

GLOBAL RECOGNITION

Afghanistan-born Indian actor Warina Hussain gets 'International Icon of the Year' award for representing causes for women

LEISURE P2

UKRAINE MARKS 31ST I-DAY

Ukraine celebrates 31 years of independence from Soviet Union with a vow to drive Russian forces out completely

INTERNATIONAL P10

PRANNOY STUNS MOMOTA

HS Prannoy stuns World No. 2 Kento Momota to set up last-16 tie against Lakshya Sen at BWF Worlds

SPORTS P12

HONING SKILLS



Government Secretariat employees participate Wednesday in a tug-of-war competition ahead of the upcoming Onam celebrations, in Thiruvananthapuram, Wednesday

PTI PHOTO

Mahapatra gets nod for second extension as CS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, August 24: Odisha Chief Secretary (CS) Suresh Chandra Mohapatra has been granted a second extension in service for six more months, officials said Wednesday. His extension was granted by the Centre at the recommendation of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, they informed. The communication was sent to the Odisha government by Kuldeep Chaudhury, Under-Secretary in the Ministry of Personnel Public Grievances and Pension through a letter dated August 23, 2022.

Mahapatra, whose first extension is to end August 31, 2022, will now remain in office till February 28, 2023, the officials said.

The extension of his service indicates that the Odisha government is not keen on any of the seven Odisha cadre officers in the rank of additional chief secretary rank, barring PK Jena, the Special Relief Commissioner



(SRC) and Rajesh Verma, who was appointed as secretary to President Droupadi Murmu recently. Mahapatra was earlier tipped to become the new Chairperson of the Odisha Electricity Regulatory Commission, a post lying vacant since January 16, 2022. He got his first extension due to the announcement of panchayat polls by the state government in February. Mahapatra however, is not the only IAS officer to get extension of service as the Chief Secretary of Odisha. RN Das was the last chief secretary who had got three extensions of six months each during the tenure of Biju Patnaik.

OPEN VENDETTA

CBI has alleged that Lalu Prasad's family had acquired land to the tune of 1.05 lakh square feet in Patna, the valuation of which currently is ₹4.39 crore

AGENCIES

New Delhi/Patna, August 24: The CBI carried out Wednesday searches at 25 locations, including an under-construction mall in Gurugram believed to be built by a firm owned by Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Tejashwi Yadav, in connection with the alleged land-for-jobs scam, officials said. The raids came on a day when the 'Mahagathbandan' (RJD, JD (U) and its other allies) took a floor test in the Bihar Assembly.

The searches are being carried out in Delhi, Gurgaon, Patna, Madhubani and Katihar among other places. The under-construction 'Urban Cubes Mall' in Sector 71 of Gurgaon is being constructed by a company named 'Whiteland' in which Tejashwi's family has a stake in own-



Security personnel at the house of RJD MLC Sunil Singh during the raid at his Patna residence

PTI PHOTO

The present disposition at the Centre does nothing except publicity. BJP's only task is to create disturbances in society

NITISH KUMAR

ership, CBI officials said. The raids came on a day when Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, who parted ways with the BJP to ally with the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD), passed a trust vote in the state Assembly.

Searches were carried out at the premises of several senior leaders of the RJD including MLC Sunil Singh and Rajya Sabha MPs Ashfaq

Karim and Faiyaz Ahmad and former MLC Subodh Rai, sources stated.

MLC Singh who is close to RJD supreme Lalu Prasad Yadav termed the raids as 'illegal and intentional'. "This is 100 per cent intentional. These people have entered my house without even informing the local police. They are asking me to sign a document. I will sue the agency for defamation," Singh said.

The alleged scam took place during the tenure of Lalu Prasad as Union Railway Minister. The case in which searches are being conducted was registered May 18 against Lalu Prasad, his wife Rabri Devi, and daughters Misa Bharti and Hema Yadav, in addition to 12 people who were given jobs in Railway zones of Mumbai, Jabalpur, Kolkata, Jaipur, Hajipur in 2008-09, the officials said. **Continued on P4**

Inebriated headmaster beats up minor student

Only a few days back, female students had accused the principal of talking inappropriately in class

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, August 24: Tension flared at the Adarsh Vidyalaya in Sundarpal under Hatadihi block of Keonjhar district after an allegedly inebriated headmaster severely beat up a minor student Tuesday with an iron rod for failing to answer a question. After that he confined all the students inside the classroom from 10.00am in the morning till 3.30pm in the afternoon.

To top it all when some parents of the students reached the school Wednesday morning to inquire about the incident, they again found the headmaster, identified as Nityananda Barik, in an inebriated condition. They were shell-shocked and demanded immediate action against the errant teacher.

It should also be stated here that earlier also complaints had been lodged against Barik. Female students had approached the block development officer (BDO) August 12 alleging that Barik conducted himself inappropriately. The alleged that Barik often talked to them about how he approached girls when he was in Class IX.

Following the complaint, officials from the block education officer (BEO)

along with the Anandpur sub-collector had initiated an inquiry.

Sources also informed that Barik regularly comes to school drunk and misbehaves with students. Narrating the incident, the victim student said that 'sir had asked him to name the six seasons'. When he failed to answer, Barik allegedly beat him up with an iron pipe, the student said.

Parents, after finding Barik unable to walk properly Wednesday, approached the local administration after which Anandpur sub-collector Anand Kumar Sethy and BDO Bichitra Kumar Kar reached the school. They spoke with the victim and other students of the school and also with Barik who confessed that he was drunk when the incident happened.

The parents then demanded action against Barik and sought his dismissal. "We came and found that he (Barik) was drunk today also. How can he teach in this condition," said one of the parents.

Sethy assured that disciplinary measures will be taken against Barik. "We had earlier received similar complaints about the principal. He was found intoxicated today as well. Necessary action will be initiated against him," Sethy said.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



I've been to courts in a couple of cases. I can tell you nobody can play football better than the courts!

Drones to scan Hirakud cracks

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, August 24: With cracks appearing at various places in the Hirakud dam, the chief safety engineer has recommended a survey by an expert panel through drones. The chief engineer of the Mahanadi river basin has been asked to furnish details of steps taken for necessary review and preparation of a plan for a special inspection by a panel of experts.

In a letter dated, August 16 to the chief engineer of Mahanadi River basin, his dam safety counterpart Sibashish Padhi underscored

the need for proper monitoring to ascertain the status of cracks and to ensure timely repair.

Referring to the recommendation of the dam safety review panel (DSRP) which had visited Hirakud dam in 2020, Padhi in his letter said a drone-based inspection of the downstream must be taken up to locate cracks on the downstream glacis of the spillway.

The DSRP panel had also recommended inspection of the cracks at operation gallery, foundation gallery, gate shaft and sluice barrels of both the left and right spillway of the dam, Padhi said. He added that

an underwater videography of the face of the spillway is required as it cannot be inspected visually.

The cracks found in the sluice gates require immediate attention, Padhi said. He added that the other cracks need to be inspected on a regular basis and they need to be repaired at the first opportunity.

Usually the survey of the dam is done every five years. However, in case of the Hirakud Dam, no such inspection has been carried out in the last five years, sources said. An inspection is needed on an urgent basis for mapping of the cracks, sources said.

MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VAIATION
SENSEX	59085.43 ↑ 54.13
NIFTY	17605.00 ↑ 27.50
DOLLAR	80.33 ↓ ₹0.01
EURO	79.63 ↑ ₹0.04
GOLD	₹51,485 ↑ ₹68
SILVER	₹55,163 ↓ ₹44

WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK
MAX	29.6°C	29.3°C
MIN	25.6°C	26.0°C
Humidity	95%	95%
Rainfall	1.0mm	2.0mm
Forecast	Partly cloudy	Partly cloudy

Lightning kills 3 in Malkangiri

POST NEWS NETWORK

Malkangiri, August 24: Three women were killed and three others critically injured Wednesday in a lightning strike at Pandripani panchayat in Malkangiri district Wednesday. The deceased women have been identified as Daimati Khil(26) of Baunsaguda village and Laxmi Kape(17) of Rauliguda village. The three injured were identified as Sushila Khil, Dipa Pangi and Chinta Khil from Rauliguda and Bapanapali villages respectively.

All the women were working on their farmland when lightning struck. They were rushed to the hospital where three were declared dead.

AGENCIES

New Delhi, August 24: Adani group's acquisition of 34-year-old broadcaster New Delhi Television (NDTV) will help its owner Gautam Adani, the world's fourth-richest man, to join a club of global tycoons in the media business. However, behind that acquisition is the story of an unpaid loan.

NDTV founders Prannoy Roy and Radhika Roy had taken the loan from a company called Vishvapradhan Commercial Pvt Ltd (VCPL) which was once linked to rival billionaire Mukesh Ambani in 2009-10. VCPL had loaned ₹403.85 crore to NDTV

- With the acquisition Adani joins the league of people like Jeff Bezos who owns The Washington Post
- NDTV operates 3 news channels and has more than 35mm followers across various social media platforms



promoter company, RRRP Holding Pvt Ltd (RRRP). Against this interest-free loan, RRRP issued warrants to VCPL entitling it to convert them into a 99.9 per cent stake in RRRP in case the loan isn't paid-back.

The VCPL ownership changed hands in 2012. Adani Group first acquired VCPL from its new owner and exercised the option to convert unpaid debt into a 29.18 per cent stake in the news channel.

Thereafter, it made a ₹493 crore open offer to buy an additional 26 per cent stake from the public in line with the country's takeover norms.

The Roys considered Adani's approach hostile, saying the acquisition was without discussion, consent, or notice. However, now they can only lament as nothing can prevent Adani from owning 'NDTV'.

THE LOAN STORY
RRRP Holding, which was a promoter group entity and then held only a 7.56 per cent stake in NDTV, took the loan on behalf of the latter from VCPL in two tranches (₹350 crore in July 2009 and another ₹53 crore in January 2010).

VCPL had got the money from another company called 'Shinano Retail Pvt Ltd' in the form of an other unsecured loan the same financial year. 'Shinano' on the other hand, got the money - also in the form of an unsecured loan - from Reliance Industrial Investments and Holdings Limited, part of Ambani's Reliance Industries Ltd. The loan agreement required Prannoy and Radhika Roy, who together held 55.5% in 'NDTV' at the end of June 2009, to transfer some of their shares to 'RRRP Holdings'. Due to these terms, RRRP Holdings stake in NDTV increased to 29.18 per cent by January 2010. **Continued on P4**

2 killed in separate elephant attacks



Baripada: Two persons were trampled to death by elephants in separate incidents at Moroda block in Mayurbhanj district, police said Wednesday. Both the attacks took place in the wee hours of Wednesday. A 40-year-old man was trampled to death when he was sleeping in his house at Dangarsahi village in the district. The tusker in search of food broke the wall before trampling the man to death. In the second incident, an elephant attacked a man who had taken his cow for grazing in the Sangadi forest of the district. His mangled body was found later by forest officials who said it was a case of elephant attack. **P5**



REPRESENTATIONAL IMAGE

leisure



KIM KARDASHIAN IS READY TO DATE 'SOMEONE OLDER'

Ending her romance with Pete Davidson on a reportedly amicable note, Kim Kardashian is at it again. "Kim's expressed she's ready to date someone older but it has to be the right person who understands her life. She isn't compromising her freedom right now," said a source close to the star.

AVATAR TO RE-RELEASE IN CINEMAS SEPT 23

James Cameron's *Avatar* is coming back to theatres worldwide September 23 in remastered 4K High Dynamic Range format, Disney and 20th Century have announced. The epic sci-fi film's re-release comes three months before the arrival of its much anticipated sequel *Avatar: The Way of Water* December 16.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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accuracy • reliability • trust
FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL \$5181*

ARIES
You may pick up the hammer and chisel today. No, you're not taking up sculpture; you're finally giving in to your spouse's demands to take some home improvement measures. It's in your interest to be speedy and focused, as you are the guilty party, says Ganesha.

TAURUS
There is a strong possibility of receptivity and sensitivity in your love life. On the down side, your negativity may lead to mediocre results. You are a fire-fighter when it comes to others' problems, but can forget digging a well for your own home, says Ganesha.

GEMINI
Today, you will toil as if you have to conquer Mt. Everest. And you will, says Ganesha. You may not get a standing ovation or a medal of honour for your hard work and dedication, but you will be lavishly appreciated by your superiors and colleagues.

CANCER
In all likelihood, this is going to be a fairly easy day for you, says Ganesha. The only tough part of the day would be how to spend it. There will be hardly anything to do, anyone to talk to. Ideally, this is what you would call a perfect day. But not today.

LEO
Call it an epiphany of sorts, but today promises to be a day of revelations for you. Finally, things fall into place as your Odyssey nears its end, and you come to terms with your hidden talents, says Ganesha. Follow your heart and dive into the bottomless pool of your imagination.

VIRGO
Ganesha suggests that you take a much-needed break from the daily rigmarole. Introduce an element of the exotic in order to replace all the mundane work that fills up your day. You may attend private and social get-togethers, and Ganesha advises you to mingle with other people to keep your spirits high.

LIBRA
Health is always a key issue, and today, you may have to pay some special attention to the same. It may be some elderly person in the family, or even you. Take the time to give it your full attention in order to avoid any further complications. You may do well to undergo a physical examination yourself. Remember, health is wealth.

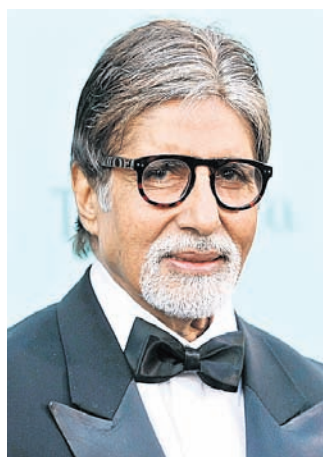
SCORPIO
The target is locked in and the arrow is shot. It is only a matter of time before Cupid celebrates and hits the bull's eye and you find yourself in the mush of things. Sentiments and romance will be the order of the day. There is a good chance that marriage proposals or new relationships will find their footing today, says Ganesha.

SAGITTARIUS
Whatever you take up today, you are on a winning spree, foresees Ganesha. A leader, you will guide and instruct your subordinates when they seek your advice. In a way, you even encourage and motivate them. All in all, you are a happy soul at the end of the day!

CAPRICORN
Your intuition will get the better of you today, bagging you respect and recognition, says Ganesha. But it's not every day that you get so lucky, so try and make the most of what's on the platter, for all you know, intuitions could have a mood swing too.

AQUARIUS
If Elvis Presley is who you dreamed of being, today may be your day! You seem to impress one and all, and even money flows in! You play smart today and everything seems to work in your favour. Take care, says Ganesha, things may not be as they seem.

PISCES
A hectic day of socialising awaits you. You will discover hidden talents and unnoticed traits about yourself. Either that, or whoever brought them to your notice was only trying to get some socialising action of their own.



Amitabh tests Covid +ve again

Mumbai: Even as Mumbai reported a spike in Covid-19 cases, mega star Amitabh Bachchan announced late Tuesday night that he had tested positive and urged "all those that have been in my vicinity and around me, please get yourself checked and tested also."

The much-loved actor has been hosting Season 14 of *Kaun Banega Crorepati*. It is to be seen if his health condition affects his appearances in the popular reality TV quiz show.

Bachchan, who will next be seen on the big screen in Ayan Mukerji's *Brahmastra - Part One: Shiva, Umchi, Goodbye* and the much-awaited *Adi Purush* with Telugu star Prabhas, had tested positive in July 2020 and isolated himself in Mumbai's Nanavati Hospital.

His son Abhishek Bachchan had also tested positive, followed by daughter-in-law Aishwarya Rai Bachchan and granddaughter Aradhya. Big B returned home after a three-week stay in hospital in early August 2020.



Warina honoured for her resilience

Her family moved from one country to another seeking a better life but finally India, a liberal and loving country, welcomed them and they made it their home, said the winner of International Icon of the Year award

Mumbai: Actress Warina Hussain was awarded an international event recently. The actress has been vocal about the humanitarian crisis in her native country Afghanistan. She was involved in representing the causes for women, who have been fighting to have a voice.

The *Loveyatri* actress moved from Afghanistan to Uzbekistan years ago due to the long-standing political turmoil in the country. After that, she migrated to India 10 years ago, and she made this country her home. She said, "I saw myself in each Afghan person clinging onto a flight for the sake of survival. My life, like theirs, is the result of migration from

a war-torn country. My family moved from country to country in search of a better life. Finally, we arrived in India, a liberal and loving country that welcomed us and we made it our home."

The actress received International Icon of the Year award for her reach and resilience. She reacted, "Who would have imagined?" Astonished and thankful! I owe it to each one of my fans, not just those in India but all over. This honour has left me incredibly humbled. I would want to express my gratitude to my admirers. This accolade of being a global icon is given in honour of all my admirers."

The actress just wrapped up the shoot of her upcoming comedy film *Dil Bill*. AGENCIES



Adieu Godard to hit theatres September 2



The Amartya Bhattacharyya directorial, premiered in Moscow, has so far bagged six prestigious awards at various int'l film festivals

Bhubaneswar: Odia feature film *Adieu Godard*, which has already been screened and appreciated at several international film festivals, will be released in theatres across the country.

After being screened in multiplexes of Bhubaneswar and Cuttack September 2, the Indo French co-production will be released in Kolkata and Mumbai the following week. It will also have limited theatrical screenings in London and digital releases across USA and Canada.

Written and directed by National Award winning film director Amartya Bhattacharyya, the film will be presented by actress Anu Choudhury for its theatrical release in India while Mumbai based Platoon Distribution is the country wide distributor for the film.

The film's cast includes Choudhury Bikas Das, Dipanwit Dashmohapatra, Sudhasri

Madhusmita, Choudhury Jayaprakash Das, Swastik Choudhury, Shankar Basu Mallick and Abhishek Giri. The music has been composed by Kisaloy Roy. Rock music sensation Rupam Islam has rendered his first Odia song in this film.

The film premiered at the Moscow International Film Festival and won six international awards at various festivals. It also won the Best Film at Kolkata International Film Festival. The film has travelled to several festivals across the globe.

"I have always been vocal about creating quality content and I am so happy to present such a film for its theatrical journey," said Anu at a presser here, Wednesday.

Amartya said, "It is always a great thing when a film gets recognised internationally. But what matters the most is how it is received by people back home. I can't thank Platoon Distribution enough for distributing an Odia film nationally."

"Our whole objective has been to make Odia films that will be celebrated nationally. Adieu Godard has been loved globally and now it's time to celebrate it in Odisha," said producer Swastik Choudhury. PNN

Rasika Dugal on reprising characters

Mumbai: The difficulty of carving an arc for a relatively known character in a new season of a web series rests more with the writers than the actors who are re-creating them, says Rasika Dugal.

She is re-creating the second season of the Netflix series *Delhi Crime*. She is currently shooting for the third season of Prime

Video show *Mirzapur*.

It is an easier task for the actor to get back into the skin of a relatively old character, she said.

"There are series like *Delhi Crime* and *Mirzapur* so it is easy to pick up the characters from season to season. When you are picking up a role from one season to another, the difficult part rests with the writers. It's difficult when the characters are already introduced and then you have to make those characters go somewhere else.

"But for actors, it's much more comfortable because after a season when you come back, you are like you know them (characters). They have only changed a little bit but we still know what they are and we understand them," Dugal said in an interview. AGENCIES



Saiyami Kher's on a roll

Mumbai: Abhishek Bachchan will be seen playing Saiyami Kher's cricket coach in R Balki's next, *Ghoomer*. This will be the second time Abhishek and Saiyami will share screen space. The two were earlier seen in the second season of the web series *Breathe 2. Not just Ghoomer*, the actress has an exciting lineup of films ahead. Latest being her upcoming film with Scam actor Pratik Gandhi.

"Saiyami and Pratik are collaborating on the project, which will be produced

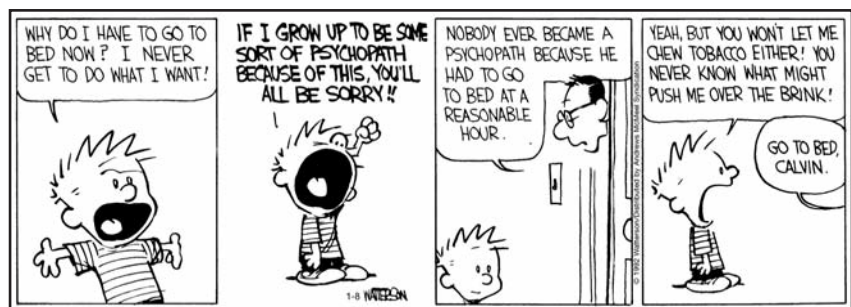
by Excel Entertainment and directed by Raees movie director Rahul Dholakia. The film titled *Agni* also stars Divyendu Sharma as one of the leads. The film is based on firefighters. While not much of the details of the project are known, the shooting already started this month. Most of the shooting will be happening in Mumbai and Delhi," says a source close to the team.

Last year both the actors collaborated for a podcast titled *Gangistan*. Saiyami will also be seen in the third instalment of *Breathe into the Shadows*. Looks like the actress has a busy year ahead. AGENCIES

PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

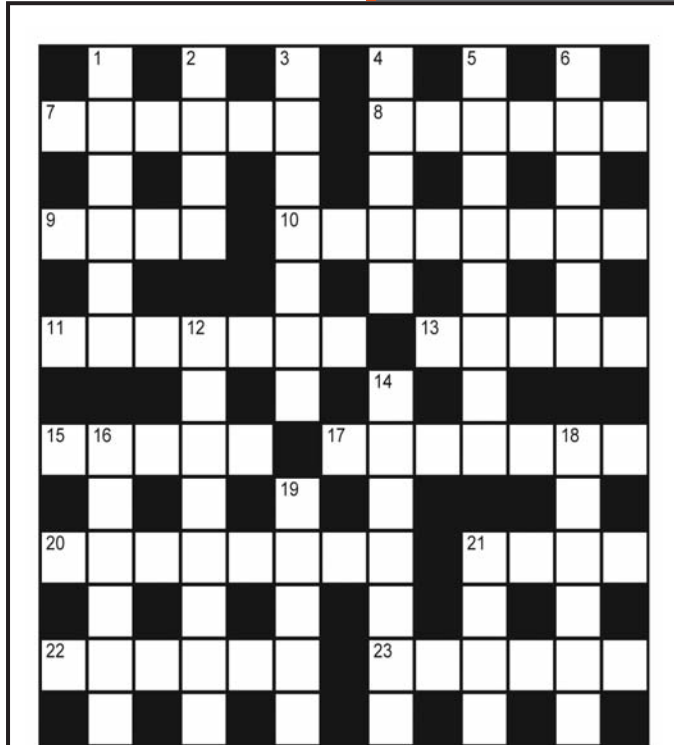


BREVITY



FUN post

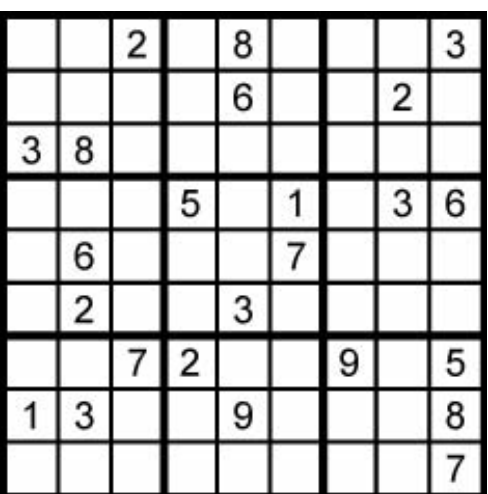
CROSSWORD



- Across**
7 Examine closely
8 Forty winks
9 Lift up
10 Indefatigable
11 Car sale part, at times (5-2)
13 Emboss
15 Stop
17 Dessert item
- Down**
20 Runway
21 Plant fiber
22 Surrender (4,2)
23 Smother
- 5 Active**
6 Two-wheeled horse-drawn covered carriage
12 Catastrophe
14 Intention
16 Draw out
18 Tea maker
19 Burst
21 Prison

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD
SUDOKU



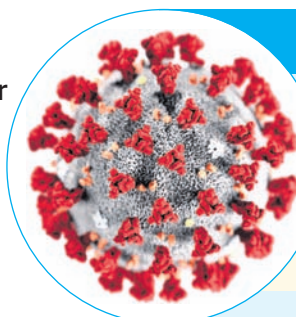
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown



TRIBUTES TO MARTYRS

Dignitaries, including I&PR Minister Pradipt Amat and Law Minister Jagannath Saraka, inaugurate an event to pay tributes to the martyrs of Papadahandi massacre, at Soochana Bhawan in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	60,28,02,806	57,76,32,889	64,77,191
India	4,43,68,195	4,37,44,301	5,27,452
Odisha	13,25,766	13,14,752	9,167

Min launches 'Azadi Quest' mobile games

The mobile games series developed by Zynga India, in collaboration with Publications Division and ICHR, will highlight the contribution of unsung heroes of freedom struggle

PNN & AGENCIES

New Delhi, August 24: Information and Broadcasting (I&B) Minister Anurag Thakur Wednesday launched 'Azadi Quest', a series of online educational mobile games that will highlight the contribution of unsung heroes of the freedom struggle.

The 'Azadi Quest' and 'Heroes of Bharat' mobile games have been developed by Zynga India, in collaboration with Publications Division and Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR).

"These games are an effort to tap into the huge market of online gamers and to educate them through games. Various arms of Government of India have collected information about unsung freedom fighters from the corners of the country," Thakur said at the launch of the games.

He said the gaming sector has grown by 28 per cent in 2021 alone,



I&B Minister Anurag Thakur along with other dignitaries launches 'Azadi Quest'

while the number of online gamers is expected to touch 45 crore by 2023. I&B Secretary Apurva Chandra said the idea about developing the games was conceived during a meeting Thakur had with representatives of Zynga India on the sidelines of the Dubai Expo earlier this year.

He said I&B Joint Secretary Vikram Sahay worked closely with

Zynga, Publications Division and ICHR for six months in developing the games.

The Publications Division also signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Zynga India to develop a series of games under the ongoing 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav'.

Zynga India Country Head Kishore Kichli said the initiative

The gaming sector has grown by 28% in 2021 alone, while the number of online gamers is expected to touch 45 crore by 2023

ANURAG THAKUR | I&B MINISTER

was designed to engage players of all ages while harnessing the power of interactive entertainment as a teaching experience about this important era.

The first two games in the series 'Azadi Quest' tell the story of India's freedom struggle, highlighting key milestones and heroes, interwoven with fun game play.

'Heroes of Bharat' is designed as a quiz game to test the knowledge of the players about the heroes of India's Independence through 750 questions spread across 75 levels and also tell them about the lesser known heroes through 75 'Azadi Veer' cards which can be shared across social media platforms.



An artisan arranges clay idols of Lord Ganesh in Old Town area of Bhubaneswar, Wednesday, ahead of Ganesh Chaturthi

Prakruti files defamation suit EOW nabs realtor for ₹20 crore fraud

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, August 24: Actress Prakruti Mishra Wednesday filed a defamation suit in the sessions court here of Rs 5.10 crore against the actor Babushaan Mohanty's wife Trupti Satapathy and her father.

She had also moved the Orissa High Court Tuesday seeking 'justice' in the case pertaining to an assault on her. The case pertains to actor Tanmay (Babushaan) Mohanty's wife Trupti Satapathy, who allegedly attacked Prakruti in full public view July 23 in Bhubaneswar.

Prakruti's parents, music director Manmath Mishra and artiste Krushnapriya Mishra, had filed a complaint against Trupti and her father with the Kharavel Nagar po-

lice July 23 evening alleging assault on their daughter.

Speaking to the media outside the court Tuesday, Prakruti said, "Whatever has happened to me is in public and the whole country saw that. I have full faith in the judiciary that I will get justice."

Prakruti's lawyer Byomakesh Tripathy said that no action has been taken by Kharavel Nagar police though a month has passed since she was attacked.

Earlier, amidst the ongoing public controversy that involved the actress, Odia film star Babushaan and the latter's wife Trupti, the actress had unveiled a poster for a film titled 'Draupadi'. The poster appears to be hinting towards a tale of victimhood with visible scars on her face.

Prakruti got into a controversy for allegedly being in a relationship with Babushaan. A video had gone viral in which Trupti was seen aggressively dealing with Prakruti after finding her in a car with her husband, Prakruti's co-star in a film.

The incident was reportedly witnessed in Satya Nagar area of Bhubaneswar. The people present there made the video viral.

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, August 24: The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of the Odisha Police Wednesday arrested the managing director (MD) of a real estate company on charges of duping investors of around Rs 20 crore.

M/s Odysa Home and Commercials Private Limited MD Aurobinda Santara has been taken into custody on the basis of a case (14/2022) registered against him under Sections 406, 420, 467, 468, 471 and 120B of the IPC and 6 of the OPID Act, 2011 following the complaint of Ranjan Kumar Mohapatra, one of the duped investors, said an EOW official.

According to EOW sources,

M/s Odysa Home and Commercials Private Limited had collected around Rs 20 crore from 42 persons on the promise of providing them affordable flats at Ganapati Homes between 2013 and 2016

- However, it neither gave them the flats, nor returned their deposits
- It was also found that the project— Ganapati Homes—is not registered with RERA

Mohapatra had booked a 3BHK flat at Ganapati Homes, a project of M/s Odysa Home and Commercials Private Limited in Sampur Mouza near Kalinga Studio here, at a consideration price of Rs 65 lakh in 2016.

"On January 22, 2016, an agreement was executed between the buyer and seller (M/s Odysa Home & Commercials Pvt. Ltd. represented through its director Saroj Kumar Panda). As per the terms of the agreement, the company was supposed to handover the flat to the buyer by the end of June 2018," said the official, adding that the company, however, did not turn up.

Left with no option, Mohapatra approached the EOW.

During investigation, the EOW claimed to have found that the company had collected around Rs 20 crore from 42 persons on the promise of providing them affordable flats at Ganapati Homes between 2013 and 2016. However, it neither gave them the flats, nor returned their deposits. It was also found that the project— Ganapati Homes—is not registered with RERA, said the official.

APARTMENT OWNERSHIP CASE

HC asks govt to take steps in 4 weeks

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, August 24: In a relief to apartment owners, the Orissa High Court Wednesday directed the state government to amend the existing laws so as to ensure formation of apartment owners' association within four weeks.

Hearing a PIL filed by activist Bimalendu Pradhan in 2019, a division bench of Chief Justice S Muralidhar posted the hearing to September 27.

According to sources, even after sale of the flats, the ownership of the common areas in the apartments remains with the real estate firms. As a result, the flat owners were unable to use the common areas.



Puri MLA Jayanta Sarangi, along with former MP Prasanna Patasani, felicitates an artiste during an event organised by 'Utkala Lokakala o Loka Sanskruti Mahasangha' at Annapurna Theatre in Puri, Wednesday

Ghatikia school flouted child rights: Parents to OSCPCR

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, August 24: A couple of days after 34 students were allegedly detained for about five hours by a private school in Ghatikia area on city outskirts over 'non-payment of fees', irate parents Wednesday wrote a letter to Odisha State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (OSCPCR) demanding action against the cruelty meted out to the innocent kids and their illegal confinement.

In the letter to OSCPCR chairperson Sandhyabati Pradhan, All India Parents Federation, Odisha state committee president Pradipta

S&ME dept orders probe

The School and Mass Education (S&ME) department Wednesday directed the district education officer (DEO) of Khurda to conduct an enquiry into detention of children for about five hours in a private school at Ghatikia and furnish a report immediately for further action.

Nayak said that the school had violated the child rights. He alleged that the school authorities had confined the children in the library room for about five hours and pressured the parents to deposit the fees immediately. He added that during confinement fans in the classroom

were switched off and drinking water was also not provided to the children. The children were not even allowed to go to urinal.

Nayak added that school had violated the rights to protection, food, affection, free movement under UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act, Juvenile Justice Act and National Child Policy.

"We, therefore, humbly prayed before the commission to initiate action against the cruelty and illegal confinement of innocent children for five hours by the school authority," he said.

Fisherfolk at sea as conservationist tag eludes them

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Puri, August 24: "We go to sea to feed our families. But the mafia use explosives to catch huge quantities of fish at one go. Yet, the police come only after people like us," laments a fisherman from Batighar village in Kendrapara as he tries to explain how the traditional fishing community is at a loss though it hardly overexploits the resources at its disposal.

For years, conservationists have been exploring ways to increase the fish population along Odisha's coast, besides protecting the breeding grounds of Olive Ridley turtles, a species recognised as vulnerable by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List.

Traditional fisherfolk, who are key to such efforts, have mostly welcomed them, despite incurring heavy losses. For example, Gahirmatha coast in Kendrapara district has a blanket ban on fishing in place as it is the largest nesting spot of the Olive Ridges.

Advocate General informed the HC that Apartment Ownership Rule-2021 has been amended and will be implemented after Law department's approval.

This affects the livelihood of tens of thousands of fisherfolk, who have to fall back on government aid for sustenance. "The incentive is meagre. Around 1,500 families get Rs 7,500 per month when the ban is in place," said Odisha Traditional Fishermen Union secretary Kanda Alaya.



Fisherfolk claim themselves to be easy targets, Gahirmatha Marine Wildlife Sanctuary Forest Range Officer Debasish Bhoi thinks otherwise. While denying allegations, he says that the department arrests those and seizes their vessels and trawlers, whenever there is an alert about illegal fishing in prohibited areas.

Bhoi cites an incident, wherein 19 fisherman were arrested in January 2020 for illegal fishing in Gahirmatha.

Forget incentives, fishing communities are denied even their rights to access coastal produce in the name of conservation. "The laws are hardly being translated in the true spirit," says Geetanjali Panda, a lecturer in Anthropology at the Dharanidhar Autonomous College, Keonjhar.



She notes how the Tourism department has curbed traditional fishing rights along the coasts of Gopalpur, Puri and Satapada, besides Chilika Lake.



Under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, the Ministry of Environment and Forests first issued the notification in 1991 for the regulation of activities in coastal areas. It said the coastal zone encompassed all that land with which the sea had direct contact and those portions of land on which the sea had an influence indirectly through tidal action. It is aimed at conserving the rich and diverse coastal biodiversity.

However, Kohli thinks that it does not serve its purpose fully. "The latest notification gave an upper hand to real estate developers, besides promoting tourism and industry on a mass scale. With it, the local subsistence economy of fishing hamlets went for a toss," she tells.

On condition of anonymity, a government official explains how the 2018 notification has brought down the regulation area to a mere 50m from the hazard line, which will significantly damage the fragile coastal ecology.

"Permission has been given in the notification to reclaim land for commercial activities, extract sand dunes and groundwater within 200m to 500m from the high tide line. Such laws only serve to quicken the pace of displacement of local communities," he warns.

BMC's nod for Ganesh Chaturthi celebrations sans restrictions

Though the Covid restrictions have been lifted, BMC Commissioner Vijay Amruta Kulange appealed to the people to take precautionary measures such as use of masks and sanitisers



to take precautionary measures such as use of masks and sanitisers.

Kulange further mentioned that two artificial ponds will be set up for immersion of idols in order to prevent pollution of rivers and water sources. The step has been taken to prevent pollution of rivers and water sources with petroleum-based colours and polythene and plastic materials that are used for transport of puja materials.

"More than 50 pandals will be set up for Ganesh Puja in Bhubaneswar this year. All idols of Lord Ganesh across the city will be immersed in these two temporary ponds of Kuakhai and Daya river," he said. It can be mentioned that Ganesh Chaturthi will be observed August

31 across the country. The festival marks the birth anniversary of Lord Ganesh, son of Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati. Ganesh Chaturthi (or Ganeshotsav) is a 10-day-long festival that culminates on Anant Chaturdashi. The last day is popularly celebrated as Ganesh Visarjan day.

A special attraction this time will be a 50-ft idol which is being prepared to be worshipped at Nayapalli. The organisers are also planning a 50-kg ladoo to be offered to Lord Ganesh. "Artists from Kolkata and Mumbai have been working for the past three months in building the huge Ganesh idol for this year's celebrations," said a puja organiser.

Another high-rise Ganesh idol is reportedly being prepared at Badagada, reports said adding that around 51-ft Ganesh idol with 8-ft Mushak (mouse) will be worshipped at the pandal where a 50 kg ladoo will be offered to the Lord.

Similarly, a 46-ft Ganesh is reportedly being erected at Saheed Nagar. Here also, a 50-kg ladoo will be offered to the Lord.

PATH SATYAGRAH



Members of Subhas Sangathan staged 'path satyagrah' during their protest against the poor condition of roads at Manglabag Ring Road in Cuttack, Wednesday

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Aug 24: Following a two year hiatus owing to Covid pandemic, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) Wednesday gave a go-ahead for celebration of Ganesh Chaturthi without any restrictions but advised denizens to follow all protocols.

Speaking to media, BMC Commissioner Vijay Amruta Kulange said there will be no restriction on the devotees to visit pandals in the state Capital for darshan this year.

Though the Covid restrictions have been lifted, he appealed to the people

ASO written test to be held Aug 27

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, August 24: The Odisha Public Service Commission Wednesday informed that examination for the post of assistant section officer (ASO), which was postponed earlier in view of the dislocation caused by heavy rainfall and flood, will be conducted August 27 as per the schedule and there will be no further change in the exam centre.

The commission August 20 announced the new date after postponing the written exam, which was originally scheduled to be held

August 21.

On the other hand, a total of 139 educational institutions in Khurda district will remain closed August 27 in view of the scheduled ASO exam. All these institutions have been designated as ASO exam centre. A total of 796 (265 women) Group-B posts in the Odisha Secretariat Service will be filled through the recruitment drive.

The ASO will draw a monthly salary in the scale of pay of Rs 35,400 in Level 9, Cell 1 as per the Pay Matrix provided under Rule-3 of ORSP Rules, 2017 with usual Dearness and other Allowances.

AIIMS Bhub starts special hand clinic



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, August 24: In a bid to provide comprehensive care for different hand related issues, a first-of-its-kind special hand clinic has started functioning at the Department of Burns and Plastic Surgery in All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) Bhubaneswar. The clinic started in collaboration with the Orthopaedic and PMR department and will function every Tuesday from 2:30pm to 4:30pm at the Plastic Surgery OPD complex.

AIIMS Executive Director, Ashutosh Biswas, while congratulating the doctors for their efforts to start the clinic said, "the first-of-its-kind special hand clinic at AIIMS will certainly help people from all age groups to get a complete care like tendon and nerve injuries, fractures, dislocations and strains, amputations, carpal tunnel syn-

drome, rheumatoid arthritis and other arthritic conditions with many other hand problems." AIIMS Bhubaneswar is always committed to serve people through its innovative approach, added Biswas. AIIMS Bhubaneswar Medical Superintendent SN Mohanty, gracing the occasion, expressed his happiness over the opening of such a hand clinic. Burns & Plastic Surgery Department HoD Sanjay Giri, Orthopaedic Department HoD Bishnu Patro and PMR HoD Jagannath Sahoo were also present on the occasion.

Burns & Plastic Surgery Associate Santanu Suba will be in-charge of the clinic. The clinic will cover a broad spectrum of conditions including tendonitis, hand contractures, soft tissue injuries, burns, diabetes, anomalies present at birth, brachial plexus injury, post radiation and post infected lymphedema, informed Suba.

German Consulate discusses potential collaboration with BSCL

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Aug 24: German Consulate General, Manfred Auster, met Sanjay Kumar Singh, Chairman & Managing Director of Bhubaneswar Smart City Limited (BSCL), Wednesday and discussed the potential collaboration and partnership for future projects of the smart city.

During the meeting, Manfred praised the development and the disaster management of Odisha and expressed that disaster management and the development of sports in Odisha are extremely praiseworthy. He further stated that Germany is eager to fortify its strong commercial ties with Odisha, which can play a vital role in the expansion of knowledge and collaboration between Germany and Odisha.

"The state government's numerous welfare measures have been extremely commendable. We have absolute confidence in Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik's ability to lead. The state government's initiative of developing and promoting hockey across Odisha and India has set an example for the others," Manfred said.

Meanwhile, BSCL Chairman, Sanjay Kumar Singh solicited the cooperation of the government of Germany in Odisha and described the state's industrial policy as attractive for investors.

OUAT'S 61ST FOUNDATION DAY

Dean hails relentless efforts of teachers & researchers

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, August 24: The 61st Foundation Day of the Odisha University of Agriculture and Technology (OUAT) was celebrated Wednesday in the MS Swaminathan conference hall of the institute.

The university completed 60 years since its establishment on August 24, 1962. To mark the occasion, a mega event was organized under the chairmanship of Susen Kumar Panda, Dean, College of Veterinary Science.

Panda recalled the uninterrupted and continuing efforts of teachers, research and extension scientists of the university even during the Covid pandemic to support the agriculture development activities and farming community of the state in particular.

"Our scientific support and extended outreach using physical and digital platforms have made our contribution more prominent in

achieving agriculture development and farmers income in the state. I should not leave this occasion without appreciating the scientists, teachers and students for their successful contributions, awards and recognitions received at various levels in the country," he said.

Moreover, the contribution of this university in developing a remarkable number of crop varieties, types in poultry birds, small farm implements and many other useful technologies will definitely help the state in marching ahead with respect to agricultural development, he added.

Prasanjit Mishra, Dean, Extension Education highlighted the prominent contribution of the university in accelerating the growth of agriculture and allied sector in the state.

Kedareswar Pradhan, Dean, College of Agriculture, underlined the academic excellence of the university.



CONTINUED FROM P1

Open vendetta...

The ruling 'Mahagathbandhan' meanwhile cried foul over the raids at a number of premises owned by leaders of the RJD, the largest constituent of the seven-party coalition. Former Chief Minister Rabri Devi told reporters, "The people are watching and they can understand what is behind these raids."

Tejashwi meanwhile called the Enforcement Directorate (ED), the CBI and the Income Tax (IT) department the 'three jamaai' (sons-in-law), that which the BJP sent to states where it was not in power. He accused the BJP of trying to 'break' CM Kumar's party in a bid to 'wipe out socialist ideology'. "My father Lalu Prasad, mother Rabri Devi, my sisters and I are all paying the price for our commitment to socialism.

The CM and I have the same ideology. You (BJP) cannot reap what we socialists have sown," said Tejashwi.

An unpaid loan...

According to the terms of the loan agreement, VCPL could convert the debt into 99.9 per cent of the shares in RRRP 'at any time during the tenure of the loan or thereafter without requiring any further act or deed on the part of the lender'.

AMG Media Networks Ltd, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Adani Enterprises, bought Tuesday 100 per cent of the equity stakes in VCPL for Rs 113.74 crore. It then converted the warrants into equity, getting a 29.18 per cent stake in NDTV. Radhika and Pranoy Roy continue to hold a 32.26 per cent stake in NDTV.

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AFFIDAVIT

"I, Chandan Kumar Sahoo, S/o- Pitambar Sahu, At/PO/PS-Daringbadi, Odisha-762104 have changed my name to Cchandn Sahu for my future needful purpose, sworn in front of Notary P.C. PATNAIK, Affidavit No-A3368".

By virtue of an affidavit sworn before the Executive Magistrate, Bhawanipatna, I Jayanti Sahu, W/o. Abhiram Sahu, R/o. Sahupada, PO-Dhamanpur, Dist-Kalahandi declare that my name and date of birth was wrongly entered in my passport bearing no. H9309318 as Sanjukta Sahu and DOB as 22.7.1965 instead of Jayanti Sahu, DOB 11.7.1965. That Jayanti Sahu and Sanjukta Sahu is the one and same person.

ICMR study on impact of snakebites in Odisha, 12 other states

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) task force has started a first-of-its-kind study on the incidence, mortality, morbidity and socio-economic burden of snakebite in 13 states including Odisha.

The other states are: Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Uttarakhand, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Tripura.

An article on the study 'ICMR task force project, survey of the incidence, mortality, morbidity and socio-economic burden of snakebite in India: A study protocol' was published in the international research journal Plos One August 22.

While the national principal investigator for the ICMR study is Jaideep C Menon from Preventive Cardiology and Population Health Sciences, Amrita Institute of Medical Sciences and Research Centre, Kochi, while Omesh Bharti, state Epidemiologist with Department of Health and Family Welfare, Himachal Pradesh, is the national Principal Co-Investigator. "This study will generate real



data on snakebite incidence, mortality, morbidity and socio-economic burden of snakebite for the first time in the country to help the decision makers in policy framing to prevent and control snakebite in India. The country still doesn't know the real snakebite burden and is hence groping in the dark when it comes to policy," Bharti told IANS Tuesday.

He said the survey is in progress and it takes into consideration all the geographical areas like hilly, plains, marshy, desert and coastal. "It is the first such study designed for the survey of snakebite inci-

dence in South East Asia. Sri Lanka has done it, but they covered a population of 1 per cent only, whereas our study would cover a population of 6.12 per cent," explained Bharti.

He said the snakebite incidence study is being carried out in 31 districts in six geographical zones in the country, including West, Central, South, East, North and North-East, in 13 states. Three districts of Himachal - Kangra, Chamba and Una - are also included in it.

According to the article on 'study protocol' to know snakebite inci-

VITAL STATS

HALF OF THE GLOBAL DEATHS DUE TO VENOMOUS SNAKEBITES, ESTIMATED AT 1 LAKH PER YEAR, OCCUR IN INDIA

THE ONLY REPRESENTATIVE DATA ON SNAKEBITE AVAILABLE FROM INDIA IS THE MORTALITY DATA FROM THE REGISTRAR GENERAL OF INDIA

GLOBAL ESTIMATES OF SNAKEBITE RANGE FROM 4.5 MILLION TO 5.4 MILLION BITES ANNUALLY WITH AN ESTIMATED TWO MILLION OF THEM IN INDIA

ence, snakebite is possibly the most neglected of the NTDs (neglected tropical diseases).

Half of the global deaths due to venomous snakebites, estimated at 1 lakh per year, occur in India. The only representative data on snakebite available from India is the mortality data from the Registrar General of India - Million Death Study and another study

on mortality from Bihar. The incidence data on snakebite is available for two districts of West Bengal.

It was only in 2017 that snakebite was added back onto the World Health Organization (WHO) list of NTDs, after being struck off the list in 2013.

Geographically, the greatest impact of snakebite is in the tropical and subtropical regions, with the highest occurrence in India.

Global estimates of snakebite range from 4.5 million to 5.4 million bites annually with an estimated two million of them in India with significant physical, mental and socioeconomic consequences.

The ICMR's study protocol for snakebite incidence and burden mentions that the hospital-based data on snakebite admissions and use of anti-snake venom are gross underestimates as most snakebite victims in rural India depend more on alternate treatment methods which do not get represented in national registries.

The ICMR study is a multi-centric one to determine the incidence, morbidity, mortality and economic burden of snakebites

in India covering all five geographical zones of the country.

"The protocol involves community-level surveillance for snakebite covering 31 districts in 13 states of India in order to obtain annual incidence of snakebites from the community. The front-line health workers will be trained to gather information on new cases of snakebite over the study period of one year; from wards (smallest administrative subunit of a village or town) that they represent in the study districts.

"Dedicated field officers would collect data on snakebites, victim characteristics, outcomes, utilization of health facilities on a questionnaire sheet designed for this purpose. The study duration is for 18 months from April 2022 to October 2023," added Bharti.

As per a study, the number of deaths due to venomous snakebite in India is 46,900 per year.

This is considerably high, compared to only 10-12 deaths per year, due to venomous snakebite in the US and Australia, this despite the fact that less populous Australia has probably more venomous species.

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Sitalapalli wagon factory in cold storage

Two other major railway projects for construction of Gopalpur-Rayagada and Rairakhole-Gopalpur tracks have also been pushed to backburner

POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, August 24: The Ministry of Railways had in 2011-12 decided to set up a wagon factory at Sitalapalli in Gopalpur constituency of Ganjam district. However, the NDA government later dropped the project. Years later, the project was again taken for consideration without any progress.

Besides, two major railway projects -- Gopalpur-Rayagada and Rairakhole-Gopalpur -- in the district have been pushed to backburner after survey. It is all due to apathy of the railways, it was alleged.

In 2011-12, the then Union Railway Minister Mamata Banerjee had announced the wagon factory at Sitalapalli. The project was supposed to be implemented in public-private-partnership (PPP) mode. It was given approval in the year 2013.

Later, it was then stated by the government that the project would be set up in Kalahandi. However, the project faced land hurdle there as necessary land was not available for the project. At this time, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik intervened and over 100 acre of land was handed over to the East Coast Railway (ECOR).

In the first term of the NDA government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, ₹2 crore had been sanctioned for the project.

The Odisha government had identified 101.6 acres of land near



REPRESENTATIVE PHOTO

RAIL(WAY)WARD PROJECT

The Odisha government had identified 101.6 acres of land near Jagannathpur railway station, 20 kilometre away from Berhampur

No ground work was undertaken despite several letters from Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik to the successive railway ministers since then

In 2021, a top ECoR official visited Sitalapalli and said that the wagon factory will be constructed on PPP mode, but no progress has been made on the project as yet

Jagannathpur railway station, 20 kilometre away from Berhampur. But the railways had dropped the project in 2018 after sanctioning token money of ₹1,000 in the Railway Budget till 2016.

No ground work was undertaken despite several letters from Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik to the successive railway ministers since then. In 2017, former Minister of State for Railways Rajen Gohain had replied to the Chief Minister citing difficulties in setting up the

factory stating that the demand for wagons may not rise till 2024. As the proposed wagon unit was dropped from the list of new projects, the ECoR in a communication May 11, 2021 had asked to cancel the land allotment.

After Ashwini Vaishnav from Odisha was made Union Railway Minister, the issue of the wagon factory was raised by locals.

September 22, 2021, a top official of the East Coast Railway visited Sitalapalli and said that the wagon

factory will be implemented on PPP mode. He said that the allotted land will be taken over.

However, a year has passed since this announcement, but there has been no progress in the much-awaited project, locals lamented.

Various quarters observed that if wagon factory is executed in the district, it would create a big scope for employment for the locals. They have demanded for expediting steps for the project.

Similarly, two other railway projects -- Gopalpur-Rayagada and Rairakhole-Gopalpur -- have been given short shrift by the Railway ministry.

A survey had been conducted in 2009 for the new railway track for Gopalpur-Rayagada. About 12 years have passed, but neither the UPA government nor the NDA government made any budgetary provision for the project.

Besides, a drone survey was conducted for the Rairakhole-Gopalpur railway project. But it has failed to make any progress after that, locals raved.

The ruling BJD had raised the issue of three projects at the meeting of its extended executive body at Bhanjanagar September 15, 2021.

A year has passed since the BJD meeting, but the party MPs are not raising the issue in the Parliament. Various outfits have demanded that the state government should take up the issue with the NDA government.

Jumbo attacks claim 2 in Mayurbhanj dist

40 girls fall sick; admitted to hosp

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, August 24: As many as 40 female hostel inmates of a state-run high school fell sick after they experienced head reeling and loose motion on their hostel premises at Raisuan under Telkoi block in Keonjhar district, Tuesday night.

The school having facilities for co-education is run by the state tribal welfare department. After the girls, one after another, experienced head reeling and loose motion and fell sick, Tuesday night the school authorities immediately rushed them to the Telkoi health centre where their health conditions improved after treatment. Some of them were also discharged for their hostel after recovery, Wednesday. A medical team Wednesday visited the spot and examined the health conditions of the rest of the girls. The school has 330 students on its roll while 100 girls study in the school residing in its hostel. However, the actual reason behind their illness is yet to be ascertained.

When contacted, district welfare officer (DWO) Pradyumna Das said that a medical team and other officials have rushed to the spot.



REPRESENTATIVE PHOTO

POST NEWS NETWORK

Morada, August 24: Two people were killed in separate incidents of elephant attack under this block in Mayurbhanj district, forest officials said Wednesday.

In the first incident, a woman Srimati Hansdah, 40, was killed in her sleep as a herd of four jumbos strayed into Dangarbila village in the block and trampled her to death, late Tuesday night. On being informed, forest officials and Morada police rushed to the spot and started an investigation after sending the body for post-mortem to PRM Medical College and Hospital in Baripada.

In the second incident, a man was killed after elephants attacked him when he had been to Asanbani jungle under Betanoti forest range in the block with some of his friends Tuesday

evening. The deceased was identified as Dhananjaya Hansdah of Sangadihi village of Durgapur panchayat. His friends ran back to the safety but he failed to return. Family members and villagers searched for him frantically through the night but in vain.

They again searched for him Wednesday morning and recovered his body in the jungle. On being informed, forest officials rushed to the spot and started a probe. However, tension prevailed after villagers confronted them over the death and repeated elephant attacks in their area.

They alleged the forest officials of doing nothing to save them from elephant menace and demanded compensation for the bereaved family members. Villagers claimed that Dhananjaya died after being attacked by two elephants.

YouTube held for keeping reptiles

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Sambalpur, August 24: The state Forest department officials have arrested a 31-year-old YouTuber in Karanjula village of Sambalpur district for illegally possessing six snakes, including cobras and four chameleons, an official said Wednesday.

The accused was identified as Ramchandra Rana from the Redakhole area of the western Odisha district. He used to make videos with the snakes, chameleons and other reptiles and wild animals to attract viewers. He has more than one lakh subscribers on his YouTube channel named Ramchandra Rana.

Speaking to the mediapersons, Rana confessed to his crime and said he caught these species from different places during this rainy season. Rana claimed that he used to release such species after making a few videos for his YouTube channel. However, he denied his involvement in the wild animal trade racket.

After getting information, the forest officials rescued the snakes and chameleons and arrested the youth.

"We have arrested the youth, who has a YouTube channel with over 1 lakh subscribers. He took us to his house, where we rescued six snakes including three cobras and four chameleons," said assistant conservator of forest Manu Ashok Bhat.

EAST COAST RAILWAY

File No. DRM/Engg/KUR/22-23/E-Tender/63 Dt. 23.08.2022

(1) Tender No. etender-Estate-KUR-162-2022, Dtd. 08.08.2022

DESCRIPTION : CONSULTANCY SERVICE FOR CONCEPTUALIZATION, DESIGNING, DEVELOPING AND PLANNING OF TOTAL FIRE FIGHTING SYSTEM FOR EAST COAST RAILWAY HEAD QUARTER BUILDING (RAIL SADA) AND CENTRAL HOSPITAL AT BHUBANESWAR.

Approx. Cost of the Work (₹) : 3.50 Lakhs, EMD (₹) : 7,000.00, Completion Period : 03 (Three) Months.

(2) Tender No. etender-South-KUR-161-2022, Dtd. 08.08.2022

DESCRIPTION : PROPOSED REPAIRS TO CEISS, TROLLEY REFUGES, TOE WALL, STONE PITCHING ETC. FOR STRENGTHENING OF EMBANKMENT BETWEEN BRAHMACHARIPATNA SECTION UNDER SENIOR SECTION ENGINEER (WORKS) / PALASA OF KHURDA ROAD DIVISION.

Approx. Cost of the Work (₹) : 199.41 Lakhs, EMD (₹) : 2,49,700.00, Completion Period : 09 (Nine) Months.

Tender Closing Date and Time : At 1500 Hrs. of 30.08.2022 (For both the Tenders).

No manual offers sent by Post / Courier/ Fax or in person shall be accepted against such e-tenders even if these are submitted on firm's letter head and received in time. All such manual offers shall be considered invalid and shall be rejected summarily without any consideration. Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-Tender is available in website : <https://www.ireps.gov.in>

Note : The prospective tenderers are advised to visit the website 10 (Ten) days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes / corrigendum issued for this tender.

Divisional Railway Manager (Engg.) PR-417/N/22-23 Khurda Road

EAST COAST RAILWAY

Tender Notice No. 20/ET/SP/ENGG/2022-23, Dt. 18.08.2022

1e-Tender Notice No. 06-eT-DENS-SBP-22

NAME OF WORK : MAJOR UPGRADEMENT OF TITLAGARH STATION IN TITLAGARH - THERUBALI SECTION OF SAMBALPUR DIVISION.

Approximate Cost of the work (₹) : ₹ 3,22,26,192.21, EMD (₹) : 3,11,200/-

2e-Tender Notice No. 07-eT-DENS-SBP-22

NAME OF WORK : MAJOR UPGRADEMENT OF BHAWANIPATNA STATION IN LANJIGARH - JUNAGARH SECTION OF SAMBALPUR DIVISION.

Approximate Cost of the work (₹) : ₹ 3,03,52,167.72, EMD (₹) : 3,01,800/-

3e-Tender Notice No. 08-eT-DENS-SBP-22

NAME OF WORK : MAJOR UPGRADEMENT OF KESINGA STATION IN TITLAGARH - THERUBALI SECTION OF SAMBALPUR DIVISION.

Approximate Cost of the work (₹) : ₹ 2,04,89,785.83, EMD (₹) : 2,52,500/-

4e-Tender Notice No. 22-eT-DENW-SBP-22

NAME OF WORK : MAJOR UPGRADEMENT OF KANTABANJI STATION OF SAMBALPUR DIVISION.

Approximate Cost of the work (₹) : ₹ 3,19,53,781.98, EMD (₹) : 3,09,800/-

Completion Period of the work : 04 (Four) Months (For All Tenders)

Date and time of closing of tender : At 1500 hrs. of 12.09.2022 (For all tenders)

No manual offers sent by Post/Courier/ Fax or in person shall be accepted against such e-tenders even if these are submitted on firm's letter head and received in time. All such manual offers shall be considered invalid and shall be rejected summarily without any consideration. Complete information including e-tender documents is available in website <http://www.ireps.gov.in>

Divisional Railway Manager(Engg.) PR-410/N/22-23 Sambalpur

RESIGNED TO FATE



OP PHOTO

A week after the embankment of Kani river breached at Brahmacharipatna village under Dasarathpur block of Jajpur, the flood-affected continue to live in makeshift camps on the Kamalpur river embankment road owing to delay in repair works

MCL for quality coal production

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, August 24: Mahanadi Coalfields Ltd (MCL) held its coordination meeting to ensure quality of coal production. The meeting was presided over by General Manager (Quality Control) RK Raju here, Tuesday. The meeting was attended by managers from MCL's coal mine areas.

At the meeting, officials discussed how to ensure quality coal production, export of coal with 100 percent size and debit and credit notes for consumers.



Some officials were feted for ensuring quality coal production on the occasion.

Manager (Quality Control) NK Parasar proposed the vote of thanks. Notably, MCL was awarded by the Coal Ministry in 2021-22 for quality coal production.

MCL holds public hearing for Balaram coal mines expansion

POST NEWS NETWORK



POST NEWS NETWORK

Talcher, August 24: A public hearing camp on increasing the production capacity of Balaram coal mines from 8MT to 15MT. They also raised demands like development of the village ponds, road, lighting and power supply, drinking water supply and free health camps in their areas.

MCL's Hingula area general manager Arun Kumar Swarnakar said that their demand will be resolved after due consultation with the administration and public representatives. Angul's ADM (revenue) Santosh Kumar Pradhan, SPCB's regional officer Anup Kumar Mallick, Talcher sub-collector Biswaranjan Rath, special land acquisition officers of Angul and MCL, Talcher tehsildar Mammath Nayak, SPCB and MCL officials were present.

The villagers gave their consent on increasing the production capacity of Balaram coal mines from 8MT to 15MT. They also raised demands like development of the village ponds, road, lighting and power supply, drinking water supply and free health camps in their areas.

MCL's Hingula area general manager Arun Kumar Swarnakar said that their demand will be resolved after due consultation with the administration and public representatives. Angul's ADM (revenue) Santosh Kumar Pradhan, SPCB's regional officer Anup Kumar Mallick, Talcher sub-collector Biswaranjan Rath, special land acquisition officers of Angul and MCL, Talcher tehsildar Mammath Nayak, SPCB and MCL officials were present.

Stone mafia strips reserve forest of trees for mining

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kuanmunda, August 24: Stone mafia has felled a large number of valuable trees on the hills of Kudabeda reserve forest under Biramitrapur forest range in Sundargarh district to make space for mining. This has caused resentment among locals.

On being informed, Forest officials raided the area, but stone mafia had managed to escape. They seized two excavators.

People of nearby villages like Jhitiara, Lase, Kumjharia and Pakerlangar alleged that the Forest department has adopted a soft attitude towards the stone mafia who has been on a plundering spree. They said that earlier, the stone mafia grabbed a patch of government land in the area and was planning to mine stones. As locals opposed it, the latter abandoned the area, they said.

Hundreds of people have submitted a memorandum to the Kuanmunda tehsildar Tuesday, seeking to know why no action was taken against the stone mafia. For lack of action, morale of mafia is high and they are setting sight on the hills to mine stone at the cost of greenery, said zilla parishad member Rajendra Kujur.

Ambulance access out of bounds for 5 Koraput villages

POST NEWS NETWORK

Dasmantapur, August 24: A road connecting Paika Phulabada Sadar panchayat to Jhoparapadar under Dasmantapur block in Koraput district has been in bad shape for over years. In the monsoon, its condition has worsened, giving nightmarish experience to locals and commuters.

In emergency cases, ambulance service has become a dream for the people of five villages, who have been reeling under commuting

woes for years.

Reports said, Jhoparapadar is seven kilometre away from Phulabada Chhak. People of the five villages - Maliguda, Salaguda, Tentuliguda and Madhu Bisali depend on the road on a daily basis.

"Our misery compounds during monsoon as the road turns muddy and slippery. If a patient or pregnant woman needs emergency medical help, ambulance fails to get access to our villages due to bad road condition. In that case, we have to carry patients on cots up to Phulabada



COMMUTING WOES

Chhak from where the ambulance can shift the patients to the hospitals," villagers Narayan Mali, Ullasi Mali and Padma Mali lamented.

Locals alleged that ₹16 lakh has been sanctioned for the road. A patch of the road has been metalled only up to Salaguda. The road work

has been left half-way due to negligence of the contractor and a junior engineer, they added.

Though the villagers have repeatedly written to the district administration to improve the road condition, no step has been taken till date.

Our reporter had contacted assistant engineer Abhisekh Sarangi and junior engineer Bakul Chandra Murmu over phone, but the latter did not pick up the call. Villagers have decided to take up the issue with the district collector soon.

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, RURAL WORKS DIVISION, BHUBANESWAR

Ph. No. 0674-2301787, Fax No. 0674-2300965, E-Mail Id: eerw_bbsr@yahoo.co.in

No. Tender-Online-BBSR Divn. - 19 e-Procurement NOTICE Date: 19.08.2022

- | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|
| 1. Name of the work | Repair/Maintenance of Road Works | | |
| 2. Total No. of Roads | 02 Nos. of Road | | |
| 3. Class of Contractor | "A" & "B" Class (of Odisha PWD) or relevant class of other licensing authorities. | | |
| a) Estimated cost more than Rs. 40.00 lakh & not exceeding to Rs. 1.50 Crore | "B" & "C" Class (of Odisha PWD) or relevant class of other licensing authorities. | | |
| b) Estimated cost more than Rs.20.00 lakh & not exceeding to Rs.40.00 lakh | "C" & "D" Class (of Odisha PWD) or relevant class of other licensing authorities. | | |
| c) Estimated cost not exceeding to Rs.20.00 lakh | Rs.6.00 lakh to 20.00 lakh | | |
| 4. Estimate cost of individual projects | 2 (Two) Calendar months | | |
| 5. Time for completion | | | |
| 6. Other details | | | |

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of Tender	Online for Bidding	Date & Time of Opening of Tender
1	2	3	4	5
Executive Engineer, Rural Works Division, Bhubaneswar	Tender Online - BBSR Divn. - 19	30.08.2022	at 11.00 A.M. upto 5.00 P.M.	12.09.2022 at 11.00 A.M.

Further details can be seen from the website www.tendersorissa.gov.in.
OIPR-25066/11/0020/2223 Sd/- Executive Engineer, Rural Works Divn., BBSR

national

of the day quote

District collectors will issue orders appealing people to remove 'Tiranga' from their houses wherever they are displayed to mark the 75th anniversary of India's Independence

PRAMOD SAWANT | GOA CHIEF MINISTER

The sharp reaction over the Samajwadi Party chief going to the Azamgarh jail and meeting imprisoned party MLA Ramakant Yadav to express sympathy is natural. This shows the general belief that the SP guards these types of criminal elements

MAYAWATI | BSP PRESIDENT

The world is responding to soil policy, but citizens of the world must continue to amplify their voices

SADHGURU JAGADISH VASUDEV

SHORT TAKES

Anubrata sent to judicial custody

Kolkata: A special court of Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) at Asansol in West Bengal, Wednesday, remanded Trinamool Congress strongman and the party's Birbhum district president, Anubrata Mondal to 14 days of judicial custody in connection with the multi-crore cattle smuggling case. Justice Rajesh Chakraborty of the special court of CBI will have to present Mondal at the same court again September 7.

Murder probe: Cops conduct searches

Srinagar: Jammu and Kashmir Police carried out simultaneous searches at four locations in Srinagar district Wednesday in connection with a murder investigation, a statement said. "Srinagar police today conducted simultaneous searches at four locations, two located in Barzulla area, one in Brein Nishat and one in Maisuma, in houses and offices of three lawyers in connection with killing of advocate Babar Qadri." "The houses of lawyers Mian Abdul Qayoom, Muzaffar Ahmad, and Manzoor Ahmed Dar were searched in furtherance of the investigation of the aforementioned murder case," a police press statement said.

Jaiveer Shergill quits Congress

New Delhi: Congress spokesperson Jaiveer Shergill quit the party Wednesday and alleged that scyphancy is eating into the organisation like "termites". In a letter to party chief Sonia Gandhi, Shergill resigned from the post of the national spokesperson and said the primary reason was that "the ideology and the vision of the current decision makers of the Congress is no longer in sync with the aspirations of the youth and modern India".

Minor killed over mother's affair

New Delhi: A 17-year-old girl was killed allegedly by a youth who lived with her family in the Outer Delhi's Tikri Border area Wednesday, police said. Harish, 18, was overpowered by the public at the spot and was handed over to the police, they said. Harish worked with the victim's mother at a factory in Bahadurgarh and also lived with her family, police said. A preliminary probe revealed that the victim's 48-year-old mother was in a relationship with the accused. The victim did not like the growing friendship between the two and had objected to it, a senior police officer said.



A person who retires or is going to retire has no value in this country

N V RAMANA | CHIEF JUSTICE OF INDIA

NO GENDER NEUTRAL SEATING IN CLASSROOMS

The Kerala government has dropped its plan of introducing gender neutral seating in schools following objections from several quarters, especially Muslim organisations. Gender neutral seating formed a part of the initial draft of the reforms to be undertaken in the education sector



Why can't govt call all-party meet on freebies: Top court

SOLICITOR GENERAL TUSHAR MEHTA SAID A LINE SHOULD BE DRAWN, WHERE SOMEBODY SHOULD TELL "PLEASE DO NOT DO THIS"

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, August 24: The Supreme Court on Wednesday queried the Central government, why it can't form a committee to examine the impact of freebies promised by political parties to induce voters, and also the government can call for an all-party meeting to examine the issue.

A bench headed by Chief Justice N.V. Ramana told the Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, representing the Centre, "Why can't the Government of India constitute a committee to study the impact of freebies..." Mehta replied that the Centre will help in every way and statistics connected with the issue and other information can be placed before the top court.

Mehta said a line should be drawn, where somebody should tell "please do not do this". The Chief Justice replied the question is who will head the committee. Justice Ramana said if he were to contest the election, he may not get even 10 votes as political parties matter more and not the individuals.

Senior advocate Vikas Singh, representing the petitioner, submitted that a retired judge of the apex court, like Justice RM Lodha, should be the chairman of the committee to examine freebies issues. The Chief Justice replied, "The person who retires or is going to retire has no value in this country." Singh said it is the personality of the person concerned which impacts.

Senior advocate Arvind Datar,



representing the Election Commission of India, questioned the definition of freebie and said if something is there in the manifesto, can it be called a freebie? Datar said there is enough material available to judge the economic impact of freebies.

The bench, also comprising Justices Hima Kohli and CT Ravikumar, noted, freebies, etc., can destroy the economy. It has to be looked at and the court just cannot pass a mandamus.

The Chief Justice said, "The Government of India can call for an all-party meeting".

Pointing at political parties seeking to intervene in the matter in court, Mehta said parties claim fundamental rights, and what will the government do. AAP, seeking to intervene in the matter, claimed that it had the fundamental right to free speech under Article 19 of the Constitution, which included the election speeches and promises for upliftment of the downtrodden

Singh submitted that the apex court's 2013 judgment in

Subramanian Balaji vs. Government of Tamil Nadu needs to be reconsidered. In this judgment, the apex court had held that the promises made by political parties in the election manifesto would not amount to 'corrupt practices' as per Section 123 of the Representation of People Act.

After hearing detailed arguments, the top court adjourned the matter.

The top court was hearing a PIL by advocate Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay seeking directions to the Centre and the Election Commission of India to take steps to regulate poll manifestos of political parties and also opposed the practice of political parties giving or promising freebies to induce voters during polls.

In the previous hearing, the top court had suggested constituting an expert panel comprising representatives from the Central and state governments, opposition political parties, Election Commission of India, Finance Commission, Reserve Bank of India, NITI Aayog, etc.

IT'S ED'S TURN TO PROWL IN J'KHAND



AGENCIES

New Delhi, August 24: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) raided multiple locations Wednesday in Jharkhand and recovered 2 AK series assault rifles as part of an ongoing money-laundering investigation into alleged illegal mining in the state, official sources said.

The weapons were kept in an almirah at a home here, officials said. They informed that the premise on which the weapons were found allegedly belonged to - Prem Prakash, who is under the probe agency's scanner.

The federal probe agency is covering about 17-20 premises in Jharkhand, neighbouring Bihar, Tamil Nadu and the Delhi-NCR as part of the operation. The searches were carried out after fresh information came to the fore following the questioning of Pankaj Mishra, a political aide of Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren, and the

former's associate and muscleman Bachhu Yadav, sources said. Both Mishra and Yadav were arrested by ED in this case sometime ago.

The ED probe began after the agency raided Mishra and his alleged associates July 8, covering 19 locations in Sahibganj, Barhet, Rajmahal, Mirza Chauki and Barharwa in Jharkhand in the case linked to alleged instances of illegal mining and extortion. After the July raids, the ED seized funds amounting to 13.32 crore lying in 50 bank accounts and froze them all. In a late evening development, Jharkhand police said that the rifles belonged to two constables who had left the weapons at the residence due to 'gross negligence'.

Section 379, 414 of IPC at Girwabadi, Sahebganj Police Station. "Besides, one illegal mine situated at Mauza Simaria, Sahebganj operated by Bishnu Yadav and others has been identified. Another mine has been identified at Mauza Demba, Sahebganj where mining has exceeded far beyond the leased area. The quantification of the excess illegal mining done at the above site has been estimated around 37.5 million cubic feet, which has remained undeclared and concealed. The processed value of the mined stone chips is estimated to be around Rs 45 crore," the official had said.



Activists stage a protest against remission of the sentence given to the convicts of Bilkis Bano's case by Gujarat government in Kolkata

Pandemic sets back Asia-Pacific's poverty fight by 2 yrs: ADB

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, August 24: Had Covid-19 not struck, Asia Pacific could have brought down extreme poverty to a level achievable in 2020 itself, enabling more people to improve living standards from surviving at less than USD 1.90 per day, an ADB report said.

People surviving with less than USD 1.90 (about Rs 152) per day fall under extreme poverty.

The Covid-19 pandemic has set back the fight against poverty in Asia and the Pacific by at least two years, said the latest report by Asian Development Bank (ADB).

The Manila-headquartered multilateral funding agency said many living in the Asia Pacific re-

gion will likely find it harder than before to come out of extreme poverty.

"The region's economic growth this year is expected to reduce extreme poverty - defined as living off less than \$1.90 a day - to a level that would have been achieved in 2020 had the pandemic not happened," according to Key Indicators for Asia and the Pacific 2022 released Wednesday.

Citing data simulations, ADB said those with lower pre-pandemic levels of social mobility, the ability to escape poverty, may witness "longer-lasting setbacks". Covid-19 has interrupted a long trend of poverty reduction, it said, adding that despite the economies



REPRESENTATIONAL IMAGE

seeming to be recovering the progress remains uneven.

The pandemic may also have worsened forms of poverty be-

The poor and the vulnerable have been hit hardest by Covid-19, and while economies are recovering, many people may find that getting out of poverty is even more difficult than before

ALBERT PARK | ADB CHIEF ECONOMIST

yond income, such as food insecurity and inadequate access to health services and education, said the report.

Park said governments in the region should focus on resilience, innovation and inclusiveness to provide more balanced economic opportunities and greater social mobility for everyone.

Going ahead, the prevalence of extreme poverty in Asia Pacific is expected to come down below 1 per cent by 2030, while about 25 per cent population may reach at least the middle-class status, meaning to have income/consumption of \$15 or more in a day (about Rs 1,197 per day) adjusted to purchasing power parity.

However, ADB said this outlook is threatened by differences in social mobility as well as other uncertainties. "Developing Asia faces the potential for stagflation, ongoing conflicts involving key global actors, increased food insecurity, and energy price shocks." ADB has a total of 68 members of which 49 are from the Asia Pacific region.

BJP offered ₹20 crore each to 4 MLAs to switch sides: AAP

AAP accuses PM Modi of making efforts to bring its legislators into the BJP-fold by hook or crook and topple the Kejriwal govt

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, August 24: The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) claimed Wednesday that the BJP has approached four of its legislators in Delhi, asking them to switch sides and join the saffron party or else, face false cases, the CBI and the ED.

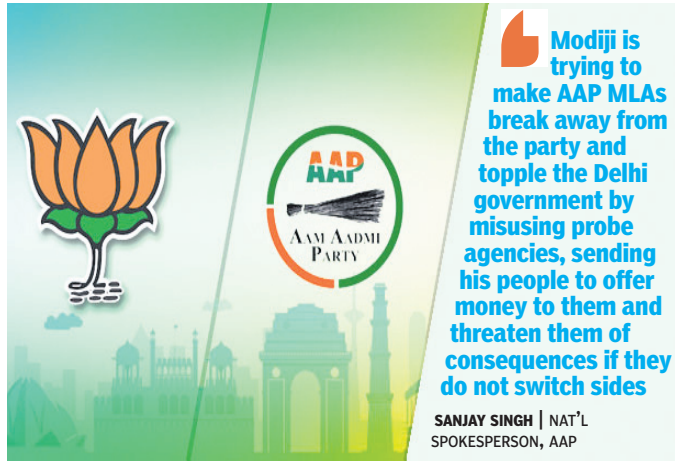
Addressing a press conference here, AAP's national spokesperson and Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh said the MLAs - Ajay Dutt, Sanjeev Jha, Somnath Bharati and Kuldeep Kumar - have been approached by leaders of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) with whom they have friendly relations.

Taking to Twitter, Delhi Chief Minister and AAP's national convenor Arvind Kejriwal said it is a very serious matter and a meeting of the party's Political Affairs Committee (PAC) has been convened at his residence at 4 pm to take stock of the situation and chalk out further strategy.

They (the four AAP legislators) have been offered Rs 20 crore each if they join the BJP and Rs 25 crore if they bring other MLAs along with them, Singh said.

"They (BJP leaders) told our MLAs that if they do not accept the offer and join the BJP, they will also have to face false cases, the CBI and the ED like (Delhi Deputy Chief Minister) Manish Sisodia is facing," he added.

Singh accused Prime Minister



Narendra Modi of making efforts to bring AAP legislators into the BJP-fold by hook or crook and topple the Kejriwal government.

"Modiji is trying to make AAP MLAs break away from the party and topple the Delhi government by misusing probe agencies, sending his people to offer money to them and threaten them of consequences if they do not switch sides," he said.

Singh claimed that the BJP leaders with whom Dutt, Jha, Bharati and Kumar have friendly relations came to meet them with the saffron party's offer.

The experiment that was successful in (the case of Shiv Sena MLA Eknath Shinde in Maharashtra) and failed in the case of Manish Sisodia is now

being tried on our MLAs, he said. "Shame on you Modiji," Singh said and asked the prime minister to stop making such efforts and focus on addressing issues like price rise and unemployment that the country is facing.

AAP MLAs can neither be intimidated nor lured by money for switching sides as they have come out of a movement, the Rajya Sabha member asserted while referring to the Anna Hazare-led 'India Against Corruption' movement of 2011 during the days of the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government at the Centre.

The four AAP MLAs who have allegedly been approached by the BJP were also present at the press conference.

TWIN TOWERS DEMOLITION

Happy residents in fear of unknown

THE NEARLY 100-METRE TALL TOWERS, WHICH CAME UP ILLEGALLY ON EMERALD COURT'S PREMISES, WILL BECOME INDIA'S TALLEST STRUCTURES TO BE SAFELY DEMOLISHED BY IMPLOSION TECHNIQUE IN PURSUANCE OF A SUPREME COURT ORDER

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Noida, August 24: Demolition of Supertech's twin towers here has been a major talking point among residents of neighbouring Emerald Court and ATS Village societies who are happy with the scheduled razing but also gripped with the fear of the unknown.

The nearly 100-metre tall towers, which came up illegally on Emerald Court's premises, will become India's tallest structures to be safely demolished by implosion technique in pursuance of a Supreme Court order, project officials said.

Around 5,000 residents of the two societies will be the most impacted when the structures go down at 2.30 pm August 28, leaving behind a whopping 55,000 tonnes of debris.

Emerald Court's Rajesh Rana (63), whose flat in Aster 2 tower is just nine metres from the twin towers, said these days the demolition is the only topic of discussion for them and it has been like this since the last few weeks.

"Of course there is anxiety among people but we are more happy than worried about the demolition. It's a result of a long struggle for us," Rana told PTI, expecting the demolition process to be successful.

ATS' Chaturvedi, a retired central government bureaucrat said, "Considering that it's an unprecedented event with not much document evidence of such dem-



olitions except for the Maradu complexes in Kerala, there is a fear of the unknown among residents."

According to officials overseeing the evacuation preparations, all residents of Emerald Court and ATS Village in Sector 93A, along with more than 150 pets, will have to vacate their homes by 7 am while the security staff of these societies will also be moved out latest by 12 pm Sunday.

Around 2,700 vehicles from both the societies will also be removed. The residents would be allowed to return after 4 pm only after safety clearance from officials.

Uday Bhan Singh Teotia (75), the president of Emerald Court residents' association said, "The adjoining Parsvnath Srishti, Parsvnath Prestige and Eldeco Utopia have offered to provide space in their community clubs to

anyone from our societies who want to go there for the demolition period."

While some residents are considering the compassionate offer, a large number of them are plan-

ning to move to their relatives' homes in Delhi, Noida, Gurugram, and Ghaziabad even as some have planned to go on a vacation to places like Uttarakhand and Rajasthan among others, ATS Village residents' group president Atul Chaturvedi told PTI.

Sabiqa Abbas of Emerald Court said the anxiety among residents is palpable and been part of their daily discussions of late.

"The support of our residents' groups and flow of information regarding the dos and don'ts for the evacuation August 28 has been good," she said, standing on her ground-floor apartment's balcony with the soon-to-be-demolished towers in sight.

She and her family members, including her husband, an infant baby and parents-in-law, will be going to their relatives' place in Noida August 28.

'NO FLY ZONE' FOR DRONES IN NOIDA ON DEMOLITION DAY

Drones will not be allowed to fly in the "exclusion zone" of Supertech's illegal twin towers when they will be demolished August 28, officials said Wednesday. They added that drones will be allowed beyond the exclusion zone only on the basis of permission by the police. The nearly-100 metre tall structures -- taller than Delhi's iconic Qutub Minar -- in Noida's Sector 93A would be razed to ground at 2.30 pm Sunday. While all residents of two adjoining societies -- Emerald Court and ATS Village -- would be evacuated, an exclusion zone has been marked around the twin towers where no person, vehicle or animal would be allowed during the demolition process, the officials said.

First batch of women DTC bus drivers gets appointment letters



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, August 24: The Delhi government Tuesday appointed the first-ever batch of women DTC bus drivers.

Delhi Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot handed over the letters of appointment to 11 women drivers joining the Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) as bus drivers.

The women who will now start their career as bus drivers have been deployed at various DTC depots.

"I want to thank all women today being handed over the letters of appointment today, for their courage to take up bus driving as career choice and becoming a role model for society. I am very hopeful that they will inspire more women to become bus drivers with Delhi's transportation fleet," Gahlot

said on the occasion.

The women, after complete training, will be equipped to drive DTC buses. A total of 81 women, in two batches, have already completed this training and 38 have earned their HMV licences. Ten of these women are currently undergoing training at the DTC Training Centre, Nandnagar for induction as bus drivers and 31 more have applied to undertake training there.

In February, the Delhi government had relaxed the norms and eligibility criteria to recruit women as drivers for DTC. It reduced minimum height criteria from 159 cm to 153 cm and experience criteria for induction as bus drivers for women to one month.

In April, the Transport Minister had kicked off 'Mission Parivartan', an initiative to train women to obtain their Heavy Motor Vehicle (HMV) licences at Society for Driving Training Institute, Burari. The initiative is being implemented as a joint venture between the Delhi government and Ashok Leyland Ltd to facilitate end to end training to 180 women candidates for obtaining driving licence of HMV category.

The Delhi Integrated Multi-Modal Transit System Ltd (DIMTS) under its CSR support has signed an MoU with the Institute to implement this programme.



Jamia Millia Islamia University students stage a protest against remission of the sentence given to the convicts of Bilkis Bano case by Gujarat government, in New Delhi, Wednesday

Unusual security for 1K sandalwood saplings to be planted in Lutyens'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, August 24: A rare plan to grow 1,000 sandalwood trees in Lutyens' Delhi has begun with the arrival from Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh of the first batch of their saplings, which will receive unusual pampering -- round the clock security guards will protect the saplings from possible theft and damage.

Delhi already has sandalwood trees at parks and gardens such as Lodhi Garden, Buddha Park and Talkatora Garden but this is for the first time when sandalwood plantation is being taken up at such a big scale, an official said.

According to the plan, besides extra care, security guards will be deployed to ensure that the sandalwood saplings are not stolen or damaged.

NDMC member Kuljeet Singh Chahal told PTI that a total of 1,000 saplings of red and white sandalwood trees will be planted in closed locations like parks, gardens of residential societies due to security concerns, under the jurisdiction of the New Delhi Municipal Council.

The first consignment of the sandalwood saplings has arrived in the national capital and preparations are underway for their plantation, Chahal said, adding they will not be planted along road stretches.

"If we plant sandalwood saplings along road stretches, they may get stolen, vandalised or damaged. These saplings require extra care and security. Our existing guards will be used for the safety of the saplings," he said.

Chahal said 600 saplings will be planted in the south circle of the

If you bring a polar bear in Delhi and keep him in an ice-house, it may survive, but it is a stupid thing to do. You need to match the tree to the soil, moisture regime and climate. The moment you stop looking after the tree, it will die

PRADEEP KRISHNAN | ENVIRONMENT EXPERT AND AUTHOR OF 'TREES OF DELHI'

NDMC which includes areas like Lodhi Garden, Sarojini Nagar, Chanakya Puri, among others, while the north circle includes locations like Rajpath, Sansad Marg, Connaught Place, Mother Teresa Crescent and Gole Market, among others.

However, Chahal did not divulge the details about the cost of the sandalwood saplings.

According to civic authorities, the cost of one sandalwood sapling is around Rs 275. The height of the saplings ranges between 3 and 4 feet and their plantation will begin this week, they said.

Although civic bodies have started the process of procuring sandalwood saplings, some environment experts raised concerns, citing that Delhi's climate is not suitable for sandalwood trees.

Environment expert Pradeep Krishnan, who is also the author of the Book 'Trees of Delhi', said it is a stupid thing to do.

Another environment expert Manoj Mishra, however, said it is possible that sandalwood trees may survive in Delhi but their heartwood will lack the scent these trees are famous for.

14L 'diyas' needed for Ayodhya Deepotsava in 2 months

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ayodhya, August 24: Potter's wheels are turning furiously in villages around the holy city to meet an expected record-breaking demand for 14 lakh earthen lamps that would light up the banks of the Saryu, two months from now.

A day ahead of Diwali, the Uttar Pradesh government sponsors the 'Deepotsava' -- a festival of lights -- in which volunteers from colleges line a stretch of the riverbank in Ayodhya with 'diyas'. At dusk, they are lit, presenting a grand spectacle.

The Ayodhya tradition began with Yogi Adityanath's BJP government. Beginning with 51,000 diyas in 2017, the number went up to 4.10 lakh in 2019, over 6 lakh in 2020 and more than 9 lakh last year, setting a new Guinness World Record.

This time, October 23, the organisers say the target is likely to be 14 lakh.

Already, potters in Jaisinghpur



village are at work, anticipating large orders.

Raju, who is in his twenties, is among them. Last year, he and those working with him delivered 21,000 diyas for the Deepotsava after they got their order only 15-

20 days in advance.

"This time I don't want to take a chance. So we are on the job, making and storing diyas. I expect to deliver 40-50,000 diyas this time," he said.

And like others, he expects a

better price. "We got one-rupee per diya last year. But this time I think we should get at least Rs 1.50 for a diya as prices have also risen. Everything has become costlier, so should our diyas," he said.

Like other potters, he used to sell diyas to middlemen as they got immediate payment without any running around for it.

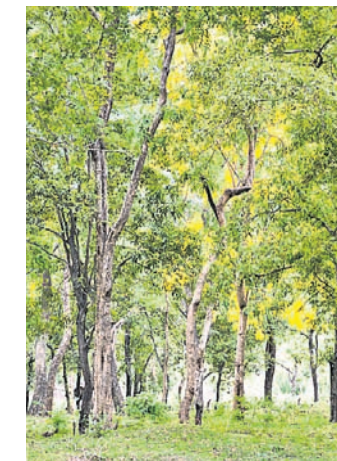
Panchram Prajapati, a potter since childhood and now over 60 years old, said diya sales were meager earlier as people bought them only for the Diwali puja. They preferred lighting up their homes with fancy electric bulbs, he said.

Big events like the Deepotsava have changed things, he said.

Jaisinghpur village, which has about 40 potter families, supplied five or six lakh diyas last year, claims Rajesh Kumar Prajapati.

Prajapati said he was waiting for more clarity and is making "kulhads" (earthen cups) for now. "We are also starting the work of making diyas in advance. Last year, I got Rs 1.20 for a piece," he said.

He hoped he would get Rs 1.50 a piece at least this time. "We are also facing rising prices. From diesel to foodgrain, everything has become costly," he said.



of the day **QUOTE**

The BJP has been trying to make India 'opposition-less' and by protecting the judiciary, the Election Commission, and other constitutional bodies, the party could be ousted to save the Constitution and country's secularism

SITARAM YECHURY | CPI-M GENERAL SECRETARY

In common parlance, the Punjabis are even afraid of taking the name of cancer as its treatment is too costly. But this centre will go a long way in ensuring accessible and affordable cancer treatment to region

BHAGWANT MANN | PUNJAB CHIEF MINISTER

Peace and harmony, which are essential to form a stable and prosperous society, are not possible without valour

YOGI ADITYANATH | UTTAR PRADESH CM

SHORT TAKES

Fresh cases booked against Raja Singh

Hyderabad: Telangana Police Wednesday registered three more criminal cases against suspended BJP MLA Raja Singh for his derogatory comments on Prophet Muhammad. Amid the continuing protests, the new cases have been registered with the Nampally and Malakpet police stations in Hyderabad. Another case was registered at Rajendra Nagar police station of Cyberabad police commissionerate. The legislator has been booked for promoting enmity between people on the grounds of religion.

Smartphone found with prisoner in jail

Indore: A smartphone has been recovered from a 35-year-old woman lodged as an undertrial in the district prison of Madhya Pradesh's Indore, where she was shifted from New Delhi's Tihar Jail three months ago, an official said Wednesday. Following the recovery of the smartphone, a female guard of the district jail has been suspended, the official said. Madhya Pradesh Home Minister Narottam Mishra said a probe has been ordered into the incident and a detailed report sought from officials within 24 hours.

Rains lash parts of Delhi

New Delhi: Rains drenched parts of Delhi on Wednesday but high humidity added to the discomfort of the residents. The city recorded a minimum temperature of 25.7 degrees Celsius while the maximum settled at 34.3 degrees Celsius. The Safdarjung Observatory, Delhi's primary weather station, recorded 6.1 mm of rainfall between 8:30 am and 5:30 pm. The Lodhi Road, Sports Complex, Pusa and Mayur Vihar weather stations gauged 4.2 mm, 9mm, 4.5mm and 2 mm of rainfall respectively.

29 injured in bus mishap

Gangtok: At least 29 persons were injured, seven seriously and one critically, in a bus mishap at 7th Mile in the outskirts of the city Wednesday, police said. Of the injured 24 were students of SRM University campus at Tadong here. They were on their way to Ranipool in East Sikkim district, about six km from 7th Mile, the police said. The injured were rescued and rushed to the Manipal Central Referral Hospital from where the critically injured, a student, was referred to a hospital at Siliguri in West Bengal, the police said.



Snooping, threatening and stealing are the foundations of the 'Amritkaal' promised by the Prime Minister
RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

PM INAUGURATES AMRITA HOSP IN FARIDABAD

Prime Minister Narendra Modi Wednesday inaugurated 2,600-bed Amrita Hospital in the presence of spiritual leader Sri Mata Amritanandamayi Devi (Amma) in Faridabad. With 2,600-beds, 534 of which are ICU, the facility will be one of the largest hospitals in the country



Rajnath calls upon SCO to fight terrorism unitedly

AGENCIES

New Delhi, August 24: Any form of terrorism, including cross-border terrorism, is a "crime against humanity" and the menace must be dealt with unitedly, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said Wednesday at an SCO meet in Tashkent, in an oblique reference to Pakistan's support to terrorist activities against India.

With defence ministers of SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organisation) member states, including Pakistan's Khawaja Muhammad Asif, listening, Singh said the grouping must work together to eliminate terrorism in all its forms and asserted that Afghan territory must not be used as launch pads for terrorist activities.

In his address, Singh also reaffirmed India's resolve to fight all forms of terrorism to make the region peaceful, secure and stable.

The SCO comprises India, China, Russia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Pakistan



■ During exchange of pleasantries with Russian Defence Minister Sergey Shoigu this morning, Singh conveyed his deep appreciation and thanks for arresting in Moscow a terrorist who was planning attacks in India

■ Russia's top intelligence agency said Monday that it has detained an Islamic State terrorist from a Central Asian country who underwent special training to carry out a suicide attack against a member of India's leadership elite for the offensive comments on the Prophet

■ The defence minister expressed India's "concern" over the situation in Ukraine and noted that New Delhi supports resolution of the crisis through talks between Moscow and Kyiv

country, create the spirit of cooperation among individuals, societies and nations," he added.

Singh asserted that terrorism in any form, including cross-border terrorism, committed by anyone and for whatever purpose, is a crime against humanity seen as an oblique reference to Pakistan.

The defence minister also voiced India's full support to a peaceful, secure and stable Afghanistan, while highlighting the need for respecting its sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity, national unity and non-interference in internal affairs. He urged all parties to encourage authorities in Afghanistan to achieve national reconciliation through dialogue and negotiation and establish a broad-based, inclusive and representative political structure in the country, according to a statement issued by the defence ministry.

Singh said that the Afghan territory must not be used to intimi-

date or attack any country by providing safe havens and training to terrorists and supporting their activities through financial assistance.

According to the statement, the defence minister stressed on the need to provide urgent humanitarian assistance to the people of Afghanistan and safeguard their fundamental rights. He also underlined the importance of United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions in this regard. Singh also threw light on India's age-old ties with SCO countries, asserting that the member states of the organisation are common stakeholders in the progress and prosperity of the region.

"India accords high priority to SCO because of its unwavering belief in multilateralism. There is a need to strengthen ties with SCO member states bilaterally and within the framework of the organisation on the basis of equality, respect and mutual understanding," he said.

Nitish wins trust vote

AS PER THE HEADCOUNT, 160 MLAS VOTED IN FAVOUR OF THE CONFIDENCE MOTION WHILE NO VOTE WAS CAST AGAINST THE SAME



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Patna, August 24: The Nitish Kumar-led Mahagatbandhan government Wednesday comfortably won the trust vote in the special Assembly session, with 160 votes in its favour in the 243-member house, while the BJP's 77 members walked out.

As Deputy Speaker Maheshwar Hazari announced the vote of trust, BJP's former Deputy Chief Minister objected to it, saying that it is not required. Hazari turned down his point and conducted the vote.

Nitish Kumar, during the discussion on the motion, accused the BJP of just creating disputes in the society, and the Central gov-

ernment not doing anything apart from advertisements.

"The BJP is expert in advertising and those leaders who give objectionable and communal statements are getting promotion in the Centre. When I left the NDA, opposition leaders from across the country called me over the phone and congratulated me for my separation from it. Now, we are committed to work for the people of the country," he said.

"They (BJP and RSS) have no contribution in the freedom struggle. Where were they during that? They will end the ideology of Babu (Mahatma Gandhi). BJP used to create communal disputes between Hindu and Muslim community."

"Bihar is a poor state where we have started 'Har Ghar Nal Ka Jal Yojana' but the Central government has not been connecting every village with roads. Connecting every village with roads was a project of Atal Bihari Vajpayee government and my party was part of it. Atal ji, (L.K.) Advani ji, Murlis Manohar Joshi ji were listening to me but this government at the Centre is not," he added.

No trees to be cut in Aarey forest: SC to Mumbai Metro

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, August 24: The Supreme Court Wednesday said it would take a stern view, if Mumbai Metro Rail Corporation Ltd (MMRCL) violates its undertaking of not cutting trees in Aarey forest.

A bench headed by Justice UU Lalit said MMRCL should not go ahead with any developmental work in the forest area. Senior advocate Anitha Shenoy, appearing for the petitioners, refuted the contents of the affidavit filed by the MMRCL during the previous hearing. She said levelling and other work is going on and there should not be any work in the area.

The top court noted that in October 2019 an assurance was given that no tree will be cut in any manner. The bench, also comprising Justices S. Ravindra Bhat and Sudhanshu Dhulia, noted "advocate Rukmini Bobde, appearing for MMRCL said her clients have already filed an affidavit that no trees have been cut since the 7.10.2019 order and would not be cut in any manner". After hearing arguments, the top court has placed the matter for further hearing Tuesday.

On August 5, MMRCL told the Supreme Court that no tree cutting has been carried out in Aarey forest in Mumbai, rather some weeds and branches were removed.



Senior advocate Chander Uday Singh, representing the petitioners, had then contended that tree cutting had been resumed in the Aarey forest region for the metro

car shed project, despite the status quo orders. The top court noted that the matter needs to be heard in detail. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta,

CITIZENS' DATA SECURITY, PRIVACY

Twitter, IRCTC officials summoned by Parl Panel



The officials of the IRCTC will depose before the Parliamentary Standing Committee chaired by Shashi Tharoor on the issue of citizens' data security and privacy Friday. On the same day, representatives of Twitter India will also appear before the panel on the same issue, the notice reads

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, August 24: A parliamentary panel has called top officials of the Railways' catering arm IRCTC and is likely to question them about a tender floated by it to hire a consultant to monetise its passenger and freight customer data, sources said Wednesday.

The officials of the Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) will depose before the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Information Technology chaired by Congress leader Shashi Tharoor on the issue of citizens' data security and privacy on Friday, as per the notice of the meeting issued by the Lok Sabha Secretariat.

On the same day, representatives of Twitter India will also ap-

pear before the panel on the same issue, the notice reads.

The IRCTC, which has more than 10 crore users, of which 7.5 crore are active users, has floated a tender to hire a consultant to monetise its passenger and freight customer data with the aim to generate revenue up to Rs 1,000 crore. Sources in the panel said the issue will be taken up for discussion in the meeting with the IRCTC officials. The Railways has not officially commented on the tender. However, highly placed sources said it will be withdrawn considering the fact that the government has withdrawn the Data Protection Bill from Parliament.

The Centre had August 3 withdrew the long-awaited Personal Data Protection (PDP) Bill, 2019 to replace it with a new bill with a 'comprehensive framework' and 'contemporary digital privacy laws'.

According to the IRCTC tender document, the data to be studied will include information captured by the transporter's various public facing applications such as "name, age, mobile number, gender, address, e-mail ID, class of journey, payment mode, login or password" and other details.

The Tharoor-led panel has been holding meeting with various stakeholders including tech companies, social media firms, ministries and other regulators on the issue of citizens' data security and privacy.

RISKY RIDE



People along with their motorcycles ride a boat to cross a road flooded due to rise in water level of Ganga following heavy monsoon rainfall, in Hetapatti village near Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh

PTI PHOTO

UPSC rolls out 'One Time Registration' platform for aspirants

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, August 24: Aiming to facilitate the process of submission of applications by the aspirants of its examinations, the Centre's apex recruitment agency the Union Public Service Commission has rolled out 'One Time Registration' (OTR) platform. It has been launched on the

Commission's website at upsc.gov.in and upsonline.nic.in on a 24 X 7 basis. As per the Commission, the OTR will be quite useful for the candidates as it will not only save them from filling in their basic personal details again for any subsequent examination being conducted by the UPSC, but also eliminate any possibility of submission of incorrect information by them

as their basic personal details will be validated by the candidates themselves.

Since about 70 per cent information of an aspirant in the OTR will automatically be pre-populated in the online application form of an examination, the time for filling/submission of an online application form will be reduced considerably.

The aspirants, who wish to apply for any future examination(s) of the Commission, are required to register themselves in the OTR platform by filling up their basic personal information indicated therein. Once the registration of an aspirant is completed, the information will remain stored securely in the Commission's servers, said the Commission.

■ THE TOP COURT NOTED THAT IN OCTOBER 2019 AN ASSURANCE WAS GIVEN THAT NO TREE WILL BE CUT IN ANY MANNER

■ ON AUGUST 5, MMRCL TOLD THE SUPREME COURT THAT NO TREE CUTTING HAS BEEN CARRIED OUT IN AAREY FOREST IN MUMBAI, RATHER SOME WEEDS AND BRANCHES WERE REMOVED

■ THE COURT WILL NEXT HEAR A PLEA AGAINST FELLING OF TREES IN THE FOREST AREA AUGUST 30

He added that there were bushes, weeds, and shrubs, which have grown in the area, and they were being removed by the concerned authority. Mehta emphasized that only trimming of certain branches were carried out citing the affidavit filed by MMRCL in the matter.

The apex court had taken suo motu cognisance of the protests against the cutting of trees in the Aarey car shed plot in 2019. It had ordered status quo on October 7, 2019, after Mehta gave an undertaking that no fresh felling of trees would be done till the next date of hearing. The status quo order had been extended from time to time.

international

of the day quote

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has vastly transformed the world's energy landscape and so Japan needs to bear in mind potential crisis scenarios

FUMIO KISHIDA | PM, JAPAN

Xi Jinping will be with us till at least 2037. He is 69 years old and by 2037, he will be 84 years old. We need to get used to the fact that Xi Jinping and Xi Jinping's China for a very long time

KEVIN RUDD | FORMER PM, AUSTRALIA

Networking of established Brazilian entrepreneurs with a growing Indian presence in Brazil was visible. India & Brazil are not only partners but can share best practices for their mutual growth & progress

S JAISHANKAR | EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER, INDIA

SHORT TAKES

US sets 65K H-1B visa cap for 2023

Washington: The US has received enough petitions needed to reach the congressionally mandated 65,000 H-1B visa cap for the fiscal year 2023, a federal agency has announced. The H-1B visa is a non-immigrant visa that allows US companies to employ foreign workers in speciality occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise. Technology companies depend on it to hire tens of thousands of employees each year from countries like India and China. The H-1B visa programme is the most sought-after work visa among foreign professionals, including Indians.

Najib loyalists call for royal pardon

Kuala Lumpur: Supporters of former Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak petitioned King Al-Sultan Abdullah to pardon the disgraced politician, a day after he was jailed for corruption linked to the multi-billion-dollar scandal at a state investment fund. About 200 loyalists gathered outside the national palace Wednesday afternoon to hand in a request for an immediate pardon for Najib, who led the country for nine years until 2018.

Singapore eases Covid restrictions

Singapore: Singapore Wednesday relaxed its social-mixing restrictions on Covid-19 and said that wearing masks won't be mandatory from August 29 except on public transport and hospitals as the daily hospital cases have halved in the country. Speaking at a press conference to announce the relaxation of the masks mandate, Deputy Prime Minister Lawrence Wong said that masks will only be mandatory in two settings, the first being healthcare facilities, residential care homes and ambulances, as well as indoor premises within hospitals and polyclinics.

Pak minor raped, burnt to death

Islamabad: A minor girl was kidnapped, raped, and burnt to death in Islamabad's Kohsar town. Her body was recovered from a water tank from one of the houses in the town, at Old Kirpa Road falling under the jurisdiction of Kirpa Police Station, The News reported. The father of the victim, hailing from Mardan, lodged a complaint with the Kirpa Police Station, in which he claimed that his seven-year-old daughter went to a neighbour's house along with her family to attend Quran Khwani.



I hope that concrete steps will be taken to bring an end to the war and to avert the risk of a nuclear disaster at Zaporizhzhia. Innocents pay for war

POPE FRANCIS | CATHOLIC CHURCH LEADER

PANDA TWINS BORN IN CHINA

Twin giant pandas have been born at a breeding centre in southwestern China, a sign of progress for the country's unofficial national mascot as it struggles for survival amid climate change and loss of habitat. The male and female cubs, born Tuesday, are the second pair of twins born to their mother, Qin Qin



UKRAINE'S 31ST INDEPENDENCE DAY

Russian shackles worse than missiles

When Russian President Vladimir Putin invaded Ukraine February 24 in an unprovoked act of aggression, many expected a quick victory. Six months later, the largest military conflict in Europe since World War II has turned into a grinding war of attrition. The Russian offensive has largely bogged down as Ukrainian forces increasingly target key facilities far behind the front lines, including in Russia-occupied Crimea

REUTERS

Kyiv, August 24: Ukraine was "re-born" when Russia invaded six months ago, President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said Wednesday, marking 31 years of his country's independence from the Moscow-controlled Soviet Union with a vow to drive Russian forces out completely.

After days of warnings that Moscow could use the anniversary of Ukraine's Independence Day to launch more missile attacks on major cities, the second biggest city Kharkiv was under curfew after months of bombardment.

The anniversary fell exactly six months after Russia sent tens of thousands of troops into Ukraine. Wednesday's celebrations were cancelled but many people marked the day by wearing embroidered shirts that are part of the national dress.

In an emotional speech to his compatriots, Zelenskiy said Russia's attack had revived the nation's spirit.

The 44-year-old leader, speaking in front of Kyiv's central monument to independence in his trademark combat fatigues, vowed to recapture occupied areas of eastern Ukraine as well as the Crimean peninsula, which Russia annexed in 2014.

"We will not sit down at the negotiating table out of fear, with a gun pointed at our heads. For us, the most terrible iron is not missiles, aircraft and tanks, but shack-



A new nation appeared in the world on Feb. 24 at 4 in the morning. It was not born, but reborn. A nation that did not cry, scream or take fright. One that did not flee. Did not give up. And did not forget

VOLODYMYR ZELENSKIY | PRESIDENT, UKRAINE

les. Not trenches, but fetters," he said. He and his wife later joined other religious leaders for a service in St Sophia cathedral and laid flowers at a memorial to fallen soldiers.

Russia has made few advances in Ukraine in recent months, after its troops were pushed back from Kyiv in the early weeks of the war. Ukrainian soldiers on the front line in the east said they were more motivated than their enemy.

"All of our people are cheering for us," a soldier called Yevhen told Reuters, declining to give his last name. "The whole country is, and other countries who help us too. Our fighting spirit is greater than theirs."

Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu told a meeting of defence ministers in Uzbekistan that Russia had deliberately slowed down what it refers to as its "special mili-

World leaders back Ukraine's brave fight

Germany stands firmly by Ukraine's side in this hour of danger - today and for as long as Ukraine needs our support. Your yellow and blue flag and that of the EU, with yellow stars on a blue background, are cut from the same cloth.

OLAF SCHOLZ | CHANCELLOR, GERMANY

Today Ukraine's independence is threatened once again and people are fighting with steel and with courage to defend their homes and their families. However long it takes, the United Kingdom will stand with Ukraine and provide every possible military, economic and humanitarian support

BORIS JOHNSON | PM, UK

Ukraine's Independence Day is a day of pride. But in the place of legitimate festivities, we are thinking of the dead and the fighters today, of the courage and resilience of your people

EMMANUEL MACRON | PRESIDENT, FRENCH

Ukraine offers a lesson that freedom and democracy will always win out over coercion and violence

PEDRO SÁNCHEZ | PM, SPAIN

tary operation" in Ukraine to avoid civilian casualties.

US President Joe Biden announced nearly \$3 billion for weapons and equipment for Ukraine in Washington's "biggest tranche of security assistance to date", while the head of NATO told Ukrainians they were an inspiration to the world.

"You can count on NATO's support. For as long as it takes," NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said in a video message.

Almost 9,000 Ukrainian military personnel have been killed in what Kyiv says is an unprovoked act of imperial aggression.

Russia has not publicised its losses but US intelligence estimates 15,000 killed. Moscow de-

scribes its actions in Ukraine as an operation necessitated by threats to its security and has imposed penalties on those deemed to discredit its armed forces.

Ukraine declared independence from the Soviet Union in August 1991 after a failed putsch by Communist hardliners in Moscow, and its population voted overwhelmingly for independence in a referendum that December.

Britain's outgoing Prime Minister Boris Johnson Wednesday made a surprise visit to Ukraine on the country's Independence Day and announced another major support package worth around GBP 54 million in its ongoing conflict with Russia.

Pakistan seeks int'l help for flood relief

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Islamabad, August 24: Cash-strapped Pakistan government has decided to seek international help to undertake relief and rehabilitation efforts in parts of the country inundated by devastating floods that has claimed over 800 lives and left thousands homeless.

The decision was made Tuesday during an urgent briefing on the flood emergency by the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), the top national body having the mandate to deal with calamities.

Unable to cope with the debilitating impact, the government has decided to launch an international appeal seeking funds for relief and rehabilitation for flood-hit people and restoration of damaged infrastructure, according to an official statement.



Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has announced Rs 25,000 to flood-affected people while appealing to the nation to extend help. He said the government was providing Rs 37.2 billion to the people in aid.

"The current relief operation needs Rs 80 billion and hundreds of billions of rupees also required to overcome the losses as well as for rehabilitation of the victims," he said.

Earlier Monday, the government decided to hold a donors' conference to get money for the flood victims.

Germany unveils hydrogen trains

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Berlin, August 24: German officials launched what they say is the world's first fleet of hydrogen-powered passenger trains Wednesday, replacing 15 diesel trains that previously operated on nonelectrified tracks in the state of Lower Saxony.

The 14 trains use hydrogen fuel cells to generate electricity that powers the engines. The German government has backed expanding the use of hydrogen as a clean alternative to fossil fuels.

Alstom says the Coradia iLint trains have a range of up to 1,000 kilometres and a maximum speed of 140 kph. By using hydrogen produced with renewable energy the trains will save 1.6 million litres of diesel fuel a year. The hydrogen is currently produced as a byproduct in chemical processes, but German specialty gas company Linde plans to manufacture it locally

DEAD SEA SHRINKING



An aerial picture shows land that used to be covered with Dead Sea water, near Jericho in the Israeli-occupied West Bank

Twenty-five years after death, Princess Diana still captivates

DIANA'S DEATH PLUNGED THE MONARCHY INTO CRISIS, COMING AFTER THE HIGHLY PUBLIC DISINTEGRATION OF HER MARRIAGE TO HEIR PRINCE CHARLES WITH ITS REVELATIONS OF FEUDING, ADULTERY, AND THE MISERY SHE HAD FELT IN HER ROYAL ROLE



REUTERS

London, August 24: A quarter of a century after her death at the age of just 36, Princess Diana remains a source of fascination to people around the world and her fate still casts a shadow over the British royals.

Diana was killed August 31, 1997, when the limousine carrying her and her lover Dodi al-Fayed crashed in the Pont de L'Alma tunnel in Paris as it sped away from chasing paparazzi photographers on motorbikes.

Millions globally mourned the "peo-

ple's princess", as the then British Prime Minister Tony Blair described Diana, who was one of the world's most recognised and photographed woman. Twenty-five years on, her allure shows little sign of faltering.

There has been "Spencer", a movie about the tumultuous end of Charles and Diana's marriage; "The Princess", a documentary by Oscar-nominated director Ed Perkins; while the hit Netflix drama "The Crown" has focused on Diana in its recent series.

There have been books, countless newspaper articles, numerous TV programmes, recriminations over a controversial 1995 interview she gave to the BBC, and even "Diana, The Musical", a much panned and shortlived Broadway show.

"Diana still has an impact, there are still documentaries being made about her, stories written about

her, people are still intrigued by this woman," said author Andrew Morton, whose 1992 biography first exposed the deep divisions in her marriage and with whom she secretly cooperated. "She just had a charisma, she had an appeal which went beyond her royal moniker - it was of an extraordinary human being," Morton said.

OMNIPRESENT For the royals themselves, Diana is still omnipresent, not least for her two sons, Princes William, 40, and Harry, 37, who have spoken of the trauma her death caused, and how it affected their mental health for years afterwards.

They were just 15 and 12 when they walked slowly behind their mother's coffin, past a throng of mourners, through the streets of London to her funeral.

"Every day, we wish she were still with us," William said when

the two brothers unveiled a statue in her honour last year at Kensington Palace in central London, her former home. "I feel her presence in almost everything that I do now," Prince Harry told a US television interview in April.

Prince Charles has slowly emerged from the shadow cast by his ex-wife's death, and has now been married for 17 years to Camilla, the woman Diana held responsible for their relationship failing. But, polls show the issue lingers with some.

The enduring fascination is also not just with her life, but the manner of her death.

A lengthy inquest concluded in 2008 Diana and al-Fayed were unlawfully killed by the grossly negligent driving of chauffeur Henri Paul and paparazzi photographers pursuing their limousine.

A police investigation which

looked at whether she might have been murdered, dismissed a host of conspiracy theories and determined Paul had been drunk and was driving too fast.

But, speculation that she was a victim of an assassination plot still endures, and one of Diana's former bodyguards made headlines this week by suggesting British security officers might have inadvertently caused the crash

In his 2010 biography, Blair wrote that his famous description of the "people's princess" now seemed "corny" and "over the top", but said it was how Diana saw herself and should be remembered.

"Was Diana, the queen of people's hearts? Just look at the evidence," Morton said. "The mountains of flowers, the fact that people mourned her loss probably in some ways greater than their own members of their own family."

