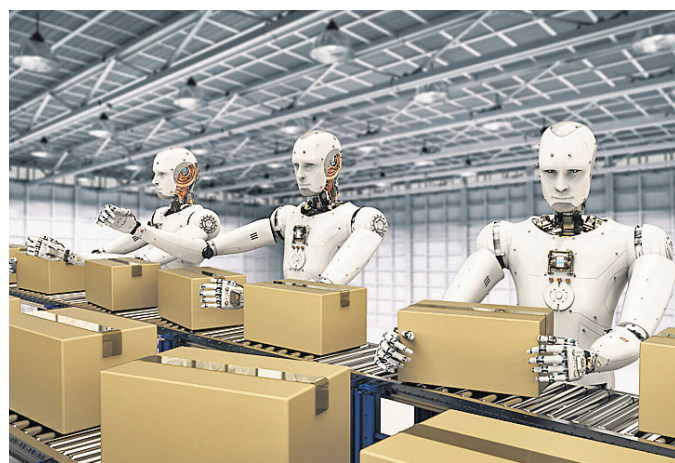
REUTERS

Smaller factories often have small runs of more tailored products that are not worth a robot. And Silicon Valley Robotics, an industry group supporting robot startups, says that in the past, funding has been a challenge. Still, some high-profile investors are on board

Livermore, California, August 26: Silicon Valley has a new pitch to persuade small companies to automate: rent-a-robot. Better technology and the need to pay higher wages to humans have produced a surge in sales of robots to big companies all across America. But few of these automatons are making it into smaller factories, which are wary of big upfront costs and lacking robot engineering talent.

So, venture capitalists are backing a new financial model: lease robots, install and maintain them, charge factories by the hour or month, cut the risk and initial costs.

Saman Farid, a former venture capitalist who invested in robots for over a decade and saw the challenges of getting robots into factories, set up rent-a-robot Formic Technologies with backing from Lux Capital and Initialized Capital,



an early investor in self-driving tech startup Cruise.

Initialized Capital partner Garry Tan sees a confluence of cheaper and better robot computer vision and artificial intelligence technology, low interest rates, and the

threat of US-China tensions on supply chains stoking interest in robot subscriptions. "It's at the center of three of the largest mega trends that are driving all of society now," said Tan.

Techies and small business

owners do not always understand each other, a dilemma that led an industry group, the Association for Manufacturing Technology, to set up a San Francisco office a couple of years ago, to bring the two together.

The lease model puts much of the financial burden on robot startups which carry the risk of a manufacturer losing a contract or changing a product. Smaller factories often have small runs of more tailored products that are not worth a robot. And Silicon Valley Robotics, an industry group supporting robot startups, says that in the past, funding has been a challenge. Still, some high-profile investors are on board.

Tiger Global, the biggest funder of tech startups this year, has backed three robot firms offering subscription in seven months.

MELVIN THE ROBOT

Bob Albert, whose family owns

Polar Hardware Manufacturing, a 105-year-old metal stamping factory in Chicago, bought Formic's pitch to pay less than \$10 an hour for a robot, compared with over \$20 an hour for his average human worker. He watched this month as a robot arm picked up a metal bar from a bin, spun around, and placed it in an older machine that bent it into a 42-inch (107 cm) door handle.

"If the robot works really well, we'll use it a lot," said Albert, who was pleased with the initial results. "And if it doesn't work out, neither one of us comes out very well. We have less skin in the game and they have some skin in the game."

Westec Plastics Corp, a family-owned plastic molding factory in Livermore, California, got its first robot in January 2020 and now has three - named Melvin, Nancy and Kim - from Rapid Robotics which charges \$3,750 a month per robot in the first year and \$2,100 from year two.

England firmly Rooted

Skipper hits century as top order props hosts to 423/8, including a lead of 345 runs, at stumps on the second day of the third Test



JOE ROOT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Leeds, August 26: Joe Root (121, 165b, 14x4) stamped his authority over the Indian bowling attack with a third masterful hundred in as many games, putting England in a dominant position on day two of the second Test here Thursday. With his 23rd hundred, Root equalled Kevin Pietersen's record and is now only behind Alastair Cook (33). Though India won at Lord's, they were not able to trouble Root

and the England skipper extended his purple patch with his 23rd Test hundred and sixth of the year to take his team to a commanding 423/8 at stumps on day two. England now lead by 345 runs. After openers Rory Burns (61, 153b, 6x4, 1x6) and Haseeb Hameed (68, 195b, 12x4) gave England the start they were desperately looking for, Root and Dawid Malan (70, 128b, 11x4) shared a brisk 139-run stand off 189 balls to pile misery on the Indians who were all out for 78 on day one.

Root as usual was a delight to watch, scoring runs at will and all around the wicket. Such was the range on offer that he also swept and reverse swept left-arm spinner Ravindra Jadeja (2/88). Barring Mohammed Shami (3/87), the Indian pacers had another ordinary day and Root made them pay for their erratic line and length. Jasprit Bumrah (1/58) managed to get one past Root's watertight defence late in the final session to end a memorable innings in front of his home crowd. India managed to pick



Mohammed Shami celebrates with teammates after getting a wicket

five wickets in the session but the damage had already been done. India find themselves thrown in at the deep end and will have to bat extremely well to first avoid an innings defeat and then save the game from there on. The pitch has dried out and Indian pacers failed to get purchase out of it for the second day running. Earlier, runs came thick and fast for England in the afternoon session as India bowlers appeared toothless, both with old and new ball. The hosts added 116 runs in the session with Root and Malan collecting runs comfortably. Against the run of play, Malan picked up a faint edge while trying to flick Mohammed Siraj (2/86) at the stroke of tea. Indian pacers, who scripted a memorable win at Lord's, bowled too many boundary balls and the England duo was quick to put them away. In the morning session, India struck twice but it was not enough to put England under pressure. The home team managed to score

62 runs in the session, taking their first innings to score 182/2 having started the day at 120 for no loss. Shami, coming round the wicket, removed Rory Burns in the first hour of play with a ball that nipped back in sharply to hit the top of off-stump. India got a much needed second wicket against the run of play when Ravindra Jadeja struck in his first over of the day with a beauty. The left-arm spinner got one to straighten slightly from middle and off-stump to beat a well-set Hameed and kiss the bails for his first wicket of the series. The Indian attack, which relies on seam more than swing, was not able to extract much from the pitch. The accuracy, which England pacers displayed, was also missing.

BRIEF SCORES

INDIA 78; ENGLAND 423/8 (Joe Root 121, Dawid Malan 70; Mohammed Shami 3/87, Mohammed Siraj 2/86, Ravindra Jadeja 2/88). **Match to continue.**

Pant opens up on change of stance



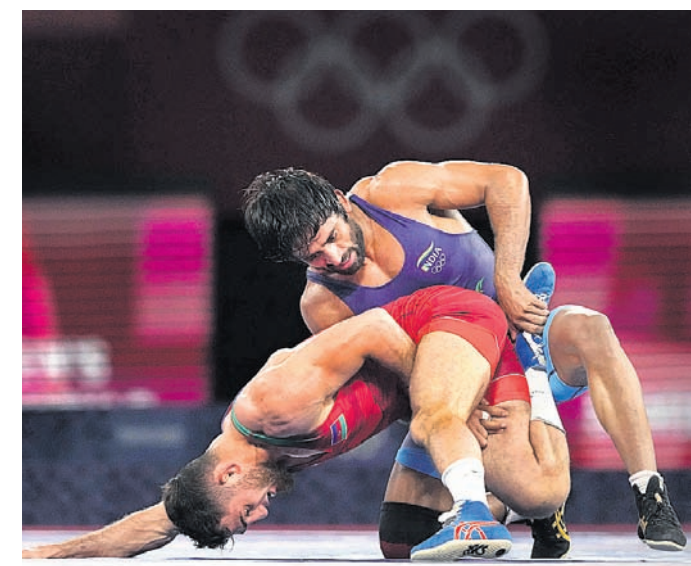
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Leeds, August 26: The swash-buckling Rishabh Pant has revealed he had to change his stance after being told by the umpire as batting outside the crease to negate swing formed footmarks in the pitch's danger area during India's forgettable opening day at Headingley. "Because I was standing outside the crease and my front-foot was coming into the danger area, so he (the umpire) told me that you can't stand there," Pant said during the virtual post-day press conference Wednesday. The southpaw added, "So, I have (had) to change my stance, but as a cricketer I don't have to think too much about that, because it's everyone who is going to do that, umpires are going to say the same thing, I didn't do that the next ball and you move on." Pant also backed his skipper Virat Kohli's decision to bat first while admitting that the wicket was "soft" in the morning. "It's part and parcel of the game. Every day the batting unit is giving hundred per cent, but sometimes, it doesn't go well," Pant said about the disastrous outing with the bat, which came just nine months after the 36 all out in Adelaide. "In the morning, the wicket was slightly on the softer side and they bowled in good areas. We could

'Ball was thrown at Siraj' from stands

LEEDS: A ball was thrown at India pacer Mohammed Siraj from the spectator stands on the opening day of the third Test against England here, his India teammate Rishabh Pant has revealed. TV cameras showed a visibly agitated India captain Virat Kohli asking Siraj, who was stationed at the boundary at that time, to throw the object out Wednesday. When asked about it at the end of day's play, Pant revealed what had transpired. "I think, somebody (from the crowd) threw a ball at Siraj, so he (Kohli) was upset. You can say whatever you want, chant, but don't throw things at fielders. It is not good for cricket, I guess," said Pant. have applied ourselves better. We can learn from it and only move on. That's all we can do as cricketers. You learn from your mistakes and improve." He also said that Kohli's decision to bat first, despite the wicket being damp, was a collective call. "I don't think so," he replied when asked if batting first was a tricky move. "Whatever decision we take, we take as a team. So, once we have decided we are going to bat first, we are going to back our decision and move on. Yes, we could have applied much better but we can't keep on thinking too much about the toss."

UP adopts wrestling till 2032 Olympics



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, August 26: In a massive boost for the Indian wrestling, the Uttar Pradesh government has adopted the sport and is expected to pump in an investment of Rs 170 crore in infrastructure and support to the wrestlers till the 2032 Olympics, WFI President Brijbhushan Sharan Singh told this agency. The top boss of the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) said that they took inspiration from the Odisha government's support to the sport of hockey and they approached the UP government for a similar assistance to their game. "Odisha is a small state, yet they are supporting hockey in such a great manner, so we thought, why can't UP, which is such a big state, support wrestling. We approached them and the CM Yogi Adityanath has accepted it," Singh said. "In our proposal, we have asked for Rs 10 crore support every year till the 2024 Games (Rs 30 crore) and in the next Olympic cycle till 2028, we have asked for a support of Rs 15 crore per year (Rs 60 crore) and in the final phase till 2032, it is Rs 20 crore per year (Rs 80 crore)," he said explaining the details. "With this happening, sponsorships will not be restricted to just country's elite wrestlers. Even the Cadet level wrestlers will get sponsorship and we will be able to give prize money to even national champions." The WFI had also roped in Tata Motors in 2018 as principal spon-

sors of Indian wrestling, a partnership which had brought with it a financial support of Rs 12 crore that allowed the federation to give away central contracts to wrestlers till the Tokyo Games. It has been learnt that the partnership will be renewed Friday with a fresh deal. The WFI President said this deal with the UP government will allow them to plan exposure trips to foreign countries even for India's Cadet level wrestlers. "As of now, only the senior and elite level wrestlers have personal coaches and guidance of foreign coaches. But we can even invest heavily in training of our cadet and junior wrestlers also. Now we can send our Cadet wrestlers abroad for training and exposure. We need to take wrestling to the next level," he said. WFI already extends a financial support to 60 junior (Rs 7500 per month stipend) and Cadet (Rs 5000 per month) wrestlers. It remains to be seen that after such a deal with a state government, if WFI allows private NGOs like JSW and OGG to support wrestling. Asked about this, Singh said the door is open but with a condition. "We actually did not need them even before. But if they want to support, they are welcome. All we want is that they stay transparent with WFI. They can't make their own secret deals with the wrestlers. If at all they want to help, they can sit with us and prepare plans with us," Singh said.

Rohidas wins Biju Patnaik Sports Award

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, August 26: Odisha hockey star Amit Rohidas has been awarded the prestigious Biju Patnaik Sports Award for outstanding performance in Sports & Games by the Odisha government, a release informed Thursday. Rohidas played an instrumental role in India's backline as well as PC defending in the recently concluded Tokyo Olympics Games, where India ended a 41-year wait for an Olympic medal by claiming bronze. Hockey India congratulated Rohidas on getting the pres-



tigious award. The superstar from Sundargarh district has been a regular feature in the Indian team after making a comeback in 2017 and has been part of some of the biggest feats in recent years. Hockey coach Kalu Charan Choudhury, who has worked towards developing talented players at the grassroots level and has been coaching aspiring hockey players from Odisha for many decades, has won the Biju Patnaik Sports Award for Lifetime Achievement in the promotion of Sports & Games. Siba Prasad was awarded the Coach of The Year award.

Congratulating the awardees, HI president Gyanendro Ningombam said, "I am very delighted to know that Indian men's hockey team defender Amit Rohidas has been awarded the prestigious Biju Patnaik Sports Award for outstanding performance in Sports & Games. "He is truly deserving of it. His contribution to the Indian Team in their Bronze Medal feat in the Olympics will go down in history. I wish this accolade will encourage him to do better and better for the Indian team in the coming days," he added.

Paddler Bhavinaben advances to last 16

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Tokyo, August 26: Ace Indian paddler Bhavinaben Patel progressed to the Round of 16 in the women's singles Class 4 table tennis event with a hard-fought 3-1 victory over Great Britain's Megan Shackleton at the Tokyo Paralympics here Thursday. The 34-year-old Indian dispatched Shackleton, the world World No.9, 11-7, 9-11, 17-15, 13-11 in contest that lasted 41 minutes. Competing in the do-or-die match, the World No.12 Indian started on a dominant note, clinching the first game in just eight minutes but Shackleton made a strong recovery to take the second.

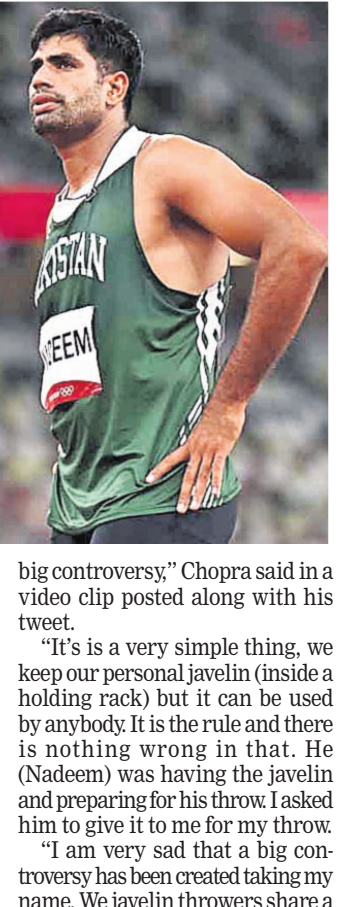


With the fixture poised at 1-1, the two paddlers fought toe-to-toe in the next two games with the Indian coming on top at the Tokyo Metropolitan Gymnasium. This was Patel's first win in the tournament as she was blanked 0-3 by World No.1 Chinese paddler Zhou Ying in the opening round Wednesday. Patel has three points from two games and moves to the knockout round along with table leader Ying.

Neeraj hurt with javelin row

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, August 26: Olympic champion Neeraj Chopra Thursday said he was pained by the controversy surrounding his comments on Pakistani Arshad Nadeem using his javelin during the Tokyo Games and called the entire furore "propaganda aimed at pushing a dirty agenda." The 23-year-old Army man, who won India's maiden Olympic medal in athletics - a gold in Tokyo, said nobody should use his name to rake up any controversy. "I would request everyone to please not use me and my comments as a medium to further your vested interest and propaganda," Chopra, who became only the second Indian to win an individual Olympic gold, said on his Twitter handle. "Sports teaches us to be together and united. I'm extremely disappointed to see some of the reactions from the public on my recent comments. There was nothing wrong with Arshad Nadeem using my javelin to prepare, it is within rules and please do not use my name to push a dirty agenda," he added. Chopra, in a recent interview, stated that he was searching for his personal javelin before his first throw during the Olympic final August 7 and found Nadeem holding it. According to rules, any javelin submitted to the officials by a competitor for his use can also be used by any other participant. This rule applies in all field events except for pole vault. Chopra, who had used Valhalla



big controversy," Chopra said in a video clip posted along with his tweet. "It's a very simple thing, we keep our personal javelin (inside a holding rack) but it can be used by anybody. It is the rule and there is nothing wrong in that. He (Nadeem) was having the javelin and preparing for his throw. I asked him to give it to me for my throw. "I am very sad that a big controversy has been created taking my name. We javelin throwers share a good bond and speak to each other nicely." A former coach echoed Chopra's view. "There is no controversy. It is not that you brought your personal javelin and nobody can use it. When you submitted it, others can also use it. Any participant can use any javelin which is there (in the holding rack),"

NEWS IN BRIEF

Arsenal rout West Brom in League Cup

LONDON: Once Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang started scoring there was no stopping Arsenal. The striker netted a hat-trick Wednesday in a 6-0 win over West Bromwich Albion in the second round of the League Cup. Arsenal hadn't even scored this season until the trip to West Brom. Aubameyang tucked home from close-range to open the scoring in the 17th minute. The Gabon international then tapped in a second after Nicolas Pepe hit the post. He turned provider before halftime, with his acrobatic shot falling to Nicolas Pepe who slid in to finish. Bukayo Saka scored five minutes into the second half after a fine flick from Martin Odegaard. Aubameyang curled in to claim his hat-trick and Alexandre Lacazette tucked home at the front post.

Bayern hit a dozen past hapless Bremer

BREMEN: Bayern Munich's reserves routed fifth-tier side Bremer SV 12-0 in their rescheduled German Cup game to ease into the second round. The match was supposed to have been played August 6 but it was postponed to Wednesday due to a number of coronavirus infections among the Bremen-based team's players. Bayern took a 5-0 lead by halftime, with Eric-Maxim Choupo-Moting scoring a hat-trick. He later struck his fourth eight minutes from time. Jamal Musiala scored a brace (16th & 48th minutes), while Malik Tillman (47th), Leroy Sane (65th), Michael Cuisance (80th), Bouna Sarr (86th) and Corentin Tolisso (88th) scored a piece for the German giants. Bayern were also lucky to find an own goal by Jan-Luca Warm in the 27th minute.

Ex England captain Ted Dexter no more

LONDON: Former England captain Ted Dexter has died at Wolverhampton after a bout of illness, the Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) said Thursday. He was 86. "After a recent illness he passed away peacefully in the Compton Hospice in Wolverhampton at midday yesterday, surrounded by his family," the MCC said. A powerful middle-order batsman and medium-pace bowler, Dexter played 62 Tests between 1958 and 1968, leading the side in 30 of those and scoring 4502 runs at an average of 47.89, besides taking 66 wickets. He was inducted into the ICC Cricket Hall of Fame earlier this year. Dexter worked as a journalist and broadcaster post retirement and also served as England's chairman of selectors. He was also instrumental in devising the players' ranking system that was later adopted by the ICC and is currently known as the MRF Tyres ICC Player Rankings.