



DADDY DEAREST

Actor Sara Ali Khan says her father Saif Ali Khan has been the epitome of love and definition of peace

LEISURE

P2



CHINA VOWS RETALIATION

China says it would retaliate after US ordered an end to preferential trade treatment for HK

INTERNATIONAL

P10



CL HOPES BOOSTED

Chelsea boost their hopes of Champions League football next season after beating Norwich City 1-0

SPORTS

P12

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Buoyed by numbers, Cong taunts renegade

AGENCIES

Jaipur, July 15: Claiming to have the support of 106 MLAs, Rajasthan CM Ashok Gehlot took an apparent dig at Congress rebel Sachin Pilot Wednesday. He said, "Speaking good English and being handsome are not everything in politics."

The Congress has sought the disqualification of Sachin Pilot and 18 other dissident MLAs from the state assembly even as it repeated that the party has not closed its doors on him.

Rajasthan Assembly Speaker C P Joshi confirmed that disqualification notices have been sent out Tuesday on the basis of the complaint made by the party. The dissidents have to reply by Friday.

Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot also talked tough, accusing the former deputy chief minister of being directly involved in the alleged horse-trading with the opposition BJP to bring down his government.

He did not refer to Pilot by name but spoke about the "deputy chief minister" and the "PCC president", both posts held by the leader before he was stripped of them Tuesday as he tussled with the more senior Rajasthan leader for power.

DOORS STILL OPEN

But, amid this tough posturing, the Congress said the dissident MLAs can still return to the Congress fold.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Looks like Advani ji still has a chance to become a PM

GOVT SIGNS MoUs TO UPSKILL YOUTH

Bhubaneswar: The state government Wednesday signed four memorandums of understanding (MoUs) with various companies to enhance the skill competency and employability of the youths of Odisha. The first MoU was signed between OSDA chief executive officer Rashmita Panda and UN Women's deputy country representative Nishtha Satyam. Director of technical education and training Reghu G and founder of SAK Robotics Sakhyasingha signed the second MoU. Another agreement was signed between OSDA and Coursera to provide skill development training on data science and technology. The fourth MoU was signed between OSDA and Times Pro (Partner of SAP) to provide training to students from govt engineering and professional institutes in SAP ERP courses.

P3

Google picks 7.7% Jio stake

AGENCIES

Mumbai, July 15: Google has agreed to invest ₹33,737 crore to buy a 7.7 per cent stake in Reliance Industries' technology venture, adding to a slew of investments since April that has crossed ₹1.52 lakh crore.

California-based Alphabet Inc joins Facebook Inc, which opened the investment cycle in Jio Platforms by picking 9.99 per cent stake for ₹43,573.62 crore, as well as chipmaker Intel Corp and Qualcomm Inc.

We are delighted to welcome Google as a strategic investor in Jio Platforms. We have signed a binding partnership and an investment agreement under which Google will invest ₹33,737 crores for a 7.7 per cent stake in Jio Platforms, RIL Chairman Mukesh Ambani said at the company's annual general meeting.

With Google coming on board, Reliance has completed its target of capital rais-



ing for Jio Platforms, he said. With this deal, Reliance has sold 32.84 per cent stake in Jio Platforms Ltd - the unit that houses India's youngest but largest telecom firm Jio Infocomm and apps. In total, Jio has raised ₹1,52,055.45 crore.

5G TELECOM SOLUTION

Ambani announced his group's digital arm Jio developing a homegrown 5G telecom solution.

"Jio has designed and developed a complete 5G solution from scratch. It will be ready for trials as soon as 5G spectrum is available and can be ready for field deployment next year," Ambani said.

MORE P11

State gets 1st plasma bank

Odisha becomes the third state after Delhi, Maha to introduce plasma therapy

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, July 15: Putting a step forward in COVID management, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik inaugurated the first plasma bank of the state at SCB Medical College for treatment of serious COVID patients here Wednesday.

With this, Odisha became the third state to introduce convalescent plasma therapy for the treatment of serious Covid patients. Delhi and Maharashtra adopted the method for treatment earlier.

Inaugurating the facility through video conferencing, Naveen reiterated his government's commitment to provide advanced medical care and treatment to the people of the state.

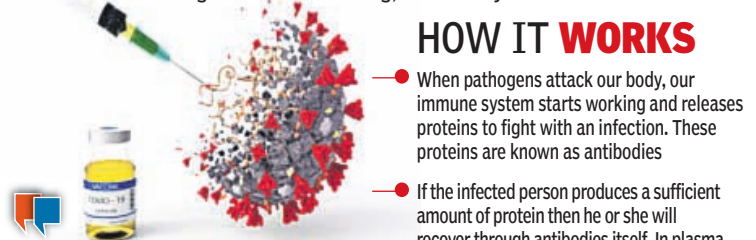
"For me and my government, life of every person is precious and the state would do everything possible to save lives of our people," Naveen said. He announced that plasma therapy will be made available free of cost to the people of Odisha. Patnaik assured that his government is committed to provide highest standards of medical care and treatment procedures for the people of the state.

"No person in Odisha would be deprived of access to latest medical technology. This is a solemn commitment of this government," the CM said. Appreciating the work of doctors, he said, "Our doctors and medical personnel are working hard to provide their best in serving the people in these difficult times."

He also congratulated the four brave donors who volunteered to contribute



CM Naveen Patnaik inaugurates the new plasma bank at SCB Medical College, Cuttack through video conferencing, Wednesday



HOW IT WORKS

- When pathogens attack our body, our immune system starts working and releases proteins to fight with an infection. These proteins are known as antibodies
- If the infected person produces a sufficient amount of protein then he or she will recover through antibodies itself. In plasma therapy, such immunity can be transferred from a healthy person to sick through blood plasma
- Plasma is the liquid part of the blood from the recovered patients of COVID-19. The idea behind the therapy is that antibodies produced by the patients who have survived the virus will boost the immune system

NO PERSON IN ODISHA WOULD BE DEPRIVED OF ACCESS TO LATEST MEDICAL TECHNOLOGY. PLASMA THERAPY WOULD BE MADE AVAILABLE TO EVERYONE FREE OF COST

NAVEEN PATNAIK | CHIEF MINISTER

their invaluable plasma and appealed all eligible survivors to come forward to donate their plasma which will help in the treatment of serious patients.

Pankaj Kumar Behera, Chid Bhusan Panda, Manoj Kumar Baral and Abinash Rout are the first four plasma donors of Odisha. Twelve more cured Covid pa-

tients including Salepur MLA Prasanta Behera have also come forward to join the mission and donate their plasma.

While SCB Medical College will be the nodal agency for plasma therapy, SUM Hospital, KIIMS Hospital from Bhubaneswar and Aswini Hospital in Cuttack will provide plasma therapy.

93.20% pass percentage in Bhubaneswar region

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 15: The pass percentage of Bhubaneswar Region in CBSE Std X exams, results of which were announced by the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) Wednesday, stood at 93.20 percent.

Girls outshone boys in the country yet again by 3.14 percent. In the Bhubaneswar region, the pass percentage of girls was 93.90, while it was 92.67 percent in case of boys.

Students from ODM Public School in Bhubaneswar performed brilliantly just like in Std XII exams. Priya Somadutta Nayak, Ankita Mondal and Ritwika Behera secured 99.2 percent each and are also the school's toppers. This apart, Ritik Ranjan Rath got 98.6 percent while Subha Krishna Agnee received 98.4 per cent marks.

On similar lines, SAI International School broke its own record by setting a new milestone this year: 99% students scored above 75% and 60% students above 90%.



JOYOUS MOMENT: Students celebrate after CBSE declared Std X results in New Delhi

Identical twins, identical scores

NOIDA: They look identical, but they also scored the same marks in the CBSE Class 12 exams. Meet Manasi and Manya, residents of Noida near Delhi, who scored 95.8 per cent each in the board exams. The twin siblings studied at Aster Public School in Greater Noida. They scored 98 in English and Computer Science, and 95 each in Physics, Chemistry and Physical Education. "Everybody remembers us for identical looks and it's only our names that differentiate us. We were confident about scoring well but were not hoping to score identical marks. When we analysed our performance after the exams, we were hoping Manya would score more," Manasi told news agency PTI.

taking the School Average to 90%. Adyasha Biswal and Rohan Jena of Mother's Public School secured 98.2 percent each. Out of the 139 students who appeared in the exam, 35 secured above 95 percent while 81 students got above 90 percent marks.

BJEM student Manyata Patra received 99 percent in the matriculation exam while Soumya Saraswati got 98.2 percent marks. Gyanadeep Paul has brought distinctive reputation to DAV Unit 8 school by being the school topper with 99.4%.

Nationally, there has been a marginal increase of 0.36 per cent in the pass percentage as against last year. The board did not announce any merit list this year in view of the exceptional circumstances. Trivandrum region recorded highest pass percentage of 99.28.

CBSE X RESULTS

ODM PUBLIC SCHOOL

We create history once again!

Congratulations! Class-X CBSE 2020 Achievers

State Toppers

3 Students with 99.2%

99.2%

ANKITA MONDAL

99.2%

PRIYA SOMADUTTA NAYAK

99.2%

RITIKA BEHERA

Class-X CBSE-2020

10 Students in Odisha's Top-10

99.2%

ANKITA MONDAL

99.2%

PRIYA SOMADUTTA NAYAK

99.2%

RITIKA BEHERA

98.6%

RITIK RANJAN RATH

98.4%

SUBHA KRISHNA AGNEE

98.2%

AMRITA SAHOO

98.2%

STITEE PRANGYA BEHERA

98%

ADI AMRUTA

97.8%

ANURAG RAY

97.8%

SAKRISHNA PANIGRAHI

95% & Above

90% & Above

33 Students

81 Students

Class-XII Science

4 Students in Odisha's Top-10

97.6%

ADYASHA JENA

97%

PRIYANSHU PRANAY

97%

SWATI NATH

97%

SOUGAT SATAPATHY

95% & Above

70 Students

90% & Above

211 Students

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ARIES

Today, you will crave total freedom in whatever you are doing, says Ganesh. And sheer entertainment is on the cards for teenyboppers, like mall-hopping or going for a film. The kids will demand a Jumbo Berry ice cone. All in all, it will be a family day for you.

TAURUS

You will wake up feeling determined and decisive today, says Ganesh. Be careful as your rigid views may make you seem stubborn. You may not be willing to come half way during a conflict and will make a habit of articulating your viewpoint. Tension at the workplace will eat through most of your time today, feels Ganesh.

GEMINI

The day promises sensitivity and compassion for you, predicts Ganesh. You may plan a trip with your family members. You may also invest your money in various financial companies, as securing the future of your family will be foremost on your mind. Moreover, you will also save some hefty amount to meet future needs.

CANCER

It is high time that you dedicated yourself to your work. If you are looking to try new things, today may not be a very good day to do so. Stick to doing things the way you have been doing them so far, advises Ganesh. All you need is a little attitude adjustment. Today, you are likely to meet an old friend and you will get busy reminiscing about your time together.

LEO

You might be the man of the house, but to make that house a home, you need a family. So keep that in mind, says Ganesh, and remember that your family is the foundation of your success. Make every possible effort to make your family's roots stronger. The fruits of such efforts shall only be sweeter. It's time to stop being stingy with giving credit. Appreciate what others do and it shall only come back to you in double.

VIRGO

Today might just bring those emotions to the fore that have been lying in the closet of your heart since long. You will even develop a bonding – a sentimental attachment – with your belongings. But, if and when you don't find the surroundings to your liking, you shall be like a fish out of the water.

LIBRA

Unleash the artist in you today! Don't be surprised if you happen to discover a love for the fine arts. The stars bestow on you refined aesthetic sense. As a result, your penchant for interior decoration is sure to get a boost. There is also the possibility of you capitalising on the commercial aspect of your newly acquired hobby, says Ganesh.

SCORPIO

Family matters have been screaming for long for your attention now. Your estranged spouse may deal the final blow to sever all ties, foretells Ganesh. But keep calm, and hold that tongue, advises Ganesh. Your priority should be to secure your family's peace.

SAGITTARIUS

Expect a call to late-night revelry and a chance to binge. But you don't seem to be in the mood to let your hair loose and party, says Ganesh. However tempting it may be, your serious side will take over and you shall deny the offer. No wonder they like that sensible head on your shoulders.

CAPRICORN

God helps those who help themselves, likewise, your sincere efforts will be paid off well, today. If you're dealing with shares and stocks, it may be your day, today. Your life partner will prove to be lucky for your success, so give him/her the credit he/she deserves, suggests Ganesh.

AQUARIUS

A productive day, as you will receive unrestrained support from your bosses and colleagues. Your creativity will reach its zenith and the resulting work will augment your reputation. The day will seem complete when you spend quality time with your family in the evening, says Ganesh.

PISCES

Happiness shared is double the joy; sorrows shared are half the burden. Your family is the foundation of your success, and it is to them you will turn in times of failure as well. With their support, getting back to the top of the game will take no time, says Ganesh.



CHRIS PRATT'S LOVE FOR LONG JACKET

Actor Chris Pratt, who played Star-Lord in superhero films like *Avengers: Infinity War*, says he loved the long jacket that his character wore. "When I get to wear that long jacket it's really cool but my least favourite is the helmet," he said.



Saif is her Mickey Mouse, says Sara



MUMBAI: Actress Sara Ali Khan Wednesday showered her father Saif Ali Khan with love and praises.

Taking to Instagram, Sara posted a throwback picture from her childhood. In the image, we see little Sara in her Abba's lap.

"The one person that has always been the definition of peace, the epitome of love and the personification of Mickey Mouse. Love you Abba," Sara wrote.

Sara is Saif Ali Khan's first-born with former wife Amrita Singh. The ex-couple also has a son named Ibrahim.

Reacting to the post, a user commented: "Such a cute picture of father and daughter." "Best father-daughter duo," another user gushed.

Saif will be seen opposite Rani Mukerji in *Bunty Aur Babli 2*. Sara has Aanand L Rai's romantic drama *Atrangi Re*, which also features Akshay Kumar and Dhanush. Her next release is David Dhawan's *Coolie No. 1* opposite Varun Dhawan.

KATY TO PERFORM AT DIGITAL FESTIVAL

Singer Katy Perry is set to perform at the digital festival *Tomorrowland Around The World*, which will take place between July 25 and 26. The singer, who is currently expecting her first child with her fiancé Orlando Bloom, hopes that her performance makes people smile, reports *dailymail.co.uk*.



Madhuri's quarantine thoughts

Mumbai: Veteran actress Madhuri Dixit Nene has shared some profound thoughts in a post she has shared on social media.

Madhuri took to her verified Instagram account, where she shared a throwback picture, which seems to be taken during a photoshoot in the nineties.

In the image, Madhuri is seen wearing a brown sweater, scarf and the sun rays render a golden on her flawless skin.

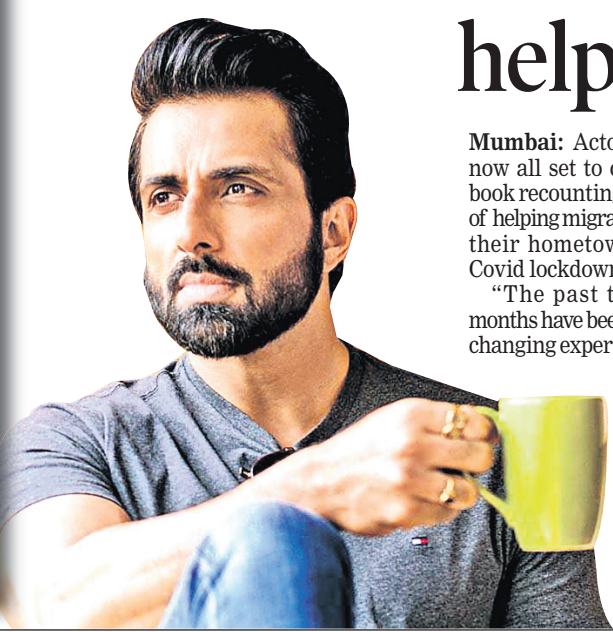
"Laakar thodi si khushi apne chehre par; humne khud ko dusron se ala bana liya, log dhoondterah muskraane ka kaaran, humne dusron ki khushi ko pana bana liya. #QuarantineThoughts," she wrote alongside the image.

Earlier this week, on the 18 years of *Devdas*, Madhuri recalled how late choreographer Saroj Khan gave her one of the finest dance performances of her career. Madhuri penned a lengthy post, remembering how the late choreographer created the dance *Maar daala* for her.

When I go to see them off as they begin their journey back home, my heart is filled with joy and relief," the Dabangg actor said.



Sonu Sood to pen book on helping migrants



Mumbai: Actor Sonu Sood is now all set to come up with a book recounting his experience of helping migrant workers reach their hometowns during the Covid lockdown.

"The past three and half months have been a kind of a life-changing experience for me, living with the migrants for 16 to 18 hours a day and sharing their pain.

When I go to see them off as they begin their journey back home, my heart is filled with joy and relief," the Dabangg actor said.

"I believe I came to this city for this – it was my purpose. I want to thank God for making me a catalyst in helping the migrants.

While my heart beats in Mumbai, after this movement I feel a part of me lives in the villages of UP, Bihar, Jharkhand, Assam, Uttarakhand and various other states, where I have now found new friends and made deep connections. I have decided to put these experiences, stories that are embedded in my soul forever; in a book," he said, about the book that is to be published by Penguin Random House India.

Intl workshop on Odissi music concludes

Several dance exponents, musicians and vocalists from India, Indonesia, the UK, the USA, France and other parts of the world were part of this three-day online cultural event



The webinar underway

POST NEWS NETWORK

BALI: A three-day online workshop on Odissi music, organised by Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre (SVCC), Bali, came to an end Wednesday on a high note.

Pompi Paul, an Odissi dance teacher of SVCC, coordinated the programme. Impressed by the success of the event, centre's director

Manohar Puri, expressed his desire to organise more such workshops in future to promote Odissi dancers, musicians and vocalists on global platforms.

Eminent Odissi vocalist Sangita Gosain from Odisha conducted the event on the first day, Monday. She spoke on a host of subjects including Odissi music repertoire, literature

used in Odia songs and different ragas of Odissi music on the occasion.

Noted Mardala player Guru Poushali Mukherjee from Kolkata discussed about taals in Odissi music and the rhythms used in the compositions of Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra during the first session of day-2. The second session was conducted by Guru Satchidananda Das, an eminent Mardala player from Odisha.

Famous sitarist Swapneswar Chakraborty and flutist Srinivas Satpathy took charge on the last day of the event. The two discussed about various compositions of Odissi music, use of ragas and different musical instruments used in Odissi dance.

Many dancers, musicians and vocalists from India, Indonesia, the UK, the USA & France took part in this international event.

Industry experts brainstorm on new era of hospitality

POST NEWS NETWORK

PURI: A virtual seminar was held Wednesday in Puri to motivate people involved in hotel and hospitality industry which has been badly affected by the pandemic. Organised by Strategy Steamers, a consultancy firm, the educational webinar titled DigiTech - The New Era in Hospitality, was attended by many hoteliers, entrepreneurs, promoters of startups, café and restaurant owners and several industry experts.

Santosh Kumar Sahoo, the founder and CEO of the firm, spoke on issues that have affected travel, tourism and hospitality industries. This apart, he elaborated on inbound centralisation, various service models and importance of technology in hospital industry. Utpal Pati, one of the guest speakers, highlighted the adverse effect of COVID-19 on tourism industry and briefed on upcoming *Dekho Odisha* campaign. Another guest speaker Rohit Srivastava, founder of FoodFindo, expressed his views on the importance of online brand visibility and spoke about the USP of hospital industry.

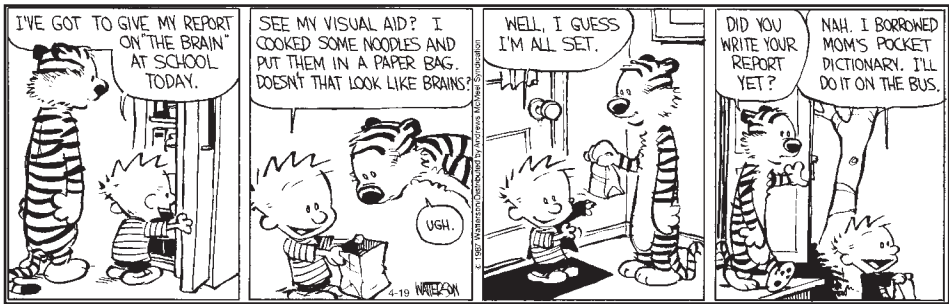


Hotelier Surya Parida, participating in the event, spoke on strategies to be adopted to re-open the hotels, resource development, skill upgradation and safety assurance. Among others, Sumit Saxena discussed on hygiene and food safety while George Nathaniel, the CEO of Reznext Global Solutions put emphasis on property branding.

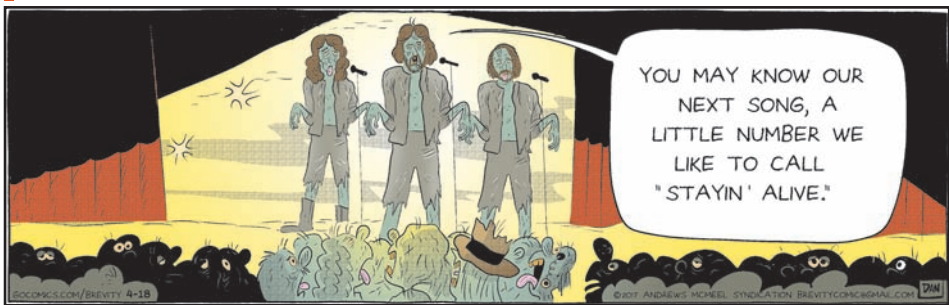
PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBES

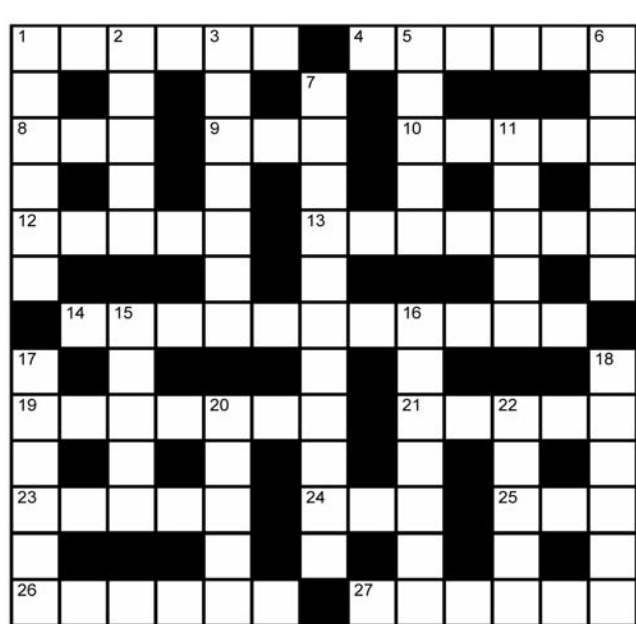


BREVITY



FUN post

CROSSWORD

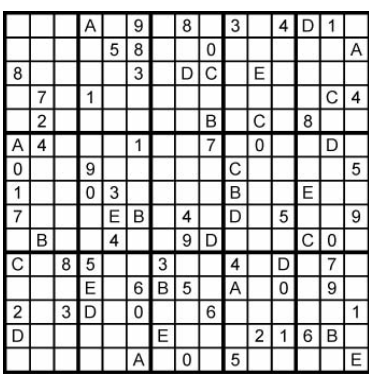


- Across
- 1 Tropical fruits
 - 4 Circus comics
 - 8 Allow
 - 9 Uncle, in Spain
 - 10 Words to remember
 - 12 Relieves
 - 13 Type of flight
 - 14 Entrancing
 - 19 Small crown
 - 21 Fancy tie
 - 23 Pine exudation
- Down
- 25 Miner's find
 - 26 Back talk
 - 27 Asian skiff
 - 1 Ship's kitchen
 - 2 Common carriers
 - 3 Skilled worker
 - 5 Citrus fruit
 - 6 Single-masted sailing vessels
 - 7 Significance
 - 11 Moon of Saturn
 - 15 Tall tales
 - 16 Advice from a personal trainer (5,2)
 - 17 Spooks
 - 18 Walk over (4,2)
 - 20 Martial arts expert
 - 22 Arum lily

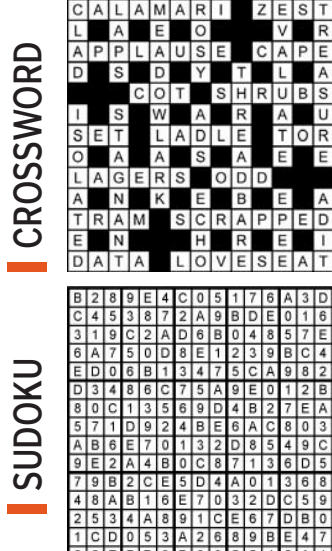
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

SUDOKU

To solve the Sudoku puzzle, each row, column and box must contain the numbers 0 to 9 and the letters A to E.



SOLUTIONS





SWARGADWAR FACELIFT

Puri Collector Balwant Singh along with other officials inspects the renovation of Swargadwar cremation ground in the Holy City, Wednesday

PLEA FOR CBI PROBE

BJP activists on their way to Cuttack collectorate to submit a memorandum addressed to the Chief Minister for a CBI probe into the death of social activist Aditya Dash



WORLD YOUTH SKILLS DAY

4 pacts inked to create talent pool of youths

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 15: The state government Wednesday signed four memorandums of understanding (MoUs) with various companies to enhance the skill competency and employability of the youths of Odisha.

This year the World Youth Skills Day was celebrated virtually in view of the Covid-19 pandemic. Various webinars have been organised by leading ITIs involving industry leaders to attract the youth to the skill ecosystem and provide them the opportunity to explore new avenues for sustainable livelihood. The theme for 2020 World Youth Skills Day is 'Skills for a Resilient Youth'.

The first MoU was signed between Odisha Skill Development Authority (OSDA) chief executive officer Rashmita Panda and UN Women's deputy country representative Nishtha Satyam. The partnership with UN Women will lead to design and implementation of ongoing and new skilling initiatives from a gender perspective.

Director of technical education and training Reghu G and founder of SAK Robotics Sakhyasingha signed the second MoU. As per the agreement, SAK Robotics will progressively cover all ITIs in the state to create exposure for ITI students



■ Another agreement was signed between OSDA and Coursera to provide skill development training on data science and technology

■ The first MoU was signed between OSDA chief executive officer Rashmita Panda and UN Women's deputy country representative Nishtha Satyam

■ Director of technical education and training Reghu G and founder of SAK Robotics Sakhyasingha signed the second MoU

The fourth MoU was signed between OSDA and Times Pro (Partner of SAP) to provide training to students from govt engineering and professional institutes in SAP ERP courses

to include robotics skills in their respective domains.

Another agreement was signed between OSDA and Coursera to provide skill development training on data science and technology. Collaboration with Coursera is a response to Covid-19 pandemic, said an official.

The fourth MoU was signed between OSDA and Times Pro (Partner of SAP) to provide training to students from government engineering and professional institutes in SAP ERP courses. This will enable Odisha students to compete in global market place for availing better opportunities and create a talent pool for the Information Technology (IT) Industry, the official stated.

On the occasion, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik said, "I am glad to learn that in these testing times, when the Covid-19 pandemic has raised new challenges to the mankind, skill eco-system of Odisha has taken a giant step forward in innovation for facing the emergent challenges. I am confident that the collaborations will lead to more opportunities for our youth at the global level and will make skill aspirational for them."

Among others, Skill Development & Technical Education Minister Premananda Nayak, OSDA chairman Subroto Bagchi and Skill Development secretary Sanjay Kumar Singh addressed the audience.

52% identified public services go online

Adhere to timeline, do not ask people to run to office, Chief Secy tells senior officials

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 15: Following Chief Minister's direction, several departments have so far made 52 per cent of 223 identified public services available online.

Chief Secretary Asit Tripathy Wednesday reviewed the online delivery of services in 21 major departments.

According to sources, five services of Steel & Mines department have gone online while all the 12 identified services in Social Security and Empowerment of Persons with Disability have been made available online. Similarly, all the three identified services in Women and Child Development department have been made online.



Works Secretary Krishan Kumar informed the meeting that e-muster roll application has already been developed

Similarly, in Panchayati Raj and Drinking Water department 13 out of 19 services have been made online while 9 of Excise department, 24 of Revenue & Disaster Management and 14 of Housing and Urban Development departments were made available online.

While complimenting the departments for the priority they

have attached to adopt technology in governance, Tripathy directed the departments to complete the task well before the decided timeline.

He also directed the departments to ensure online delivery of all payments and benefits so that people are not required to run to government offices at different levels. The issues relating to e-muster

roll application for tracking online payment of wage and entitlements to labourers by the contractors in different infrastructure as well as development projects of the government were discussed in the meeting.

Works Secretary Krishan Kumar informed the meeting that e-muster roll application has already been developed. It was decided that some projects under Works, Water Resources and Rural Development would be taken up on pilot basis for tracking through this new application to assess its effectiveness in real time monitoring.

The Chief Minister had earlier asked all the departments to make identified services online by October 2, 2020.

Investigation sought into Nayagarh starvation death

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 15: A petition has been filed with the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) seeking its intervention in the alleged starvation death of a tribal woman in Nayagarh district.

Rights activist Pradipta Nayak has filed the petition alleging violation of human rights and right to food of Dukhi Jani, 46, a resident of Kaliamba village in the district who died June 24, 2020.

It was alleged she died after three days of starvation. To buttress his allegations, Nayak cited the report of a fact-finding team which visited the spot to enquire into the matter.

The petitioner stated that the tribal woman was deprived of benefits under several government schemes due to administrative apathy and also due to non-possession of an Aadhaar card.

"Her access to subsidised food was limited and irregular. Although



The petitioner said the tribal woman was deprived of benefits under govt schemes as she did not have an Aadhaar card

the victim had an Annapurna card sanctioned in March 2016, she had got the rice last November 2018. She was deprived of free rice since November 2018," the petition said.

"She was entitled to get pension as single woman but could not get it in spite of applying for it several times to local Panchayat and block officials out of administrative negligence's and apathy, the village people complained," it added.

It was also alleged that the deceased neither had a job card under MGNREGS nor had Jan Dhan account which could have helped her with direct cash support provided by the Union government during

Covid-19 lockdown.

"She also did not get the rice and dal provided under PM Garib Kalyan Yojana. She presumably did not have a ration card. The fact-finding team members who spoke to the villagers said in spite of approaching panchayat and block officials, the woman could not get a ration card under Antyodaya Anna Yojana as she did not possess an Aadhaar card," the petition said.

The petitioner has sought an enquiry by the district administration in this regard and sought stringent punishment to the officials whose lapses caused deprivation of her rights.

Homoeopathic drugs to boost servitors' immunity

POST NEWS NETWORK

Puri, July 15: The Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) has planned to distribute immunity-boosting homoeopathic medicines among the servitors once again to protect the latter from the novel coronavirus infections.

The SJTA, in association with the AYUSH Ministry, had distributed the homoeopathic medicines among the Srimandir servitors prior to this year's Rath Yatra, sources said.

According to sources, the homoeopathic medicines would



be distributed at Niladri Bhakta Niwas for two days starting July 17. The SJTA has urged the AYUSH Ministry to take necessary steps for distribution of the immunity-boosting medicines. "The homoeopathic medicines will also be distributed among the employees of the Srimandir," said an official of the SJTA. According to sources,

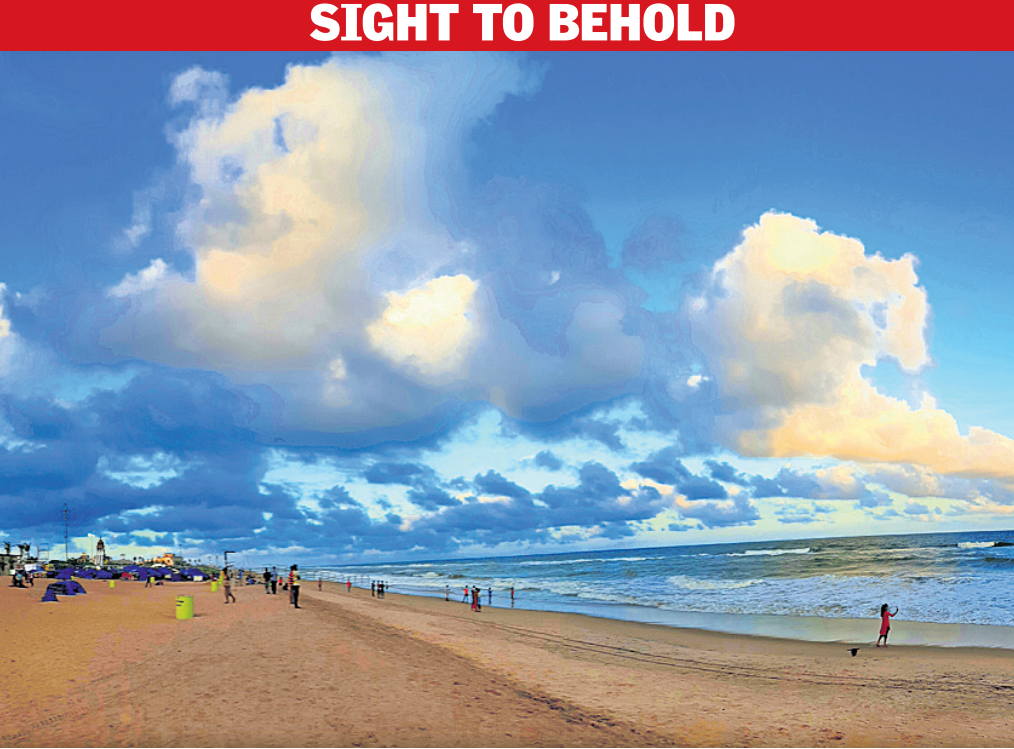
the homoeopathic medicines will be distributed among the Suar and Mahasuar, Puspalak, Bimanbadu, Daitapati, Badu Suar, Khuntia, Patara Bisoyi and Ghantua servitors of Srimandir July 17.

Similarly, the medicines would be distributed among the Pratihari, Pujapanda, Garabadu, Hadapnayak, Roopakar, Chitrakar, Bhoi, Maharana, Kothabhoga and other servitors July 18.

"The servitors can collect the medicines for their families from the health camp within 11 am to 5 pm," said the officials.

State procures 70.5L tonne paddy this year

Bhubaneswar: Despite lockdown due to Covid-19 pandemic, the state government has procured a record 70.56 lakh tonne paddy during the 2019-20 Kharif Marketing Season. The previous year, state had procured 65.50 lakh tonne. State Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare Minister Ranendra Pratap Swain said, "The paddy procurement target for Rabi season was 10 lakh MT while 17.25 lakh tonne paddy was procured till June end, which is 24 per cent more than the previous year." In its Food and Procurement Policy, the state government had set a target to procure 55 lakh tonne of paddy which was equivalent to 37 lakh tonne rice. An amount of Rs 12,805.57 crore was sent to the farmers' bank accounts directly.



Clouds hover over the beach in Puri as the Holy city witnesses moderate rainfall, Wednesday

OP PHOTO

MARKET WATCH		
INDEX		
VARIATION		
SENSEX	36051.81	▲ 18.75
NIFTY	10618.20	▲ 10.80
DOLLAR	75.25	▼ ₹0.25
EURO	86.04	▲ ₹0.18
GOLD	₹49,147	▼ ₹112
SILVER	₹52,815	▲ ₹ 166

WEATHER		
BHUB CTK		
TEMP	MAX	32.2°C 33.0°C
TEMP	MIN	25.4°C 24.5°C
Humidity	78%	83%
Rainfall	1.7mm	Nil
Forecast		
Light rain likely		

Woman's severed fingers reattached

Cuttack: Doctors at the SCB Medical College and Hospital (SCBMCH) here have reattached the severed fingers of a woman who met with a road mishap July 4. A team of doctors at the Plastic Surgery department of SCBMCH comprising Bibhuti Bhushan Nayak, Rashmi Ranjan Mohanty and Prashant Kumar Bal reattached the severed fingers of Susama Bal, 48, of Pipili area in Puri district through a rare surgery that lasted for 11 hours, sources said.

There is infodemic amid pandemic, says Tathagata

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 15: The Editor of **Orissa POST** and Dharitri, Tathagata Satpathy, Wednesday said that there is an infodemic amidst the outbreak of Covid-19.

Director of I&PR dept Krupasindhu Mishra batted for highlighting more positive news during this health emergency

He was speaking at a webinar organised by the Press Information Bureau (PIB) on the role of media during coronavirus crisis. He said, "Along with the pandemic, there is an infodemic too. The media, to some extent, has gone off the leash which in turn has impacted its image and created a credibility crisis. At this juncture, media should disseminate information responsibly and not create panic on Covid-related news. At the same time, it should not also compromise on the news that can show the reality and help the government in course correction."

Instead of focusing only on Covid-related reports, the media should lay emphasis on other important news



Dignitaries at the webinar

items, he added.

He cited the examples of western media where the line of treatment and conditions of hospitals treating Covid-19 patients are discussed and debated. He also batted for bringing more alternative forms of news for the public at a time when news related to Covid have been bombarded.

The webinar was presided over by Shailesh Kumar Malaviya, Additional Director General, PIB, Bhubaneswar and other journalists from the state. Krupasindhu Mishra, Director of Information and Public Relations department, Odisha government, also participated in the event.

Mishra batted for highlighting more

positive news during this health emergency. He said, "During Covid-19 outbreak, media is playing a key role in disseminating authentic information."

Sandeep Mishra, editor of a digital media, said, "The media is now struggling to get the information. The media personnel are now too struggling to get the reports published in time with full authenticity."

He talked about the struggle in news gathering and checking the veracity of news at the time of the health disaster.

The webinar was attended by several people from different corners of the state. A lot of them shared their live feedback with the speakers during the session.

COVID-19 PRECAUTIONS

Stay Home. Save Lives. Help stop Coronavirus

Protect yourself and others around you by knowing the facts and taking appropriate precautions. Follow advice provided by your local health authority.

TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF COVID-19:

- Clean your hands often. Use soap and water, or an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Maintain a safe distance from anyone who is coughing or sneezing.
- Wear a mask when physical distancing is not possible.
- Don't touch your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Cover your nose and mouth with your bent elbow or a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Stay home if you feel unwell.
- If you have a fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical attention.

A WELL WISHER

67% Covid patients have recovered

STATE'S INFECTION TALLY RISES TO 14,898 WITH 618 FRESH CASES

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 15: Almost 67 per cent of the state's total coronavirus infected have recovered, data from the state government said.

State's death toll due to novel coronavirus mounted to 77 with three more patients succumbing to the disease Wednesday. The infection tally rose to 14,898 with 618 fresh cases, an official of the Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) department said.

Two men from Ganjam district, aged 65 and 86 years, and a 72-year-old man from Bhubaneswar, died of the disease, said the official.

"Regret to inform the demise of three Covid-19 positive patients while under treatment in hospitals," the department tweeted.

With these fatalities, Odisha's Covid-19 death toll increased to 77.

Ganjam has reported 46 deaths, followed by 13 in Khurda, eight in Cuttack, two in Puri, and one each in Angul, Bargarh, Bhadrak, Gajapati, Jajpur, Kendrapara, Rayagada and Sundargarh, the official pointed out.

Two other coronavirus patients died due to non-Covid reasons, said the official. "A 72-year-old man from Ganjam with traumatic brain injury and a 52-year-old man from Khurda district with coronary artery disease, who had tested positive for coronavirus, died due to non-Covid reasons," the official said, adding that the number of coronavirus patients who died of other complications increased to 24.

Excluding GST, antigen test fixed at ₹450

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 15: The state government Wednesday fixed maximum price of ₹450 (excluding GST) for conduct of one antigen test in private healthcare facilities.

"The upper price cap of ₹450 (plus GST as applicable) as specified by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) for each standard Q COVID-19 Ag kit of the vendor, SD Bio Sensor must be adhered to by all private facilities complying to the prevailing ICMR norms," Health and Family Welfare department said in a notification.



The government has asked all private healthcare facilities, which will conduct the rapid antigen test or the TrueNat tests, to strictly follow protocols prescribed by ICMR.

A rapid antigen test is a rapid diagnostic test suitable for point-of-care testing that directly detects the presence or absence of an antigen. This distinguishes it from other medical tests that detect antibodies (antibody tests) or nucleic acid (nucleic acid tests), of either laboratory or point of care types.

CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

By virtue of an affidavit sworn before the Notary, Sonapur I, RFN (GD) Phakira Mohan Sahu (15th Assam Rifles service No. G/154277F) have changed my wife's name from Sanjukta Sahu to Sanjukta Patra and DOB-18.10.1981 to 10.06.1979. My father Bairagi Charan Sahu's DOB- 17.11.1941 to 27.11.1945 and my mother Kamalini Sahu's DOB- 15.08.1947 to 07.08.1950.



Meanwhile, 618 new cases of coronavirus were reported from 22 districts of the state in the last 24 hours.

Of the fresh cases, 411 were detected in quarantine centres across the state, while 207 were found through contact-trace.

Ganjam has the highest 1,601 active cases, followed by Khurda with 511. Deogarh and Kalahandi have the least active cases with four and five, respectively.

Ganjam reported the highest of 286 new cases, followed by Khurda (107), Balasore (61), Jagatsinghpur (26), Mayurbhanj (21) and Cuttack (16). Fifteen cases were detected each in Nayagarh and Sundargarh, 14 in

Angul, 13 in Malkangiri and 10 in Sundargarh. Eleven other districts also reported fresh cases, but the numbers are in single digits, the official said.

The state government has deployed 130 doctors and 52 administrative officers in various health facilities in Ganjam which is the worst-hit district by the Covid-19 outbreak, said the official.

The official further said that MBBS doctors and medical officers from the AYUSH department have been asked to serve their duties in health facilities in Ganjam which has been reporting the maximum number of fresh cases for the past few days.

The Capital city witnessed the highest single-day spike in Covid-19 cases with as many as 90 persons testing positive for the viral in-

fection Wednesday. While 63 were quarantine cases, 27 were local contacts. Meanwhile, four Covid-19 cases were detected under the jurisdiction of Cuttack Municipal

Corporation, an official said. While

two cases were from institutional quarantine, one was detected from home quarantine and another was a local contact case, said the civic body in a tweet.

With an all-time high of 612 persons recovering in a day, state's total recoveries from Covid-19 crossed the 10,000-mark Wednesday.

The H&FW department took to the Twitter to say, "With a record high of 612 #COVID19 patients recovering in a day, on 15.07.20, Odisha reaches a Milestone of over 10,000 recovered cases in the

Ganjam has the highest recovered cases too with 2,971, followed by Khurda with 1,000.

The Covid hotspot in state witnessed highest one-day recovery (270), followed by Sundargarh with 84 recoveries.

State. The total recovered cases now stand at 10,476." (sic) The recoveries include 270 from Ganjam, 84 from Sundargarh, 48 from Keonjhar, 35 from Gajapati, 31 from Balasore, 28 from Khurda, 25 from Nayagarh, 10 from Cuttack and six from Puri.

The state now has 4,371 active cases, while 10,476 patients have so far recovered from the viral infection.

Civil society speaks up for neglected non-Covid patients

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 15: Civil society members have requested the state government to assure that non-Covid patients are not turned away by healthcare facilities and hospitals.

The members have alleged that many government hospitals and medical colleges have shut their indoor units and denying the incoming non-Covid patients services on the pretext of focusing on Covid-19.

"The district and medical college hospitals have been closed for treatment of serious patients other than Covid-19. Only emergency or casualty is open that too without experts and senior doctors. No indoor patients are allowed," said social activist Prafulla

Samantara. He added, "Even during the shutdowns, patients in need of urgent treatment are being returned from the hospitals without being rendered the service."

Samantara, who is also the president of Lokshaki Abhiyan, said, "It is not justified! Hospitals are closed on the plea that Covid is spreading fast and patients and doctors could get affected." "There should be at least senior doctors and experts, with protection kits, present to look into the needy patients."

Samantara and other activists have written to Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik and Chief Secretary Asit Tripathy in this regard and sought the intervention of the state government.



Giving the excuse that the deadly novel coronavirus may spread, healthcare facilities are not entertaining non-Covid patients, allege civil society members

The district and medical college hospitals have been closed for treatment of serious patients other than Covid-19. Only emergency or casualty is open that too without experts and senior doctors.

PRAFULLA SAMANTARA | SOCIAL ACTIVIST

Restoring the greenery lost in Fani

Around one lakh seed balls to be tossed in about 60 hrs in compliance with all Covid-19 guidelines laid down by govt

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sakhigopal, July 15: A non-governmental organisation pledged about 1 lakh saplings to restore greenery here, Wednesday.

The Odisha Paryavaran Samrakshan Abhiyan (OPSA) has prepared one lakh seed balls to be tossed in about 60 hours in compliance with all the Covid-19 guidelines laid down by the government.

OPSA managing trustee Soumya Ranjan Biswal said the seed balls can be used to create new forests in an innovative and easy way. "Seedlings have the ability to create green belts in the soil and provide oxygen and help prevent pollution. They will



Members of the organisation pose with the seed balls

OP PHOTO

also help in controlling depletion in groundwater level and have enough capacity to prevent soil erosion," Biswal added.

According to Biswal, the mixture of manures, fertile soil and wet mud is used for preparation of seed balls. "We dry the seed balls for two days. When anyone goes outside our village, they take the seed balls and throw them in the open areas. This will result in creating small forests," he said.

It may be noted that the OPSA had decided to prepare the seed balls every year in the wake of the loss of greenery in state due to cyclonic storm Fani.

"The OPSA will continue its efforts to prepare 20 lakh seed balls and recreate forests in cyclone-affected areas like Nimapara, Balanga, Satyabadi and Krushna Prasad." It is also trying to restore greenery in Puri, Satpada (Chilika) and Bhubaneswar, Biswal concluded.

FLIRTING WITH DISASTER



Throwing Covid-19 norms to the wind, people wait for a train near Bhubaneswar railway station, Wednesday

NABARD to provide ₹250cr for another barrage on Kharasrota

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rasulpur, July 15: Jajpur district administration has planned to construct a second barrage on the river Kharasrota at Jokadia under Rasulpur block in the district, for effective management of rainwater. The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) will provide Rs 250 crore for the purpose.

A proposal in this regard was placed by the Water Resources department, which has got the state government approval. After completion, the barrage will feed rainwater to irrigation canal connecting the Kharasrota river at Jokadia and the Budha river at Rudhia round the year, Jaraka irrigation department officials said.

Worthy to note, Dharamsala MLA Pranab Kumar Balabantaray,

Korei MLA Ashok Kumar Bal, Jajpur irrigation department executive engineer Dhaneswar Samal, deputy executive engineer Kamadev Das and several other senior officials had earlier visited the proposed barrage site and taken stock of available infrastructure.

Even as water reserve capacity of the existing barrage has been going down and the barrage has run down gradually, second barrage which will be built with advanced technology would have better storage capacity, the department assistant engineer Subash Sahu said.

The proposed barrage will help in utilising rainwater for irrigation and other purposes, rather than allowing it to drain down the river. It will irrigate hundreds of acres of farmlands in villages under Korei, Rasulpur and Dharamsala blocks in the district, Sahu added.

Admission deadline for public schools extended till Aug 14



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 15: The state government Wednesday extended the dates of admissions into all government and government-aided schools till August 14. School and Mass Education Minister Samir Ranjan Dash informed that this decision was taken after observing the Covid-19 situation in the state.

Earlier, the School and Mass Education department had issued an order to complete admission by July 15.

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NGT ORDERS PROBE BY JOINT PANEL SAUBHAGYA YOJANA FLOPS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur/Balichandrapur, July 15: Even as illegal sand mining continues at several river ghats under Vysanagar tehsil in Jajpur, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) has ordered formation of a special squad to look into the illegal sand mining at Madhupur ghat of Kharasrota river, a report said.

Locals are strongly opposed to unauthorized sand mining at the ghat. They had repeatedly approached the tehsildar, but to no avail. Upset over inaction against the sand mafia, locals had moved the NGT a few days ago.

The NGT registered a case (48/2020/EZ). A division bench comprising Justice SP Wangdi and expert member D Nagin Nanda ordered a probe by a special committee into alleged illegal sand mining in Kharasrota river.

As per the directive, the committee will comprise the District Collector, the deputy director of mines, and a representative of Odisha State Pollution Control Board.

The committee has been asked to investigate unlawful sand mining in the river and submit a report to NGT within two months, i.e., August 10.

The NGT observed that if the allegations on illegal sand mining stand verified during the probe, the committee should initiate necessary action on illegalities and seize the machinery and vehicles



ILLEGAL SAND MINING IN KHARASORTA RIVER

Locals are strongly opposed to unauthorized sand mining at the ghat. They have even approached the tehsildar, but to no avail. Upset over inaction against the sand mafia, locals had moved the NGT a few days ago.

Transportation of sand in heavy vehicles has left roads of the riparian villages in bad shape, due to which locals have to face commuting woes. The embankments have weakened due to operation of sand-laden heavy vehicles

being used in sand excavation and transportation.

The Bench said, "We deem it essential to constitute a committee comprising Jajpur Collector, and Odisha State Pollution Control Board (OSPCB) and the deputy director of mines who shall jointly inspect illegal sand mining, verify the factual aspects and submit a report."

It may be noted here that the NGT had earlier issued a similar order regarding the alleged illegal sand mining at Sanla ghat of Baitarani river.

This is the second order of the

Boinda, July 15: Even as three years have passed, at least 30 families in Jamukhol village under Kishorenagar block in Angul district are yet to get power supply despite wires being drawn for the purpose under the Centre-sponsored Saubhagya Yojana, a report said.

All preliminary works like installation of a transformer, utility poles and drawing wires have been completed but the residents reel under darkness at night in the absence of power. The residents have repeatedly drawn the attention of power officials to their plight but their pleas are yet to be addressed.

In the absence of power supply, the villagers have to live in darkness after evening and had to manage with oil lamps to perform their household works.

Village women Lakshmi Pradhan, Jira Pradhan and other villagers alleged that the power department of



officials visited their village in 2017 and informed them about their names being included under Saubhagya Yojana for power supply to their households.

Soon, a new transformer and poles were installed and wires drawn for power supply to the households. Even meters were installed and consultancy agency col-

lected ₹300 from each household for power supply. Since then, three years have passed but their houses are yet to get power supply.

The villagers alleged as their village is in a forest area they rush indoors after evening descends. The worst-hit are the children who find it hard to study in the absence of power supply.

The villagers have run out of their patience waiting for power supply over last three years. They have warned an agitation if their houses are not connected with power supply at the earliest.

Sarpanch Nabkishore Sahu said both the junior engineer and the consultancy agency have been informed in this regard. When contacted, Umakant Majhi, junior engineer, said the consultancy agency has completed 90 per cent of the works and the households will get connected with power supply as soon as the rest of the work gets completed.

Mass-marriage ceremony foiled in Bhadrak

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhadrak, July 15: The coronavirus pandemic continues to sweep Odisha with 618 fresh cases being reported Wednesday.

Bhadrak district has so far reported 297 cases and one death. Meanwhile, some people from Basudevpur town in the district

organised a mass marriage at a temple near Balinagar Yadav ground, Tuesday.

Sources said that more than 20 couples with their parents and relatives gathered at the temple where a mass marriage was being solemnized.

On being informed about the mass-marriage, police reached the

temple and drove out all the people from the temple premises.

Even though the state government and the district administration have been urging people to adhere to proper social distancing norms and avoid mass gathering, safety guidelines as prescribed by the government are allegedly being flouted in many pockets.

VIMSAR, VSSUT under shutdown

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, July 15: Amid the worsening coronavirus crisis across the state, the Out Patient Department (OPD) of Veer Surendra Sai Institute of Medical Sciences & Research (VIMSAR) was shut Wednesday till July 19, informed Sambalpur district administration.

However, VIMSAR authorities said emergency services in the hospital will continue. Similarly, the district administration has sealed Veer Surendra Sai University of Technology (VSSUT), Burla and declared a shutdown till July 21.

The decision has been taken to en-



sure employees of VSSUT, Burla, who are kept under home quarantine, should not move out of their houses till completion of the home quarantine period. All entry and exit points of the university have been sealed except for the main entrance. The authorities of the university are adhering to proper

infection prevention protocols of COVID-19 in the university premises.

Essential commodities to the employees at the staff quarters will be provided by the district administration.

The VSSUT Vice-Chancellor and registrar are to ensure that all instructions are followed and in case of any urgent activity to be undertaken, prior permission is to be obtained.

As many as seven medical staff of Veer Surendra Sai Institute of Medical Sciences (VIMSAR) Burla in Sambalpur district tested positive for COVID-19, Wednesday, informed VIMSAR director Lalit Kumar Meher.

Out of the seven medical staff three are doctors and four are nurses.

Wildlife official tests +ve, office shut for two days

BALASORE: As preventive measures to contain the spread of Covid-19, the district administration shut the office of the Divisional Forest Officer (DFO), Balasore Wildlife Division at Kuruda in Balasore district for two days after one of its employees tested positive for COVID-19. The office will remain shut July 15 and 16. An Assistant Conservator of Forest (ACF) working in this office has tested positive for COVID-19. Similarly, two more employees of the Regional Transport Office (RTO) tested positive for COVID-19, the Regional Transport Officer informed. In the district, 61 persons tested positive for virus Wednesday.

No entry into Athagarh sub-div

ATHAGARH: Keeping the rising cases of COVID-19 in view, the Cuttack district administration has declared Athagarh sub-division as containment zone. The district administration has banned entry into Athagarh sub-division.

Collector Bhabani Shankar Chayani informed this in his Twitter handle.

"After examining the present increasing trend of COVID +ve cases in Athagarh sub-division, the entire area is declared as containment zone wef 13-07-2020 with detail guidelines as attached," read the tweet.

The Collector has also issued an order declaring ban on entry from other districts and states to Athagarh sub-division (Athagarh, Tigiria, Badamba and Narasinghapur block of Cuttack district).

He has also directed that the tehsildar and IIC have the joint responsibility of examining the details of persons coming from other states and districts. The health screening of persons coming from other districts and states must be conducted at the entry points. The histories of the persons from other districts shall be recorded.

6-day shutdown in 7 NACs of Ganjam

POST NEWS NETWORK

CHHATRAPUR: The Ganjam district administration announced a complete shutdown for six days starting Wednesday in seven NACs under Chhatrapur sub-division in view of the spike in number of COVID-19 cases.

A complete shutdown has been enforced in 11 districts of Odisha including in Ganjam during weekends. The seven NACs where the shutdown is being observed are Chhatrapur, Rambha, Khallikot, Polsara, Kodala, Kabisuryanagar and Purusontampur.

"In view of the increasing number

BeMC head clerk succumbs to virus

BERHAMPUR: The head clerk of Berhampur Municipal Corporation (BeMC) succumbed to COVID-19 virus Wednesday here. The head clerk was undergoing treatment at the dedicated TATA COVID-19 hospital at Sitapalli in this town. The deceased corona warrior has been identified as Upendra Majhi. Some other officials of the BeMC have tested positive for COVID-19. This has prompted the authorities to shut down the BeMC office for 14 days. "Only health and COVID-related sections of BeMC will remain open to facilitate the fight against the virus," Commissioner Chakravorty Singh Rathore said.

of cases in urban areas, we need to take tough steps like contract tracing, isolation of suspected cases and door to door health screening of people through rapid antigen tests. So, we have announced complete shutdown in urban areas for five days," said Ganjam District Collector Vijay Amruta Kulange. Essential services will however, remain open, he said.

Record number of estuarine croc nests spotted in Bhitarkanika

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kendrapara, July 15: A record 103 nests of estuarine crocodiles were spotted in the mangrove forest of Bhitarkanika National Park.

Rajnagar DFO Bikash Ranjan Dash said 103 nesting sites with 50-60 eggs in each of them were sighted by forest officials. The eggs will hatch within 75 days. The forest officials had sighted 103 crocodile nests in the forest last year as well.

They expect to find more in the next two weeks. Entry of tourists into the park has been restricted due to coronavirus pandemic which also helps in the mating and breeding process of crocodiles.

"The female reptiles guard the eggs from predators like jackals, wild dogs, fishing cats, vultures, water monitors,



wild boars and other animals," added Dash. Dash also said, "The crocodiles cover their eggs with leaves to prevent ingress of rainwater into the nests during monsoon."

In 1975, the Ministry of Forest and Environment in collaboration with UNDP had started a crocodile breeding and rearing project in Dangamala

within the park. Bhitarkanika, a Ramsar site, is said to house 70 per cent of the country's saltwater crocodiles, conservation of which was started in 1975, he said Tuesday.

Every year, the national park remains shut from May 31 to July 31 to ensure disturbance-free nesting of crocodiles.

"Adequate conservation measures by the state forest department have led to a rise in the number of the crocodiles over the years," the official said.

Though estuarine crocodiles are also found in West Bengal's Sundarbans and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, the density of the reptiles is more in Bhitarkanika, he said. The wildlife sanctuary continues to remain out of bounds to tourists in view of the COVID-19 pandemic, the official added.

AYUSH hospital in Balasore hangs fire

POST NEWS NETWORK

Balasore, July 15: An AYUSH hospital proposed by the Ministry of AYUSH in this district in 2018 is yet to see the light of day.

With an aim to give people the benefits of Ayurveda, Yoga and naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and homoeopathy, the Ministry of AYUSH had decided to set up a 50-bed hospital in this district. For this purpose, five-acre land at Achyutpur in Remuna block was identified. The administration also transferred the land to the Ministry of AYUSH.

Meanwhile, the district administration deposited a detailed report on the project to be carried out by the housing and urban development department at a cost of ₹12 crore.

"In comparison to allopathic medicines, Ayurvedic medicines are generally less expensive and have no side-effects. So people in some cases prefer Ayurvedic medicines. We are eagerly waiting for the hospital to come up. If immediate steps are not taken



For a 50-bed hospital, the district administration has identified a patch of 5-acre land at Achyutpur under Remuna block

for the construction of the hospital, we will resort to an agitation," warned senior citizens of the locality.

General secretary, District Senior Citizens Forum, Laxmidhar Behera, said, "The approval for the AYUSH hospital has come after we resorted to several strikes. The central government had sanctioned the money for the hospital in 2018-19. But the money returned as the land had not been identified by then. This year, the administration has earmarked a patch of land for the hospital and has handed over the documents to the revenue divisional commissioner (Central Division). Since money has again been sanctioned in 2019-20, we can say for sure that the con-

struction will start soon."

When contacted, District

OFFICE OF THE SR. GENERAL MANAGER (ELECTRICAL)
UPPER INDRAVATI HYDRO ELECTRIC PROJECT, MUKHIGUDA
DIST.: KALAHANDI - 766026, E-mail: sgmel_uhp@ohpcitd.com

ODISHA HYDRO POWER CORPORATION LTD.
(A GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA UNDERTAKING)
Regd. Office: OSPH & W.C. Building, Vanivihar Chhik, Janpath, Bhoanagar, Bhubaneswar - 751022, Tel.: 91-0674-2542983, 2542802, 2545526, 2542826, Fax: 2542102, E-mail: ohpc.co@gmail.com / md@ohpcitd.com
WEB: www.ohpcitd.com, CIN: U40101OR1995SGC003963

NOTICE INVITING TENDER No. UIHEP-17/2020-21 Date: 10.07.2020
No. CAD-266: Sealed tenders are invited in two part i.e. (i) Techno Commercial Bid & (ii) Price bid in separate sealed envelopes from eligible bidders meeting eligibility criteria only for execution of the following work:

Description of Work	Cost of Tender Paper (Non-refundable) in Rs.	EMD in shape of DD/Banker's Cheque only (Refundable) in Rs.	Period of sale/download of tender document	Last date & Time of receipt of Tender	Date & Time of Opening of Techno Commercial Bid
Annual Maintenance of DC System, Station Auxiliaries System, Control & Relay Panels at Valve House and EAPBX System of UIHEP, Mukhiguda for a period of 02 years.	7,080/- (inclusive of GST)	23,600/-	From Dt.20.07.2020 to Dt.05.08.2020 (Upto 12.00 Hrs.)	05.08.2020 (Upto 13.00 Hrs.)	05.08.2020 at 16.00 Hrs.

For details of the tender documents, terms and conditions please visit our website www.ohpcitd.com
Sd./- Unit Head, UIHEP, Mukhiguda
OIPR-32138/11/0014/2021

ODISHA STATE SEEDS CORPORATION LTD.
(A GOVERNMENT UNDERTAKING)
SANTARAPUR, BHUBANESWAR - 751002
Tel.: MD-0674-2340573, Fax: 2340096
Website: <http://www.osscltd.in>

PURCHASE OF QUALITY PLANTING MATERIALS/SEEDS FOR THE YEAR 2020-21
INVITATION FOR BIDS NO-OSSC/MKTG-15/2020

No. CAD-263: Managing Director, Odisha State Seeds Corporation Ltd, invites tender from Govt. Agency like National Level Corporations/State level Corporations/Govt. of India Undertaking/Agency/Agriculture Research Institutes/Private Producer/ Suppliers on Itemwise Rate Contact basis in Double Cover System through **ONLINE MODE ONLY** for the works below.

No.	Name of work	Purchase of Quality Planting Materials for year 2020-21.
1	Name of work	Purchase of Quality Planting Materials for year 2020-21.
2	No. of work	01 No.
3	Availability of Bid Document in Portal	15.00 hours on dt. 15.07.2020 to 17.30 hours on dt. 03.08.2020
4	Last date of receipt of tender in portal	17.30 hours on dt. 03.08.2020
5	Date and time of opening of Bid	12.30 hours on dt.04.08.2020
6	Tender value	8,00,00,000/- (Rupees eight crores)
7	Tender paper cost	10000/- + 12% GST =11200/-

Further the details can be seen from the website <https://tendersodisha.gov.in>. Any addendum / corrigendum / cancellation can also be seen in the said website.

Sd./- Managing Director, OSSC Ltd.
OIPR-01045/11/0009/2021

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
PANIKOILI (R&B) DIVISION, PANIKOILI
Phone/Fax: 06726-240120, E-mail: eepwd.pki@rediffmail.com

INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)
NOTICE INVITING REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL
RFP Identification No. RFP - 01/2020-21

No. 2185 **Dated: 29.06.2020**

01. The Executive Engineer, on behalf of Governor of Odisha invited proposal from experienced and reputed Architectural consultants registered with Council of Architectural for preparation of Architectural drawing, DPR & Project Management Consultancy (PMC) to be received on offline mode for project detailed in the below to be eventually drawn in PWD Form P1 for the work.

Sl. No.	Name of the Work	Bid Security (Rs.)	Cost of Bid Document (Rs.)
01	Construction of Cultural Centre "Lord Shiva" Statue at Baraha Island, Jajpur	50,000/-	10,000/-

02. The selection of consultants shall be through **Three State** evaluation. In the first state, Eligibility of firm will be ascertained on the basis of experience certificate. Firm's turn over. In the second stage, the shortlisted firms are required to give technical presentation. In the third stage financial bid will be opened of those firms shortlisted from technical presentation.

03. Request For Proposal (RFP) documents can be obtained from the **Executive Engineer, Panikoli (R&B) Division, Panikoli and Superintending Engineer, Cuttack (R&B) Circle, Cuttack** against a non-refundable fee of Rs.10,000/- in form of Demand Draft in favour of **Executive Engineer, Panikoli (R&B) Division, Panikoli** payable at Panikoli. An additional cost of Rs.500/- shall be paid in case of request for purchasing the RFP document through Registered Post. **Executive Engineer, Panikoli (R&B) Division, Panikoli** or his representatives will not be held responsible for the postal delay, if any in the delivery of the documents or non-receipt of the same.

04. The sale and receipt of the RFP documents shall **start from 07.07.2020 and close on 16.07.2020 at 16.00 hours**. Bids shall be received in all offices where the bids have been notified to be sold.

05. Bid must be delivered in the **tender box** to be kept in the Office of the **Executive Engineer, Panikoli (R&B) Division, Panikoli** having Identification No. **RFP 01 of 2020-21 on or before Dt.16.07.2020**.

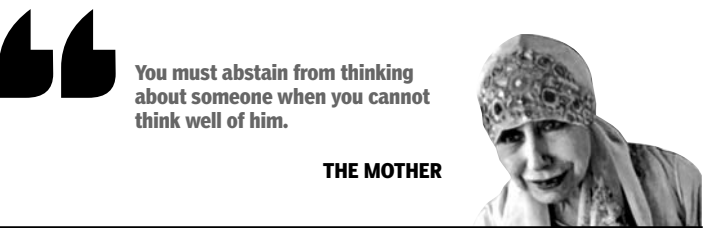
06. The proposal must be accompanied by security amount of **Rs.50,000.00 (Rupees fifty thousand)** only in shape of Deposit Receipt (Term Deposit Receipt) of any Nationalized/Scheduled Bank/Kissan Vikash Patra/Post Office Saving Bank Account/National Savings Certificate/Post Office Term Deposit account duly pledged in favour of **Executive Engineer, Panikoli (R&B) Division, Panikoli**.

07. The **Technical Bids (Cover-I)** of RFP will be opened on **17.07.2020 at 11.30 hours** in the office of the undersigned, in the presence of the consultants or their authorized representatives, who wish to attend. After evaluation of Technical proposal the qualified consultants shall be intimated regarding the date of opening of the Financial Bid. If the office happens to be closed on the date of receipt/opening of the proposal as specified the proposals will be received/ opened on the next working day at the same time and interested consultants may obtain further information at the above address.

08. Other details can be seen in the RFP documents available in offices where RFP documents fixed for sale within the sale and receipt period as above.

09. Right to revise or amend the notice and / or the RFP documents fully or partially, prior to the last date notified for submission of other or on any subsequent date is reserved by the **Executive Engineer, Panikoli (R&B) Division, Panikoli**. The authority reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals without thereby incurring any liability to the affected applicants.

Sd./- Executive Engineer
Panikoli (R&B) Division
OIPR-34067/11/0001/2021



THE MOTHER

Good campaign, bad campaign

One of the silliest things on the internet is an international site called change.org. The owners have offices in a number of countries and the mandate seems to be that anyone who has a grievance, and wants it redressed, can list an issue and get signatures on it. These will be sent to a bureaucrat/politician through email.

When change.org reached its peak some years ago, I received hundreds of emails ranging from “India should not be violent on women” to “Sanitary towels should be tax-free” and, of course, many animal issues. Every three days, the issues would change and very often they were complaints of a generic nature which no one person or system can deal with.

Very often they were sent to the wrong target. When I was new in office, I responded to one of these campaigns and the end result was that the head of change.org got awards for being one of India’s best change-makers – even though she had nothing to do with it at all, except stand with me for photo ops. No research ever went into any issue. Just one line complaints which died out in a few days and were replaced by another. After a while, I started erasing them as soon as they appeared on my email and now I don’t receive them anymore. I was the only minister/bureaucrat who ever read a change.org email. The site had no impact on policy change or action. But it did have a really bad impact on the average computer user: everyone who signed these petitions – and it was often the same people signing every petition on the computer – felt they had done their bit for the world. By merely clicking a link, to send an electronic signature somewhere, one got the feeling of having done something.

Unfortunately, change.org has become institutionalised in many forms by animal welfare sites. ‘Maneka: sign this to save the dolphins in the Faroe Islands; sign this to save the wild hares in Scotland; sign this to stop monkey export from Mauritius...’ I must have signed thousands of these. What happened to the issues and where these signatures went – no one knows. The only difference, between me and perhaps others who signed, is that I do many other things on the ground to save animals, and the only reason I sign is because I feel a deep need to keep up the spirits of animal welfare organisations, by making them believe that someone is looking at their sites!

Kerala is perhaps the worst state when it comes to elephant torture and killing. And the forest department is completely indifferent to any complaint. Kerala elephants attract the most attention from signers. Every time someone highlights an elephant being tortured, hundreds of emails from desk jockeys pour in to me. They probably go to the officials in Kerala but, I believe, till today no officials read their emails. And, of course, no politician does. It is going to take at least another five years for anyone in government to read, and respond, to anything a citizen has emailed about. There is complete institutional indifference to the general/generic email.

And organisations that host these petitions on their site are simply using this to collect names for fundraising appeals.

So, what can you do to actually save an animal and bring about change? How do you become an actual animal advocate and expose cruelty, corruption, and incompetence? How do you save an animal in your area, or change a policy creatively and seriously?

Find out and keep the phone numbers, and personal emails, of all the local administrators: DMs, SDMs, the head of the police, the local thana, the MP, the MLA, the corporator, the zilapanchayat member, the local veterinary officer, the forest office, and the three main press reporters, and use these numbers liberally when you need help. You can follow this up with calls and emails directly to the person.

Make a group. This means finding people in your area who want to help animals. Go to schools, colleges, your neighbourhood, the local lawyers and teachers. Put small hand-made flyers up, asking people to contact you. Take this group to see the officials, and the press, regularly. You want an SPCA and animal ambulance in your district? You need to keep hounding everyone in the local administration till you get it. It may take months, but the results will be permanent. You need a temple to stop using elephants? Keep complaining to the temple and the administration – and, of course, the press, with photos and write-ups. Picket it, stand outside the house of your MP and MLA, and don’t let go till they respond. A small determined group can bring about a change. The police are the worst. They take crime against animals lightly and most policemen don’t even know the laws. This allows criminals, smugglers, pet shops, breeders, animal beaters, to carry on – especially since the police often use the complaint to extort money from them. If the thana does not listen, go to the SP. If he doesn’t go to the local court, get an order. If this doesn’t work, go back to the court and file for contempt. If you can make a noise in just two cases, no matter how much time it costs you, you will automatically be heard in the third.

For instance, khokhas (roadside cages), holding chickens for slaughter, are illegal under the Municipal Act. Get them removed in your area. An SPCA and animal hospital/ambulance is mandatory by law. Get it made. All pet shops are now illegal unless they are licensed by the Animal Welfare Board. Get them closed. All bird markets are illegal, no matter which birds they sell. Picket them – as I did the local bird market in Nakhas, Lucknow – and get them closed down. A single girl of ours, Swati Dikshit, has been doing all this in Bhopal and, within two years, the bird markets have reduced substantially and the police are helping her. The birds come in illegally from West Bengal – now the railway authorities are stepping in with her to stop this trade.

Go viral locally. Collect emails of local people all the time. This is your wealth. If a local or national company does something that you know is cruel, get on to your net and Facebook and Twitter/Instagram, and condemn them to the world. This will get back to them. Use your social media liberally so that when you speak, people listen. Since the government has destroyed Veterinary Council of India over last five years, there is no institution of redressal against vets that don’t know their jobs and cheat on medicines, misdiagnose and often kill animals. I know one vet who inserted a steel rod inside a pregnant cow’s uterus to get the baby out. Another who gave a dog 11 injections, for a skin problem, and killed it. Both were sacked. Start shaming them on internet and write to everyone you know in your district.

The last thing that companies, institutions, and prominent individuals, who are heavily dependent upon maintaining a positive public image to sell their product, want is bad publicity that often goes viral. Keeping the spotlight on them is an effective approach to reducing animal suffering. But don’t make up stories. Donate, donate and donate all the time. The money you get from the Kabari (the person you sell old newspapers to), the money you save from not going to a movie or not eating a snack, a tenth of your income. Give it first to the people in your area who feed animals. Or, give them food: grains for birds and rotis for dogs and cows. They will feel so much better at being supported that they will get more courage to face the wicked people who abuse them daily. Then donate to people who run shelters. Even though you may feel alone, a student living in PG digs in an alien city, you know at least six people and, if you follow these steps, your words can have a ripple effect that bring about change. Look at how the vegan movement has suddenly spread. In the words of Animals 24-7 “The word ‘vegan’ went within the space of just one generation from being completely unfamiliar to most consumers to becoming one of the most-used product descriptions in supermarkets. It was not multi-million-dollar mass media ad campaigns that made plant-based diets fashionable. The food industry, fixated on marketing meat, dairy, and egg products, did not jump on the vegan bandwagon until it was already rolling down the aisles, emptying shelves of vegan food items with nothing more than the momentum of word-of-mouth, friend to friend.”

To join the animal welfare movement contact gandhim@nic.in, www.peopleforanimalsindia.org



Ashok Mahapatra

HISTORICALLY, CHINESE MAPS GAVE LITTLE IMPORTANCE TO THE SOUTH CHINA SEA. THIS CHANGED IN 2009 WHEN CHINA ATTACHED A MAP WITH THE INFAMOUS NINE-DASH LINE IN ITS SUBMISSION TO THE UN, RELATED TO A DISPUTE WITH VIETNAM



Maneka Gandhi

If a local or national company does something that you know is cruel, get on to your net and Facebook and Twitter/Instagram, and condemn them to the world

SPECTRUM PANDEMIC

Prof Shankar Prasad Pati

A PREDICTION ON COVID-19 SPREAD WILL HAVE SOME MEANING IF IT IS MADE FOR TWO WEEKS AT A TIME

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

OrissaPOST
B-15, Rasulgari Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

FOCUS CHINA

NINE OR TEN DASHES

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) defines the rights and responsibilities of nations with respect to their use of the world’s oceans, establishing guidelines for businesses, the environment, and the management of marine natural resources. It replaced the quad-treaty 1958 Convention on the High Seas. This is by far the best codification of customary international law.

During the UNCLOS negotiations, China was still finding its feet in the international theatre. At that time, the brief given to the Chinese delegation consisted of three principles: support anti-hegemony (i.e. be against US and USSR), support the Third World and protect the national interest. During the negotiations, China being grateful to the Third World for their support in deciding its membership in the United Nations put its national interest temporarily in the backburner.

Now, China sees itself as the big loser in UNCLOS due to its unfavourable geographic location. Earlier, China used to emphasise its advantage due to its long boundaries and coastlines as well as its large natural resources. Lately, it has realised that notwithstanding its approximately 18,000-km coastline, China’s geography inhibits it from achieving its maritime hegemony. As China’s coastline opens into four seas (the Bohai, Yellow, East China, and South China Seas) which are enclosed by island states and not oceans, China’s maritime space is inhibited due to lack of breadth. As a result, in accordance with the provisions of UNCLOS, China would have to share its maritime space with these littoral states. Among these, the South China Sea offers more space, but it is enclosed by nations with their own sovereignty claims in that maritime space.

Historically, Chinese maps gave little importance to the South China Sea. This changed in 2009 when China attached a map with the infamous nine-dash line in its submission to the UN, related to a dispute with Vietnam. They are so pedantic about this that, now, Chinese passports are emblazoned with a map with nine dashes through the South China Sea which



If, in today’s world, China’s claims are considered valid, then what prevents other countries including India (from Kalinga, Pallava and Chola times, or even earlier) from digging into history to do the same? This would result in utter chaos and anarchy

further includes a tenth dash to include Taiwan. These dashes hug the coasts of other Southeast Asian nations more closely, giving China an even more expansive claim to the waterway. This is the heart of the South China Sea dispute and China claims almost 90 per cent of this area. Interestingly, the line runs almost 2000km from the Chinese mainland and within a few hundred kilometres of the Philippines, Malaysia, and Vietnam. In addition, China insists that it owns all land or features contained within the line through its vague “historical maritime rights”.

If, in today’s world, China’s claims are considered valid, then what prevents other countries including India (from Kalinga, Pallava and Chola times, or even earlier) from digging into history to do the same? This would result in utter chaos and anarchy.

While being a signatory to UNCLOS, China has never defined the legal meaning of the nine-dash line or what its “rights” are within the boundary. This ambiguity, probably intentionally, is to fool the ordinary Chinese people into believing that the line marks China’s maritime boundary. This is not surprising as China of today is well-known for its duplicity and deceit.

In 2013, the Philippines petitioned an international tribunal within the Permanent Court of Arbitration, in The Hague, to rule on the legality of China’s nine-dash line under UNCLOS. The tri-

bunal ruled that China’s nine-dash line claim and accompanying claims to historic rights had no validity under international law. The tribunal also concluded that, China’s historic rights to resources in the waters of the South China Sea were extinguished as they were incompatible with the exclusive economic zones provided for in UNCLOS. In addition, the tribunal ruled that Chinese reclamation activities of building artificial islands were illegal under UNCLOS. Notwithstanding the ruling, China immediately clarified that it does not accept the result or legitimacy of the tribunal’s award and would continue its activities in South China Sea unhindered.

China’s negotiation of UNCLOS and its present implementation of the provisions thereof provide a good case study to understand its foreign policy making and its attitude toward international laws and treaties. In contrast, the United States which was the original architect, while not yet being a party to UNCLOS, has accepted and complies with nearly all the treaty’s provisions.

After abrogating term limits for a leader, President Xi Jinping at the National People’s Congress in 2018 outlined his vision for a rejuvenated China leading the world order as a superpower rivaling the United States by 2049. Here, one cannot help but recall Deng Xiaoping’s definition of a superpower as an imperialist country which every-

where subjects other countries to its aggression, interference, control, subversion, or plunder and strives for world hegemony. He also went on record at the United Nations in 1974: “If one day China should change her colour and turn into a superpower; if she too should play the tyrant in the world, and everywhere subject others to her bullying, aggression and exploitation, the people of the world should identify her as social-imperialism, expose it, oppose it and work together with the Chinese people to overthrow it.”

As China turns the script of ‘peaceful rise’ on its head, it has forced nations into strategic reversals. Vietnam and the Philippines have criticised China that the military drills in the South China Sea were a violation of sovereignty and could be detrimental to Beijing’s relationship with ASEAN. Considering the foregoing, the question that comes up is, how the world, and India in particular, will deal with this situation?

Bearing in mind that China has been acquiring various maritime assets around India popularly known as Garland of Pearls, the time has come for India to cooperate with the littoral states in the South China Sea and form its own Garland of Coalition to assist them reclaim their due maritime jurisdiction in accordance with established customary international law.

Furthermore, reciprocity is synonymous with diplomacy, where there always is a give-and-take. For far too long, India has towed the Chinese line relating to the ‘One China Policy’ without getting anything in return. It needs to be conveyed that if they expect India to accept the ‘One China Policy’, then it must reciprocate with ‘One India Policy’ – i.e., accept POK and Gilgit Baltistan as an integral part of India and return the annexed area of Aksai Chin.

Finally, the world should unite in making China aware that there is space for peaceful coexistence but not submissive behaviour as a Middle Kingdom’s tributary and that it probably has bitten off more than it can chew.

The writer is retired director, Maritime Safety Division, International Maritime Organisation, United Nations

Scary predictions far from realities

Two MIT professors along with a doctoral student have calibrated Covid-19 data on testings, reported cases, reported deaths, and overall mortality from 84 nations. The team included India, but not China, while making a projection vis-à-vis the pandemic’s spread by February next year. As per this, there will be a daily addition of 2.87 lakh infections in India by February next year; and 249 million infections and 1.8 million deaths by March, 2021. Prima facie, these are sensational projections.

Granted that there is a chance of a serious worsening of the Covid scenario, people are well-advised to take care, observe norms like social distancing, mask-wearing, stay-at-home, and frequent washing of hands. Yet, while we respect MIT, its projections cannot be taken at its face value. There obviously are lacunae in the way figures were worked out.

The research covered 84 out of the 213 affected nations which together have a population of 475 crore, out of a world population of 800 crore. China where the virus was first

detected is excluded from the study despite the fact that it has 150 crore of population and is one of the majority-hit nations. The released paper was pre-print and not reviewed by experts vis-à-vis the models and parameters adopted.

The team made the prediction conditional to a situation wherein there is no vaccine or drug till date. But, several labs and nations are actively striving to come up with both. India too has its works ongoing in labs. India has marketed two/three drugs by now for moderate attacks. Plasma therapy is coming up as suggested by India.

The researchers did the work through Mathematical Modeling by taking S (Susceptible) E (Exposed) I (Infectious) and R (Recovered) as basic parameters. Mathematical Modeling can be accepted if several parameters are taken into account, but they ignored the other parameters like how the governments would respond to the situations and how the community would behave.

The team has not relied on parameters like concentration of Covid-19 cases in some countries,

some states and some districts. The same model cannot be applicable to such different scenarios. For instance, Dharavi and less-affected areas cannot be bracketed together. Also, the effect of the lockdown and shutdown would need to be considered. The higher average immunity of Indians is a major aspect that was ignored in this study.

The researchers stated that the infections could stand at 60 crore if the contact rate is taken as 8 per infected. The usual contact rate, however, is accepted as 2.58. This itself will bring down the team’s global infection projection to only a few crores, and much less than the predicted 25.5 crore. The team has accused governments of all countries of hiding the actual figures, and saying that, otherwise, the cases by now could be 11.48 times more than the reported infections and an additional of 50 per cent more deaths. In India, for instance, such a hiding is not possible as the media and other agencies are closely tracking the ground situations.

The researchers said that by increasing testing by 0.1 per cent

every day, the cases will decline from 1.55m to 1.37m. This is a marginal decrease. Some 0.1 per cent of the population for India would mean 13 lakh. Now India is doing around 3 lakh tests per day. By increasing the tests to 13 lakh to reduce infection by 2 lakh is, of course, one way. No country can do testing on such a massive scale.

Usually, Covid predictions are going haywire. A March prediction by an international team of scientists, including from the Johns Hopkins University, was that India could be saddled with between 1 lakh and 13 lakh confirmed cases of the novel coronavirus by mid-May. But, by May, India had only 2,000-4,000 cases. Another prediction was of 5.5 lakh infections for Delhi in July, though in reality this figure now stands only around 1 lakh.

A prediction on Covid-19 spread will have some meaning if it is made for two weeks at a time. The complicated variations depending on several parameters cannot be drawn at a time for longer term.

The writer is a former professor with various universities in Odisha.

Online study, problems

Sir, A long-awaited speculation on online education for schoolchildren is about to settle down soon. Since the closure of schools from March 16 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, classroom teaching has been halted in schools, colleges and universities. And immediate switch-over to online education was not possible in India. Undoubtedly, through trial and error method, various schools, state governments, colleges and universities are maximising their efforts to provide online classes. But teaching will not be effective unless the three of its components – the student, the subject and the teacher – are mutually accessible. Notably, the HRD Ministry has released a set of guidelines titled “Pragvata” in which a three-way approach has been underscored. The government has emphasised on a 30-minute online class for pre-primary students, two classes of 30-45 minutes each for class I to class VIII students and four classes of 30-45 minutes for students from classes IX to XII a day. At the same time, the guideline also proposes a healthy mix of schooling at home and schooling at school. The major concern is that a pool of students is not blessed with facilities such as electricity, internet, 4G modeled mobile sets and computers. Some are even unable to adapt to technology. Therefore, the question is, “Is not online education creating a disparity among students?”

Santosh Kumar Satapathy, PARALAKHEMUNDI

Babas, Covid-19

Sir, For the last couple of days, some TV channels and web portals have been giving wide coverage to a ‘baba’ claiming to cure Covid-19 with his ‘miraculous powers’. This baba living in Bhubaneswar is claiming that he has cured patients by hugging, massaging, touching and other methods. Making claims to heal diseases by miraculous powers is an offence under Indian laws. During 1950-51, a boy called Nepali Baba of village Rantlei near Angul was making such claims. Thousands of people died due to such administration of medicines and resort to superstitious practices. Now, coronavirus has turned into a super pandemic and doctors and scientists are doing research to invent drugs and vaccines to check its spread. Various government agencies are silent about claims by babas about healing powers and magic medicines. Immediate steps are advised to curb such unhealthy trends.

Sudhansu Sekhar Dhada, Khandagiri, BHUBANESWAR

Clamour grows for national park tag to ‘Amazon of the East’

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Guwahati, July 15: The Assam government’s decision to upgrade the Dehing Patkai Wildlife Sanctuary into a national park has enthused environmental conservationists and activists but with this the long-standing demand to encompass the entire 500 sq km of the contiguous rainforests, known as Amazon of the East, within its ambit has gathered momentum.

Conservationists have been demanding that the government include the adjoining reserved forests connected with the existing wildlife sanctuary like Joypore reserved forests, Upper Dehing East Block and the Upper Dehing West Block to the proposed national park.

Prominent personalities of the state like actor Adil Hussain, singer Papon,

musician Joi Barua, former Axom Xahitya Xabha chief Parmananda Rajbongshi, author and journalist Anuradha Sarma Pujari and artist Dadul Chaliha have also been appealing to the government to include the reserve forests within the proposed park.

Ethnic communities of the villages surrounding the reserve forests has also extended their unstinted support to this entire movement.

Last week, Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal issued a directive to upgrade the sanctuary into a national park.

The sanctuary encompasses only 111.11 sq km but the stretch of rainforests include 500 sq km of the Joypur, Upper Dehing and Dirok reserved forests, spread over the two districts of Tinsukia and Dibrugarh, said



Soumyadeep Dutta, director of environmental organisation Nature’s Beckon.

It is imperative that the entire stretch is included within the proposed national park territory to save it from further destruction, he said.

“We welcome the chief minister’s initiative but area expansion is a must and a concerted campaign has been launched through various media, including the social media, to highlight the need to include the entire stretch of the three reserved forests within the proposed national park,” Dutta told PTI.

Nature’s Beckon along with the people of the villages surrounding the forests

has spearheaded the movement for the protection of rainforests since the late ’80s and has been emphasising the need to include the entire stretch within the wildlife sanctuary to protect the surviving patches of forests, he said.

“Tea gardens, village settlements, deforestation, oil and coal exploration had irreversibly destroyed the previously contiguous rainforests and most of the surviving patches existed in isolation from each other, therefore slowly and progressively losing the extraordinary characteristics that define a rainforest. A glimmer of optimism has now emerged and we now hope that the entire stretch will be in-

Call of conservationists

- Dehing-Patkai came to the forefront recently due to the coal mining at Saleki, at an aerial distance of nine km from the Sanctuary by the Northeast Coalfields, an unit of the Coal India Limited, being carried out since 2003 but it has been stopped by the PSU after widespread protests
- Last week, Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal issued a directive to upgrade the sanctuary into a national park.
- The sanctuary encompasses only 111.11 sq km but the stretch of rainforests include 500 sq km of the Joypur, Upper Dehing and Dirok reserved forests, spread over the two districts of Tinsukia and Dibrugarh, said Soumyadeep Dutta, director of environmental organisation Nature’s Beckon

cluded,” he said.

These reserved forests though separated by different administrative divisions, are in reality, one undivided and continuous stretch of rainforest and the species diversity of this entire stretch is so overwhelming that we have to preserve this pristine rainforest from the clutches of the exploiters, Dutta said.

Bibha Talukdar, secretary general of another conservation group Aaryanak has also called for inclusion of the three reserved forests within the proposed national park area.

A senior forest official said declaring a national park under the Wildlife Protection

Act is a process that requires several steps which includes public hearings, views of stakeholders, infrastructure development, settlements, if necessary, among other measures.

The process has just begun and all factors will be considered before the final notification is issued.

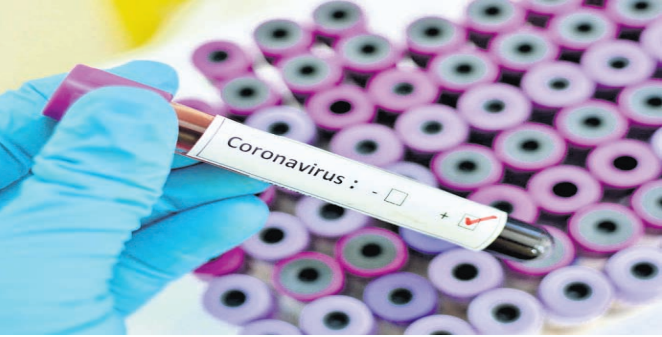
Sonowal had directed the forest department to prepare an action plan for upgrading the sanctuary into a national park in consultation with the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests.

Dutta said measures must be initiated immediately to bring in infrastructural development within the forests by setting up sufficient protection camps, construction of bird watching towers, employment of more forest guards and strengthening the manpower required, upgrading the Digboi and Dibrugarh wildlife forest division, among others.

He also said that the stretch declared as a elephant corridor instead of including it as a part of the sanctuary is also not secure as elephant reserves do not enjoy legal sanctity similar to a wildlife sanctuary.

He demanded that the draft of the Dehing Patkai Wildlife Sanctuary Ecosensitive Zone prepared by the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change and notified in May 2019 should be immediately scrapped and a fresh one be drafted following the chief minister’s directive.

In 3rd phase, Kerala sees virus resurgence



AGENCIES

Thiruvananthapuram, July 15: Kerala, which is in the third phase of the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, witnessed the highest single day surge of 623 Wednesday.

The total infection tally crossed the 9,500-mark and the death toll climbed to 35 with a woman succumbing to the virus in Idukki.

This is the second consecutive day that the daily spike has crossed 600. Tuesday, 608 cases were reported.

The infection through contact rose to 432 Wednesday, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said. The total infection count touched 9,553 and 4,890 are under treatment and 4,636 people have recovered, including 196 discharged during the day.

Thiruvananthapuram has the highest number of patients -939, followed by Malappuram 563, Alappuzha 520 and Ernakulam 475.

The death toll has touched 36 with one more fatality being re-

ported. A woman from Rajakkad in Idukkidistrict died of the virus Sunday.

While 96 had come from abroad, 76 had come from other states, the Chief Minister told reporters here. This is the first time that 432 had been infected through contact and the source of infection of 37 people is not known.

Nine health workers and nine Defence Service Corps (DSC) personnel have tested positive Wednesday.

Among the 14 districts, Thiruvananthapuram reported the highest number of cases at 157, including 130 infected through contact. In the last 24 hours, 16,444 samples have been sent for testing.

At least 1.84,600 lakh people are under observation and 4989 in various hospitals, including 602 admitted during the day, Vijayan said.

Samples of 2,60,353 lakh people have been sent for testing so far. The total number of hot spots has touched 234 as of Wednesday.

Vijayan under fire from Cong over gold smuggling case

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Thiruvananthapuram, July 15: The Congress Wednesday again sought to corner Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on the gold smuggling case, asking him why was he ‘shielding’ IAS officer M Sivasankar in the matter.

Leader of Opposition Ramesh Chennithala told the media that Vijayan is fearful of something since the gold smuggling case being probed by the NIA has reached his office.

Sivasankar was removed as CM’s Principal Secretary and IT Department Secretary after the case came to light, though Vijayan has not favoured suspension of the IAS officer.

“Whom do you fear Vijayan? Why are you shielding Sivasankar, who was grilled by the Customs for several hours. His alleged links with the arrested accused are now known to all, but you continue to shield a tainted high officer who reigned supreme for more than four years in your office. This means you have something to hide,” Chennithala said.

The Congress will hold a state-wide protest July 24 to demand Vijayan’s resignation. The Congress



leader alleged that Vijayan now misused his daily Covid briefings to abuse people, the media and the opposition. “The CM is trying to hide behind a probe ordered by the Chief Secretary against Sivasankar. Who is he trying to fool? Even Vijayan may be called in for questioning by the NIA. What information will the Chief Secretary probe bring out? Vijayan has to quit first and then face the probe,” added Chennithala.

State BJP President AK Surendran too demanded that Vijayan quit as Chief Minister. “We now hear that Higher Education Minister KT Jaleel also has links with the accused. He said that he got

The CM is trying to hide behind a probe ordered by the Chief Secretary against Sivasankar. Who is he trying to fool? Even Vijayan may be called in for questioning by the NIA... Vijayan has to quit first and then face the probe

RAMESH CHENNITHALA | LEADER OF OPPOSITION

in touch for distribution of kits by the UAE Consulate. But it was not a food kit but a ‘gold kit’. Everything appears mysterious and fishy but Vijayan continues to say there is nothing,” said Surendran.

Swapna Suresh, a former employee of the UAE Consulate, and employed with the IT Department, of which Sivasankar was in charge, and three others were booked by the NIA for allegedly facilitating smuggling of 30 kg gold in a diplomatic baggage to Thiruvananthapuram from Dubai July 5.

Sivasankar ran into trouble after his alleged links with Swapna surfaced. Sivasankar has reportedly admitted to the Customs that he and Swapna were friends. She was on the run after the arrest of her friend and former colleague PS Sarith by the Customs. Later, it was revealed that Swapna and Sivasankar were close and had attended several Kerala government events. Vijayan removed him both as his Principal Secretary and in charge of Information Technology Department though he ruled out his suspension Tuesday.

Meanwhile, the name of another person attached to Vijayan’s office has surfaced for allegedly helping those involved in the case.

Sivasankar, who was let off by the Customs after a nine-hour grilling in the early hours of Wednesday, is now likely to be called in for more questioning by the Customs and the NIA.

Catholic priest wants to marry his rape victim

Robin Vadakkumchery, dismissed from priesthood by the Vatican, was serving as a parish vicar near Kannur and was manager of the Church-backed-school, where the victim, a Class 11 student, was studying

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kochi, July 15: Kerala Catholic priest Robin Vadakkumchery, 52, sentenced to 20 years in jail in three different cases of rape and abuse of a minor, has moved the Kerala High Court seeking to marry the victim and take care of the child born to her.

Expressing similar wish, the victim has filed an affidavit in the court.

However, the prosecution expressed doubts over it and said it could be a ploy to get relaxation. The court has sought a police report and posted the case for July 24.

Vadakkumchery, dismissed from priesthood by the Vatican, was serving as a parish vicar near Kannur and was the manager of the Church-backed-school, where the victim, a Class 11 student, was studying.

A child line agency, which works among school children, had registered the complaint against the

priest. The priest came under pressure after the girl gave birth to a child February 7, 2017.

The priest was arrested February 27, 2017 from near the Kochi International Airport while he was preparing to slip out of the country. He was tried under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act. February 17, 2019, he was sentenced to 20-year jail by a court in Thalassery.

During the trial, the victim and her mother had turned hostile. But the court handed out the verdict on the basis of evidence. Four nuns, another priest and one more woman attached to the convent, all co-accused in the police charge-sheet, were let off due to lack of evidence.

In March, the Manthavady (in Wayanad district) Adiocees officials said the Vatican had dismissed Vadakkumchery from priesthood. The papers related to the Pope’s decision, taken December 5, 2019, were given to the jailed priest.



50 days on, gas well fire likely to be doused

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Guwahati/Dibrugarh, July 15: Energy major Oil India Limited (OIL) Wednesday said the blaze at the damaged Baghjan gas well in Assam has continued unabated for 50 days and the final push to extinguish the fire will begin soon.

A senior official of the PSU told PTI that the fire is expected to be doused by Friday.

Major debris from the well plinth area has been cleared and a detailed inspection was undertaken jointly by experts from OIL, ONGC and Singapore’s Alert Disaster Control to decide the next course of action.

“The main operation for capping and killing the well is yet to begin. The well continues to be on fire,” the oil exploration major said on its official Twitter handle.

Describing a report published in an English daily that the fire has been extinguished as “factually incorrect”, the company said the debris has been removed from the well site and preparations are on for the well capping operation.

Well number 5 at Baghjan in Tinsukia district has been spewing gas uncontrollably since May 27 and it caught fire on June 9, killing two firefighters of the OIL at the site.

Giving an update of its efforts to put out the massive flame, the OIL said, “Equipment being placed at Kill Pump area at the site... activities are on for carrying out the well capping and killing operation.”

Later, the company said in a statement that the water reservoirs are



being filled up periodically and three heavy duty pumps of the ONGC and OIL are ready for use.

Meanwhile, protests and blockades were being staged by locals leading to heavy production loss in the last few months, the company said.

“Blockade still continues at Baghjan EPS. Due to the blockade, four gas wells and eight oil wells under Baghjan EPS had to be shut since July 7. As a result, approximately 1.5-1.6 MMSCMD gas has gone out from the grid, which ultimately led to curtailment of gas supply to all consumers,” the statement said.

The OIL said there was a production loss of 441 MT of crude oil and 1.34 MMSCM of natural gas on Tuesday because of disruptions

ECO DAMAGING

Well number 5 at Baghjan in Tinsukia district has been spewing gas uncontrollably since May 27 and it caught fire June 9, killing two firefighters of the OIL at the site

Over 9,000 people were initially shifted to 13 relief camps after the well suffered the blowout

The PSU said various assessments and impact studies of the blowout as well as the blaze in villages and nearby forest areas by multiple agencies such as ERM India, TERI and CSIR-NEIST are going on at present

in 11 oil wells and four gas wells due to blockades. “Cumulative production loss since May 27, 2020, due to bandhs and blockades: 12,657 MT

crude oil, 23.38 MMSCM of natural gas,” the release said. The PSU said various assessments and impact studies of the blowout as well as the blaze in villages and nearby forest areas by multiple agencies such as ERM India, TERI and CSIR-NEIST are going on at present.

About the relief and rehabilitation process, it said surveys for assessment of damage for compensation by the district administration are in progress in both Tinsukia and Doomdooma circles.

“Total number of families surveyed till July 14 in both Tinsukia and Doomdooma circles is 1,491,” it added.

Over 9,000 people were initially shifted to 13 relief camps after the well suffered a blowout in May and subsequently caught fire last month.

AGENCIES

Guwahati, July 15: An adult ‘golden’ tigress, recently spotted in Assam’s Kaziranga National Park, is primarily a singular case of ‘colour aberration caused by a unique gene’, experts said.

The only such big cat in the park, first spotted in 2014 during an all India tiger monitoring exercise, has ‘lighter yellowish skin tone, narrower black stripes, whiter abdominal and facial regions when compared to a normal Royal Bengal Tiger’, Dr Firoz Ahmed, the head of Tiger Research and Conservation Division at NGO Aaryanak, told PTI.

A photograph of the tigress posted by a forest officer on social media has gone viral, generating considerable curiosity among people.

“This individual tigress, in particular, has black stripes which are narrow and less intense in colour, making it appear unique. The expression of colour in animals is controlled by genes and it is natural that hidden genes find expression at times, giving them unique appearance,” he said.

However, the rare golden colour’s impact on the behaviour of the tigress is unknown, but it has grown into an adult and is living naturally in Kaziranga, Ahmed added.

Wildlife experts Rabintra Sharma and Kamal Azad have pointed out

COLOUR ABERRATIONS

- The biological reason of colour aberration may be due to excessive inbreeding caused by habitat destruction and loss of connectivity
- The finding is not a cause for celebration, but an indication for us to start pondering about better connectivity among the fragmented population of tigers to prevent inbreeding -- one of the serious problems caused due to population decline

Wildlife experts have pointed out that colour aberrations are not very common, and only a few are recorded in the wild

that colour aberrations are not very common, and only a few are recorded in the wild.

“The biological reason of colour aberration may be due to excessive inbreeding caused by habitat destruction and loss of connectivity,” one of the experts pointed out.

The recessive genes are showing up due to inbreeding within fragmented population, Sharma, also a research officer in Kaziranga National Park, said.

The finding is not a cause for celebration, but an indication for us to start pondering about better

connectivity among the fragmented population of tigers to prevent inbreeding – one of the serious problems caused due to population decline, the experts said.

The tigress was captured multiple times since 2014.

In 2016, she was photographed with another tiger. But it could not be concluded whether the other tiger was her cub or mate due to low quality of the image.

It will be very interesting to find out whether her offspring will carry her ‘faulty gene’, the two experts added.

of the day quote

These days many of the youngsters are encouraged in the Congress party. But at the same time there is a need for well-tested leadership because you can't just neglect the veterans also



M VEERAPPA MOILY | SENIOR CONGRESS LEADER

In the last five years, Skill India has played a major role in boosting the spirit of entrepreneurship among the youth. By encouraging the job seekers to become job givers, I am sure that this will go a long way in realising PM @narendramodi ji's vision of #AatmaNirbharBharat



AMIT SHAH | UNION HOME MINISTER

The COVID-19 situation in the national capital is better than in June, but the war against the disease has not been won yet



ARVIND KEJRIWAL | DELHI CHIEF MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

MC member abducted in J&K

Srinagar: Meraj-ud-Din Malla, Vice-President of Watergam Municipal Committee in Baramulla district of Jammu and Kashmir, was abducted Wednesday by unidentified persons, police sources said. The sources said after the abduction was reported Wednesday morning, a massive manhunt has been launched to trace Malla.

Girl threatened

Aligarh: A student of Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) has lodged a complaint with the police against a fellow student who allegedly threatened her on social media that she would be forced to wear a 'brass hijab' once the varsity reopens after the lockdown. Taking cognisance of the matter, State Women's Commission member, Meena Kumari, has written to Aligarh SP (crime) Arvind Kumar and sought action on the complaint filed by the girl student. The police have assured action in the matter. According to the complaint filed with the SSP, the girl alleged that a student of Bachelor in Architecture (B.Arch) had used uncivilised language against her on a social media site after she posted her opinion on girls being forced to cover themselves in some colleges.

Cop found dead

New Delhi: A 23-year-old woman constable of Delhi Police posted at Tihar jail was found dead at her rented accommodation in southwest Delhi's Palam village Wednesday, police said. Police suspect that someone known to the victim might have killed her. She lived at the rented accommodation while her parents stayed in Haryana's Rewari district, they said. She joined the Delhi Police in 2018 and was currently posted with the 3rd Battalion of Delhi Armed Police. She was deployed at the Tihar jail as a Daily Diary entry writer in the office of the duty officer, police said.

One arrested

Meerut: Beating up of a 'sevadar' at a temple in Uttar Pradesh's Meerut district and his subsequent death led to tension in the area after VHP activists claimed a communal angle to the crime and demanded the arrest of all the culprits. One person has been arrested for the crime that was reported on Tuesday in Bhavanpur where deceased Kanti Prasad ran a shop selling religious memorabilia.



WB government will provide jobs to the family members of state employees who died while leading the fight against COVID-19

MAMATA BANERJEE | WEST BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER

TIME TO CHEER

Distribution of free books to students of Classes X and XII in schools across districts of Tamil Nadu began from Wednesday



LAC ROW

India conveys strong message to China

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 15: The Indian military conveyed a "very clear" message to the Chinese army during a nearly 15-hour-long talks that status quo ante must be restored in eastern Ladakh and it will have to follow all mutually agreed protocols for border management to bring back peace and tranquility along the Line of Actual Control, government sources said on Wednesday. During the course of the intense and complex negotiations between senior commanders of the two armies that ended at 2 am on Wednesday, the Indian delegation also apprised the Chinese PLA about the "red lines" and conveyed that the onus was largely on China to improve the overall situation in the region, the sources said.

The two sides agreed on certain modalities for rolling out the next phase of disengagement and are expected to get in touch with each other after discussing agreed points with the higher authorities of both sides, the sources said.

The fourth round of Lt General-level talks began around 11 am Tuesday at a designated meeting point in Chushul on the Indian side of the LAC, they said. There was no official word on the outcome of the talks.

The Indian delegation was led by Lt Gen Harinder Singh, the Commander of the Leh-based 14 Corps, while the Chinese side was headed by Major General Liu Lin, Commander of the South Xinjiang military region.

Army Chief Gen MM Naravane was apprised about the details of the negotiations following which he



The two sides agreed on certain modalities for rolling out the next phase of disengagement and are expected to get in touch with each other after discussing agreed points with the higher authorities of both sides, the sources said

The Indian delegation was led by Lt Gen Harinder Singh, the Commander of the Leh-based 14 Corps, while the Chinese side was headed by Major General Liu Lin, Commander of the South Xinjiang military region

held discussions with senior military officers. He is scheduled to hold another meeting with a number of senior military officers later in the day.

Tuesday's discussions were the longest negotiations between the two armies after the tense standoff that began on May 5. The third round of Lt General-level talks on June 30 lasted 12 hours. During this round, both sides agreed on an "expeditions, phased and step wise" de-escalation as a "priority" to end the standoff.

The sources said the main focus of the latest round was on finalising a framework for a "time-bound and verifiable" disengagement process from all the friction points like Pangong Tso and Depsang and pulling back large numbers of troops and weapons from rear bases along the LAC as part of modalities for further de-escalation.

ARMED FORCES GET SPECIAL POWERS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 15: In view of the border row with China in eastern Ladakh, the defence ministry on Wednesday granted special powers to the three services for individual capital procurement programme worth Rs 300 crore to meet emergent operational requirements, officials said.

They said there was no cap on the number of procurement programmes and that each acquisition under the emergency requirement category should not cost more than Rs 300 crore.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) headed by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh.

"The DAC delegated the powers for progressing urgent capital acquisition cases of up to Rs 300 crore to the armed forces to meet their emergent operational requirements," the defence ministry said in a statement.

The decision, it said, will shrink the procurement timelines and ensure placement of orders within six months and commencement of deliveries within one year.

It said the special meeting of the DAC was convened considering the prevailing security environment along the northern borders and the need to strengthen the armed forces for the defence of the country's borders.

The three services have started buying a range of military equipment, weapons and platforms in the last few weeks in the midst of the tense border row with China in eastern Ladakh.



KANPUR KIDNAPPING

Police botch up rescue op

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kanpur, July 15: The Kanpur police has landed in a major controversy after it asked the family of a kidnapped man to pay the ransom money to the kidnappers.

The family arranged for the money, Rs 30 lakh, and went to the designated spot on the Gujaini railway track on Monday. The police were apparently waiting in the wings to swoop down on the kidnapper.

However, the entire plan went awry when the kidnapper fled with the money and there was no rescuing the hostage.

According to reports, Sandeep, son of Chaman Singh who works at a local pathology lab, was kidnapped June 22.

The kidnappers called up the family and demanded Rs 30 lakh as ransom. Subsequently, Chaman Singh lodged a complaint and an FIR was registered at the Barra police station.

On the advice of the police, Chaman Singh managed to arrange the ransom amount and, as asked by the police, he handed it over to the kidnapper.



The family arranged for the money and the police were waiting in the wings to swoop down on the kidnapper. However, the entire plan went awry when the kidnapper fled with the money

"However, the police are now saying that they are clueless about the whereabouts of the kidnappers as well as my son," Singh said. A video

of his daughter crying for help from the media and the police has also gone viral on the social media.

Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Dinesh Kumar Prabhu, said: "I am looking into the investigation of this alleged kidnapping case registered at Barra police station. Our priority is to rescue the hostage."

He further said that separate teams have been formed and further investigations were on to trace the criminals and rescue the victim. SSP also assured to investigate the role of the police and said that if found guilty, they will face strict action.

Delete FB account or quit Army, Delhi HC tells officer

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, July 15: A division bench of the Delhi High Court has refused to grant relief to a senior army officer, who had pleaded against the order of the Indian Army to ban its officers from using social networking platforms.

"If Facebook is so dear to you, then put in your papers. You'll have to make a choice," said the division bench presided over by Justices Rajiv Sahai Endlaw and Asha Menon on Tuesday.

The officer had approached the court on Monday against the Indian Army's order banning the army officers from using social networking platforms like Facebook, Instagram, etc.

The court said he has to take a decision and also asked the army official to delete his FB account as the policy to ban the use of social net-

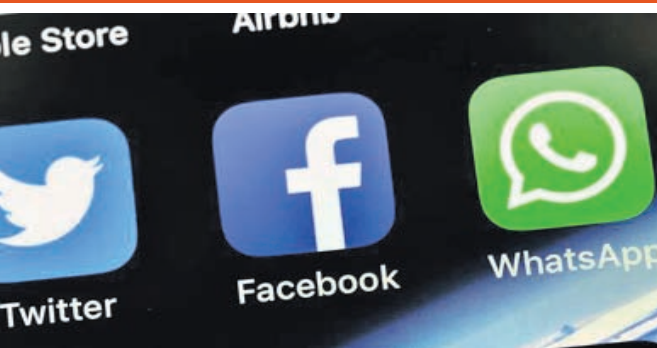
working platforms for army personnel was initiated keeping in view the national security of the country.

"The question of granting any interim relief does not arise, especially when the matter has the potential of concerning the safety and security of the country," the bench said.

The observations came in while the court was hearing a petition filed by Lieutenant Colonel P. K. Choudhary which sought the court's direction to the Director General of Military Intelligence (DGMI) to withdraw its policy which had ordered the officials of the Indian Army to delete their accounts from social networking platforms like Facebook and Instagram.

During the hearing, Choudhary contended that once deleted all the data, he would lose all his friends and contacts which are there on

MATTER OF CHOICE



the said social media platform. "No, you please delete it. You can always create a new one. It cannot continue like this," the bench said.

The petition filed through advocates Shivank Pratap Singh and Sanandika Pratap Singh stated that the said policy issued by the DGMI banned usage of 89 applications

and websites and directed deletion of accounts on the said websites and applications.

The ban and direction of deletion are applicable to all ranks of the Indian Army.

"The soldiers rely on social networking platforms like Facebook to address various issues arising in

IIT Delhi develops most affordable Covid test kit

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 15: Claimed to be the world's most affordable diagnostic kit for coronavirus, a low-cost test kit developed by the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) here was launched Wednesday.

According to IIT officials, the base price of the RT-PCR assay developed by IIT Delhi is Rs 399. Even after adding the RNA isolation and laboratory charges, the cost per test will go upto Rs 650 and will be considerably cheaper compared to currently available kits in the market. It can deliver results within three hours.

HRD Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' launched the test kit named 'Corosure' which will now be available for use at authorised testing labs. "The Corosure Kit has been developed indigenously and is much cheaper

than other kits. The country requires cheap and reliable testing for the country which can help control the pandemic. The kit has received ICMR approval with the highest score and DCGI approved with a very high sensitivity and specificity," he said at the launch.

Referring to as world's most affordable COVID-19 diagnostic kit, the HRD Minister said the innovation is a step

towards "Make in India".

IIT Delhi, which became the first academic institute to get ICMR nod for a COVID-19 testing method, gave non-exclusive open licence to 10 companies for commercialising the test, but with a price rider of Rs 500 for the assay needed for testing. The kit Corosure has been commercialised by Newtech Medical Devices.

CHEAP AND RELIABLE



AI allows LWP for up to 5 yrs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 15: Air India has started the process of identifying employees, based on various factors like efficiency, health and redundancy, who will be sent on compulsory leave without pay (LWP) for up to five years, according to an official order.

The airline's board of directors have authorised its Chairman and Managing Director Rajiv Bansal to send employees on LWP "for six months or for a period of two years extendable upto five years, depending upon the following factors - suitability, efficiency, competence, quality of performance, health of the employee, instance of non-availability of the employee for duty in the past as a result of ill health or otherwise and redundancy", the order said on Tuesday.

The departmental heads in the headquarter as well as regional directors are required to assess each employee "on the above mentioned factors and identify the cases where option of compulsory LWP can be exercised", stated the order dated July 14.

"Names of such employees need to be forwarded to the General Manager (Personnel) in headquarter for obtaining necessary approval of CMD," the order added. In response to queries regarding this matter, Air India spokesperson said, "We would not like to make any comment on the issue."

Aviation sector has been significantly impacted due to the travel restrictions imposed in India and other countries due to the coronavirus pandemic. All airlines in India have taken cost-cutting measures such as pay cuts, LWP and firings of employees in order to conserve cash flow.

For example, GoAir has put most of its employees on compulsory LWP since April. India resumed domestic passenger flights from May 25 after a gap of two months due to the coronavirus pandemic. However, the airlines have been allowed to operate only a maximum of 45 per cent of their pre-COVID domestic flights. Occupancy rate in Indian domestic flights has been around 50-60 per cent since May 25. Scheduled international passenger flights continue to remain suspended in India since March 23.



A municipality worker stands near a manhole on a waterlogged street during rain in Mumbai, Wednesday PTI PHOTO

of the day quote

These so-called young politicians are here to make careers (in politics) but don't have any inclination towards any party ideology



BK HARIPRASAD | CONGRESS LEADER

Traffic movement is less, there is a lockdown atmosphere everywhere, I feel that people have understood the importance... cooperation is required. I appeal to the people, if this lockdown has to be effective it has to be voluntary, only then we can control the rapid spread of coronavirus



BASAVARAJ BOMMAI | KARNATAKA HOME MINISTER

Lockdown is not a solution for the COVID-19 outbreak in Goa



GIRISH CHODANKAR | GOA CONGRESS CHIEF

SHORT TAKES

19 jawans test Covid positive

Shillong: Nineteen BSF personnel tested positive for COVID-19 in Meghalaya on Wednesday, taking the northeastern state's tally to 337, officials said. The fresh infections have taken the number of active cases in the state to 289, of which 205 are Border Security Force (BSF) personnel. The remaining 84 COVID-19 patients are civilians, Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma said.

Six arrested for attacking police

Bulandshahr (Uttar Pradesh): Six people have been arrested for attacking a team of Crime Branch policemen in Uttar Pradesh's Bulandshahr district. The ruckus allegedly helped a criminal to escape. The crime branch team was attacked on Saturday evening when they were searching for a criminal, Shahid, who is wanted in a murder case, in the Sarai Qazi area. The accused identified as Shakir, Aquil, Nadeem, Nawab, Naimuddin and Chand were arrested Tuesday.

Cops rescue pigeon in UP

Bareilly (UP): A pigeon caught in a kite string at about 60 feet above the ground, was rescued by Bareilly police in Izzatnagar area. The police used a crane to reach the bird and the policemen untangled the kite string from the bird and even tended to its wounds. According to report, the incident took place Monday evening when Constable Sandeep Kumar noticed a few people looking towards the sky.

STAYING RELEVANT

PM's job mantra amid Covid crisis

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 15: The mantra to stay relevant in the rapidly changing business environment and market conditions is to "skill, re-skill and upskill", Prime Minister Narendra Modi told the youth Wednesday, noting that the need for it has become more important in times of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Addressing a virtual event to mark five years of the Skill India mission, he said skill is timeless and it keeps getting better with time and it makes you different from others. He also said that in today's rapidly changing world, millions of skilled people are needed and there is a huge potential, especially in the health services. The prime minister said merchant navy is another avenue which has a huge potential. He said if we work on increasing the skill in this field, then we can give lakhs of expert sailors to the world, and can also strengthen the coastal economy of the country.

The coronavirus crisis has changed the nature of jobs as well as the world culture. The ever-changing new technology has also influenced it, he noted. Keeping in mind the new work culture and the new nature of jobs, the country's youth are increasingly adopting new skills, Modi said in his video address.

"Several people ask me that in today's time, business and markets change so fast that they do not understand how to remain relevant. In this time of corona (virus), this question has become even more important. "I have only one answer: The mantra to stay relevant is - skill, re-skill and upskill," the prime minister said.

Modi was of the view that skill is something which we gift to ourselves, which grows with experience. "Skill is timeless, it keeps getting better with time. Skill is unique, it makes you different from others. Skill is a treasure that nobody can take away. And, skill is self-reliance, it not only makes one employable but also self-employable," he noted. He observed that the Skill India Mission launched five years back on this day has led to creation of a vast infrastructure for skilling, reskilling and upskilling and enhancing opportunities to access employment



→ ADDRESSING A VIRTUAL EVENT TO MARK FIVE YEARS OF THE SKILL INDIA MISSION, HE SAID SKILL IS TIMELESS AND IT KEEPS GETTING BETTER WITH TIME AND IT MAKES YOU DIFFERENT FROM OTHERS

→ HE SAID THAT IN TODAY'S RAPIDLY CHANGING WORLD, MILLIONS OF SKILLED PEOPLE ARE NEEDED AND THERE IS A HUGE POTENTIAL, ESPECIALLY IN THE HEALTH SERVICES

both locally and globally.

It has led to hundreds of PM Kaushal Kendras being set up across the country and increase in the capacity of the ITI ecosystem. Due to these concerted efforts, more than five crore youth have been skilled in the last five years.

Referring to the portal launched recently for mapping skilled employees and employers, he stated that this would help skilled workers, including migrant workers who have returned to their homes during the coronavirus-induced lockdown to access jobs easily and the employers to contact skilled employees at the click of a mouse. He emphasised that the skills of migrant workers would also help in changing the local economy. Modi said migrant workers, with a special skill set, have started rejuvenating villages.

"Someone is painting the school, while someone is building a house with a new design," he pointed out.

Modi also brought out the distinction between 'knowledge' and 'skills' in his address. He illustrated this with an example - that knowing how a cycle runs is 'knowledge' while actually being able to ride a cycle was a 'skill'. It is important for the youth to realise the difference between the two and their different contexts and implications, he said.



Flood-affected villagers sit on a boat in front of their partially submerged house at Chandrapur in Kamrup district, Wednesday

PTI PHOTO

TMC CRACKS WHIP

Although Trinamool Congress, which controls nearly 80 per cent of the state's panchayats, has been at the receiving end of the public ire, the opposition BJP and the CPI(M) have also faced protests in some areas over allegations of fraud related to the 'Amphan' aid delivery

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, July 15: As protests continued in parts of West Bengal over alleged misappropriation of monetary compensation to the people affected by cyclone 'Amphan', the ruling TMC cracked a whip against corruption and expelled several party leaders and workers, while the BJP and CPI(M) said that they won't stand by those who have been proven guilty.

Although Trinamool Congress (TMC), which controls nearly 80 per cent of the state's panchayats, has been at the receiving end of the public ire, the opposition BJP and the CPI(M) have also faced protests in some areas over allegations of fraud related to the 'Amphan' aid delivery.

The protests have been taking

CYCLONE AID SCAM



place in various parts of East Midnapore, South and North 24 Parganas, the worst-affected districts by the cyclone 'Amphan' which hit West Bengal on May 20, killing 96 people and leaving behind a trail of destruction.

"Whenever any complaint was received, we took action against the accused leaders and party workers. We have either suspended or asked them to return money. We have zero tolerance towards corruption," a senior TMC leader said. Several local

level TMC leaders were recently expelled from the party for their alleged involvement in corruption and nepotism, he said.

West Bengal Chief Minister and TMC president Mamata Banerjee recently said that her government was rectifying the "lapses" which might have occurred in its effort to pay the compensation to the cyclone-hit victims quickly.

She had earlier warned a section of the party leaders of stern administrative action for being involved in corruption over the distribution of relief materials to the cyclone-affected people and said the party wouldn't stand by the wrongdoers. The opposition BJP, which have been accusing the TMC of indulging in corruption, also faced protests in some areas, where the party controls the panchayats.

Corona stings Bihar BJP chief

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Patna, July 15: BJP Bihar unit President Dr Sanjay Jaiswal has tested positive for coronavirus, apart from his wife and mother, a family member said Wednesday.

Dr Deepak Jaiswal said that his brother Sanjay had been tested after his return from Patna and the report was positive. "My mother and sister-in-law (Sanjay's wife) have also been found infected," Deepak said.

He said that test reports of other family members were negative. According to the sources, Sanjay had complained of cough and mild fever. He had visited Patna to attend the party's regional meeting last week. Earlier, five other party office-bearers in Bihar had tested corona positive.

The number of corona positive cases in Bihar has reached 18,853. More than 1,000 people are testing positive every day for the last three days. Many IAS and IPS officers have also tested positive for the virus.

Kashmir's carpet industry facing decline

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Srinagar, July 15: The iconic carpet industry of Kashmir is facing a sharp decline forcing most carpet weavers to take up odd jobs for earning their livelihood.

At Gada-khud village in Bandipore, 30 kms from Srinagar, the majority of the 400 households are carpet weavers. But with most handlooms shut the carpet weavers have taken up menial jobs. The weavers say demonitisation, abrogation of Article 370 and the economic downturn due to ongoing pandemic has dealt a big blow to Kashmir's multi-crore carpet industry.



For years Nazir Ahmad with five of his family members have been weaving carpets at a handloom in their house. But with hardly any buyers during the last one year they have stopped making carpets.

"We are facing major losses and not able to earn anything. We haven't

made a single carpet in the last one year," Nazir Ahmad said. "We don't get good rates for carpets, so we have stopped making carpets."

The acute financial crisis has forced Nazir Ahmad's son Mohammad Hussain to move to Srinagar to work as a labour. "There is no other option for me. I earn ₹400 daily as a labour which is barely enough to meet the expenses of the family," says Hussain.

According to estimates one lakh people were associated with carpet making in Kashmir. "The COVID-19 induced lockdown following the abrogation of Article 370 caused a sharp decline in the number of

The weavers say demonitisation, abrogation of Article 370 and the economic downturn due to ongoing pandemic has dealt a big blow to Kashmir's multi-crore carpet industry

tourists coming to Kashmir, which also impacted the carpet business," said Ghulam Mohammad, a carpet trader. "The exporters are also telling us that there are no buyers for carpets. But we are hoping that the things will improve," said Mohammad.

Smuggling of cigarettes, liquor surges amid Covid

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, July 15: Gold, cigarettes and liquor were among high tax items which topped the list of smuggled goods across India amid the current coronavirus crisis that has led to economic distress.

Smuggling of these goods not only registered a sharp spike amid the pandemic but also smugglers, interestingly, used innovative measures like ferrying illegal cigarettes in COVID-19 special trains.

Revealing the fact based on a study of seizure of such smuggled items, FICCI's Committee Against Smuggling and Counterfeiting Activities Destroying the Economy (CASCADE) said Customs officials had two major seizures of smuggled cigarettes at the New Delhi railway station where the smugglers were using COVID-19 special trains for



ferrying these products in less than a week. These seizures come on the back of two other major busts of foreign cigarette smuggling rackets, the first in Mumbai and second one in Hyderabad, said the study, adding the combined value of the seizures is over ₹15 crore. Earlier this month, the study said, seizures of smuggled gold

worth ₹1.5 crore and ₹15 crore were also made by the Kerala Airport Authority and customs at Thiruvananthapuram Airport respectively.

Not only does the smuggling dent the government exchequer by creating opportunities from tax arbitrage, but also threatens local industries on which livelihoods of

many depend, the study said.

The study estimates that over 16 lakh jobs were lost in India in five industry sectors alone in 2017-18 due to smuggling. "Besides unemployment and massive financial losses, it also creates large scale destabilisation by fomenting crime and funding insurgency and terrorism."

In order to create large-scale awareness of this menace, FICCI CASCADE has been conducting several interactions with government and enforcement agencies to mitigate this challenge. Applauding enforcement agencies for recent seizures, FICCI, an association of business organisations in India established in 1927, has urged the government to keep up the vigilance on smuggling of goods.

"Illicit trade has emerged as one of the most formidable challenges before our nation, especially during

the current pandemic which has led to economic distress. This comes in the wake of several cases of smuggling of goods such as gold, cigarettes, liquor, which have been reported amid the COVID-19 pandemic," the organisation said.

Anil Rajput, Chairman, FICCI CASCADE said: "The perpetrators of illicit trade are always looking at innovative ways to deceive the system to carry out their activities. "This deeply harms the economic interests of the nation and the society ends up paying a huge cost. While the recent efforts of enforcement officers are laudable, we cannot afford to let the guard down. At a time when the country is already dealing with the coronavirus-triggered financial stress, it is important that the government maintains a strict vigil to ensure that these offenders are kept at bay."

82 MAHA COPS DIED OF CORONA SINCE MARCH

A total of 82 Maharashtra police personnel, including six officers, have succumbed to Covid-19 infection since the outbreak in March this year, a senior official said Wednesday



FIGHTING CORONA

Punjab plans to expand social media outreach

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chandigarh, July 15: Amid the growing global importance of the social media in battling the COVID-19 crisis, the Punjab government Wednesday decided to expand its social media outreach by setting up 15 expert teams on an outsourced model. The Cabinet approved an annual budget of ₹7 crore for the teams, which will be constituted by engaging professionals and experts in the field, an official spokesperson said.

Chief Minister Amarinder Singh termed the move as vital for expanding the state's reach and strengthening the Public Relation Department's efforts in disseminating information regarding various aspects related to the novel coronavirus pandemic in an effective and result-oriented manner.

The cabinet felt that certain departments of the state have a high level of interaction with the public. It was essential that all important information relating to the pandemic and the preventive

measures being taken to combat it should be regularly highlighted in the social media.

The social media teams would help in bridging the gap between these departments and the public at large. In order to cater the requirements of such departments, the Cabinet also gave a nod to engage the services of 63 social media professionals and experts. These include one media manager, two assistant media managers, 15 digital media executives, 15 video editors, 15 graphic designers and 15 content writers on an outsourced basis for one year.

It was felt that to keep pace with the fast-paced changes in the field, recruitment of professionals for long periods of service was not feasible. Besides creating awareness among the people about the precautions, norms, etc., relating to the pandemic, the teams would also help in countering the spread of misinformation. They would be providing credible and updated information to them on a regular basis.



of the day quote

My sense is that 2020 will witness an inflection point in the UK-India healthcare collaboration

DR AMAN PURI | INDIAN DIPLOMAT

Germany is willing to compromise on the European recovery fund at the upcoming summit of the European Union (EU) leaders

ANGELA MERKEL | GERMAN CHANCELLOR

France is ready for a second epidemic wave and our team will follow a new path based on social dialogue to address the challenges triggered by the coronavirus crisis

EMMANUEL MACRON | FRANCE PRESIDENT

SHORT TAKES

Biden vows to rejoin Paris deal

Washington: Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden has unveiled a \$2 trillion proposal to boost investment in clean energy and combat the global warming as he pledged to rejoin the historic Paris agreement on climate change if elected in the November elections. US President Donald Trump in 2017 withdrew the United States, the world's No 2 emitter of greenhouse gases behind China, from the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement that brought countries together to mitigate global warming, saying it was too costly.

Indonesia flood toll rises to 21

Jakarta: The death toll from a flash flood in Indonesia's South Sulawesi province rose to 21 Wednesday with two people still missing, an official said. National Disaster Mitigation Agency spokesman Raditya Jati said search and rescue operations were hampered by thick mud covering roads and houses, and rain was continuing to fall.

Covid red alert situation in Tokyo

Tokyo: Tokyo raised its coronavirus alert to the highest "red" level Wednesday, alarmed by a recent spike in daily new cases to record highs, with Governor Yuriko Koike describing the situation in the Japanese capital as "rather severe".

3 ships on fire at Iranian port

Iran: At least three ships are on fire at the Bushehr port in southern Iran, the official *IRNA* news agency reported Wednesday. There have been several explosions and fires around Iranian military, nuclear and industrial facilities since late June.

Judge halts execution

Terre Haute (US): A judge Wednesday halted the execution of a man said to be suffering from dementia, who had been set to die by lethal injection in the federal government's second execution after a 17-year hiatus. Wesley Ira Purkey, convicted of a gruesome 1998 kidnapping and killing, was scheduled for execution Wednesday at the US Penitentiary in Terre Haute, Indiana, where Daniel Lewis Lee was put to death Tuesday after his own 11th-hour legal bids failed.

China vows retaliation against US

AGENCIES

Washington, July 15: President Donald Trump Tuesday ordered an end to Hong Kong's special status under US law to punish China for what he called "oppressive actions" against the former British colony, prompting Beijing to warn of retaliatory sanctions.

Citing China's decision to enact a new national security law for Hong Kong, Trump signed an executive order that he said would end the preferential economic treatment for the city.

"No special privileges, no special economic treatment and no export of sensitive technologies," he told a news conference.

Acting on a Tuesday deadline, he also signed a bill approved by the US Congress to penalise banks doing business with Chinese officials who implement the new security law.

"Today I signed legislation, and an executive order to hold China accountable for its aggressive actions against the people of Hong Kong," Trump said. "Hong Kong will now be treated the same as mainland

TRUMP ENDS PREFERENTIAL STATUS FOR HK



China," he added. Under the executive order, US property would be blocked of any person determined to be responsible for or complicit in "actions or policies that undermine democratic processes or institutions in Hong Kong," according to the text of the document released by the White House. It also directs officials to "revoke license exceptions for exports to Hong Kong," and includes revoking special treatment for Hong Kong passport holders. China's foreign ministry said Wednesday Beijing will impose

retaliatory sanctions against US individuals and entities in response to the law targeting banks, though the statement released through state media did not reference the executive order.

"Hong Kong affairs are purely China's internal affairs and no foreign country has the right to interfere," the ministry said.

Critics of the security law fear it will crush the wide-ranging freedoms promised to Hong Kong when it returned to Chinese rule in 1997, while supporters say it will bring

stability to the city after a year of sometimes violent anti-government protests. The security law punishes what Beijing broadly defines as subversion, secession, terrorism and collusion with foreign forces with up to life in prison.

US relations with China have already been strained over the global coronavirus pandemic, China's military buildup in the South China Sea, its treatment of Uighur Muslims and massive trade surpluses.

"Make no mistake. We hold China fully responsible for concealing the virus and unleashing it upon the world. They could have stopped it, they should have stopped it. It would have been very easy to do at the source, when it happened," he said.

Asked if he planned to talk to Chinese President Xi Jinping, Trump said: "I have no plans to speak to him." Analysts say that completely ending Hong Kong's special treatment could prove self-defeating for the United States.

Hong Kong was the source of the largest bilateral US goods trade surplus last year, at \$26.1 billion, US Census Bureau data shows.

Localists top HK pro-democracy polls



LOCALIST CANDIDATES SAID THE RESULTS REFLECTED THE TERRITORY'S 'UNITY' ON CHINA'S CONTROVERSIAL NATIONAL SECURITY LAW

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Hong Kong, July 15: Young activists and localist candidates dominated Hong Kong's unofficial pro-democracy primaries over the weekend, with hundreds of thousands of people voting despite warnings the election could violate the territory's new security law imposed by Beijing.

Candidates who topped the polls were in their 40s or younger in every constituency and included prominent pro-democracy activists Joshua Wong and Jimmy Sham, who helped organise many of last year's anti-government protests that had alarmed the central government in Beijing.

Incumbent lawmakers such as Ted Hui and Eddie Chu, known for their vocal and outspoken criticism in legislative meetings, also took top spots. The polls were held to whittle the pro-democracy camp's

candidates to field a unified slate in a legislative election in September in hopes of achieving a "35-plus" majority in the 70-seat legislature.

The pro-democracy camp has pledged to vote down the budget if they attain majority.

Under Hong Kong's mini-constitution, known as the Basic Law, the city's leader — currently Carrie Lam — must resign if an important bill such as the budget is vetoed twice.

Wong also said at the pro-democracy camp's news conference Wednesday that President Donald Trump's signing of the Hong Kong Autonomy Act — which paves the way for sanctions to be imposed on Chinese officials in retaliation for the national security law — has shown that Beijing's actions will backfire on them.

Lam Monday warned organisers and candidates of the primary that the event could be considered subversive under the city's tough new national security law if the objective is to resist every policy initiative of the government.

The sweeping law Beijing enacted June 30 in response to last year's often violent protests calling for greater democracy and police accountability outlaws secessionist, subversive and terrorist activities, as well as collusion with foreign forces to intervene in the city's affairs. The maximum punishment for serious offenders is life imprisonment.

Tanker off UAE sought by US 'hijacked'

Satellite photos showed the vessel in Iranian waters Tuesday and two of its sailors remained in the Iranian capital

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Dubai, July 15: An oil tanker sought by the US over allegedly circumventing sanctions on Iran was hijacked July 5 off the coast of the United Arab Emirates, a seafarers organisation said Wednesday. Satellite photos showed the vessel in Iranian waters Tuesday and two of its sailors remained in the Iranian capital. It wasn't immediately clear what happened aboard

the Dominica-flagged MT Gulf Sky, though its reported hijacking comes after months of tensions between Iran and the US.

David Hammond, the CEO of the United Kingdom-based group Human Rights at Sea, said he took a witness statement from the captain of the MT Gulf Sky, confirming the ship had been hijacked.

Hammond said that 26 of the Indian sailors on board had made it back to India, while two remained in Tehran, without elaborating.

Hammond said that he had no other details on the vessel. *TankerTrackers.com*, a website tracking the oil trade at sea, said it saw the vessel in satellite photos on Tuesday in Iranian waters off Hormuz Island. Hormuz Island,

near the port city of Bandar Abbas, is some 190 kilometers (120 miles) north of Khorfakkan, a city on the eastern coast of the United Arab Emirates where the vessel had been for months. The Emirati government, the US Embassy in Abu Dhabi and the US Navy's Bahrain-based 5th Fleet did not respond to requests for comment. Iranian state media did not immediately report on the vessel and Iran's mission to the United Nations did not immediately respond to a request for comment. In May, the US Justice Department filed criminal charges against two Iranians, accusing them of trying to launder some \$12 million to purchase the tanker, then named the MT Nautica, through a series of front companies.

'Nature-positive' solutions can create 395mn jobs: WEF

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Geneva, July 15: The global COVID-19 pandemic has caused unprecedented job losses and economic uncertainty. As governments and businesses look to stimulate growth, a new study from the World Economic Forum found 'nature-positive' solutions can create 395 million jobs by 2030.

The Future of Nature and Business Report provides blueprints for businesses to tap into a \$10.1 trillion business opportunity, focusing on industry actions that are nature-positive, meaning that they add value to nature.

The report is built on real world examples where business outcomes have been improved by nature-positive outcomes.

Smart farming utilizing sensors and satellite imagery in Indonesia

improved crop yields on average by 60 per cent.

Suzhou Industrial Park's green development in China has seen its GDP increase 260-fold partially through green development. In Vietnam, people living in coastal communities saw their incomes more than double

following the restoration of critical mangroves.

"We can address the looming biodiversity crisis and reset the economy in a way that creates and protects millions of jobs," said Akanksha Khatri, Head of the Nature Action Agenda, World Economic Forum.

"Public calls are getting louder for businesses and government to do better. We can protect our food supplies, make better use of our infrastructure and tap into new energy sources by transitioning to nature-positive solutions."



Virus resurgence forces countries to reimpose curbs

AGENCIES

Promachonas (Greece), July 15: Countries around the world are reimposing lockdowns and implementing new health checks at their borders in an effort to curb a resurgence of the coronavirus before it spins even further out of control.

Starting Wednesday, all travellers arriving in Greece from a land border with Bulgaria were required to carry negative coronavirus test results issued in the previous 72 hours and translated into English. The new rules, which follow an increase in tourism-related COVID-19 cases, triggered an immediate drop in arrivals compared to recent days.

Residents of Australia's second-largest city Melbourne, were warned Wednesday to comply with lock-



down regulations or face tougher restrictions. Melbourne's 5 million people and part of the city's semi-rural surroundings are a week into a new, six-week lockdown to contain a new outbreak there.

The developments come with

more than 13 million cases of coronavirus cases confirmed worldwide, and with over 578,000 deaths, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University. The actual numbers are thought to be far higher due to a number of reasons in-

cluding limited testing. In Serbia, which has been hit hard by a spike in infections and anti-government protests, a government crisis team expanded a ban on gatherings of more than 10 people from Belgrade to encompass the entire country.

Masks were also made mandatory in public spaces where there is no opportunity for 1.5 metres of distancing, such as in lines to enter shops and bus stations.

Renewed restrictions took effect in Hong Kong Wednesday with public gatherings limited to four people, restaurants restricted to take-out after 6 pm, and a one-week closure for gyms, karaoke bars, and selected other businesses.

Masks were mandated on public transit for the first time, with the

non-compliant being fined.

After a surge in daily infections beginning last month, Israel moved last week to reimpose restrictions, closing events spaces, live show venues, bars and clubs. It has imposed lockdowns on areas with high infection rates, which in some cases sparked protests from residents.

South Africa, Africa's most developed country, is already showing signs of being overwhelmed by the pandemic — an ominous outlook for the rest of the continent of 1.3 billion people. In Spain, authorities in the northeastern Catalonia region made fresh attempts to stem the spread of new coronavirus outbreaks as health experts warned that more and better contact tracing is needed.

US COVID VACCINE ENTERS FINAL STAGE TRIAL THIS MONTH

AGENCIES

Washington, July 15: The US biotech firm Moderna said it would enter the final stage of human trials for its COVID-19 vaccine on July 27, after promising early results were published in an influential journal.

The Phase 3 trial will recruit 30,000 participants in the US, with half to receive the vaccine at 100 microgram dose levels, and the other half to receive a placebo.

It is designed to show whether the vaccine is safe and can prevent infection by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, or — if people still get infected — whether it can prevent the infection progressing toward symptoms.

of the day quote

The government has approved the launch of the initial phase of its flagship skill scheme PMKVY-III, as it eyes an increased focus on strengthening of district skill committees and creation of a demand-driven ecosystem for targeted training

MAHENDRA NATH PANDEY | MINISTER OF SKILL DEVELOPMENT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

We have implemented stringent safety measures across all our stores, which will help us in reassuring our customers and moving much faster towards normalcy. We are also accelerating our omni-channel marketing strategy with a renewed focus on e-commerce

CK VENKATARAMAN | MD, TITAN

Looking at the country and the state's financial condition, we want the Supreme Court to allow resumption of mining. Goa has low grade iron ore, which can only be exported. We are hopeful

PRAMOD SAWANT | CM, GOA

SHORT TAKES

‘Near term outlook bleak’

New Delhi: Asian Paints sees the near term outlook as "bleak" following COVID-19 disruption, but going forward it is optimistic and is focusing on medium to long term prospects, according to company's annual report. Paint being a discretionary spend item, there is a likelihood of customers putting their requirements on hold. Moreover, the real estate market is unlikely to recover soon, Asian Paints said.

Anarock ties up with Mace

New Delhi: Home-grown property consultant Anarock Wednesday said it has partnered with the UK-based Mace to provide project management services to Indian real estate developers and infrastructure firms. The two companies have signed a pact to provide a new and integrated project management service to the Indian developers, helping to deliver real estate projects and vital infrastructure, Anarock said in a statement.

‘Deal with Aramco not progressed’

Mumbai: Asia's richest man Mukesh Ambani Wednesday said his group's planned stake sale in oil-to-chemical business to Saudi Aramco for an asking of \$15 billion has not progressed as per original timelines due to COVID-19. "We value our two-decade relationship with Aramco and are committed to a long-term partnership," Ambani said at Reliance Industries' annual general meeting.

Honda drives in all new City

New Delhi: Japanese auto major Honda Wednesday launched the new version of its mid-sized sedan City in India priced between ₹10.9 lakh-Rs 14.65 lakh (ex-showroom Delhi). The fifth generation version of the popular model, which in its current form is longer and wider than the fourth generation City, comes with BS-VI compliant petrol and diesel powertrains. The 1.5-litre petrol versions with manual transmission are priced at ₹10.9 lakh, ₹12.26 lakh, and ₹13.15 lakh.



What has happened to businesses? Lockdown is lifted, but the demand doesn't exist. What you are going to see is a bloodbath among MSMEs. Do we need stimulus? Yes!"

PRONAB SEN | PROGRAMME DIRECTOR, IGC, INDIA

INDIA POSTS 1ST TRADE SURPLUS IN 18 YEARS

India posted a trade surplus of \$790mn in June, its first in over 18 years, with imports plunging as the nCoV pandemic hit domestic demand for crude oil, gold and other industrial products, government data showed. Merchandise imports contracted 47.59% in June to \$21.11bn from a year ago, while exports fell 12.41% to \$21.91bn



Flipkart, Odisha sign MoU to boost local art, craft, handloom

As part of this MoU, Flipkart will take onboard renowned local Odia brands like Boyanika, Utkalika and Sambalpuri Bastralaya

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 15: In a bid to promote Odisha's arts, crafts and handloom sectors, homegrown e-commerce marketplace Flipkart, Wednesday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the state government.

The partnership with State Institute for Development of Arts & Crafts (SIDAC) under the Flipkart Samarth programme will enable the local artisans, weavers and craftsmen in the state to showcase their trademark products to millions of customers across the country. SIDAC and Flipkart will primarily focus on creating avenues to increase business and trade inclusion opportunities for these underserved segments of the society, thereby adding further thrust to the 'Made in India' efforts.

As part of this MoU, Flipkart will take onboard renowned local Odia brands like Boyanika, Utkalika and Sambalpuri Bastralaya - the enterprises that work with local artisans and weavers to promote the best of state's local handicraft and handloom products, besides skilled artisans and weavers associated with the government.



The partnership with Flipkart is the beginning of a new era in Odisha's handicrafts and handloom sectors. With Flipkart's help, artisans living in remote areas of the state will now be able to market their products to consumers across the country

KAILASH CHANDRA SAHOO | ADDL. SECY. TO HANDLOOMS, TEXTILES & HANDICRAFTS DEPARTMENT, GOVT. OF ODISHA

Commenting on the MoU, Kailash Chandra Sahoo,

Additional Secretary to Handlooms, Textiles & Handicrafts Department, Govt. of Odisha said, "The partnership with Flipkart is the start of a new era in Odisha's handicrafts and handloom sectors. With the help of Flipkart, handloom and handicraft artisans living in remote areas of the state will now be able to market their products to consumers across the country via a better platform. This partnership will also help the artisans gain valuable knowledge about branding, digital marketing and financial management while showcasing the local heritage and hallmark products."

"We are delighted to join hands with the Govt. of Odisha to bring the state's heritage on our platform while providing the state's artisans and weavers a chance to fulfill their ambitions and expand their businesses on a pan-India level. These are challenging times, and as a homegrown platform, we believe it is our responsibility to boost local businesses and transform them through ecosystem partnerships. This MoU will reap the benefits of Flipkart Samarth to the thousands of handloom artisans, weavers and craftsmen in the state," said Rajneesh Kumar, Chief Corporate Affairs Officer, Flipkart Group.

In less than a year since its launch, Flipkart Samarth has been playing a significant role in building capabilities within the rural and underserved society of the country and is today supporting the livelihood of more than 5,00,000 artisans, weavers and micro enterprises across India.

BIZ BUZZ

Exports of coir, products rise to all-time high

New Delhi: The exports of coir and its products stood at ₹2,757.9 crore in 2019-20, registering an all-time high record, the government said Wednesday. The outward shipments of coir and coir



products in 2018-19 were ₹2,728.04 crore. "9,88,996 MT of coir and coir products were exported during the year 2019-20 from the country as against 9,64,046 MT exported during the preceding year," the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises said. While the exports of coir pith, tufted mats, coir Geo-textiles, coir rugs and carpets, coir other sorts, coir rope and power-loom mats registered growth both in terms of quantity and value, products like hand-loom mats, coir yarn, rubberized coir and power-loom matting showed decline in terms of quantity and increase in terms of value.

OPEC+ meets to decide on oil cuts easing

London/Dubai: OPEC and allies such as Russia meet on Wednesday to decide oil output policy from August amid broad market expectations the group will ease supply curbs as the global economy slowly recovers from the coronavirus pandemic. The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and allies, known as OPEC+, have been cutting output since May by 9.7 million barrels per day, or 10% of global supply, after the virus destroyed a third of global demand. After July, the cuts are due to taper to 7.7 million bpd until December. A panel involving key ministers and known as the Joint Ministerial Monitoring Committee (JMCC) meets Wednesday after 12 GMT to recommend the next level of cuts. Five OPEC+ sources have said no recommendations have been made to prolong record cuts into August.

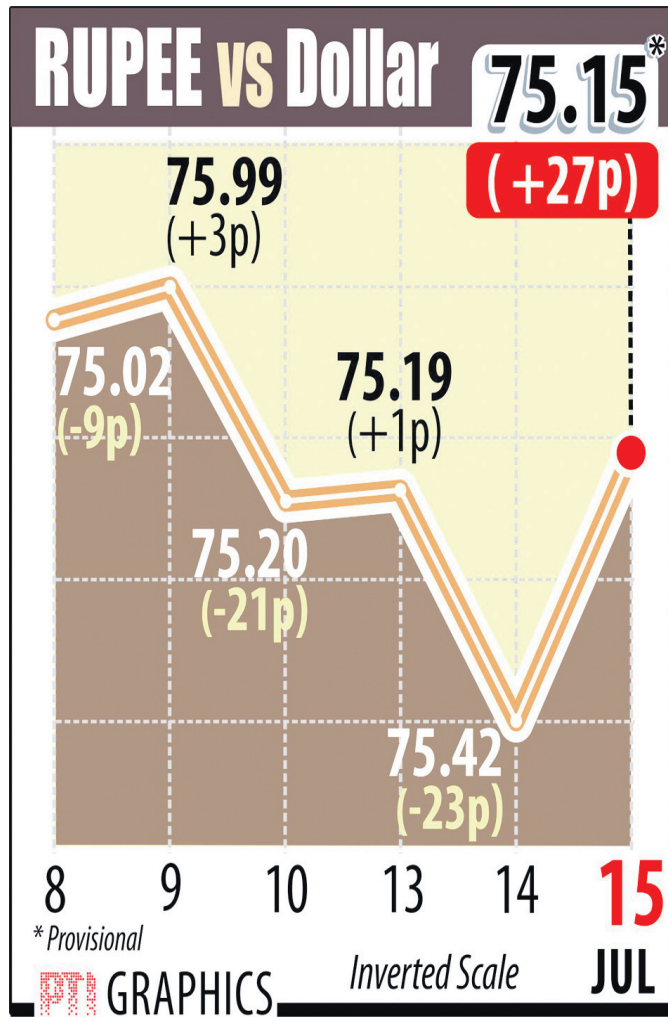


PNB Bhubaneswar gets new Zonal Manager

Bhubaneswar: Ashwani Kumar assumed the charge as Zonal Manager (ZM) of Bhubaneswar Zone. Under Bhubaneswar Zone, there are 5 circles and 371 branches spanning across the state. Kumar has worked in various capabilities as CFO, head of Corporate Credit vertical & headed two large corporate branches of the bank. "Earlier Odisha state was administered by Zonal office Kolkata, but in the merged entity new Zonal Office and 3 new Circles at Baleswar, Cuttack & Berhampur has been set up in Bhubaneswar in order to have focused approach to fulfill the credit needs of customers of the state. Earlier the bank was having 2 Circles at Bhubaneswar and Sambalpur," Kumar said. He further stated that turnaround time will reduce substantially, easy access/approach to the customers of the state & bank staff.



Ashwani Kumar



NTPC Kaniha bags Nat'l Training Award



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 15: NTPC Limited, Talcher Super Thermal Power Station, Angul bagged the prestigious 'Golden Peacock National Training Award'. A virtual global session was conducted by the Institute of Directors to present the Golden Peacock Awards to the winners for Business Excellence, Innovative Product/Service, Training and Quality, Wednesday.

In view of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, awards were presented via a virtual platform. Sudip Nag, Chief General Manager, NTPC Talcher Kaniha received the award virtually in presence of KS Sarma, AGM (HR) and PMGV Srinivas, AGM(RLL). The award was presented by Lt. Gen. JS Ahluwalia, President, Institute of Directors in the august presence of Durga Shanker Mishra, Secretary, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.

‘Fresh capital to provide stability to banks in rocky times’

ACCORDING TO A RELEASE, MOST INDIAN PUBLIC SECTOR BANKS IMPROVED THEIR CAPITALISATION LAST YEAR, WHICH SHOULD PROVIDE SOME SUPPORT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 15: Appreciating the decision of Indian banks to raise fresh capital, S&P Global Ratings has said that the move will provide stability to the institutions during these rocky times and help them withstand the economic slump amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The large capital-raising is credit positive," the agency said in a release adding that "large capital increases across India's financial institutions support the system's stability during these rocky times."

Indian banks that have expressed an intention to raise equity include ICICI Bank (Rs 15,000 crore), Axis Bank (Rs 15,000 crore), Yes Bank (Rs 15,000 crore), State Bank of India (Rs 20,000 crore), Bank of Baroda (Rs 9,000 crore), and Punjab National Bank (Rs 7,000 crore), said S&P.



Others that recently issued large amounts of capital include Kotak Mahindra Bank and IDFC First Bank.

"We believe top-tier Indian private sector banks are adequately capitalised," said S&P Global Ratings credit analyst Michael Pul.

They are raising further capital to strengthen their balance sheets, unlike state-owned banks, which generally have only small buffers

DRIFTING THROUGH

INDIAN BANKS THAT HAVE EXPRESSED AN INTENTION TO RAISE EQUITY INCLUDE ICICI BANK, AXIS BANK, YES BANK, SBI, BANK OF BARODA, AND PNB

TOP-TIER PRIVATE SECTOR BANKS ARE RAISING FURTHER CAPITAL TO STRENGTHEN THEIR BALANCE SHEETS, UNLIKE STATE-OWNED BANKS

S&P GLOBAL RATINGS PROJECTED NON-PERFORMING LOANS TO SHOOT UP TO 13-14% OF THE TOTAL LOANS IN THE CURRENT FINANCIAL YEAR

over regulatory capital, he said. "We expect large private sector banks, State Bank of India and a few other major public sector banks to be able to raise capital relatively easily," the release said adding that

Yes Bank's follow-on public equity offer at a huge discount to the market price shows that the banks are willing to go the extra mile as well to get sufficient capital.

Further, S&P Global Ratings projected non-performing loans to shoot up to 13-14% of the total loans in the current financial year, from an estimated 8.5% in 2019-20.

It also said credit costs may rise to about 3.7% of average loans in 2020-21.

"This cost should drop to 2% in fiscal 2022, but this would still be above the 15-year average of 1.5%," it said.

According to the release, most Indian public sector banks improved their capitalisation last year, which should provide some support.

The common equity tier-1 (CET1) ratio of public sector banks (PSBs) was 10.1% as of December 31, 2019,

higher than the regulatory requirement of 8% (including a capital conservation buffer).

Similarly, PSB' tier-1 capital adequacy ratio was 11.1%, higher than the regulatory requirement of 7%, it said. The agency expects that government-owned banks in India in aggregate will be able to absorb the estimated credit losses without breaching the regulatory minimum, but these banks need capital to grow.

"In our base case where we have factored in 4.5 per cent credit growth for government-owned banks in the current fiscal year, we estimate these banks need additional capital of ₹35,000 crore-Rs 40,000 crore this year," it said.

Some finance companies are also looking to bolster capital adequacy to address asset quality issues and improve liquidity, it said.

BLUES BOOST CL CHANCES



Olivier Giroud heads in the winner for Chelsea before celebrating (inset) the goal

REUTERS

London, July 15: An underwhelming Chelsea boosted their chances of a spot in next season's Champions League (CL), overcoming a slow start to beat relegated Norwich City 1-0 at Stamford Bridge Tuesday.

Olivier Giroud scored with virtually the last touch of the first half as Chelsea consolidated third place in the Premier League and moved four points above Leicester City and Manchester United in the battle for a top four finish.

It was an eighth successive league defeat for Norwich, who were already condemned to relegation after losing to West Ham United Saturday.

Chelsea struggled to convert their overwhelming possession into goals, failing even to fire a shot in anger before Christian Pulisic hit one into the side netting in the 27th minute.

The US international, who has been a revelation for Chelsea since the league returned after its COVID-19 hiatus, then showed some sharp skill nine minutes later.

His first touch allowed him to

bring the ball down with his back to goal and he then swivelled to shoot on target, forcing Norwich goalkeeper Tim Krul to tip the ball over the top. Kurt Zouma then headed the resultant corner narrowly wide.

Pressure from Chelsea, who made five changes after losing at Sheffield United Saturday, eventually paid off three minutes into first half stoppage time when Pulisic's cross was met by a diving Giroud to head home from point-blank range.

Norwich were more adventurous after the break but Chelsea still had the lion's share of possession, without creating too many chances.

Pulisic forced another save out of Krul in the 75th minute as he got a touch onto the end of a ball over the top of the defence from Giroud and the visiting keeper also pushed out William's 89th-minute free-kick.

Chelsea will now turn their focus to the FA Cup where they meet Manchester United in Sunday's semi-final at Wembley. Norwich will complete their season in the top flight at home to Burnley this weekend and away at Manchester City next.

EPL transfer window to run from July 27 to Oct 5

London: The Premier League said Wednesday that the 2020 summer transfer window will open for 10 weeks from July 27 and close October 5, with a domestic-only window for English Football League (EFL) clubs until October 16.

The league made the announcement after all shareholders agreed on the dates. It added that the transfer window was subject to the approval of FIFA.

The window, which has been delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent late finish to the season, opens one day after the completion of the top-flight campaign.

"Following consultation with the EFL, a domestic-only window will be added from October 5, closing 1700 BST October 16," the league said in a statement.

"During this window, Premier

League clubs will only be able to trade with EFL clubs (either loans or permanent registrations). No transfers can take place between Premier League clubs in this period."

World soccer governing body FIFA had said in April that it would be flexible with transfer windows and allow them to be moved "so they fall between the end of the old season and the start of the new season."

Clubs had been previously granted a one-day window to register new players July 1. "But clubs have been announcing new signings for the 2020-21 campaign. No signings announced after July 1 will be registered by the Premier League until the beginning of the summer 2020 transfer window," the league said. "So any new signings will only be able to play in 2020-21."

4 ties a day in 2022 WC group stage

REUTERS

Zurich, July 15: World Cup fans will be able to watch an unprecedented four games a day on television, spread out over 11 hours, during the group stage of the Qatar 2022 tournament after the schedule was confirmed Wednesday.

With the relatively short travel distances for the venues in and around Doha, it could be possible for fans who travel to the 32-team tournament to attend multiple games each day.

The tourney's opening game will be played at the 60,000-capacity Al Bayt Stadium November 21, while the final will take place December 18 at the 80,000-capacity Lusail Stadium

FIFA WORLD CUP Qatar 2022

The early games will kickoff at 1300 local (1000GMT) with the fourth match starting at 2200 local (1900GMT) and finishing just before midnight.

The tournament's opening game November 21, will be at the 60,000 capacity Al Bayt Stadium, with its distinctive 'tent' style covering. The final December 18 will be held at the 80,000 Lusail Stadium, which, like Al Bayt, will also host a semifinal.

NO JULY 19 RESUMPTION OF HOCKEY CAMPS!

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 15: The national camps for Indian men's and women's hockey teams will not resume as planned July 19 at Bangalore SAI Centre with the rising COVID-19 case count forcing the city into a complete seven-day lockdown.

The grave situation in the southern metropolis has left the Sports Authority of India (SAI) with no choice but to defer its plans.

Enjoying a break at their respective native places after being confined to their rooms at the SAI Centre for two months due to the nationwide lockdown, the players had been expected to return to base by July 19.

A SAI source in Bangalore, however, confirmed to PTI that there is

no way the national camps can resume on the earlier earmarked



date under the current circumstances.

"We didn't get any such instruction till now about resumption

of hockey camps. We were just being asked June 18 to allow the players to leave for their homes but no intimation has been given to us on resumption of camps," the source said.

"Frankly speaking, it is impossible to resume camps now because Bangalore is under complete lockdown till July 22. The cases are increasing everyday and there is a possibility that the lockdown would be extended till the end of this month."

Although the SAI headquarters here is yet to take a formal decision on the matter, Hockey India's de-recognition by the Sports Ministry, along with 53 other National Sports Federations (NSFs), as per the Delhi High Court's order, has made the situation complex.

Vettel could join Aston Martin in 2021: Reports

AGENCIES

London, July 15: Four-time Formula One (F1) World Champion Sebastian Vettel has been reportedly in talks with new Aston Martin team. German newspaper 'Bild' has reported that Vettel has reached an agreement with Racing Point, which is being rebranded by Lawrence Stroll to Aston Martin.

Vettel is expected to replace Sergio Perez, who currently races for Racing Point and has a lengthy contract with the team. Perez last year announced a long-term deal with Racing Point until 2023. But, it appears that his team would be using an exit clause to make way for Vettel.

The German will end his five-year association with Ferrari at the end of this season, as announced by the driver and the team earlier this year.

However, Racing Point team principal Otmar Szafnauer had played down the suggestion of approaching the four-time World Champion after he had announced his availability, the report added. "You're absolutely right, we have long contracts with both our drivers, so it would only be logical that we don't have space," Szafnauer told Autosport.



Hamilton aims for another F1 record

Mogyorod (Hungary): Red Bull's Max Verstappen will be doing all he can to stop six-time World Champion Lewis Hamilton completing a Mercedes hat-trick and matching another of Michael Schumacher's Formula One records in Hungary this weekend.

Verstappen has lined up on the front row for the first two races of the season in Austria, won by Mercedes' championship leader Valtteri Bottas and Hamilton respectively, and the rivalry is hotting up. Hungary is a favourite for Hamilton, who has won there seven times and can equal Schumacher's feat of winning the same Grand Prix eight times.

ODIs & T20Is AT HOME

India-England series set to be postponed

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 15: The Indian cricket team's six-match limited-overs home series against England scheduled in September is all set to be postponed along with New Zealand A's visit of the country next month due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The BCCI is yet to make any formal announcement in this regard but it is expected that it will happen soon. "England were supposed to play six games (three ODIs and three T20Is) during late September. Obviously in the current circumstances England won't be travelling to India," a senior BCCI official told this agency on conditions of anonymity.

India's Future Tours and Program (FTP) calendar will be among the main topics of discussion during the BCCI Apex Council meeting Friday.

"But I guess a formal announcement will happen once the FTP issue is discussed as it's part of the agenda during Friday's Apex Council meeting. New Zealand A had a tour of India scheduled in August and even that's also unlikely to go ahead," the

official said.

According to reports in the British media, the white ball tour may now happen in September, next year.

India currently has over nine lakh positive cases of COVID-19 and the death toll is inching towards the 25,000 mark. India's case load is the third highest in the world.

Even if the situation in India improves by September, there was very little possibility of England coming. "Our (BCCI) president (Sourav Ganguly), in a recent interview, said that they are planning for a camp in August if the situation permits. It's common sense that under these circumstances, no matches can be held," the official added.

Also the England tour was scheduled in the last week of September and with the ICC T20 World Cup in Australia set to be postponed, the IPL is expected to kick off during that phase either in India or abroad.

India's cricket team was last seen in action in March in a series against South Africa at home, which had to be called off midway because of the pandemic.



Barca launch new home kit for 2020-21



AGENCIES

Barcelona, July 15: Barcelona launched their new home kit for 2020-21 Tuesday which saw the club back in stripes for the new campaign.

The shirt has been leaked a long time ago but it's still pretty nice to have a look at players in the new shirt after ditching this season's Croatia-style checkerboard.

Barca had been due to debut the new kit against Espanyol but there had been problems with the shirt which had seen its release delayed until now.

"This season, the jersey is recovering its traditional vertical stripes, but is including gold as a distinctive element. The 'Blaugrana' stripes are bordered on each side by gold strips, which evoke the design of the Club crest that the team wore on their shirts throughout the 1920s," said a club official as quoted by SB Nation's 'barcablaugranes.com'.

"Another outstanding feature of the new design is the roundneck collar that also has a gold-coloured rim, while the Catalan 'senyera' flag appears on the back, just underneath," it added.

There's no official statement on when the players will be seen with it in action.

Olympics at risk 'if virus mutates'



REUTERS



Tokyo, July 15: The Tokyo Olympics may have to be postponed again if the novel coronavirus mutates into a stronger pathogen, Kiyoshi Kurokawa, a prominent Japanese government adviser, said Wednesday. However, a recent spike in cases in Tokyo is due to a failure to stick to guidelines to prevent contagion, he said.

A physician who served as a science adviser to the Japanese cabinet from 2006-2008, Kurokawa also headed an independent probe into the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster. Currently, he is advising the government on the pandemic.

"I think the virus is mutating all the time ... it may be a much stronger virus that triggers a second wave," Kurokawa told Reuters. "The Olympics may be postponed again, but I can't predict."

"I think it's small incidents happening in Tokyo ... new cases are because people are not abiding by recommendations," Kurokawa said of the current spike in infections. "But if there are some mutations, that is a completely different story. That could happen anywhere in the world."

Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike told Reuters Monday the Olympics, originally scheduled to start this

month but put off to 2021 because of the pandemic, must go ahead next year as a symbol of world unity in overcoming coronavirus.

The spike in infections in Tokyo, which accounts for more than one-third of Japan's more than 23,000 cases, has prompted a backlash against a planned campaign to promote domestic tourism. Kurokawa said authorities were trying to balance priorities.

"I think one of the concerns of this pandemic is how to prevent the spreading out of this corona infection. The other side of this issue is ... how to promote the economy. Many people are losing their jobs," he said. He added that he thought the government was "carefully balancing" the two priorities.

Kurokawa was appointed last month to head a new panel to examine how to use artificial intelligence to fight the spread of the virus. His appointment to the four-person group including a Nobel Prize winning geneticist came after Economics Minister Yasutoshi Nishimura abruptly announced he would dissolve a panel of scientific experts and remake it with new members.

GOING BY THE POSSIBILITY OF OLYMPICS' STAGING IN 2020 Men's team had good chance: Kumar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, July 15: World Cup-winning hockey legend Ashok Kumar Wednesday said it would be difficult for the Indian men's team to keep up the momentum that seemed good enough for a long-awaited Olympic podium finish had the Games been held as scheduled this year.

A key member of the 1975 world champion team and a bronze-medallist at the Munich Olympics can't help but wonder whether the Manpreet Singh-led team would shape up as nicely next year, as it did this year after a stellar 2019.

"If the Olympics were held this year, we definitely had some chance. We had shown improvement and we could have got some good results there," Kumar, who scored the winning goal against Pakistan in the 1975 World Cup final, told PTI in an exclusive interview.

"Definitely there is a break in momentum and it will really make a big difference. You can't say now (that we will win medal). We will talk about it next year seeing how they perform in the build up to the Olympics."

In fact, Kumar feels that coach



Graham Reid will also be a bit circumspect due to the forced break caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Even (head coach) Graham Reid will have a big question mark going on his head now. Coaching is going on inside closed doors. Unless you see them in real matches, how will you assess... He's not a machine."

India's best show came against world's top ranked team Belgium, beating a full strength side 2-1 in a Pro League encounter. India also had a commendable 2-2 draw against the formidable Australia in their final Pro League game before world came to a standstill due to the pandemic.

The 70-year-old further said the women's team was also in great shape and would have done well had

the Olympics been held this year.

"Even our women's team were in the peak of their form and they too had bright chances but now we never know. We will talk about the Olympics only next year," he said, remembering the 5-1 win over the USA in the first leg Olympic Qualifier.

The men's team will have a packed calendar when it resumes as it is slated to play in the Asian Champions Trophy in November before a tour to Malaysia followed by a Four-Nation tournament in New Zealand early next year.

The team will then resume the Pro League against Argentina with back-to-back matches till end of May in the build up to Tokyo 2021.

India, who lost to Belgium in Rio



2016 quarterfinals, have not won an Olympic medal since Moscow 1980 where they won a gold medal.

"It depends how they regroup and how they keep the spirit high. They have to stay motivated, it's purely an individual thing," the star dribbler of yesteryears said.

Kumar, however, believed that India have improved a lot in the recent past by bolstering their defence.

"We have a balanced squad at the moment. We have plugged the hole of leaking goals at the last minute. Our defence is much better now."

"We have some good drag-flickers in Rupinder Pal Singh and Simranjeet Singh. The forwards just need to combine a bit more and show ball anticipation."