



BRINGING CHEER

Actor Rasika Dugal says she is delighted to entertain the viewers through her acting-from-home skills

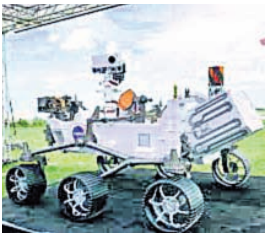
LEISURE P2



DELUGE IN BIHAR WORSENS

Over 38 lakh people of the state are affected, while 11 people have died so far in separate incidents

TWO STATES P7



MISSION 'MARS'

Nasa's new car-sized robotic spacecraft is on its way to Mars to search for ancient life

INTERNATIONAL P10

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Oh! Rafale's a fighter plane? The way everyone was behaving I thought it's a vaccine!!

SHORT TAKES

Trump suggests delay in elections

Washington: President Donald Trump is for the first time floating a "delay" to November's presidential election, as he makes unsubstantiated allegations that increased mail-in voting will result in fraud. The dates of federal elections - the Tuesday after the first Monday in November - are enshrined in federal law and would require an act of Congress to change. The Constitution makes no provisions for a delay to the January 20, 2021 presidential inauguration. Trump tweeted Thursday: "With Universal Mail-In Voting (not Absentee Voting, which is good), 2020 will be the most INACCURATE & FRAUDULENT Election in history."

3 Assam Rifles jawans killed

New Delhi: Three Assam Rifles personnel were killed and five injured in an ambush near India-Myanmar border at Chandel area in Manipur Wednesday night. A senior government officer said that a group of 15 soldiers were returning from an area dominance patrol at Khongtal in Chandel area when an improvised explosive device exploded. Thereafter they came under heavy fire from the members of an insurgent group.

MARKET WATCH	
INDEX	VARIATION
SENSEX	37736.07 ↓ 335.06
NIFTY	11102.20 ↓ 100.70
DOLLAR	75.06 ↑ ₹0.12
EURO	88.24 ↑ ₹0.35
GOLD	₹ 52,950 ↓ ₹237
SILVER	₹62,573 ↓ ₹2781

WEATHER	
	BHUB CTK
TEMP MAX	36.3°C 34.8°C
MIN	26.5°C 25.0°C
Humidity	92% 81%
Rainfall	1.2mm Nil
Forecast	Partly cloudy sky

Eyes on OERC order on TPCL plea

WITHIN JUST TWO MONTHS, TPCL FILES PETITION BEFORE OERC TO REVIEW ITS AGREEMENT

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 30: Though the state government has the privatised power distribution sector with a view to provide quality and uninterrupted power supply to people, the initiative is yet to yield the desired results. While quality and uninterrupted power supply remains a distant dream, the private discoms made handsome money utilising the infrastructure built with the taxpayer's money and left the state. This initiative was started in 80s, when the US-based company AES was the first one to enter into the business. Later, it was Reliance (BSES Ltd) and now Tata has entered the profitable business - operating as Tata Power Central Odisha Distribution Ltd. (TPCODL) (earlier known as CESU) since June 1. A pact in this regard was signed between the GRIDCO and OTPCL. The state government has 49 per cent share in the discom, while OTPCL holds the balance. While TPCODL has started collecting money from the consumers without spending a single pie, it has filed a petition before the Odisha Electricity



Revenue collection by CESU in 2019-20	
CONSUMER	COLLECTION
LT (Low tension)	₹1598.70 cr
HT (High tension)	₹785.58 cr
EHT (Extra high tension)	₹575.82 cr

Regulatory Commission (OERC) to review its agreement even before completing two months in business. The hearing was scheduled for July 28, but it has now been postponed to September 1. Hence, all eyes are now on the decision of OERC - whether it will go in favour of the consumers in the state or the company. That the company has filed a review petition within 60 days shows it has also come here to 'loot' the state. After achieving its goal of grabbing CESU, the company is now working with the moto of profit. This is why it has knocked the doors of OERC. Odisha has two power transmission utilities - Gridco and Odisha Power Transmission Corporation Limited (OPTCL). They are selling power to distribution companies like Wesco,

Nesco and TPCODL. Till June 1, CESU's pending dues was over ₹2,000 crore to Gridco and OPTCL. As nothing is mentioned about the pending dues of CESU in the agreement it is unclear whether or not TPCODL will bear CESU's debt burden. Hence, Gridco and OPTCL too have filed petitions before the OERC in this regard. If the OERC does not consider the pleas of Gridco and OPTCL, the financial burden of over ₹2,000 crore may eventually come on the state government. Moreover, Gridco and OPTCL would become financially weak and Tata Power, which has entered into the system, will be the front runner in buying the two organizations. In the past 10 years, the state government has spend ₹552.62 crore through various schemes including

ADANI ENTERS STATE POWER SECTOR

BHUBANESWAR: The Competition Commission of India (CCI) has approved the proposal of Adani Power Limited's (APL) to acquire 49% of the total equity share capital of Odisha Power Generation Corporation Limited (OPGC). The proposed transaction relates to the acquisition of 49% of the total equity share capital of OPGC by APL (Proposed Combination). Odisha government holds 51 per cent stake in OPGC. OPGC operates a 1,740 MW thermal power plant at Banharpalli in Jharsuguda district, Odisha.

Rajiv Gandhi Grameen Vidyutikaran Yojana, Saubhagya Yojana, Restructured Accelerated Power Development And Reform Programme (RAPDRP), Odisha Distribution System Strengthening Project (ODSSP) and Biju Gram Jyoti Yojana to develop power infrastructure in the CESU area. But, Tata Power has purchased the stake in CESU estimating the properties to be ₹350 crore.

COVID-19 more prevalent among the young in state

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 30: The state government Thursday said that compared to the elderly, the young population in the state has been infected by coronavirus more. Shalini Pandit, Mission Director (MD) of National Health Mission (NHM) - Odisha, said that infection statistics showed that younger people were more vulnerable to the infection. Like in most other places across the globe, the highest number people in the age group of 0-40 years have been hit by the COVID-19 pandemic in the state most. "Most of the cases - 64 per cent - in the state are reported from people in the age group of 20-40 years. On the other hand, 29 per cent of the people in the age group 41-60 years are infected by the virus. The elderly are the least infected, as only 7% of the patients in the state were above the age of 60 years," she said. The data made available by NHM MD also hinted that the cases of symptomatic patients too have risen in the state. The government earlier claimed that 80-90 per cent of the patients were asymptomatic. Data provided government official Thursday showed that 46 per cent of the COVID patients in the state were symptomatic, while 54 per cent were asymptomatic, hinting at the rise of symptomatic cases. The door-to-door surveys being undertaken are trying to isolate the symptomatic patients and make them undergo tests. "It depends on the day of testing. Any person can test negative on some days and positive on other days during the infection cycle," she added.



A baya weaver bird prepares a nest, in Ajmer district, Thursday

PTI PHOTO

Varied views on teaching in mother tongue

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 30: While teaching students up to Class 5 in the mother tongue or regional language will promote multilingualism, students may face difficulties in coping with the syllabus in higher classes where medium of instruction is English, according to many school principals. As per the new National Education Policy (NEP), the medium of instruction until at least Class 5, but preferably till Class 8 and beyond, will be the home language, mother tongue, local language and regional language. "We first have to distinguish between language and literacy. Language is speaking and is nat-

ural for our brains. Literacy is reading and writing which is to be learnt by our brains," said Vishnu Karthik, Director, Heritage Schools. He said children's brains are designed to learn multiple languages and the more they are exposed to many languages, the more they can absorb them at an early age. "Thus, teaching in only one language is not the best use of the critical learning windows nature has given for learning languages. Teaching only in English or only in the mother tongue is not a good practice. Rather a healthy mix of 2-3 languages is good for children in primary school," he said. As far as literacy (reading and writing) is concerned, Karthik said it is best to keep it simple by fo-



cusing on just two literacy languages. "For urban parents, English and one vernacular language should be good. A third literacy can be picked up post-grade 5," he added. According to Alka Kapur, Principal, Modern School, Shalimar Bagh, English is a universal language and in guidelines it is written that it can be used wherever possible. "It is not clearly stated if

'wherever possible' means subject or place. English should be one common language as everyone wants their child to know the language and I think if it is taught at the foundation state it would be very nice," she said. "Regional language along with English language would be a good idea as the English language is a window to the world and every child from the foundation should be focused to learn English," she added. A representative of Green Fields Public School, who refused to be identified said, "It is okay to promote multilingualism but then to make (vernacular) languages the medium of instruction is not a wise approach.

Police 'inaction' prompts minor girl to end life

POST NEWS NETWORK

Dhenkanal/Bhapur, July 30: In a shocking incident, a 17-year-old girl from Dinabandhupur village under Sadar police limits in Dhenkanal district committed suicide after Bhapur outpost police allegedly did not take any action on a complaint filed against a youth over repeated harassment and molestation. Fed up over public humiliation, the girl, a native of Chatka Sahi in Dinabandhupur village, finally ended her life by consuming poison Wednesday night. Family members rushed her to the district headquarters hospital where she succumbed during treatment, Thursday. The accused youth was identified as Subhas Muduli in the same village. The matter came to fore after the girl's family members met the Superintendent of Police Anupama James and informed her about their daughter's death. The SP assured that a case has been registered and the accused will be nabbed soon. "The allegations levelled by the family will be probed," the SP added. On being directed by the SP, SDPO Sriharsha Mishra, Sadar police IIC Sandhyarani Behuria along with other police personnel reached the spot and started an investigation. The victim's family alleged that the youth from the same village was repeatedly harassing the minor girl.

Cybersecurity lapses found in online payment system: Govt

REUTERS

New Delhi, July 30: A government audit of the country's flagship payments processor last year found more than 40 security vulnerabilities including several it called "critical" and "high" risk, according to an internal government document. The audit, which took place over four months to February 2019, highlighted a lack of encryption of personal data at the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) which forms the backbone of the country's digital payments system and operates the RuPay card network championed by



A govt audit of the country's flagship payments processor last year found more than 40 security vulnerabilities

The audit highlighted a lack of encryption of personal data at the NPCI which forms the backbone of the country's digital payments system

The audit was undertaken to provide the National Security Council with an overview of the NPCI's defences against cyberattacks

Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The March 2019 government document cited the storing of 16-digit card numbers and other personal information such as customer names, account numbers and national identity numbers in "plain text" in some databases, leaving the data unprotected if the system was breached. The audit has not previously been reported. The NPCI said in a statement to this news agency it is regularly audited in the interests of security and senior management reviews all findings, which are then "remediated to (the) satisfaction of the auditors". This includes the findings cited here, it said.

India's National Cyber Security Coordinator, Rajesh Pant, whose office coordinated the audit, also said in a statement to Reuters that "all observations raised in last year's report have been confirmed as resolved by the NPCI". Pant added audits are best practice for the mitigation of cyberattacks and are conducted on a periodic basis by all enterprises. The audit was undertaken to provide the National Security Council with an overview of the NPCI's defences against cyberattacks. The PMO and the finance Ministry did not respond to a request for comment. The audit's findings underscore

the data-security challenges faced by the NPCI which processes billions of dollars daily via services that include inter-bank fund transfers, ATM transactions and digital payments. Set up in 2008, the NPCI is a not-for-profit company which as of March 2019 counted 56 banks as its shareholders, including the State Bank of India, Citibank and HSBC. RuPay, in particular, has been enthusiastically endorsed by Modi who has likened its use to a national duty. It has grown to account for almost two-thirds of nearly 900 million debit and credit cards issued in India as of October, according to NPCI and central bank data.

FORTUNE FORECAST

GaneshaSpeaks.com™
accuracy • reliability • trust
FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181

ARIES

Your temper will be volcanic today. You're ready to pop and bust at the snap of a finger; but it just won't do. Instead of punching your boss, Ganesha suggests you burn that energy clocking a hundred laps at a pool side or simply run back home. Yes, all the 22 miles!

TAURUS

There is an unexpected occurrence waiting at every bend and turn in your path today. With maturity for sword and mellowness as shield, you will sift through everything that life throws at you. Some long-standing problems will also be solved by today evening, says Ganesha.

GEMINI

It is possible that your emotional nature is the cause of many of the problems currently plaguing you. Therefore you need to curb your emotions when reacting to any situation. You will concentrate on family matters today, and spend time with your family.

CANCER

Meditation will be the order of the day. Your need to find inner peace is likely to push you to look inward and explore the alternate school of thought. You are likely to get inclined towards the mystical and the metaphysical.

LEO

Today, you shall have the unique ability to put up with any disparity and inequity, predicts Ganesha. Blessed with this, you can look forward to a seemingly endless number of favours and wonders later in the day. Speaking of love, your partner can expect a lot of serene words from you, even as you live up to his/her expectation, says Ganesha.

VIRGO

Today will be an unusually lucky day full of unexpected things, but you will manage to tackle them all with great maturity. If someone takes you for granted, they will later regret their lack of good judgement as you don't like being pushed around.

LIBRA

It's not the Olympics, but for those associated with sports, today, you may come across the opportunity to stake your claim to fame. Also, expect the unexpected and be prepared for a lot of different turn of events in the afternoon. Ganesha can tell that you are brimming to the top with energy and enthusiasm in the evening.

SCORPIO

It's time to live your dreams. You may just land up in your dream house or drive in a plush car, you once dreamt of. Evening time is spared for family and loved ones, says Ganesha. You may even go shopping to buy object de art for your new cosy corner.

SAGITTARIUS

Ganesha says the day will be eventful and full of excitement. Differences in opinion might just crop up at work, but don't let them dampen your spirit. A romantic, candlelit dinner with your beloved could well be the high point of your day. You are set to make an impact on your near and dear ones.

CAPRICORN

It is your day today! You'll feel like everything is coming your way, without you making any effort whatsoever. Though sub-consciously, you will want to showcase your talents and achievements to impress people around. And, you will succeed at that, says Ganesha.

AQUARIUS

Excellence is the buzz-word today! But that implies only to your work and not to the results. Nothing earth-shattering is on the cards, so slog away. Kids may howl or your spouse may yell in the evening, but you will simply pull your feet up and relax!

PISCES

It is a day where you are likely to be busy in tempering frayed relationships or indulging in tempestuous secretive affairs. Either way, the expenses incurred on the same will return to haunt you at the end of the day, says Ganesha.

EMMY AWARDS 2020 TO GO VIRTUAL

The Primetime Emmy Awards will be held online this year owing to the Covid pandemic. The event is scheduled to take place September 20. Emmy executive producers sent a letter to key acting nominees informing them that this year's ceremony would be virtual, a report in *variety.com* said.

TRACY, MEGAN HEAD FOR DIVORCE

Actor Tracy Morgan and his wife, Megan Wollover, are splitting after five years of marriage. "Sadly, after nearly five years of marriage, Megan and I are filing for divorce. This is a challenging time, so I ask all to respect our privacy," *hollywoodreporter.com* quoted Morgan as saying.



RADHIKA SHARES 'RIGHT PROFILE'

Mumbai: Actress Radhika Madan has given fans a peek of her right profile on social media.

Radhika took to Instagram, where she shared a picture of herself. In the image, she is flaunting her side profile and flaunting her perfect skin.

Alongside the image, she wrote: "Right profile."

Radhika, an avid social media user, has been keeping her fans entertained with her pictures and the captions. Recently, she shared a picture of herself Wednesday and borrowed a line from the song "Om shanti om" picturised on late actor Rishi Kapoor.

"Kya tumne kabhi kise se pyaar kiya? Kabhi kisi ko dil diya?"

Radhika will next be seen in the

Vicky Kaushal shares reason for his regrets

Mumbai: Actor Vicky Kaushal has shared what he regrets, on social media.

Vicky took to Instagram and posted a selfie himself after a workout. In the image, the actor flaunts post-work sweat, in a white T-shirt and black baseball cap. He wrote: "Sweat > Regret.. Although regret wasting time in between sets for a (taking a photo emoji). Adios!"

Vicky Wednesday shared that he yearns to break free. The actor shared his thoughts along with a still from his 2018 release *Mammarziyaan* on Instagram. In the picture, he can be seen jumping from the terrace of one building to another.

Vicky was last seen in Bhanu Pratap Singh's *Bhoot Part One: The Haunted Ship*. His upcoming film brings alive the story of revolutionary Udhham Singh, who avenged the Jallianwala Bagh massacre of 1919 by assassinating General Michael O'Dwyer. Singh was subsequently tried and convicted of murder, and hanged in July 1940. IANS

upcoming romantic comedy *Shiddat*, which also stars Mohit Raina, Diana Madan and Sunny Kaushal, and is directed by Kunal Deshmukh of *Jannat* fame on a script by Shridhar Raghavan and Dheeraj Rattan. IANS



Rasika displays acting-from-home skills

Mumbai: Actress Rasika Dugal is delighted to bring some cheer through her work amidst the tough time.

Earlier, she gave a glimpse of her writing and acting-from-

home skills with the short film, *Banana Bread*, directed by Srinivas Sunderajan. She starred in the film with Mukul Chadda. The short film is a funny take on love and loneliness in time of social distancing.

"During the lockdown, with our short film *Banana Bread*, I felt the need to create something relatable yet light-hearted...some humour to keep us from slipping into a sense of doom and gloom," the actress said.

She is now awaiting the streaming of her upcoming film, *Lootcase*. Its story revolves around a turn of events that unfolds after a middle-class man chances upon a suitcase full of cash. Rasika will be seen showcasing her comic timing in the film, which also stars Kunal Kemmu.

"Shooting for *Lootcase* was a lot of fun. Director Rajesh Krishnan would fill the scene with many quirks and Kunal's super comic timing was a treat to play off," said Rasika. IANS

Sambalpuri films to get global audience soon

POST NEWS NETWORK

BHUBANESWAR: Eminent filmmaker Sabyasachi Mohapatra has joined hands with internationally acclaimed film producer and promoter Jitendra Mishra to reach out to the global audiences. Jitendra's team will be exploring the international distribution and festival opportunities to showcase Sabyasachi's select films in Sambalpuri language like *Pahada Ra Luha*, *Aadim Vichar* (both National award winners) and *Sala Budha*.

Speaking to **Orissa POST**, the *Bhukha* director said, "Jitendra is a rare talent having a great eye for good cinema. I admire the fact that he has been able to find a niche for himself on global platform. I am extremely



A still from *Aadim Vichar*

happy and positive about the outcome of our association. I am sure, we will succeed in telling the tales of our beautiful history, culture and traditions to the world."

Jitendra, on the other hand, said, "I have been a great admirer of Mohapatra's style of filmmaking. I was deeply inspired by his film *Bhukha* when I was a kid. I feel privileged to take such path-breaking films to the global viewers and to spread the essence of the rich art, culture, and traditions of our region."

Sabyasachi Mohapatra is known for capturing the colourful culture of tribal society in western parts of Odisha on the celluloid.

Ikat rakhis this year to celebrate sibling love

CHAITALI SHOME, OP

BHUBANESWAR: Raksha Bandhan festival, since ages, has been an occasion to celebrate sibling love. Whether it's a bond between a brother and a sister or two sisters or two brothers, the festival is all about loving, caring and protecting each other irrespective of gender, age and tradition.

However, the pandemic is set to dampen the spirit of the celebration with makeshift shops selling 'rakhis' in the city are yet to put up their stalls. Expectedly, many families are planning to give the festival a miss given the situation the country is facing. But well known fashion designer Reemly Mohanty thinks otherwise. She has come up with an idea to make rakhis using handloom fabrics and deliver them to the customers online.

Speaking on her unique initiative, she says, "A couple of weeks back I was searching online for some designer rakhis for my brother but couldn't find anything of my choice as most of them looked old fashioned. It made me think to make my own designs which would look classy, attractive and at the same time it won't hurt customers' pocket much. Therefore, I zeroed in on ikat fabric to make my rakhis which was perfect for my purpose. I kept the designs simple and elegant which worked. So far, I have delivered more than 1,000 pieces of



Reemly explains a design

survive. I hope, things will change for the better if we can hang on," says the designer.

Ikat fabric has always been popular for its distinctive elegance, says Arta Ranjan Mohapatra, the marketing manager of Boyanika. The global fashion has always looked up to ikat, therefore, I hope these rakhis will certainly catch the fancy of customers, he adds.

FUN post

PEANUTS



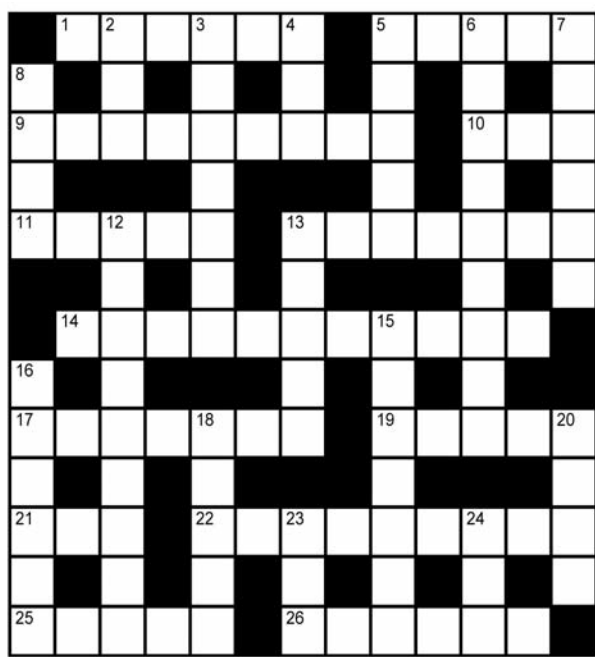
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



CROSSWORD

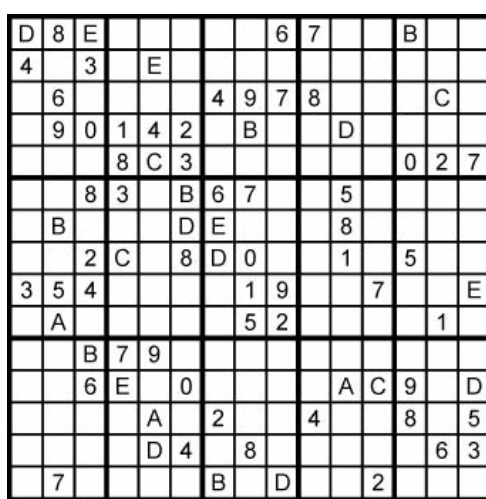


- Across**
- 1 Baffles
 - 5 Bet
 - 9 Skilled storyteller
 - 10 Canyon feature
 - 11 Words to a bride and groom
 - 13 Kind of battery (3,4)
 - 14 Time keepers
 - 17 They are tickled on a piano
 - 19 Relieves
 - 21 Chi preceptor
 - 22 Precious stone
 - 25 Forbidding
 - 26 Desolate
 - 2 Personal quirk
 - 3 Leviathan, e.g.
 - 4 "Get the picture?"
 - 5 Fret
 - 6 Workers of the soil
 - 7 Gad about
 - 8 Very dry, as wine
 - 12 Express regret
 - 13 Knuckleheads
 - 15 Sanctuary
 - 16 Scenes
 - 18 "Peer Gynt" dramatist
 - 20 Mideast canal
 - 23 Court play
 - 24 Curling surface

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.

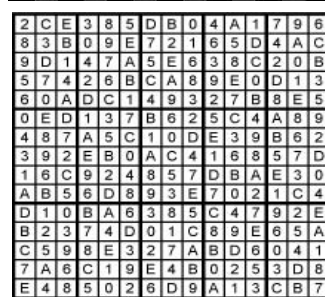


SOLUTIONS



CROSSWORD

SUDOKU



Crime Branch probe into Aditya’s death begins

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 30: The Crime Branch (CB) of the state police Thursday launched a probe into the death of social activist Aditya Dash whose mutilated body was found along the railway tracks here a few weeks ago, a senior official said.

The CB move came a few minutes after Director General of Police (DGP) Abhay took to the Twitter to say that the CB has been directed to take over investigation of the case from the Bhubaneswar Government Railway Police (GRP). “I have ordered Crime Branch to take charge of investigation of BBSR GRPS case no 81/20 relating to death of social activist Sri Aditya Das (sic),” the DGP tweeted. A CB team has reportedly visited the GRP establishment here in order to obtain the required information, the official said. The National Human Rights Commission Wednesday sought an



File photo of Aditya Dash

The mutilated body of Aditya Dash, a social activist, was found along the railway tracks near Lingaraj Temple Road station in Bhubaneswar July 7

Although police strongly suspected Dash committed suicide by jumping in front of a train, his friends and relatives alleged foul play and conspiracy

THE NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION HAS SOUGHT AN ACTION TAKEN REPORT FROM THE TWIN CITY COMMISSIONERATE POLICE IN CONNECTION WITH THE MOTIVATIONAL SPEAKER’S DEATH

The Crime Branch probe followed the directive of Director General of Police Abhay to take over investigation of the case from the Bhubaneswar GRP

action taken report (ATR) from the twin city Commissionerate Police within four weeks in connection with Aditya’s death.

The rights body move had come while hearing a petition filed by Supreme Court lawyer and social activist Radhakanta Tripathy.

Tripathy contended the rights body that the delay in arresting the culprits, exposing the truth, and uncovering the mystery over Dash’s death pose a serious question on human rights as it involves the role

of police, intelligence and law and order of the state.

The petitioner requested the NHRC to ensure fair investigation by agencies like CBI or CB-CID of the state or by an independent team of experts immediately so as to uncover the mystery behind the death and ensure safety and security of all the RTI activists.

The rights body said, “In case the ATR is not received within the stipulated time, the Commission will be constrained to invoke coer-

cive process Under Section – 13 of the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993 for the personal appearance of the concerned authority.”

The mutilated body of Dash, a popular social activist and motivational speaker, was found along the railway tracks near Lingaraj Temple Road station in the Capital City here July 7 and Bhubaneswar GRP had been investigating into the case since then, the official pointed out.

According to sources, after reg-

TPCODL PLANS TO ENSURE SEAMLESS SUPPLY OF POWER

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 30: With the rise in Covid-19 positive cases as well as the fatalities in Odisha, the state government has imposed lockdown in four districts including Khurda.

Under these challenging circumstances, the TPCODL has come up with comprehensive plans and procedures to ensure round-the-clock operations and maintenance services, company sources said.

The company’s detailed plan ensures readiness and availability of trained personnel and facilities necessary to provide seamless service to its consumers.

TPCODL’s frontline employees work 24X7 to carry out various operations and also the maintenance of its equipment to ensure that its consumers receive uninterrupted power supply.

These frontline warriors are the unsung heroes who work day and night amid the pandemic to provide uninterrupted power supply to the consumers.

As many as 234 technicians and engineers of TPCODL are working hard to maintain 8,559 transformers, 2,492 km HT and 4,196 km LT line network in Bhubaneswar city, sources added.

STATUES UNVEILED

Bhubaneswar: The full bodied bronze statue of Utkal Gourav Madhusudan Das and Theatre personality Asim Basu were unveiled by Minister, Odia Language, Literature and Culture Jyoti Prakash Panigrahi through virtual mode here Thursday. The statue of Madhu Babu has been installed at Madhu-setu near Bidanasi, Cuttack while that of Asim Basu is installed in the premises of Rabindra Mandap.

COVID SCARE IN PRISONS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, July 30: The Odisha prison authority has asked the police to conduct to detect coronavirus infection in accused before sending them to judicial custody, an official said on Thursday.

According to sources in the state prison directorate, 96 inmates of 10 prisons in the state were found to have been infected by the novel coronavirus. Seventeen staff of four jails have also tested positive for COVID-19, they said.

The officials expressed anxiety over the viral infection spreading in prisons despite several precautionary measures. They said the highest 54 cases of coronavirus infection have been detected in pris-

Virus test ‘must before remand’

ons of Berhampur circle, that also includes Ganjam district which has been hit hardest by the pandemic in Odisha.

“We have urged the police to conduct RT-PCR tests of the arrested persons before sending them to jails,”

Director General, Prison, S K Upadhyay told PTI. A total of 17,509 inmates are lodged in the 85 prisons of Odisha, an official said, adding the first confirmed case was found in the Puri jail on May 17 when an accused arrested by Kumbhapa police station tested positive.

Adequate measures under COVID-19 protocol are being taken

to check the spread of the virus in jails. Upadhyay said, “16,789 inmates have been released from jails across the state on parole to decongest prisons in the wake of the pandemic. Besides, the authorities have shifted over 1,200 inmates to other prisons in order to reduce crowding.”

Of those released on parole by July 28, 16,639 are undertrials and 150 convicts, he said.

The highest 5,231 inmates were released on parole under Berhampur circle keeping in view the vulnerability of Ganjam district, which has so far reported 9996 positive cases and accounted for 90 deaths.

Agri dept adopts Dakshyata system

Chief Secretary directs other departments to emulate the system through customisation

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 30: As part of 5T model of governance, the state government has adopted a robust performance management system in agricultural sector to monitor performances of agriculture officials. The system will come into effect from this Khariff season.

Through the new system, the government will recognise the top performers through various non-monetary incentives in their service carrier. Agriculture secretary Saurabh Garg said, “Dakshyata system has been designed through a consultative approach spreading over nine months with various stakeholders. More than 400 suggestions received from ground level officers have also been considered and addressed while developing the system.”

The software would have inbuilt

online MPR reporting with geo-tagging of the operations and the beneficiaries.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT



All Group-B and Group-C officers including assistant agriculture officer, assistant agriculture engineer, agriculture overseer, asst horticulture officer, horticulture overseer and soil conservation extension worker engaged in field

level operations will be considered under this initiative, he said.

The performance would be assessed in every month and each one can see own position in the Dakshyata portal, Garg added.

Agriculture director Muthu Kumar said, “The performance would be based on the broad components like scheme implementation, 5T implementation, priority area interventions and risk management”.

Chief Secretary Asit Tripathy recently reviewed various contours and parameters of the system and advised other departments to emulate basic architect of the system through customization as per their schemes and programmes. “The objective criteria of assessment will identify the real performers by eliminating the subjective prejudice and human errors,” Tripathy had said.

BMC RE-OPENS UNIT IV MARKET



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 30: Following a 14-day sealing of the city’s prominent market area, Unit IV market, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC), Thursday, allowed resumption of services after submitting undertaking from the vendors and traders working in the area.

Issuing an order, the BMC observed that the wholesale market which caters to supply of essential commodities, food and grocery items is a vital area in the city. However, the BMC, Thursday, stated that it is satisfied from multiple rounds of mass testing and services can resume from July 31st.

“All the members of Vendor

Association have submitted and undertaking with regard to adherence of all the guidelines issues by the BMC and government of India and Odisha relating to social distancing. Moreover, after conducting multiple testing and sanitizing the area properly we are of view that the services may resume,” the order stated.

It is worth mentioning that the BMC, July 17, had sealed the entire Unit-4 market and markets adjacent to its areas after several positive cases were detected in the vicinity. As per the sources, multiple of these cases were identified among fish and meat vendors residing in various slums and operating in the Unit IV market area.

HARIDASPUR-PARADIP RAILWAY LINE

CREDIT TUSSLE FOR PROJECT

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 30: BJP and BJD, who are ruling at Centre and state, entered a fresh battle to grab credit for the new railway line project connecting Haridaspur-Paradip through Kendrapara district.

Ruling Biju Janata Dal (BJD) legislators from Kendrapara district Thursday submitted a memorandum to Union Railway Minister Piyush Goyal through general manger of East Coast Railway. The ruling party MLAs demanded commissioning of passenger trains on the line.

“The Haridaspur-Paradip project in final stage and very soon it will start functioning. We have submitted a memorandum requesting Union Railways Minister to start passenger train service in the route along with goods trains,” said BJD legislator Sashi Bhushan Behera.

In a bid to get credit for the project, Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan Wednesday requested



Goyal to set a date for formal inauguration of Paradip-Haridaspur railway line, in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik.

Pradhan wrote the letter to his colleague following Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik’s letter to Goyal to start operation of passenger trains on the new line from August.

Meanwhile, former Kendrapara MP and BJP leader Baijant panda has also jumped into the fray by

istering a case, the GRP had launched a probe to ascertain the circumstances that led to the death of Dash, who was running a NGO and had set up an old-age home as well.

Police have also recovered CCTV footage from the activist’s house and the railway station in course of its investigation. The post-mortem report had found that Dash died because of grievous injury on the head, they said.

His friends and relatives alleged foul play behind his death and refused to accept that Dash, known for his inspiring talks and encouraging acts, could have committed suicide.

A hand-written letter in Odia was also found with messages for his family, friends and those associated with the old age home established by him. The letter was examined by the State Forensic Science Laboratory here and found to have been written by him, police said.

State’s Covid caseload reaches grim milestone

PNN/ AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, July 30: State’s novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) count crossed 30,000-mark with 1,203 fresh infections reported in a day, while 10 more deaths due to the disease pushed the toll to 169, an official of the Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) department said Thursday.

The fresh cases were reported from 28 of the state’s 30 districts. Ganjam district reported the highest of 250 new cases, followed by Khurda (220), Cuttack (97), Sundargarh (74), Gajapati (72) and Malkangiri (65), the official said.

According to the H&FW department, of the 10 persons, four died in Ganjam, two in Khurda and one each in Sundargarh, Sambalpur, Rayagada and Nayagarh.

“A 60-year-old male of Bhubaneswar who was also suffering from diabetes and chronic kidney disease and another 60-year-old female also suffering from diabetes died due to COVID infection. Similarly, a-50-year-old male of Rayagada district who was also suffering from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, died during treatment. The four deaths from Ganjam district included a 65-year-old female, a 43-year-old male, a 47-year-old male and a 33-year-old male,” said the department.

It added that a 71-year-old male of Sundargarh district who was

also suffering from diabetes and a 65-year-old male of Nayagarh district also suffering from chronic kidney disease with uremic encephalopathy died during the last 24 hours. A 67-year-old male COVID patient of Sambalpur district who was also suffering from hypertension died.

Meanwhile, 807 persons recovered from the disease Thursday.

The recoveries include 431 from Ganjam, 62 from Cuttack, 47 from Rayagada and 34 from Gajapati.

Of the total 30,378 COVID-19 patients, 19,745 have recovered.

The twin cities of Bhubaneswar and Cuttack Thursday registered 156 COVID-19 cases and 129 recoveries.

The Capital city Bhubaneswar saw 105 fresh cases and 123 recoveries. “Among the fresh cases detected, 59 were reported from quarantine centres while 46 contracted the virus locally. At the same time, 123 persons who had earlier tested positive for COVID-19 recovered

Thursday,” a Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation said, adding that two of the 10 COVID deaths in state were from Bhubaneswar.

The Cuttack Municipal Corporation, on the other hand, detected 51 fresh cases of the viral infection. “Among the new cases, seven were reported from institutional quarantine centres, 33 were home quarantine cases and 11 persons contracted the virus locally. Six persons also recovered from the infection,” it said.

TINY HANDS



Kids of artisan families dust the idols of Lord Ganesh at Rasulgarh in Bhubaneswar, Thursday. This year, Ganesh Puja will be a low-key affair owing to coronavirus pandemic

OP PHOTO

‘NEP 2020 only aimed at luring foreign investment’

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 30: Members of All India Democratic Students Organisation (AIDSO) Thursday opposed the new National Education Policy that was recently approved by the Union Cabinet.

AIDSO president Ganesh Tripathy said that the new policy was approved just for the commercialization and privatization of the education and not for welfare of students. Its main focus is only to attract foreign investment. He also said that the merging of anganwadi sector with the school curriculum will bring no change in education. Instead of strengthening the areas, they are trying to avoiding the problem. “We also oppose the decision of UG education for 4 years instead if three as it will be of

no use,” he added.

Secretary of association Subash Nayak said that the policy is only aimed at commercialisation of education sector. The main motive is to attract foreign investment for

which the policy facilitates institutional collaborations and allows entry of top ranked universities to open campuses in our country.

Tripathy also said that vocational education in schools from the 6th grade is not a good decision as it will do more harm than good. The decision is highly immature and childish. Students will be confused if such a system is implemented.

The new national education policy is just a new version of National Policy on Education 1986 which was introduced by the Congress govt, he alleged.

FOR CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS CONTACT OUR BOOKING STATIONS

Acharya Vihar-DayalAgency-9437135727, **A.P. Tours and Travel**, Maitri Vihar, C.S. Pur- 9861301598, **Aurobindo Market-Sai** Audio & Electronics-9438304668, **Airport Road-Sai** Baba Variety Store-9090071530, **Anish Infotech**- Tankapani Road-9861341488, **Bapuji Nagar**- Dreamland Studio- 9777517314, **Baramunda Rental Colony**-Maa Ramchandi Communication-9658821469, **Baramunda Housing Board Colony**-Pappu Variety Store-9040500106, **Cuttack Road**-Alishan Snacks-8984236754, **District Center (Chandrasekharpur)**-Sai Google Mart-9776056507, **Forest Park**-DTDC Couriers & Services (HB Services)-7381024156, **IRC Village**-Bapi Xerox-9090090404, Gift Hut(Antriksh Gifts & Decors Pvt. Ltd.)-9954781084, Pruthvi Medicine-9853314816, **Janpath**-Krupajal Book Store-7978646669, **Jaydev Vihar**-AK Enterprises-7978116618, Subam Sai Books Store-8895550649, Swain Graphics- 9337121249, **Jagannath Mobile Point**- Janpath Road, Ram Mandir- 9938475415, **Kanan Vihar**-Auro Electronics-8260697560, **Khandagiri**- Swosti Mobile Centre- 7992914045, World Solution- 9938317559, **KIIT Road**-Jugad Jn-9338545031, **Laxmi Sagar**-Aditya Mobile-9438191836, **Lewis Road**-Spider Web-7809186415, **Metro Satellite City**-Arogya Mitra Medicine Store-9853621640, **Madhusudan Nagar**-Mohapatra Communication-9124446664, **Maa Santoshi travels**- Gajapati Nagar- 9777675867, **Nayapalli**- The Cake Room- 7873660137, **Near Mayfair Lagoon**-Cookiemana-9439491273, **Nigamananda-Omm Sai Travels**-9668284823, **Nr Cosmopolis Main Gate**- Shreeram Medical Store- 8763711714, **Net Square**-Niladri Vihar (C.S. Pur)- 7205634821, **Priyadarshini Market**-Astro Point-9938134346, **R.N. General Store**-Nilakantha Nagar-9438642501, **Sahid Nagar**- Maa Communication- 9437353424, **Sahini General Store**- Near Patia Railway Station, Mahavir Vihar- 9937586626, **Satyaj Nagar**-Baishnavi Mixture & Sweets-7894821764, **Samantapur**- Download Point-7504557743, **Sailashree Vihar**-Harsha Book Store-8093449515, **Sahed Nagar**-Jagannath Graphics-7978652670, Photo World-7978468191, Sainath Photo Studio-8984436129, Shanti & Co-9937071063, **Siripur**-Omm Maa Sarala Communication-9777682449, **Sushree fashion**- Jagmara-9938714347, **Shree Vision**- Sailashree Vihar-9861476678, **Unit-3**-LIC of India Premium Point-9337787080, **Unit-7**- LIC Premium Point- 9338227422, **VSS Nagar**-Friends Cake & Bake-8658200930, Jeet Infoworld-7205195782, **XIMB Square**-LD Books-9658061373.

Bhitarkanika shrinking under space crunch, pollution

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kendrapara, July 30: The Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary under Rajnagar block in this district spread over 672 sqkm is fast losing its cover due to various reasons and being pushed into the vicious circle of pollution, a report said.

If this trend continues, the sanctuary might lose its national park status. This will seriously hit the tourism industry in the district. The Bhitarkanika National Park is one of the wonders in the world known for its rich biological diversity. The colourful birds, rare sea turtles and saltwater crocodiles and a variety of other wildlife animals inhabit this eco-system which is one of Asia's most spectacular wildlife sanctuaries. These are a real feast to the eyes of tourists and a subject of importance for the researchers. The large stretch of mangrove forests and medicinal plants attracts the nature lovers. The Bhitarkanika is situated on the delta created by the Brahmani, Baitarani and Dhamra sea mouths. It is known for



RICH IN BIODIVERSITY

- The colourful birds, rare sea turtles and saltwater crocodiles and a variety of other wildlife animals inhabit the eco-system at Bhitarkanika National Park which is one of Asia's most spectacular wildlife sanctuaries
- The Central Groundwater Board conducted a groundwater study in 2011. It found excess presence of harmful chemicals like nitrate, iron and fluorides in the groundwater which is likely to destroy the bio-diversity of the sanctuary
- The total dissolved solids (TDS) as well as harmful chemicals like chloride, phosphate and magnesium have increased in the water. This has happened because of lack of management of industrial and urban wastes

its natural environment, landscape, biological diversity and 62 types of mangrove forests and 215 types of wildlife.

UNESCO made an attempt to place Bhitarkanika in World Heritage Site in 2016. The UNESCO conducted a survey but Bhitarkanika missed the World Heritage Site tag as the mangrove eco-system was found wanting on several counts.

It was reported that much of the land within Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary is privately owned by local community of Bangaldesh refugees. Moreover, there are other

areas where the tenure of the land is currently under dispute.

It was noted that human impacts from communities situated within Bhitarkanika are extremely high as land use in this area is predominantly agricultural including livestock grazing, shrimp cultivation and construction of houses within the sanctuary by destroying the mangrove forests.

The Central Groundwater Board conducted a groundwater study in 2011. It found excess presence of harmful chemicals like nitrate, iron and fluorides in the groundwater which is likely to destroy

the bio-diversity of the sanctuary. The board advised the state government to recharge groundwater through construction of artificial dams in the rivers and other water bodies. Later, a team of researchers comprising BC Behera from North Odisha University in Baripada, RR Mishra from MITS School of Biotechnology, HN Thatoi from College of Engineering and Technology in Bhubaneswar, SK Dutta from IIS in Bangalore, KK Patra of NITS in Rourkela conducted a survey of the Mahandi delta region and the Bhitarkanika sanctuary in 2014. They submit-

Woodlands in focus of stone mafia in Jajpur; Sec-144 thrown to winds

Rampant stone mining is happening on 456.34 acres of forestland at Bichhakhandi, Anjira and Kusunpur under Dharmashala tehsil



POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur, July 30: Stone mafia has occupied some forest land under Dhamashala tehsil in Jajpur district even though section 144 has been imposed in the areas since 2019, a report said.

According to the reports, mafia has been carrying out stone mining on 456.34 acres of forest land at Bichhakhandi, Anjira and Kusunpur. This was stated in an investigation report submitted by Balanag revenue inspector to Dhamashala tehsildar. The report was also given to Jajpur ADM.

It was alleged that Dhamashala tehsildar had drawn attention of the ADM and Cuttack forest division towards the illegal stone mining in forest land. But no action has been taken.

People of the villages in these acres observed that some officials have virtually handed over the for-

est land to black stone traders. Rampant stone mining has taken a heavy toll on biodiversity, natural resources and wildlife.

In the report given to the ADM and DFO, it was stated that over 100 stone mines are being operated at Bichhkhandi, Kusunppur and Anjira forests.

Besides, some stone crushing units have been set up on the forest land. Illegally extracted black stoner is supplied to these stone crushers. These areas are witnessing massive air pollution owing to stone quarrying and stone crushing. Significantly, due to illegal stone mining, the government is losing huge revenues.

In 2019, the administration had tried to contain unauthorized stone mining on forest land. As part of it, the administration had imposed section 144 of the CrPc on September 11. Some conscious citizens of these areas wondered that black stone

is being transported in heavy vehicles every day even without submitting R-Forms, which are mandatory for mineral transportation.

Locals alleged that officials who are tasked to check mineral transportation have been facilitating supply of stone chips, boulders, and spawls by taking bribe from the stone traders.

Some villagers had taken up the issue with the Collector while a case was failed in the High Court in this regard. Locals had earlier opposed illegal stone mining in September, 2019 when a group clash took place over the issue. Surprisingly, a case had been registered against 32 people who had been fighting for protection of forest land. When asked about the alleged illegality, Cuttack DFO Sudarshan Patra said a task force has been formed by Jajpur Collector to check illegal stone mining, but it is not working properly.

However, he pointed out that the department is struggling with a staff crunch. "Only 27 forest guards are under the Cuttack forest division whereas the division requires 75 guards for proper monitoring on such activities," he added. Despite all this, efforts will be made to contain illegal stone mining in forest land in the area, he assured.

Two girls end life after fake HSC results

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhadrak/Kendrapara, July 30: After the results of the Board of Secondary Education (BSE) were declared Wednesday, two students from Bhadrak and Kendrapara district committed suicide after allegedly receiving false news of their failure in the examinations. The two deceased have been identified as Ranismita from Hatapokhari Sahi under Basudebpur police limits in Bhadrak district while the other girl is the daughter of Arjun Sahoo of Balipadar village under Pattamundai Municipality. When the results of Class-X examination were announced Wednesday morning, a friend of Ranismita called her and said she had failed in her attempt. Without checking for the authentic result on the official website, she consumed poison out of embarrassment.

Knowing about the incident, her family members immediately took her to Bhadrak District Headquarters Hospital where she breathed her last. Meanwhile, her family members found out that she had passed the exam with good marks and the information provided by her friend was incorrect. Bhadrak police reached the spot and launched a probe. A similar incident was reported from Kendrapara district where a Class-X student hanged self at home after a friend told her that she had failed in the examinations this year. Arjun Sahu, father of the deceased said, "A friend told that she failed to secure passing marks in the examination. Depressed over the news, she decided to hang herself inside her room."

"However, the school authorities later informed that she had cleared the examination," added Sahu.

Drought fears in Angul

POST NEWS NETWORK

Banarpal, July 30: Even as the state government gives emphasis to boost farming in the wake of hundreds of returnees coming home in Angul district, 33 defunct lift irrigation (LI) points have blocked farming activities on 660 hectares under Banarpal block.

The district has been facing a drought-like situation amid scanty rainfall. This has added to the woes of local farmers. It was targeted by Angul agriculture department that farming activities will be carried out on 24,811 hectares under Banarpal block alone.

As against this, paddy was to be cultivated on 10,825 hectares non-paddy crops on 13,986 hectares this Kharif season. However, there is provision of irrigation facilities for 9,615

hectares only, out of the total 24,811 hectares in Banarpal block.

It is known that, about 2,000 hectares in the block depend on lift irrigation. There are about 101 LI points at village areas like Gadatalamula, Mahidharapur, Phulapada, Bauligada, Ramimunda, Kalandapal, Juharapur, Patana, Kukudanga and Ekagaharia, near several nearby water bodies under Banarpal block limits.

33 LI points are still defunct under the block as a few pumps were stolen and others have no power supply. As a result, 660 hectares under Banarpal block were badly hit.

Lift irrigation department junior engineer Newton Kumar said, "We have already sent proposals to the government for repair of at least 11 defunct LI points.

state of 'mobile cinema' programme.

This programme used to be the best medium for both the central and state governments to make people aware about their various schemes and plans. At the same time it used to be the best medium of entertainment for people in villages.

There were documentaries that used to be played at the beginning and at the intervals of the film shows. But this 'mobile cinema' which established a relationship between villagers and the government for as long as 30 years is dying a slow death. The growing popularity of TV, mobile phones and the government using more of folk art forms to disseminate its messages are said to be the reasons.

The 'mobile cinema' was launched



With a spurt in Covid infections in Sambalpur, a temple and its periphery being sanitised, Thursday

OP PHOTO

Three bodies found; witchcraft suspected

POST NEWS NETWORK

Angul, July 30: Panic gripped Dimiripada village under Chhendipada police limits in Angul district after bodies of three persons including a woman were found hanging from a tree in wee hours of Thursday.



Sources said, a resident of the village had gone to a jungle to graze goats where he reportedly noticed the bodies hanging from a tree. Upon seeing the horrific incident, he rushed to the village leaving his goats at the jungle and informed the villagers about the same.

While most of villagers hesitated to go to the spot suspecting it is as a case of sorcery, a group of youths went to the spot to verify the incident. There they spotted three hanging bodies. The villagers suspected that the trio could have been murdered and their bodies left hanging to give it a look of suicide. Chhendipada police said they are unaware of the incident.

Keonjhar village gets electricity after 72 yrs

POST NEWS NETWORK

Patna, July 30: Residents of Saradhapur village under Chakundapal panchayat in Patna block of Keonjhar district are a happy lot after the village was electrified 72 years after Independence.

The development in the village came days after **Orissa POST** published a report about the plight of the residents due to lack of electricity. The report was published July 19.

About 12 days after this report, the energy department and the administration were jolted awake.

Following a direction from electrical SDO Kartik Chandra Sahu and engineer Chiranjit Sahu, power was supplied to 24 families in the village Wednesday afternoon.

They expressed happiness over the electricity and thanked the newspaper.



The villagers pointed out that the Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana (Saubhagya) is being implemented in the district to provide electricity to the poor; but they were deprived of benefits, despite the village having been included in it two years ago.

As the village is located close to a forested area, residents used to panic at night fearing attack from wild animals. Children used to study under earthen lamps, Sukanta Behera, a villager, added.

OP IMPACT

2 YOUTHS DROWN

POST NEWS NETWORK

Angul, July 30: Two youths drowned in a canal while they were taking bath in Hemasurapada under Angul police limits Wednesday afternoon. The deceased were identified as Brundaban Sethi and Babu Mohanty, both residents of Hemasurapada in the town. Locals said Brundaban and Babu had gone to a canal to take bath at around 2 pm. The incident occurred when Brundaban lost balance and fell into the deep water due to strong current. Watching him drowning, Babu, who was at the canal bank, jumped into water to rescue him. However, the current was so strong that both the youths were swept away, locals claimed. On being informed, police and fire service personnel launched a rescue operation and fished out the bodies from the canal, a police official said.

Sana Ghagara wears a deserted look amid Covid-19 in Keonjhar

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, July 30: Even as Sana Ghagara waterfall in Keonjhar district has been barricaded for over four months, the popular destination wears a deserted look as it lacks tourist footfall.

Hundreds of tourists from outside the district and the state throng Sana Ghagara throughout the year. However, amid Covid-19 outbreak in Keonjhar district, visitors are not being allowed here.

Crores of rupees spent on its infrastructural development have gone for a toss in such a precarious situation.

Over last couple of months,

48-hour shutdown in Koraput

KORAPUT: As the Covid-19 pandemic continues to spread its tentacles across Koraput, the district administration Thursday declared a 48-hour complete shutdown across the district.

According to Koraput District Collector Madhusudan Mishra,

the shutdown will be in force from the midnight of July 30 to the midnight of August 1.

During the 48-hour shutdown, the district administration will undertake containment measures like contract tracing, symptom checking, ensuring isolation of suspected cases and door to door health

screening of people.

The district administration has restricted movement of public and vehicles within and outside the district. Entry and exit points have been closed. All the residents in the district are strictly advised to remain at home.

66 new cases detected Thursday.



the infrastructure has run down due to lack of maintenance. A boating facility and a children's park in the vicinity have become dilapidated. Similar gloomy situations prevail at other tourist destinations in the district.

Keonjhar is renowned for its popular waterfalls like

Khandadhar, Handibhanga, Gundichaghagi, Bhimkund and Murga. Famous shrine of goddess Tarini also suffers the same fate.

Following imposition of Section 144 during the month of Shravan at all shaiva peeths in Keonjhar, Gonasika, Kushaleswar and Murga shaiwaite shrines in the district do not witness kanwariyas any more.

Keonjhar district tourism officer Ramesh Chandra Nayak said, "The pandemic has badly hit the tourism industry in Keonjhar which was largely contributing to the district's economy." The entire tourism industry is in tatters, Nayak added. "Directly or indirectly, local residents and small vendors were largely being benefited. Lockdown restrictions have changed the scenario altogether," said social activist Debaraj Acharya.

‘MOBILE CINEMA’ STILL HAS ITS UTILITY, AUDIENCE

THIS CAN BE A POWERFUL MEDIUM TO CREATE AWARENESS AMONG PEOPLE IN THE STATE, ESPECIALLY IN ITS RURAL POCKETS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Dhenkanal, July 30: There was a time when villagers used to throng to a place in a village where a white screen was tied to two bamboo poles on two sides to watch cinema in the evenings.

Films like Shree Jagannath, Bandhu Mohanty, Amada Bata, Matira Manisha and Mathura Bijaya were being screened with villagers watching the movies attentively.

These films were screened under 'mobile cinema' programme of the government. But this programme was stopped in 1995. A thick layer of dust gathered on the reel cases and projector machines at the district information and public relations office in Dhenkanal explains the sorry



in the sixties with an aim to make illiterate and semi-literate people in villages across the state aware of various government schemes and programmes. There is a film unit at the information and public relations department and the employees of

this unit used to visit villages to put up cinema shows.

Remembering the golden era of 'mobile cinema', Lokanath Das, now in his 60s and a retired employee of the district information and public relations department

said, "I put up hundreds of cinema shows during the period between 1978 and 1995. Films like Shree Jagannath, Bandhu Mohnaty, Amadabata, Matira Manisha, Mathura Bijaya, Krushna Sudama, Sindura Bindu and Dharitri used to be showed then and people are still wistfully remembering those days."

"To reach some villages we had to travel in boats as then there were no bridges across rivers Brahmani or Ramial. We were given a warm welcome by the villagers. Para Jhia Ghara Bhangana was the last film to be showed under 'mobile cinema'," he reminisced.

"If the government infuses life into it by using it for the same purpose of making people aware of its schemes and programmes, the 'mo-


bile cinema' can get back its lost sheen," he added.

Mobile cinema has not lost its importance even today because there are still villages where there is no electricity or mobile connectivity. 'Mobile cinema' shows can be restarted to cater to these villagers," maintained Shatrughan Mati, a theatre director.

Seconding him, Debashis Mishra, a serial director, said, "The films shown under 'mobile cinema' are milestone films in Odia. People used to learn many things from these films. Besides, they used to know about schemes and programmes of both the central and state governments. If the 'mobile cinema' is restarted, it will be highly appreciated by people."

When mind is still, then truth gets her chance to be heard in the purity of the silence.

SRI AUROBINDO



Don't lower guard

After unveiling a raft of austerity measures earlier this month to meet the spiraling expenditures entailed by the fast spreading Covid-19 pandemic, a cash-strapped state government has followed this up by cutting down this year's Budget allocations under different heads. Finance Minister Niranjan Pujari had presented a record ₹1.50 lakh crore state Budget for 2020-21 in February – a 11 per cent jump over the revised estimate of 2019-20. The record Budget targets were proposed to be supported through receipts of ₹1,24,550 crore and borrowings of ₹24,450 crore. However, with the economic slump having taken a toll on economy and the Covid-19 now killing whatever economic activities were left behind, revenues from internal sources have come down by a whopping 70 per cent during April and May. This works out to a 20 per cent fall in the annual revenue collections. Further, the Centre is expected to cut down the size of its assistance under different heads to the state government. In such difficult times, the state government had no way but to tighten its belts. The government has already incurred expenditure of around ₹1,900 crore under various heads in managing the Covid-19 pandemic.

While the government had set out to keep the expenditures under leash through the austerity measures, the latest announcement of a downward revision of budget allocations is a direct corollary to that. The government has announced that it will resort to borrowings insofar as its internal accruals and central aid won't add up to expectations. The state government has done well by deciding that it will not go for borrowings from the open market. Availability of funds at cheap rates under the Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA) and Odisha Mineral Bearing Area Development Corporation will come in handy for it. In May, the Centre had eased the FRBM norms and raised the borrowing limits of states from 3 per cent of the gross state domestic product (GSDP) to 5 per cent in 2020-21. This will make available an additional ₹4.28 lakh crore for states. The Centre has laid down certain conditions to use that window. The preconditions entail state government must bring in reforms on ease of doing business, power distribution and universalisation of One Nation - One Ration Card, among others. In sync with these conditions, the state government has rushed in to implement these reforms. Chief Secretary Asit Tripathy reviewed the implementation of district-level business reforms action plan (BRAP) to improve the state's position in the ease of doing business. A better show on the ease of doing business index will improve the business eco-system in the state. It will help attract more investors to the state. As a major policy initiative to improve the ease of doing business, the government has done away with the need for industries to go for periodical license renewals – a good move that will not only hasten industrialisation and processes, it will also reduce corruption in the system. The need for periodical renewal of multiple licenses from the authorities by industrial houses spun off systemic corruption and slowed down the pace of industrialization in the state. An end to this policy is a welcome move. However, the government must keep vigil on industrial activities and processes lest companies should resort to shortcuts. Covid-19 is an evolving crisis. Nobody really knows how much longer the crisis will drag or its repercussions. Nor is the government in a position to assess the scale of the damage that the disease will potentially inflict on the human race and the economy. Thus, any preparation for the eventuality can only be haphazard. The government should not lower its guard.

WISDOM CORNER

- An 'eye for an eye' only ends up making the world blind. MAHATMA GANDHI
- The flower that blooms in adversity is the rarest and most beautiful of all. WALT DISNEY
- It is good to love many things, for therein lies the true strength, and whosoever loves much performs much, and can accomplish much, and what is done in love is well done. VINCENT VAN GOGH

WORDSWORTH

Synthetic biology

Biotechnologists are beginning to move on from modifying organisms through changing their DNA (by genetic engineering) to building them from scratch. Synthetic biology refers to such creation of artificial life from raw materials. This new field is regarded by many experts as the next big thing in science, but one which may also have disastrous consequences if mishandled. It was in the news in the UK some time ago, as the result of a visit by the maverick US scientist, Craig Venter, who ran one of the two projects that mapped the human genome. He has hinted that his team has already created a minimal bacterial genome from its chemical building blocks and may shortly succeed in making an artificial organism. He attempted to allay the fears of critics, who worry that artificial life such as bacteria might escape into the environment and cause unpredictable consequences, or be used to make military bio weapons. The former eventuality has been called bioerror by the astronomer Sir Martin Rees, the president of the Royal Society. Other critics object on religious grounds, arguing that scientists ought not to "play God" by such experiments. The term synthetic biology was first applied to this field of research in 2003 but is only slowly becoming known to the general public. A researcher is a synthetic biologist, a term that may make the humorists among us smile.

Szygy

If you look up at the sky and see the full moon, you're witnessing an example of szygy. From our point of view, the Sun is then on the opposite side of the sky to the moon, and so is said to be in opposition to it. The three are also in szygy at new moon, this time with the moon and the Sun apparently next to each other in the sky – a state called conjunction. Halfway between these states, when the moon is half full, the sun and moon are in quadrature. "Spring tides form during szygy (full and new moon), whereas neap tides form during quadrature (the waxing and waning phases of the moon)." -- Science, 5 Jul. 1996. The word appeared in English in the 17th Century, and at first could apply only to conjunctions. It comes via late Latin from the Greek szugia, which derives from szugos, yoked or paired. It was not until a century later that its meaning was extended to cover astronomical opposition, in defiance of its etymology. Szygy has a variety of other meanings in mathematics, poetry and zoology, all of them developed from the idea of things being joined together. For example, "As a soldier studies his guns, and a dentist his tools, so a writer must study the laws of rhythm, accent, phrasing, alliteration, phonetic szygy, run-on and double-ending lines, rhyme, and, last but not least, the melodies of common speech." -- The World's Best Books, by Frank Parsons, 1893. Phonetic szygy is a little like alliteration, in that a consonant is repeated throughout a passage.

LOL

BABY

At the chapel, a three-year-old boy sits near a pregnant woman. Boy: You look so fat! Woman: I have a baby inside me. Boy: Oh My God, how the baby inside? Boy: And you ate it! My God!



FOCUS WORLD

CHINA'S IRAN CARD

Iran says it is negotiating a 25-years' agreement with China encompassing trade, energy, infrastructure, telecommunications, and even military co-operation. For Teheran, the prospect of a strategic partnership with China comes at a critical time. The Iranian government has been confronting popular discontent over a sinking domestic economy, which has been battered by American sanctions and, now, Covid-19.

Making matters worse, a recent series of explosions across the country has deepened the sense that the regime is under siege. Damaging at least two sites associated with the Iranian nuclear and missile programmes, these blasts appear to be part of a broader strategy by the United States and Israel to cripple Iran's capabilities. News of a large deal with China is thus a welcome diversion for the Iranian government, and may even buy it time to maintain the status quo until the November 2020 US presidential election. The outcome of that contest will determine the trajectory of US-Iranian relations and the fate of the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), while also influencing Iran's own presidential election in June 2021.

To be sure, Iranians historically have been averse to aligning too closely with any great power, and they are even less willing to accept economic tutelage. With Iran's relationship with China already a source of domestic controversy, it is possible that the country's parliament will refuse to ratify the deal unless it is revised to meet certain concerns.

But Iran's economy has been in a free-fall since 2018 after the Trump administration withdrew from the JCPOA and launched its "maximum pressure" on Teheran by imposing heavy sanctions designed to squeeze the regime. Moreover, with the regime as a whole facing a public backlash, President Hassan Rouhani's government has been under tremendous internal pressure. The announcement of a deal with China allows Rouhani's government to demonstrate that it is not putting

all its eggs in the Western basket. The message to the Iranian people is they are not isolated, and may even enjoy economic improvements despite US sanctions.

At the international level, Iran has always sought to balance one great power against another: Over the past decade, in response to US diplomatic and economic pressure, its security forces looked to Russia, key economic sectors looked to China, and the Rouhani government reached out to Europe. Now, with Sino-American tensions rising, Iran is looking to China to shore up its economy and balance the US. Closer ties with China would give Iran more leverage in future talks with the US and Europe when it comes to revising or restoring the JCPOA, as well as in its dealings with regional rivals such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

By contrast, a strategic partnership with Iran is a minefield for China. Although China continues to trade with Iran and invest in the country's infrastructure, a deepening of ties could raise America's ire at a critical and increasingly sensitive diplomatic juncture. By potentially exposing itself to US sanctions, China risks losing some access to the US market (which is far larger than that of Iran). Not surprisingly, Chinese officials have been relatively quiet about the negotiations than their Iranian counterparts have been. Likewise, China does not want to upset its regional partnerships with Israel or Saudi Arabia, each of which is currently engaged in proxy wars with and covert operations against Iran.

Nonetheless, China obviously sees some value in forging a comprehensive arrangement with Iran – a large, important regional player whose vast energy resources and tremendous economic potential make it a natural candidate for China's westward-looking Belt and Road Initiative. China already buys discounted oil from Iran – not exactly a negligible benefit for the world's foremost consumer of energy – and has become Iran's key trading partner, including as a principal supplier of heavy machinery and manufacturing goods.

As part of this expansion, China could even gain control of the Iranian port of Chahbahar, which its main Asian rival, India, has been developing as a counter to China's development of the nearby

Pakistani port of Gwadar. The Chahbahar port allows India to circumvent Pakistan – another rival – in its trade with Central Asia. But, despite the port's recognized importance, US sanctions are forcing India out of Chahbahar and frustrating Iran. In fact, Iran is reportedly forcing India out of a railway project that bypasses Pakistan to connect with Afghanistan and Central Asia. News of that rupture came just after China and Iran announced a preliminary deal.

The recent border skirmishes between China and India show just how seriously China takes its footprint in West Asia. In addition to opening the door for China to control Chahbahar and monopolize trade routes into Central Asia, the Iran deal also appears to offer opportunities for China to develop naval facilities on the Gulf of Oman. Though the US has long wanted to shift away from the Middle East to focus more on China, the emerging Sino-Iranian deal reminds us that the two theaters are by no means separate

Vali Nasr and Ariane Tabatabai

WITH THE US SET TO LEAVE AFGHANISTAN, A PARTNERSHIP WITH IRAN WILL GIVE CHINA A NEAR-STRANGLEHOLD OVER THE STRATEGIC CORRIDOR STRETCHING FROM CENTRAL ASIA TO THE ARABIAN SEA

SPECTRUM EDUCATION

Online teaching cannot 'shape' students

Do students learn to respect the time of the teacher? Are they obedient and disciplined when it comes to actions such as spending their allotted time on the laptop as is now the case? Do we, as parents, help the teachers with our child's learning experiences and perceptions? These are all frequently asked questions related to online classes in the pandemic times.

Academicians say the digital divide may turn on-line classes into an operational nightmare. Due to Covid-19, a tendency is spreading across the country towards digital teaching-learning though its feasibility is weak, and more so in rural areas. There is a growing tendency to use the teaching Apps, E-learning tools, video conferencing facility etc, but all these accessories have ultimately proven to be less acceptable, set against the traditional and live classroom teaching, which involves a good amount of student-teacher interaction, and a charm of its own.

It's a fact that teachers are being locked out of their virtual classes by tech – expert students and it's also true for the teachers that they don't have any tool to check whether the students are attentive to the teaching or not. How is a student progressing with his or her learning process? There are some indicators to judge this by way of sense of comprehension, use of communication skills, vocabulary, co-relation with other objects or subjects, critical thinking etc. All these aspects have no role to play in on-line teaching, which is mostly a mechanical process. A robot can do the teaching as well.

A large majority of parents are out of sync with the online teaching system. They are basically handicapped in information technology (IT), computers, internet etc, and these are the ones whose first priority and day's sole obsession is to work and ensure there is fire in the family hearth.

Online learning is just like building castles in the air, many still feel. It is proven in a research studies that students enrolled in distance learning are managing themselves to be average performers, and are a step or two below the students in regular classrooms. Apparently, online teaching in the context of Covid-19 can't give any benefit to good and proficient students.

Online resources can't supplement the resources available in the four walls of a live classroom at any educational institution. Computer-based instruction is generally limited to power point, video lecture etc, but it can't be an alternative to discussion or the participatory method of a classroom. Can we think in terms of group activities, or co-operative learning, in an online class?

It is true that there is a limit to what a student learns from prescribed textbooks. No instructional technology or material has been developed to replace group activities or student's learning from the Labs. The topics discussed in the classroom makes the class vibrant. Teachers as well as students miss a lot if there is no face-to-face interaction as in a traditional classroom. A teacher in a classroom can do miracles, and able to motivate all learners as per their capacity; instantly so. This is impossible in digital teaching. It inflicts a process of participation in learning, physical proximity; and face-to-face interaction can attribute the best in the students.

A teacher in physics or chemistry might not be feeling as comfortable in an online class just as he or she feels fine with the chalk and black board in the classroom, or while handling test tubes in the lab in a chemistry practical class.

In this pandemic-induced crisis period, when educational institutions remain closed for a quarter of a year already, this situation could be used effectively by IT experts. But, whatever it may be, our time-tested and trusted live classroom teaching can't be replaced by any new mode of teaching. Classroom is live and the atmosphere therein also helps develop a student's personality in immense ways. It also instills discipline in group behaviour.

At the same time, there is merit in the argument that online classes will in future be the norm rather than an exception. That's part of humanity's constant catch-up and adaptations with new technology. What is important is to attune children's mind to new ways of learning. This takes time and cannot be done in a huff, as the pandemic has forced the society to do in these critical times.

The author is a former faculty at the Regional Institute of Education (NCERT) of Bhubaneswar.

SPECTRUM EDUCATION

Online teaching cannot 'shape' students

Do students learn to respect the time of the teacher? Are they obedient and disciplined when it comes to actions such as spending their allotted time on the laptop as is now the case? Do we, as parents, help the teachers with our child's learning experiences and perceptions? These are all frequently asked questions related to online classes in the pandemic times.

Academicians say the digital divide may turn on-line classes into an operational nightmare. Due to Covid-19, a tendency is spreading across the country towards digital teaching-learning though its feasibility is weak, and more so in rural areas. There is a growing tendency to use the teaching Apps, E-learning tools, video conferencing facility etc, but all these accessories have ultimately proven to be less acceptable, set against the traditional and live classroom teaching, which involves a good amount of student-teacher interaction, and a charm of its own.

It's a fact that teachers are being locked out of their virtual classes by tech – expert students and it's also true for the teachers that they don't have any tool to check whether the

students are attentive to the teaching or not. How is a student progressing with his or her learning process? There are some indicators to judge this by way of sense of comprehension, use of communication skills, vocabulary, co-relation with other objects or subjects, critical thinking etc. All these aspects have no role to play in on-line teaching, which is mostly a mechanical process. A robot can do the teaching as well.

A large majority of parents are out of sync with the online teaching system. They are basically handicapped in information technology (IT), computers, internet etc, and these are the ones whose first priority and day's sole obsession is to work and ensure there is fire in the family hearth.

Online learning is just like building castles in the air, many still feel. It is proven in a research studies that students enrolled in distance learning are managing themselves to be average performers, and are a step or two below the students in regular classrooms. Apparently, online teaching in the context of Covid-19 can't give any benefit to good and proficient students.

Online resources can't supplement

the resources available in the four walls of a live classroom at any educational institution. Computer-based instruction is generally limited to power point, video lecture etc, but it can't be an alternative to discussion or the participatory method of a classroom. Can we think in terms of group activities, or co-operative learning, in an online class?

It is true that there is a limit to what a student learns from prescribed textbooks. No instructional technology or material has been developed to replace group activities or student's learning from the Labs. The topics discussed in the classroom makes the class vibrant. Teachers as well as students miss a lot if there is no face-to-face interaction as in a traditional classroom. A teacher in a classroom can do miracles, and able to motivate all learners as per their capacity; instantly so. This is impossible in digital teaching. It inflicts a process of participation in learning, physical proximity; and face-to-face interaction can attribute the best in the students.

A teacher in physics or chemistry might not be feeling as comfortable in an online class just as he or

she feels fine with the chalk and black board in the classroom, or while handling test tubes in the lab in a chemistry practical class.

In this pandemic-induced crisis period, when educational institutions remain closed for a quarter of a year already, this situation could be used effectively by IT experts. But, whatever it may be, our time-tested and trusted live classroom teaching can't be replaced by any new mode of teaching. Classroom is live and the atmosphere therein also helps develop a student's personality in immense ways. It also instills discipline in group behaviour.

At the same time, there is merit in the argument that online classes will in future be the norm rather than an exception. That's part of humanity's constant catch-up and adaptations with new technology. What is important is to attune children's mind to new ways of learning. This takes time and cannot be done in a huff, as the pandemic has forced the society to do in these critical times.

The author is a former faculty at the Regional Institute of Education (NCERT) of Bhubaneswar.

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

Bad deal to the old

Sir, Traditionally, India has been home to elderly people who are treated with reverence in the family as also in the society. But, with the passage of time, the table seems to have been turned against them. Even after contributing immensely to the development process in the prime of their youth, they not only neglected in the very social edifice in old age. Family members apart, the society too starts looking down on them. Governmental measures for their safety and security helps, but these are too little. Many old men and women are dumped in old age homes. They are now hard-hit by the slashing of various interest rates by banks, by way of reducing the income on their life's savings. Added to this predicament, they have to cough up huge taxes on the interests earned on fixed deposits. These double-edged government policies require reconsideration. The tax rate slabs in the graded structure of senior citizens must be suitably revised to give adequate relief to these people. It needs mention that, among the population of more than one billion, senior citizens account for 8.6 per cent. Can this segment be allowed to languish simply because they have grown in age? Besides, observing occasions such as Senior Citizens Day carries no significance at all in the present grim context they are in.

Sanjib Das, CUTTACK

Youths, work

Sir, Most of the youths have returned to their homes from other states after the eruption of the Covid crisis. Now, earning money and getting daily job is too difficult for these men and women in Odisha. The central government has declared many plans and policies to deal with the financial crisis, but the ordinary man is not getting much of these benefits. It is very difficult for an ordinary citizen to get loans from banks for any project, while the cash chests of PSBs are wide open to the rich and the influential to engage in outright loot via the system of loans. The state should engage youths in rural areas by providing them opportunities in agriculture, animal husbandry, horticulture, fishing, farmhouse, and small business, all depending on local conditions. Banks must change their ways and help the nation and its people. Only then can the development process be facilitated.

Santosh Kumar Mohanty, CUTTACK

The deluge in Bihar worsens

OVER 38 LAKH PEOPLE OF THE STATE AFFECTED, 11 PEOPLE DEAD SO FAR

AGENCIES

Patna, July 30: The flood havoc in Bihar is continuously worsening as people in 12 districts are bearing the brunt of floods due to overflow in almost all major rivers and tributaries in the state. Over 38 lakh people of the state are affected by the floods, while 11 people have died so far in various incidents.

Meanwhile, the government is claiming relief and rescue work is on.

The report of the Department of Water Resources states that Kosi has a trend of increasing the water level. The water level of Kosi near Veerpur Barrage was 1.83 lakh cusecs at 6 am Thursday, which has increased to 1.86 lakh cusecs. Water level of the Gandak river remains stable. The drainage of Gandak has reached 1.91 lakh cusecs at 8 am at Balmikinar Barrage.

Almost all the rivers of the state are flowing above the danger mark. Ganga, Bagmati, Budhi Gandak, Kamala Balan and Mahananda are flowing above the danger mark in many areas.

Additional Secretary of Disaster Management department Ramchandra Do said that 901 panchayats of a total of 102 blocks of 12 districts of Bihar have been



A young girl teaches flood-affected children near their makeshift homes along a road on NH-77, at Mithan Sharay in Muzaffarpur district

- Water level of Kosi near Veerpur barrage increases to 1.86 lakh cusecs from 1.83 lakh cusecs
- Water level of the Gandak river remains stable
- Almost all the rivers of the state are flowing above the danger mark

901 panchayats of 102 blocks in 12 districts of Bihar have been affected by the floods

RAMCHANDRA DO | ADDITIONAL SECY, DISASTER MANAGEMENT DEPT



People use boats to move across a flooded village in East Champaran



Houses are submerged in floodwaters following heavy monsoon rain, in Gopalganj district

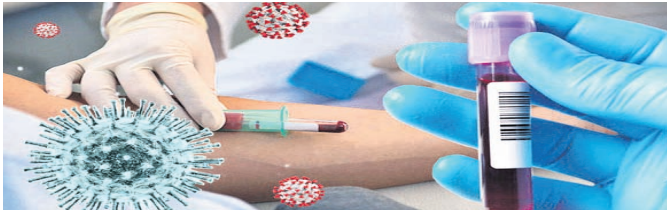
Plasma will be provided free of cost: Punjab CM

Contrary to the CM, state AAP president Bhagwant Mann said the party would not allow the government to sell the donated plasma to private hospitals for ₹20,000 per unit

AGENCIES

Chandigarh, July 30: With the main opposition AAP announcing statewide protests against the decision to sell 'donated' plasma to private hospitals, Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh Thursday said it would be provided free of cost to all the Covid patients who need it.

An official statement quoting Singh said he has directed authorities to strictly ensure Covid patients are not charged for plasma therapy and that nobody is allowed



to buy or sell plasma.

The Chief Minister also appealed to the recovered patients to come forward to save the lives of others.

He urged the Deputy Commissioners and health department officials, during a Covid management virtual review meeting, to motivate such patients to donate plasma.

Currently, there are around 10,000 recovered virus patients in the state, he said, adding that his government's priority was to save each and every life in Punjab.

Contrary to the Chief Minister, state AAP president Bhagwant Mann said the party would not allow the government to sell the donated plasma to private hospitals for Rs 20,000 per unit.

"We strongly oppose the open 'loot' by the government allowing sale of 'donated' plasma at a price. We will hold peaceful and symbolic protests against this decision on Friday all across Punjab, strictly observing the essential safety corona stipulations," Mann said in a statement.

Meanwhile, the Chief Minister asked the Health Department to expedite setting up of two new plasma banks at Amritsar and Faridkot towns to supplement the one already operational in Patiala.

He was informed by Minister O.P. Soni that the approvals for the new banks had already been received and tenders were being floated for procurement of equipment.

Punjab may not go Centre's way

CM Amarinder Singh says he will take a final decision on this and other relaxations after receiving DCs' inputs

AGENCIES

Chandigarh, July 30: Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh Thursday sought the views of the Deputy Commissioners on opening of gyms and coaching centres. He said that he will take a final decision on this and other relaxations under Unlock 3.0 after receiving their inputs.

At a review meeting on Covid-19 containment and management arrangements, the Chief Minister said that while the Central government had announced certain relaxations, including permission to reopen gyms, under the Unlock 3.0 guidelines, he will decide on the matter after an assessment of the ground situation.

He asked the Deputy



UNLOCK 3.0

Commissioners to think through and submit their views to Chief Secretary Vini Mahajan, following which a final decision will be taken by the government after due deliberations.

Underlining the need for strict enforcement in view of the increasing number of Covid-19 cases in Punjab, the Chief Minister said that while there was a lot of demand from youngsters for opening of both gyms and coaching centres, the modalities would have to be thought through and all options

would be explored before a decision can be taken.

Taking serious note of reports of violation of social distancing and other Covid protocols by some shopkeepers, the Chief Minister directed the Deputy Commissioners to order shut-down of shops for three days in case of first offence and for a higher number of days on subsequent violations.

He further asked the Deputy Commissioners to strictly enforce all safety protocols and norms,

including wearing of masks and social distancing, to check the spread of the pandemic.

Expert K.K. Talwar pointed out that scientific data show that wearing of masks is as effective as lockdown, as it not only prevents the spread of infection but also lowers mortality.

Director General of Police Dinkar Gupta informed the meeting that from March 23 to July 29, a total of 14,384 FIRs have been registered and 19,850 people have been arrested for various violations.

Expressing grave concern over the increasing mortality, the Chief Minister called for concerted efforts to bring down the fatality rate.

Punjab has so far lost 361 lives to the virus, with 25 people succumbing to the deadly disease since Wednesday night, he pointed out, adding that this was not acceptable.

The Deputy Commissioners of some of the worst affected districts – Amritsar, Jalandhar, Patiala and Mohali – briefed the meeting on the situation in their respective regions.

Parties rush to bank in on Sushant's death

AS THE BIHAR ASSEMBLY POLLS NEAR, THE DEATH OF THE HINDI FILM ACTOR SEEMS TO GATHER POLITICAL ATTENTION

We raised the demand (CBI enquiry) shortly after Rajput's tragic death, when actor Shekhar Suman had come from Mumbai and was refused appointment by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar with whom he wanted to share some startling observations

TEJASHWI YADAV | RJD LEADER

It should be understood that the sentiments of 13 crore people of Bihar, besides that of millions of Rajput's fans across the country are involved in the case

MADHAW ANAND | NATIONAL GENERAL SECY, RLSP

It is the prerogative of Maharashtra government to hand over the case to the CBI not. But the fact remains that 40 days of investigation by the Mumbai police had led nowhere, a reason why the bereaved family lodged an FIR in Patna

RAJIV RANJAN PRASAD | SPOKESMAN, JD(U)

AGENCIES

Patna, July 30: The Maharashtra government's refusal to hand over to CBI the investigation into actor Sushant Singh Rajput's death met with strong disapproval from across the political spectrum in Bihar Thursday.

Parties sympathetic as well as hostile to the Shiv Sena-NCP-Congress combine in Maharashtra were unanimous in criticising its Home Minister Anil Deshmukh's assertion that there is no need to transfer the case to the central probe agency.

The deceased actor's family is yet to disclose in public what they think of handing over the case to the CBI.

Bihar MLC and AICC media panelist Prem Chandra Mishra said the investigation by the Mumbai Police has left many loopholes.

The bereaved family has lodged an FIR in Patna and if they have trust in a probe by the Patna



Police, it should be extended all possible cooperation, he said.

But if they want a CBI inquiry, that sentiment should be respected as well, he added.

The lawyer of the actor's family, Vikas Singh, who practices at the Supreme Court, has alleged

in TV interviews that the Mumbai Police has been trying to derail the investigation.

He has claimed that the family members had told a top Mumbai police official way back in February that Rajput faced a threat to his life, which was ig-

That it took the Bihar police to lodge an FIR under IPC sections since the Mumbai police had merely registered a UD (unnatural death) case proves that Maharashtra's ruling dispensation was engaged in an eyewash

NIKHIL ANAND | SPOKESMAN, BIHAR-BJP

nored. The actor was found hanging from the ceiling of his Bandra residence June 14.

The RJD, senior alliance partner of the Congress in Bihar, claimed it was the first political party to have demanded a CBI inquiry into the actor's death.

The RLSP, a junior partner of the Congress-RJD combine, termed as hasty the stance adopted by the Maharashtra home minister.

The JD(U), which is headed by Kumar, came out with a guarded statement.

The party expressed hope that the Maharashtra government will appreciate the right of the actor's family and fans to know the complete truth about his death and instruct its police to conduct the investigation accordingly.

JD(U) ally BJP reacted with outrage and accused the Shiv Sena, the Congress and NCP of "harbouring friendships with Bollywood mafias."

CONG 'BALANCING' CASTE EQUATIONS BEFORE POLLS

TWO DAYS AGO, THE PARTY TRIED TO GIVE A MESSAGE TO STRENGTHEN THE CASTE MATRIX THROUGH NOMINATION OF DISTRICT PRESIDENTS

AGENCIES

Patna, July 30: Almost all parties have started preparations for the likely Assembly election in Bihar this year. The Congress, which is facing allegations of neglecting the backward community within the party, is now engaged in balancing the caste equations.

Two days ago, the Congress tried to give a message to strengthen the caste matrix through nomination of district presidents. The party tried to appease Muslim voters by nominating Parvez Alam as the president in Bhagalpur district, while in the same district, nominated Abhymanand Jha and Vipin Bihari Yadav as executive president, in a nod to the upper caste and backwards.

Similarly, while the responsibility of Sheikhpura district has been given to Sundar Sahni, the leadership of Patna city has been handed over to Sashiranjay Yadav. In addition, the Congress has made Sridhar Tiwari acting president in Bhojpur district, while Satish Kumar is president of Nawada district, and Bengali



Policemen stand guard in the premises of Gyan Bhawan ahead of the monsoon session of the two houses of Bihar legislature, which will be held from August 3 in view of the Covid-19 pandemic, in Patna, Thursday. The four-day session of the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council will be conducted on separate floors of the Gyan Bhawan at the Samrat Ashok International Convention Centre

Paswan have been given the responsibility of acting president.

A Congress leader also accepts this, saying on condition of anonymity: "While the Congress has tried to help the upper caste and Muslim communities through the nomination of these leaders, the backward community within the party itself has rebelled and it has also started trying to pacify the voices."

Four of these nominated leaders have previously been in the Youth Congress.

It is noteworthy that Kailash Pal, who was the state vice-president of the Congress, had resigned from all posts in the Congress Election



Campaign Committee meeting in the past, in front of several senior leaders, who accused him of neglecting the backwards in the party. After this, the head of the election campaign committee and Rajya Sabha MP Akhilesh Singh also had to come forward and he said that the Congress respects all communities and will take care of them.

Kailash Pal expressed satisfaction over the preference of all the communities in the nomination of the district presidents and said that this is a good initiative. He said, "This is a good start. What else do we want in Congress? We only want social justice in the party."

While the Congress has tried to help the upper caste and Muslim communities through the nomination of these leaders, the backward community within the party itself has rebelled and it has also started pacifying the voices

CONG LEADER | ON CONDITION OF ANONYMITY

started trying to pacify the voices."

Four of these nominated leaders have previously been in the Youth Congress.

It is noteworthy that Kailash Pal, who was the state vice-president of the Congress, had resigned from all posts in the Congress Election

OPEN YOUR EYES TO SECESSIONIST THREAT: AMARINDER BLASTS BADAL

SAD chief accuses state police of misusing anti-terror law and arresting Sikh youth "indiscriminately" for "minor misdemeanours"

AGENCIES

Chandigarh, July 30: Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh Thursday tersely told SAD chief Sukhbir Singh Badal to open his eyes to the secessionist threat of anti-Indian forces instead of indulging in "political theatrics" over the alleged misuse of anti-terror law UAPA.

The Chief Minister made the cutting retort days after Badal accused the state police of misusing the anti-terror law and arresting Sikh youth "indiscriminately" for "minor misdemeanours".

The Chief Minister hit back at SAD chief while welcoming the UK's rejection, after Canada, of the pro-Khalistan outfit Sikhs for Justice's 'Referendum 2020', with a categorical statement that "it is not involved in any way in this unofficial and non-binding referendum...and considers Indian Punjab

as part of India."

Welcoming the UK's statement, the CM expressed surprise that Badal continues to turn a "blind eye" to the threat posed by Pakistan-backed SFJ, and other terrorist and radical forces working to destabilise India, particularly Punjab.

"Can't he (Badal) see that the arrests under the UAPA which he is opposing are part of the state government's strategy to combat this threat?" Singh asked.

The CM said it was unfortunate that instead of playing the role of a constructive opposition in the state, the SAD was "wasting" its time with its "baseless charges" and comments.

He reminded the SAD chief of his earlier offer to look into any case of misuse of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act and wrongful arrest under the same if Badal brings any such incident to his notice.

of the day quote

The Sushant Singh Rajput death case is getting murkier. I think there should be a CBI probe into the matter to ensure justice for the bereaved family

MAYAWATI | BSP PRESIDENT

Cases lodged against 150 people for allegedly attacking a police station, after a key was jabbed into a man's forehead by a policeman, will be withdrawn

TRIVENDRA SINGH RAWAT | UTTARAKHAND CHIEF MINISTER

After the assembly session was announced, the rates of horse trading have increased. Earlier, the first instalment was of ₹10 crore and second was of ₹15 crore. Now it has become unlimited and all know who is doing horse-trading

ASHOK GEHLOT | RAJASTHAN CM

SHORT TAKES

Hardik appointed PS to PM

New Delhi: Gujarat cadre Indian Administrative Service (IAS) official Hardik Satishchandra Shah was Thursday appointed as the Private Secretary to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on co-terminus basis. At present, Shah, a 2010 batch official, is the Deputy Secretary in the Prime Minister's Office.

Premises of ex-IITM scientist raided

New Delhi: The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) Thursday carried out searches at several locations in Maharashtra's Mumbai and Pune after it registered a case against a former scientist and ex-officials of the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM). The CBI has named then scientist Gurfan Beig, then senior technical officer IITM staff Vipin Mali, Anil Chandrakant, Managing Director of Mumbai-based Video Wall India Pvt Ltd, Director of the company Manisha Anil Girkar and other unknown public servants under several sections of the IPC and Prevention of Corruption Act on June 30 this year on allegations of causing loss to IITM.

One arrested for cheating

New Delhi: The Delhi Police claimed to have solved a case of cheating with the arrest of one person in Surat, Gujarat. According to the police, a retired school vice-principal was duped of ₹1,05,000 from his pension account. A person, posing as an executive officer of Paytm, asked him on phone to share his card number and four-digit card verification value (CVV) for updating his Paytm KYC (know your customer) details, in Jamia Nagar of southeast Delhi. During the investigation, details of bank account, Paytm, mobile phone and IP address of transaction were collected and the district cyber cell team succeeded in tracing the accused Abdur Rehman, 32, in Surat.

Sonia hospitalised

New Delhi: Congress president Sonia Gandhi was admitted to Sir Ganga Ram Hospital Thursday for routine tests, hospital authorities said. She was admitted to the private facility here at 7 pm for "routine tests and investigations", the hospital said in a health bulletin. "Her condition is currently stable," Dr D S Rana, the chairman of the Board of Management of the hospital, was quoted as saying in the bulletin.



Most of the ventilators are being made within the country now. India is supplying hydroxychloroquine drug to nearly 150 countries

HARSH VARDHAN | MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE

TN EXTENDS LOCKDOWN

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister K. Palaniswami Thursday announced the extension of Covid-19 lockdown till August 31, with certain relaxations in the existing restrictions



HERD IMMUNITY NOT AN OPTION: GOVT

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, July 30: The Union Health Ministry Thursday said that herd immunity cannot be a strategic option in a nation the size of India and this can only be achieved through immunisation in the future.

Addressing a press conference, Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan said: "Herd immunity is an indirect protection from a disease. In a country the size of India, it cannot be a strategic choice or option. It can only be achieved through immunisation but that is in the future."

He said that the ministry, too, believes that the herd immunity is far in the future and hence, it is important to adopt Covid appropriate behaviour. The remarks came



at a time India has logged over 15 lakh coronavirus cases and continues to have the fastest growth rate of infection.

The Ministry again reiterated that there is no community spread in the country, and that there are merely clusters of cases and pockets of localised transmission.

Bhushan said that as many as one million people have recovered till now and the recovery rate is increasing. "In April first week, the rate of recovery was 7.85 per cent, in June, it increased to 48.31 per cent and 64.44 per cent in July. Recoveries are 1.9 times the number of active cases."

As many as 16 states and UTs have a recovery rate more than the national average of 64.44 per cent. Highest number of recovered patients are in Delhi, Ladakh, Haryana, Assam, Telangana, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat. Besides this, there is a decrease in the percentage of active cases and deaths due to Covid-19, the Health Secretary said, adding that effective clinical management has led to the decrease in case fatality

OVER 50,000 NEW CORONA CASES

New Delhi: India Thursday reported more than 50,000 daily coronavirus cases for the first time, driven by a surge in infections in rural areas at a time when the government is further easing curbs on movement and commerce. There were 52,123 new cases in the previous 24 hours, according to federal health data, taking the total number of infections to almost 1.6 million. Some 775 people died of COVID-related conditions over the same period, raising total deaths now just under 35,000 - low compared to the total number of cases, but showing little sign of slowing. While major cities like New Delhi and Mumbai have seen their cases ease, infections in rural areas are continuing to rise sharply, alarming experts who fear weak healthcare systems there will be unable to cope.

rate. "In June, it was 3.33 per cent and now it is 2.21 per cent and is continuously decreasing."

"If compared to other countries, the case fatality rate is 2.21 per cent. Barring Russia, all the major countries have a case fatality rate six-seven times more than India. It is

the lowest in the world as compared to the developed western countries or neighbourhood countries."

Bhushan said that testing infrastructure has also increased and almost one crore tests were conducted in the span of the last one month.

HC sends notice to Raj Speaker

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jaipur, July 30: The Rajasthan High Court on Thursday issued notices to the speaker and secretary of the state legislative assembly and six MLAs, who contested elections on BSP tickets and then defected to the Congress.

The court heard the arguments Wednesday, which remained inconclusive and the hearing resumed Thursday

The court issued the notices while hearing the writ petitions filed by the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and BJP MLA Madan Dilawar against the six lawmakers defecting to the Congress. "The notices have been issued to the speaker and secretary of the Assembly and six MLAs. They have to submit their replies by August 11," a counsel for Dilawar told reporters here.

In his petition, Dilawar has also challenged the speaker's July 24 decision to reject his complaint filed in March against the BSP MLAs joining the Congress.

The bench of Justice Mahendra Kumar Goyal issued the notices while hearing the petitions. Separate notices have been issued on the petitions.

The court heard the arguments on Wednesday, which remained inconclusive, and the hearing resumed on Thursday. The next hearing in the matter is on August 11. The merger of the BSP MLAs with the Congress was a boost for the Ashok Gehlot-led Rajasthan government as the tally of the ruling party increased to 107 in the 200-member House.

Four Covid patients booked for spitting

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Agartala, July 30: Four COVID-19 patients were booked after they allegedly abused and spat on a woman doctor at a health facility here, police said Thursday.

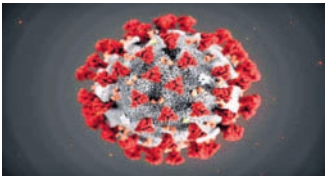
A police official said that the four accused, who have recovered from the disease, will be arrested after the completion of their seven-day institutional quarantine period.

"Some coronavirus patients last week spat at and aggressively abused West Tripura District Health Surveillance Officer Sangita Chakraborty at a Covid care centre in Agartala when she had gone there on Friday to admit five women who had given birth to babies a day before," the police officer said.

Chakraborty also told the media: "One of the patients rinsed his mouth and spat on my head from the roof of the Covid care centre, forcing me to rush inside the centre." She said they had reached the care centre with a health department team and police personnel to admit the new patients when a group of people, men and women, obstructed and falsely claimed that there were no vacant beds in the centre.

"When requested by the other doctors and nurses to return to their beds, some of them started agitating using filthy language, spat at me and threatened to touch me and infect me with coronavirus," the health officer said.

Tripura Health and Family



A police official said that the four accused, who have recovered from the disease, will be arrested after the completion of their seven-day institutional quarantine period

Welfare Department Director Radha Debbarma said that the appropriate authority would take stern action against the accused persons. Stating that Chakraborty, a young doctor, worked hard to take care of COVID-19 and other patients, Debbarma said: "We will not tolerate any unpoliteness in the health institutions and Covid care centres."

Demanding 'exemplary punishment', the All Tripura Government Doctors' Association (ATGDA) general secretary Rajesh Choudhury said they had raised the issue with higher authorities, including Sanjay Kumar Rakesh, Additional Chief Secretary (in-charge of the Health and Family Welfare Department). "If they failed to take any action, we would take appropriate legal steps," Choudhury said.

SOMEN MITRA PASSES AWAY



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kolkata, July 30: Veteran Congress leader and West Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee (WBPPC) president Somen Mitra died at a city hospital early Thursday. He was 78.

Mitra was hospitalised here with increased creatinine level, fever and respiratory troubles. He was undergoing dialysis. According to sources, Mitra was admitted to an Intensive Care Unit (ICU) of a private hospital in south Kolkata. Though his health condition slightly deteriorated on Monday night but later it got stable after treatment at the hospital. He was responding to the treatment well.

Sources said Covid-19 tests were also done on Mitra and the test report was negative. "Saddened to hear about the passing away of veteran leader, former MP and Indian National Congress West Bengal president Somen Mitra. My deepest condolences to his family, followers and well-wishers," Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee tweeted.

Mitra took charge as the state Congress chief in 2018 and played a crucial role in forging an electoral understanding between the Left parties and Congress in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls. This was his third stint as Bengal PCC chief.

India rejects China's claim

AGENCIES

New Delhi, July 30: India Thursday said the process for disengagement of troops in eastern Ladakh has not yet been completed though some progress was made, an assertion that came two days after China claimed frontline troops of the two countries have "completed" this exercise at most locations along their border.

China had also said that the situation on the ground was easing. "There has been some progress made towards this objective but the disengagement process has yet not been completed," Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Anurag Srivastava told an online media briefing when asked about the Chinese claim on Tuesday.

He also said the senior commanders of the two militaries will



be meeting in the "near future" to work out steps to complete the process of disengagement. "As we have stated earlier, the maintenance of peace and tranquillity in the border areas is the basis of our bilateral relationship," Srivastava said.

"Therefore, we expect that the Chinese side will sincerely work with us for complete disengagement and de-escalation and full restoration of peace and tranquillity in the border areas at the earliest as agreed to by the Special Representatives," he added.

Australia backs India

New Delhi: In veiled criticism of China over the border row in eastern Ladakh, Australia Thursday said it opposes any attempts to unilaterally alter the status quo along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) as it will only serve to increase tension and the risk of instability. Australian High Commissioner Barry O'Farrell also said Australia remains deeply concerned by "actions" in the South China Sea and that it rejected China's "unlawful maritime claims" in the region. Referring to the situation in eastern Ladakh, he said Australia "urges" restraint along the LAC, and supports continued moves towards de-escalation.

MP WOMAN PUNISHED FOR ALLEGED ADULTERY

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Jhabua, July 30: In a bizarre incident, a woman resident of Ranwas village under Para police post in Jhabua, Madhya Pradesh, was forced to carry her husband on her shoulders as a punishment for her alleged illicit relations with another man.

The video of the incident has gone viral on the social media. In the video, a woman is seen carrying her husband on her shoulders and walking around the village. The woman's husband had accused his wife of having an extra-marital affair with another man. A panchayat was called and it was decided that the woman will have to carry her husband

In the video, a woman is seen carrying her husband on her shoulders and walking around the village

on her shoulders and move around the village. A case has been registered against seven persons on the complaint of the woman. The police said an investigation is underway and appropriate action will be taken once it concludes.

No arrests have been made in the case so far. This is the second such incident in Jhabua in the past one month.

Lab technician held for taking vaginal swab for Covid test

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Amravati (Maharashtra), July 30: In a shocking development, a government hospital lab technician allegedly took a vaginal swab from a woman for conducting a Covid-19 test, officials said Thursday. He has now been arrested for molestation and rape.

The incident occurred on Tuesday, when the 23-year-old complainant had gone for a Covid test at the Trauma Care Testing Lab of the Badnera government hospital in the district, said Investigating Officer Punjab Wanjari.

The woman, a mall employee, turned out to be a contact of a colleague who tested Covid-19 positive, and was sent along with 20

others to the TCTL for a corona test. After the test, the technician - identified as Alpesh A. Deshmukh, 30 - called up the woman to inform her that the Covid test was positive and she was required to undergo another test - a vaginal swab.

"When she asked whether there are any female technicians for the second test, the accused replied in the negative, but allowed her to bring a female companion if she wanted," said Wanjari. Deshmukh took the swab and later informed her that the test was negative, which aroused suspicions in her mind.

The woman subsequently confided in her brother, who enquired with a doctor and confirmed that there are no vaginal swab tests involved for Covid.



"She immediately lodged a complaint and we arrested the accused. He was produced before a court and has been remanded to police custody till July 31," Wanjari said.

The incident sparked off a furore with Maharashtra Women & Child

Development Yashomati Thakur - who is also Guardian Minister of Amravati district - demanding the most stringent punishment for the accused.

"The accused technician has been booked under IPC's Sections 354

and 376. He will not be spared. This is shocking that such an incident can take place in a district which gave India its first woman President (Pratibha Patil)," Thakur said in a statement.

Strongly condemning the incident, Bhumata Ranragini Brigade President Trupti Desai said besides the first women President, Amravati district has a woman Minister and Guardian Minister, and woman MP Navneet Kaur-Rana, which made it all the more shocking, and wondered what will be situation elsewhere.

"This is a sheer atrocity on the dignity of a woman. We urged the government to immediately clear the proposed Disha Law to deter such culprits," Desai said.

of the day quote

All my love and support to family and friends of Somen Mitra at this difficult time. We will remember him with love, fondness and respect

RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

It is a moment of proud privilege that the sacred soil from the auspicious Rudreshwar Temple - Harvalem, Sankhai Goa, will be used in the foundation of the #RamMandir at Ayodhya! I offered my prayers at the Rudreshwar Temple today

PRAMOD SAWANT | GOA CHIEF MINISTER

I hope that you (Yogi Adityanath) will look into the matter in a sensitive way and ensure that Dr Kafeel Khan gets justice

PRIYANKA GANDHI VADRA | CONGRESS GENERAL SECRETARY

SHORT TAKES

10 arrested

Agartala: Ten persons have been arrested in connection with the gang rape of a 17-year-old girl in Tripuras Khowai district, a senior police officer said Thursday. DIG, Northern Range, Soumitra Dhar said the girl in her complaint said that five persons have raped her in a jungle in Khasiamangal area of the district on July 21. Dhar said the police has arrested 10 people including three for raping the girl and the rest had either collaborated or given shelter to the accused.

Four killed

Mandla (MP): Four persons were killed after a mini-truck collided with a cargo autorickshaw in Mandla district of Madhya Pradesh Thursday, police said. The accident took place on National Highway 30 under Bichhiya police station area, located around 55 kms from the district headquarters, they said. "Three persons travelling in the cargo auto, including its driver as well as that of the mini-truck, died in the mishap," district Additional Superintendent of Police Vikram Singh Kushwaha said.

Sisters gangraped

Balodabazar: At least 11 persons, including two minor boys, have been apprehended in connection with the alleged rape and blackmail of two minor sisters in Balodabazar district of Chhattisgarh, police said Thursday. The incident, which had taken place on May 31 in Palari police station area, came to light on Wednesday when one of the victims contacted the women's helpline to complain about the offence, the official said. The victims, aged 14 and 16, had stepped out for an outing with two male friends, when eight accused intercepted them on the outskirts of a village, Balodabazar superintendent of police Indira Kalyan Elesela said.

Couple booked

Thane: A case has been registered against a couple in Maharashtra's Thane city for allegedly cheating over six women of ₹3.42 lakh with the promise of getting them jobs, police said Thursday. Jitendra Chandrakant Dhotre and his wife Kavita had allegedly lured women from poor families working with self-help groups with the promise of getting them better jobs, inspector A E Kaldate of Kasarvadavali police station said. The couple would ask the victims to shell out anywhere between ₹20,000 to ₹55,000 and promise to find them work, but would later evade them, he said.



Millions have lost their jobs or livelihood in the last 12 months. The collapse of two major industries - telecom and aviation - will cost many more thousands of direct and indirect jobs

P CHIDAMBARAM | FORMER UNION FINANCE MINISTER

HONING SKILLS

Teachers of Delhi government schools will now be able to enhance their skills in the English language with the help of the US Embassy. The Delhi government has launched an online professional development programme for English teachers in government schools in partnership with the Regional English Language Office (RELO) of the US Embassy



SUSHANT CASE

Bihar govt files caveat in SC



Rhea moved the top court Wednesday seeking transfer of an FIR from Patna to Mumbai, which is being investigated by the Bihar police on the allegations of Rajput's father that she abetted 'suicide' of his actor son

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 30: Bihar government Thursday filed a caveat in the Supreme Court seeking that it be heard before any order is passed on the plea of actor Rhea Chakraborty seeking transfer of an FIR lodged against her in Patna in connection with the death of actor Sushant Singh Rajput.

The Bihar government moved the top court, hours after a similar caveat was moved by Rajput's father. Caveat is a type of petition filed to pre-empt any ex-parte order by the court on the plea filed by opposite side.

The caveat filed through Bihar government counsel Keshav

Mohan seeks to be heard before any order is passed on the plea of Chakraborty, who has sought transfer of the FIR, lodged by Rajput's father in Patna to Mumbai.

Rajput, aged 34, was found hanging from the ceiling of his apartment in suburban Bandra in Mumbai on June 14 and since then the Mumbai police has been probing the case keeping in mind various angles.

Rhea moved the top court on Wednesday seeking transfer of an FIR from Patna to Mumbai, which is being investigated by the Bihar police on the allegations of Rajput's father that she abetted 'suicide' of his actor son.

"Let nothing be done in the above matter without prior notice to the undersigned" Rajput's father Krishna Kishore Singh said in his caveat filed through lawyer Nitin Saluja.

Senior advocate Vikas Singh, who is the family lawyer of the late actor, had said Wednesday that Bollywood actress Rhea Chakraborty's plea in the Supreme Court seeking transfer of an FIR from Patna indicates that "somebody in Mumbai police was helping her".

Three Assam Rifles soldiers killed

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, July 30: Three Assam Rifles personnel were killed and five injured in an ambush near India-Myanmar border at Chandel area in Manipur Wednesday night.

A senior government officer said that a group of 15 soldiers were returning from an area dominance patrol at Khongtal in Chandel area when an improvised explosive device exploded. Thereafter they came under heavy fire from the members of an insurgent group.

"On 29 July, 2020, an area domination patrol in Khongtal, Chandel dist, Manipur: At 18:45 hrs the patrol party got ambushed on their way back," said a senior government officer. The incident happened about three kilometers from the India-Myanmar border. They were returning to their post after three days of operation along the international border.

The deceased have been identified as Havildar Pranay Kalita, Rifleman Y.M. Konyak and Rifleman Ratan

A senior government officer said that a group of 15 soldiers were returning from an area dominance patrol at Khongtal in Chandel area when an improvised explosive device exploded



Salim. The five jawans who sustained "minor injuries" have been shifted to the military hospital.

The government has stated that no insurgent group has so far claimed responsibility for the attack. "The local administration and intelligence agencies are working to identify the insurgent group which carried out the attack on the patrolling party," said a senior government officer.

Assam Rifles, a paramilitary force under Union Home Ministry,

comprises of Indian Army soldiers and officers and their own cadre of officials and officers. On June 23, a report published by the European Foundation for South Asian Studies (EFSAS) stated that Indian insurgents from the country's north eastern states, who have been sheltered for years in Myanmar, present security challenges for India.

"In addition to being threats to national security, they are also irritants that impact India's Act East Policy. The Indian suspicion, not without

basis, is that impeding the progress of India's Act East projects has assumed weight in China's strategic thinking. The influx of Chinese weapons is, accordingly, in tune with such thinking," the EFSAS said.

In 2015, in an attack by Naga group NSCN (K), a total 18 Indian Army soldiers were killed in Chandel district of Manipur. As retaliation, the force had carried out strikes on Myanmar hideouts of the group.

IN SYNC



PTI PHOTO

Rosy pelicans swim in a pond inside an enclosure, at Assam State Zoo-cum-Botanical Garden in Guwahati, Thursday

Must resolve conflict: SC

The apex court issued notice to state governments on permission given for killing of large number of blue bulls (Nilgai) to stop the destruction of crops

AGENCIES

New Delhi, July 30: The Supreme Court Thursday said a solution must be found to mitigate the animal-human conflict without killing animals or destruction of crops.

The apex court issued notice to state governments on permission given for killing of large number blue bulls (Nilgai) to stop the destruction of crops.

A bench comprising Chief Justice S.A. Bobde and Justices A.S. Bopanna and V.Ramasubramanian asked the state governments and the petitioner, Biju Janata Dal MP Anubhav Mohanty, to devise a solution to the problem.

The Chief Justice noted that both should be avoided neither killing the animals nor destruction of crops was an option. "We must find how best animal-human conflict can be controlled without killing of animals or destruction of crops," observed the bench. The petitioner had contended that the



state governments give permission for killing of blue bulls, which resulted in shooting down as many as 50 animals in a day. The bench observed that it will take this petition along with the other petition on the brutal killing of an elephant with explosives in pineapple.

Mohanty had moved the apex court seeking action and direction challenging the practice of rewarding wild animal killing in the country and sought directions against the indiscriminate

killing of wild animals.

Senior advocate Sidharth Luthra, representing Anubhav Mohanty, contended before the bench that the presence of humans in these areas (wildlife areas) creates problems and encroaching in the area also creates problems.

The petition claimed that many state governments like Bihar, Himachal Pradesh and Kerala have financially incentivized the killing of wild animals such as blue bulls, Rhesus Macaque, wild Boar etc.

"Not only do animals and children suffer because of these violent actions, our farmers also incur heavy losses due to inaction of the governments. By expediting financial compensation for crop damage, we must support our food givers," said the plea.

The petition was filed in response to the death of a child and several animals after practices such as snares, explosives, bomb baits, poison baits were reported to kill wild animals.

LAC CLASH

MARTYRS' NAMES TO BE ON WAR MEMORIAL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 30: The names of 20 Indian Army personnel, who were killed after valiantly fighting Chinese troops in Galwan Valley in eastern Ladakh on June 15, will be inscribed on the National War Memorial here, officials said Thursday.

They said the process for inscribing the names of the Army personnel on the memorial may take a few months. Chinese and Indian troops clashed in Galwan Valley for several hours on the night of June 15 in their deadliest brawl in the last five decades.

Colonel B Santosh Babu, the commanding officer of the 16 Bihar regiment, was among the Indian Army personnel killed in the clash. The incident significantly escalated the border tension in eastern Ladakh with

India calling it "a premeditated and planned action by China"

The Chinese soldiers used stones, nail-studded sticks, iron rods and clubs in carrying out brutal attacks on Indian soldiers after they protested the erection of a surveillance post by China around patrolling point 14 in Galwan Valley.

China has not disclosed the number of casualties its troops suffered. According to an American intelligence report, the number of casualties on the Chinese side was 35.

During a visit to Lukung forward post in eastern Ladakh on July 17, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh personally conveyed his appreciation and compliments to the troops from the Bihar regiment for displaying exemplary grit and courage in fighting the Chinese troops.

Ayodhya priest tests positive for corona

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Ayodhya, July 30: Acharya Pradeep Das, the assistant to the chief priest of the Ram Janmabhoomi temple, said that he has tested positive for coronavirus.

Besides, 16 policemen on duty at Ayodhya, where the 'bhoomi puja' ceremony for the Ram temple is scheduled to be held on August 5, have also tested positive for Covid-19.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to attend the ceremony along with about 200 guests.

Last Saturday, UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath had visited the Ram Janmabhoomi complex to review preparations for the August 5 event.

Photos and videos from the day show the Coronavirus-positive priest Pradeep Das standing next to the Chief Minister during a ritual.

Pandemic parents: 'First-timers' navigate lockdown hurdles

The spread of COVID-19 has deprived thousands of young couples of the support system of parents, parents-in-law and even distant relatives

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 30: Parenthood can be daunting at the best of times but when it happens for the first time and that too in the middle of a pandemic without the family-friends support structure, well that's when it takes on a whole new dimension - exciting but oh-so-scary.

The spread of COVID-19 has deprived thousands of young couples of the support system of parents, parents-in-law and even distant relatives who are ready with tips and tricks to help them transition into parenthood. And sometimes there is no domestic help either.

Just ask Vinolia and Ravi Sadarani, a Mumbai couple who had their first baby during lockdown when they were not stepping out of their homes and no one was coming in either.

In March this year, when the lockdown to stem the spread of the disease was imposed, Vinolia was nine months pregnant, just days away from becoming a mother. It was a tense, anxious and physically exhausting time.

"Right after conceiving we were told it is going to be a complicated pregnancy and we would have to go for a caesarean delivery. So obviously we knew we would need a lot of assistance. This was our first child and we knew nothing," Vinolia, who gave birth to their daughter Ruhi on April 27, said.

In a classic case of so near and yet so far, Vinolia's mother who lives in another part of Mumbai couldn't come and she couldn't go either.

"Once the lockdown was announced, not only did the possibil-



ity of getting some extra help from our parents disappear but whatever little help we had in the form of the maid was also gone," the 29-

year-old said. Her mother has come to her place now but the first two months were harrowing.

The couple was cooking and

cleaning all on their own, and for everything else there was Google. Whether it was reaching out to their parents through video calls for advice on what to eat before delivery and what to feed the baby or watching videos about pregnancy and parenting, Google was their go-to guide.

The process of having a child in itself is trying, and the stress increased exponentially due to the pandemic and the lockdown. "Access to nutritional food like fresh vegetables and fruits became challenging. We were always worried if anything we consumed would infect us and then jeopardise the baby's health. The lack of enough knowledge about the spread of the virus was very frustrating," Vinolia said. It has been worse for couples with parents in other cities and countries.

Like Canada-based Baanipreet Kaur and Tanveer Singh who had their baby last month, without any clue about the basic do's and don'ts of looking after a new-born and without parental help from back home in India.

Baanipreet said they tried everything they could to fly her parents from Gurgaon, across the Atlantic to North York, but in vain.

"The plan was that my parents would come to Canada... but the visa got rejected because of COVID-19. Two months back we applied again, but the application is still in process," the 28-year-old new mother said. Baanipreet, who gave birth to a son, Ranveer Singh, on June 2, said she was relying on her parents to help her navigate through the taxing times, but had to make do with the internet.

of the day quote

The UK government will not hesitate to reintroduce emergency measures to keep the country safe as COVID-19 cases soar in Europe




MATT HANCOCK | UK HEALTH SECRETARY

Face masks will be mandatory on the floor of the Democrat-controlled US House of Representatives



NANCY PELOSI | SPEAKER OF THE US HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

No one expected the Uruguay Round to be the last global trading round. Over the last two decades, countries like China and India got a lot richer, but they've refused to take on any more responsibilities



CHUCK GRASSLEY | TOP US SENATOR

SHORT TAKES

Fresh Covid cases in China
Beijing: China's COVID-19 cases have crossed the 100-mark for the second consecutive day, belying the hopes that the country managed to contain the deadly contagion. The National Health Commission (NHC) Thursday said that 105 new coronavirus cases, including 102 domestically transmitted ones, were registered in the country on Wednesday, mainly in the Muslim Uyghur majority Xinjiang province which reported a sudden spike in cases.

Tropical Storm hits Puerto Rico
San Juan: Tropical Storm Isaías was battering Puerto Rico early Thursday with high winds and heavy rains, according to the U.S. National Hurricane Center. Isaías was located about 100 miles (160 kilometers) west southwest of Ponce, Puerto Rico, and about 160 miles (257 kilometers) southeast of Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.

Quake rattles Los Angeles
Los Angeles: A magnitude 4.2 earthquake shook the Los Angeles region before dawn Thursday but no significant damage was reported. The 4:29 am jolt was centered in the northern San Fernando Valley and occurred at a depth of 5.5 miles (8.9 kilometers), the US Geological Survey said. A magnitude 3.3 aftershock followed. The Los Angeles Fire Department found no damage or injuries in a survey by ground and air units, a standard procedure after earthquakes in the nation's second-largest city.

Bolsonaro keeps mum
Brasília: Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro on Wednesday attended his first public event since recovering from COVID-19, though he declined to speak. Brazil's president is typically last to address at the presidential palace, but Bolsonaro only watched the event recognizing women who work in rural areas around Latin America and left the room once it ended.

Deadliest day in Oz
Canberra: Australia Thursday recorded its deadliest day of the COVID-19 pandemic so far, with 13 new deaths and a record 744 confirmed cases. With the new tallies, the total number of coronavirus cases in the country stood at 16,303, with 189 deaths.



The world will not allow Beijing to treat the South China Sea as its maritime empire
MIKE POMPEO | US SECRETARY OF STATE

NEPAL OPENS MT EVEREST
Nepal has opened Mount Everest and other Himalayan peaks from Thursday after a nearly 5-month closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic, according to a Tourism Department official



Lawmakers batter Big Tech CEOs

THE COMPANIES FACE LEGAL AND POLITICAL OFFENSIVES ON MULTIPLE FRONTS, FROM CONGRESS, THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION, FEDERAL AND STATE REGULATORS AND EUROPEAN WATCHDOGS

AGENCIES

Washington, July 30: Congressional lawmakers finally got a chance to grill the CEOs of Big Tech over their dominance and allegations of monopolistic practices that stifle competition. But it's not clear how much they advanced their goal of bringing some of the world's largest companies to heel. Investive flew as legislators questioned Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg, Amazon's Jeff Bezos, Sundar Pichai of Google and Tim Cook of Apple at a hearing of the House Judiciary subcommittee on antitrust.

In nearly five hours of testimony and questioning, however, there were few startling revelations or striking confrontations. The execs provided lots of data purporting to show how much competition they face and just how valuable their innovation and essential services are to consumers. But they sometimes struggled to answer pointed questions about their business practices. They also confronted a range of other concerns about alleged political bias, their effect on US democracy and their role in China. The panel's chairman, Rep. David Cicilline, a Rhode Island Democrat, said each platform controlled by Facebook, Amazon, Google and Apple "is a bottleneck for a key channel of distribution." "Whether they control access to information or to a marketplace, these platforms have the incentive



The CEOs testified via video to lawmakers, at times appearing together on the committee room display as tiny individual figures in a mostly empty array of squares

In nearly five hours of testimony and questioning, however, there were a few startling revelations or striking confrontations

and ability to exploit this power," he said. "They can charge exorbitant fees, impose oppressive contracts, and extract valuable data from the people and businesses that rely on them." "Simply put: They have too much power." The four CEOs command corporations whose products are woven into the fabric of everyday life, with millions or even billions of customers, and a combined market value greater than the entire German economy.

One of them, Bezos, is the world's richest individual; Zuckerberg is the fourth-ranked billionaire. And they had a few rough moments. Pichai and Zuckerberg, for instance, appeared discomfited when pressed about unsavory aspects of their companies' businesses, but got respite when their inquisitors ran out of time. Bezos also acknowledged that alleged misdeeds at Amazon—such as reports that the company has used data generated

by independent sellers on its platform to compete against them—would be "unacceptable" if proven to be true.

Outside observers were able to draw radically different conclusions from the event. Richard Hamilton Jr., a former Justice Department antitrust lawyer, said that everyone on the committee seemed to be in agreement on the need for tougher regulation of all four companies—an "ominous" sign, he said.

But Stephen Beck, CEO of the management consulting firm cg42, said the tech companies and their brands emerged relatively unscathed. In particular, he said, Cook was particularly polished and well prepared, enabling the Apple CEO to put on what Beck called "a master class in terms of how to handle these situations." Cook drew less attention from lawmakers than did the other CEOs after arguing that Apple isn't dominant in any of its markets.

Lee Teng-hui, Taiwan's 'Father of Democracy,' dies

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Taipei (Taiwan), July 30: Former Taiwanese President Lee Teng-hui, who brought direct elections and other democratic changes to the self-governed island despite missile launches and other fierce saber-rattling by China, has died. He was 97.

Taipei Veterans General Hospital said Lee died Thursday evening after suffering from infections, cardiac problems and organ failure since being hospitalized in February.



Lee strove to create a separate, non-Chinese identity for Taiwan, angering not only China, which considers the island part of its territory, but also members of his Nationalist Party who hoped to return victorious to the mainland. Lee later openly endorsed formal independence for the island but illness in his later years prompted him to largely withdraw from public life. Physically imposing and charismatic, Lee spanned Taiwan's modern history and was native to the island, unlike many who arrived with Chiang Kai-shek in 1949, at the end of the Chinese civil war.

LIFE AMID PANDEMIC



People practice social distancing as they visit a beach during the coronavirus outbreak, in Chipiona, Spain

REUTERS

Trump floats election 'delay'

AGENCIES

Washington, July 30: US President Donald Trump Thursday raised the possibility of delaying the nation's November 3 presidential election, though the Constitution bestows that power on Congress, not the President.

The move drew immediate objections from Democrats and it was not clear whether Trump was serious.

Trump also said he would not trust the results of an election that included widespread mail voting—a measure that many election observers see as critical given the coronavirus pandemic. Trump,

without evidence, repeated his claims of mail-in voter fraud and raised the question of a delay, tweeting: "delay the election until people can properly, securely and safely vote???"

Trump's tweet came shortly after the United States reported its worst economic downturn since the Great Depression: a second-quarter crash in gross domestic product due to widespread shutdowns prompted by the coronavirus pandemic.

Trump, who is trailing challenger and former Vice President Joe Biden in opinion polls, had previously intended to focus his re-election bid on the nation's economic performance.

STERN MESSAGE

Donald Trump has alleged that India, China and Russia do not take care of their air, while America does, noting that he withdrew from the "one-sided, energy-destroying" Paris climate accord which would have made it a "non-competitive nation". Trump, in his address on energy and the Permian Basin in Midland, Texas, said that by imposing these punishing restrictions and beyond restrictions—"the Washington radical-left, crazy Democrats" would also send countless American jobs, factories, industries to China and to other foreign polluting states.

RAM TEMPLE GROUNDBREAKING

Lord Ram's images to be displayed in Times Square

PROMINENT COMMUNITY LEADER AND PRESIDENT OF THE AMERICAN INDIA PUBLIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE JAGDISH SEWHANI WEDNESDAY SAID THAT ARRANGEMENTS ARE BEING MADE TO CELEBRATE THE HISTORIC MOMENT IN NEW YORK AUGUST 5

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New York, July 30: Images of Lord Ram and 3D portraits of the grand Ram Temple in Ayodhya will be beamed across the giant billboards in the iconic Times Square here on August 5 to celebrate the temple's groundbreaking ceremony with organisers describing the commemoration as a one-of-a-kind and historic event.

Prominent community leader and President of the American India Public Affairs Committee Jagdish Sewhani Wednesday said that arrangements are being made to celebrate the historic moment in New York August 5, when Prime

Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to lay the foundation stone for construction of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya.

Sewhani told PTI that among the prominent billboards that are being leased for the occasion are the giant Nasdaq screen and the 17,000-square-foot wrap-around LED display screen, considered among the largest continuous exterior displays in the world and the highest-resolution exterior LED screen in Times Square.

Beginning from 8 AM on August 5 till 10 PM, images of the words 'Jai Shri Ram' in Hindi and English, Lord Ram's portraits and videos, 3D portraits of the temple's design



and architecture as well as pictures of the laying of the founda-

tion stone by Modi will be displayed across several billboards,

NASA launches Mars rover to look for signs of ancient life

The rover will carry an experiment to test whether carbon dioxide in Mars' atmosphere can be used to produce oxygen for possible human stays on the planet

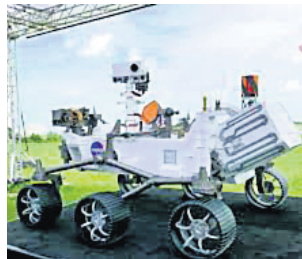
ASSOCIATED PRESS

Cape Canaveral (US), July 30: The biggest, most sophisticated Mars rover ever built—a car-size vehicle bristling with cameras, microphones, drills and lasers—blasted off for the red planet Thursday as part of an ambitious, long-range project to bring the first Martian rock samples back to Earth to be analysed for evidence of ancient life.

NASA's Perseverance rode a mighty Atlas V rocket into a clear morning sky in the world's third and final Mars launch of the summer. China and the United Arab Emirates got a head start last week, but all three missions should reach their destination in February after a journey of seven months and 300 million miles (480 million kilometres).

The plutonium-powered, six-wheeled rover will drill down and collect tiny geological specimens that will be brought home in about 2031 in a sort of interplanetary relay race involving multiple spacecraft and countries. The overall cost: more than USD 8 billion.

NASA's science mission chief, Thomas Zurbuchen, pronounced the launch the start of "human-



ity's first round trip to another planet." "Oh, I loved it, punching a hole in the sky, right? Getting off the cosmic shore of our Earth, wading out there in the cosmic ocean," he said. "Every time, it gets me."

In addition to addressing the life-on-Mars question, the mission will yield lessons that could pave the way for the arrival of astronauts as early as the 2030s.

The US, the only country to safely put a spacecraft on Mars, is seeking its ninth successful landing on the planet, which has proved to be the Bermuda Triangle of space exploration, with more than half of the world's missions there burning up, crashing or otherwise ending in failure. China is sending both a rover and an orbiter. The UAE, a newcomer to outer space, has an orbiter en route.

which are among the most striking and popular features of Times Square, one of the most popular tourist destinations in the world. Sewhani said that members of the Indian community will also gather at Times Square on August 5 to mark the celebration and distribute sweets.

"This is not a once in a lifetime or a once in a century event. This is an event that comes once in the life of mankind. We had to give it a befitting celebration and what better place than the iconic Times Square to commemorate the 'Ram Janna Bhoomi shilanyas' (ground-breaking ceremony)." Under Prime Minister Modi, the construction of

the Ram Temple is a dream come true for Hindus all over the world. Till six years back, we never thought that this day will come soon but due to Modi's leadership, this day has come and we want to celebrate it in a befitting way," he said, adding that on August 5, images of Lord Ram will flood Times Square.

Sewhani said that the Times Square commemoration is being made possible with the help and support of the community and sponsors. Prime Minister Modi had announced the formation of the Shri Ram Jannabhoomi Teertha Kshetra Trust in February. The Trust has invited Modi to lay the foundation stone of the grand Ram Temple.

of the day **quote**

While disbursements across segments are expected to fall 50-60%, AUM trajectory will differ by segment. Crisil's analysis of the largest segments of the NBFC AUM pie shows that most segments could witness contraction in the current fiscal

KRISHNAN SITARAMAN | SENIOR DIR, CRISIL RATINGS

Cyber-criminals capitalise on drive-by download technique to target the organisations and end-users with the objective to steal valuable financial information or intellectual property

KESHAV DHAKAD | GROUP HEAD & ASST GENERAL COUNSEL, MICROSOFT INDIA

Coal companies: Central Coalfields Ltd, Bharat Coking Coal Ltd and Eastern Coalfields Ltd are expected to mine out 742 million MT of coal in the next 4 years in Jharkhand, paying revenue of almost Rs 18,889 crore

PRALHAD JOSHI | COAL MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

VAT on diesel lowered in Delhi

New Delhi: CM Arvind Kejriwal has announced a reduction in the Value Added Tax (VAT) on diesel from the existing 30% to 16.75%, saying the move will help propel Delhi's economy. The diesel price will be reduced by Rs 8.36 in Delhi due to the VAT cut, Kejriwal said in a virtual press briefing. He said there was a serious challenge of reviving the economy of Delhi. Price of diesel will now come down from Rs 82 a litre to Rs 73.64 a litre, he said.

COVID-19 sinks US economy

Washington: The US economy contracted at its steepest pace since the Great Depression in the second quarter as the COVID-19 pandemic shattered consumer and business spending, and a nascent recovery is under threat from a resurgence in new cases of coronavirus. The bulk of the historic plunge in gross domestic product reported by the Commerce Department occurred in April when activity almost ground to an abrupt halt.

Wipro bags multi-year deal

New Delhi: IT major Wipro Thursday said it has inked a multi-year contract with UK-based Metro Bank to deliver testing and environment management services. As part of this partnership, Wipro will leverage its digital and quality engineering capabilities to drive transformation through automation, service virtualisation and DevSecOps (development, security and operations) enablement, it said in a statement. This will help Metro Bank achieve its objectives around cost, pace and quality of operations.

German economy continue to shrink

Berlin: The German economy contracted at its steepest rate on record in the second quarter as consumer spending, company investment and exports all collapsed during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, wiping out nearly 10 years of growth. The Federal Statistics Office said gross domestic output in Europe's largest economy shrank by 10.1% q-o-q from April to June after a revised 2.0% contraction.

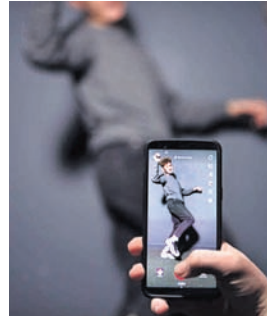


Recovery in the residential market is imminent and its green shoots would first emerge in the affordable and mid-segments across the top cities. More than 50% of the prospective homebuyers surveyed are likely to buy their dream house within the next six months

RAMESH NAIR | CEO & COUNTRY HEAD, JLL INDIA

TIKTOK PLANS \$2 BN FUND FOR CREATORS

TikTok has now raised the ante in the social media war with a plan to offer creators \$2 billion globally in next 3 years as it fights rivals like Instagram and YouTube. The TikTok move comes after the media said Instagram is reportedly offering financial incentives to some popular TikTok creators in a bid to make them use Reels



FMCG to register flat growth in 2020: Nielsen

SALES IN RURAL AND SEMI-URBAN MARKET BOUNCED BACK IN JUNE, BUT THE BIG CITIES CONTINUED TO STRUGGLE

AGENCIES

New Delhi, July 30: India's fast moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector is expected to witness a flat growth in 2020 following severe and extended lockdowns, restrictions on manufacturing units, social distancing norms and store closures, according to data analytics firm Nielsen.

The FMCG industry started to witness slowdown from the last week of March and got amplified in April-May 2020 when the industry declined by 28% as compared to the same period of 2019. This was due to massive disruptions in production and supply chain, and low consumer confidence.

Though the FMCG industry has shown some sign of improvements in June, but in the first half of the year (January-June) the industry growth slipped to negative with 6% decline.

"Keeping these unprecedented dynamics in the market, Nielsen has revised its outlook and is expecting the year to be in the flat growth range (-) 1% to 1% for branded FMCG industry in India, as against a 5-6% growth projected earlier



SIGNS OF RECOVERY

Nielsen expect an uptick in demand in October-December quarter during the festive seasons as food categories are expected to see a higher growth

The MGNREGA wages are at an all time high and rural disbursement against the programme is more than double of same period last year

this year," said Nielsen.

This is the second revision of the forecast by Nielsen for 2020, amid coronavirus pandemic and subsequent disruption in the market and supply chain.

Nielsen had January 21, projected a 9 to 10% growth for the FMCG industry with a "stable" outlook on the back of favourable macroeconomic factors.

"The bellwether FMCG industry, which was trying to revive from a difficult 2019, had a significant hit in the April-June quarter with a 17% decline in sales value as compared to the same quarter of 2019," said Nielsen.

However, they expect an uptick in demand in October-December quarter during the festive seasons as food categories are expected to see a higher growth, while July-September quarter is also likely to

see some growth.

According to the report, the FMCG industry would have rural dividends, which has recovered and bounced back from the COVID-19 impact.

"Rural India has been comparatively insulated from COVID-19 so far; however its spread is now reaching the hinterland. Having said that, we do expect an overall positive uptick due to reverse migration," said Nielsen.

Moreover, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) wages are at an all time high and rural disbursement against the programme is more than double of same period last year, it added.

Rural India contributes around 36 to 37% of the total FMCG sales, bulk of which is contributed by food items.

CCI approves acquisition of 49% of OPGC by Adani



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 30: The Competition Commission of India (CCI) approved proposed acquisition of 49% of the total equity share capital of Odisha Power Generation Corporation Limited (OPGC) by Adani Power Limited (APL).

The proposed deal relates to the acquisition of 49% of the total equity share capital of OPGC by APL (Proposed Combination). Odisha government holds 51% stake in OPGC. OPGC operates a 1,740 MW thermal power plant at Banharipalli in Jharsuguda district, Odisha.

The plant has a long-term power purchase agreement valid for 25 years with the state-owned GRIDCO and sources fuel from a nearby captive mine.

APL, is a public listed company and its shares are listed on the Bombay Stock Exchange Limited

The proposed deal relates to the acquisition of 49% of the total equity share capital of OPGC by Adani Power Limited

and the National Stock Exchange of India Limited. It is a part of the Adani Group, which is inter-alia engaged in the business operations of generation, transmission and distribution of power in India. APL is primarily engaged in the business of power generation.

OPGC, incorporated in Odisha, is a joint venture between Government of Odisha, AES India Private Limited and AES OPGC Holding and operates as a state government company. OPGC is engaged in the business of power generation.

ODISHA ENERGY MINISTER HOLDS REVIEW MEETING

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 30: Nobody should be deprived from power facilities as it is a basic commodity in today's world, said Dibya Shankar Mishra, state energy minister.

Mishra made the statement during a review meeting Thursday while briefing on the status of electrification works in Kalahandi district under centrally sponsored schemes like Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana (DDUGJY) and Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar yojana (SAUBHAGYA).

Principal secretary of energy department, Kalahandi District Magistrate and officials from REC Limited, NTPC Limited, OPTCL, WESCO and OREDA participated in the review meeting through video conferencing.

During the meeting, the energy minister reviewed the detail status of electrical infrastructure works being executed by OPTCL, NTPC and OREDA. He requested for collective efforts by NTPC, WESCO and OREDA to ensure 100% energisation of all households in Junagarh constituency by August 15 this year.



Mishra emphasised that households in remote villages which cannot be connected through grid may be electrified by installing solar modules by OREDA.

BIZ BUZZ

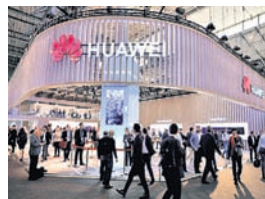
Zoom speeds up hiring IT personnel in India

New Delhi: As part of its commitment to expand and innovate further in India, US-based video meet app Zoom is fast recruiting DevOps engineers, IT, security and business operations personnel in the country. Zoom, which has an office in Mumbai and data centres in Mumbai and Hyderabad, recently announced to open a technology centre in Bangalore. "We are excited to hire key talent. Employees will work from home until it is safe to move into the new facility," Velchamy Sankarlingam, President of Engineering and Products at Zoom, said in a blog post. "We continue to invest significantly in supporting global audiences, and India will play a critical role in that growth and innovation," he added.



Huawei trumps Samsung to top smartphone market

New Delhi: Despite the US trade restrictions, Huawei has overthrown Samsung and Apple to become the leader in smartphone shipments globally in the second quarter of 2020, a new report said Thursday. It marks the first quarter in nine years that a company other than Samsung or Apple has led the market. Huawei shipped 55.8 million devices, down 5% (y-o-y) in Q2. The second-placed Samsung shipped 53.7 million smartphones, a 30% fall against Q2 2019, according to market research firm Canalys. "This is a remarkable result that few people would have predicted a year ago," said Senior Analyst Ben Stanton. "If it wasn't for COVID-19, it wouldn't have happened. Huawei has taken full advantage of the Chinese economic recovery to reignite its smartphone business," Stanton said in a statement.



ArcelorMittal logs \$599 mn net loss in Q2

New Delhi: Steel giant ArcelorMittal Thursday reported a net loss of \$599 million for the second quarter of 2020. During the corresponding period last year, the company had reported a net loss of \$447 million. Loss during the period under review narrowed down from \$1.12 billion in the January-March quarter of 2020. Sales of the Luxembourg-headquartered company fell 43% to \$10.97 billion during April-June, the company said in a statement. Commenting on the performance, Chairman and CEO Lakshmi N. Mittal said: "The first six months of the year, and particularly the second quarter, have been one of the most difficult periods in the history of the company, with demand for steel considerably disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic."



'Economy on recovery path piggy-riding rural rebound'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, July 30: Mortgage lender HDFC Chairman Deepak Parekh Thursday sounded confident of the pandemic-ravaged economy coming out soon, as he expects Bharat to help nurture India back to economic health earlier than the consensus forecast.

Base-case forecasts by many pencils in a GDP contraction of 5% if the lockdown is lifted by July and normalcy trundles back from September, and over 7.5% in the worst case as each month of the lockdown shaves off 100 bps of the GDP.

"Signs of the wheels of the economy beginning to churn are evident from the following facts: unemployment rates have tapered down from their peaks in May, e-toll collections are higher; as are e-way bills, digital transactions and GST collections which are back to the Rs 90,000 crore levels.

"Demand for two-wheelers and



tractors have risen, even though passenger and commercial vehicle demand remains subdued on the back of the timely onset of the monsoons," Parekh told the shareholders at the 43rd Annual General Meeting of HDFC.

Advising people not to get too perturbed with the forecasts of negative growth, he said the economy will recover for sure assuming that there are no further lengthy and complete lockdowns in future.

"Since the Independence, we have

reality, saying that many large companies are using the lockdowns as a good opportunity to snap up good properties when the prices are low.

Listing out the reasons for his optimism, Parekh said that there is a misconception that demand for commercial real estate will diminish with more opting to work-from-home. However, many large companies have in fact acquired or leased commercial properties during this period, particularly in Bangalore and Hyderabad.

"And also there is demand for real estate from newer sectors like warehousing, e-commerce companies and from cloud and data centre parks as they seek to increase

their data storage capacities."

On the housing sector, he said the inherent demand for home loans continues to remain strong and the combination of low interest rates, fiscal incentives and softening of realty prices bodes well for new homebuyers.

He called up on the states to offer some sweeteners for home buyers by giving a temporary stamp duty waivers apart for helping migrant workers to return to their workplaces as the hit on the commercial realty is largely due to massive reverse migration of labourers, which is making resumption of projects a challenge.



A good monsoon, strong agricultural growth and government support through rural employment guarantee scheme is enabling rural consumption to lead the overall recovery

DEEPAK PAREKH | CHAIRMAN, HDFC

workplaces as the hit on the commercial realty is largely due to massive reverse migration of labourers, which is making resumption of projects a challenge.

Analysts at Barclays acknowledged that high inflation is adding confusion to the RBI's policy outlook but pitched for a 0.25% cut to generate demand

tinue easing, by cutting the repo rate at least 0.25% at its next policy meeting," the analysts said, ahead of the meeting of the monetary policy committee to be conducted between August 4 and 6.

They added that the impact on the activity favours more easing measures rather than less, and for having the cuts faster rather than at a deliberate pace.

"We do not believe the argument of saving 'ammunition' for future cuts holds water, given the inherent lags in transmission of policy rates into lending rates," it added.

Meanwhile, Singaporean lender DBS Bank said it sees "slightly higher odds" for a pause in the rate cuts at the upcoming review of the monetary policy but added that there will be cuts of 0.50 per cent between October to March 2021.

Instant lending app 'Navi' gets positive response in state

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 30: The Navi Lending App which was launched in June has received an overwhelming response in the state, with customers in the twin cities of Bhubaneswar and Cuttack availing instant paperless loans through the app.

Aimed at middle-income Indians, who are comfortable with smartphones and technology, the Navi app provides instant loans of up to Rs 5 lakhs with tenures of up to 36 months, via a completely digital and contactless process for customers.

Available for download at Google's Play store, customers can check their eligibility, select the loan and EMI amount, and enter their PAN and Aadhaar number to receive the loan amount in their bank account within minutes. The process is entirely paperless and does not require uploading of any documents like pay slips or bank statements.

Navi's official Samit Shetty said, "Most of Navi's loans were disbursed to customers' bank accounts in less than 10 minutes, while some customers were able to avail loans in less than 5 minutes from the time they installed the app."

Royal Enfield launches 'service on wheels'

Bhubaneswar: Royal Enfield announced the launch and rollout of 'Service on Wheels'. The customer-friendly initiative is aimed at safe, seamless and hassle-free motorcycle service experience for customers. In an effort to provide customers the convenience of getting their motorcycles serviced at their doorstep, Royal Enfield has deployed as many as 800 units of Royal Enfield branded, purpose-built Service on Wheels motorcycles across dealerships in the country. The Service on Wheels motorcycles are purpose-built, and equipped to carry tools, equipment and genuine spare parts to undertake up to 80% of all typical service and repair requirements at the doorstep of a customer including scheduled maintenance service, minor repairs, critical component testing, parts replacement, electrical diagnosis, and others.

UNCONVENTIONAL APPROACH

Indian boxer Vikas Krishan prefers US Pro bouts instead of national camp in Patiala for mission Tokyo Olympics



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 30: Top Indian boxer Vikas Krishan has decided to revive his professional career in the US instead of training at the national camp in Patiala as he believes conventional is just not good enough for a podium finish at next year's Tokyo Olympics.

Vikas is currently training in Bangalore's Inspire Institute of Sports (IIS) with another professional boxer and close friend Neeraj Goyat after being asked to leave NIS Patiala for alleged violation of COVID-19 quarantine norms, later deemed unintentional.

He has no plans of going back even though the Sports Authority of India (SAI) decided to allow him

to return after an inquiry.

"I will continue training here (in Bangalore). I have fallen into a rhythm and I don't wish to disturb myself by once again taking the trip to Patiala. I don't see the point," Vikas, who is training under American coach Ronald Simms at the IIS, told PTI in an interview over phone.

Asked about the controversy in Patiala, Vikas offered a philosophical take. "I have never harmed anyone. I have made mistakes but the intent is only to do well for the country. I have never caused problems for anyone else. That's all I have to say," he said.

The 28-year-old Haryana-lad is more eager to talk about his plans to return to the US, where he con-

tinues to have a contract with Hall of Famer Bob Arum's Top Rank Promotions. The welterweight (69kg category) boxer will compete in the 70kg division in the pro circuit.

"As soon as I manage to get a flight, I am going to the USA. I am in touch with Top Rank Promotions. They have promised to arrange fights for me and I hope to compete in 3-4 bouts before the Olympics," he said.

"That would help my Olympic chances more than anything else because it is in the pro circuit that I learnt the crucial lesson of not believing in luck. It is all about ability, there is nothing called luck," added the former world bronze-winner, who won his two pro bouts before returning to amateur cir-

cuit last year.

The Asian Games and Commonwealth Games gold-winner will be making third Olympic appearance in Tokyo next year. He is the most experienced among the five men who have made the cut so far.

"I took a break from professional with due permission from my promoter to pursue my Olympic dream. Now that I have qualified, I will go back to pro to prepare myself," he said.

Talking of preparations, do High Performance Director Santiago Nieva and national coach CA Kuttappa know of his plans?

"They know and they are supportive. They know what I am capable of and they have encouraged me. I have also got immense support from Boxing Federation of India Executive Director R K Sacheti," he said.

Less than a year away from his third Olympics, Vikas said he has never enjoyed boxing as much as he does now. "If you watch me fight now, you can see the artistry. In my past two Olympics (2012 and 2016), I used to be bothered by pressure and expectations, not anymore. I feel free of that. This has made boxing very enjoyable for me. Earlier there was an element of stress," he explained.

His friend Neeraj, also a pro boxer, has been a constant in his life for the past few years and Vikas said he is grateful for the support.

"I don't think I will be able to do as much for him as he has done for me. He has come to train with me, support me whenever I have asked him," he said.

Amid the strenuous preparations, has he factored in the COVID-19 mayhem, the one which forced the Olympics to be postponed and which still is a threat to the Games going ahead even next year.

"I am destined to win an Olympic medal. Olympics will happen because God can't be so cruel to me. I know that," asserted the boxer.

Mariana wants to become 'world's best midfielder'



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, July 30 : Indian junior women's hockey team midfielder Mariana Kujur has said she idolises her fellow Odia stalwarts Lilima Minz and Namita Toppo and has always looked up to them since her initial days in the sport.

Speaking from her Railways' office in Mumbai, the 21-year-old said: "When I had begun my hockey career at the Panposh Sports Hostel, both Lilima di and Namita di were in their early years with the national side, and I would just be so happy to see them train at our academy whenever they would come home from national duty."

"They have been inspirational in my career and I've also been very fortunate that they have been there to guide me along the way. When I see the journey that they have made, I feel really excited and confident because that means I can do such things as well," said Mariana.

The young midfielder hails from a small village of Timna, which lies

in Odisha's Sundargarh district, a hockey hotbed of the country. Growing up, Mariana was always inclined towards the sport because of the hockey culture in her locality.

Reminiscing her early days, Mariana said, "I come from an area where hockey is played in every village with the use of whichever piece of wood we can find. I was fortunate to have my elder brother who was always very passionate about the sport, and I would end up playing with him and my friends in my village."

"It was in 2010 at the age of 11 when I finally gave trials and got selected for the Panposh hostel. It was at the academy that I realised my true potential, and here I am targeting a place in the Indian team in the future," she said.

With both her parents' occupation being farming in her native village, Mariana said it her dream to make them see her on TV one day. "When there is live hockey on television, my parents are often asking me why I am not playing

at the Kalinga Stadium, like our senior teams do. They do not realise that I am in the junior team, but it is my dream to make them very proud, and for them, that would happen if they are able to see me on television," expressed the youngster.

Having established herself at the junior level, Mariana says her eventual dream is to play at the Olympics, but wants to also become the best midfielder in the world.

"I am a midfielder and it gives me huge joy to be able to play my part both in attack and defense. My overall aim, like any other hockey player, is to make it to the Olympics and win medals for my country. But I also think about being the best midfielder in the world."

"I have so many great players to watch in our senior team, and I believe if I can pick up the good qualities of all of those players, I can become a complete player, and help my team also become the best in the world," she said.

Virtual gaming in teams' plans for non-match days

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, July 30: With the 13th edition of the IPL set to be played in UAE, the franchises are working overtime when it comes to planning for non-match days.

The sole reason is that unlike other seasons, players cannot go out of the hotel when they are not playing due to COVID-19 concerns. Moreover, the BCCI is yet to give the green signal for teams to get their immediate family to UAE during the course of the tournament.

Speaking to this agency, an official of one of the franchises said that player engagement on non-match days is high on agenda for all teams this year as they cannot leave the team hotels and will have to remain indoors.

"It is an area of focus for sure. In fact, I would say this is the biggest challenge this year. When you realise that the boys will be restricted for close to two months, you need to also provide them with options. Xbox and virtual gaming facilities will rule the roost. Don't be too surprised if they play more FIFA than cricket in these two months of IPL (laughs)."

"Also, futsal is something that is big among players as is pool and table tennis. You cannot just brief the players and tell them that do not step out. You need to create an atmosphere where the players are excited to hit the team room and engage among themselves on non-match days," the official explained.

Echoing similar sentiments, another official said that planning is already on to hit a new level when



it comes to being creative with the team room.

"See, watching movies on Netflix and all is fine. But that you can do even in your own room. We need to work on things we can do out of the box to engage the players. It will be a challenge for sure, especially if the families are not travelling with the team."

"This is something that we will get to know in the next few days from the BCCI. We do have a meeting planned with them post the IPL Governing Council meeting Sunday," the official said.

It is believed that franchises have requested the BCCI to allow immediate families to travel with the players and support staff, but in batches and not for the whole duration of the tournament.

Hardik, wife Natasha blessed with baby boy



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, July 30: India all-rounder Hardik Pandya and Natasha Stankovic have been blessed with a baby boy the 26-year-old announced via his social media handle.

His Twitter post read: "We are blessed with our baby boy." It was posted with the picture of the baby's hand. The delivery happened in Vadodra.

The duo had earlier announced in May that they were expecting a third member in their family. Fast forward a couple of months and they shared the good news with their fans and followers on social media, with the photo of their newly-born child.

Hardik's Instagram post in May

had read: "Natasa and I had a great journey together and it is just about to get better. Together we are excited to welcome a new life into our lives very soon. We're thrilled for this new phase of our life and seek your blessings and wishes."

Wishes immediately poured in with India skipper Virat Kohli being one of the first to wish the cricketer. He was followed by not just the other Indian players, but also chief coach Ravi Shastri.

Earlier this year, Hardik had announced his engagement to Natasa via social media as well. Hardik had shared an image of him proposing to Natasa January 1 and had captioned it: "Mai tera, Tu meri jaane, saara Hindustan. 01.01.2020 #engaged."

Sports Awards likely to be delayed

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 30: The National Sports Awards ceremony this year is likely to be delayed by a month or two due to the COVID-19 pandemic but a final decision will be taken only after receiving guidance from the Rashtrapati Bhavan, a Sports Ministry official has said.

The National Sports Awards include the Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna, the Arjuna, Dronacharya and Dhyanachand honours, conferred every year by the President of India at the Rashtrapati Bhavan August 29.

"We haven't heard anything from the Rashtrapati Bhavan yet. We are waiting for a communication with regard to the Sports awards."

So, at this point of time, it is very difficult to say what will happen," the ministry official told this agency.

"Currently, public gathering is prohibited across the country due to COVID-19 so no functions are being organised at the Rashtrapati Bhavan."

"In the past also, the awards ceremony has been organised with delays, so in case it cannot be held August 29, we can hold it one or two months later. The well-being and safety of all should be the priority right now," he added.

The pandemic had last month forced the sports ministry to extend the deadline for submission of online applications for the awards. It also allowed athletes to self-nominate in view of the 'difficulties'

being faced by them to find recommenders amid the lockdown.

The self nomination has resulted in a huge number of applicants for the awards but the sports ministry is yet to form a committee to select the eventual winners with just a month left for the ceremony if it is held on time. It has been learnt that the ministry is yet to start screening of the applications and a delay is inevitable.

"The sports awards this year will definitely be delayed because screening of applications is a tedious task which is yet to begin," a ministry source told this agency.

"But the awards will definitely be given away. There is no question of denying deserving athletes and coaches their due recognition."

Roller-coaster start for Shubhankar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Birmingham, July 30: Indian golfer Shubhankar Sharma began with a flourish, but two slightly wayward tee shots cost him heavily as he ended the first day with a roller-coaster one-over 73 in the Hero Open Thursday.

The 24-year-old Indian, who has two wins on the European Tour, had a birdie followed by an eagle on the second and third holes, but double bogeys on the 10th and 13th on the tougher back stretch saw him



drop a bunch of shots.

Overall, he had an eagle, three

birdies, two bogeys and two double bogeys in an eventful round at the Hero Open, which is the second event on the UK Swing, at the Forest of Arden Marriott Hotel & Country Club.

Spain's Sebastian Garcia Rodriguez fired a stunning 62 to hold the clubhouse lead on day one, as fellow Spaniard Pablo Larrazabal shot 64. Veteran Miguel Angel Jimenez, the 56-year-old playing his record 707th European Tour event, was five-under through 10 holes with five birdies.

Anand ends disastrous campaign with defeat



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, July 30: Indian chess ace Viswanathan Anand's signed off second from bottom after his disappointing campaign at the Legends of Chess online tournament ended with a loss to long-time rival Vasily Ivanchuk in the ninth and final round.

It was Anand's eighth loss in the USD 150,000 tournament. The 50-year-old ended in ninth position above last-placed GM Peter Leko.

After all the four games ended in draws, the Anand-Ivanchuk contest went into the Armageddon (a tie-breaker), which also ended in a stalemate. The Ukrainian emerged victorious as he played black in the decider late Wednesday. Anand started the match with a 57-move draw and the tie progressed in a similar vein with the players opting for quiet draws.

The Armageddon game was a 59-move affair before the former world champion signed peace with Ivanchuk. The 50-year old Indian finished ninth in the standings with 7 match points and a solitary win (over Boris Gelfand) on his debut in the Magnus Carlsen Tour.

In other matches, World No.1 Magnus Carlsen defeated Vladimir Kramnik 3-1 to finish with an all-

win record after nine matches in the preliminary stage.

The Norwegian will now play Russia's Peter Svidler in the semi-finals, while Anish Giri (Hungary) takes on Ian Nepomniachtchi (Russia) in a repeat of their Chessable Masters semifinal.

Legends of Chess is an event in which Carlsen, Liren, Nepomniachtchi and Giri, semifinalists at the Chessable Masters (part of the Magnus Carlsen Tour), received an automatic invite and are up against six legends aged 40-52, who have been at the top of world chess at various points in their career.

RESULTS (ROUND 9): Vasily Ivanchuk (Ukraine) beat Viswanathan Anand (India) 2.5-2.5 (Ivanchuk wins by playing black after Armageddon is drawn); Magnus Carlsen (Norway) beat Vladimir Kramnik (Russia) 3-1; Boris Gelfand (Israel) beat Ian Nepomniachtchi (Russia) 3-2; Anish Giri (The Netherlands) beat Peter Svidler (Russia) 2.5-1.5; Ding Liren (China) beat Peter Leko (Hungary) 2.5-1.5.

FINAL STANDINGS: 1. Carlsen 25 match points, 2. Nepomniachtchi 20, 3. Giri 18, 4. Svidler 14, 5. Ivanchuk 13, 6. Kramnik 12, 7. Gelfand 11, 8. Liren 7, 9. Anand 7, 10. Leko 6.