



NO NEGATIVITY PLEASE!

Actor Samantha Ruth Prabhu has filed defamation cases against YouTube channels for streaming malignant content about her

LEISURE P2



ATTACKS LEAVE 27 DEAD IN SYRIA

Bomb attack on an army bus in Damascus and shelling in another Syrian town led to the death of 27 people Wednesday

INTERNATIONAL P10



ROHIT FINDS FORM

Rohit Sharma finds his groove as his 61-run knock helps India beat Australia in the second WT20 warm-up match

SPORTS P12



4 MILITANTS, 1 SOLDIER DIE IN J&K

Srinagar: Four Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) militants were killed Wednesday while one soldier died and two others suffered injuries in an encounter in Shopian district of Jammu and Kashmir, officials said. One of the slain ultras was Adil Wani who was involved in the killing of a carpenter from Uttar Pradesh's Saharanpur, three days back, IGP, Kashmir zone, Vijay Kumar, said. Officials said security forces formed a cordon and launched search operations in Dragad locality leading to the encounter. The four deceased ultras belonged to The Resistance Front (TRF), a shadow outfit of LeT, police said.



EX-ODISHA DY SPEAKER NO MORE

Bhubaneswar: Former Deputy Speaker of the Odisha Assembly, Prahalad Dora passed away Wednesday afternoon while undergoing treatment. He was 74. Family sources said Dora was admitted to AIIMS for age-related ailments few days back. While undergoing treatment, he got infected with Covid-19. He breathed his last at 4.55pm, family sources added. Dora was elected to the Odisha Assembly thrice from the Chittrakonda seat. He won the elections on a Janata Dal ticket in 1977 and 1990 and on a BJP ticket in 2004. He was elected Deputy Speaker in 1990 and 2004. Odisha CM Naveen Patnaik condoled Dora's death.

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Aryan bail plea rejected again

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Oct 20: A special court here Wednesday refused to grant bail to Aryan Khan, son of actor Shah Rukh Khan, and two others in connection with the case of seizure of banned drugs on board a cruise ship off the Mumbai coast. Immediately after the bail plea of Aryan was rejected his lawyers moved the high court. The appeal is likely to be mentioned Thursday before a single bench of Justice NW Sambre.



Special Judge VV Patil, designated to hear cases related to the Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, rejected the bail pleas of Aryan, his friend Arbaaz Merchant and fashion model Mummun Dhamecha.

When the matter was called out for order Wednesday afternoon, special judge Patil said, "Rejected." The trio was arrested October 3 by the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) for alleged conspiracy, possession, consumption, purchase and trafficking of drugs.

Aryan and the others have been booked for offences under Sections 8(c), 20(b), 27, 28, 29 and 35 of the NDPS Act. The three are presently in judicial custody. While Aryan and Merchant are lodged at the Arthur Road prison here, Dhamecha is lodged at the Byculla women's jail.

Aryan in his bail plea had said the NCB's contention that he was involved in conspiracy and illicit drug trafficking was absurd, and pointed out that there was no recovery of drugs made from him.

SC rap for UP govt

The apex court bench said the UP government has done nothing to extract information from six of the 10 accused in the Lakhimpur Kheri violence case in which eight people died

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, Oct 20: The Supreme Court came down hard Wednesday on the Uttar Pradesh government for its ongoing probe into the Lakhimpur Kheri case. The apex court said it thought police are 'dragging feet' and they are required to 'dispel' that impression and ensure recording of statements of witnesses before magistrates and their protection.

A three-judge bench of the apex court headed by Chief Justice NV Ramana questioned the UP government as to why statements of witnesses weren't recorded under section 164 of CrPC before a judicial magistrate. The court granted further time to the UP government to record statements of witnesses under section 164 CrPC and posted the matter for hearing October 26.

"We think you are dragging your feet. Please dispel that impression," the bench observed. It added that the probe should not be an 'unending story' and red-flagged the issue of non-recording of statements of nearly 40 prosecution witnesses, of the total 44. "Please ask them to immediately take steps to record section 164 statements. That is the most important thing... Protection to the victims as well as the witnesses," said the bench also comprising Justices Surya Kant and Hima Kohli.

The apex court was hearing a



matter about the October 3 violence in Lakhimpur Kheri. Eight persons including four farmers were killed in the violence. Ten people, including Union Minister of State for Home Ajay Mishra's son Ashish, have been arrested so far. Earlier October 7, the Supreme Court had sought a status report from the UP government on the FIR registered and arrests made in connection with the incident.

The bench also lamented on the UP government for filing the status report Wednesday morning. "We waited till 1.00am last (Tuesday) night but we got nothing. We received the report in the morning. So when will we have the time to read it," the bench said. The Supreme Court also objected to the UP government presenting the report in a sealed cover: "We never said anything about sealed cover," the bench said.

During the hearing, the top court asked the state counsel that how many accused have been arrested and how many of them are in police custody. The bench noted that in police custody more information can be extracted from the accused. "You can't get out anything unless you have them in the police custody," the bench said.

Sahu admits to murder

12 days after the disappearance of school teacher Mamita Meher, police have been finally able to crack the case with prime accused Sahu confessing to the murder

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bolangir, Oct 20: Police have cracked the murder mystery of school teacher Mamita Meher who went missing October 10. It was a pre-planned murder by prime accused Gobind Sahu, the chairperson of Sunshine English Medium School at Mahaling in Kalahandi district, DIG Deepak Kumar said at a press conference here Wednesday. He also confirmed that the exhumed half-burnt body was that of Mamita's.

Sahu was produced at the Bangomunda JMFC Court and was remanded to five-day police custody. Police are also questioning three other suspects, one of whom has been detained, Kumar informed.

Kumar said that Mamita had come to know about the extra-marital affairs of Sahu and had threatened to expose him. Fearing that his cover would be blown off, Sahu decided to eliminate Mamita. Accordingly he had planned Mamita's murder.

Police informed Sahu has confessed that he used to nurture grudge against Mamita. He had taken Mamita in a car to Bhawanipatna. While returning from Bhawanipatna to K Gaon, he strangled her in the car, the DIG said. Sahu then



DIG Deepak Kumar (R) talks to the media in Bolangir, Wednesday

burnt her body and sprinkled salt over it for quick decomposition before burying it at an under-construction stadium at Mahaling.

Kumar said that Sahu had planned the murder of Mamita in meticulous fashion. It is for this reason he had asked the JCB operator to dig up a pit inside the stadium October 7. Following the killing October 8 and burying the body, he had asked the operator to fill up the pit, the next day.

Sahu had earlier been detained by the police after family members of Mamita lodged a complaint with the police blaming him for the teacher's disappearance. However, he escaped from the Titlagarh police barrack October 17 following which three policemen were suspended for dereliction of duty. Sahu was arrested Tuesday again from a sugarcane field behind his younger sister's house at Budhipadar vil-



Gobind Sahu

lage under Bangomunda block.

Meanwhile opposition BJP organised protests at various places in Odisha including Kalahandi and Bolangir districts. They demanded the immediate removal of Minister of State for Home, Dibya Shankar Mishra for his alleged involvement in the gruesome

NCW seeks removal of Odisha ministers

NEW DELHI: Seeking removal of two Odisha ministers, the National Commission for Women (NCW) has written to Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik alleging that they used their position to exploit and sexually harass women, besides manipulating police investigation in a case involving a teacher who was raped and killed. The NCW said Minister of State for Home, Dibya Shankar Mishra and Law Minister Pratap Jena frequently visited the school where the victim worked several times, before her mysterious disappearance. The commission has also demanded the immediate removal of Mishra and Jena from position of ministers. The NCW has also written to Odisha DGP Abhay to ensure a fair investigation in the matter and to book all the accused under relevant provisions of the law.

killing. The BJP has also alleged that Mishra ran a sex-racket in the school where Mamita worked and also stated that Sahu is a close associate of the minister.

Leader of Opposition Pradipta Kumar Naik wrote to Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik in this regard. He demanded CBI investigation into the incident and resignation of the minister on moral grounds. The minister himself is in the charge of Home Affairs and it will hamper the investigation if he continues in office, stated Naik. **MORE ON P3**

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



I quit long ago. Now I deal only in 'opium of the masses'



FIGHTING ALL ODDS: People under umbrellas try to pull to safety a car which had overturned due to the sudden gush of floodwaters on the national highway in Malda district of West Bengal

Guilty will be punished: BJD

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Oct 20: Biju Janata Dal (BJD) leader Pramila Mallick said Wednesday that the state government has taken the case of Mamita Meher's murder very seriously and those involved in it will be punished.

"There are several instances where BJP ministers have been spotted in pictures with anti-social persons. The accused in the attack on Mohan Majhi's vehicle has been seen clicking pictures with central ministers," Mallick pointed out.

"It is important to note that in social and political spheres we attend meetings and photos are clicked with us. Therefore, the political person

should always not be held responsible if the other person in the frame commits a crime," Mallick added.

The BJD leader said that an officer who has previously worked with the NIA has been handed the charge of probing the case.

"Whoever is found guilty, whether it may be the minister (Dibya Shankar Mishra), strict action will be taken against the culprit(s)," Mallick asserted. "Mamita's family will certainly get justice. Do not politicise the heinous crime. We request the opposition not to spread canards in the name of the educational institution where Mamita was employed. This slander will impact the future of other children studying there," she added.

Facebook fined £50mn for 'Giphy' takeover

CMA said that it had no option but to fine the social networking giant as it deliberately refused to share important information

AGENCIES

London, Oct 20: Britain's competition watchdog said Wednesday it had fined social networking giant Facebook over £50 million for a 'deliberate' failure to supply information linked to its takeover of animated graphics startup company 'Giphy'.

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) said the fine totalling £50.5 million (\$69.5 million, 60 million euros) was imposed for 'consciously refusing to report all the required information' concerning the purchase last year.

"We warned Facebook that its refusal to provide us with important information was a breach of the

order but, even after losing its appeal in two separate courts, Facebook continued to disregard its legal obligations," Joel Bamford, Senior Director of Mergers at the CMA, said in a statement. "This should serve as a warning to any company that thinks it is above the law," Bamford added.

The CMA said it was first time a company had been found to have consciously breached such an order. "Given the multiple warnings it gave Facebook, the CMA considers that Facebook's failure to comply was deliberate," the CMA noted.

Facebook hit out at the fine in a statement. "We strongly disagree with CMA's unfair decision to punish Facebook for a best effort compliance approach, which the CMA itself ultimately approved. We will review the CMA's decision and consider our options," it added. It comes as Facebook faces a



storm of criticism since a whistleblower leaked internal studies showing the company knew its sites could be harmful to young people's mental health. Facebook announced in May

2020 its purchase of 'Giphy' for a reported \$400 million. 'Giphy' is a platform and search engine for 'stickers' and other products using the graphics interchange format or GIFs.

Senators oppose FB's 'Novi' plan

Washington: A group of US lawmakers have said Facebook cannot be trusted to manage cryptocurrency. They have urged the social media platform to discontinue immediately a small pilot of its cryptocurrency wallet named 'Novi', which was launched Tuesday. US Democratic senators Brian Schatz, Sherrod Brown, Richard Blumenthal, Elizabeth Warren and Tina Smith voiced their opposition to Facebook's two-year-old effort to launch a cryptocurrency and digital wallet. They have written to Facebook Chief Executive Mark Zuckerberg on this issue. "Facebook cannot be trusted to manage a payment system or digital currency when its existing ability to manage risks and keep consumers safe has proven wholly insufficient," the senators wrote.

Fuel prices hiked again after 2 days

Since rate revision began in the last week of September, petrol price have gone up 17 times and diesel 20 times

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Oct 20: After two days of lull, petrol and diesel prices were Wednesday again hiked by 35 paise per litre each. The new hikes pushed the rates to new highs across India.

The price of petrol in the national capital rose to its highest-ever level of ₹106.19 a litre and ₹112.11 per litre in Mumbai, according to a price notification of state-owned fuel retailers. In Mumbai, diesel now comes for ₹102.89 a litre, while in Delhi, it costs ₹94.92.

With this rise, petrol is now at ₹100-a-litre mark or more in all state capitals while diesel has touched the level in over a dozen states. Diesel crossed the ₹100-a-litre mark in Panaji and Ranchi

CITY PRICES	
PETROL	₹107.13 (+0.36)
DIESEL	₹103.55 (+0.38)

with the latest increase. Since ending of a three-week long hiatus in rate revision in the last week of September, this is the 17th increase in petrol price and the 20th time that diesel rates have gone up.

International benchmark Brent crude was trading at USD 84.43 per barrel Wednesday for the first time in seven years. A month back, Brent was trading at USD 73.92.

Being a net importer of oil, India prices petrol and diesel at rates equivalent to international prices.

MARKET WATCH	
INDEX	VARIATION
SENSEX	61259.96 ↓ 456.09
NIFTY	18266.60 ↓ 152.20
DOLLAR	74.96 ↓ ₹0.46
EURO	87.18 ↓ ₹0.24
GOLD	₹47,424 ↑ ₹144
SILVER	₹65,094 ↑ ₹644

WEATHER		
	BHUB	CTK
MAX	32.6°C	33.2°C
MIN	24.7°C	24.5°C
Humidity	95%	88%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
Forecast	Light rain very likely	

leisure



MEGAN FOX THINKS IT'S VERY DIFFICULT TO BE A WOMAN

Actress Megan Fox says it is hard to be a woman and has encouraged other women to wear whatever makes them 'feel good' and not to worry about the opinions of other people.

SYLVESTER STALLONE BOWS OUT OF EXPENDABLES FRANCHISE

Hollywood star Sylvester Stallone has confirmed that he has filmed his last-ever scenes in the *Expendables* franchise, and he is now 'passing the baton' over to actor Jason Statham and his 'capable hands. He wrote: "EXPENDABLES finale for me Today is my last day of filming a Heading home. So they go."



FORTUNE FORECAST

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

ARIES
Flow with the tide today. This is Ganesh's tip pertaining to your relationships. You are assertive as a general rule but you can save it for later. Today is the day to be generous and accede to the wishes of your beloved. You may even propose to him/her.

TAURUS
This day you will be compelled to be resigned to your fate. Ganesh does not see your own will power in operation today. Though you would be surrendering yourself to the whims of destiny, do not expect anything good to come out of it.

GEMINI
You will end up having an argument with people owing to your aggressive nature. These people could slander your reputation on account of your enmity. However you will be able to defeat them. They will have to give up against your intellectual superiority.

CANCER
You are known for your ability to set the ball rolling. Once you set your mind to do something, it is generally considered done by your peers. Today, you are eyeing a few accomplishments on the monetary front. Most part of your day will go in dealing with financial transactions, and importing and exporting goods.

LEO
The desire and passion for learning is a life-long quest, says Ganesh. It may be that you love to learn, but dissipating the knowledge you have acquired is equally important. So on this day, it is through teaching that you shall learn just how fascinating and frustrating children can be.

VIRGO
Expenses will mount uncontrollably today, and they will be mostly wasteful in nature. However, positive energies are gathering momentum, and Ganesh says you would do well in making full use of them, both in your personal and professional spheres.

LIBRA
Sometimes, you lend a helping hand and people end up taking the entire arm. Well, that's kids for you! So beware, because young ones around you may try to take undue advantage of your sympathetic nature today, hints Ganesh. Minor issues and problems may dampen the high spirits that you are in today.

SCORPIO
It is more than likely that you will be in high spirits today, says Ganesh. All your energy and exuberance may not yield expected results. That is no reason to lose heart though. Keep up the effort from your end and you will eventually taste success in the days to come.

SAGITTARIUS
You will find yourself rubbing shoulders with Lady Luck today. Sharpen your multi-tasking skills as you will keep busy and have only occasional moments of respite. Good will and green print, you might find them both with ease and in abundance, predicts Ganesh.

CAPRICORN
Patience is tested when one is in trouble; your patience could be tried today. The trick is in keeping your composure, says Ganesh. Avoid getting into an argument or scuffle with those around you, as luck may not be on your side.

AQUARIUS
Be sure of your strengths and decisions, and Ganesh guarantees you success. You don't care what others think about you, but don't be so indifferent that you ignore their choices, preferences and comforts completely. The smile of your sweetheart will work like a charm and you will forget all your worries, feels Ganesh.

PISCES
For those in the creative fields of marketing or advertising, today is an extraordinary opportunity to tweak your marketing mix into bringing in maximum profits with bare minimum efforts. Your health interests will also take priority now, and you will find yourself spending more time in the gym, says Ganesh.

Kapil floors viewers with his Ranveer act



Mumbai: There's a reason Kapil Dev is considered a legendary all-rounder, as this is not just in reference to his cricketing skills and swash-buckling playing style but also it's about what he does off the field. The former Indian skipper made the nation proud 38 years back when he lifted the World Cup trophy after beating the mighty West Indies team at Lord's. And now he has again sent shockwaves across the country and has left everyone dazed and amazed with his new advertisement. In a recent ad for a fintech company, Kapil Dev is seen doing antics which can be easily defined as bizarre, eccentric and wacky, something which aptly suits actor Ranveer Singh. And that's precisely what the ad is about - Kapil Dev acting like Ranveer Singh. In the 37-second ad Kapil goes out of his way to act like Ranveer. He acts the enactment by wearing some outlandish clothes, his over-the-top actions and simple dialogues that hammer the funny bone. Looking at his antics, it won't be wrong to say that the legendary cricketer has not just imitated Ranveer but he has internalised the latter's character to the point of absolute perfection. **IAN S**

Katrina's ethnic look a sight for sore eyes

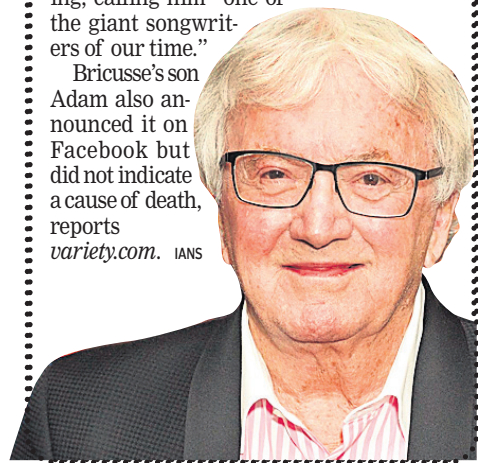


Mumbai: As the audience prepares for the Rohit Shetty directorial *Sooryavanshi*, Katrina Kaif has been running pillar to post with regards to the promotions of the film. However, the fans have no complaints as the string of promotions continues to bring us Katrina's most dazzling looks.

The actress recently took to Instagram to share a few pictures of herself from the promotion streak where she attended Colors' show *The Big Picture* with her *Sooryavanshi* director Rohit Shetty. She captioned the image as, "vibes for #bigpicture #sooryavanshi-intheatres." *The Big Picture* host Ranveer Singh was quick to react with a comment on the actress's post. He wrote, "What a blast! ?? ??? thank you for coming and making it such a special episode! (sic)". Katrina embraced a Sabyasachi Mukherjee creation, a burnt orange coloured saree with an embellished blouse having a heavy sequin embroidered torso and floral sleeves. Complementing her attire were the emerald and stone adorned drop earrings and, her open and tresses. She kept the accessories to a bare minimum in order to draw the attention towards her clothing. **IAN S**

Goldfinger songwriter Leslie Bricusse passes away at 90

Los Angeles: Oscar- and Grammy-winning songwriter Leslie Bricusse, whose songs for Broadway and Hollywood include *What Kind of Fool Am I?* and *Pure Imagination*, died Tuesday in Saint-Paul-de-Vence, France. He was 90. Bricusse wrote the lyrics for the James Bond theme songs *Goldfinger* and *You Only Live Twice*, as well as songs for movies including *Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory*, *Scrooge*, *Hook*, *Doctor Dolittle* and *Superman*. His close friend, Dame Joan Collins, announced his death on Instagram this morning, calling him "one of the giant songwriters of our time." Bricusse's son Adam also announced it on Facebook but did not indicate a cause of death, reports *variety.com*. **IAN S**



Adarsh Gourav joins Meryl Streep, Sienna Miller for Extrapolations



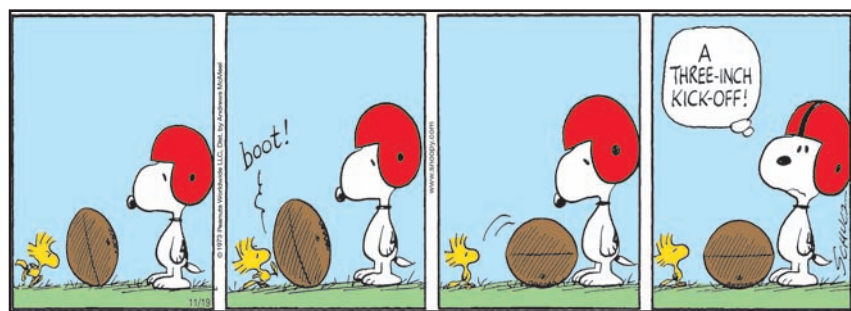
Mumbai: Actor Adarsh Gourav will be seen sharing screen space with Hollywood personalities such as Meryl Streep, Sienna Miller, Kit Harrington and Tahar Rahim in an upcoming anthology titled *Extrapolations*. It also features Matthew Rhys, Daveed Diggs, Gemma Chan and David Schwimmer. The series explores the stories of how the changes to the planet will impact love, family and work both on a personal level and at a large human level. It's an eight interconnected episodic series and will display the need for survival world over in the current era. Adarsh, who gained global spotlight with his performance in *The White Tiger*, said: "This is beyond anything I can express to be honest. But to be working with such an incredible team at such an early juncture of my career is truly rewarding. "I'm elated to be part of this project and grateful that I will be working alongside some of the very best in the business." Adarsh recently flew off to the US, where the show is currently expected to go into production. **IAN S**

Samantha files defamation cases against YouTube channels



Hyderabad: Samantha Ruth Prabhu, who recently announced her separation from Akkineni Naga Chaitanya, stood up for herself in these tough situations. She has now filed defamation cases against some YouTube channels for streaming malignant content about her. Suman TV, Telugu Popular TV, and a few more YouTube channels will receive legal notices from Samantha, for defaming her image on their respective channels. Also, Samantha has apparently filed a legal notice against an advocate named Venkat Rao, who had allegedly spoken about Samantha's marital life and had alleged that she had affairs. In the wake of all the negativity, Samantha had released a personal note asking others stay away from her as she is not going to allow any kind of negativity to break her. Apparently, neither her ex-husband Naga Chaitanya, nor his father Nagarjuna stood by her in these struggles. On the work front, Samantha has a couple of interesting subjects she would start shooting for soon, while she is also taking her personal space to cope with the recent tumult in her life. **IAN S**

PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

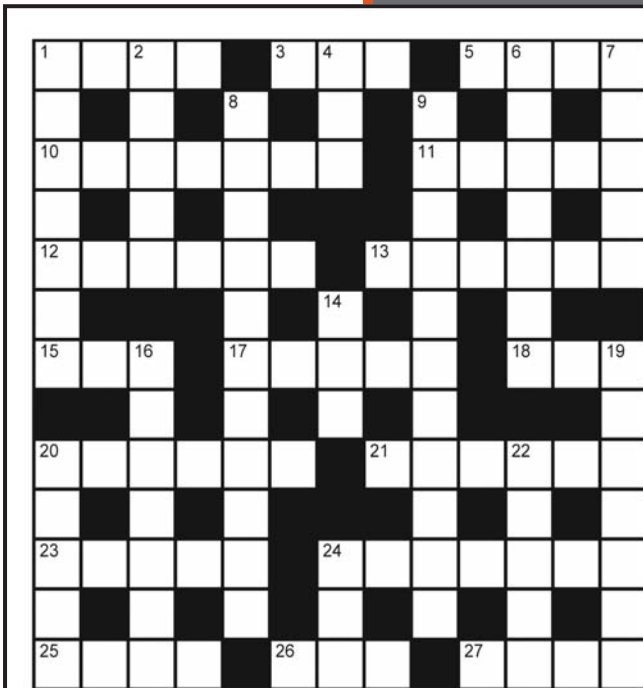


BREVITY



FUN post

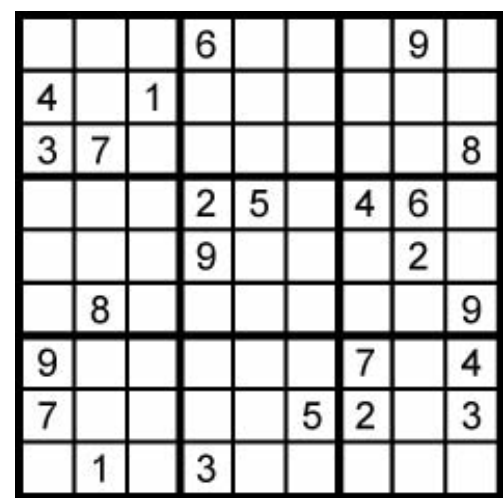
CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 1 Toast topping
 - 3 Bird-to-be
 - 5 Exchange
 - 10 Makes a phone call (5,2)
 - 11 Speculate
 - 12 Acquire
 - 13 Truant
 - 15 Defraud
 - 17 Sufficient
 - 18 Small pouch
 - 20 Tux adornment (3,3)
 - 21 The Thinker, e.g.
 - 23 Colossus
 - 24 Spelling bee, for one
 - 25 London district
 - 26 Caustic chemical
 - 27 Hankering
 - 4 Hiatus
 - 6 Sommeliers, e.g.
 - 7 Skirt fold
 - 8 Desires
 - 9 Like some rural streets
 - 14 Gibbon, for one
 - 16 Entrance
 - 19 Big cat
 - 20 Nibbles
 - 22 Pick up the tab
 - 24 Coquettish
- Down**
- 1 Sitting room
 - 2 Basic belief

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

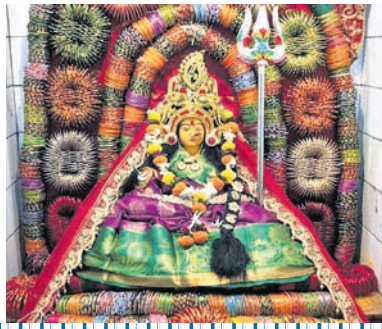


CROSSWORD

SUDOKU

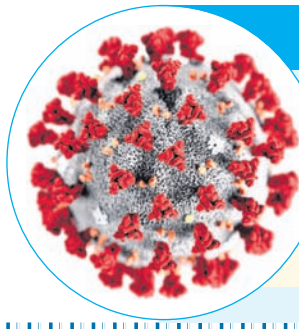


CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



RITUAL IN PROGRESS

Goddess Annapurna of Deewan Bazar in Cuttack adorned with Kanchan Gouri Beshha, Wednesday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	24,25,89,367	21,98,48,825	49,32,573
India	3,41,08,996	3,34,78,247	4,52,651
Odisha	10,36,532	10,23,849	8,296

Chorus for CBI probe as state boils over Mahaling

A BJP delegation led by party's state president Samir Mohanty meets Governor Ganeshi Lal demanding expulsion of MoS, Home DS Mishra



Activists of BJP Mahila Morcha during a protest near the Chief Minister's residence, Wednesday

OSCW seeks report from Kalahandi SP

Bhubaneswar: Taking cognisance of the murder of Mamita Meher, a teacher of Sunshine English Medium School in Mahaling under Sindhekela police limits of Kalahandi district, the Odisha State Commission for Women (OSCW) Wednesday sought a detailed report of the case from the Kalahandi Superintendent of Police (SP). Terming the murder as 'shameful', the women's rights body has directed the office of the Kalahandi SP to furnish a detailed report within 15 days. OSCW chairperson Minati Behera said, "This is a heinous crime. We have already sought a report from the SP two days back and they will be furnishing the same within 15 days." The Commission has also asked the SP to conduct a free and detailed investigation so that the culprit/s can be brought to justice, she added.

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Oct 20: Alleging involvement of Minister of State (MoS) Home, Dibya Shankar Mishra in the kidnap and murder of Kalahandi's Mahaling Sunshine Public School teacher Mamita Meher, Opposition BJP Wednesday demanded a CBI probe into the case.

The Opposition BJP and Congress alleged that Mishra was shielding Gobind Sahu, the president of the school and the prime accused in the missing of the school teacher.

BJP spokesperson Aparajita Sarangi said, "Mamita Meher won't get justice if the probe is launched by the state government. The case should be handed over to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), if the government wants to ensure a fair & impartial probe."

"We know that in its reaction, the state government will reply 'law will follow its own course'. The question is will the law be permitted to follow its course," she asked. As per reports, Gobind has confessed to his crime during the police interrogation.

Gobind, who had escaped from police custody, was nabbed from a sugar cane field where he was hiding Tuesday evening. The prime accused was nabbed hours after police declared Rs 1 lakh reward on his head.

Meanwhile, a delegation of state BJP led by president Samir Mohanty Wednesday met Governor Ganeshi Lal demanding expulsion of Mishra and probe by the central agency into the sensitive case. Addressing a presser here,

Mohanty said a fair probe into the crime is not possible if Mishra continues to remain in the Council of Ministers as he had intimacy with the prime accused Gobind Sahu.

Members of BJP Mahila Morcha led by MP Sangeeta Kumari Singh Deo also staged dharna in front of the SP office in Bolangir demanding removal and arrest of Mishra.

Earlier in the day, some BJP workers allegedly hurled eggs on the residence of Mishra at Bhawanipatna and the party also observed a 12-hour Kalahandi bandh demanding a CBI probe and the ouster of the Minister.

Leader of Opposition in the state Assembly Pradipta Naik has written to Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik demanding a CBI investigation into the case.

Meanwhile, activists of Youth Congress also staged protests near Naveen Niwas, the residence of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, in Bhubaneswar. Youth Congress president Smruti Ranjan Lenka



A Congress delegation after submitting a memo to Governor Ganeshi Lal in Bhubaneswar

has been detained at Airport police station.

"We tried to meet the CM to seek justice for the 24-year-old girl but were picked up by police personnel midway. On the other hand, the government is protecting the minister, who is directly involved in the case," said state youth Congress president Smruti Ranjan Lenka.

"Horrible news coming out on Mamita Meher missing case. I am visiting the girl's family today. The perpetrators of the crime should not be spared no matter how high or mighty they are," tweeted senior Congress leader Narasingha Mishra.

Demanding the expulsion of the MoS Home, the members of Shree Jagannath Sena have also staged a protest outside the Srimandir Singhadwar and burnt posters of the minister.

Blaze in Cuttack house; none hurt



POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, Oct 20: A fire broke out at the first floor of a multi-storied residential complex at Manikghosh Bazar here Wednesday afternoon, a Fire Services official said.

The official added that no casualty was reported although property worth lakhs of rupees were reduced to cinders in the inferno that possibly sparked out from an earthen lamp and engulfed two rooms of a residential complex belonging to an elderly woman here.

The fire broke out around 2pm. "Two fire tenders from Buxi Bazar Fire Station were pressed into service. Firemen managed to douse the blaze after a two-hour-long operation. An elderly woman, the only occupant of the house, was rescued unharmed," assistant Fire officer Abani Kumar Swain said.

Friend turns foe in Khurda: Youth killed over money

POST NEWS NETWORK

Khurda, Oct 20: Asking for repayment of borrowed money turned fatal for a 19-year-old youth here as he was killed by his friend near Jatni Bypass here late Tuesday night, an official said Wednesday.

Addressing the media here, Khurda superintendent of police (SP) Raj Kishore Dora said they have taken Maheswar Das alias Muna of Jatni Bypass Chachera Sabar Sahi here into custody. Maheswar has been nabbed on charge of killing his friend Rashmiranjan Pattjoshi alias Chandan of Mukundaprasad Spinning Mill Labour Colony here by slitting his throat.

The Khurda SP said Pattjoshi and Das were friends for years before working as drivers at a private firm in the industrial area here. Das had borrowed some money from Pattjoshi a few days ago. Their relationship started turning sour when Pattjoshi asked the money back recently.

The SP said it was a pre-planned murder that took place around 10:30pm Tuesday.

"In a bid to execute the murder, Das asked Pattjoshi to meet him near Jatni Bypass Chachera Sabar Sahi Square at 10:30pm. The meet-



Khurda SP Raj Kishore Dora at a presser

ing had just begun when Das took out a knife and stabbed Pattjoshi before slitting his throat. Onlookers informed Pattjoshi's parents who reached the place, barely 500 metres from their house, within a few minutes just to find a profusely bleeding Pattjoshi lying in a pool of blood and Das standing nearby with a blood-stained knife," the Khurda SP said.

When asked by the PattJoshis, the accused confessed to have killed their son as 'he was being rough for money', Dora said, adding that soon after Das fled the spot.

Soon after, an unconscious Pattjoshi was rushed to a nearby hospital where he was declared 'dead on arrival', the SP pointed out.

Maheswar Das had borrowed some money from Rashmiranjan Pattjoshi a few days ago

Their relationship started turning sour when Pattjoshi asked the money back recently

In a bid to execute the murder, Das asked Pattjoshi to meet him near Jatni Bypass Chachera Sabar Sahi Square at 10:30pm

THE MEETING HAD JUST BEGUN WHEN DAS TOOK OUT A KNIFE AND STABBED PATTJOSHI BEFORE SLITTING HIS THROAT

On the other hand, victim's father Santosh Pattjoshi approached the Town police that registered a case (419/21) under relevant sections of the IPC and launched a probe.

Later, two police teams raided possible hideouts of Das in the area. "We were tipped off that Das was heading for his uncle's place in Janla area. One of our teams intercepted him near Janla Square around 4am Wednesday," the senior police official said.

A forensic team has collected vital evidence from the crime scene. The body has been handed over to the PattJoshis after an autopsy, the Khurda SP added.

Terracotta expo at Ekamra Haat as Diwali nears



The terracotta exhibition at Ekamra Haat

OP PHOTOS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Oct 20: Ahead of the Diwali festival, the Handlooms, Textiles and Handicrafts department has started a special exhibition and sale of terracotta products at the recently-renovated Ekamra Haat here.

The exhibition will continue till October 31. Over a hundred artisans

from 22 states are exhibiting different terracotta items at the expo, sources said. The Ekamra Haat will remain open for buyers from 10am to 9pm every day.

"We are trying to facilitate the sale of handicraft and handloom products of local artisans amid the Covid-19 pandemic," said an official of the department. Ekamra Haat, which remained

closed for over a year for renovation, was reopened October 2 with better facilities for both visitors

and artisans. The haat now has 83 stalls and it has been divided into two zones - Ekamra Kutir and Ekamra Bazaar.

Ekamra Kutir has 50 stalls including eight for live demonstration. The open space outside the haat has been used to set up the Ekamra Bazaar with 33 stalls. Of the 83 stalls, 56 have been reserved for sale of handicraft products and the remaining for handloom products, sources said.

The haat was earlier managed by the Odisha Industrial Infrastructure Development Corporation (Idco) and it was handed over to the Handlooms, Textiles and

Handicrafts department in October last year.

"Now, the visitors can not only purchase the handlooms and handicrafts products but also see live demonstration of their making process," added the official.

Outlets of Boyanika, Amlan, Sambalpuri Bastralaya and Utkalika have been opened in the haat. The food stalls at Ekamra Kutir are serving cuisines from across the country, including those from Odisha, sources added.

This apart, several other amenities, including a conference hall and an open-air-theatre have been set up at the haat.



Creating more jobs only way to eradicate poverty: Murthy

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Oct 20: Infosys co-founder Narayana Murthy Wednesday said the only way to solve poverty in the country is to create more and more jobs with better incomes. He also said that being a good citizen is about treating the society as one's own.

He said this while addressing the 10th annual convocation of the IIT Bhubaneswar in virtual mode. Murthy underlined that the only way to solve poverty in the country was to create more and more jobs with better incomes.

"I have tremendous confidence in the power of youth, values, aspirations, energy, confidence, determination, discipline and enthusiasm," Murthy said in his address.

"But then, that requires that you people do some hard thinking, some introspection and are determined to do what the previous generations have not done," the 75-year-old said.

He stressed on the need to create a civilised society where every citizen has equal opportunity to better one's life, every child has food, shelter, healthcare and education, and a society that focused on performance rather than empty slogans, among others.

Murthy, who was the chief guest at the convocation, told the IIT graduates to "be good citizens first and

then be good people".

"In India, most of us are kind, courteous and generous to our family, and perhaps to our close friends. This is being good people," Murthy elucidated. He said being a good citizen is about treating the society as your own, putting the interests of the society ahead of yours and your family's interest, treating strangers with courtesy and taking care of the commons.

"Somehow, we do not care about responsibility towards people outside the family and friends' orbit," Murthy rued.

"That's why, we see corruption, people cleaning their homes and throwing the dirt on to public roads and that's why you see complete lack of civic sense, according to the Infosys founder.

"Remember, that this country belongs to you!" he said.

Murthy underscored that education was extremely important in creating a stabilised society.

"We must create jobs in the manufacturing and the services sector. We need more engineers, scientists, bureaucrats and politicians that have a mindset to encourage entrepreneurship," Murthy said.

He highlighted that English is the 'only window' in the modern world for Indians to access knowledge and achieve progress in science, technology, arts, medicine and economy.

SJTA in jittery over bid to grab Srimandir plots



POST NEWS NETWORK

Puri, Oct 20: The Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) will soon write to the district Collectors to examine the status of the landed properties of Srimandir under their respective jurisdictions.

This comes after reports that some people in Soro area of Balasore tried to grab landed properties of the 12th century shrine through forged documents.

According to sources, some people had applied before Soro tehsildar to record Srimandir land in their names. They had furnished certain letters of the SJTA and a Supreme Court order on the temple land to support their cause.

Suspecting some foul play, Soro tehsildar raised the issue with the SJTA October 16. Soon, it was found that the applicants had submitted fake documents to press for their case.

The SJTA made it clear that the applicants had forged the signature of SJTA chief administrator for preparing fake letters of the

temple administration. The shrine authorities also claimed that the applicants submitted some false documents as Supreme Court order before the Soro tehsildar.

The temple administration has lodged an FIR in this regard with Singhadwar police.

In addition to this, FIRs against two former Amins of Srimandir office were lodged at Soro police station in connection with the land grab bid. The two Amins—Chittaranjan Panigrahi and Rabi Narayan Das—were working for the temple office in Balasore district between 2018 and 2021.

Meanwhile, the locals and Srimandir servitors have sought a high-level probe into the entire episode. They also urged the SJTA to examine the status of landed properties of Srimandir in various districts.

“Some people have forged the signature of SJTA chief administrator to prepare fake letters and tried to occupy temple land. This is a serious issue. A high-level probe into the incident would unearth the conspiracy behind the

EX-TEMPLE AMINS IN DOCK

Some people had applied before Soro tehsildar to record Srimandir land in their names

They had also furnished certain letters of the SJTA and a Supreme Court order on the temple land to support their cause

Suspecting some foul play, Soro tehsildar raised the issue with the SJTA October 16. Soon, it was found that the applicants had submitted fake documents to press for their case

FIRs against two former Amins of Srimandir office were lodged at Soro police station in connection with the land grab bid

land grab attempt,” said senior Daitapati servitor Binayak Dasmahapatra.

BJP leader Jayanta Kumar Dash sought a CBI or Crime Branch probe into the incident. “The temple administration should come forward for a proper probe into the incident and take action against the guilty. It cannot run away from its responsibilities by saying that two former Amins of Srimandir office were behind the land grab attempt,” Dash said.

SJTA administrator (development) Ajay Kumar Jena said the temple administration will soon write to district Collectors to check the status of Srimandir lands coming under their jurisdictions.

“We will write to the Collectors to keep tab on Srimandir lands,” he added.



Jajpur MLA and BJD Organisational Secretary Pranab Prakash Das greets ex-Congress MLA Kailash Chandra Kulesika as the latter joins Biju Janata Dal in presence of party's General Secretary (Media Affairs) Manas Mangaraj and Kotpad MLA Padmini Dian in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday

Man dies after jumping off Kathajodi bridge

Cuttack: A youth died after jumping off the Kathajodi river bridge between Press Chhak and Gopalpur here Wednesday. The ODRAF team, which was pressed to action after the youth jumped from the bridge, found his body after hours of search operation. The deceased was identified as Sapan Kumar Behera of Kharavel Nagar area in Bhubaneswar and worked as a courier delivery boy. The exact cause leading to his jumping off the bridge is yet to be ascertained. Earlier in the month, a man working as a laboratory assistant at a college in Bhubaneswar went missing after jumping into Mahanadi River from the bridge near Jagatpur in Cuttack Town September 26.

Goutam Das cracked JEE Advanced in 1st attempt

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Oct 20: SAI International School student Goutam Das scored 282 out of 360 in JEE Advanced 2021 and secured the all-India rank (AIR) 115. He is also the state topper.

Goutam, a meritorious and hard working student, qualified IIT-JEE in the first attempt and now desires to study in IIT-Mumbai. He was also the state topper in NEST 2021 wherein his all-India rank was 6. Earlier, he secured 98.6% in Class XII CBSE Board Examination 2021.

Goutam comes from a simple background. His father Ravindra Das is a businessman in Balasore, while his mother Madhumita Das is a housewife. He believes that practice and only practice has helped him secured such a percentile. He has taken no less than 180 practice tests for JEE. He started with preparing from the basic NCERT books and subsequently graduated to others. Goutam confessed that he did not aspire to become an engineer but it was his love for mathematics that made him take the IIT-JEE examinations.

Goutam suggested that anyone who wants to appear for the JEE exams should first be thorough in his/her basic concepts and then get into other high-level course content.

The pandemic and the lockdowns did not dampen his spirit to study hard. In fact, Goutam was happy that the lockdown gave him a lot of



A hard working Goutam wants to graduate in Computer Science and later become an IAS officer and serve the nation

time to focus on his studies. He attended his online classes and because of the lockdown his school teachers were always available to clear his doubts over phone calls. About his school, Goutam said that his school helped him a lot in his preparation for Board examinations as well as JEE. Regarding his future plans, he said he wants to graduate in Computer Science and later become an IAS officer and serve the nation.

Silpi Sahoo, Chairperson of SAI International Education Group, said, “Goutam Das’ hard work, perseverance and dedication have helped him reap fruits of success. He has not only made the school proud but also the entire state is proud of his accomplishment. I wish him all the best on his future endeavours.”

Notorious criminal Biju hurt in Puri encounter

AGENCIES

Puri, Oct 20: The prime accused in the firing and extortion bid incident which left a woman injured in the pilgrim town of Puri Tuesday was caught after a police encounter Wednesday.

The main accused identified as a notorious criminal Biju Behera, a resident of Gokhasahi in Puri, had gone into hiding shortly after the firing incident.

Acting on a tip-off about his presence in Chandanpur, a special team of police conducted raid in the area. As per sources, Biju was warned to surrender, however, the criminal first opened fire at the cops leading the police to resort to retaliatory firing.



Later, after a brief exchange of fire, Biju was overpowered by the police personnel.

He has reportedly received gunshot wounds on his left leg and has been admitted to Puri district headquarters hospital.

A pistol and three rounds of live ammunition have been seized from Biju.

550+ new cases for 2nd consecutive day

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Oct 20: The state, for the second consecutive day, logged above 550 new Covid-19 cases taking the tally to 10,36,532 Wednesday while two fresh fatalities pushed the death toll to 8,296, a Health department official said.

While the state Wednesday reported 559 new cases, the figure was 556 on the previous day and 340 Monday.

Wednesday's new cases included 71 children and adolescents. The rate of infection among the population in the age group of 0 to 18 years stands at 12.70 per cent.



OF THE 559 FRESH CASES DETECTED IN 23 DISTRICTS, 321 CAME FROM QUARANTINE CENTRES WHILE 238 WERE LOCAL CONTACTS

THE RATE OF INFECTION AMONG THE POPULATION IN THE AGE GROUP OF 0 TO 18 YEARS STANDS AT 12.70 PER CENT

Of the 559 fresh cases detected in 23 of the state's 30 districts, 321 came from quarantine centres while 238 were local contacts. Khurda district of which

Bhubaneswar is a part, reported the highest 279 fresh infections followed by Cuttack (54), the official said.

One Covid-19 patient each died

in Jagatsinghpur and Nayagarh districts, taking the state's death toll to 8,296.

The state's daily test positivity rate (TPR) stands at 0.79 per cent as 559 people were detected with the disease out of 70,586 samples tested Tuesday. The TPR was 0.97 per cent the previous day.

The state currently has 4,785 active cases while 10,23,398 patients including 618 on Tuesday recovered from coronavirus.

The state has thus far conducted over 2.12 crore sample tests.

As many as 1.02 crore people have been fully inoculated with double doses of Covid-19 vaccines till Tuesday, the official said.

WASSUP TODAY

BHUBANESWAR

- Police Commemoration Day, Reserve Police Line, 7:45am
- 'Impact Talk', Centre for the Sustainable Use of Natural and Social Resources, online, 5:00pm

Programmes/announcements for wassup today may be sent to opwassup@gmail.com for record, it must also carry the sender's mobile number for our verification, but not for publication.

4 held for arms trade

Cuttack: Chauliaganj police Wednesday claimed to have arrested four persons in connection with illegal firearms trade in the city. The accused were identified as Soumendra Sahu of Thatara Sahi in the Silver City, Sk Sajid Ali of Tirtol, Sudarshan Mallick and Badal Kumar Jena of Biridi in Jagatsinghpur, said Police Commissioner Saumendra Priyadarshi at a presser here. A team of Chauliaganj police caught the accused at Gatiarapatna Tuesday night and seized five guns and 12 bullets from them. Two bikes and five mobile phones were also seized from the accused, Priyadarshi said. The accused were selling guns to criminals of Cuttack city and its nearby areas, police said.



Lord Sudarshan of Srimandir being taken on a procession as part of a ritual on Kumar Purnima in Puri, Wednesday

12th edition of OEC at FM Univ from Dec 18

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Oct 20: The 12th edition of Odisha Environment Congress (OEC) will be organised from December 18 to 20, 2021 at Fakir Mohan University in Balasore.

Organising secretary of OEC, Sudarshan Das said the theme of 2021 OEC is 'Environment and Pandemic'.

“Along with industrial progress we have achieved in general and the pharmaceutical industry in particular, infectious diseases are rising due to globalisation, increased travel and trade activities, urbanisation, changes in human behaviour, improper use of antibiotics among others,” Das said.

The outbreak of Covid-19 shows that infectious diseases spread rapidly due to open economies and threatens economic stability apart from disturbing the social fabric, he said. “Diseases like Black Death, SARS, Influenza H1N1 and Swine Flu had earlier caused similar impacts worldwide,” he added.

OEC Chairperson DK Roy said the occurrence of novel coron-



avirus and its disastrous socio-economic impact in India as well as Odisha are well known. “Therefore, the 12th edition of OEC has chosen Environment & Pandemic, as its main theme. Like previous years, this year too OEC will bring out a conference proceeding incorporating research and evidence based articles/papers which will be released during the inaugural session of the three-day long conference.

The sub-themes of the OEC 2021, on which papers will be presented

are: Pandemic, Endemic and Epidemic, Pandemic & Environmental Impact, Pandemic -Socioeconomic Impact on Agriculture & Allied Activities, Food Security, Industry including Startup Business etc.

The 12th edition of OEC is being organised by Centre for Environment and Development in association with Centre for Development Action and Research, Regional Museum of Natural History, Fakir Mohan University and Xavier University.

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Villagers haunted by fear of second displacement



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bargarh/Ambabhona, Oct 20: Hundreds of people in Ambabhona block of Bargarh district have to face displacement again. This time around, the displacement is going to bring more miseries for them, a report said. According to reports, due to Hirakud reservoir, people of four villages like Rengali, Kurumkel, Bhuthili and Baljori had been displaced. These villages are located near the reservoir. However, these villages were identified as part of an eco-sensitive zone December 10, 2015. In 1985, an area of 353 square km of Chaladhara and Debrigarh forests in Bargarh district was declared as a sanctuary. The area was later considered a wildlife conservation project.

The villages are in the buffer zone of sanctuary. The forest dept has started relocating people after organising a palli sabha and declaring a compensation package for the affected

In 2017, as many as 46 families in Debrigarh and Jhagadabehera villages were displaced in the first phase. The above-said four villages have been identified as a buffer zone of the sanctuary. Meanwhile, the forest department has started relocating people after organising a palli sabha in the area. It has declared a compensation package for the people. The administration has as-

ured people that they would be rehabilitated at Chakramal.

Villagers are worried that they have no way but to leave their home and hearth in a few days.

Worried over displacement, Megharam Thekua of Kurumkel, said, "Displacement is more horrible than natural disasters like floods and cyclones. What will happen in future is haunting us every day. What will happen to our livelihood? We have lost our sleep. We were displaced earlier. Again we will be displaced."

Expressing concern over the displacement, Ganapati Dharua, another resident of Kurumkel, said they were displaced by Hirakud reservoir in 1948. "Many of us have not yet received compensation as declared then. After the displacement, we had to walk miles in forests and finally settled here. Again, we will be displaced. It is very painful," he noted.

Social activist Amitabh Patra said before the displacement, the government had declared to provide 10 decimals of land for houses in 1948. Land has not been provided till date, he added. Patra also demanded that people facing displacement be provided with 20 decimals of land. Under the Odisha Livelihood Mission, all displaced people should be ensured scope of livelihood, he observed.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION



People of Kantasaru village in Kudumulguma panchayat in Malkangiri district repair a stretch of road which has been in bad shape for a long time. Villagers had drawn attention of the block administration and people's representatives towards the bad condition of the road, but nothing was done. OP PHOTO

SUSPECTED POACHING OF TUSKER IN SAMBALPUR

Forest dept intensifies probe, but clueless

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, Oct 20: Following a report published in Orissa POST about suspected killing of a tusker by poachers in Mundeidumberchua reserve forest under Sambalpur forest division, the forest department has intensified its probe to know its veracity.

Notably, locals talked about possibility of an elephant having been killed and buried in the forest as foul smell had spread in the area Tuesday. On being informed about it, the DFO had ordered an investigation

into the matter Tuesday. ACF Madanlal Sharma visited the forest where the tusker was suspected to have been buried.

Jhankarpalli forester Suryanarayan Khillari, Bhimkhaj forester Kulamani Panigrahi and other forest officials visited the area, but failed to find the carcass. Surprisingly, they found marks of tyres of bike and vehicles crisscrossing the area. This pointed to possible presence of poachers in the forest. A team of officials was still carrying out a search for the carcass in the forest.

A local resident claimed that a decomposed carcass of a tusker was lying near a pond in the forest some days ago. The carcass had no tusks, but had injury marks. It was suspected that the animal had died five days ago as a foul smell had spread in the area.

But there was no trace of the carcass anywhere. Locals suspected that poachers might have burnt the carcass with petrol and firewood. The burnt remains of the carcass might have been buried some-

where to destroy the evidence. Elephants have been causing mayhem in the area for a week. Locals claimed that the tusker might be part of the herd. For the last few days, Tharli, Bhabanipalli, Mundeid and Sitelpalli are witnessing elephant menace. A herd of 26 elephants damaged paddy and other crops in the region.

Notably, an elephant had been killed earlier in Padiabahal range. Its carcass had been burnt and buried. However, it was then alleged that the forest department had suppressed the matter.

Trawlers in prohibited area on a fishing spree

Olive Ridley turtles face threat in Gahirmatha sanctuary



POST NEWS NETWORK

Mahakalpara, Oct 20: Illegal fishing has been rampant in prohibited area along the coast under Mahakalpara block in Kendrapara. Hundreds of trawlers are now seen fishing inside Gahirmatha sanctuary in the evening time.

By morning, these trawlers reportedly net huge quantities of fish. Fish is transported in hundreds of vans and trucks to Kolkata, Raipur, Balasore and Andhra Pradesh.

When illegal fishing has been rampant in the prohibited zone marked for the marine turtles, the silence maintained by the forest department, the fisheries department and the Coast Guard has come into question. It was alleged that most of the trawlers engaged in fishing in prohibited area belong to people of Digha (West Bengal), Balasore, Bhadrak, Kasapala, Dhamra and Balaramgadi.

"The ganj nets used by these trawlers for fishing are a major danger to the marine turtles," said Samarendra Mahalik, an environmentalist.

Mahalik was shocked to see how trawlers have been allowed to fish inside the prohibited area. Conscious citizens like Laxmikant Swain, Subash Swain and Nirakar Swain have cast their doubts on the role of forest department, the fisheries department, the marine police station and the Coast Guard as illegal fishing goes on in the prohibited zone for the marine turtles.

They have alleged that valuable fish varieties are caught in prohibited area and trawler owners earn big bucks, but the administration is taking no action against the trawlers. These trawlers should be seized, they added.

One can see hundreds of trawlers fishing every day in Mahandi near Bahakud village. When contacted, IIC of Jambu marine police station Paresh Kumar Mohanty said information was received about entry of trawlers in the prohibited area. "Action will be taken against the trawlers soon," he assured.

Village bans liquor after molestation case

Located 20 km from Nuapada district headquarters, Dharambandha has a population of about 6,000. Here, selling, buying and making any kind of liquor has been prohibited. No one can open a liquor shop or a furnace to brew liquor

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Nuapada, Oct 20: In mid-September this year, a group of women from Dharambandha village - situated in the Sadar block of Nuapada district - went for a bath in the village canal. Nearby, a shop was selling liquor to some men.

Soon, under the influence of alcohol, these men proceeded to molest the women. When the women protested, the drunkards started abusing them.

Although no official complaint was registered with the police, the village's youth decided to eradicate this problem from its roots. They started an alcohol de-addiction campaign in Dharambandha.

"I was present during the incident that took place near the canal. I had been protesting against the sale of liquor there. However, no one agreed. But after the incident, a meeting was held in which all the women of the village participated, and the decision to ban liquor was taken," said villager Padma Dewangan.

Confronting this reality, the youth of Dharambandha village decided to take matters into their own hands. They initiated an al-

cohol de-addiction campaign with the cooperation of the village Sarpanch.

As a result, the sarpanch called the gram sabha meeting September 21, where the decision to prohibit liquor in the village was passed with mutual consensus.

Plan for the ban

Located 20 km from district headquarters, Dharambandha has a population of about 6,000. Here, selling, buying and making any kind of liquor is now prohibited. No one can open a liquor shop or a furnace to brew liquor. If someone is caught selling liquor, they will be fined ₹51,000 and forced to parade around the village wearing a garland of shoes and slippers. The person caught buying alcohol will be fined ₹5,100.

An action committee consisting of 25 men and 25 women from Dharambandha has been formed to enforce the prohibition. Five senior members supervise them. The committee's job is to conduct raids on places selling liquor based on the information received. A day after the prohibition, the action committee had raided a place after receiving information about continuing liquor sales. However, no



alcohol was found.

An active member of the alcohol de-addiction campaign, Ankit Jain told 101Reporters that villagers also wrote a letter to Dharambandha police station, the SP Office and the Excise Department informing them about the campaign. "We got assurance of cooperation from them," Jain added.

No more 'bad water'

The ban on alcohol in Dharambandha was not just welcome but also seemed necessary. According to Ramesh Sahu of the village, people's health deteriorated due to excessive liquor consumption. Most of the deaths in the village were due to sharab. (Sharab is an Arabic word derived from the combination of Shar meaning 'bad' and Aab meaning 'water')

Liquor was being sold in the streets, and the villagers had started depleting their savings to

buy it. Some villagers said that cases of atrocities on women and domestic violence had also increased. Even the village children started drinking alcohol with the money they got for chocolates or ice cream.

Sadanand Majhi, the president of the de-addiction campaign, claimed that crime has reduced in the village after the ban. Earlier, there used to be eight to ten incidents of abuse and assault in the village. However, no such cases have come to light recently.

Now, the focus is on development and cleanliness of the village. Children and youth are concentrating on studies and sports, he told 101Reporters.

Former Sarpanch of Dharambandha, Kusum Sahu resented with Majhi's statement. She said, "Earlier, it was difficult for

women to leave the house. But ever since the ban, the women have been feeling safe. Not only Dharambandha, but the entire country should also be alcohol-free."

The slogan of prohibition gets its strength from women. Today, all the women of Dharambandha are unitedly involved in the drug de-addiction campaign. However, while women of the village are happy, liquor traders and wine lovers are disappointed with this decision.

Harinder Singh, manager of one of the liquor shops in the village, had opposed the ban, but this had no effect. He said, "With the mutual consent of the villagers, the sale of liquor is prohibited in the village. At present, liquor is not being sold, and everyone is following the rules. Let's see what happens next."

"Post the ban, there has been no case of selling liquor in Dharambandha. The campaign is going well so far. However, if we don't get continued cooperation, then we are prepared to go directly to the Excise SP and the Collector," said Omprakash Kalar, the village sarpanch. This has also created fear among the liquor traders of the surrounding areas.

Dharambandha has set such an example from which the whole country can take a lesson. Nuapada MLA Rajendra Dholakia told 101Reporters, "The people of Dharambandha have taken a historic decision. This step is welcome. I hope their campaign is successful."

Captain Eric James Tucker a forgotten legend

THE FIRST ASHOK CHAKRA RECIPIENT OF ODISHA IS REMEMBERED ON HIS 94TH BIRTH ANNIVERSARY TODAY

SUMAN MOHANTY, OP

Bhubaneswar, Oct 20: India has produced many bravehearts who have made supreme sacrifice for the motherland. Odisha is not far behind when it comes to producing such brave sons.

Captain Eric James Tucker was a young and handsome Army officer and the first Ashok Chakra awardee in Odisha. His saga of valour and supreme sacrifice is unparalleled as he died for the motherland fighting the Naga insurgents. However, his is a forgotten lore as the state and the country have done little to honour the legend.

Born in Cuttack, October 21, 1927, Captain Tucker studied in Stewart School before shifting to Koraput with his father who was in Odisha Police. The school, which has produced many stalwarts including Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, has a rich history of education. The 133-year old institution was instrumental in shaping the formative years of Tucker.

PV Narsayyah, an ex-Stewartonian, said Captain Tucker was awarded the Ashok Chakra, the highest gallantry award posthu-



Born in Cuttack, Oct 21, 1927, Tucker studied in Stewart School. His father was in Odisha police

mously by the President of India January 26, 1958. As an ex-student of the school, he said, he is sad that people have forgotten the supreme sacrifice of Tucker.



Captain Tucker served in the 2nd Battalion of the Maratha Light Infantry. When the unit was contacted, the details of late Captain's son Yashwant Tucker were traced. Yashwant, a former Air India employee leading a retired life in Mumbai, was contacted and a new story unfolded that Captain Tucker had his roots in Odisha. Yashwant said he was only 11 months old when his father attained martyrdom. This he had heard from his

mother and grandmother.

He mentioned that the Indian Army and the 2nd Maratha Light Infantry have always kept in touch with him. However he has not heard anything from his father's school or the state of Odisha till date. Now after Narasayya remembered his senior, Stewart School, Cuttack is conducting a special assembly to honour the braveheart on his birthday October 21, 2021. Captain Eric Tucker was assigned the task of opening the lines of communication from Chakabama to Phek during the Nagaland uprising in 1957 and destroy the hostile concentrations en route to establish a post at Meluri. This task was achieved October 9, 1956.

Employing feats of skill in clearing varied obstacles on the road, showing great leadership in crossing turbulent Tizu river, neutralising hostile resistance opposing the advance with courage and determination, infusing great confidence on the troops under his command, Captain Tucker achieved this task in nine days.

Captain Tucker was to move from Khusami to Kirikhu, August 2, 1957. Hostile elements, who had obtained prior information of his move, laid an ambush from the

thick undergrowth. Captain Tucker was hit in his face and leg. But, he stood his ground and engaged the enemies with his stungun and firing from the hip until his magazine was empty. He charged towards the enemies with a grenade. However, a further burst of automatic fire hit him in his chest and he collapsed and attained martyrdom.



A woman artisan drying mud-covered terracotta items in the sun before they are taken to furnace at a village in Angul. OP PHOTO

EAST COAST RAILWAY
HIRING OF VEHICLE
Tender Notice No. ELS-ANGL-OT-21-22-02
NAME OF WORK: HIRING OF ONE LIGHT ROAD VEHICLE I.E. NON-AC TATA SUMO, BOLERO OR EQUIVALENT FOR OFFICIAL USE OF SENIOR DIVISIONAL ELECTRICAL ENGINEER / TRS / ANGUL FOR A PERIOD OF THREE YEARS.
Advertised Value (₹): 14,07,782.72.
Period of Completion: 36 Months.
Bidding Start Date: 25.10.2021.
Date and time of closing of tender: 1500 hrs of 08.11.2021.
Manual offers are not allowed against this tender, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored.
Complete details including e-tender documents are available at <http://www.reps.gov.in>.
Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer/TRS, Angul
PR-476/M/21-22

But few are those who tread the sunlit path; only the pure in soul can walk in light.

SRI AUROBINDO



Biden's Trap

When the election gods handed Joe Biden the presidency in 2020, they set a trap that he walked right into. The question – one that could define his presidency and affect the 2024 presidential election – is whether he can escape the trap formed by the narrow margins the Democratic Party has in both chambers of Congress. Along with the presidency, Biden was handed a 50-50 vote in the Senate, with the deciding vote to be cast by Vice President Kamala Harris, and an eight-vote margin in the House of Representatives. Thus, one Democratic Senator or four Democratic Representatives can block any Biden initiative.

Notwithstanding this, Biden proposed the expansion or initiation of numerous domestic programmes, with improvements to the “social safety net” and environmental efforts. Most of these programmes are popular. Combating climate change has more Democratic than Republican support, and the White House wants it badly because Biden will attend the UN climate-change summit (COP26) in Glasgow October 31. This may have been what led House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to set the October 31 deadline for Congress to pass the “human infrastructure/climate” Bill.

The \$3.5 trillion cost of programmes on the scale Biden envisaged appeared to be high. Spread over ten years, it amounted to \$350 billion annually, a less alarming amount (though the White House failed to communicate this effectively). Earlier estimated costs of the package had placed it at between \$6 and \$10 trillion, largely because Senator Bernie Sanders, the most Left-leaning senator, is chairman of the Senate Budget Committee. Still, \$3.5 trillion had the appearance of being a negotiable number.

But in settling on such an apparently high overall number, did Biden and his aides overlook the fact that of the 50 Democratic senators, at least two couldn't be counted upon to go along with such a sum? Joe Manchin, the Democratic senator from West Virginia, which has been turning Republican, is believed to be the only Democrat who can carry the state. He won it in 2018 by 3.3 percentage points. By contrast, Donald Trump won West Virginia in the 2016 presidential election by 42 points. Though Manchin is the most conservative Senate Democrat, his party has a strong interest in him winning re-election in 2024 if it is to maintain control of the Senate.

The other unreliable vote is that of Kyrsten Sinema, a Democrat from Arizona and a mystery to her Senate colleagues. Once a radical Leftist, she's now right of center. So far as is known, Sinema has resisted telling almost anyone how she wants the human infrastructure/climate provisions changed – though she says she's told the President, who has met with Manchin and Sinema several times. Further vexing the Democrats' leaders, the two rebels are understood to want different things. White House impatience with Sinema is growing.

Though Biden served as President Barack Obama's Vice President, he apparently failed to learn the lesson of Obama's healthcare initiative. Obama and his aides did a poor job of explaining what was in their proposal, which gave the Republicans an opportunity to speak of “socialised medicine” and “death panels.” Similarly, most of what the public now understands of Biden's package is that it was to cost \$3.5 trillion. The President maintains that the package can be paid for by raising taxes on the super-wealthy and businesses, but not everyone is convinced.

The social welfare-climate programme is being considered as “reconciliation” Bill because it would be passed under a Senate procedure that requires a majority vote rather than the 60 votes needed to overcome a filibuster. This was necessary because there are not ten Republican votes to add to the 50 Democratic votes (or 49 plus Harris). So, if Manchin or Sinema opposes the proposed Bill, it would fail – a crushing blow to Biden. Manchin, who represents a coal-mining state and has grown rich from holdings in coal mines, has reportedly vetoed the clean-air provisions, which will likely force a rewrite of the bill.

Almost simultaneously, another proposed Bill, composed of “hard” infrastructure programmes – building or repairing roads, bridges, tunnels, ports, levees and waterways, as well as the delivery of clean drinking water – was moving forward. The hard infrastructure program, costing a little over \$1 trillion, has bipartisan support: nineteen Senate Republicans voted for it. Few politicians want to turn down such a boon to their constituents.

The coexistence of these two programmes deepened divisions within both parties. Though moderate Republicans are nearly extinct, the Democrats are deeply divided, particularly in the House. Almost no right-wing Democrats remain nowadays, as members who held such views became Republicans. The Democratic caucus in each chamber is dominated by liberals – which led them to display little interest in negotiating with the moderates. But when Biden indicated that he would go for a smaller number out of necessity, they became more open to compromise. The liberal Democrats don't trust the party's moderates to keep their word about supposed agreements, such as whether they'd support the “human infrastructure/climate” programme in certain circumstances.

One reason for the divide is that these two groups have different constituencies. Those on the left have little reason to worry about re-election as opposed to members from “swing” districts. The disagreements have prevented progress on the “human infrastructure/climate” Bill as well as on the timing of congressional consideration of both Bills. This stalemate has also contributed to an impression of a hapless President. Biden's team is aware that his presidency may be at stake. So, too, is the Democrats' tenuous control of Congress.

But something even more important is at risk. Though there were other factors, the sense – particularly among the middle class – that the government is incapable of acting in their interest is widely understood to have fueled Donald Trump's 2016 victory. With Trump now hovering on the brink of another presidential race (unless his legal problems prove insurmountable), and likely obtaining almost unhindered power if he wins, something far more than two federal programmes is riding on the legislative outcome. America's democracy is also endangered.

The writer is a Washington-based journalist and the author.

PROJECT SYNDICATE

COMPETITION AND COEXISTENCE

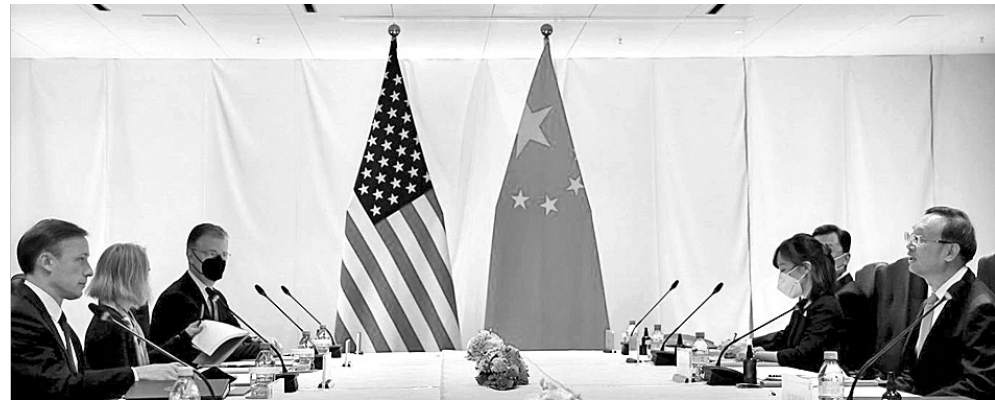
FOCUS GEOPOLITICS

These are demanding times. Geopolitical tensions are rising, primarily – but not exclusively – between China and the United States. Yet, at the same time, there is a deep need for inclusive global cooperation to fight the pandemic and meet the threat of climate change. How the leading powers manage these competing demands will set the course of global development in the years and decades ahead.

Over the past few weeks, the US and China have attempted to establish some guardrails to prevent rising tensions from spiraling out of control. Following a recent meeting in Switzerland with his Chinese counterpart, Yang Jiechi, US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan spoke about the need for “responsible competition” between the two countries – a choice of words we haven't heard before.

But as welcome as this rhetoric is, the reality is that the US and China are still locked in a deepening rivalry. The US decision to supply Australia with nuclear submarines – the delivery of which will not come for many years – was intentionally framed to seem like a major strategic move to counter Chinese maritime expansion. Similarly, at a two-day meeting in Pittsburgh last month, EU and US officials outlined an agenda for new talks over trade and technology, placing special emphasis on the need for defensive measures against China. In Washington, DC, speculation about a potential Chinese invasion of Taiwan is running rampant and driving numerous decisions.

An increasingly authoritarian and assertive China is not the only geopolitical concern. Russia, too, poses a revisionist threat, with President Vladimir Putin issuing pronouncements that openly challenge Ukrainian sovereignty and cast doubt on the utility of diplomacy in handling the war in Ukraine's Donbas region or issues stemming from Russia's annexation of Crimea. Just as many in the US see a drift



Just when the world needs to come together to tackle the pandemic and mobilise a response to climate change, geopolitical tensions are rising, threatening the prospects of cooperation. The situation demands a level of global statesmanship that has yet to materialize

toward war with China over Taiwan, many in Europe worry about a similar escalation with Russia over Ukraine.

But the need for cooperation to meet even larger challenges should be obvious. When world leaders gather in Rome later this month for the G20 summit, they will have to confront the fact that we have made it only halfway (at best) in our fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

At a recent summit hosted by US President Joe Biden, representatives from more than 100 governments, international institutions, business, and civil society committed to vaccinating “70% of the population in every country and income category” by next September. That target is still a long way off. At the moment, approximately 37% of the global population has been fully vaccinated, and there is a glaring and dangerous inequity between high- and low-income countries. Indeed, high-income countries have administered 32 times as many doses per inhabitant as low-income countries.

The truism that no one is safe until everyone is safe is as relevant as ever. There is no guarantee that the Delta variant will be the last mutation to trigger new epi-

demio waves. It is humanity versus the virus. We urgently need to mobilise additional resources to distribute not only vaccines but also tests and treatments. In this context, China's potential contributions cannot be ignored. It produces more vaccines than any other country, and it will play a key role in any new global structures that are created to prevent or fight future outbreaks (any one of which could be far more dangerous than COVID-19).

Likewise, when global leaders meet for the UN climate-change summit (COP26) in Glasgow next month, they will have to make up for lost time. A recent report from the International Energy Agency paints an alarming picture of how much work there is to be done to decarbonise the economy. This year, we will see the second-highest increase in carbon-dioxide emissions in history, indicating no progress toward a 2050 net-zero emissions target. Worse, governments' current pledges cover less than 20% of the reductions needed by 2030 to keep global warming within 1.5° Celsius of the average pre-industrial temperature.

Everyone must do more, but few single actors are as important as China. If it doesn't reduce its enormous dependence on coal,

global targets will remain out of reach. China's recent announcement that it will end its overseas financing of coal projects is potentially very significant: that alone could reduce emissions by as much as the European Union reaching net-zero by 2050. But even then, China and everyone else will have more to do.

As with the pandemic, climate change puts all of humanity on the same side against a threat that could all too easily spiral out of control. To be sure, today's geopolitical tensions are real, and issues like Taiwan and Ukraine must not be neglected. Democracies have every reason to stand together against revisionist aggression. But the pandemic and climate change are problems that can be addressed effectively only if everyone is committed to working together. Achieving that outcome will require true global statesmanship, and progress toward it must be the standard against which diplomacy is judged.

The writer was Sweden's Foreign Minister from 2006 to 2014 and Prime Minister from 1991 to 1994, when he negotiated Sweden's EU accession.

PROJECT SYNDICATE

Carl Bildt

AN INCREASINGLY AUTHORITARIAN AND ASSERTIVE CHINA IS NOT THE ONLY GEOPOLITICAL CONCERN. RUSSIA, TOO, POSES A REVISIONIST THREAT



Elizabeth Drew

Though Biden served as President Barack Obama's Vice President, he apparently failed to learn the lesson of Obama's healthcare initiative

SPECTRUM MIZORAM

The population explosion debate

Mizoram has made news – not necessarily for the wrong reasons. North-Eastern India generally makes news due to insurgency-related incidents or instances of violence and killings. This time a mother of 15 children and a widow has been honoured and rewarded with a cash prize of ₹1 lakh by Mizoram's Sports Minister Robert Romawia Royte.

The reason is that the native Mizo population is dwindling and hence women like her are being awarded and honoured. The unprecedented show had the backing of the influential Young Mizo Association (YMA) and a Presbyterian Church leader Rev PM Manikama. The state Sports Minister, Robert Romawia Royte, also loves to be called ‘Triple R’, in fact has distributed ₹2.5 lakh to 17 women who delivered ‘more children’ at a function held within his Aizawl East-II constituency.

The dwindling population and ‘fertility’ issues are of general concern in the North-East. There are also other issues. The local Christian tribals do not believe in the government's policy of family planning. The Nagas generally use the refrain – a mother's womb is not a graveyard. The population issue

remains a vexed problem in the North-Eastern region, which has more than 200 linguistic and ethnic groups across the seven states of Nagaland, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Manipur, Assam, Tripura and Arunachal Pradesh.

Of these, three Christian-majority states are Mizoram, Nagaland and Meghalaya.

Meghalaya, the hub of Khasis, Garos and Jaintia tribals practises matriarchy. Nagaland has so far not elected any woman legislator and Mizoram has elected only two in the past and more so as an exception. Royte belongs to the regional outfit Mizo National Front, the party led by Chief Minister Zoramthanga. Royte said that the incentives to mothers were given in accordance with ‘more children drive’ launched by different church bodies and denominations and the Young Mizo Association (YMA). Such a gesture is not new to Mizoram. In 2018, a Baptist church in remote Lunglei district town had announced incentives to encourage couples to have more babies in an effort to check their dwindling numbers.

Of course, this disregards the national policy for control population. The church in remote Lunglei town had said it would pay fami-

lies a one-time cash assistance of ₹4,000 for a fourth child and an additional ₹1,000 for each new child. These are very sensitive matters. The issue of dwindling numbers in the region should be understood in a socio-political context. Ethnic minority groups fear being swamped by ‘outsiders’ from mainland India and other tribal groups. Nagas witnessed violent days in the mid-1990s in their confrontation and clashes with Kukis. The menace hit both Nagaland and parts of Manipur. In Mizoram, the native Lushais are not happy to entertain Brus, especially when it comes to casting votes.

Mizo youth leaders would readily tell one that the locals are “not against professionals coming and working in our state”. The fear and objections are of a regular influx. Here too certain complexities work. Mizoram has for months now accommodated and helped ‘refugees’ from Chin province of Myanmar who have taking shelter after facing persecution following the harsh military actions there since the February coup.

Yes, ‘sharing’ ethnic bond is a crucial factor in the entire debate. Moving out of the North-East, we know the population debate is of

general concern. India currently is the world's second most populous nation after China. There is a ‘national policy’ to check population growth even as it is not illegal to have more children.

According to the UN figures, in 2019, India had an estimated population of 1.37 billion and China 1.43 billion. Now experts say by 2027, it is possible that India will surpass China's population. It is estimated that India could add nearly 273 million people to its population between 2021 and 2050.

The answers to some queries triggered by these debates are not known to us as of now. Nor do I want to hazard a guess. If an answer has to be decided by a democratic process, it is difficult to conceive of a more satisfactory method or system than that is embodied in the existing structures. Family is a private business and the state should have no business. But is it so?

Society and policy makers hence come back to the same question posed on a number of occasions pertaining to different pressing problems. The question is – What is the right way for us to get forward?

The writer is a New Delhi-based journalist.

IAN5

WORDSWORTH

Chill Can

An otherwise normal-looking drinks can is provided with a false bottom that contains a refrigerant, usually an HFC (hydrofluorocarbon). By pressing a button on the bottom, the can and contents are quickly cooled. The device is an American invention (the term Chill Can is a trademark of the Joseph Company Inc of California), designed to produce cool drinks in places where refrigerators are not readily available. Though it seems a useful little device, it has been widely criticised because of the environmental consequences of releasing HFCs into the atmosphere. Unlike CFCs (chlorofluorocarbons), which are now banned in most developed countries, the HFCs don't have much impact on the ozone layer, but they are even more effective greenhouse gases, and so contribute to global warming. Several major suppliers of HFCs, including ICI in Britain, have now publicly refused to supply them to drinks manufacturers for this purpose, and the British government is pressing the European Union to ban them altogether, so the Chill Can may struggle to be accepted, unless its manufacturers can find some less environmentally sensitive working fluid.

No peace yet

Sir, Two years have passed since the abrogation of Article 370 but Kashmir valley has not achieved peace. Thirty-three civilians have been killed this year and the recent attacks on migrant labourers tell a lot of things about the failure of the authorities in tackling terrorism. The killings of minorities have led to a fear psychosis akin to what was witnessed in 1990 when the Kashmiri Pandits left their homeland en masse. If this trend continues, everyone including, Kashmiri Pandits, non-local labourers and non-Muslim workers, will be forced to leave Kashmir again and history will repeat itself. The government needs to immediately provide security to the minorities and keep a watch on their business interests. The government needs to also ensure a peaceful atmosphere in the Valley for the safety of all. Most importantly all the shareholders of Kashmir valley should immediately act against growing terrorism and try to cut their inks with Pakistan at the earliest.

Deba Prasad Nayak, CUTTACK

Devastating deluges

Sir, Heavy rains in Kerala during the past few days have caused severe flash floods and horrifying landslides, making life miserable once again. The disaster has already claimed many lives and hundreds have been evacuated to safe zones and relief camps. Though the authorities rose in action to the occasion, questions do rise on lack of foresightedness and failure to implement long-time strategies. Haven't lessons been learnt from the previous years' devastating deluges? Already the state has been witnessing unprecedented deluges for the past three years and was there not sufficient time to take necessary measures and precautions to at least lessen or avert the disasters caused by rain fury. But it seems nothing was done. Lack of proper mechanism and plans have yet again pushed the state to inexplicable misery. After continuous deluges in the state some proposals and plans were laid in the papers but nothing materialised and it seems as if the government has lost track and concentrated on ‘issues’ other than those concerned with day-to-day life of the common man. Man is just a pawn in front of nature's fury but then some foresight, caution, plan and timely execution can truly mitigate woes at times of natural calamities. Encroachment of flood plains, building resorts and allowing human settlements on hills and river banks, exploitation of ecologically fragile areas are still going on, thanks to the “unlimited money and political power”.

M Pradyu, KANNUR

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

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MAMITA MURDER

BJP observes Kalahandi bandh, demands minister's resignation

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhawanipatna, Oct 20: Hundreds of BJP workers Wednesday observed a 12-hour bandh in Kalahandi district and staged demonstrations demanding the scalp of Dibya Shankar Mishra, Minister of State for Home Affairs, for his alleged link with key accused Govind Sahu, the mastermind in school teacher Mamita Meher's pre-planned murder.

Angry BJP workers demanded immediate resignation of Mishra for his alleged link with Govind Sahu, the key conspirator in the mysterious murder of lady teacher Mamita Meher. The party also demanded a CBI probe into the case.

Ties between prime accused Sahu and Mishra might deter the probing officials to function independently, a local BJP leader alleged.



The bandh in entire Kalahandi district that started from 6 am will continue up to 6 pm. Demonstrations carried out at several important locations in the district brought civic life to a standstill. Bhawanipatna town witnessed severe disruption of vehicular movement following the bandh, the local BJP leader stated.

"The BJD government has

done nothing for the safety of women in the state. As far as the case of missing lady teacher is concerned, we demand resignation of Minister Dibya Shankar Mishra to facilitate a fair probe," an agitator at College Square in Bhawanipatna said.

"It is a peaceful protest and we appeal to residents of the district to show solidarity with the murdered lady teacher Mamita's family. The government and private offices along with commercial establishments remained closed. No vehicle was allowed to ply on the road during the 12-hour long bandh," president of Kalahandi district unit of the BJP expressed.

Meanwhile, the family of Mamita has identified the articles, as those of the teacher, found Tuesday near body which was exhumed from an under-construction mini stadium near the Sunshine EM School.

RAIN MISERIES



Following heavy rains, schoolkids wading through a waterlogged street in Baliapal area of Balasore

OP PHOTO

Many irrigation projects in Nayagarh defunct

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nayagarh, Oct 20: Deep lift irrigation projects meant to provide irrigation facilities to farmlands are increasing every year in Nayagarh district. This has failed to bring cheers to the farming community as many of the projects have become defunct and are yet to become functional. As a result, they have been suffering like in the past in irrigating their farmlands.

A close scrutiny of government records shows that the administration has done so much in providing irrigation facilities to the farmlands. The government record says that 418 out of 1,228 lift irrigation projects have become defunct. However, a private estimate has fixed the number of defunct projects twice the government estimate.

Among them, 1,203 electric powered projects were meant to irrigate 6,015 hectare and 25 solar powered projects meant for irrigation of 125 hectare. The government record says 418 electric powered projects are lying defunct for which 2,090 hectares are lying non-irrigated.



At present, 4,050 hectares are being irrigated by 810 projects. Uddhab Pradhan, a farmer from Gania, said farmers have no knowledge on the number of projects lying defunct in the district. The project from which he used to draw water for irrigating his farmland is lying defunct now but is shown as working.

All these are being shown in pen and papers without actually benefitting the farmers. He said

farmers are spending from their own pocket in drawing water to irrigate their farmlands.

However, none in government and administration are trying to understand the pain a farmer undergoes to irrigate his farmland. Sources said the state government has directed establishment of 400 deep borewells in Nayagarh district in 2021-22 financial year for which 395 farmers have been selected for installation of deep

Official record says 418 out of 1,228 lift irrigation projects have become defunct. But, unofficial estimate has put the number of defunct units twice the official figure

borewells on their farmlands. As per the order, 238 deep borewells were dug up in the district out of which 15 are from Bhapur block, 3 from Gania block, 21 from Khandapara block, 81 from Nuagaon block, 11 from Nayagarh block, 59 from Odagaon block and 48 from Ranpur block.

However, 97 of the projects are yet to become operational out of which 11 are in Bhapur block, 3 in Gania block, 21 in Khandapara block, 37 in Nuagaon block, 8 in Nayagarh block, 7 in Odagaon block and 10 in Ranpur block. The rest of the 141 projects have become functional. However, how far these projects will be of any ben-

efit to the farmers is still in doubt.

On the other hand, the applications of four farmers in Dasapalla block have been accepted but the administration is yet to dig up borewells on their farmlands.

Rama Chandra Dalabehera, a farmer of Nayagarh, said digging of deep borewells on farmlands has met with very little success and is becoming defunct after running for one to one and half month. He alleged over 700 projects including electric and solar powered are lying defunct in the district.

The government provides financial assistance for renovation of these defunct projects but farmers are unaware about it. He alleged that he has repeatedly drawn the attention of the authorities about his project lying defunct but his pleas are yet to be addressed.

When contacted, Niranjana Das, executive engineer, lift irrigation division, Nayagarh said his department is taking steps for the benefit of farmers. He said over 418 deep borewell projects are lying defunct in the district whose renovation is being done in phases.

COVID LOSS

Horticulture dept steps up efforts to bail out farmers



POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, Oct 20: Fruits, flowers and vegetable farmers of Ganjam have suffered a lot as they were unable to sell their produce during the pandemic due to lockdowns and shutdowns, a report said.

This has shaken them to hilt as the district horticulture department has stepped up efforts to provide them help through alternative cultivation methods. The department is laying stress on mushroom cultivation and providing them subsidies to raise their crops.

Over 800 farmers have been provided with 15 mushroom beds and ₹1,000 financial assistance each. Even women self-help groups adopting green house cultivation method have been provided with 150 mushroom beds and ₹10,000 assistance each. Moreover, ₹6 lakh has been set aside for mushroom cultivation. This has helped the women SHG members get involved in the schemes and earn a livelihood for their families.

This has given them a bit of relief when they were struggling to earn their livelihood during the

pandemic. According to available details from the district horticulture department, cultivation of fruit plants like mango, banana, guava, cashew, groundnuts, coconuts and papayas have been taken up on 3,185 acres with the engagement of 2,775 farmers. These farmers have been provided with 75 per cent subsidy by the horticulture department, deputy director Sarat Chandra Behera said.

Similarly, cultivation of flowers like rose, gladioli, jasmine and marigold have been taken up on 127 acres with the engagement of 243 farmers. The small and marginal farmers have been given incentives of ₹60,000 per hectare. The big farmers have received ₹37,500 per hectare, he said. Farmers conducting flower cultivation in green house were given 70 per cent subsidy while 50 per cent subsidy is for farmers conducting cultivation in green shadow house.

Moreover, cultivation of high-yielding crops has been taken up on 2,250 acres with the involvement of 2,198 farmers. These farmers were given ₹20,000 subsidy which is being transferred to their bank accounts through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) scheme.

Transgender bludgeoned to death

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, Oct 20: A transgender person was bludgeoned to death at Pandi hutting under Daitari police limits in this district Tuesday evening.

The deceased was identified as Sarani Kinnar (30). Sadashiv Samal, who had been living with the deceased, allegedly killed the deceased by hitting the head with the handle of a spade and a grinding stone.

Sadashiv works in the mines as a loading labourer. Both of them had been living together as a couple

for years. Sadashiv asked the deceased to have food Tuesday evening and was declined. Subsequently a fight broke out between them. Angered by this, Sadashiv attacked the deceased under the influence of alcohol, it was alleged.

Informed, Daitari police reached the spot and recovered the dead body and sent it to Anandapur Sub-divisional hospital for post mortem Wednesday. A homicide case has been registered and a probe initiated in this regard. The truth will come out after further investigation, said Daitari PS IIC Tulsi Manjari Bhuyan.

4 held in petrol pump worker thrashing case

POST NEWS NETWORK

Pattamundai, Oct 20: Four persons -- two sarpanchs, one panchayat samiti member and the proprietor of the petrol pump at Sahupada under Badapada panchayat in this block -- have been arrested in connection with the brutal thrashing of a petrol pump worker and his father at a kangaroo court.

The video clip of the incident went viral on social media Tuesday. Hundreds of locals staged a road blockade at the

The video clip of the incident had gone viral on social media Tuesday

Sahupada Indian Oil filling station demanding arrest of the petrol pump's owner.

"A 17-year-old boy working in this petrol pump was falsely implicated for theft and subsequently beaten brutally in the presence of two sarpanchs and a panchayat samiti member. The stolen money was found in the pump owner's

house. We want justice. All of them including the owner should be arrested," said Sasmita Mallick, an agitator.

Pattamundai police arrested all the accused after tension went up in the locality.

"A viral video came to our notice yesterday. We have registered an FIR in this connection. Strict action will be taken against the culprits. We have already arrested four persons till now," said a police officer.

More arrests are likely since some of the accused are on the run.

LIVELIHOOD SCOPE



Members of an SHG run a retail shop selling their products at Thakurmunda in Mayurbhanj district as part of government efforts to boost women empowerment

OP PHOTO

76 DEATHS REPORTED IN THREE YEARS

NH-16 death zone in Ganjam

POST NEWS NETWORK

Gopalpur, Oct 20: The 18-kilometre stretch of road on National Highway-16 from Haldiapadar to Girisola in Ganjam district has turned into a death zone with frequent road mishaps occurring on the highway, a report said.

This has happened as the consultancy agency has failed to keep the highway in proper shape owing to poor maintenance work.

The bad shape of the highway has led to frequent mishaps. Reports said that over 76 persons have died during last three years due to the road mishaps. During this period, 51 persons sustained critical injuries and 60 persons sustained minor injuries. Travelling on the highway has become a nightmarish experience for the commuters with large craters coming up on the highway.

Frequent rains fill up these craters to the brim following which it becomes difficult for motorists to negotiate the road and results in accidents. Moreover, absence of traffic control measures at various intersections and lack of protective barricades have also contributed to the mishaps. People alleged that the consultancy agency has endangered the lives of people after reaping huge profits from the



Bad shape of the NH has led to frequent mishaps. The stretch of road from Haldiapadar to Kanishi is always fraught with risk due to large craters

construction of the highway. Sources said the stretch of road from Haldiapadar to Kanishi is always fraught with risk as large craters have been formed on the road due to frequent and incessant rainfall in this rainy season. The agency is filling up the pits and craters with metals and cement-concrete mixture which comes out after few days and results in road accidents.

The agency is constructing an over-bridge on the highway near

the Haldiapadar bus-stand. However, the work has been moving at a snail's pace even after passage of two years. As a result, vehicular movement often gets disrupted on the highway. Vehicles providing emergency service like ambulance and fire service were often seen getting stuck on the highway. Moreover, traffic personnel engaged by the agency often remain absent on duty for which accidents are frequently occurring on the highway. There is provision for putting up protective barricades on the highway but the agency has neglected in doing it and carrying on the over-bridge works.

Residents have warned the agency to finish the over-bridge works on war time footing failing which, it will remain responsible for any mishaps occurring on the highway.

Pilot loyalists want nothing less than leadership change

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Jaipur, Oct 20: Amid the ongoing feud between the Ashok Gehlot and Sachin Pilot camps in Rajasthan, Pilot supporters now want to compromise on nothing less than the leadership change as the long-awaited cabinet reshuffle and expansion along with the delayed political appointments have left them frustrated.

In December, the Congress government will complete three years of its working and the workers will get only two years to work, out of which the last year of the 5-year term will go in making preparations for the Assembly elections.

"We have no grassroots presence, our money has been exhausted and so we are just not prepared to contest polls in the present state," said one of the Pilot loyalists.

In December, the Congress government will complete three years of its working and the workers will get only two years to work, out of which the last year of the 5-year term will go in making preparations for the Assembly elections.

In fact, Gehlot has had a meeting with Rajasthan in-charge Ajay Maken along with Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Saturday where the state issue was discussed at length.

Meanwhile, the Congress workers in Rajasthan were seen discussing why Sonia Gandhi was



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In December, the Congress government will complete three years of its working and the workers will get only two years to work, out of which the last year of the 5-year term will go in making preparations for the Assembly elections

not present in the meeting. "Is she also anguished over the delays in cabinet expansion," asked a Congress worker. Sources said that Gehlot had also expressed his an-

noyance in the meeting over the issue of Rahul Gandhi not taking his calls.

The frequent missing of deadlines (given by Maken) for cabinet expansion and reshuffle, the delay in political appointments and the way the Pilot issue is being handled has left the Gandhi family aggrieved too, said sources, and hence Pilot loyalists are now eyeing a larger slice of the cake, which is nothing less than a leadership change in state, said a Congress worker.

"Had it been a simple matter of accommodating ministers from the Pilot camp in the government, it would not have got so late. The issue now is different and we are working to resolve it," he added.

Cong trying to emulate us: TMC

THE DIG FROM THE MAMATA BANERJEE LED-PARTY COMES AT A TIME WHEN BOTH THE CONGRESS AND THE TMC ARE STRIVING TO LEAD THE OPPOSITION FRONT AGAINST THE BJP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Oct 20: The Trinamool Congress Wednesday mocked the Congress over its decision to field 40 per cent women candidates in the upcoming Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections, and hoped that the move to "emulate" the ruling party in West Bengal is not mere "tokenism".

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra had Tuesday announced that the party will give 40 per cent tickets to women, who constitute roughly half of the electorate, for the UP Assembly polls.

"Under the visionary leadership of @MamataOfficial, AITC has shown the way to ensure increased participation of women in politics in this country. We're the first party to give 40 per cent seats to women in LS elections!" the TMC said in a tweet.

"Amid such dire times, @INCIndia is understandably trying to emulate, and one can only hope that this is genuine and not tokenism. If they are to be taken seriously, they must give 40 per cent seats to women in states other than UP as well," it added in a series of tweets.

The dig from the Mamata Banerjee led-party comes at a time



when both the Congress and the TMC are striving to lead the opposition front against the BJP.

Reacting to the remarks, senior Congress leader Pradip Bhattacharya said the grand old party does not need lessons from the TMC on political empowerment of women. "It is the Trinamool Congress that is trying to emulate the Congress and poach on our leaders," he asserted.

Earlier this month, the relationship between the two parties hit



Priyanka Gandhi Vadra had Tuesday announced that the party will give 40% tickets to women, who constitute roughly half of the electorate, for the UP Assembly polls

a new low after the TMC took a jibe at Rahul Gandhi's defeat from Amethi in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls,

wondering whether the Congress would look at erasing the loss through a Twitter trend.

The TMC has been up in arms against the party over its alleged failure to put up a fight against the BJP. TMC mouthpiece 'Jago Bangla' had also recently claimed that its supremo and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, and not Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, has emerged as the face of the opposition against Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Major reshuffle in Bengal BJP soon

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kolkata, Oct 20: Considering the crucial Municipal Corporation elections likely at the end of this year, the BJP in West Bengal might go through a major organisational reshuffle just after the festive season. Preference is likely to be given to youth and pro-RSS leaders.

There are strong indications that the party which is struggling to hold back its own members particularly in South Bengal is likely to give more importance to the leadership from North Bengal where the saffron brigade has performed better.

Sources in the party indicated that the high command is not at all happy with the present performance of the party and so they are willing to bring in young leaders which might give a different look to the party

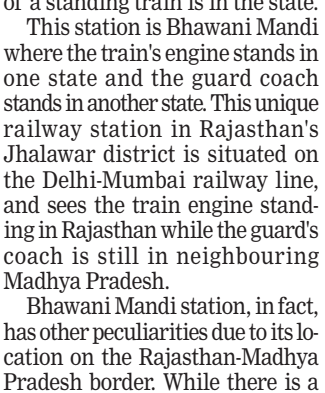
Not only at the state level but the party is likely to make major changes in the district level too

after October 20, 2021. In the first round, he will conduct organisational meetings in 20 districts. Sources said that more than 50 per cent of district presidents will be changed.

Not only at the state level but the party is likely to make major changes in the district level too. There are 39 organisational districts which are headed by district presidents. Sources said that after the posts of the general secretaries, the posts of branch organisations of the party youth wing, peasants' wing, women's wing and minority wings, are extremely crucial. Sources said that the defunct district president will surely be replaced. And new faces from the young generation will be roped in there.

"All the changes will be as per the constitutional provisions. The new committee will be formed according to the advice of our central leadership. The final decision of the changes will be taken by the central leadership of the party only," a senior party leader said.

The new state president of the BJP, Sukanta Majumdar will start extensive visits across districts



RAIN WOES



Vehicles wade through a flooded Suri-Katwa road at Laghata in Birbhum district, Wednesday. The water level is rising after the release of water from the Massanjore dam as rain continues in the upper area of West Bengal

Raj to give free school uniforms

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Jaipur, Oct 20: The Rajasthan government will provide uniforms free-of-cost to students of classes 1 to 8 studying in government schools in the state.

The money for the uniform will be directly transferred to the bank accounts of the students or their parents. The Rajasthan School Education Council has issued a circular in this regard and issued orders to all District Chief Education Officers to collect and send the information about the bank accounts.

The order said the process of making the uniforms available is being worked out. Information is being collected and the hard and soft copies are being sought about details of bank accounts of eligible students or their parents and their Jan-Aadhaar card is being updated with their bank accounts. The details of bank accounts of all gov-



ernment schools or school management committees etc. is also being collected to work on the direct benefit transfer scheme.

Money can be deposited in the account of parents or students or it can be transferred to the bank accounts of schools or management committees of schools, the order added.

Providing free school uniforms is expected to help in increasing the enrolment percentage of children in government schools and reduce the drop-out rate.

Liquor worth ₹720 cr sold during Durga Puja

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kolkata, Oct 20: The West Bengal government has earned revenue of around ₹550 crore following the record sale of liquor worth ₹720 crore during Durga Puja, an official said. Alcohol worth ₹720 crore was lifted from warehouses of the state's sole liquor distributor, the West Bengal State Beverages Corporation, from October 1-12.

"It was sold mostly during Durga Puja, which was from October 11-15 this year. Liquor worth ₹1,306.86 crore was lifted in August," he said. Sushmita Mukherjee, secretary of the West Bengal Foreign Liquor, ON, OFF Shops, Country Spirits and Hotel Owners Association, said that liquor sales during the four days of Durga Puja increased by 1.5 times over the last year. "Liquor stocks in many stores had gone dry on Dasami," she added.

Jal Jeevan Mission team to review progress in Raj

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Jaipur, Oct 20: A multi-disciplinary 10-member team from Jal Shakti Ministry is visiting Rajasthan from October 18 to 21 to review the progress of National Jal Jeevan Mission (NJJM) in five districts of Baran, Dausa, Jodhpur, Bhilwara, and Jaipur, an official statement said.

The NJJM team will daily visit 3-5 villages in each district, and discuss various aspects of programme implementation and progress made under the mission by the state to understand the ground situation and assess the state's preparedness to meet the saturation deadline for ensuring 100 per cent tap water supply to all rural households.

"During the visit, the team will interact with district officials, local village community members of Gram

Panchayat and Pani Samitis. Thereafter, the team will brief and share their observations with the district officials as well as senior officers of the state government," the Jal Shakti Ministry release said.

Rajasthan plans 100 per cent tap water connections to all rural households by 2024. However, out of its 1.01 crore rural households, only 11.74 lakh (11.59 per cent) had tap water supply as on August 15, 2019, when the Jal Jeevan Mission was announced.

Despite lockdown and disruptions due to Covid-19 pandemic, in last two years, 9.48 lakh households (9.36 per cent) have been provided tap water connections. Today 21.22 lakh rural homes (20.95 per cent) in the state have tap water supply.

Rajasthan faces extreme water scarcity in many parts of the state as the desert and desert-prone areas receive scanty rainfall.

Bengal may hold civic polls in Dec



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kolkata, Oct 20: West Bengal's State Election Commission is looking for the state government's permission to conduct pending elections to 112 urban civic bodies, including two Municipal Corporations of Kolkata and Howrah, in December and once they get the green signal, a notification might be issued after the October 30 Assembly bypolls.

"The civic body elections are pending for more than 18 months because of the pandemic situation and the subsequent lockdown. We want to complete the polls as soon as possible. We need the financial sanction from the Finance Department. Once the state government gives us the clearance, we will be in a position to announce the dates," a senior SEC official said.

A senior Finance Department official said: "The Commission has asked for ₹185 crore to complete the polls in 112 municipalities. That is almost double the cost of the previous poll five years ago. We are working on it. It will be sent to the Chief Minister for clearance soon."

Sources in the SEC indicated

that the poll body is likely to conduct the elections in three phases where the election in Kolkata and Howrah Municipal Corporations will be held in the first phase, for municipalities in south Bengal in the second phase and the rest of the municipalities in north Bengal in the third phase. Sources also indicated that though the dates of the elections are yet to be finalised, the poll body is likely to conduct the election in the two corporations on or after the third week of December.

Apart from the financial sanction, the poll body will also have to look into the police arrangements and maintain the Covid protocol before the announcement of the polls. "We will have to conduct elections in almost 22,000 booths in 112 municipalities and because of Covid, we need more election personnel and police arrangements. We have already spoken to the state government regarding this. We are fully prepared to conduct the polls," an election official said. Before the Durga Puja holiday, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee herself had hinted that the pending election of the civic bodies will be completed after the completion of the four Assembly bypolls in the state.

A railway station where trains stand in two states

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Jaipur, Oct 20: It may sound unbelievable but there is a railway station in Rajasthan where only half of a standing train is in the state.

This station is Bhawani Mandi where the train's engine stands in one state and the guard coach stands in another state. This unique railway station in Rajasthan's Jhalawar district is situated on the Delhi-Mumbai railway line, and sees the train engine standing in Rajasthan while the guard's coach is still in neighbouring Madhya Pradesh.

Bhawani Mandi station, in fact, has other peculiarities due to its location on the Rajasthan-Madhya Pradesh border. While there is a

board displaying the name of Rajasthan at one point, the board on other end showcases Madhya Pradesh.

The railway station also remains unique as most of the people coming here to get their tickets booked introduced themselves as Madhya Pradesh residents but the ticketing office is in Rajasthan.

Not only the railway station, the area has many houses, whose front doors open into Madhya Pradesh's Bhaissodamandi town while the back door opens into Bhawani Mandi. As per officials, the drug peddlers have been cashing in on the geographical situation of this town as they vanish from one state to the other giving a slip to pursuing police.





Under the BJP government, Uttar Pradesh has made it to the number one position in ease of committing crime
AKHILESH YADAV | SP PRESIDENT

BSF TO HONOUR BRAVEHEARTS

India's premier border guarding force Border Security Force (BSF) will be commemorating the supreme sacrifice made by its valiant bravehearts in the line of duty by organising a day long grand ceremony at the National Police Memorial in New Delhi, October 23



of the day quote

The Opposition being "unable to digest the popularity" of this government, is trying to vitiate the peaceful atmosphere in the state



YS JAGAN MOHAN REDDY | ANDHRA CM

Provide security and give confidence to migrant workers. Some will die



MANISH TEWARI | CONGRESS LEADER

Farmers of Delhi need not get distressed over damaged crops as their son stands with them. Ever since AAP came into power in Delhi, we have made sure that the farmers do not feel helpless



ARVIND KEJRIWAL | DELHI CM

SHORT TAKES

Four terror associates held

New Delhi: The NIA Wednesday conducted searches at multiple locations in four districts of Jammu and Kashmir and arrested four alleged terror associates in connection with a terrorism conspiracy case, an official said. The searches were carried out at 11 locations in Srinagar, Pulwama, Kulgam and Baramulla districts of Jammu and Kashmir. Suhail Ahmad Thokar of Kulgam; Kamran Ashraf Reshi, Rayid Bashir and Hanan Gulzar Dar from Srinagar, have been arrested by the premier investigation agency, the NIA official said.

No relief for Narayan Sai

New Delhi: The grant of furlough must be balanced against the public interest and can be refused to certain categories of prisoners, the Supreme Court Wednesday said as it set aside the Gujarat High Court order granting 14-day furlough to rape convict Narayan Sai, son of self-styled godman Asaram Bapu. The top court said that Sai and his father have a mass following of persons who owe loyalty to them and there is a reasonable apprehension of disruption of public peace and tranquility.

Ex-Goa Deputy CM joins AAP

Panaji: Former Speaker of the Goa legislative assembly and deputy Chief Minister Dayanand Narvekar joined the Aam Aadmi Party in Goa Tuesday. "The AAP has a structure in place in Goa and they have done exemplary work in the national capital," Narvekar said after his formal induction in the party.

Arms seized

Chandigarh: In an intelligence-led operation, Punjab Police on Wednesday recovered huge arms and ammunition, besides heroin at a search operation close to the Indo-Pak border in Tarn Taran district of Punjab. The operation was jointly conducted by the BSF and the Counter Intelligence Armritsar in the Khemkaran sector.

Punjab sets up SIT

Chandigarh: Punjab's Director General of Police Iqbal Preet Singh Sahota, on the direction of Deputy Chief Minister Sukhjinder Randhawa, Wednesday set up a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe the allegations of sister of Lakhbir Singh, who was murdered by Nihang Sikhs on the Singhu border. The SIT has been constituted under the chairmanship of ADGP-cum-Director of Bureau of Investigation, Varinder Kumar. DIG Ferozpur Range Inderbir Singh and SSP Tarn Taran Harvinder Singh Virk are its members.

PUNJAB POLLS

Ready for alliance: BJP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Oct 20: The BJP Wednesday reciprocated warmly to former Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh's suggestion for an alliance with the party in the upcoming state Assembly polls, lauding him as a patriot and asserting that it is open to joining hands with those who put national interest first.

BJP general secretary and party in-charge of Punjab affairs Dushyant Gautam said Singh, who has announced that he will quit the Congress and launch a party, is moving away from the dynasty and towards nationalism.

Gautam's comments came a day after Amarinder Singh said he will soon launch his political party and is hopeful of a seat arrangement with the BJP if the farmers' issue is resolved in their interest. On his condition of resolving farmers' issue, the BJP leader said Singh did not talk about ending the farmers' agitation.

"He talked about farmers' issues. We are committed to it and are working for the welfare of farmers.



When the time comes, both will sit together and discuss farmers' issues," Gautam said. As far as the agitation is concerned, it is politically motivated, he alleged.

"Our main agenda is nationalism and keeping the nation first. All those parties who want to form alliances with us on this agenda are welcome," he said. Amarinder Singh was once a soldier and his stand on the issues of national security should be praised, the BJP leader said.

"...He (Amarinder Singh) was a

soldier. He knows about the threats to the country and how to secure it. "He is patriotic. And whenever it was a matter of national security and security at the borders, we have appreciated his stand," Gautam said, adding that nationalists are not "untouchables" to the BJP.

Amarinder Singh will not hug the Pakistan army chief to be a "hero" in the Pakistani media, the BJP leader said in a swipe at Punjab Congress president Navjot Singh Sidhu, who was seen instrumental in Amarinder's ouster as Punjab Chief Minister and fallout with the Congress.

Gautam, however, indicated that nothing has been finalised yet as "Amarinder Singh still needs to form his party and put forward his views". Singh resigned as the Chief Minister of Punjab last month after a bitter feud with Sidhu and infighting in the state unit. The party replaced him with Charanjit Singh Channi. After resigning, Singh had met Union Home Minister Amit Shah and National Security Adviser Ajit Doval.

Jacqueline Fernandez appears before ED

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Oct 20: Actor Jacqueline Fernandez appeared before the Enforcement Directorate (ED) Wednesday for questioning in connection with an over ₹200 crore money laundering case being probed against alleged conman Sukesh Chandrashekar, officials said.

The actor deposed before the federal agency around 3:30 pm after skipping its summons at least three times earlier. Her statement was recorded under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), they said.

Fernandez, 36, has once appeared before the federal agency in this case in August and had recorded her statement. It is understood that the agency wants to confront her with some new evidence and question her along with the main accused in the case Chandrashekar and his



actor wife Leena Maria Paul.

Sources said some funds were allegedly transferred by Chandrashekar from accounts linked to him to those related to the family members of Fernandez. In this connection, some bank accounts in India and in Dubai are under the scanner of the agency.

The agency, the officials said, wants to understand some trail of funds and transactions that are allegedly linked to Fernandez in this case.

FEAR RETURNS



Women security personnel frisk a female at a temporary check point in Srinagar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow/Agra Oct 20: A man accused of stealing ₹25 lakh from a police station in Agra died in police custody after his health deteriorated during interrogation, officials said Wednesday.

Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP), Agra, Muniraj G said an inspector, a sub-inspector and three constables, who were on duty at Jagdishpura police station when the accused died, were suspended after an uproar in the city over the incident.

The accused, Arun, a sanitation worker, suddenly fell sick Tuesday

night while a raid was being carried out at his house to recover the stolen money, the SSP said. He was taken to a hospital where doctors declared him dead, he said.

An FIR has been registered over the death without identifying anyone, officials said, adding a team has been formed to investigate the case. People from the Valmiki community gathered at Arun's house and demanded a fair probe into his death.

District Magistrate, Agra, Prabhu N Singh said that a compensation of ₹10 lakh has been announced to Arun's family and a government job as a Safai Karmchhari in Nagar Nigam to his kin. Meanwhile, Congress national general secretary Priyanka Gandhi

CBSE allows students to change exam city

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Oct 20: Class 10 and 12 students who are not in the same city where they had taken admission will be allowed to request a change in the city of examination centre for first term board exams beginning next month, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) announced Wednesday.

"It has come to the notice of the board that some students are still not in the city of their school where they had taken admission and are residing somewhere else. In view of the above, at an appropriate time CBSE will inform the students to make a request to their respective schools to change the city of examination centre. Schools will follow instructions given by the CBSE to forward the request to the board in an online system," said CBSE Examination Controller Sanyam Bhardwaj.

Uttarakhand rain mayhem claims 52



A jawan rescues a child stranded in flood water in Tanakpur, Uttarakhand

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Oct 20: Six more bodies were recovered Wednesday in rain-battered Uttarakhand, taking the death toll to 52 in the Himalayan state, while Uttar Pradesh, Sikkim, and areas of north Bengal were also pounded by torrential rainfall that caused landslides and led to closure of National Highway 10, the main road linking Gangtok with the rest of the country.

Three people were killed and hundreds marooned as heavy rains lashed Uttar Pradesh's Bareilly and Pilibhit districts over the last two days. In Uttarakhand, 17 people were injured and five went missing in rain-related incidents. The official count of missing people does not include a trekking team of 11, who left Uttarakashi but did not reach their destination Chitkul in Himachal Pradesh, and three porters who went missing while accompanying an ITBP patrol near the India-China border.

The Kumaon region of the state, which has been worst affected by the rainfall, also reported cases of 46 houses being damaged. With 28 deaths, Nainital alone has accounted for the highest number of fatalities.

Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami extended his tour of the affected areas of Udhampur Singh Nagar and Champawat districts in Kumaon to take stock of the situation. He travelled by road as his helicopter could not take off from Haldwani due to technical reasons.

Accompanied by Union Minister of State for Defence and Nainital MP Ajay Bhatt and State Disaster Management Minister Dhan Singh

Rawat, Dhami, on board a tractor, crossed vast stretches of marooned fields in Udhampur Singh Nagar district and assessed the damage to crops. He also trudged through the streets of Champawat to get a first-hand assessment of the damage inflicted by nearly three days of incessant rains.

The weather cleared across Uttarakhand Wednesday, giving momentum to rescue operations and leading to the partial resumption of the Chardham Yatra, with pilgrims allowed to proceed to Kedarnath, Yamunotri, and Gangotri. However, the yatra to Badrinath could not be resumed as the national highway leading to the temple was blocked by landslide at several points.

Water has receded completely from the streets of Nainital, which was cut off from the rest of the state on Monday, with the Naini lake flooding the roads and landslides choking them at various points.

Life returned to normal in Nainital on Wednesday morning as tourists were found shopping and taxis plying through the town.

Electricity and telephone connectivity which had been badly hit in Nainital by incessant rains has been restored.

Villages on the outskirts of the town are still going without electricity and telephone connectivity. Haldwani and Kaladhungi roads have been opened partially to traffic restoring connectivity to Nainital.

The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) said it has rescued over 1,300 people from flood-affected areas of Uttarakhand.

Man accused of stealing ₹25L from police dies in custody

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

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Vadra, who raised questions about his death in a tweet, left by road from the state capital to Agra to meet the Arun's family but was stopped from proceeding by the Lucknow Police at the Lucknow-Agra Expressway and taken to the police lines, citing the Agra DM's request to not allow any political person to reach there.

"Do I need somebody's permission whenever I move out of Lucknow? Is there a problem why I am not being allowed to go to Agra, is there a law and order issue," she asked policemen who stopped her cavalcade.

The police said the Congress

general secretary was stopped at the Lucknow-Agra expressway as the Agra district magistrate had requested not to allow any political personality to go there following the man's death. "She has neither been taken into custody nor arrested. Because of the massive crowds, the movement of traffic was being hampered and she was first asked to either go to the party office or her residence but when she did not agree, she was sent to the police lines," Lucknow police commissioner D K Thakur said.

Congress workers reached the spot in large numbers and raised anti-government slogans.

TOURISM PUSH

PM inaugurates Kushinagar airport to boost Buddhist pilgrimage

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kushinagar (UP), Oct 20: Giving a push to the government's Buddhist tourism circuit initiative, Prime Minister Narendra Modi Wednesday inaugurated the Kushinagar international airport in Uttar Pradesh and said a slew of measures are being taken to boost the country's aviation sector.

At around 9 am, a Sri Lankan Airlines flight carrying scores of Buddhist monks and dignitaries from the island nation touched down at the airport, built at an estimated cost of Rs 260 crore. The monks also brought relics of Lord Buddha and were welcomed by various Union ministers and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.

"Development of Kushinagar is one of the key priorities of the UP and central governments," Modi said, as he formally inaugurated the airport at Kushinagar, a key

Buddhist pilgrimage site that is widely known as the final resting place of Lord Buddha where he is said to have attained 'Mahaparinirvana' after death.

The eastern Uttar Pradesh town is nearly 50 kilometres from Gorakhpur and about 225 kilometres from Varanasi. It has got many Buddhist temples, making it a popular tourist destination for Buddhists pilgrims from all over the world.

The Prime Minister said the airport will boost connectivity and tourism, while also helping develop an entire economic ecosystem in the region and create new job opportunities. He said the government's special attention to the development of places associated with Lord Buddha and developing Kushinagar are among the top priority areas for the UP and central governments.

Referring to the recent decision to privatise Air India, Modi said the



Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses at the inauguration and foundation stone laying ceremony of various development projects, in Kushinagar, Wednesday. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath is also seen

country has taken a big step related to Air India so that its avia-

tion sector should run professionally, and convenience and safety

should be given priority.

"This step will give new energy to the aviation sector of India," the prime minister said and also referred to the reforms related to the opening of defence airspace for civil use. The newly launched 'PM Gatishakti-National Master Plan', Modi said this will not only improve the governance, but it will also be ensured that whether it is road, rail, or plane, they support each other and increase each other's capacity.

About the UDAN scheme, he said more than 900 new routes have been approved in the last few years, out of which air service has started on more than 350. Besides, more than 50 new airports or those which were not in service earlier have been made operational, he added. In Uttar Pradesh, 8 airports are already functional.

The prime minister said that work is on Jewar international airport after Lucknow, Varanasi

and Kushinagar." Apart from that, airport projects are going on in Ayodhya, Aligarh, Azamgarh, Chitrakoot, Moradabad and Shravasti," he added.

The new airport is part of the government's endeavour to connect Buddhist pilgrimage sites around the world. Modi said that tourism in all its forms needs modern infrastructure complete with rail, road, airways, waterways, hotels, hospitals, internet connectivity, hygiene, sewage treatment and renewable energy, ensuring a clean environment.

"All these are interconnected, and it is important to work on all these simultaneously. Today's 21st century India is moving ahead with this approach only," he said. According to him, the recently launched drone policy is going to bring life-changing transformation in the fields ranging from agriculture to health to disaster management to defence.

international



Wonderful to see Colin Powell, who made big mistakes on Iraq and famously, so-called weapons of mass destruction, be treated in death so beautifully by the Fake News Media. Hope that happens to me someday
DONALD TRUMP | FORMER US PRESIDENT

IMF CHIEF ECONOMIST GITA GOPINATH TO QUIT JOB

IMF's Chief Economist Gita Gopinath will leave her job in January next year and return to the prestigious Harvard University's Economics Department, according to the global financial institution



of the day quote

Our thoughts are with the Hindu community in Bangladesh as we urge authorities to investigate fully. Freedom of religion or belief is a human right
NED PRICE | US STATE DEPARTMENT SPOKESPERSON

The view of the vast majority of Americans is that former president Trump abused the office of the presidency and attempted to subvert a peaceful transfer of power
JEN PSAKI | WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

The transition to clean energy is not only vital for our planet. It is also crucial for our economy and for the resilience to energy price shocks
URSULA VON DER LEYEN | EUROPEAN COMMISSION PRESIDENT

SHORT TAKES

Donald Blome new US envoy to Pak

Washington: US President Joe Biden intends to nominate career diplomat Donald Armin Blome as his next envoy to Pakistan, the White House has announced. Blome, who is currently the US Ambassador to Tunisia, is fluent in Arabic, it said Tuesday. Previously, he had been posted as Chargé d'Affaires a.i. At the Libya External Office in Tunis, Consul General at US Consulate in Jerusalem, and Director, Office of Arabian Peninsula Affairs at the US Department of State. He has also served as Political Counselor, Embassy in Kabul, Afghanistan and Minister-Counselor for Economic.

Putin to skip climate summit

Moscow: Russian President Vladimir Putin will not attend next month's landmark UN climate summit, the Kremlin said on Wednesday but stressed that addressing climate change was one of Russia's top priorities. "Unfortunately, Putin will not fly to Glasgow," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters, adding however that climate change was "one of our foreign policy's most important priorities." World leaders gather in the Scottish city next month for a historic summit billed as humanity's "last best chance" to get devastating climate change under control.

Ship capsizes with 9 crewmen

Seoul: A ship with nine crewmen capsized in waters off South Korea's easternmost islets of Dokdo (called Takeshima by Japan). Yonhap news agency reported Wednesday citing the South Korean coast guard. The coast guard was informed by Japanese authorities that the 72-tonne ship tipped over at about 2.24 p.m. local time in international waters some 168 km northeast of the Dokdo islets. Crewmen aboard the vessel included four Chinese, two Indonesians and three South Koreans.

Volcano erupts in southwest Japan

Tokyo: An eruption was observed on Wednesday at Mt Aso in Kyushu area, southwestern Japan, the Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA) said. Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno told reporters in Tokyo that no injuries have been reported so far and that local authorities are working to determine whether there are any climbers still on the mountain.

Back-to-back attacks claim 27 lives in Syria

The Damascus bombing will challenge the government's assertion that the decade-old war is over



AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Damascus, Oct 20: A rare bombing against an army bus in Damascus and shelling moments later of a town in rebel-held northwestern Syria killed at least 27 people Wednesday in the deadliest flare-up in months.

Two bombs planted on an army bus in central Damascus were detonated early in the morning, killing 14 people in the worst such attack in the capital in four years, the state news agency SANA reported.

There was no immediate claim for the bombing but moments later shelling by government forces killed 13 people in Idlib province, an area controlled by groups that have claimed such attacks in the past.

"A terrorist bombing using two explosive devices targeted a passing bus" at a key bridge in the capital, the news agency said, reporting that at least three people had also been wounded. Images released by SANA showed first responders searching the charred carcass of the bus and what the news agency said was a bomb squad defusing a third device planted in the same area.

A military source quoted by the news agency said the bombs were detonated as the bus passed near the Hafez al-Assad bridge, close to the national museum in the heart of the capital.

"We hadn't seen violence of that type in a long time," a fruit vendor

Two bombs planted on an army bus in central Damascus were detonated early in the morning, killing 14 people in the worst such attack in the capital in four years

Moments later shelling by government forces killed 13 people in Idlib province, an area controlled by groups that have claimed such attacks in the past

who gave his name as Salman told AFP at the scene.

"We thought we were done with such attacks. I hope this will be the last bombing," he said.

Damascus had been largely spared such violence in recent years, especially since troops and allied militia retook the last significant rebel bastion near the capital in 2018. The attack is the deadliest in the capital since a bombing claimed by the ISIS terrorist group targeted the Justice Palace in March 2017, killing at least 30 people.

Around an hour after the Damascus attack, shelling by the Syrian army struck the rebel-held town of Ariha, in the northwestern region of Idlib.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said the rockets struck a busy area at the time children were heading to school. Three children were among those killed, the Britain-based war monitor said. An AFP reporter saw at least five dead bodies as first responders treated the wounded and scenes of chaos filled the streets of Ariha.

Taliban behead junior volleyball player: Report

ALL THE PLAYERS OF THE VOLLEYBALL TEAM ARE IN A BAD SITUATION AND IN DESPAIR AND FEAR

AGENCIES

Kabul, Oct 20: Taliban militants allegedly beheaded a member of the Afghan junior women's national volleyball team, a coach told the Persian Independent.

In an interview, coach Suraya Afzali (name changed) said a woman player named Mahjabin Hakimi was killed by the Taliban earlier in October, but nobody learnt about the gruesome murder as the insurgents had threatened her family not to talk about it.

Mahjabin played for the Kabul Municipality Volleyball Club before the collapse of the Ashraf Ghani government, and was one of the club's star players. Then, a few days ago, pictures of what seemed to be her severed head and bloodied neck turned up on social media.

The coach of the Afghan women's national volleyball team said that only two of the team's players were able to escape from the country



Mahjabin Hakimi, a player in the Afghan junior women's national volleyball team, was beheaded by the Taliban
PHOTO: TWITTER/PERSIAN INDEPENDENT

before the Taliban wrested complete control in August. Mahjabin Hakimi was among the many other unfortunate women sportspersons who were left behind.

Since their takeover, the Taliban have tried to identify and hunt

down women athletes; the militants have been even more keenly on the look-out for members of the Afghan women's volleyball team, who competed in foreign and domestic competitions and appeared in media programs in the past,

claimed Afzali.

"All the players of the volleyball team and the rest of the women athletes are in a bad situation and in despair and fear," Afzali told the Persian Independent. "Everyone has been forced to flee and live underground."

The Afghan national women's volleyball team was established in 1978 and has long been a beacon of hope and empowerment for young girls in the country. However, Mahjabin's death has fuelled fears of being targeted by the Taliban. Efforts by members of the team to gain the support of foreign organisations and countries to leave Afghanistan have so far been unsuccessful.

Last week, FIFA and the Qatar government successfully evacuated as many as 100 women footballers, including members of the national football team, and their family members from Afghanistan.

SILENT PROTEST



A protestor holds a Tibetan flag during the Olympic flame lighting ceremony for the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics in Olympia, Greece
REUTERS PHOTO

Haiti gang seeks \$1mn each for abducted US missionaries

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Port-Au-Prince (Haiti), Oct 20: A gang that kidnapped 17 members of a US-based missionary group is demanding \$1 million ransom per person, although authorities are not clear whether that includes the five children being held, a top Haitian official told The Associated Press.

The official, who wasn't authorized to speak to the press, said someone from the 400 Mawozo gang called a ministry leader shortly after kidnapping the missionaries Saturday and demanded the ransom. A person in contact with the organisation, Christian Aid Ministries, also confirmed the \$1 million per person demand, which was first reported by The Wall Street Journal. That source spoke on condition of anonymity due to the sensitivity of the situation.

The ages of the adults being held captive range from 18 to 48, while the children are 8 months, 3 years, 6 years, 13 years and 15 years. Sixteen of the abductees are Americans and one Canadian.

"This group of workers has been committed to minister throughout poverty-stricken Haiti," the Ohio-based ministry said, adding that the missionaries were most recently working on a rebuilding project to help those who lost their homes in the magnitude 7.2 earthquake that struck August 14.

The group was returning from visiting an orphanage when they were abducted, the organisation said.

A recent wave of kidnappings prompted a protest strike that shuttered businesses, schools and public transportation starting Monday in a new blow to Haiti's anemic economy. Unions and other groups vowed to continue the shutdown.

REUTERS

Washington, Oct 20: Social media giant Facebook Inc is planning to rebrand itself with a new name next week, the Verge reported Tuesday, citing a source with direct knowledge of the matter.

Facebook Chief Executive Officer Mark Zuckerberg plans to talk about the name change at the company's annual Connect conference October 28, but it could be unveiled sooner, the Verge reported.

In response, Facebook said it does not comment on "rumour or speculation."

The news comes at a time when the company is facing increasing US government scrutiny over its business practices. Lawmakers from both parties have excoriated the company, illustrating the rising anger in Congress with Facebook.

The rebranding would position Facebook's social media app as one of many products under a parent company, which will also oversee groups like Instagram, WhatsApp, Oculus and more, the Verge report added.



Google established Alphabet Inc as a holding company in 2015 to expand beyond its search and advertising businesses, to oversee various other ventures ranging from its autonomous vehicle unit and health technology to providing internet services in remote areas. The move to rebrand will also reflect Facebook's focus on building the so-called metaverse, an online world where people can use different devices to move and communicate in a virtual environment, according to the report.

Beijing to be first city to host summer and winter Games

REUTERS

Beijing, Oct 20: China lit its Olympic flame in Beijing Wednesday after the ceremonial torch arrived from Athens, ahead of the Chinese capital's hosting of the 2022 Winter Games in February.

The Winter Games will be held from February 4 to February 20, when Beijing will become the first city to host both the summer and winter Olympics, amid a COVID-19 pandemic that means overseas spectators will be excluded.

At a welcome ceremony held near the National Stadium, shaped like a bird's nest and built for the 2008 Summer Games, Beijing Communist Party chief Cai Qi lit a cauldron to symbolise the arrival of the Olympic flame in China. The flame had left Athens



October 19 and travelled to Beijing in a red lantern designed in the likeness of a Han Dynasty tomb artefact, carried by torchbearers decked in white.

China will display the Olympic flame at Beijing's Olympic Park from Wednesday. In early February next year, 1,200 torchbearers will carry the flame through the cities of Beijing and Zhangjiakou and the district of Yanqing, which are the competition venues. The torch relay route has been

"appropriately reduced" due to the need to guard against the spread of COVID-19, said Beijing Vice Mayor Zhang Jiandong at the ceremony. The ceremony went off without a hitch on Wednesday in Beijing, where, like elsewhere in China, security is usually tight.

At a ceremony in Athens October 18 to hand over the flame to China, three protesters unfurled a banner reading "No Genocide Games" and waved a Tibetan flag.

Rights groups have called for a boycott of the Beijing games to protest against what they termed as human rights atrocities in Tibet, Xinjiang and Hong Kong. China has rejected those claims.

Greece's Olympic Committee (HOC) said it was disappointed the Athens ceremony had been used for political purposes.

Activists battle high costs, travel curbs to attend climate talks

SOME ACTIVISTS IN COUNTRIES INCLUDING B'DESH, PAK AND UGANDA HAD SECURED FUNDING, VISAS AND VACCINES TO ATTEND THE SUMMIT BUT OTHERS GAVE UP

REUTERS

Brussels, Oct 20: Nigerian climate activist Goodness Dickson thought being invited to take part in the UN climate summit in Scotland meant he would have no trouble attending.

But the high cost of hotels, COVID-19 travel curbs and quarantine rules have left Dickson and other activists from developing countries concerned that their voices will not be heard at the COP26 conference in Glasgow from October 31-November 12.

Dickson is still aiming to get to COP26, where he hopes to tell delegates in person about trying to learn at school when temperatures reached 43°C. He believes developed countries need to hear the personal experiences of those most vulnerable to climate change.

"I'm still looking out for funding," said the 28-year-old, who represents Nigeria's Eco Clean Active NGO and estimates his trip would cost over \$4,000 including accommodation and quarantine.

"I am worried that the COP will lack representation from the African continent."



People take part in a Climate March ahead of the COP26 climate summit, in Brussels, Belgium
REUTERS FILE PHOTO

The summit's British hosts have offered some funding assistance and vaccines for delegates who could not otherwise access them. "We are working tirelessly with all our partners, including the

Scottish government and the UN, to ensure an inclusive, accessible and safe summit in Glasgow with a comprehensive set of COVID mitigation measures," a COP26 spokesperson said, adding that

government-approved hotel provider MCI had offered delegates a range of fairly-priced accommodation.

The United Kingdom this month scrapped quarantine requirements for 47 countries including South Africa and India, sparing delegates the 2,285 pounds (\$3,150) cost of a 10-day hotel quarantine.

Last month, it said it would cover quarantine costs for delegates from countries still on the UK's COVID-19 travel "red list" - currently seven states including Colombia and Venezuela.

But some would-be delegates say they've been unable to access the help, or that it doesn't go far enough. Others say their own governments should be doing more to ensure they can attend.

"Visas and quarantines have been a nightmare," said Philippines-based activist Mitzi Jonelle Tan

with youth movement Fridays for Future. The youth movement is sending around 55 delegates from regions vulnerable to climate change to COP26, but Tan said others dropped out before the UK revised its quarantine rules.

Meanwhile, the UK government is expecting around 25,000 people to attend COP26, but has yet to release a list of delegates.

As of Tuesday, prices for the few hotel rooms still available for the full 12-day conference on Booking.com began at 291 pounds per night, a total of 3,486 pounds.

The cost was enough to deter Ugandan climate justice advocate Nyombi Morris, 23, who had been hoping to highlight campaigners' concerns about the impact of EU biomass energy policies on forests. He turned down the UK's accreditation offer because it came without financial support.

of the day quote

The situation in which YES Bank was, you have to give three years time at least for it to stabilise. It has shown remarkable progress as the condition was very bad when SBI salvaged it

RAJNISH KUMAR | FORMER SBI CHAIRMAN

Our experience of supporting the electrification of the Royal Navy's warships over many years is of particular significance, including the design and deployment of the world's first hybrid-electric naval system

KISHORE JAYARAMAN | PRESIDENT (INDIA AND SOUTH ASIA), ROLLS-ROYCE

The growth in SIP flows is the most significant achievement, as the SIP is a forward call on an organisation by both advisors as well as investors

SWARUP MOHANTY | CEO, MIRAE ASSET INVESTMENT MANAGERS

SHORT TAKES

Pak rupee dips to all-time low

New Delhi: The Pakistani rupee's slide continued against the US dollar in the interbank currency market, ARY News reported. The Pakistani rupee Wednesday tumbled to a fresh all-time low at ₹173.50 against the greenback. The greenback gained 37 paise at the start of the trading day. Monday, the rupee closed at ₹172.72 against the US dollar. Rising demand for the US dollar is driving up its value despite a number of measures introduced by the State Bank to ease the pressure on the exchange rate.

Soch opens first store in Berhampur

Bhubaneswar: Indian women's ethnic wear brand Soch launched its first store in Zennana Hospital Road in Berhampur. The store is spread across a massive 1650 sq ft and will showcase the brand's latest festive collection 2021. The collection houses ensembles in rich and beautiful fabrics like silk, silk blend, muslins, chanderi and georgette. Vinay Chatlani, Executive Director & CEO, Soch Apparels said, "We are very excited for the launch of our 4th store in Odisha. The response to our brand has been very encouraging, so, we decided to expand our presence with a new store in Berhampur."

LIC Mutual Fund to launch BAF

Bhubaneswar: LIC Mutual Fund to launch of LIC MF Balanced Advantage Fund (BAF), an open-ended dynamic asset allocation fund, which would invest across equity and debt & money market instruments using several parameters like valuation and earning drivers. The investment strategy for LIC MF Balanced Advantage Fund, essentially a hybrid scheme, would be uniquely driven by 'fundamental driven mathematical model'. LIC MF BAF model would precisely use this relationship to determine optimum asset allocation level for the scheme.

Amazon targets digital divide

New Delhi: Amazon India is targeting to bridge the prevailing digital divide in the country, increase accessibility of digital devices for students from underprivileged communities. In this matter, the company announced the launch of 'Delivering Smiles' initiative. The program will enable customers to experience the joy of giving and participate in the company's objective to reduce the digital gap.



It is really terrific to see India leading the ISA (International Solar Alliance). India is a close partner and the United States strongly supports India's goal of reaching 450 GW of renewable energy by 2030. We believe that it's absolutely doable and will be done

JOHN KERRY | SPECIAL PRESIDENTIAL ENVOY FOR CLIMATE, US

VIL OPTS FOR 4-YEAR PAYMENT MORATORIUM

Vodafone Idea Limited Wednesday said its board has approved availing the four-year spectrum payment moratorium being offered by the government as part of its relief package for the telecom sector. The other options offered in the Telecom Department's notification will be considered by the board of directors within the stipulated timeframe, it said in a regulatory filing



CRYPTO BOOM

Bitcoin crosses \$66K after ETF debut

ASSOCIATED PRESS

New York, Oct 20: Bitcoin jumped to a record Wednesday, topping \$66,000 for the first time, as it rides a wave of excitement about getting further accepted by the financial establishment.

Bitcoin was trading at \$66,901.30, up 7.6%. It is roared back after sinking below \$30,000 during the summer to top its prior record set in April. That previous all-time high was nearly \$64,889, according to CoinDesk.

A day earlier, the first exchange-

traded fund linked to Bitcoin attracted huge interest from investors, giving another boost to the surging field of cryptocurrencies. Shares of the ProShares BitCoin Strategy ETF changed hands 24.1 million times in a resounding debut. It was off to another strong start Wednesday, with volume topping 9 million within the first hour of trading.

The ETF does not invest directly in Bitcoin. It instead invests in the futures market tied to Bitcoin, but the industry sees the ETF bringing in a new class of investors to Bitcoin. Someone with an old-school bro-



kerage account can buy the ETF, for example, without having to learn what a hot or cold wallet is.

Investors are getting more interested in crypto because they are always looking for assets whose

prices moves independently of everything else in their portfolios. One school of thought says Bitcoin in particular can offer investors protection from high inflation, and some fans see it as akin to "digital gold," though it does not have a long track record to back that up.

More high-minded fans say digital assets are simply the future of finance, allowing transactions to sidestep middlemen and fees with a currency that is not beholden to any government. Crypto still has not won over everyone, though. Critics say they are still not widely

used as forms of payment. They also criticize how much energy is used by the crypto system, which adds to climate-changing emissions.

China last month declared Bitcoin transactions illegal. US regulators have not gone that far, but the chair of the US Securities and Exchange Commission has said the world of crypto does not have enough protections for investors.

Cryptocurrencies are also notorious for their sharp swings in price. The last time Bitcoin set a record high, the price dropped by half in roughly three months.

CUT IMPORT BILL

Refiners take strong stand against OPEC+

INDIA'S TRADE DEFICIT IN SEPTEMBER SURGED TO A RECORD \$22.6 BILLION, ITS HIGHEST IN AT LEAST 14 YEARS, DRIVEN BY EXPENSIVE IMPORTS



AGENCIES

New Delhi, Oct 20: India is forming a group that brings together state-run and private refiners to seek better crude import deals, oil secretary Tarun Kapoor said Tuesday, as the country grapples with soaring oil prices.

The world's third largest oil importer and consumer, India depends on imports for about 85% of its crude and buys most of it from Middle East producers. Initially the group of refiners will meet once in a fortnight and exchange ideas on crude purchases. "The companies can form joint strategies and they can even go for joint negotiations wherever possible. Kapoor, the top bureaucrat in the petroleum ministry," told agencies. Indian state refiners already jointly negotiate some crude oil purchases.

India is already reducing the share of OPEC oil in its crude mix as refiners, that have invested billions of dollars in refinery upgrades, are tapping cheaper oil

With local gasoline and gasoil prices rising to a record high amid India's worst power crisis in years, the nation wants to redouble its efforts to buy wisely

Kapoor said the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and its allies, together known as OPEC+, should raise production to bring down global oil prices.

"OPEC+ should realise that this is not the right approach, they must step up production. If the demand is going up and you are not increasing production, you are trying to create a gap," he said.

"Due to this, prices are going up and that's not fair."

PM invites CEOs to explore oil, gas

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Wednesday rolled out the red carpet for global oil and gas giants and invited them to come and explore for oil and natural gas in India. In his annual interaction with CEOs and experts of global oil and gas sector, he said the aim is to make India 'aatmanirbhar' or self-reliant in the oil and gas sector. Talking about the rapidly growing natural gas demand in the country, he outlined the current and potential gas infrastructure development, including pipelines, city gas distribution and LNG regasification terminals.

OPEC+ producers recently agreed to stick to a plan to increase November output by 400,000 barrels per day (bpd) as it looks to phase out output curbs of 5.8 million bpd over time.

Kapoor said rising oil prices would prompt oil consumers to "seriously start thinking of shifting to other forms or curtail their demand for OPEC oil somehow."

"These kind of prices are not sustainable." High oil prices are spurring investment in upstream activities, that could lead to higher production from regions other than the Gulf, Kapoor noted.

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Oct 20: In a bid to avert power crisis being triggered in the country due to fuel shortages in the months following monsoon rains, the government proposes revise the coal stocking norms for thermal power plants, based on regular shift stock limits, depending on the actual fuel requirement during a particular period.

As per a draft that is being discussed, against the uniform requirement of 20-22 day coal stocks to be maintained by power plants, lower coal stock of 10 days may be mandated for pit-head power plants while 20 days stock may be needed for power plants farther from coal-producing areas. But in the peak summer months (April-June), non-pit head plants would still require to stock 22 days of coal while pit head plants around 12 days. The norms of stocking may change slightly in winter months.

The thinking within the government is that the revised coal stocking norms will prevent a situation like the one that faced the country recently when post monsoons, several of the 135 coal-based power plants in the country were found to be sitting with critical coal stock levels sufficient to meet just three to four days of supply.

In fact, the shortages late last month and early this month pushed several state utilities to schedule power cuts to maintain a balance between demand and supply. Threats of complete power failure also lingered for some time. Even



Sources said that the Central Electricity Authority will come up with revised coal stocking guidelines that will have higher stocking requirement for non-pit head power plants

now, over 60 power plants have critical coal stocks levels.

Relaxed coal stocking norms should also better distribution of the fuel amongst generating stations. This would prevent shortages and ensure uninterrupted power supply irrespective of the demand situation in the country, said an official source privy to the development.

Apart from lower stock holding norms, the changes in regulations would also require power plants to stock fuel only to meet generation requirement for 75 per cent of capacity and not 85 per cent or more. This would also lower the fuel requirement for each power plant and enable better distribution amongst all stations.

BSNL to operate Inmarsat's GX satcomm services

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Oct 20: State-owned BSNL has received licence to offer Inmarsat's Global Xpress (GX) mobile broadband services in India that would enable high-speed passenger inflight connectivity and maritime connectivity for carriers and vessels using Inmarsat terminals and infrastructure, the British satellite company announced Wednesday. SpiceJet Ltd and Shipping Corporation of India have already signed up for the new GX services, which would open-up capacities as high as 50Mbps, Inmarsat India Managing Director, Gautam Sharma told PTI.

Once deployed, the GX services can enable Indian domestic airlines as well as international airlines flying over India to provide the high-speed inflight connectivity, allowing passengers to surf the internet, check social media, send emails and even make voice call over apps, during flights, according to Sharma.

Under BSNL's Inflight and Maritime Connectivity (IFMC) licence from Telecom Department, GX will be available to Indian customers across government, aviation and maritime, an Inmarsat statement said.

RBI fines Paytm, Western Union

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Oct 20: The Reserve Bank has imposed a penalty of Rs 1 crore on Paytm Payments Bank Limited (PPBL) and Rs 27.78 lakh on Western Union Financial Services for non-compliance with certain directions.

In a release Wednesday, the RBI said on examination of PPBL's application for issue of final Certificate of Authorisation (CoA), it was observed that it had submitted information which did not reflect the factual position.

"As this was an offence of the nature referred to in Section 26 (2) of the Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007, a notice was issued to PPBL. "After reviewing the written responses and oral submissions made during the personal hearing, the RBI determined that the aforementioned charge was substantiated and warranted the imposition of a monetary penalty," it said.

The RBI, however, added the penalties are based on deficiencies in regulatory compliance and are not intended to pronounce upon the validity of any transaction or agreement entered into by the entities with their customers.

Mines Secy unveils Nalco's Lean Slurry project

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Oct 20: Alok Tandon, Union Mines Secretary, inaugurated Nalco's Lean Slurry project at Angul, Wednesday, marking a significant milestone in the Navratna Company's journey for business excellence and adopting outstanding practices in environmental management.

The Lean Slurry project will ensure 100% utilization of ash generated at the company's captive power plant (CPP) and marks a big step forward in its commit-



ment towards environment-friendly & sustainable operations.

Alok Tandon also visited the smelter and captive power plants

at Angul and appreciated Nalco's efforts in achieving the targets and scaling new heights of success amidst challenging business environment. The Union Mines Secretary also interacted with officials and employees, and motivated them to maintain the tempo of production and productivity.

During 41st Foundation Day of Nalco, Union Minister for Coal & Mines, Pralhad Joshi had said that NALCO will invest around ₹30,000 crore rupees by the financial year 2027-28 on the company's expansion and diversification plans.

BIZ BUZZ

Revolt Motors eyes 100% localisation by Jan

NEW DELHI: Electric bike maker Revolt Motors Wednesday said it aims to fully localise its product range by January next year. The company, which will re-open bookings of its electric motorcycle - RV400 across 70 cities from tomorrow, currently has been able to achieve localisation of around 70 per cent. "The company is working on 100 per cent localisation and by January we would be able to achieve it," Revolt Motors Founder Rahul Sharma told PTI. Revolt currently rolls out its electric bike from a manufacturing facility in Manesar, Haryana. The plant currently has an installed production capacity to roll out one lakh units per annum. "We are looking to increase the capacity and there would also be new products by next year," Sharma noted but declined to share details. The revolt also plans to expand its retail presence by entering 64 new cities, including Bangalore, Kolkata, Jaipur, Surat, Chandigarh, Lucknow & NCR by early 2022, from presence in just six cities to cater to the consumer demand.



Microsoft launches new scheme to boost AI startups

SUPPORTED BY TIE MUMBAI, THE LAUNCH COHORT WILL KICKSTART IN NOVEMBER 2021. THE FIRST COHORT WILL FOCUS ON MANUFACTURING AND LOGISTICS AND THE SECOND ONE WILL FOCUS ON FINTECH

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Oct 20: Tech giant Microsoft Wednesday launched a new programme Microsoft AI Innovate for nurturing and scaling startups that are leveraging Artificial Intelligence (AI).

The 10-week initiative will support startups in India leveraging AI technologies, helping them scale operations, drive innovation, and build industry expertise.

Both B2B and B2C startups from various industries, including financial services, healthcare, education, agriculture, space, manufacturing and logistics, retail, and e-commerce can participate in the quarterly cohorts of this programme.

AI is increasingly transitioning from artificial intelligence into augmented intelligence that ensures efficient, faster, more targeted experiences for everybody.

Microsoft India President Anant Maheshwari said at a virtual event said, "As creators, users and advocates of technology, it is important for us to make careful choices so that technology ultimately translates into benefits and opportunities for all."

"AI has a tremendous potential to empower people and institutions to do better, understand customers more deeply, share information more quickly and enable scientific breakthroughs," Maheshwari added.



Trust is non-negotiable and everyone is accountable for creating a responsible, trusted and ethical tech ecosystem, he noted.

Through its latest initiative, Microsoft will focus on providing tech and business opportunities to startups for improving their solutions, transforming organisa-

tions and building responsibly to make AI accessible to everyone, Maheshwari said. The programme will also enable startups to reach out to newer customers and geographies with Microsoft's sales and partner networks.

The selected startups in each of the cohorts will have access to in-

India has the third-largest AI startup ecosystem in the world. AI adoption can add more than \$90 billion to the Indian economy by 2035. To maximise AI's potential and mitigate its risks, we need to develop AI in a way that is responsible and fosters trust

ANANT MAHESHWARI | PRESIDENT, MICROSOFT INDIA

dustry deep-dive sessions and AI masterclasses by industry experts, mentoring by unicorn founders, skilling and certification opportunities, among other benefits. Catering to technical and busi-

ness audiences, the programme will bring together leading-edge tech know-how, global GTM (go to market) partnerships as well as engineering and research experts from Microsoft.

Qualified seed to series B startups will be provided with technical enablement benefits, including Azure benefits (in addition to free cloud credits) and product engineering support among other benefits. They will also receive support with business and sales acceleration needs such as marketplace on boarding. Startups with enterprise-ready solutions will be provided opportunities to build their solutions alongside a dedicated team of professionals.

Messi rescues PSG Rohit strikes form, India win

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



KYLIAN MBAPPE LIONEL MESSI

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Paris, Oct 20: Lionel Messi scored twice in quick succession, including an exquisite Panenka-style penalty, to rescue PSG as they rallied to beat Leipzig 3-2 in the Champions League after being dominated for long spells. Messi equalised in the 67th minute

Tuesday, poking home from close range after goalkeeper Peter Gulacsi tipped his first shot onto the post. He then sent Gulacsi diving to the left before dinking the ball softly down the middle for his third goal since joining PSG from Barcelona. They have all come in the Champions League, with Kylian Mbappe setting up the first two and

winning the penalty for Messi's winner against Leipzig in the 74th minute. Mbappe pointed straight at Messi to tell him he could take the spot-kick. It was the 34th time that Messi scored at least two goals in a CL game, bringing the Argentina captain's total to 123 goals in the tournament. He remains second to long-time rival Cristiano Ronaldo on 137. Mbappe then took a penalty in the fourth minute of stoppage time, awarded following a video review for a foul on right back Achraf Hakimi, but he blazed it well over. PSG is atop Group A with seven points, one more than Manchester City. Leipzig is last with no points. Mbappe opened the scoring with a ninth-minute goal. But after that, the visitors took control by pressing high up the field and forcing panicky PSG into numerous errors. Striker Andre Silva equalised in the 28th and midfielder Nordi Mukiele volleyed in powerfully in the 57th, with left back Angelino setting up both with his deft left foot.

OTHER RESULTS

Shakhtar	0-5	Real Madrid
Inter	3-1	FC Sheriff
FC Porto	1-0	AC Milan
Man City	5-1	Club Brugge
Ajax	4-0	Dortmund

Dubai, Oct 20: India fine-tuned their T20 World Cup preparations with a convincing nine-wicket win over Australia in their final warm-up game here on Wednesday but the sixth bowler's slot remained a worry as even Virat Kohli rolled his arm over going into the tournament proper. Captaining the side with Kohli only taking the field to bowl, Rohit Sharma (60 retired, 41b, 5x4, 3x6) showed sublime touch alongside opening partner KL Rahul (39, 31b, 2x4, 3x6) as India chased down Australia's 152/5 in 17.5 overs. Suryakumar Yadav (38 n o, 27b, 5x4, 1x6) came at number three in Kohli's absence and got valuable time in the middle which should boost his confidence going ahead. Hardik Pandya (14 n o) came at four to finish the game and he did it with a clean hit over the bowler's head. Another plus for India was seasoned pacer Bhuvneshwar Kumar (1/27) finding rhythm after a poor outing against England. The batting department looks more or less settled and the five specialist bowlers also inspire con-



fidence but the same can't be said about the extra bowling option with Hardik not bringing his all-round skills to the table at the moment. India conceded 58 runs off the last five overs and that is something they would like to improve on. After losing the toss, India put up a decent bowling effort. India had Australia on the mat at 11/3 after Aaron Finch opted to bat first. Ravichandran Ashwin (2/8) struck twice in the second over. Ravindra Jadeja (1/35) had Finch trapped LBW with a slider off his very first ball, leaving Australia with a lot of work to do. Steve Smith (57) and in-form Glenn Maxwell (37) tried to break the shackles with a 61-run partnership. After Maxwell fell to a conventional sweep, Smith and Marcus Stoinis (41 n o) got together and provided a much needed final flourish to the innings. Brief scores: Australia 152/5 (Steve Smith 57, Marcus Stoinis 41 n o, Glenn Maxwell 37; Ravichandran Ashwin 2/8, Rahul Chahar 1/17) lost to India 153/2 (Rohit Sharma 60 ret'd, KL Rahul 39, Suryakumar Yadav 38 n o) by 8 wickets.

Salah helps Liverpool down 10-man Atletico

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Madrid, Oct 20: After a frustrating end to Antoine Griezmann's night with Atletico Madrid, Mohamed Salah came through for Liverpool in a Champions League thriller.

Salah scored twice Tuesday as Liverpool took advantage of Griezmann's red card to beat Atletico 3-2 and stay perfect after three matches in the European competition.

Griezmann had already scored twice to help Atletico recover from a poor start, but then he was sent off with a straight red card early in the second half for hitting Roberto Firmino's head with his foot while trying to reach for the ball.



Mo Salah celebrates a goal; (inset) Antoine Griezmann's kick hits Roberto Firmino's head which led to the Atletico scorer's sending off, Tuesday

Liverpool capitalised on the advantage with Salah scoring the winner from a penalty kick in the 78th minute. Naby Keita also scored

for Liverpool in the first half as Liverpool took a 2-0 lead as early as the 13th minute at the Wanda Metropolitano Stadium.

Wiese knock keeps Namibia in hunt for World T20 Super 12

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Abu Dhabi, Oct 20: In a sensational display of power-hitting, David Wiese conjured up a 66-run knock to fashion Namibia's six-wicket win over the Netherlands in a crucial first round Group A game of the T20 World Cup here Wednesday.

Wiese's maiden international half century changed the pace of the game in matter of minutes as he added 93 runs with skipper Gerhard Erasmus (32) for the fourth wicket.

Chasing 165 to stay alive in the competition, debutants Namibia were stuttering at 52/3 after nine overs. The victory has kept Namibia in hunt for the Super 12 stage and now need to beat Ireland in their final game in the first round.

LAKSHYA SAILS ON, SAINA SINKS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Odense, Oct 20: Young Lakshya Sen thumped compatriot Sourabh Verma in straight games to enter the second round but it was curtains for Saina Nehwal at the Denmark Open Super 1000 tournament here Wednesday.

Lakshya, who had finished runners-up at Dutch Open last Sunday, dished out a superb performance to outclass national champion Sourabh 21-9, 21-7 in 26 minutes.

The 20-year-old from Almora, who had failed to make the cut for the Sudirman Cup and Thomas Cup Final after losing his only match in the trials, is likely to clash with second seed and Olympic champion Viktor Axelsen of Denmark next.

London Games bronze medalist Saina, who had retired mid-



way through her first match at Uber Cup Final due to a groin injury, couldn't match Japan's World No.20 Aya Ohori and lost 16-21, 14-21 in the opening round.

While Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Ashwini Ponnappa's gallant battle ended with a 17-21, 21-14, 11-21 loss to China's Feng Yan Zhe and

Du Yue in mixed doubles, Meghana Jakkampudi and Poorvisha S Ram lost 8-21, 7-21 to Indonesian combination of Nita Violina Marwah and Putri Syaikhah in women's doubles.

Ashwini and N Sikki Reddy also went down 17-21, 13-21 to second seeded Korean pair of Lee Sohee and Shin Seungchan.




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