



FEARLESS VIDYA

Vidya Balan says she does not have the fear of losing stardom she has gained over the years

LEISURE P2



BHUSHAN BOOKED

Mumbai police register case against T-Series boss Bhushan Kumar for allegedly raping a woman

TWO STATES P8



MEGA WARGAME

The UK's largest warship HMS Queen Elizabeth and its strike task group to carry out mega wargame with the Indian Navy

INTERNATIONAL P10



PANGS OF MIGRATION: In this picture taken by Danish Siddiqui September 11, 2017, a Rohingya refugee woman is seen touching the shore after crossing the Bangladesh-Myanmar border by boat through the Bay of Bengal, in Shah Porir Dwp, Bangladesh

Indian photojournalist killed in Afghanistan

AGENCIES

New Delhi, July 16: Indian photojournalist Danish Siddiqui, a Pulitzer Prize winner, was killed in Afghanistan while on a reporting assignment. Afghan Ambassador Farid Mamundzay said Friday.

security forces. I met him 2 weeks ago before his departure to Kabul. Condolences to his family & Reuters."

Danish Siddiqui, who worked for news agency Reuters, was constantly capturing Afghan happenings in his camera, and was informing people through his social



'LUCKY TO BE SAFE'

In a string of tweets three days ago, the photojournalist reported how the vehicle he was travelling in was targeted and that he felt lucky to be safe. "The Humvee in which I was travelling with other special forces was also targeted by at least 3 RPG rounds and other weapons. I was lucky to be safe and capture the visual of one of the rockets hitting the armour plate overhead," Danish Siddiqui had tweeted July 13.

A resident of Delhi, Siddiqui was on a reporting assignment with the Afghan security forces when he was killed.

Siddiqui's father Professor Akhtar Siddiqui told IANS: "I got information about my son about one hour ago. The last time I spoke to my son was two days ago, and he was very happy at that time."

Mamundzay tweeted, "Deeply disturbed by the sad news of the killing of a friend, Danish Seddiqi in Kandahar last night. The Indian Journalist & winner of Pulitzer Prize was embedded with Afghan

media posts. Two days ago, he tweeted: "The Humvee in which I was travelling with other special forces was also targeted by at least 3 RPG rounds and other weapons. I was lucky to be safe and capture the visual of one of the rockets hitting the armour plate overhead." He also posted a short video about the action.

Siddiqui was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 2018 for his coverage of the Rohingya issue.

He was a student of Jamia University and his father has been a professor at the university.

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Still looking for pigeons: SC on bail order delays

AGENCIES

New Delhi, July 16: The Supreme Court Friday wondered why in the era of internet, jail authorities continue to rely on ancient modes of communication to receive bail orders.

The apex court also emphasised that it will soon develop a secure electronic transmission mechanism for the jail authorities to access orders, for expeditious release of prisoners.

A bench of Chief Justice NV Ramana and justices L Nageswara Rao and AS Bopanna made the observation during the hearing on a suo motu case in connection with the delay in releasing convicts by prison authorities even after being

granted bail by courts.

The Chief Justice said: "In this age of information and communication technology, we are still looking at the skies for the pigeons to communicate the orders."

He expressed surprise that the prison officials are waiting for the Supreme Court orders to be sent by post. "We had ordered release in some matters, and they were not released since they (jail authorities) did not receive authentic copy of orders. This is too much," he added.

The bench, elaborating on the system, said: "We are contemplating a system for secure orders of bail, so that such orders can be sent electronically to jail authorities."

CM seeks vax for 12-18

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 16: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Friday requested Prime Minister Narendra Modi to allow inoculation of children in the age group of 12 to 18 years at the earliest due to the anticipated third wave of COVID-19.

The CM also demanded an increase in the allocation of vaccines for the state to 95 per cent, and a reduction in the share of private hospitals to 5 per cent, to expedite the inoculation drive in the state.

Voicing concern over a possible third wave and its impact on children, Patnaik proposed, "I would like to request that the vaccines for the age group of 12-18 years may be prioritised and rolled out at the earliest."

PM Modi Friday held an interaction with CMs of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Odisha, Maharashtra and Kerala, which accounted for 80 per cent of the new COVID-19 cases last week in the country.



I would like to request that the vaccines for the age group of 12-18 years may be prioritised and rolled out at the earliest

NAVEEN PATNAIK | CHIEF MINISTER

Official sources said that as many as 49,076 children below 14 years tested positive for COVID-19 during the first wave and the prevailing second wave of the pandemic in Odisha.

Patnaik also demanded that the vaccine distribution between the state government and private hospitals should be in the ratio of 95:5 instead of the existing 75:25.

The CM made the demand before the PM after the state government's letters to the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and the minister concerned failed to yield any result.

Earlier, Health and Family Welfare Minister NK Das had written several letters to his counterpart in the Union government. Additional Chief Secretary of the department PK Mohapatra had also requested the ministry to modify the vaccine allocation policy.

The state government believes that due to the low presence of private hospitals in the state, the lifting of the vaccines from the 25 per cent quota has been less.

On the other hand, the state government which has the infrastructure for inoculating over three lakh people on a single day, is facing an acute shortage of vaccines.

Drive kicks in for pregnant women

BHUBANESWAR: The state government Friday launched an inoculation drive for pregnant women and lactating mothers. The state government wants to inoculate pregnant women ahead of the possible third wave of the pandemic in the country, State Immunisation Programme chief Bijay Panigrahi said. Panigrahi said a special feature has been added to the CoWIN portal for the vaccination of expectant mothers.

The scarcity of vaccines has led to suspension of inoculation drives for several days in a month.

While justifying the state's demand for more vaccines, Patnaik claimed that Odisha has been performing very well in vaccination. Odisha's vaccine wastage is among the lowest in the country, the CM said.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Does the Indian drone policy say anything about Chinese or Pakistani drones?

MARKET WATCH

| INDEX | VALUE | VARIATION |
|--------|----------|-----------|
| SENSEX | 53140.06 | ↓ 18.79 |
| NIFTY | 15923.40 | ↓ 0.80 |
| DOLLAR | 74.95 | ↑ ₹0.05 |
| EURO | 88.29 | ↑ ₹0.20 |
| GOLD | ₹48,038 | ↓ ₹362 |
| SILVER | ₹68,405 | ↓ ₹1,276 |

WEATHER

| | BHUB | CTK |
|----------|--------|--------|
| MAX | 35.2°C | 34.2°C |
| MIN | 26.5°C | 26.0°C |
| Humidity | 73% | 69% |
| Rainfall | Nil | Trace |

Forecast: Light rain very likely

May not make profit: Paytm on \$2.2bn IPO

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Mumbai, July 16: Digital payments pioneer Paytm Friday took a major step towards launching the country's biggest initial public offering, telling regulators that it would seek to sell \$2.2 billion in shares.

The offering is the latest in a wave of IPOs in the country, with food delivery firm Zomato this week raising \$1.3 billion. Paytm is backed by the Ant Group of Chinese tycoon Jack Ma, which holds a nearly 30 per cent stake, along with Masayoshi Son's Softbank Vision Fund, Berkshire Hathaway and other high-profile investors.

Founder and chief executive Vijay Shekhar Sharma, who has a net worth of \$2.3 billion according to Forbes, holds just under 10 per cent of the company. As a part of the IPO, Paytm will issue fresh shares worth ₹83 billion and sell an equal amount of shares through a sale offer, according to its prospectus filed with regulators.

Since 2010, Paytm has become a key digital payments enterprise in a country dom-

inated by cash transactions. It has benefited from the government's efforts to curb cash transactions - including the cancellation of nearly all banknotes in 2016 - and from the coronavirus pandemic.

But Paytm has made continual losses and is not sure if it will make a profit. It reported a net loss of ₹17 billion last year, on revenues of ₹31.86 billion.

"We expect to continue to incur net losses for the foreseeable future and we may not achieve or maintain profitability in the future," the prospectus warned.

Paytm has reported negative cash flows for the last three years, primarily due to operational losses.

Big-ticket tech issues are heating up the country's IPO market. The share issue by Zomato - which has also never reported a profit - has seen a strong investor response and companies like Delhivery and Mobikwik expect to follow.

With a target of \$2.2 billion, Paytm would surpass Coal India's \$2 billion issue in 2010 to become India's biggest IPO and propel the country's primary market to its best year ever.

SEC initiates process for panchayat polls

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 16: The State Election Commission (SEC) has initiated the process for the panchayat elections, scheduled to be conducted next year.

SEC Secretary RN Sahu has recently written a letter to all collectors asking them to submit an inventory of ballot boxes available in their respective districts by July 26.

The Commission is in protracted correspondence with districts to ascertain the availability of ballot boxes, both in good as well as in repairable conditions.

"On perusal of the figures submitted by the districts it is seen that proper inventory has not been done at the district level and the figures have been submitted in a mechanical manner and are found to be much less than the ballot boxes supplied to the districts," Sahu said in his letter.

The SEC further proposed to have central counting at block headquarters instead of counting at the booth level in the next elections to Panchayati Raj Institutions in 2022.

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Rank 601-800 in Engineering & Technology and Computer Science, 2021

Rank 601+ In Health Sciences, 2021 (Clinical, Pre-clinical and Health Science category)

Rank 401+ Times Asia University Rankings, 2021

Rank 351-400 Times Young University Rankings, 2021

Rank 501+ Emerging Economies University Rankings, 2020

QS WORLD UNIVERSITY RANKINGS

Rank 801-100 World University Rankings, 2022

Rank 351-400 In QS Asia University Rankings, 2021

Rank 49 among Indian institutions QS World University Rankings India, 2020

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FREDDIE HIGHMORE TALKS ABOUT HIS ROLE IN THE GOOD DOCTOR

Actor Freddie Highmore has opened up about how much research work went into his role in the upcoming fourth season of *The Good Doctor*. In the American medical drama television series, Highmore stars as Shaun Murphy, a young autistic savant surgical resident at the fictional San Jose St. Bonaventure Hospital.

GIGI OPENS UP ABOUT ANXIETY ISSUES DURING PREGNANCY

Model Gigi Hadid has shared that she worried about being a good mother while she was pregnant with her first child Khai. The 26-year-old model opened up about how she kept a good journal and a bad journal which she thinks she might give to her daughter Khai one day, reports *dailymail.co.uk*.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
You are feeling nervous today. There may be something particular playing on your mind which makes you circumspect. Ganesh advises you to make the best of the evening, when you might be invited to a party or a social gathering. Things may turn out to be in your favour.

TAURUS
It is a day of dreaming and doing, says Ganesh. Your ideas will click at work and help you shine through today. You will impress the boss with elegance and spend the evening with champagne and your love-struck beloved.

GEMINI
There are strong indications that today will be an action-packed day for you, says Ganesh. Though you will be burdened with a lot of responsibilities, you will be able to show your family members how much you care for them. New relationships will also develop in the evening.

CANCER
Ganesh counsels you to persevere thoughtfully before signing any document. As it is a day of financial loss, handle middlemen and agents deftly. New tempting offers are seen on the job front. So you may accept a new job.

LEO
There is no other way out of your current predicament except hard work. You will need to decide whether you want to work hard to achieve your goals, or let them slip by in pursuit of leisure. It is in your best interests to make some effort now to reap substantial gains later, says Ganesh.

VIRGO
Today will be a creative and beneficial day for you at your workplace. In the afternoon, Ganesh says, you will be in your element. With your professional acumen, you will succeed in sharing your ideas with your boss and getting his approval. You will be free in the evening to indulge in lavishing your affection on your beloved.

LIBRA
Ganesh says today you need to be careful about taking up any new ventures, agreements or deals in business today. You may have to bear the ire of higher ups in your office today but after the afternoon your work ability and skills will suitably impress them and remove any doubts that they had in you earlier.

SCORPIO
You enjoy being a social butterfly today, says Ganesh. Evening will be spent wine and dining in the company of pleasant and like-minded people. During the day, you keep planning for the evening. And perhaps, that's the reason that you are not in the mood to work today.

SAGITTARIUS
You may feel as if you are caught in a rat race and for you it has become important of survive it. Though it is challenging enough, you are excited to get a new mission in life. Take a break in the evening and enjoy it with family and friends, says Ganesh.

CAPRICORN
You'll feel trapped and may feel as if everyone is trying to bog you down by hook or crook. Others may bully you and this may shatter your confidence. Do not worry though, as your luck is guarding you, assures Ganesh. Even if others are meant to you, their behaviour will not mar your health or image.

AQUARIUS
You will take up the road less travelled today. You will find solace in spiritualism. You have worked really hard till now, and it's time to take breather, feels Ganesh. Spend some time with your friends, unwind yourself, travel to your favourite destination and rejuvenate yourself.

PISCES
Other people will have high expectations from you. You will be required to co-operate with others and give your co-workers more of your time than is their due. However, your co-workers will also reciprocate in equal measure when the need arises. You will be determined to complete all your projects on time.

SUREKHA SIKRI DIES AT 75

Surekha's acting in the movies Tamas, Mammo and Badhaai Ho made her win National award thrice and she also won Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 1989

Mumbai: Three-time National Award-winning actress Surekha Sikri, popular as Dadasa of *Balika Vadhu*, passed away in the city following a cardiac arrest Friday. She was 75.

"Farewell Surekha ji, you will be missed," wrote actor Sushant Singh on Twitter, confirming the news. Sikri has been unwell for quite sometime now, suffering from complications owing to a second brain stroke. She suffered a brain stroke in 2020 and a paralytic stroke in 2018.

Sikri made her film debut in the 1978 political drama *Kissa Kursi Ka* and made a mark with roles in films, TV and on stage over more than 40 years. She won the National Award as Best Supporting Actress for *Tamas* (1988), *Mammo* (1995) and *Badhaai Ho* (2018). She won the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 1989. Sikri was born in Uttar Pradesh. Her father was in the Air Force and her mother was a teacher. She graduated from National School of Drama (NSD) in 1971.

In recent years, she won acclaim for her roles in the film *Badhaai Ho*, and the TV series *Balika Vadhu*.



Mumbai: Actors including Manoj Bajpayee and Randeep Hooda have mourned the death of three-time National Award-winning actress Surekha Sikri, popular in recent years as Dadasa in the TV series *Balika Vadhu*. Actor Manoj Bajpayee tagged Surekha as one of the greatest talents.

"Very Sad news!!! One of the greatest talent Surekha Sikri ji passed away leaving behind so many great performances in theatre and cinema!! She was a treat to watch on stage. Can't forget some of those memories of her act in theatre. Great craft and a graceful person!! RIP," Manoj tweeted.

Actor Vijay Varma, who gained popularity as Moeen from the film *Gully Boy*, called Surekha's demise a loss to cinema.

Vijay wrote on his Instagram story: "What a force of nature she was. A true artiste. A big loss to cinema. Heartbroke."

Actor Randeep

Hooda simply wrote: "Rest in peace #SurekhaSikri ji"

Actress Divya Dutta, said that she would remember the late veteran star 'very fondly'.

"RIP #surekha ji. I'll always remember you so very fondly!! Big loss!! Your talent was spectacular!!" Divya wrote along with a picture she shared of her posing with Surekha on Twitter.

Filmmaker Ashoke Pandit called it a 'great loss to the industry'. He tweeted: "Sad to know about the demise of veteran theatre, television, film actress & a great human being #SurekhaSikri ji due to cardiac arrest. It's a great loss to the industry. My heartfelt condolences to her near & dear ones."

Reminiscing about Sikri on the set of *Badhaai Ho*, Gajraj Rao penned: "She was definitely the youngest at heart on the sets, and had no airs about her stature or endless experience as an actress. Her craft was defined by her years of homework and 'riyaaz' as an actress, combined with a child-like enthusiasm."

He added: "As all journeys must end eventually, we bid goodbye to Surekha ji today. Thank you, Surekha ji, for all the wisdom and memories you have left us with. #rip #surekhasikri #badhaaiho @iamitrrsharma."

Ayushmann posted a video clip of Sikri on Instagram Story. In the clip, Sikri is seen reciting



a few lines written by Faiz Ahmed Faiz. In the monochrome video, Sikri, who wears a white shirt with bird prints, mouths the lines of 'Mujh Se Pehli Si Mohabbat'.

"RIP Surekha Sikri," wrote Ayushmann, along with the video.

"I am saddened to know about the demise of my mentor Surekha Sikri ji, one of the greatest actors and doyen of Indian cinema, a legend. She inspired generations of actors

and will always be missed. RIP. Surekha ma'am was an inspiration and showed the way with grace," said Avika Gor who rose to fame playing Anandi in the TV show *Balika Vadhu* alongside Surekha Sikri, who essayed the popular Dadasa.

Mourning the loss, Neena Gupta said in a video on her Instagram page: "I received the sad news of Surekha Sikri's demise this morning. I thought of sharing my grief with you. She was my senior at National School

of Drama, in the Repertory Company. We used to secretly watch her performances and I learned so much from her. I wished to become an actress like her someday. That was many, many years ago."

Anushka Sharma took to her Instagram story and shared a throwback picture of the veteran actress. Along with the picture, she wrote, "We have lost a gem! RIP Surekha ma'am" followed by a broken heart and folded hands emojis.

Vidya on fear of losing stardom

Mumbai: Vidya Balan says she does not have the fear of losing the stardom she has gained over the years with her power-packed performances. She admits, though, that it hurts when a film of hers does not do perform well because she is always intensely involved in anything that she does.

"When you are going through a low, it is very tough, especially because it is all very public. When your films don't work, for example, it affects me badly because I am so intensely involved in my

films. I give so much of myself to my films," Vidya said while speaking to IANS.

The actress says the most painful part of the experience is that she feels 'rejected or unloved' when such a thing happens. "It is heart-breaking, there is no doubt about it and then

you feel unloved and rejected. I think that is what is painful. You can't make sense of it. Only later are you able to look at the situation objec-

tively and say, 'oh that is why this film did not resonate with people'. When it is fresh, I think it is always very tough," she said.

However, loss of stardom is a notion that has never bothered her, Vidya added. "Is there fear of loss of stardom? Not at the moment, no," said the actress, flashing the trademark smile.

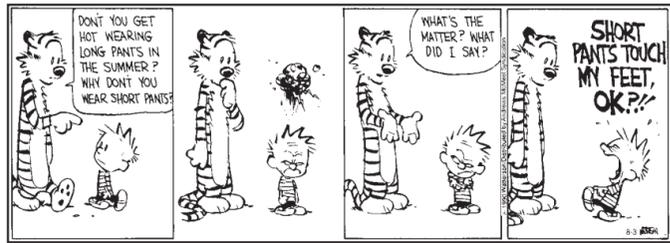
Vidya was recently seen in Amit Masurkar's film *Sherni*, where she played an upright forest officer on the lookout for a man-eating tigress. The film also features Sharat Saxena, Mukul Chadda, Vijay Raaz, Ila Arun and Brijendra Kala, and garnered a positive response upon release.



PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

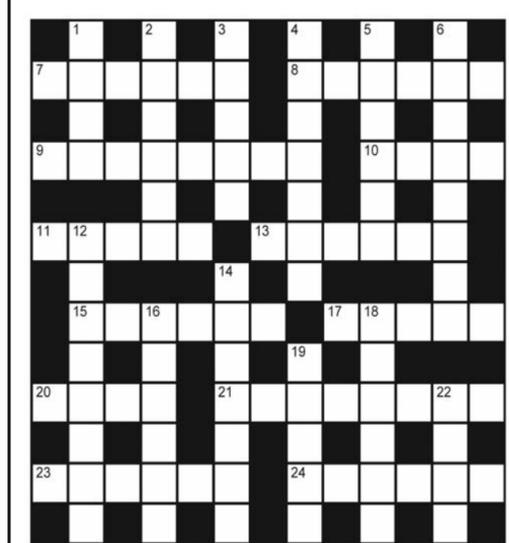


BREVITY



FUN post

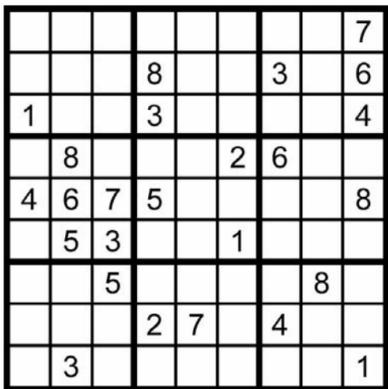
CROSSWORD



- Copyright ©2021 PuzzleJunction.com
- Across**
- 7 Ravel classic
 - 8 Cry of dismay (2,4)
 - 9 Health drink
 - 10 Minute amount
 - 11 Venomous snake
 - 13 Mombasa native
 - 15 Airline passenger's problem (3,3)
 - 17 Dwelling
 - 20 High point
 - 21 Discount a price (4,4)
 - 23 Shooting star
 - 24 Bookstore section
 - Down**
 - 1 Good earth
 - 2 Mescal button source
 - 3 Coffee shop order
 - 4 Cloaked
 - 5 Unusual knickknack
 - 6 Secured
 - 12 Down in the mouth
 - 14 Carpenters' tools
 - 16 A little giggle (3-3)
 - 18 Homeowner's fiscal map
 - 19 Snares
 - 22 "Star Trek" speed

SUDOKU

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

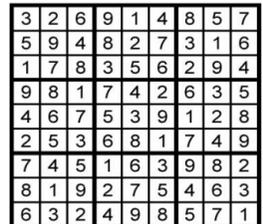


SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD



SUDOKU



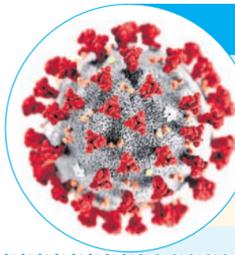
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown



HUGE RUSH

Bapuji Nagar area in Bhubaneswar witnesses traffic snarls as there is relaxation in Covid restrictions, Friday



COVID-19 TRACKER

| | INFECTED | RECOVERED | DEAD |
|--------|--------------|--------------|-----------|
| World | 19,00,20,508 | 17,32,99,931 | 40,86,904 |
| India | 3,10,26,829 | 3,01,83,876 | 4,12,531 |
| Odisha | 9,49,929 | 9,25,526 | 4,925 |

People told to go for tests as dengue cases surge

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 16: With the state capital witnessing a steep rise in dengue cases within the last 10 days, Director of Public Health, Niranjan Mishra, Friday appealed to people to get themselves tested as soon as they develop any symptom for the vector-borne disease.

As per sources in the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC), the Capital city has reported 150 dengue cases since January this year. While only 17 cases were reported till July 7, the City recorded as many as 133 cases in the last seven-eight days.

Civic body sources claimed that altogether 20 cases were reported from the City Thursday, while the number was 16 Wednesday.

"Though the number of the people tested positive for dengue is less in comparison to last year's, we have set up four designated sites at the Capital Hospital, RMRC, AIIMS-Bhubaneswar and Khurda District Headquarters Hospital (DHH) for testing samples for dengue. People can get themselves tested free of cost. If you have fever and body ache, then don't visit private institutions for dengue test. They don't use standard methods," Mishra said.

BMC sources, meanwhile,



The Capital city has reported 150 dengue cases since January this year. While only 17 cases were reported till July 7, the city recorded as many as 133 cases in the last seven-eight days

Civic body sources claimed that altogether 20 cases were reported from the city Thursday while the number was 16 Wednesday

Most of the dengue patients have recovered and we are now monitoring those who have symptoms for the disease. Moreover, awareness is being spread among people to use mosquito repellents, eliminate stagnant water, cover open water containers and use long-lasting insecticidal nets while sleeping. We are also taking steps to destroy eggs at breeding sites

ANTARYAMI MISHRA | ADUPHO

claimed that the City could see further rise in dengue cases in the coming days. While most of these cases have been detected in slum areas, Niladri Vihar area has reported the highest of 39 cases followed by 17 cases from Sailashree Vihar. Dengue cases have also been recorded from Chandrasekharpur, Unit-VIII, Kalpana Square and other localities, sources added.

Urging people not to panic, Additional District Urban Primary Health Officer (ADUPHO), Antaryami Mishra, said that dengue cases will come down once the

weather becomes dry or there is heavy rain which can wash away the eggs of dengue-causing mosquitoes.

"Most of the dengue patients have recovered and we are now monitoring those who have symptoms for the disease. Moreover, awareness is being spread among people to use mosquito repellents, eliminate stagnant water, cover open water containers and use long-lasting insecticidal nets while sleeping. We are also taking steps to destroy eggs at breeding sites," the ADUPHO said.

Khurda is on recovery path: Collector

Khurda district has been reporting a maximum number of Covid cases in the first and second waves of the pandemic. The district has also been plagued by illegal stone quarrying and other issues. In a tête-à-tête with Manish Kumar of **Orissa POST**, Khurda Collector Sanat Kumar Mohanty opens up. Excerpts...

■ Khurda is seen as a Covid-troubled district due to high caseload. Your take?

Khurda administration is entrusted with the task of managing the Covid scenario in areas except for the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation jurisdiction. We are now in a better situation, thanks to the relentless efforts of the administration. The Test Positivity Rate (TPR) in our jurisdiction, which was around 11.41 per cent in June first week, declined to 2.09 per cent by July first week. Khurda is on a recovery path.

■ What measures have been taken to reduce the caseload?

A nodal officer has been dedicated for every block to manage the Covid situation. This apart, I am personally reviewing the situation thrice a week. As per the Chief Minister's directive, we have ensured the participation of the local community and members of Panchayati Raj Institution as well as Mission Shakti to manage the Covid crisis. So far, we have declared 544 containment zones, out of which 14 are still in force. Moreover, Covid violators were being fined.

■ How Khurda is preparing itself for a possible third wave?

We are taking a multi-sectoral approach to keep the possible third wave at bay. Efforts are on to inoculate all the vulnerable sections of society on a war footing. This apart, strengthening paediatric care in hospitals, early commencement of surveillance activities at village levels and strengthening the overall health infrastructure is being done.

■ Illegal stone quarrying is rampant in the district. What measures are being taken to curb the menace?

Led by sub-collectors, sub-divisional committees comprising police, Revenue, Forest and geology officials have been formed to plan, monitor and carry out raids, collect fines and file cases. As a result of our

effective crackdown, the collection of penalty which was around Rs 2.47 crore in FY 2019-2020 FY has gone up to Rs 4.05 crore in FY 2020-21.

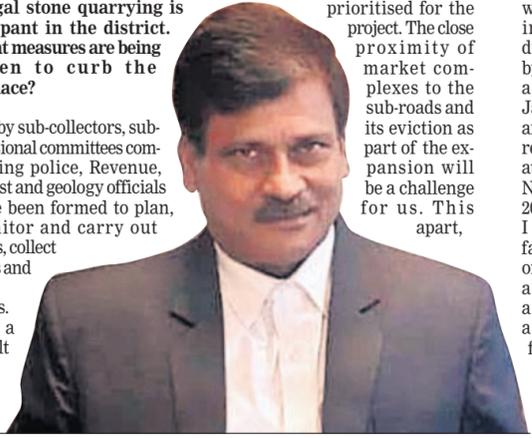
■ What role does your administration play in the 6-laning of Bhubaneswar-Tangi NH?

Basically, our role is that of a facilitator in the 6-laning project. Ensuring a timely supply of aggregates and resolving local issues have been prioritised for the project. The close proximity of market complexes to the sub-roads and its eviction as part of the expansion will be a challenge for us. This apart,

demand for underpasses at some places may create local agitations and the subsequent pressure. The district administration will definitely try resolving the issues in order to ensure a hassle-free execution of the mega project.

■ What are the major initiatives you have so far taken as a Collector that you are proud of?

Effective management of two waves of the pandemic, breaking the deadlock in the industrialisation of the district by resolving the land disputes at Mukundaprasad, Jayamangal and Kholadwara and finding solutions to issues related to the road overbridge at Jatni, construction of NH at Naharakanta (pending since 2010) were some of the works I can recount. Moreover, facilitating the development of Sri Sankara Cancer Centre and Research Institute, a state level OAV at Andhra and state level Museum for Odisha Mineral Development Corporation Limited were also some of the works I am proud of.



Congress slams Modi govt over price hike

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 16: All India Congress Party (AICC) spokesperson Sushmita Dev Friday attacked the BJP government at the Centre for skyrocketing prices of essential commodities and fuel in the country.

"The prices of majority of common items like pulses, salt, oil and others are only rising. This is not due to high demand but a forced inflation triggered by the government. The NDA government was able to collect Rs 25 lakh



crore in the last seven years as excise tax from fuel alone. The BJP government has been telling that the rising prices are due to public expenditure," she said, adding, "but we want to ask where the investment is. The government has written off debts worth crores. We demand that the inflation should be curbed."

The leader said that the Union government had been asking the states to exempt value added tax (VAT) but failed to do their duty.

"VAT is only 48 per cent but the Union government takes the majority of 52 per cent which includes taxes and cess. If the Union government cannot remove excise tax, it may at least reduce the cess to provide some relief to the people of the country," she said.

Addressing a press conference at Congress Bhavan here, she said, "The Congress party is raising the issue of consistent rise in prices of essential commodities and fuel. The BJP had promised to reduce inflation and came to power in 2014. Fuel prices are skyrocketing at a time when majority of the country is facing loss of income."

She said that the government has increased fuel prices 66 times in the last seven months.

SRIMANDIR RITUAL



Servitors carrying Goddess Mahalaxmi in a procession from Srimandir to Srigundicha temple in Puri for Hera Panchami ritual, Friday

OP PHOTO

Offices to function with full strength

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 16: With slight improvement in the Covid-19 situation and majority of the people receiving vaccine, the state government Friday asked all of its departments and subordinate offices to function with full strength of employees until further order.

The General Administration and Public Grievance (GA&PG) department issued a direction in this regard. Since offices are closed Saturday, the new norm will become functional from coming Monday.

The order said, "Most of the employees are now fully vaccinated and are required mandatorily to attend office regularly. In case any employee has been unable to get vaccinated for medical or some other compelling reason(s), he/she must apply for an exemption to the Head of the office."

On receipt of such applications, the concerned head of the office will consider it on a case-to-case basis.

Employees, who are neither vaccinated nor exempted, would not be permitted to attend office and their absence will be treated as willful, said the order.

Like earlier, all state government offices will remain closed Saturdays.

Earlier, the offices were functioning with 50 per cent strength of employees due to Covid-19 situation.

Bolgarh man reaps success in integrated farming

POST NEWS NETWORK

Khurda, July 16: A 55-year-old man from Bolgarh in Khurda district has set an example for many by achieving success in integrated farming.

With hard labour and determination, Rabindra Kumar Samantaray has created a special identity for himself in the district. Besides, he is now providing wage employment opportunities to others, sources said.

Samantaray had managed to secure a job at Surajmalla Saha College in Puri in the early 1990s after completion of his college education. However, he always had a passion for agriculture.

"I had quit the job in 1999 as per the advice of my grandfather and started concentrating on farming. My grandfather had told me that one could become self-employed and help others in getting livelihood," recalled Samantaray.

After quitting his job, Samantaray had started growing



mango and other fruits on four acres of land. Subsequently, he entered into vegetable and fish farming.

"Now, there are 350 mango trees, 250 coconut trees and at least a hundred lemon plants in my garden. This apart, I have been cultivating vegetables like brinjal, okra, beans, cucumber, pumpkin and bitter gourd for many years now. Very recently, I have entered into

marigold, mushroom and fish farming," Samantaray said.

Samantaray's family members, including his son Mukesh, usually help him in farm activities. Now, the family is earning around Rs 5 lakh per annum from fruit and vegetable farming, sources added.

"My son is helping me in farming after finishing his college education. We have planned to grow

The growth of agriculture and its allied sectors is very much crucial for our country. Educated youths should come forward to opt for agriculture and become agripreneurs. I always invite youths to visit my garden and observe the success story of integrated farming

RABINDRA KUMAR SAMANTARAY

more varieties of flowers and fruits in our garden in coming days,"



Samantaray added.

Samantaray is now supplying mango and vegetables to various places in the district. The 55-year-old farmer claimed that he has been using organic fertilizers in his farming.

"The growth of agriculture and its allied sectors is very much crucial for our country. Educated youths should come forward to opt for agriculture and become agripreneurs. I always invite youths to visit my garden and observe the success story of integrated farming," Samantaray said.

PARI'S MOTHER SUBMITS ORISSA HC ORDERS IN SC

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, July 16: Saudamini Sahoo, mother of the five-year old girl Pari who was allegedly raped and killed in Nayagarh July last year, placed the orders of the Orissa High Court before the Supreme Court Friday.

A two-judge bench of the Apex court comprising Justices AM Khanwilkar and Sanjiv Khanna adjourned the matter for a week. The top court will hear Saudamini's petition seeking CBI enquiry into the death of her daughter, July 23.

The Apex court Thursday had asked the counsel of the petitioner to place on record the two orders of the Orissa High Court on the same issue for perusal in the case. The Orissa High Court had earlier disposed of two petitions seeking enquiry in the Pari case by an independent agency.

Significantly, petitioner Saudamini Sahoo has knocked

The Orissa High Court had earlier disposed of two petitions seeking enquiry in the Pari case by an independent agency

the doors of the Apex court and sought a CBI enquiry into the death of her daughter July last year in Jadupur, Nayagarh.

The petitioner also sought direction to the CBI to investigate all cases related to missing children in the state.

The petitioner contended that rampant organ smuggling is the cause of murder of her daughter. Petitioner also contended that the state police are treating the parents of Pari as criminals.

The police are completely insensitive towards the family members of Pari.

2,070 fresh Covid cases

BJD plans to hold demo over paddy procurement July 20

Covid package announced for Mission Shakti

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, July 16: Odisha Friday reported 2,070 new Covid-19 cases taking the tally to 9,49,929, while 64 more fatalities pushed the toll to 4,925, a senior Health department official said.

Of the 2,070 new cases, 1,195 were reported from quarantine centres, and the rest were detected during contact tracing, the official said.

Khurda district, of which state capital Bhubaneswar is a part, recorded maximum number of new cases at 446. Bhubaneswar logged 22 deaths.

Other districts which reported more than 100 fresh cases include Cuttack at 319, Balasore at 176, Jajpur at 136 and Puri at 109. Deogarh reported the least number of cases at three.

Of the 64 fatalities, 10 were recorded in Bargarh, eight in Balasore, seven in Sundargarh, six in Ganjam, and two each in Kandhamal and Sambalpur. One patient each succumbed to the infection in Boudh, Kalahandi, Kendrapara, Mayurbhanj, Nuapada, Puri and Rayagada.

This apart, 53 other Covid-19 patients in the state died due to comorbidities.

Odisha currently has 21,742 active cases, while 9,23,209 patients, including 2,563 Thursday, have recovered from the highly infectious disease. The positivity rate stands at 6.36 per cent. Over 1.49 crore samples have been tested in state



Figures say it all

Khurda district, of which state capital Bhubaneswar is a part, recorded maximum number of new cases at 446 followed by Cuttack at 319, Balasore at 176, Jajpur at 136 and Puri at 109

Only two districts—Nayagarh and Cuttack—have reported TPR over 5 per cent, while the rest 28 districts have TPR less than 5 per cent. Out of the 28 districts, 15 have TPR less than 2 per cent

Over 1.49 crore samples have been tested in Odisha thus far, including 70,244 Thursday



thus far, including 70,244 Thursday.

The state government has extended the partial lockdown in the entire state from Friday till 6am of August 1 along with night curfew and clamped weekend shutdown in 10 districts registering high Covid cases. The government had divided the districts into Category A and B on the basis of test positivity rate and given more relaxations

in 20 districts under Category A like lifting the weekend shutdown, allowing the shops to open from 6 am to 8 pm and night curfew from 8 pm to 5 am.

On the other hand, in Category B districts, the shops were allowed to open on weekdays from 6 am to 5 pm, weekend shutdown and night curfew from 5 pm to 6 am. The Category B districts have been re-

porting nearly 70 to 80 per cent of daily Covid cases.

Five districts such as Khurda, Cuttack, Balasore, Jajpur and Puri, all in coastal Odisha, accounted for 1,187 cases, almost 57.34 per cent of the total Covid cases reported in the past 24 hours.

Sources said only two districts—Nayagarh and Cuttack—have reported TPR over 5 per cent, while the rest 28 districts have recorded TPR less than 5 per cent of which 15 districts have TPR less than 2 per cent.

Six districts such as Khurda, Cuttack, Jajpur, Balasore, Puri and Mayurbhanj have together accounted for 13,128 active cases, almost 60 per cent of the total active cases in the state.

Khurda district has the highest number of 4785 active cases followed by Cuttack (3,092), Balasore (1,768), Jajpur (1,430), Puri (1,043) and Mayurbhanj (1,010). The other 24 districts have less than 1,000 active cases.

Meanwhile, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) has declared two apartments in the state capital as containment zones after detection of multiple cases there. Both the apartments have been put under surveillance of the civic body and police.

The BMC will provide essential commodities and necessary medical support to the families residing in those areas through authorised vendors, sources in the civic body said.



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 16: Attacking BJP-led Centre over paddy procurement issue, the state ruling party BJD Friday said it will hold demonstrations before the Food Corporation of India (FCI) office and godown July 20.

In a press conference here, BJD's women wing president Snehangini Churia and spokesperson Shreemayee Mishra hit out at the Centre for lifting all procured paddy from the state.

It is the responsibility of the Central government to procure paddy from the farmers and provide MSP for them. As the Centre is unable to discharge its duty, the state government has been procuring paddy since 2003-04, said Mishra.

However, the BJP government is constantly lying to people regarding the paddy procurement and trying to politicise the matter with

lies intended to divert public attention.

In the Kharif season of 2020-21, the state has procured 77.33 lakh MT paddy worth Rs 14,446 crore. However, the Centre has so far provided Rs 3,824 crore as subsidy and released Rs 2,935 crore to the FCI, they said.

Excluding the state's subsidy of Rs 1,117 crore, Rs 6,570 crore is outstanding on bank loans.

"We urge the Central government to immediately release the outstanding due of Rs 6,570 crore to Odisha immediately," the BJD demanded.

The state government has requested the central government to extend the Kharif paddy procurement period from June 30, 2021, to September 30, 2021, for various reasons. Unfortunately, the BJP-led central government extended the deadline to one month (July 31), which is not acceptable, Churia said.

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 16: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Friday announced special Covid-19 assistance of Rs 453.50 crore for women members of Mission Shakti in the state.

As per the announcement, 338 block-level Mission Shakti federations will receive Rs 50 lakh each for construction of Mission Shakti Bhawan which can be used for training and business purposes. The state government would spend Rs 169 crore on this head.

This apart, a revolving fund to the tune of Rs 84.50 crore has been announced to help the Mission Shakti groups.

The Chief Minister said his government will provide Rs 200 crore interest subvention to the self-help groups (SHGs) under the Mission Shakti.

He claimed that Mission Shakti is a huge institution involving 70 lakh women and has played a key role in women empowerment.

Expressing his confidence in the women SHGs, the Chief Minister said, "You march ahead, I am with you."

He praised the Mission Shakti members for their active participation in Covid-19 management in state by supervising temporary medical centres, producing masks and creating awareness among people.

Vigilance reels under staff crunch

GST officials nab 2 over ₹115Cr tax fraud

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, July 16: Vigilance department, the anti-corruption wing of Odisha police, is now reeling under staff crunch, sources claimed.

The state government has recently appointed senior IPS officer Yeshwant Jethwa as the Director of Vigilance wing following the death of incumbent director Debasis Panigrahi. This apart, IPS officer Asheet Panigrahi has been appointed as the Inspector General (IG) of the anti-corruption agency.

However, the state government is yet to appoint Vigilance Superintendents of Police (SPs) for Berhampur, Bhubaneswar, Cuttack and Rourkela divisions.

Sambalpur SP Sara Sharma has been given the additional charge of Rourkela Vigilance division while the post of Cuttack division SP is falling vacant after the retirement of police officer Abhiram Kar.



Additional Vigilance SP Trilochan Swain has been asked to carry out the responsibilities of Cuttack division SP, sources said.

Similarly, Additional Vigilance SP Akhaya Kumar Mishra is now holding the fort at Bhubaneswar division as SP Anupama James is on maternity leave. Moreover, the post of Berhampur Vigilance SP is lying vacant after the retirement of Shantanu Kumar Padhi, sources added.

According to sources, at least 15 Vigilance DSP posts out of the total 63 are now lying vacant. Similarly, altogether 88 Inspector posts out of the total 175 are lying unoccupied now. Besides, the Vigilance department now has 200 constables against the sanctioned strength of 309, sources said.

"Hundreds of posts in the Vigilance department are now lying vacant. This is affecting action against the corrupt elements in the government. The state government should look into the issue at the earliest," said a social activist.

Former Director General of Police (DGP) Gopal Nanda said the Vigilance department usually sources its staff from Odisha police. "Perhaps there is staff crunch in Odisha police. That is why the Vigilance department is facing problems to get adequate staffers," he added.

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, July 16: The Enforcement Wing of Odisha's GST Directorate Friday nabbed two businessmen for their alleged involvement in availing and passing of bogus tax credit worth Rs 115.10 crore on the strength of fake invoices to the tune of Rs 641 crore, official sources said.

"The accused have been identified as Gurdit Dang, Managing Partner of Tirupati Traders and authorized representative of Satguru Metals & Power Pvt. Ltd., Rourkela, and Sujay Maitra, Director of Smartage's Trade Venture Private Limited of Rourkela," said State GST Commissioner SK Lohani. While Dang has been arrested in Rourkela, Maitra has been arrested in Bhubaneswar, he informed.

Lohani said that the 'masterminds', in collusion with others,

The state GST enforcement wing has so far arrested 20 fraudsters for their involvement in issuance of fake invoices

have availed bogus input tax credit (ITC) raising fake purchase invoices in the name of 16 fictitious or non-existent business entities located at Angul, Rourkela, Banai, Ersama, Tirtol, Riamal and Sundargarh.

The investigation originated from a complaint filed by a dealer of Jogeswarpur, Balasore on supply of goods by the accused on the strength of fake invoices. The probe led to interrogation of five existing dealers of Panikoli, Baripada, Rasgopindpur, Bargarh, Puri and Balasore, who admitted to the

wrongdoing.

To set up and operate the fake firms, the masterminds obtained identity documents like PAN, Aadhar, Bank Passbooks of innocent people like plumbers, drivers, electrical mechanic, gas distributing boys, unemployed youth and people below poverty line living in Indra Awas Yojana (IAY) houses and availing PDS facility of different areas like Panikoli, Baripada, Rasgopindpur, Bargarh, Puri, Balasore and Jharkhand on the pretext of hiring them in different companies. They mis-used the documents obtained to get GST registrations.

The State GST Enforcement Wing has so far arrested 20 fraudsters for their involvement in issuance of fake invoices. Registrations of 25,400 dealers have been cancelled so far by the state GST officers on the ground of their

non-existence after field enquiry or due to non filing of returns. To eliminate bogus registration, the registration process has been streamlined. Moreover, a two month long special drive starting from July 16, 2021 to September 15, 2021 has been launched to weed out all non-existing registrants.

The Commissioner of State GST appealed to the general public that they should not share their identity documents, personal details, bank details and other documents with any unauthorized person. Also, they should not permit any unauthorized person to operate a business or bank account on their behalf or in their name.

If it comes to their notice that their credentials and other personal documents are being misused, the same should immediately be intimated to the nearest GST office, Lohani said.

26 transgenders among 1,32,496 apply for SI posts

LIFE VS LIVELIHOOD

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, July 16: As many as 1,32,496 persons have applied for the sub-inspector (SI) posts with the Odisha Police, an official said Friday.

The applicants include 97,506 males, 34,964 females and 26 transgenders. While 26,319 candidates applied under 'General' category, 52,274 filled forms under SEBC category, 29,710 applied for the post under SC category and 24,197 applied under ST category.

The Odisha Police Recruitment Board (OPRB) had invited applications from candidates for 477 SI posts. The application window opened June 22, 2021 and closed July 15.

The applicants include 97,506 males, 34,964 females and 26 transgenders

Of the 477 posts, 239 were for General category, 53 reserved for SEBC category of applicants, 78 for SC applicants and 107 for those belonging to ST category, said a source.

The selection process comprises written test which will be conducted in the mode of Computer Based Recruitment Examination (CBRE). There will not be any viva-voce and psychological test, said a source.



A salon in Bapuji Nagar area of Bhubaneswar welcomes back people, Friday, a day after the state government eased Covid restrictions

OP PHOTO

Thunderstorm, lightning warning for next 2 days

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 16: The regional office of the India Meteorological Department (IMD) Friday issued warning of thunderstorm and lightning for the next two days.

The department, while issuing the warning for Saturday said, "Thunderstorm with lightning very likely to occur at one or two places over the districts of Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj, Sundargarh, Koraput, Rayagada, Gajapati, Ganjam, Kandhamal and Kalahandi."

ment said that these could be seen in districts like Malkangiri, Koraput, Rayagada, Gajapati, Sundargarh, Keonjhar, and Mayurbhanj Sunday with light to moderate rain.

The department has however issued warning of heavy rain from Monday. "Heavy rainfall very likely to occur at one or two places over the districts of Sundargarh, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj, Koraput, and Malkangiri," the department said.

Nevertheless, the weatherman said that the maximum tempera-



It also added, "Light to moderate rain or thundershower very likely to occur at a few places over the districts of Odisha."

The met department also issued warning of thunderstorm and lightning for Sunday. The depart-

ture was recorded at Sambalpur which saw 36.6 degree C while the minimum was recorded in Phulbani at 19.5 degree C. Most of the districts received negligible rainfall in the last one day, the met department said.

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Centre orders probe into IAP funds misutilisation in Jajpur

Youth murdered in Jharsuguda; ₹78K cash found near body

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur, July 16: The Centre had executed the Integrated Action Plan (IAP) to fast track the development of the tribal-dominated and backward regions in the country and pumped in crores of rupees for various projects. However, it has been alleged that the IAP was marred due to irregularities in Jajpur. The funds were misutilised and projects were botched up. All this was five years ago.

Though the Centre-sponsored scheme has also ceased to operate here, surprisingly, neither the district administration nor the state government took any action into the alleged irregularities in the IAP. Now, the Centre has ordered an investigation into the matter after five years.

According to reports, the PMO has issued an order to investigate the alleged irregularities to the state government a couple of



REPRESENTATIVE PIC

PRIOR TO 2016, JAJPUR DISTRICT HAD RECEIVED ₹117.28 CRORE UNDER THE IAP WITH SPECIAL INSTRUCTION OF UTILISING ABOUT 65 PER CENT OF THE FUNDS FOR THE TRIBAL AREAS AFFECTED BY LEFT-WING EXTREMISM

SURPRISINGLY, NEITHER THE DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION NOR THE STATE GOVERNMENT TOOK ANY ACTION INTO THE ALLEGED IRREGULARITIES IN THE IAP. NOW, THE CENTRE HAS ORDERED AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE MATTER AFTER FIVE YEARS

It has been alleged that the IAP was marred due to irregularities in Jajpur. The funds were misutilised and projects were botched up. All this was five years ago. Moreover, the Centre-sponsored scheme has also ceased to operate here now.

It was alleged that only ₹26.4 crore was utilised in Sikunda block, while ₹19.4 crore was utilised in Danagadi block. The remaining 61.54 per cent of the IAP funds were spent arbitrarily in other blocks and civic body areas where it was not meant for. The lawyer had pleaded for a CBI investigation into the fund misappropriation since it was provided by the Centre.

Sahu had also sent a copy of his complaint to Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik. "But I am not aware of what action was taken by the state government in this matter," he added.

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jharsuguda, July 16: A youth was murdered at Baharamahal in Jharsuguda Friday. The victim was identified as Bipin Saha (32) of Purunabasti.

According to reports, when a local resident was on his morning walk Friday he found a body with multiple injuries in a pool of blood on the roadside.

On being informed, police rushed to the spot and seized the body. The police also recovered ₹73,000 cash, a cell phone, an ATM card, money purse and a driving licence certificate from near the body.

Police registered a case of murder, and handed over the body to the family members after post-mortem.

SP Bikash Chandr Das, SDPO Nirmal Mohapatra, and other police officials visited the spot. It was learnt that a bike used by the youth is still untraced.

The cause of the murder is yet to be ascertained. Police are examining CCTV footages in the locality. It is suspected that the murder is a fall out of past enmity.

The SP said that given the circumstances at the scene where the body was found, the youth possibly had a fight with unidentified



fied miscreants as the body has multiple injuries. If the youth had been killed with the motive of looting, there would be no cash or cell phone near his body, it is said.

The youth used to work as a sales manager at a smartphone wholesale shop in Jharsuguda. He had left the shop at 8 pm Thursday, but did not reach home.

Body recovered from school campus

POST NEWS NETWORK

Hatadihi, July 16: Police recovered a decomposed body from the campus of Nishakar Nodal School at Sadha-Naha under Hatadihi block in Keonjhar district, Thursday.

The deceased is yet to be identified since the body was decomposed beyond recognition.

While informing about the incident, the school headmaster Subash Chandra Pradhan said he sensed a putrid smell emanating from the school campus. In order to find out the source of the smell, he went to the school only to find the decomposed body.

He immediately informed the police about his finding and a team from Soso police station reached the spot and recovered the body from near the toilet of the school.

"A dead body was lying inside school campus for many days and how could the headmaster not know about it," asked some villagers. A detailed probe is underway, it was learnt.



A house in Rameyapatana under Golanthara police limits in Ganjam hanging on edge as the sea continues to eat into the village. Four more houses crashed into sea, Friday

'AMA GAON AMA BIKASH' YOJANA IN BALASORE Projects caught in legal hassle

Most projects were approved by the district administration without the nod of Pall Sabhas and people's representatives

POST NEWS NETWORK

Balasore, July 16: Hundreds of projects taken up under the 'Ama Gaon Ama Bikash' Yojana in Balasore district are progressing at a tardy pace due to legal hassles.

According to the reports, most projects were approved by the district administration without the nod of Pall Sabhas and people's representatives. A case has been filed at the High Court as projects worth crores of rupees have got stuck, while rural folks searching for work for a living at the time of pandemic are sitting idle.

At some places, construction of projects like roads, community centres, school buildings and Anganwadi centres had been abandoned at various stages. Altogether 1, 628 projects are hanging fire in the district.

Before the 2019 general and Assembly elections, the state government had launched 'Ama Gaon Ama Bikash' Yojana in order to hasten rural development. Even two-and-a-half years later, the Yojana has failed to reach scores of villages.

There are 12 blocks in Balasore district. The government has al-

located ₹87.16 crore for 3,614 projects in these blocks. Work of 1,986 projects was undertaken amid disputes and opposition at the grassroots level in many blocks.

However, it has been alleged that the administration had approved scores of projects without the knowledge of local people's representatives and approval of Pall Sabhas in Remuna, Khaira and Simulia blocks. Some people moved the High Court against the administration in this matter. As a result, work on 1,036 projects has not taken off till date.

In Remuna block, only 5 out of 445 projects were taken up, but halted later. Funds to the tune of ₹9.25 crore have remained unutilised.

Simulia block was sanctioned 117 projects but work on only 13 was undertaken. They are now stuck midway. Meanwhile, ₹3.87 crore has already been spent.

In Khaira block, work on only 93 out of 414 projects was initiated and stopped later. Over ₹8.12 crore has been spent here.

In the remaining blocks, 2,014 out of 2,578 projects have been completed, while work on 592 projects has been stopped for various



Work of 1,986 projects was undertaken amid disputes and opposition at the grassroots level in many blocks

reasons. However, in Basta block, 95 per cent of the sanctioned projects have been completed, while 81 per cent of the projects were completed in Sadar, Oupada and Jaleswar blocks, according to information available from DRDA. Commenting on the issue, PD Rabintra Kumar Sahu said that projects in three blocks failed to start and resume as the matter is sub-judice in the High Court. However, efforts are on to complete the projects at the earliest, he added.

Ganja worth ₹1 crore seized while being smuggled to Punjab

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jeypore, July 16: Police busted an inter-state ganja smuggling racket and seized cannabis worth ₹1 crore near Jeypore Ghat in Koraput district while the narcotic was being transported to Punjab Thursday night.

Acting on a tip-off, a police team led by Jeypore Sadar police station OIC A Mahakur conducted a raid near Jeypore Ghat and intercepted a truck coming from Koraput.

On searching the vehicle, the cops recovered 93 packets containing 1,001 kg ganja worth ₹1 crore and nabbed the person driving the vehicle. The cops seized the truck and

three mobile phones from his possession. The accused, Amrinder Singh (31) of Haryana, was produced before court Friday.

"Other persons involved in the racket are being identified and steps are being taken to apprehend the suspects as soon as possible," said police. The ganja packets were concealed inside gunny bags stuffed with ginger. The seized contraband is worth ₹1 crore, Jeypore SDO Arup Abhishek Dash said. Further investigation is on to trace the buyer and supplier of the material.

The accused truck driver confessed that he got an order to ferry ginger from Similguda to Ludhiana while he was stationed at Rourkela.

Man plans fake abduction to get rid of wife

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, July 16: In a bizarre incident, a man who solemnised his marriage just a few weeks back reportedly carried out his own kidnapping to get rid of his wife. However, the 'fake' kidnapping attempt failed and he was arrested by the Burla police in Sambalpur district Friday, official said.

The man was identified as Pinku Singh of Goshala in Burla town. Pinku was in a relationship with a woman of the same locality for a long time. They left their respective homes, May 30 and got married June 20 at a

local court in Bhadrak. The couple then returned to Burla and stayed in a rented accommodation.

They visited a shop July 12 and were returning home when Pinku was 'abducted' by two unidentified men in a car. Pinku's wife informed her parents about the 'abduction'. And her father lodged an FIR with Burla police.

During the probe, police learnt that Pinku's family was involved in the abduction and had persuaded him to abandon his newly-married wife. Under pressure, Pinku hatched the 'kidnap' plan with his brother Bikash to get rid of his wife.

'Gachha Sir' of Khandapada nominated for 'Padma Shri'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Khandapada, July 16: Popular as 'Gachha Sir' in the locality, Antaryami Sahu of Krushneswar Patana village of Kantilo panchayat under Khandapada block in Nayagarh district has become a household name after it came to the fore that the former MLA of Khandapada, Siddharth Sekhar Singh, has requested Prime Minister Narendra Modi that he be honoured with the 'Padma Shri' award.

Besides ex-MLA Singh nominating Sahu for 'Padma Shri' award, acknowledging his dedication towards preserving green cover in the region, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik and Union Minister

Dharmendra Pradhan also recently heaped praises on him in their respective tweets.

Wistfully remembering his childhood days, 'Gachha Sir' says he has been spreading the message 'Banchaile Banchiba' (we will live if we keep them alive) even when he was just a child.

He started his career as a primary school teacher. Now he is retired. During his service period, he would dedicate his time after school hours to plant saplings and create awareness about the importance of trees among the people. As of now he lives in his village. If one goes around his village, they can see what he has done to preserve greenery. There are palm and date palm trees along the side of Malabandh near his



village. He says he has planted those trees to help increase the population of weaverbirds. In addition, there are fruit-bearing and umbrageous trees in and around the village.

He says it gives him immense pleasure when he sees the trees planted by him bear fruits or provide shade to passers-by. When asked how many trees he has planted so far, "Over 30,000 trees," was his prompt reply.

He says his day starts with activities aimed to save the environment and help increase the population of birds and animals that are on the verge of extinction.

He has founded an organization 'Chetana' and has been organising programmes under its banner involving youths and children. In

these programmes, he makes people aware about the reasons why many birds and animals are no longer sighted as frequently as they used to be few years ago and about how they can be saved for the next generation. Expressing his concern about sparrows being sighted rarely even in rural areas, he says he has recently been emphasising on how these birds can be saved.

According to him, the human race will stay alive till there are trees, animals, birds and insects on the Earth. "We can never survive without them. Even dreaming a world sans trees, birds and animals is impossible. So all of us should try our best to keep them alive," he maintained.

EAST COAST RAILWAY

File No. DRM/Engg/KUR/21-22/E-Tender/37 Dt. 13.07.2021

(1) Tender No. E-Tender-EAST-KUR-94-2021, Dtd. 09.07.2021

DESCRIPTION: REBUILDING OF RCC SLAB BRIDGE NO. 31UP INTO RCC BOX BRIDGE ON CUTTACK - KANDARPUR SECTION OF KHURDA ROAD DIVISION.

Approx Cost of the Work (₹): 77.42 Lakhs, Completion Period: 12 (Twelve) Months.

(2) Tender No. E-Tender-EAST-KUR-95-2021, Dtd. 09.07.2021

DESCRIPTION: THROUGH RENEWAL OF EXISTING 3473 NO. OF STEEL CHANNEL SLEEPERS WITH H BEAM SLEEPERS INCLUSIVE OF ALL FIXTURES AND FASTENINGS OVER BR. NO. 544 AND 545 ON UP LINE BETWEEN NERUGUNDI - CUTTACK SECTION OF KHURDA ROAD DIVISION.

Approx Cost of the Work (₹): 851.77 Lakhs, Completion Period: 18 (Eighteen) Months.

(3) Tender No. E-Tender-EAST-KUR-97-2021, Dtd. 09.07.2021

DESCRIPTION: EXECUTION OF 5.00 KM THROUGH RAIL RENEWAL WORK FROM KM 400.00 TO 405.00 ON DOWN LINE BETWEEN SALEGAON - RAJATGARH SECTION OF KHURDA ROAD DIVISION.

Approx Cost of the Work (₹): 57.98 Lakhs, Completion Period: 06 (Six) Months.

Tender Closing Date and Time: At 1500 Hrs. of 30.07.2021 (For all the Tenders.)

No manual offers shall be accepted against such e-tenders.

Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-tender is available in website: <http://www.ireps.gov.in>

The prospective tenderers are advised to visit the website 15 (Fifteen) days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes/corrigenda issued for this tender.

The tenderers should read all instructions to the tenderers carefully and ensure compliance of all instructions including check lists, para 3.1 (additional check-list) of Tender form (Second sheet) Annexure-I of chapter 2 of Tender documents, submission of Annexure-C/G & G1 duly verified and signed by Chartered Accountant.

By: Chief Electrical Engineer/Conl PR-36/CE/21-22 Angul

Divisional Railway Manager (Engg) / PR-217/M/21-22 Khurda Road

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER BALASORE (ROADS & BUILDINGS) DIVISION-I AT/PO- PADHUANPADA, BALASORE

CONTACT NO.: 06782262045, E-MAIL ID: ee_blsrb@yahoo.co.in

BID INVITATION NO. EE (R and B) BLS-Divn-1-11/2021-22

Letter No. 5916 Date: 14.07.21

1. The Executive Engineer, Balasore (R&B) Division-I, Balasore on behalf of the Governor of Odisha invites Percentage rate bids to be received in ONLINE MODE only for road and building works.

2. No. of Work : 19 Nos.

3. Nature of Work : Road works of Balasore (R&B) Division-I

4. Class of Contractor : "D", "C", "B" & "A" Class

5. Approx. value of work : ₹ 4.92 Lakhs to 47.66 Lakhs

6. Tender Cost : ₹ 2,000/-, 4,000/- & 6,000/-

7. Availability of Bid Documents in the website : From 10.00 hours of dt.19.07.2021 to 16.00 hours of dt.29.07.2021

8. Date of Opening of Bid : Dt. 30.07.2021 at 11.00 hours

9. Other details can be seen in the Bidding documents from the website: <https://tendersorissa.gov.in>

Sd/- Er. R.C. Sethi, Executive Engineer, Balasore (R&B) Division-I

OIPR-34078/11/0012/2122

Office of the Executive Engineer, Potteru Irrigation Division, Balimela At/Po-Balimela, Dist : Malkangiri, (Odisha)

'e' mail id :- eepid78@gmail.com

QUOTATION CALL NOTICE NO.-02/2021-22

No. A-308:- Sealed quotations are invited from interested reputed Travel Agencies / Tour operators / Private individuals having valid GST/GeM registration number, Income tax clearance certificate, PAN card, first track banking facility etc. for providing Non-AC/ AC diesel driven vehicle or BS -IV compliant petrol vehicle (TUV300/ Bolero/ Sumo Gold/ Ertiga) having sitting capacity not more than ten including driver, which shall confirm to the Terms & Conditions of the quotation call notice for the official use of the different offices of Potteru Irrigation Division, Balimela on monthly rent basis for the period from 08/2021 to 03/2022 (for the financial year 2021-22).

1. Date and time of availability of quotation documents for sale:- From dt.22.07.2021 to dt. 30.07.2021 during office hours and on working days only.

2. Date and time of receipt of quotation documents:- From dt.22.07.2021 to dt. 30.07.2021 (during office hours and on working days only).

3. Date and time of opening of quotation documents:- on 31.07.2021 at 11.00 A.M. in the office chamber of the Executive Engineer, Potteru Irrigation Division, Balimela.

Please visit the office of the undersigned or website <http://www.odisha.gov.in> / <http://www.dowrodisha.gov.in> for details.

Sd./- Executive Engineer, Potteru Irrigation Division, Balimela

OIPR-32052/11/0003/2122

FOCUS RESOURCES

POWER OF MARKET DESIGN



Misallocation of scarce resources too often deprives users of them even as others waste their supply. Well-designed markets can overcome such problems by enabling voluntary transactions that allow existing users to retain their allotments while enabling higher-value uses

In 2010, the United States faced a challenging allocation problem. Demand was surging for a resource vital to daily life, but the available supply was being used by incumbents that had built an important industry around it. Moreover, incremental transfers to new uses were impossible. Could new rules alleviate growing scarcities while respecting existing users' rights and enabling a voluntary, multi-party reallocation?

For years, WTO members have failed to forge an agreement to limit fishing subsidies, thereby allowing the continuation of ecologically devastating fishing operations that would otherwise be economically unviable. But with another round of negotiations this month, they have a chance to make up for lost time.

The resource was not water but radio spectrum – the electromagnetic frequencies used for wireless phone calls, smartphone data, and emergency communications. Demand for spectrum had grown as more people streamed movies, placed video calls, and used mobile apps. But because spectrum that would have been ideal for smartphone apps was taken up by a fragmented industry of TV broadcasters, there wasn't enough bandwidth for mobile uses.

Our company Auctionomics, advised the US Congress and Federal Communications Commission to solve the problem through a series of changes culminating in the Broadcast Incentive Auction. Spectrum would be bought back from less-valuable broadcast uses and resold for cellular applications, while generously protecting incumbents who wanted to continue their traditional uses.

The success of this initiative demonstrates the power and potential of market design to create and refine marketplaces and exchanges to improve the allocation of scarce resources. The auction design was integrated with important legislative changes that made spectrum rights more easily exchangeable while allowing incumbents to continue operating with little or no disruption. This approach is widely appli-

cable, especially in environmental management. Market design provides new economic theory and related algorithms, evidence, and examples to help policymakers implement effective solutions. Market design methods have already solved several important everyday problems of matching resources to users. Applications include internet advertising (seeing online ads that are appropriate and match your interests), organ transplantation (finding a compatible donor for a loved one), medical residency matching (connecting newly minted doctors to their first job), and charitable food donations (stocking the local food bank with the most-needed items).

Policy makers can adapt the same theory and practices for new and evolving allocation problems. For example, market design can help address Covid-19 vaccine shortages by allowing exchanges of the ingredients and supplies (such as filters, tubing, and pharma bags) needed for vaccine production. Likewise, financial instruments using cryptocurrencies have introduced decentralized designs with fully automated trading. Spectrum-license auctions will need to change again to accom-

modate 5G technologies and support small-scale Internet-of-Things and artificial-intelligence applications. And the success of cap-and-trade programmes – for carbon dioxide emissions, fisheries, and other environmental goods – will depend on how well regulators can define the products to be exchanged and set rules that encourage participation while achieving societal objectives. Market design will also play a critical role in solving the problem of water allocation. Many of the world's existing rights to fresh water – both surface water and groundwater – have already been granted and grandfathered in complex ways to cities, farmers, and industrial users. Water may be unavailable to towns that require more of it as they grow, even when those urban and residential uses are a hundred times more valuable than the rural ones they would supplant. Certain industrial firms whose rights are based on historical use may have an incentive to overuse water, even during droughts, to retain their rights to future allotments. Where trading of rights is limited or prohibited, poor price signals make it difficult even to assess which uses are most valuable.

And water demand will increase and shift as climate change continues to upend historical usage patterns. The success of the US radio spectrum auction points to a solution. Instead of revoking incumbents' spectrum rights unilaterally, Congress redefined them in a way that made trading them possible and simple, and then allowed TV broadcasters to decide for themselves whether to continue their previous uses or decline to participate. The rights that were sold were then reconfigured to be suitable for new uses and efficient trading, while those that were unsold remained fit for existing purposes.

A similar reorganisation of water rights could protect existing users not wishing to sell, while creating tradeable rights for others that would allow water to flow to its most valuable use. Any attempt to compel all current users to participate will likely be thwarted by legal and political opposition, but a fully voluntary market styled on the same principles as the one for radio spectrum could accommodate resisters while drastically improving the allocation of water rights. Moreover, policymakers could use a portion of the value freed by any reallocation to offset inequities – for example, by granting credits to rural towns or small agricultural producers so that they receive the water resources they need.

Allocating water efficiently and fairly will require innovation, collaboration, and regulation. In this and other domains, market design puts practical economic theory in the service of establishing rights and introducing effective rules and algorithms. That way, we can accommodate diverse market participants, harness new technologies, and maximise the public good.

Paul Milgrom, a Nobel laureate in economics, is Professor of Humanities and Sciences at Stanford University and Co-Founder and Chairman of Auctionomics. Silvia Console Battilana, Co-Founder and CEO of Auctionomics, is a World Economic Forum Young Global Leader.

PROJECT SYNDICATE

MARKET DESIGN METHODS HAVE ALREADY SOLVED SEVERAL IMPORTANT EVERYDAY PROBLEMS OF MATCHING RESOURCES TO USERS

Paul Milgrom & Silvia Console Battilana

Centre tightens grip over Delhi Police

It is often considered that the most important babu in Delhi is not the Chief Secretary but the Police Commissioner. High profile incumbents of this chair have graced Parliament and become Governors in states. Getting to be Commissioner of Police is very often a long process. Most of it, Dilli Ka Babu knows, is conducted in stealth and in the wee hours of the morning. With the Lt Governor now in full command of the state, the control of the Union Home Ministry is far more than it ever has been.

For the second time, the Centre has chosen to give the prestigious commissionerate position as an additional charge. Police babus tell us that this always helps to ensure greater control to those who actually pull the strings.

It should be recalled that Balaji Srivastava's predecessor Sachidanand Srivastava was appointed similarly in February last year during the bloody Delhi riots. He was regularised in the post in May, barely a month before his retirement. Will history be repeated with Balaji? While clearly odd, some fear that the government could in fact 'regularise' this mode of appointments.

Two key regulators straining at the leash

Surely the government saw it coming but did not move fast enough. Now Sanjay Kothari has completed his term as the Central Vigilance Commissioner (CVC) and retired without a permanent successor in place at the probity watchdog. Tardiness or just indecision suddenly led to Vigilance Commissioner Suresh N Patel being named acting CVC. He's walking on eggs till the Modi sarkar appoints Kothari's successor. Informed sources say that the Personnel Ministry has already called for applications for the posts of CVC and another vigilance commissioner. Will Patel get confirmed in his added role or will we see a new face at the helm of CVC? This is a mystery that was perhaps not really needed. A handover could have been managed with more elegance and if not, just good past practice.

In recent times, the nation's top vigilance institution has been struggling to fulfil its mandate, having to deal with rising corruption complaints and shortage of staff. It is also hamstrung by the fact that when it was constituted it was made just as an advisory body, with Central departments and ministries free to accept or reject its advice. Only last year the commission initiated some unconventional but 'systemic' changes to ensure prompt action in corruption cases. To keep that momentum going would probably be Patel's first major task. But the government will eventually need to reframe the panel's currently limited powers.

Likewise, the National Financial Reporting Authority (NFRA), the audit watchdog, too is seeking more powers. It may have been set up as a super-regulator to audit auditors, but it suffers from similar problems like the CVC. Fighting for space with too many other regulatory authorities, including RBI, SEBI and the Ministry of Corporate Affairs among others, NFRA is currently lost in the crowd. The watchdog of corporate misdoings will need its role redefined at the earliest.

Babus, techno babus, new fragrance of re-imagined Cabinet

Loud murmurs are being heard both from babus as well as the faithful about the sudden influx of non-politicos in the latest reshuffle. They insist that a sarkar that is seen to be treating babus shabbily has mysteriously changed course. After the setbacks of Covid and the recent assembly poll results, Modi has ousted 12 ministers and brought in technocrats and babus. The message is that he is focused on good governance and the delivery of promises.

Among the former babus brought in are RCP Singh from Bihar and Ashwini Vaishnav from Odisha, who will now hold the important Railways portfolio. Meanwhile, former Home Secretary and Minister of State RK Singh, along with another Foreign Service babu Hardip Singh Puri now gets equal ranking as his former Foreign Secretary but junior S Jaishankar, who has been Cabinet minister from the start.

The new team also has a sprinkling of technocrats and doctors including Rajiv Chandrashekar, Devusinh Chauhan, Subhash Sarkar, Bharati Pawar and Bhagwant Karad.

The reshuffle indicates a clear shift in policy and even a U-turn – remember all that talk about avoiding technocrats, especially those with academic degrees from Western universities. Seems that Modi needs them, and of course the babus-turned-netas for the rest of his term.

Share a babu experience! Follow dilipthecherian@twitter.com. Let's multiply the effect.

WORDSWORTH

Camp

The adjective first appears in print in 1909, in J Redding Ware's Passing English of the Victorian Era, in which he says it refers to "actions and gestures of exaggerated emphasis", which are used by "persons of exceptional want of character", by which I take it he means homosexuals. He suggested it came from the French, perhaps because all things risqué were considered to be imports from across the Channel. Eric Partridge, on the other hand, was sure that it was natively English, from a dialect word camp or kemp, meaning rough or uncouth. Anthony Burgess has argued that it might be derived from a literal camp, as in a military or mining camp, in which the all-male society might lead gay men to advertise their availability through an exaggerated pseudo-femininity. It might be from a slang use of camp to mean a male brothel, though that term is probably of later date and derived from it. Those theories take you as near to the true origin as you're likely to get. As a side note, though camp still has close associations with the gay world, another sense has grown up in the past half-century or so. It can now mean a sophisticated and knowing type of amusement, based on something deliberately artistically unsophisticated or self-consciously exaggerated and artificial in style. It's an obvious enough extension of the older sense. Christopher Isherwood called it high camp in his novel The World in the Evening of 1954, in which he emphasised that "you're not making fun of it; you're making fun out of it". Susan Sontag famously wrote about this type in the Partisan Review in 1964; she said that the ultimate camp statement was "It's good because it's awful".

LOL

BLACK OR WHITE

Adam and Eve are wondering whether they are black or white. Eve says why don't you go and ask god. So Adam goes into the Garden of Eden and shouts out to god are we black or white? A big booming voice bellows out YOU ARE WHAT YOU ARE. He immediately goes back to Eve and



tells her that they are white. How do you know asks Eve. Because he said you are what you are Adam replied. Why does that mean we are white? asked Eve. Because if we were black he would have said, 'You is what you is'.

SPECTRUM TECHNOLOGY

Public investment in new technologies

China has successfully landed its spacecraft on Mars, created temperatures equal to that of the sun in their laboratories, and produced its own fighter jets instead of buying them from Rafael or other manufacturers. These achievements have been made possible because the Chinese government has made huge investments in developing new technologies. Needless to say we are lagging behind. Our situation has become more desperate during the Covid pandemic. Our government is not even able to manage its current expenditures and it has to borrow huge amounts to maintain them. Although the Finance Minister has increased the capital expenditures by 35% to ₹5.5 lakh crore in the financial year 2021-22, this amount is very small compared to the needs of investment in technologies. We need to invest heavily if we wish to keep up with the technologies at the global level.

The present value of market capitalisation of all the public sector undertakings is about ₹20 lakh crore. This is about 4 times the total annual capital expenditures of the Union government at ₹5.5 lakh crore. The government can raise about 4 times more money for these investments if the existing

public sector undertakings (PSUs) are privatised.

Certain PSUs will continue to be necessary. For example, the State Bank of India manages the clearing houses in every district of the country. The Central Board of Secondary Education undertakes regulation of schools across the country. Such PSUs are providing "public goods" that necessarily need to be provided by the government. The regulation of schools cannot be left to the whims and fancies of the private sector. However, other PSUs are no longer essential. For example, banks other than the State Bank of India can be easily privatised without any loss to the economy. The privatisation of these PSBs will only heat up the competition among the banks and make them more efficient and force them to reduce the price of services provided by them. Similarly, there is no need for the government to run Air India since other airline companies like Indigo and Spice Jet are able to provide domestic aviation service. Likewise oil companies like Indian oil can also be privatised. The basic point is that there remains no case for the government to undertake these activities in areas where private sector is competent in providing the

required services. Thus I reckon that out of the market capitalisation of ₹20 lakh crore of all the PSUs in the country may be retained to provide essential services like managing clearing houses and regulation of schools.

The remaining PSUs having market capitalisation of ₹15 lakh crore can be privatised. This amount would be about three times the present capital expenditures of the Union government. This money can be utilised to invest in the creation technologies so that we can compete with the global powers. Investment in technology will be absolutely essential if we have to protect the sovereignty of our country and also strengthen our economy. We should not forget that multinational corporations are remitting huge amounts as royalty payments because they are giving licenses of their patented technologies to Indian manufacturers. Fifty per cent of the price of Covid-19 vaccines is being paid to Astra Zeneca and other companies. We need not have to pay this amount if we had invested in developing Covid-19 vaccines.

The following areas desperately require more investment by the Government of India. For instance, Artificial Intelligence as IBM has

a project named Watson which is helping doctors to process information about a patient and suggest the future course of treatment. Artificial Intelligence programmes process the information about a patient and provide the doctor with a number of alternative courses of treatments. Secondly, investment is required in the Internet of Things (IOT). The security of offices, for example, can be better managed by computers. Third, the genetic modification is being done across the world. Fourth, we need to invest in promoting our conventional medical systems like Ayurveda, Unani and homeopathy because allopathy has its limits.

A possible counter-argument may be that the government should not renege from its responsibility of welfare of present employees of the PSUs. In think this argument is upside down. By privatising existing PSUs, the employees of the present PSUs remain employed with the buyer of the PSUs. In addition new employment will be created in the new PSUs. Thus privatisation will create employment, not reduce it.

The writer is a former Professor of IIM, Bangalore. Views are persona.



Bharat Jhunjhunwala

WE NEED TO INVEST HEAVILY IN TECHNOLOGIES IF WE WISH TO KEEP UP WITH THE TECHNOLOGIES AT THE GLOBAL LEVEL

Olympics without spectators

Sir, For the first time in the history of the Olympic Games, no fans will be allowed inside the stadia during the Tokyo Olympics from July 23 to August owing to a Covid-induced emergency. Sadly, the fastest man and woman in the world will get to the finishing line without the spectators' applause and cheer. Great sportspersons will compete in a spectator-less and cheerless environment. It is sad that the opening parade of the participating nations where the smallest to the largest contingent wave their flags with pride will turn their heads and look at the empty stands. The impact of Covid-19 on sports varies from region to region. India had to suspend even a spectator-less IPL due to second wave of Covid, while Euro 2021 took place amidst roaring audiences. Like any other human activity, sport events are also dependent on vaccines. Japan has vaccinated only 15% of the population while the UK has vaccinated around 50% of its population. Sarah Gilbert, who helped develop the Oxford/Astra Zeneca vaccine, was given a standing ovation at Wimbledon recently by a large number of unmasked people. One wonders what the purpose of sports without spectators and enthusiasm is. The pandemic has severely affected human activities, including sports. Olympics mean setting new records, achieving excellence, entertainment and solidarity. We will miss the excitement at Tokyo, but even without these, the Olympics will remain the same.

Venu GS, KOLLAM

Master stroke

Sir, The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has prohibited Mastercard Asia from taking any new domestic customers on board its card network. As per the order, the restrictions will come into effect from July 22, 2021 and it is a master stroke indeed. Mastercard Asia has been found to be non-compliant with the direction on Storage of Payment System Data as announced by the RBI. Further, RBI has clarified that its order will not impact the existing customers of Mastercard. The directive bars the US-based network from issuing either prepaid, credit or debit cards to new customers under its network in India. Mastercard is the second-largest credit card issuer (after Visa) in India and the central bank's tough stance could have implications on foreign relations. The RBI has been pushing all regulated entities to store data relating to Indian customers on Indian soil since April 2018. It is indeed a right step in the right direction and done at the right time before losing track of Indian customers.

Krishnan Ramani, MUMBAI

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

Andhra MLAs urge Collector to take up more projects in Kotia



FACT FILE

Salur MLA Rajanna Dora and Babli MLA Shyambangi, both from Andhra Pradesh, met the Vizianagaram district Collector Hari Jawaharlal Nehru, Thursday, and held discussions on the developmental projects implemented by their state in Kotia

During the meeting they discussed with the Collector how more developmental projects could be implemented in Kotia panchayat to benefit the residents. The two MLAs also questioned about the probe into the construction of Patitapaban (Jagannath) temple at Neredibalsa village

A couple of days ago, Andhra officials visited Neredibalsa village and discussed with the villagers about the developmental projects being implemented in the area by their government

POST NEWS NETWORK

Pottangi, July 16: The dispute over territorial rights on Kotia panchayat of Koraput district between Odisha and Andhra Pradesh governments has refused to abate with the latter allegedly refusing to budge from the area. On the contrary, the Andhra Pradesh authorities are keeping a close watch on every move taking place in the area, a report said.

The dispute over the territorial rights on Kotia panchayat in Koraput district is now sub-judice in Supreme Court.

Odisha government has approached the Supreme Court, but even before the apex court could pronounce its judgement, concerned administrations of both the states are implementing parallel developmental projects in the area.

The matter came to fore after Salur MLA Rajanna Dora and Babli MLA Shyambangi, both in Andhra

Pradesh, met Vizianagaram district Collector Hari Jawaharlal Nehru of Vizianagaram, Thursday, and discussed about the developmental projects implemented by their state in Kotia panchayat.

During the meeting they discussed how more and more developmental projects could be implemented in Kotia panchayat to benefit the residents.

The two MLAs also questioned about the probe into the construction of Patitapaban (Jagannath) temple at Neredibalsa village in Kotia panchayat.

A couple of days ago, Andhra officials visited Neredibalsa village and discussed about the developmental projects with the villagers being implemented in the area by the neighbouring state.

The officials, including Kormanath, PO ITDA of Parabatipuram in Vijayanagaram district, Parbati, BDO of Salur block, DSP Subhash and Iram

Naidu, the CI of Kotia panchayat appointed by the neighbouring state were accompanied by a team of police officials during their visit. They sought to know from the villagers about the developmental projects being implemented by Odisha government and directed the Salur BDO and other officials to expedite various developmental works being implemented by the Andhra government.

The officials had visited Uparsembi village and held a meeting with the villagers on church premises. There they discussed about various developmental plans with the villagers being implemented by the Andhra government, apart from preparing an action plan on the projects. The villagers drew the attention of the officials to the need for higher education of their children and urged them to make available drinking water, roads, pension, healthcare and houses under state and Centre-sponsored schemes in the area.



Children planting saplings on forest land on the outskirts of Paralakhemundi town

OP PHOTO

Murder of woman: Hubby, in-laws held

POST NEWS NETWORK

Balasore, July 16: Police have arrested the husband and in-laws of a woman, who died in mysterious condition at Sarasatia village in Khaira block of Balasore district Thursday night.

The deceased was identified as Sasmita Das (25), daughter of Gadadhar Das of Gadapokhari village in Khaira block.

She had married Narayan Sethi of Sarasatia four years back. Following her death, her parents lodged a complaint at Kharia police station alleging that she has been killed by her in-laws. Acting on the complaint, police arrested Sasmita's husband Narayan, father-in-law Ananta Sethi and mother-in-law Sanjukta Sethi.

Vig raids PACS secy's house over DA case

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bolangir, July 16: Vigilance sleuths Friday carried out simultaneous raids at the residence and office of Primary Agriculture Credit Society (PACS) secretary at Salepali in Bolangir district.

According to reports, Masood Mohammed works as secretary at Dubula PACS and is also in-charge of Charbhatta PACS.

Officials of the anti-graft agency conducted the raid on charges of amassing properties disproportionate to Masood's known sources of income. A joint team of vigilance officials from Bolangir, Sonepur, Bargarh and Sambalpur is carrying out the crackdown.

"We are conducting searches at the house of the PACS secretary at



A joint team of Vigilance officials from Bolangir, Sonepur, Bargarh and Sambalpur carried out the crackdown on the house of PACS' secretary

Salepali on charges of accumulating disproportionate assets. All the documents are being verified. No estimation has been made yet to ascertain the cost of all properties as the raids are still underway. We began the searches at 6 am," Vigilance DSP, Dasarathy Sethi said.

Vigilance officials are examining the bank accounts, movable

and immobile assets in the name of the secretary and his relatives. Last week, the anti-corruption wing had conducted raids at the residence of retired Superintendent of Odisha State Warehouse Corporation in Bolangir. The retired official, identified as Ganapati Purohit, was accused of amassing assets disproportionate to his known sources of income.

Freedom fighter Ishwar Bisoi passes away

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nayagarh, July 16: Eminent freedom fighter Ishwar Bisoi, who hailed from Majhiankhanda village of Ranapur block in Nayagarh district, breathed his last Friday. He was suffering from age-related ailments for the last few days, family sources informed.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik expressed his condolences on the demise of Ishwar Bisoi.

Taking to his personal Twitter handle, Patnaik wrote in Odia, "I am saddened to learn about the death of eminent freedom fighter Ishwar Bisoi. His patriotism and bravery as a soldier of the Azad Hind Fauj will always be remembered. May departed Bisoi's soul rest in peace. I extend my heartfelt compassion to the bereaved family members as well."

It may be mentioned here that Bisoi had joined the Azad Hind Fauj in 1945 and was put behind the bars in the then Rangoon Central Jail. He was awarded 'Rashtrapati Samman' in 2018 for his exceptional contribution to India's freedom movement.



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Pvt schools grab CoRs even sans proper infra

302 PRIVATE SCHOOLS OPERATING IN JAJPUR DISTRICT WHILE 60 SCHOOLS ARE YET TO RECEIVE CoRS. JOINT DIRECTOR OF PRIMARY EDUCATION HAD DIRECTED THE DEO TO ISSUE SHOWCAUSE NOTICES TO THESE SCHOOLS AWAITING CoRS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur, July 16: The district administration has failed to rein in the private schools in the district as the latter continues to function without necessary infrastructure and violating the guidelines, a report said.

The report said that the private schools are being able to operate as they manipulate to get certificate of recognition (CoR) despite lacking necessary infrastructure. The private schools also run their institution with impunity under the cover of CoR which they allegedly get in exchange of kickbacks.

It is also alleged that the private schools function without trained teachers under the cover of CoRs. Residents here alleged that this has made the future of the children studying in these schools uncertain as they stare at a bleak future.

Sources said out of 302 private schools in the district, 60 schools are yet to receive the CoRs.

Expressing concern, the Joint Director of Primary Education had directed the District Education Officer to issue showcause notices



to the private schools who have not received the CoR and submit an action taken report to him, July 6, 2021.

Earlier, the Joint Director had issued similar orders to the DEO November 26, 2018, March 16, 2019 and July 17, 2020, but his orders are yet to be implemented due to alleged bonhomie between the concerned education officials and the private school authorities.

Reports said that guardians admitting their children in these schools lacking legal sanction are facing numerous problems at a later stage. The Director of Secondary Education, through a no-

Hundreds of private schools have mushroomed over years in Vyasaganar, Chandikhole, Jaraka, Panikoili, Jajpur Municipality, Binjharpur and Dasarathpur areas in Jajpur district

way of Kalinganagar Industrial Complex. Moreover, equal numbers of private schools have also been established at Chandikhole, Jaraka, Panikoili, Jajpur Municipality, Binjharpur and Dasarathpur areas of the district. Over 10,000 students study in these schools.

It is alleged that these schools are now collecting hefty fees from students on the pretext of providing online education due to Covid pandemic and paying the money to the bank against loans taken by them to construct the school buildings.

Given such exploitation by some private schools, many parents are

taking transfer certificates from these schools and readmitting their wards in other schools.

Experts opined that the School and Mass Education department is responsible for the messy situation in the private schools as it has thoughtlessly opened the education sector for commercialisation while the government schools, despite having skilled and trained teachers, are being closed down.

It was in 2012, the Education Department had decided to form a special team to probe the fact if the recognised schools have necessary land, infrastructure; and whether their function with proper managing committees; whether the committees are registered or not and if the school authorities have appointed trained teachers.

However, the department has allegedly failed to look into such crucial aspects of the private schools. No action is being taken against the schools indulging only in exploitation of students in the name of education.

This reporter tried to contact the District Education Officer for his comments, but he could not be contacted.

Woman hacked to death by nephew

POST NEWS NETWORK

Chhatrapur, July 16: A man allegedly hacked his aunt to death at Sundarpur village under Chhatrapur police limits in Ganjam district, Thursday.

The reason behind the crime is yet to be ascertained.

The deceased has been identified as Padmabati Mandal, 80, while the accused is her nephew Sitaram Mandal. The accused managed to

flee the scene after the incident.

Reports said that Padmabati who was bed-ridden due to paralysis, died on the spot. On being informed, Chhatrapur police rushed to the spot and recovered the body.

A case was registered in this connection and a probe was launched. However, the accused is absconding after committing the crime. Raids are on to nab him, police said.

POLLUTION WOES



People of Harbhanga block in Boudh hold talks with officials of local administration about action taken against stone crushing units operating in their area, Friday

OP PHOTO

Nation's first 'grass art park' in Silk City

PARK PRESENTS BEAUTIFUL SCULPTURES WRAPPED IN ARTIFICIAL GRASS AT BERHAMPUR ITI

POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, July 16: The Industrial Training Institute (ITI) here in Ganjam district added another feather to its accolade-heavy cap Thursday when a unique 'grass park' was inaugurated in its campus.

Referring to it as the first of its kind in the country, principal, Rajat Kumar Panigrahy said such initiatives would go a long way in making the students self-reliant. "In the park, there are beautiful sculptures wrapped in artificial grass, making them a visual treat. Such sculptures can widely be found in foreign countries like Russia and Europe. Now onwards, our institution will also be known for this unique park," he added.

The park was virtually inaugurated by Chairman, Odisha Skill Development Authority, Subroto Bagchi, on the occasion of sixth World Youth Skill Day celebration on the premises of the institution. Heaping praises on the students for employing their skills to do



something out of the box, Bagchi said, "The concept of the grass art park is an innovative concept. This will attract the attention of exterior and interior designers as well as industries. It will help to create new entrepreneurs and, at the same time, help people 'learn when earn' potential of the ITI."

While encouraging the students, he said the students' innovative ideas are attracting him to visit the campus again and again.

In his speech, Director, Technical Education and Training, Odisha, Reghu G, appreciated the students' work. He said the Berhampur ITI is on the right track. The skilled team of the institution have stood rightly after the pandemic and started working towards achieving their goals.

Echoing the same, district Collector Vijay Amruta Kulange termed the ITI as the education wonderland saying the campus

has changed the mindset of people towards vocational education.

Similarly, Berhampur Municipal Commissioner, Siddeshwar Baliram Bondar said he was highly inspired by the grass art park. "Given the students' innovated ideas and transpiring them into realities, people from various industries are showing interest to recruit more and more students from this institution," he informed.

Among others, Berhampur Sub-Collector Keerthi Vasan V; chairman, Oriental Zirochonia, Chhatrapur, RC Pattnaik; chief general manager, Ire Ltd, Krushna Chandra Sahu, Kapil Mahajan of Tata Advance System Limited, Hyderabad; director, Ecp Industries & Glaze Group, Spreety Mishra, and many others participated in the event.

The ITI was in the news for manufacturing as many as 15 devices like oxygen cylinder lifter, mobile swab collection kiosk, smart UVC sole disinfection system among a few to help the government win the battle against coronavirus.

Delta variant threat looms large in K'taka

AGENCIES

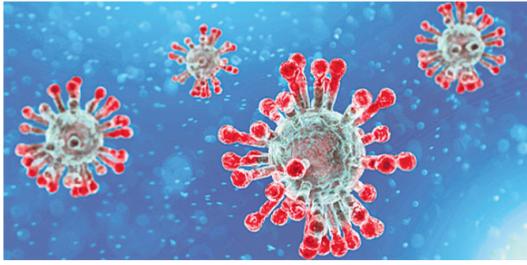
Bangalore, July 16: Amid the increase in the number of cases infected with the Delta variant in neighbouring Maharashtra and Kerala, 725 people have been found affected by this variant in Karnataka.

Among the 752, Bangalore accounts for the maximum number 525. A total of 77 cases are from Vijayapura district, and the coastal district of Udipi recorded 40 cases of Delta variant.

Even as NIMHANS and National Centre for Biological Sciences are involved in genomic sequencing, tracking primary and secondary contacts of affected persons with Delta variant is proving to be a challenge for the authorities in Bangalore, Vijayanagar and Udipi.

Meanwhile, about 652 children getting affected with normal coronavirus has put the authorities on their toes. Between July 5 and July 14, about 86 cases involving a newborn to 5 years, 109 cases between 5 years to 10 years, 296 children of 11 and 18 years of age and 161 between the ages of 19 to 20 years were found to be affected with coronavirus.

"Parents freely mingling with children is causing the spread of the infection," explained Indian Pediatric Doctors Association, Bangalore President and BBMP Child Expert Committee member Dr Mallikarjun. "However, whether



False Covid -ve reports worry

Eight cases of RT-PCR test reports showing negative and CT scan reports confirming Covid symptoms at the government-run Jayanagar General Hospital, have become a cause of worry for the health authorities. The experts stress the need of genomic sequencing of these patients to check if they are affected by a different variant. The development took place in the last week and two of the eight patients have died giving a serious turn to the issue. The hospital authorities have admitted it was a matter of serious concern, considering that there is little pressure on them after Covid second wave subsided in the city.

it is normal coronavirus or Delta variant, if the family member who comes in contact with people restricts himself to a room and if he is being watchful of symptoms, the spread can be checked to a great extent," he underlined.

Half of the people affected with Delta variant (a.1.617.2) do not get any symptoms and remaining will have normal symptoms of cold, cough, fever, breathlessness, loose motion and serious lung infection and those who are detected with Delta require hospitalization in

most cases. About 725 Delta cases were found in genome sequencing examinations.

D Randeep, Special Commissioner (Health) allayed fears of spread of Delta in the city and said, "The normal Covid infection found among children is less than 10 per cent which is not a cause of worry. Affected children have asymptomatic features and are being treated at homes without any complications. People need not fear about the spread of Delta variant among children."

Entry to Nandi Hills, Gokak Falls banned on weekends in K'taka

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bangalore, July 16: Amid the prevailing Covid-19 situation in the state, the district authorities have decided to restrict the entry of people to the Nandi Hills located on the outskirts of Bangalore during weekends.

The Belagavi authorities have also taken a decision to ban the entry of citizens to the Gokak Falls dubbed as the 'Niagara Falls' of India during weekends and holidays. Thousands of Bangaloreans thronged the Nandi Hills during the last weekend while the authorities remained mute spectators to Covid rule violations. The Chikkaballapura district authorities issued an order after discussions with K. Sudhakar, the Karnataka Health and district in-charge Minister. Meanwhile, Belagavi Deputy Commissioner M.G.



Hiremath on Friday directed that the entry to Gokak Falls would remain closed for the public on weekends and holidays.

The entry to surrounding Dhopadaala and Godachinmalki Falls had also been restricted. Action has been taken as a large number of tourists and local residents did not follow social distancing norms or wear masks.

BATTLE AGAINST COVID

Maha CM urges PM to frame policy to stop gatherings

AGENCIES

Mumbai, July 16: Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Friday urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to formulate a national policy to stop public gatherings for social, political and religious purposes, in a bid to curb the spread of Covid-19.

He sought three crore anti-coronavirus vaccine doses per month for Maharashtra, saying it would expedite the vaccination process in the state.

Thackeray was speaking during the prime minister's video interaction with the chief ministers of six states over the coronavirus situation.

"Even as the government is battling the Covid-19 pandemic, the crowding at public places is a huge challenge. The Centre should conceptualise a national level policy to prevent public crowding happening in the name of social, political and religious gatherings," the chief minister said.

A statement issued by the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) said Thackeray told the PM that the daily spike in Covid-19 cases and the fatality rate in the state were going down. "But we want to bring these numbers further down," he said. "Even though the number of cases have reduced, we are still at risk. People have started going out for tourism, shopping and started crowding public places. This is revenge tourism and re-



Thackeray was speaking during the Prime Minister's video interaction with the Chief Ministers of six states on the coronavirus situation

venge shopping. Crowding at religious and political events is also on the rise. There is a need to stop

this under a national policy, which will be applicable for the entire country," he said.

Eight to 10 districts in Konkan and western Maharashtra regions are still reporting high number of infection cases. In these districts, 2.06 crore people above age of 18 have been fully vaccinated. A total of 87.90 lakh vaccine doses have been provided to these districts, Thackeray added. "If the state gets three crore doses per month, vaccination in all the districts can be completed," he said. Maharashtra's vaccine wastage rate was very low and the state was trying to vaccinate the frontline workers at the earliest, he said.

T-SERIES MD BHUSHAN KUMAR BOOKED FOR RAPE

AS PER THE COMPLAINT, BHUSHAN KUMAR, 43, ALLEGEDLY RAPED THE WOMAN ON THE PRETEXT OF PROVIDING A JOB TO HER IN SOME PROJECT OF HIS COMPANY



of the complaint lodged by the 30-year-old woman, who is an actor, an official said.

Sources in the police department said that the complainant knew Kumar since the last few years and he allegedly sexually exploited her between 2017 and 2020 at various places. The woman said she was cheated by him and hence she approached the police, the official said.

According to the official, Kumar

has been booked under IPC sections 376 (rape), 420 (cheating), 506 (criminal intimidation).

In a statement issued to the media, T-Series denied the charges and said the company is in the process of consulting their lawyers and "will take appropriate legal action". "The complaint filed against Mr. Bhushan Kumar is completely false and malicious and the contents of the same are denied. It has been falsely alleged that the lady in question was sexually exploited between 2017 to 2020 on the pretext of giving her work. "It is a matter of record that she has already worked for T-Series banner in Film and music videos," the production company said in a statement.

As per T-Series, the woman had approached Kumar in March 2021, seeking help to fund a web series she wanted to produce, but she was "politely refused".

T-Series claimed that the complainant was trying to extort money from the company, leading the banner to file a case against her.

PUJA AMID PANDEMIC



Devotees offer prayers outside the Banshankari Temple during Covid-induced lockdown in Bangalore

PTI PHOTO

Heavy rains pound Mumbai, local trains hit

TULSI LAKE, ONE OF THE SEVEN RESERVOIRS THAT SUPPLY DRINKING WATER TO THE METROPOLIS, OVERFLOWED DUE TO HEAVY RAINS

AGENCIES

Mumbai, July 16: Around 250 residents of a slum-dominated area in Mumbai's Kurla were evacuated Friday morning as Mithi river swelled up following heavy rains in the city and its suburbs, which also affected the local train services, officials said.

However, as water level of the river later subsided, these people returned to their places, they said. "People residing in Kranti Nagar, a slum-dominated area in Kurla west, located along the bank of Mithi river, were shifted to nearby municipal schools after its water level touched 3.7 metres in the morning with its danger mark being 4 metres," an official of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) said.

Mithi river originates from Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP) in Borivali and meets the Arabian sea at Mahim creek. During the 2005 Mumbai flooding, areas around Mithi river were the most affected and Army had to be called in to rescue and shift locals. Hundreds of people had died in the floods that year.

The official said that after the rains took a break following the



evacuation of people, Mithi river's water level went down to two metres from 3.7 metres. After that, most of the evacuated people returned to their places.

Heavy rain pounded Mumbai, especially its suburbs, since early morning, the BMC officials said, adding that Mumbai island city recorded 55.3 mm rain, while 135 mm and 140.5 mm rain in Eastern and Western suburbs, respectively between 4 am to 9 am. A civic official said that the H-East administrative ward of the BMC, which includes areas like Bandra east and

Khar east, recorded the highest rainfall of 186.9 mm, followed by 175.5 mm rain in M-west ward that includes Shivaji Nagar, Govandi and Mankhurd areas during those five hours.

Due to the downpour, several low-lying areas in the eastern and western suburbs witnessed water-logging, which led to traffic snarls on the arterial roads. As a result of water-logging, mainly between Sion and Vidya Vihar section on the Central Railway's main line, and Chunabhatti-Tikal Nagar section on the Harbour line, the suburban

train services were badly affected.

A Central Railway spokesperson said the suburban services on both these lines were hit due to water-logging and it led to bunching of trains. "Due to this, suburban services ran behind schedule and the operations of some long distance trains were also hit," he said. Meanwhile, the IMD has predicted moderate rain in the city and suburbs with possibility of heavy rainfall at isolated places, the civic official said, adding that the city will witness hightide of 4.08 metres Friday at 4.26 metres.

Yediyurappa meets PM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 16: Karnataka Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa Friday called on Prime Minister Narendra Modi here and requested him to facilitate early implementation of some pending state works including the Mekedatu dam project.

Yediyurappa, who is visiting the national capital amid speculations about a leadership change in the state, sidestepped reporters' questions on the issue.

"I don't know. You have to tell," he told the reporters with a smile. "I requested the PM to facilitate for early implementation of some state works. He has agreed for all." Asked if the Mekedatu dam project across the Cauvery river was also discussed, he said "all issues" came up.

The CM said he would share the details of the meeting Saturday before returning to Bangalore.

Before meeting the PM, the CM said he would call on some of the Centre's key ministers including Amit Shah and Rajnath Singh on Saturday. He also told reporters before the meeting that the state has got every right to implement the Mekedatu project and will start the work. "They (TN) have been opposing us since the beginning but we have got our rights. I request



THE RS 9,000 CRORE MEKEDATU PROJECT ACROSS THE CAUVERY RIVER IN RAMANAGARA DISTRICT AIMS AT UTILISING 4.75 TMC OF WATER FOR DRINKING PURPOSES IN BANGALORE AND NEIGHBOURING

HOWEVER, TAMIL NADU IS OPPOSED TO IT SAYING THAT IT WILL HAMPER THE INTERESTS OF TAMIL NADU AND DEPRIVE ITS FARMERS OF WATER FOR IRRIGATION PURPOSES

them not to disturb us." He also assured Tamil Nadu that the implementation of the proposed project will not create any problem to them. "I have written to them (TN CM) about the matter, but they are

not letting us (implement the project)." "There is no need to have confusion. I want to assure our state that we will cent percent implement the Mekedatu project," he added. On a likely Cabinet rejig in the BJP-ruled state, Yediyurappa said before meeting the PM, "I will tell you if any discussion (happens) with seniors over the restructuring or expansion of the Cabinet." No state minister is accompanying the Chief Minister during his trip. However, his son B Y Vijayendra has come.

The Rs 9,000-crore Mekedatu balancing reservoir and drinking water project across the Cauvery river in Ramanagara district aims at utilising 4.75 TMC of water for drinking purposes in Bangalore and neighbouring areas besides generating 400 MW power.

national

of the day quote

The DJB along with the people of Delhi finally managed to compel Haryana to release Delhi's rightful share of water in the Yamuna -- 16,000 cusecs. As a result, all our water treatment plants are now operating at optimum level

Cess is a very divisive idea as it is not divisible or shared with the states. When the Centre keeps 96 per cent of the cess by itself, then the onus is on it to reduce the taxes on fuel and bring down prices, and not on the state governments

From 2018, about 3,500 Muslim women from India have performed Haj without 'Mehram'. The women who apply to perform Haj without 'Mehram' are exempted from the lottery system

SHORT TAKES

2 militants killed in J&K encounter

Srinagar: Two Srinagar-based Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) militants were killed and two security forces' personnel injured in an encounter here in Jammu and Kashmir Friday, officials said. "Acting on specific information generated by police about the presence of terrorists in Alamdar Colony in the Danmar area of Srinagar, a joint cordon and search operation was launched by police and the CRPF in the said area," a police spokesman said.

Goa CM's FB account hacked

Panaji: A day before Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant's old Facebook account was hacked, the hackers asked a social media user to send across money through Unified Payments Interface (UPI) payment mode. Sawant Friday said a police complaint had been filed in the matter but the man targeted by the hackers, Pramesh Solkar, said he is still in shock that the state Chief Minister's social media account had been tapped into.

Sidhu meets Sonia Gandhi

New Delhi: Amid continued infighting in the Punjab Congress, former minister Navjot Singh Sidhu Friday met party chief Sonia Gandhi at her residence here. Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi and party in-charge of Punjab affairs, Harish Rawat were also present during the meeting, sources said.

MP well collapse: 5 bodies recovered

Vidisha (MP): As many as 19 people have been pulled out safely and five bodies recovered as of Friday evening from a well in which several people fell while trying to rescue a boy in Madhya Pradesh's Vidisha district. The incident took place Thursday night when the parapet wall of the well in Lal Patar village in Ganj Basoda area, 50 km from here, gave way, and the people who were standing on it fell inside.

Pilot killed

Jalgaon (Maharashtra): A pilot was killed and a woman trainee pilot was injured as a brand-new training aircraft belonging to a private aviation academy crashed in a remote field near Chopda village in Maharashtra's Jalgaon Friday, officials said.



Congress only needs courageous people, and not those who are afraid of the BJP
RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

SPURIOUS LIQUOR KILLS 9

Nine persons have died in Bihar's West Champaran district after allegedly consuming poisonous liquor in the last two days



India orders 660mn vax doses

SEVERAL STATES HAVE REPORTED VACCINE SHORTAGES, WITH MANY INOCULATION CENTRES SHUT AND PEOPLE HAVING TO WAIT FOR LONG HOURS AT OTHERS FOR THEIR SHOT

AGENCIES

New Delhi, July 16: The Indian government has ordered 660 million vaccine doses for August-December; its largest procurement, local news reports said Friday, as state authorities and health experts warned that shortages could leave millions vulnerable if coronavirus infections surge again.

The federal government aims to inoculate all of the country's estimated 944 million adults by December; a target health experts have said is ambitious, as only 8% of that number is currently vaccinated with the mandatory two doses.

The government has now ordered 375 million more doses of AstraZeneca's locally produced Covishield and 285 million doses of Bharat Biotech's homegrown Covaxin, the Economic Times newspaper reported, citing sources. The health ministry did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment.

The Serum Institute of India, which manufactures Covishield, has raised monthly production to about 100 million doses.

Bharat Biotech, which has been struggling to raise output of its vaccine, did not respond to a request for an update on its production plans.

"I expect the vaccine shortage to continue and as per the planned vaccine supply, it appears that the daily average for the whole of July will stay below 4 million," said Rijo John, health economist and a professor at the Rajagiri College of



PM EXPRESSES CONCERN

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said Friday that rising COVID-19 cases in some states remain a matter of concern as he asked them to take proactive measures to rule out a third wave by moving forward with the strategy of test, track, treat and 'tika (vaccine)'. In a video interaction with chief ministers of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Odisha, Maharashtra and Kerala, where many districts have been reporting a high number of cases, Modi said the country stands at a point in its battle with the pandemic where apprehensions about a third wave are being continuously expressed. These states have accounted for 80 per cent of new COVID-19 cases last week and 84 per cent of deaths, he noted in his closing remarks, specifically mentioning the rise in infections in Kerala and Maharashtra as a matter of grave concern for the country. A similar trend was witnessed in January and February before the second wave started, he said.

Social Sciences in the southern city of Kochi.

After a record 9.1 million doses were administered on June 21, fewer than 4 million doses per day have since been given on an average this month.

A full rollout of Russia's Sputnik V vaccine in India has also been de-

layed due to a lack of imported supplies. Commercial production of the vaccine in India, however, could begin soon.

India's daily COVID-19 cases have dropped to nearly two-month lows, the country remains the second-highest globally in terms of daily infections.

Apex court asks UP to reconsider Kanwar Yatra

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, July 16: The Supreme Court Friday pointed out that fear of a third Covid wave looms large over all Indians as it asked the Uttar Pradesh government to reconsider its decision on a physical Kanwar Yatra.

On the Yogi Adityanath government's symbolic Kanwar Yatra proposal, the court replied, "The right to life is paramount" and asked the government to reconsider its position on even a symbolic annual ritual that annually registers a heavy movement of pilgrims across states in the northern belt.

A bench comprising justices RF Nariman and BR Gavai insisted that authorities should reconsider whether to hold physical Kanwar Yatra at all, otherwise court will pass order in the matter.

"We are of the view that this is a matter which concerns everyone of us as citizens of India, and goes to the very heart of Article 21 of the Constitution of India, which has a pride of place in the fundamental rights chapter of our Constitution.

The health of the citizenry of India and their right to 'life' are paramount.

All other sentiments, al beit religious, are subservient to this most basic fundamental right," said the bench, in its order.

However, the bench insisted that the UP government should reconsider it.

The top court has scheduled the matter for further hearing Monday.

On July 14, the top court took suo moto cognizance of the Uttar Pradesh government's decision to allow Kanwar Yatra amid the ongoing Covid pandemic.

LAC ROW RAJNATH MEETS ANTONY, PAWAR



AGENCIES

New Delhi, July 16: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh Friday met Congress leader AK Antony and NCP chief Sharad Pawar and is learnt to have briefed them about the border row with China in eastern Ladakh as well as the current situation in the region, people familiar with the development said.

The former defence ministers were also provided with some details about India's military preparedness in the region during the meeting, which was also attended by Chief of Defence Staff Gen Bipin Rawat and Army Chief Gen MM Naravane, they said.

The meeting is seen as an effort by Singh to reach out to the Opposition ahead of the Monsoon session of Parliament beginning July 19. However, there was no official comment about the meeting.

Earlier in the day, Leader of House in Rajya Sabha Piyush Goyal also met opposition leaders, including Pawar and former prime minister Manmohan Singh.

Congress has already indicated that it will raise the border row with China in the Parliament.

While Antony served as India's defence minister from October 2006 to May 2014, Pawar held the post from June 1991 to March 1993.

On Wednesday, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar held talks with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi in Dushanbe on the sidelines of a meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). During the talks, Jaishankar firmly conveyed to Wang that prolongation of the existing situation in eastern Ladakh was visibly impacting the bilateral ties in a "negative manner" and rued that there was no forward movement since the disengagement in Pangong lake areas in February.

At the meeting, the two foreign ministers agreed to hold the next round of military dialogue at the earliest to discuss all the remaining issues. There has been a stalemate in the disengagement process between the two militaries in the remaining friction points in eastern Ladakh after they withdrew troops and weapons from the Pangong lake areas in February following a series of military and diplomatic talks to resolve the standoff.

ED attaches Deshmukh family's ₹4.21 Cr assets

AGENCIES

New Delhi/Mumbai, July 16: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) Friday said it has attached assets worth ₹4.20 crore in connection with its money laundering probe in an extortion-cum-bribery case against former Maharashtra home minister Anil Deshmukh and his family.



A provisional order has been issued under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) attaching a residential flat worth ₹1.54 crore in Mumbai's Worli, and

25 land parcels valued at ₹2.67 crore in Dhutum village in Raigad district.

The central probe agency alleged the attached properties are "beneficially owned" by Deshmukh. The 72-year-old NCP leader has skipped at least three Enforcement Directorate (ED) summonses for questioning in this case. His son Hrishikesh and wife were also summoned by the federal probe agency but they too refused to depose.

The summonses were issued in connection with the criminal case registered under the PMLA related to an alleged ₹100 crore bribery-cum-extortion racket in the Maharashtra police establishment that led to Deshmukh's resignation in April this year.

The ED claimed its probe found that "Deshmukh, while acting as home minister of Maharashtra, with dishonest intention has received illegal gratification of approximately ₹4.70 crore in cash from various orchestra bar owners, through Sachin Waze, then the assistant police inspector of Mumbai Police (now-suspended)."

LET'S BEAT COVID-19



A medic administers a dose of Covid-19 vaccine at Yamuna Khadar in New Delhi

PTI PHOTO

NO BAN ON ANIMAL SLAUGHTER IN J&K, CLARIFIES ADMIN

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Srinagar, July 16: The Jammu and Kashmir administration Friday said there was no ban on bovine slaughter in the union territory, clarifying that the earlier order seeking to prohibit illegal killing of cows and camels on the occasion of Eid-ul-Adha was issued by the animal welfare board for implementation of various acts concerning animal slaughter.

An official spokesman said the Animal and Sheep Husbandry Department clarified that the Jammu and Kashmir administration has not issued any order banning the slaughtering of animals in accordance with rules.

Earlier, in a communication addressed to the divisional commissioners of Jammu as well as Kashmir, the J-K Animal and Sheep Husbandry and Fisheries Department sought a ban on illegal killing of cows, calves, camels on the occasion of the Muslim festival during which sacrificing sheep, cows, calves and camels is an important ritual.

IMD predicts heavy rainfall in country next week

In Himachal Pradesh, the Met office issued an orange warning for heavy to very heavy rains, thunderstorm and lightning for July 18-20

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 16: A swelled up Mithi river forced the evacuation of 250 people in rain-battered Mumbai's Kurla area on Friday, even as the temperatures were above normal in several parts of north Indian plains in the absence of rainfall despite the revival of the Southwest Monsoon.

Very light rains and thunder-showers occurred at isolated places in Uttar Pradesh though, and a fresh warning of heavy showers was issued in Himachal Pradesh as the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said heavy to very heavy rainfall is likely in several parts of the country, including the northern region, over the next six-seven days.

The meteorological department said rainfall activity is very likely to increase with fairly widespread to widespread rainfall and heavy to very heavy falls over the west-



ern Himalayan region and Uttar Pradesh from July 17 to 20.

Heavy falls are also expected over Punjab, Haryana, east Rajasthan and north Madhya Pradesh from July 18 to 20 and isolated heavy rainfall over Delhi July 18, it said, adding that isolated extremely heavy falls are also likely over Uttar Pradesh July 18, Jammu July 19, and

Uttarakhand July 18 and 19.

"Moderate to severe thunderstorm with lightning very likely at isolated places over Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and south Rajasthan during next 24 hours. They may cause injuries leading to casualties to people and animals staying outdoor," the IMD said.

It said widespread rainfall with

isolated heavy falls are also very likely to continue over the west coast and remaining parts of west peninsular India except over Gujarat during the next six-seven days. Heavy to very heavy falls are very likely over Konkan, Goa, ghat areas of central Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala and Mahe during same period, the IMD said.

Heavy rainfall is also expected over northeast India, it added. Widespread rainfall with isolated heavy falls is likely over north-east India and sub-Himalayan West Bengal and Sikkim till July 19 which will decrease in intensity and distribution thereafter, the IMD said. In Delhi, the maximum temperature settled at 37.8 degrees Celsius, three notches above the season's normal, Friday, and the minimum temperature was recorded at 27 degrees Celsius.

The weatherman predicted partly cloudy skies with light rain or thundershowers for Saturday.

In Himachal Pradesh, the Met office issued a yellow warning for heavy rains, thunderstorm and lightning in the plains, low hills and middle hills on Saturday. It also issued an orange warning for heavy to very heavy rains, thunderstorm and lightning for July 18-20.

Several parts of the state received light to moderate rains during the day. Sarkaghat gauged 86 mm of rainfall, followed by 52 mm in Nadaun, 49 mm in Jogindernagar and 29 mm in Baijnath, 27 mm in Sujampur Tira, 19 mm in Kasol, 16 mm in Hamirpur, 14 mm in Bhoranj, 13 in Rampur, 11 mm in Sarahan, 9 mm in Palampur and 4 mm in Mandi, the weather office said.

The maximum temperatures in Haryana and Punjab rose Friday after a few days of respite brought about by monsoonal rains, with joint capital Chandigarh recording a high of 36.8 degrees Celsius, three notches above normal.

Ambala in Haryana recorded a maximum temperature of 36.5 degrees Celsius and Hisar 38.1 degrees Celsius. In Rohtak, it was 37.3 degrees Celsius, 37.8 degrees Celsius in Gurgaon and 35 degrees Celsius in Karnal.

In Punjab, Amritsar recorded a maximum of 35.6 degrees Celsius, Ludhiana 36.7 degrees Celsius and Patiala 36 degrees Celsius. According to the Met department forecast for Haryana, heavy to very heavy rain is likely at isolated places July 18, 19 and 20. The forecast for Punjab says heavy rain is likely at isolated places on July 18, and heavy to very heavy rain at isolated places on July 19 and 20.

In Uttar Pradesh, very light rains along with thundershowers occurred at isolated places. The temperature rose markedly in Moradabad division, while no large changes were seen in the remaining divisions of the state.

international



“If anyone doubts my tweet on Pak Air Force & Pak Army warning to d Afg side not to retake Spin Boldak I am ready to share evidence through DM. Afghan aircrafts as far as 10 kilometers from Spin Boldak R warned 2 back off or face air to air missiles”
AMRULLAH SALEH | VICE PRESIDENT, AFGHANISTAN

EFFEL TOWER REOPENS

The Eiffel Tower is reopening Friday for the first time in nine months even though the French government introduced new virus rules this week aimed at taming the fast-spreading delta variant



of the day quote

It doesn't take many doublings until we're in actually quite scary numbers again... I don't think we should underestimate the fact that we could get into trouble again surprisingly fast

CHRIS WHITTY | CHIEF MEDICAL ADVISER, UK

I urge the Government to address the protesters' grievances through dialogue, and to respect and fully protect the rights of all individuals to peaceful assembly and to freedom of opinion and expression

MICHELLE BACHELET | HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, UN

Happy to meet with Bangladesh FM Dr AK Abdul Momen on the sidelines of the Tashkent Connectivity Conference. A good opportunity to review the progress in our ties, including its connectivity aspects

S JAISHANKAR | EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER, INDIA

SHORT TAKES

Pope recalls curbs on old Latin Mass

Rome: Pope Francis cracked down Friday on the spread of the old Latin Mass, reversing one of Pope Benedict XVI's signature decisions in a major challenge to traditionalist Catholics who immediately decried it as an attack on them and the ancient liturgy. The pontiff said he was taking action because Benedict's reform had become a source of division in the church and been used as a tool by Catholics opposed to the Second Vatican Council.

Stricter curbs from July 19 in Abu Dhabi

Dubai: Abu Dhabi residents have been asked to stay home unless "absolutely necessary" as the Abu Dhabi Emergency, Crisis and Disasters Committee launched a new National Sterilisation Programme. The restriction is applicable every day between midnight and 5 am, the time during which authorities will carry on the sterilisation drive. No movement of traffic and the public will be permitted at these times, and a permit from Abu Dhabi Police needs to be obtained if one intends to get out for essential supplies, such as food and medicine.

UN calls for \$850M to help Afghan

United Nations: The UN humanitarian chief in Afghanistan appealed for \$850 million Thursday to help the war-torn country cope with the impact of the Taliban offensive, protracted malnutrition for a third of the country, a severe drought, and the return of 627,000 Afghans this year, most of them deported from neighbouring Iran. Ramiz Alakbarov told reporters at UN headquarters after a virtual briefing from the capital of Kabul that at least 80 million Afghans are in need of assistance and the UN plan is to provide help for at least 15.7 million of them.

Protests, gunfire in Iran province

Dubai: Protesters angry over water shortages marched through streets late Thursday in an oil-rich, restive province in southwestern Iran and police apparently fired weapons to disperse the crowds, online videos showed. It wasn't immediately clear if anyone had been wounded or arrested in the protests across multiple cities in Khuzestan province, including its capital, Ahvaz.

INDO-PACIFIC COMMITMENTS

UK's carrier strike group reaches Indian Ocean

INDIAN MILITARY OFFICIALS SAID A SERIES OF COMPLEX DRILLS WILL BE CARRIED OUT AS PART OF THE WARGAME THAT IS EXPECTED TO TAKE PLACE AROUND JULY 26

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

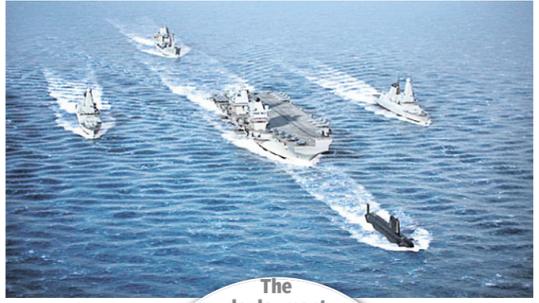
Washington, July 16: The UK's largest warship HMS Queen Elizabeth and its strike task group have sailed into the Indian Ocean to carry out a mega wargame with the Indian Navy as the aircraft carrier began a 40-nation tour aimed at demonstrating Britain's commitment for an open and inclusive Indo-Pacific.

UK Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said the deployment of the carrier strike group marks the start of "a new era of defence cooperation with allies in India and the Indo-Pacific."

It is HMS Queen Elizabeth's first operational deployment. The warship has a fleet of F35B stealth fighter jets onboard and is accompanied by six Royal Navy ships, a submarine and 14 naval helicopters.

The warships are expected to visit the South China Sea region as part of the tour.

"By visiting 40 countries and working alongside our partners, the UK is standing up for democratic values, seizing new trading opportunities and tackling the shared



threats we face together," Foreign Secretary Raab said. The British high commission in India said the carrier strike group (CSG) 2021, led by HMS Queen Elizabeth, has sailed into the Indian Ocean Region after transiting the Suez Canal. "Following a series of successful engagements and operations in the Mediterranean it is now sailing east across the Indian Ocean towards India. It will then meet with ships from the Indian Navy to conduct routine maritime exercises," the high commission said in a statement.

The deployment illustrates the UK's enduring commitment to global defence and security, strengthening our existing alliances and forging new partnerships with like-minded countries as we face up to the challenges of the 21st century

BEN WALLACE | DEFENCE SECRETARY, UK

It said the deployment represents the UK's commitment to deepening diplomatic, economic and security ties with India and in the

Over 120 dead as floods sweep western Europe



AGENCIES

Schuld, July 16: More than 1,000 people were missing and more homes were destroyed in flood-stricken regions of western Germany and Belgium Friday where waters were still rising and the death toll was already at about 117. Entire communities lay in ruins after swollen rivers swept through towns and villages in the western German states of North Rhine-Westphalia and Rhineland-Palatinate, Belgium as well as the Netherlands.

Germany were without power and mobile phone networks collapsed in some flooded regions, which meant that family and friends were unable to track down their loved ones.

In Rhineland-Palatinate, around 1,300 people were reported missing in the Ahrweiler district south of Cologne, the district government said on Facebook.

COLLAPSED INFRASTRUCTURE Further north, in Erfstadt near Cologne, several houses collapsed Friday morning, and authorities feared casualties.

Residents had been evacuated but some returned home so officials do not know who might be in the houses, district commissioner Frank Rock said, adding: "We are expecting deaths."

The German military has deployed over 700 soldiers to help with rescue efforts.

NORTH-SOUTH GAS PROJECT

Pak, Russia sign terms of accord for gas pipeline

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Islamabad, July 16: Pakistan and Russia have signed an agreement for the construction of about 1,100-km gas pipeline from Port Qasim in Karachi to Lahore at an estimated cost of USD 2.5-3 billion by the end of 2023, according to a media report Friday.

The Heads of Terms (HoTs) of shareholders' agreement was signed Thursday after four days of talks, the Dawn News reported. The two sides also signed minutes of the third meeting of the Russia-Pakistan Joint Technical Committee (JTC) for implementation of the Pakstream Gas Pipeline Project -

commonly known as North-South Gas project.

The two sides agreed over 7426 per cent shareholding in the special purpose vehicle (SPV) for the project. This envisages both 'put option' and 'call option' to Russian side which means its entities can move out of the project if it is not found feasible or increase its shareholding to 49 per cent if it is able to provide attractive financing arrangements acceptable to Pakistan.

The two sides committed to expeditiously implement the project to meet the emerging energy security scenario of Pakistan to ensure investment commitments.

NEPAL POLITICAL CRISIS

OLI FACTION TO VOTE AGAINST DEUBA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kathmandu, July 16: The CPN-UML's faction led by ousted former prime minister K P Sharma Oli Friday decided to vote against newly-appointed Nepal Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba when he seeks a vote of confidence in the House of Representatives.

This was decided at a standing committee meeting of the party held in Kathmandu. It also decided to remain in the Opposition bench in Parliament, according to a statement issued by the party.

The meeting, chaired by Oli, also endorsed the 10-point proposal forwarded by the party task force formed to resolve intra-party disputes. However, leaders close to dissident party leader Madhav Kumar Nepal boycotted the high-

level meeting. The UML (Unified Marxist-Leninist) dissident leaders are likely to vote in favour of Deuba during the vote of confidence. UML's support will be crucial for the survival of Prime Minister Deuba.

Nepal commands 23 UML Lawmakers, who put their signatures when Deuba staked claim for premiership before the President Bidya Devi Bhandari a couple of months ago.

Deuba is required to seek a vote of confidence from the House of Representatives within 30 days of his appointment as the Prime Minister, as per the constitutional provisions by August 12.

He needs 136 votes in the 275-member lower house as there are only 271 members presently. His party has only 61 seats in the House.

BATTLING BLAZE



Firefighters spray water from a fire train to hot spots along the tracks over Rock Creek Bridge as the Dixie Fire grows in Plumas National Forest, California

INDIA PREPARES TO HEAD UNSC

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

United Nations, July 16: As India prepares to take up the presidency of the UN Security Council, Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla met Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and other international diplomats here to explain New Delhi's priorities while leading the UN's top decision-making body.

Shringla briefed Guterres during his meeting Thursday about India's focus areas during its presidency next month, maritime security, peacekeeping and counter-terrorism, according to the India's UN Mission. They also exchanged views on the



regional situations, including Afghanistan and Myanmar, on climate change and the International Solar Alliance that India is promoting, on Security Council reforms and on the Covid-19 situation around the world, the Mission said. Guterres expressed solidarity

with the government and people of India in their efforts against the recent wave of Covid-19 pandemic and appreciated the positive role India is playing in the UN Security Council as well as India's robust contribution to UN peacekeeping, it said.

India will take over as the Council President next month from France and Shringla briefed French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian about New Delhi's plan and invited him to attend the high-level meetings that India would chair, the Mission said.

Shringla also met several senior UN officials to discuss the entire gamut of India's engagement with the UN system and its agencies.

Biden bids Merkel farewell: Friends with disagreements

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Washington, July 16: Chancellor Angela Merkel Thursday visited the White House in her diplomatic swan song, a trip underlining how important the veteran German leader has been to the transatlantic relationship, but also highlighting the unanswered questions she leaves behind.

Hosting Merkel in the Oval Office, President Joe Biden called her "a great friend, a personal friend, and a friend of the United States."

Greeting Merkel at the vice presidential residence, Harris called her guest's career "extraordinary."

'Working visit' The White House insists this is "very much a working visit," rather

than a ceremonial farewell for the woman widely seen as Europe's steadiest leader at the helm of the continent's biggest economy.

Merkel and Biden will discuss climate change, Covid-19 vaccine distribution, and the future of Afghanistan now that US, German and other foreign troops are leaving, said the administration official, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Jihadist threats in Africa's Sahel region are on the agenda. And reflecting Germany's pivotal role in NATO and transatlantic security, the two leaders were also set to discuss Russian "cyberattacks and territorial aggression," Ukraine's struggle against Russia and "countering China's rising influence."



'Unresolved issues' However, Merkel is now out of

time for resolving some of the pressing issues facing Europe and

Angel Merkel who has dealt with four US presidents during her 16 years in power, is stepping down later this year hailed her friendship with the United States and its contribution to a free and democratic Germany

to Germany. Not only will it bypass Ukraine, leading to fears that Russia is deliberately weakening its neighbor's economy, but the project underscores European energy dependency on an increasingly hostile Moscow.

Despite strong criticism of the pipeline, Biden in May waived key US sanctions on Nord Stream 2 after concluding that it was too late to stop the project and that it was better to seek cooperation with Germany.

On the flip side, Germany's next leaders will no longer be sure that whoever holds power in the United States after Biden won't revert to the extraordinary disruption of the Donald Trump era.



It is of utmost importance for the government to address the issue of surging prices of gas, petrol and diesel, which is due to two key reasons of rising international oil rates and the higher domestic tax structure that is levied by both central and state governments
SANJAY AGGARWA | PRESIDENT, PHDCI

ARCHIES FORAYS INTO BEAUTY SEGMENT

Gift and greeting cards major Archies has forayed into the beauty and personal care products segment as part of business expansion plans. It has partnered with around 45 brands, ranging from cosmetics, haircare, skincare, fragrances and scents and bodycare



of the day quote

Web Werks' Bangalore data centre will cater to the increasing demand from hyperscalers and enterprises. We look forward to providing our new customers in south India with highly reliable and scalable solutions combining hosted infra, cloud on-ramp, network, and security

This strategic alliance (with Delhivery) will support our long-term vision to grow our India business and serve customers seeking to expand in or enter the Indian market, as well as provide opportunities to develop product and technology solutions together with Delhivery for the benefit of our customers

The agri reforms undertaken by the central government are going to bring a change in the lives of the farmers. If farmers across the country take advantage of these agricultural reforms will prove to be revolutionary for them as well as increase the contribution of the farm sector in the economy

SHORT TAKES

Crown Worldwide to invest \$30mn

Mumbai: Hong Kong-headquartered logistics company Crown Worldwide Group is looking to invest \$30 million (around ₹223 crore) across its portfolio of brands in India. The company, which is completing 25 years in India, Friday, said. It is expanding the digital capabilities of its business offerings to meet the changing times. Founded in Japan in 1965, Crown delivers a broad portfolio of complementary brands that include workspace, world mobility, relocations, records management, fine art and logistics.

Ducati opens bookings

New Delhi: Italian superbike maker Ducati Friday said it has opened pre-launch bookings for Multistrada V4 in India. The Multistrada V4 is an all-new motorcycle from the ground up that will headline Ducati's family of adventure touring bikes in both capability and technology prowess. Customers can book their Multistrada V4 at their nearest Ducati dealerships by paying an amount of ₹1 lakh, the company said.

US warns of 'growing risks'

Washington: The United States Friday warned its business community of growing risks of operating in Hong Kong following a clampdown by China in the major financial hub. In a long-awaited advisory that has already been denounced by China, US government agencies led by the State Department told entrepreneurs that they face particular risks from the imposition a year ago of a draconian new security law.

Tata Power ties up with HPCL

Mumbai: Tata Power has joined hands with Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) to provide end-to-end EV charging stations at the latter's retail outlets at multiple cities and major highways across the country, according to a statement released Friday. Under the pact, Tata Power will provide its EV charging infrastructure at HPCL petrol pumps for users.

Oil imports hit their lowest in 9 months in June

REUTERS

New Delhi, July 16: India's crude oil imports in June fell to their lowest in nine months, as refiners curtailed purchases amid higher fuel inventories due to low consumption and renewed coronavirus lockdowns in the previous two months.

India, the world's third-biggest oil importer and consumer, shipped in about 3.9 million barrels per day (bpd) of crude last month, about 7% down from May, but 22% higher from year-ago levels, tanker arrival data obtained from trade sources showed.

India is the second major importer in Asia, after China, to post a slump in last month's crude im-



ports. After an uptick in India's fuel demand in February and March, the country's refiners cranked up crude processing and oil imports, said an Indian refining official who declined to be named as he is not authorised to speak to media. However, fuel demand fell sharply

in April and May after the government imposed restrictions to curb a second wave of coronavirus, leaving refiners with high fuel inventories.

"We had enough inventory of refined fuel so there was little scope to raise crude imports," the source

India, the world's third-biggest oil importer and consumer, shipped in about 3.9 million barrels per day of crude last month, about 7% down from May

India is the second major importer in Asia, after China, to post a slump in last month's crude imports

Fuel demand fell sharply in April and May after the government imposed restrictions to curb a second wave of coronavirus, leaving refiners with high fuel inventories

Crude imports between April and June, however, rose 11.7% y-o-y to 4.1 million bpd as the lockdown curbs were not as severe as last year

said, adding that the export market was unattractive as profits were low.

India's crude imports between April and June, however, rose 11.7% year-on-year to 4.1 million bpd as the lockdown curbs were not as severe as last year when COVID-19 first hit the nation, according to the data.

Last month, Iraq stayed as the top oil supplier to India, followed by Saudi Arabia. The United Arab Emirates climbed four notches to emerge as third-biggest supplier while Nigeria rose to No.4 from No.5 in May. The United States was at No.5, followed by Canada.

The share of oil from the Middle East in India's imports rose to about 59% in June from 53% in the prior month, while that of other regions declined, data showed.

Air travel likely to become expensive



AGENCIES

New Delhi, July 16: State-run refiners increased the jet fuel prices on Friday adding more worries to the Indian carriers struggling to re-boot operations after extensive disruptions due to the fresh wave of pandemic. The move is expected to make air travel more expensive, further impacting demand.

In the National capital, ATF prices for domestic airlines increased by 2.44 per cent from ₹68,262.35 per kilo litre on July 1 to ₹69,857.97 on July 16. In Mumbai too ATF rose from a level of ₹66,482.90 per KL to ₹68,064.65 per KL on Friday.

Any increase in jet fuel prices by state-run refiners swells the operating costs of Indian carriers. Aviation turbine fuel (ATF) accounts for 35-50 per cent of the cost of running an airline in India.

Moreover, the flurry of price increases may further stress the balance sheets of airlines who are making desperate efforts to stay afloat.

ATF prices have risen close to 40 per cent since January this year from a level of just around ₹50,000 per KL at the beginning of the year to over ₹70,000 per KL now.

Though airlines have the option of buying ATF abroad, but with curtailed international operation, this option has also limited benefits. And with passenger demand staying tepid amid the pandemic, it is difficult for airlines to pass on the entire cost increase to passengers.

India to witness growth at 6.5-7% FY23 onwards: CEA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, July 16: The country's economy will start witnessing a growth of 6.5 to 7 per cent from fiscal 2023 onwards, helped by various reforms undertaken by the government so far and also as Covid-19 vaccination drive progresses, Chief Economic Advisor (CEA) Krishnamurthy Subramanian said. He said the second wave of Covid-19 is unlikely to have a very significant on the economy. The country's economy contracted by 7.3 per cent in fiscal 2020-21.

"Together with the reforms and focus on vaccination, I expect growth to start hitting close 6.5 to 7 per cent from FY23 onwards and accelerate from there on," Subramanian said at a virtual event organised by Dun & Bradstreet.

"Given the significant reforms that have been done over the last one and a half years, I have no hesitation in saying that I look forward to a decade of high growth for India."

He said the momentum in recovery that was seen in the fourth



quarter of FY21 and overall in the second half of FY21 got impacted to some extent by the second wave of Covid-19.

While the second wave was quite devastating on the health side, the economic impact of that has been limited because the second wave was much shorter in duration compared to the first wave and the economic restrictions that were placed were primarily at the state level, he said.

"We expect the impact of the second wave to be not very large," he said.

Subramanian said the supply-side reforms undertaken by the

government in sectors such as agriculture, labour, export PLI scheme, change in MSME definition, creation of the bad bank, privatisation of public sector banks among others, are going to push growth in the future.

He said vaccination is important for the country to recover from the pandemic and to convert Covid-19 into effectively the common flu and reduce its impact significantly.

While addressing the event earlier, Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM) Chairman Bibek Debroy said GDP growth rate is a function of what the base was in the last year.

"Since the base in 2021 dropped by 7 and some decimal point percentages, correspondingly the (real rate of) growth in 2021-22, because of that low base, will be high," he said. He expects a real rate of growth of around 10 per cent during the current financial year.

Given the significant reforms that have been done over the last one and a half years, I have no hesitation in saying that I look forward to a decade of high growth for India

KRISHNAMURTHY SUBRAMANIAM | CHIEF ECONOMIC ADVISOR

HC seeks Centre's stand on inclusion of water sector under ECLGS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 16: The Delhi High Court has sought central government's stand on the plea seeking inclusion of Drinking Water and Waste Water Management Sectors under the Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS).

Justice Prateek Jalan asked counsel for Centre to take instructions and assist the court on the next date of hearing July 29.

"Copy of the petition and this order be served upon Kirtiman Singh, learned Standing Counsel for the UOI, who is requested to take instructions and assist the Court on the next date of hearing," the judge said in the July 12 order.

Water Alliance India and Nangloi Water Services Pvt. Ltd moved the high court claiming that exclusion of water sector, which is part of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), from availing the benefits under ECLGS, violates the fundamental rights conferred under Article 19 and Article 14 of the Constitution.

In the absence of ECLGS being extended to them, Drinking Water and Waste Water Management Sectors would be compelled to shut



operations which would lead to an adverse impact on its workforce as well as the public at large, the petition submitted.

While Water Alliance India claims to be an organised group of MSMEs involved in diverse fields in the water sector, Nangloi Water Services overseas improvement and revamping of existing water supply system on behalf of the Delhi Jal Board.

ECLGS was introduced under the Atmanirbhar Bharat package of Government to ameliorate the credit crunch and reduce the cost of funds for MSMEs and other business enterprises, so that they can tide over the Covid-19 crisis.

In their petition filed through advocate Arjun Syal, the two petitioners have asserted that MSMEs and other small businesses involved in the drinking water and waste water management sectors have been excluded from the scheme.

BIZ BUZZ

PNB Balasore Circle gets new Head

Balasore: Purushottam Patnaik has joined as the new Circle head of Punjab National Bank (PNB), Balasore Circle. Prior to this, he was heading the Loan Processing Cell of the Bank in Madurai of Tamil Nadu. The Balasore Circle covers Balasore, Bhadrak, Jajpur, Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar districts with 70 branches and business mix of 4,200 crore. Patnaik started his career in PNB in 2000 as a management trainee. He will be entering Odisha for the first time after gaining massive experience in states like Punjab, Bihar, Rajasthan, West Bengal and Haryana. During his 21 years of banking experience, he has 19 years of branch exposure where he has come in direct contact with the customers.

Long-awaited Bolero Neo enters market

Bhubaneswar: India's most leading automobile manufacturer Mahindra & Mahindra Limited has launched its long awaited Bolero Neo July 16, 2021. The launching ceremony was held at Aditya Motors, NH 5, Bampahakuda, Phulnakhar, Cuttack in the presence of Anil Rawat, ZSM, Cholamandalam Finance, Debashisha Shukla, AGM Sales, Aditya Motors, Sri Kishore Kaushal, Area Sales Manager, Mahindra and Mahindra, Manoj Kumar Rath, General Manager, Aditya Motors (From right to left) and many other invited dignitaries.

HDFC, Mission Shakti join hands to support SHGs

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 16: HDFC Bank joined hands with Mission Shakti to support woman SHG's in Odisha. Taking a great step forward to support women empowerment in Odisha, HDFC Bank has funded 3 Pickle Units in the district of Ganjam, Dhenkanal & Mayurbhanj run by Mission Shakti SHG's.

In a Virtual Event, Honorable Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik appreciated all good work of SHGs and cheered them for their successful venture of setting up of the pickle unit and appreciated HDFC Bank's efforts to support the Pickle Units. Sujata Kartikeyan-



IAS, Commissioner-cum-Secretary, Mission Shakti Department encouraged and highlighted the good works carried out by all the SHGs.

In this virtual function, District Collectors of 3 districts, Vijay Amruta Kulange (DM- Ganjam), Bhumes Ch. Behera (DM-Dhenkanal) and Vineet Bhardwaj (DM-Mayurbhanj) along with municipal commissioner of

Berhampur; PD DRDA of Baripada & PD DRDA Dhenkanal with other senior officials of district and Mission Shakti were present in the handing over ceremony. Cluster Head of HDFC Bank Ansuman Das, Debendranath Jena and Debabrat Nayak handed over the cheque and sanction letter to all Collectors in the virtual event.

Deepak Kumar Singh, Senior Vice President and State Head, Odisha HDFC Bank mentioned, "the bank will facilitate progress through partnering with SHG's of Mission Shakti in Odisha and our bank has always focus on women empowerment across all states and UTs in India".

2nd wave impact on hinterland to restrict 2Ws growth

THOUGH FORECASTS OF NORMAL MONSOON IN THE IMPENDING SEASON BODE WELL FOR THE RURAL SEGMENT, HIGHER RATE OF COVID-19 INFECTIONS IN RURAL AREAS WILL IMPACT INCOME LEVELS AND CONSTRAIN OFFTAKE, FOR MOST OF THE FIRST HALF OF FISCAL 2022

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, July 16: Deeper and wider penetration of the second wave of the pandemic into the hinterland, temporary closures of dealerships and higher channel inventory is expected to moderate recovery of two wheelers this fiscal to 10-12% volume growth against an earlier estimate of 18-20%.

Significantly this volume growth would come on a low base - after a tumble of 13.2% last fiscal and 17.2% in fiscal 2020. However, overall revenue growth will be higher on account of calibrated price hikes by two wheeler makers in the last quarter of fiscal 2021, as well as the current fiscal to offset rise in input costs.

Net-net, credit profiles of two-

wheeler makers will remain healthy owing to higher revenues, almost stable operating margins, healthy cash surpluses and strong balance sheets. A CRISIL study of five manufacturers, which account for 80% of the sale volume of the sector, indicates as much.

"Though forecasts of normal monsoon in the impending season bode well for the rural segment, higher rate of Covid-19 infections in rural areas will impact income levels and constrain offtake, for most of the first half of fiscal 2022.

Moreover, unlike during the first Covid wave, channel inventory for the industry was higher at 40-45 days in April 2021 compared to 20-25 days in April 2020 due to BS VI transition. Hence, benefit of channel filling will not be available this



fiscal, as the impact of the Covid wave abates from Q2 of current fiscal, resulting in lower growth," said Gautam Shahi, Director,

CRISIL Ratings.

Segment-wise, motorcycle volume is expected to see higher moderation as 70-75% of these are sold

in rural area, compared to scooters' which is predominantly an urban product.

Amongst domestic two wheeler segments, growth of rural focused executive and economy motorcycles will remain constrained at 9-11% this fiscal. And the premium motorcycles, after last three fiscals of volume decline, is expected to grow at 12-15%, given higher number of new launches and increased focus of two-wheeler makers on premiumisation.

The scooters segment is expected to stage a good recovery this fiscal, registering volume growth of 15-17%, albeit on a relatively low base, supported by faster recovery in urban incomes, continuing preference for personal mobility, and the graded opening up of of-

fices and educational institutes, as vaccination drive gathers pace. This growth, though, is on the back of three consecutive years of volume decline.

Additionally, overall two wheeler export sales volume (accounts for 17% of industry volume) which de-grew only 3% in fiscal 2021 will grow at 11-13% this fiscal with continued recovery in demand in overseas markets and increase in geographic reach by players.

Calibrated price hikes, diversification into high-margin premium products, and cost rationalisation efforts will ensure limited impact on profitability for players against a sharp increase in steel and aluminium prices that account for more than half of the total material cost.

MESSI CLOSER TO BARCA DEAL

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Barcelona, July 16: Lionel Messi and Barcelona are closer to signing a new deal that would keep the Argentina star at the Spanish club through the end of his playing career.

A person with knowledge of the negotiations between club and player told The Associated Press on Friday that Messi was prepared to accept Barcelona's offer of a five-year contract at 50 per cent of his previous salary.

The person spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly about the negotiations. In his previous contract, signed in 2017, Messi earned a massive 138 million euros (USD 163 million) per season.

The person with knowledge of the negotiations did not indicate the other aspects of the contract still being worked out between the club and Messi's father, Jorge Messi, who acts as his agent.

Barcelona as a club has officially said nothing publicly about the details of the negotiations with the soccer great.

The 34-year-old Messi joined Barcelona two decades ago at age 13. Last August he stunned Barcelona by announcing that he wanted out after the 2019-2020 season ended without a title and his relationship with then club president Josep Bartomeu deteriorated.

The return of Joan Laporta to the club's presidency in March has



been key in bringing Messi back into the fold. Laporta ran Barcelona when Messi had his breakout as a teenager.

A significantly lower salary for Messi is critical to keeping him at the financially troubled club following the losses sustained by the pandemic and some questionable management. Laporta admitted that a lower salary cap for Barcelona due to reduced revenues complicated his task to make all the pieces fit.

Messi's previous contract with Barcelona expired on June 30, making many Barcelona fans nervous that he could be lured away to big spenders like Paris Saint-Germain or Manchester City.

Even Barcelona coach Ronald Koeman acknowledged last week that he was concerned. "Messi? When things don't get resolved, you have to be worried," Koeman said.

"Laporta told me to remain calm because we are working hard so that he remains with us for years to come. I have complete faith in our president to work this out."

The six-time Ballon d'Or winner is currently on vacation after leading Argentina to the Copa America title last weekend, ending a long wait for a major title for his nation.

Messi has enjoyed a glittering career at Barcelona. He has won 35 club titles in 17 seasons, including four Champions Leagues, and set club records for goals (672) and appearances (778).

India, Pakistan in same group

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dubai, July 16: Arch-rivals India and Pakistan were Friday placed in the same group for the World T20 as the ICC announced the pools for its flagship event, set to be played in the UAE and Oman from October 17 to November 14.

India and Pakistan are placed in Group 2 along with World Test Championship winners New Zealand and Afghanistan. The Group 1 has defending champions West Indies, former winners England, Australia and South Africa.

The Groups of Super 12s have been selected on the basis of team rankings as of March 20, 2021, according to the ICC. Two teams will join each of the groups from the qualifying rounds.

Eight teams will contest the first round including automatic qualifiers Sri Lanka and Bangladesh with the remaining six who booked their spot through the ICC men's T20 World Cup Qualifier 2019.

Ireland, Netherlands and Namibia join Sri Lanka in Group A, while Oman, PNG and Scotland will face Bangladesh in Group B.

The tournament was originally scheduled to be held in India but was moved out of the country due to an expected third wave of the coronavirus.

"There are some great match ups offered by the groups and it starts to bring the event to life for our fans as our first multi-team event since the onset of the global pandemic draws closer," ICC act-



ing chief executive Geoff Allardice said in a release.

"Given the disruption caused by COVID-19, we selected the cut-off date as close as possible to the event to ensure we were able to in-

GROUPS

SUPER 12S

Group 1: England, Australia, South Africa, West Indies, Winner Group A & Runner-up Group B;

Group 2: India, Pakistan, New Zealand, Afghanistan, Winner Group B & Runner-up Group A.

ROUND 1

Group A: Sri Lanka, Ireland, The Netherlands & Namibia;

Group B: Bangladesh, Scotland, Papua New Guinea & Oman.

clude the maximum amount of cricket in the rankings which determine the groups.

"There is no doubt we will witness some highly competitive cricket when the event gets underway in just three months."

Allardice unveiled the draws in Muscat hours after the BCCI top officials - president Sourav Ganguly and secretary Jay Shah - arrived in the city.

Ganguly said, "It is good to get Oman in the frame of world cricket with the hosting of the ICC men's T20 World Cup. It will help a lot of young players take an interest in the game. We know it will be a world class event in this part of the world."

Shah said, "There is nothing that separates the two groups as both are packed with sides that are highly competitive in the shortest format of the game."

This will be the first T20 World Cup since 2016 when West Indies beat England in the final in Kolkata.

OLYMPICS DIARY

Djoko in for Tokyo Games

BELGRADE: Novak Djokovic is going to the Tokyo Olympics, keeping alive his chance for a 'Golden Slam'. Djokovic, 34, posted Thursday on Twitter that he had booked his flight and was proud to represent Serbia at the Olympics. After he won Wimbledon Sunday for his record-tying 20th career Grand Slam title, Djokovic said he didn't know if he was going to play in Tokyo. If the top-ranked Djokovic wins gold in men's singles and at the US Open, he would be the first male tennis player to complete a "Golden Slam" - all four Grand Slam tournaments and the Olympics in the same calendar year. Steffi Graf is the only woman to have done it, in 1988.



Gold for both finalists if title clash cancelled due to Covid

TOKYO: Saddled with many "ifs and buts" around the conduct of hockey at the Olympics, The International Hockey Federation (FIH) Friday said if finalists at the Tokyo Games are ruled of the title clash due to COVID-19, both teams will be awarded gold medals.

The FIH also said the discretion to withdraw from hockey events in Tokyo Olympics due to COVID outbreak within a team will lie with the respective competing nations. Terming the Tokyo Olympics as "different from the normal Games", FIH CEO Thierry Weil said a team can still keep on playing even when multiple cases are reported within the group. He said there are still many "ifs and buts" surrounding the rules and regulations which need further clarifications but hoped that a situation where a team needs to withdraw from the competition because of COVID doesn't arise at all.



Mohoric triumphs Stage 19

REUTERS

Libourne (France), July 16: Slovenian Matej Mohoric gave Bahrain Victorious something to cheer with his second stage win in this year's Tour de France two days after French police searched his team's accommodation and vehicles amid an investigation into potential doping.

Mohoric, who had already prevailed in the seventh stage in Le Creusot, attacked from the breakaway to wrap up a solo victory on the 19th stage, a 207-km ride from Mournex, virtually zipping his mouth shut as he crossed the line.

France's Christophe Laporte of Cofidis was second and Dane Casper Pedersen (Team DSM) came home third, both 58 seconds off the pace.

The French prosecutor's office in Marseille on Thursday said it had opened a preliminary investigation into the Bahrain Victorious team after police searched the outfit's hotel.

It said the investigation was into "acquisition, transport, possession, import of a prohibited substance or prohibited method for use by an athlete without medical justification." Bahrain Victorious said they were complying with the investigation.

Mohoric's compatriot Tadej Pogacar retained the overall leader's yellow jersey for UAE Team Emirates after staying safe in the peloton, crossing the line more than 20 minutes 50 seconds off the pace.

Friday's ride was expected to end in a mass sprint but some 20 riders managed to break away from the main bunch and their advan-



tage increased quickly, meaning Mark Cavendish has one last chance to win his 35th Tour stage on Sunday on the Champs-Elysees.

The Briton is tied with Belgian great Eddy Merckx, who bagged 34 stage wins in his glittering career as he won a record five Tour titles.

Merckx was at the start of the stage in Mournex, where he has a velodrome named after him after

he pulled one of his greatest feats, beating his rivals by more than eight minutes in a mountain stage on his way to his first Tour title in 1969.

Pogacar still have a splendid lead of 5 minute 45 seconds over second-placed Jonas Vingegaard of Team Jumbo-Visma, who have a six-second lead over third-placed Ineos Grenadiers' Richard Carapaz.

Nagal makes singles cut for Tokyo Games

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 16: Sumit Nagal Friday made the cut for the men's singles event of the Tokyo Olympics as large-scale withdrawals pushed him inside the qualification mark and the Indian tennis player is now hoping that competing at the biggest stage will settle a "few things" that are bothering him in his career.

The All India Tennis Association (AITA) promptly paired him with Rohan Bopanna for the men's doubles competition by withdrawing Divij Sharan's nomination since singles players are getting priority in entering the doubles draw.

Nagal was ranked 144 June 14, when ATP rankings were to be considered for direct entries but consistent withdrawals helped him.

"I knew it (cut-off) was gonna drop. Things are different this year, compared to any other Olympics. Nonetheless, I feel very happy. I am getting a chance to represent the country. I can't complain much about it," Nagal said from Germany.

The 23-year-old Nagal will enter the Olympics with some disappointing results this season as he has suffered seven first round defeat on the Circuit, including at the Australian Open. His ranking has dropped to 154 after beginning the year at 137.

As of now, only Sania Mirza and Aniketa Raina are certain to compete in the women's doubles draw. Sania used her protected rank of nine to enter with Aniketa.

BLAST FROM PAST

With the Tokyo Olympics approaching, let's take a look at interesting facts and trivia about the Games from its previous editions. Here are some highlights and fun facts from the 1912 and 1920 Olympics...



Stockholm Games, 1912

- The Games were attended by approximately 2,400 athletes representing 28 countries, including 48 women, who competed in 102 events across 14 sports.
- It was the last Games where first-placed winners were awarded medals made completely of gold.
- For the first time, competitors in the Games came from all five continents, symbolising the Olympic rings.
- It marked the introduction of the automatic timing devices for the track events, the photo finish and a public address system.
- The middleweight wrestling semi-final match between Finland's Alfred Asikainen and Martin Klein of Russia lasted more than 11 hours. Klein eventually won but was too exhausted to participate in the championship match so he settled for the silver.
- The course for the cycling road race was 320km -- the longest race of any kind in Olympic history.
- The Games were the first to have art competitions, women's diving, women's swimming, and the first to feature both the decathlon and the new pentathlon.
- Boxing was removed from the programme as it was unappealing to the Swedes.



Berlin but were cancelled due to World War I. The 1920 Games were awarded to Antwerp to honour the suffering that had been inflicted on the Belgian people during the war.

The countries that were defeated in World War One -- Germany, Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Turkey -- were not invited. The new Soviet Union chose not to attend.

The city, plagued by bad weather and economic woes, had a very short time to clean up the rubble left by the war and as a result, the athletics stadium was unfinished when the Games began. The athletes were housed in crowded rooms furnished with folding cots.

During the opening ceremony, the Olympic flag, with the five rings signifying the universality of the Olympic Games and the union of the five continents, was raised for the first time at an Olympic Games.

The Olympic oath was taken for the first time by an athlete on behalf of all competitors, and for the first time, doves were released as a symbol of peace.

In a performance unequalled in Olympic history, Nedo Nadi of Italy earned gold medals in five of the six fencing events.

India sent its first Olympic team to the 1920 Olympics, 20 years after Norman Pritchard competed for India in the 1900 Paris Games.

The Indian team comprised four athletes - Purma Bannerjee (100m and 400m), Phadappa Chaugule (10000m and marathon), Sadashiv Datar (marathon) and two wrestlers - Kumar Navale and Randhir Shindes.



Dhyan Chand's captaincy test in Nazi Germany

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 16: When Adolf Hitler commissioned Nazi Germany's favourite film director Leni Reifanstahl to document the 1936 Berlin Olympics, he and his propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels couldn't have imagined that there would be another nation, apart from the USA, refusing to salute the Fuhrer.

The British India contingent comprised a bunch of inexperienced athletes with only shining glory being a two-time champion hockey team led by its resident magician Major Dhyan Chand.

The global media's focus was the USA refusing the traditional right-arm salute to Hitler during the opening ceremony but who would have thought that a contingent of amateur athletes wearing golden 'Kullahs' and light blue turban would do the unthinkable.

The contingent, with its flag-bearer Dhyan Chand, refused to salute and it was more of an emotional decision than political, taken by the team when the entire Third Reich sang the two national hymns 'Deutschland' and 'Horst Wessel Lied'.

In the book 'Olympic History: The



India Story', co-authored by Boria Majumdar and Nalin Mehta, they have quoted Mirza Naseeruddin Masood, a member of the gold winning team, narrating that opening ceremony.

"It made a strange impression upon the Indian contingent and not an eye was left dry. India rose before our imagination. Somehow the spring of our national feelings was touched, and the unity and solidarity of the people in the 'Stadium' made us look with shame

and regret at our poverty, destitution and discord."

Masood was an accomplished man beyond the field of hockey as he served the government of India in various capacities, which included being private secretary of independent India's first education minister, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad.

One of Masood's biggest regrets was being denied India captaincy in 1936, despite being socially elite compared to Dhyan Chand. And very few people knew that Masood was actually also one of the five national selectors entrusted with the duty of picking the skipper.

Masood had, in fact, made his displeasure clear in a book he authored and published in 1937 'The World's Hockey Champions' - 1936'.

For Dhyan Chand, what the score-line of India matches in that Olympics won't reveal is the tremendous pressure that he faced as media reports suggested that the defending champions were no longer invincible.

Also the fact that the 1932

Olympics, without participation of major European nations due to the Great Depression, became a sort of a sham and those who know about hockey would tell that there wasn't a lot of fight that India faced while retaining the yellow metal in Los Angeles.

Dhyan Chand, in his autobiography 'Goal', which was first published in 1952 in weekly installments of the iconic 'Sport and Pastime' magazine published by 'The Hindu' group, wrote about that loss prior to the Berlin Games.

According to the book, the Indian hockey federation needed Rs 40,000 to send the team and it required the Nizam of Hyderabad and the Gaekwads of Baroda to bail them out.

Nizam donated Rs 5000, the rulers of Baroda gave 200 GBP (Rs 3600 INR then) and, along with contributions from other princely states, ensured that the team boarded the ship. Another Rs 1700 was spent on flying Ishitque Dara on SOS, who played a big role alongside Dhyan Chand in the business end of the tournament.

