



PAW LOVER

Actor Tamannaah Bhatia, sharing pictures of herself with stray puppies, says there is no love like puppy love

LEISURE P2



BIHAR BATTERED

Floodwaters continue to wreak havoc in the country's third-most populous state

TWO STATES P7



CHINA'S MARS MISSION

China successfully launches its first major interplanetary mission to Mars

INTERNATIONAL P10

SHORT TAKES

₹1L fine for not wearing mask

Ranchi: Jharkhand government Thursday announced ₹1 lakh fine for not wearing masks in public places and two-year jail term for violating lockdown guidelines. The Jharkhand Cabinet has issued the Infectious Diseases Ordinance (IDO) 2020 Wednesday. In IDO 2020, Jharkhand government warned that those who violate the security protocol and those not wearing masks will have to pay a fine of ₹1 lakh. And those who violate lockdown rules will be jailed for 2 years. This development comes as the number of corona patients in Jharkhand is constantly increasing.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Drink it. Your body is immune to political insults only, not corona!

Guv in hospital for 'routine' check-up

Bhubaneswar: Odisha Governor Ganeshi Lal was Thursday admitted to a private hospital here after he complained of uneasiness, a hospital source said. Lal, 78, will spend the night at the hospital and be under observation, a Raj Bhavan source said. "His health condition is normal. It is just a routine check-up," he told PTI. He said the Governor is likely to be discharged Friday.

MARKET WATCH			
INDEX			VIARIATION
SENSEX	38140.47	▲	268.95
NIFTY	11215.50	▲	82.90
DOLLAR	75.06	▲	₹0.21
EURO	86.95	▲	₹0.38
GOLD	₹50,632	▲	₹554
SILVER	₹ 61,337	▲	₹ 222

WEATHER			
	BHUB	CTK	
TEMP	31.0°C	30.5°C	
MIN	23.5°C	22.4°C	
Humidity	95%	90%	Forecast
Rainfall	Nil	Nil	Generally cloudy sky

COVID PROPELS VEGGIES PRICE

Lockdown, entry of non-traders into the business, no action from government lead to the retail price hike

BISWA BHUSAN MOHAPATRA, OP

Bhubaneswar, July 23: Adding to the woes of the people already suffering due to the COVID-19 pandemic, retail prices of vegetables have witnessed a sharp rise in the state. The government, on the other hand, is a mute spectator doing virtually nothing to alleviate the burden. While the retail price of potatoes in the state stood at ₹32 a kg Thursday, tomatoes were selling for ₹60 a kg, up from ₹25 and ₹30 respectively, July 1. However, the price of kitchen essential onion is somewhat stable at ₹20 a kg. The prices of other vegetables including brinjal, pointed gourd, cucumber, bins, cauliflower, carrot and cabbage have also spiraled upwards. In Bhubaneswar markets, the retail price of brinjal sold at ₹50 per kg, cucumber at ₹40, beans at ₹80, drum stick at ₹120 a kg, cauliflower at ₹35 per piece, carrot at ₹40 a kg, bitter melon at ₹40 and cabbage at ₹50 a kg. The price of only

one vegetable – ladies finger – being sold at Rs30 per kg is within the reach of consumers. "During this lockdown, prices of vegetables have increased drastically. Only a month ago, I was able to purchase one kg of tomatoes for a maximum ₹30 a kg from street vendors. But now, they are selling it for no less than ₹60 per kg," said Pravat Nalini Mohapatra, a homemaker from Fire Station area. "My salary has been reduced in view of the lockdown and in this situation, the vegetable and oil price hike has made it difficult to run the family," said Biplab Dash,

a young professional said. Sources in the market said there is no shortage of any vegetable or essential goods in the state. But the lockdown has contributed to the retail price hike. Many, who have lost their livelihood, are now selling vegetables on road sides. Ironically, the wholesale price of the essential goods is far below their retail price. The Traders Association general secretary Sudhakar Panda said, "It is true that the retail price of vegetables is up. But, the wholesale price has more or less remained stable. The gap between the wholesale and retail prices have widened may be due to the lockdown restrictions." On the pretext of the pandemic, the government too has turned a blind eye to the consumers' woes. So far no action has been taken to check the prices or any action taken against those selling the commodities at a premium. Talking to **Orissa POST**, All Odisha



EVEN NON-VEG

The cost of edible oils has also been raised slightly by at least ₹2-3 per litre. Similarly, the price of non-veg items too increased by about ₹80 per kg during this lockdown period. The most common fishes are available at ₹250 per kg, while broiler chicken costs ₹200 per kg. The price of egg sold at ₹60 a dozen has remained stable.

Traders Association general secretary Sudhakar Panda said, "It is true that the retail price of vegetables is up. But, the wholesale price has more or less remained stable. The gap between the wholesale and retail prices have widened may be due to the lockdown restrictions." On the pretext of the pandemic, the government too has turned a blind eye to the consumers' woes. So far no action has been taken to check the prices or any action taken against those selling the commodities at a premium.

PIL seeks panel to look into fuel price hikes

AGENCIES

New Delhi, July 23: Susheel Mahajan has through advocated N Pradeep Sharma and Harsh K Sharma filed a PIL in the Delhi High Court, seeking directions to form a high powered committee to look into the issue of rationalization of petrol and diesel prices across the country.

In his petition, Mahajan seeks directions to the Centre to reduce the irrational and unjustified taxes in the form of Excise and VAT, effectively and to take remedial steps to lower the prices.

The petitioner has submitted that the notification of May 5, 2020, imposing central excise duty, mentions that the notification is in the public interest, which is contrary to the present facts and circumstances. In addition, the Dearness Allowance of government employees and the pensioners have been frozen, which is also why the common man is burdened. This hike (in fuel prices) cannot be justified by giving reason of public interest.

The petitioner has also submitted that by not providing the required essential commodities to the general public at reasonable rates, there is a clear violation of the Article 21 of Constitution of India.



A squirrel nibbles on corn lying on the ground at Jammu University, Thursday

Can't suppress dissent in democracy: SC

AGENCIES

New Delhi, July 23: The Supreme Court Thursday observed out loud that the voice of dissent cannot be suppressed, or else democracy will shut down. It also wanted to know whether there was democracy within the Congress party. The apex court was hearing a plea by Rajasthan Assembly Speaker CP Joshi challenging the Rajasthan HC's decision extending the time for Sachin Pilot and 18 rebel Congress MLAs to reply to the anti-defection notice of July 14.

A bench headed by Justice Arun Mitra and comprising Justices BR Gavai and Krishna Murari took up the matter up through video conferencing. "Voice of dissent cannot be sup-

RAJASTHAN CRISIS

The top court said voice of dissent cannot be suppressed...then democracy will shut. After all they have been elected by the people. Can they not express their dissent?

The SC was hearing a plea by Rajasthan Assembly Speaker CP Joshi challenging the Rajasthan HC's decision extending the time for Sachin Pilot and 18 rebel Congress MLAs to reply to the anti-defection notice

HC can pass orders on dissidents' plea

NEW DELHI: The SC Thursday allowed the Rajasthan HC to pronounce order on plea of 19 dissident Congress MLAs, including sacked deputy CM Sachin Pilot, against the Speaker's notice for initiating disqualification proceedings against them, but said that it would be subject to the outcome of the petition before the top court.

Sibal argued that if MLAs want to voice their opinion they should do so before the party. To which, Justice Mishra asked, "Is there democracy within the party or not?" The bench asked

Sibal, can a whip be issued for attending a party meeting? Sibal denied Joshi issued a whip for the meeting and said, "It was only a notice not a whip."

Justice Mishra asked Sibal isn't this a case where party members cannot raise voice against their own party? Sibal contended before the bench that it is for the Speaker to decide whether not attending meetings outside the House is grounds for disqualification. "But it is about a lot more than not attending a meeting. It is about their anti-party activities," argued Sibal.

The bench noted that whether a valid Whip can be issued to attend party meeting. "Is Whip valid only for attending Assembly or for a meeting outside?"

FLOOD-LIKE SITUATION IN KANTABANJI



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bolangir/Kantabanji, July 23: Heavy downpour in Kantabanji of Bolangir district Wednesday night led to a flood-like situation and heavy water-logging in the town as well as disruption of traffic movement on State Highway-42, Thursday.

The heavy rains led to a flood like situation in Kantabanji town and the adjoining villages forcing the people to suffer in silence. Things came to such a pass that even the family members of a person who had died had to suffer carrying his body for cremation. A video of the family members carrying the body for cremation in knee-deep water went viral in social media.

All traffic on SH-42 was disrupted as rain waters above four feet overflowed on the highway while vehicles were seen submerged in water at many places. Properties worth several lakhs were damaged as the rain water entered the houses leaving people confined to their homes all through the day. People termed the water-logging in the town as manmade and held the NAC authorities responsible for the disaster. They alleged that large scale encroachments in the town as well as lack of de-siltation of the drains led to the situation.

Xi Jinping 2.0 in combat mode; 'will dare India'

The Communist Party of China has taken yet another step to reboot the stature of its General Secretary Xi Jinping at par with Mao Zedong, the founding father of the Party State

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, July 23: The ruling Communist Party of China has taken yet another step to reboot the stature of its General Secretary Xi Jinping at par with Mao Zedong, the founding father of the Party State, whose tempestuous rule, marked by loss of millions of lives,

brought China to the brink of collapse around the time of his death in 1976.

On Tuesday, a book on Xi Jinping 'Thought on Diplomacy' was released in Beijing. The publication amplified a key dimension of Xi Jinping Thought for a 'new era', unveiled in October 2017 during the 19th party congress of the CPC.

During that twice-a-decade assemblage, Xi was elevated to Mao's stature, as he became the only Chinese leader after PRC's founding patriarch, whose Thought was enshrined in the party's constitution. Even the status of the architect of China's reforms, Deng Xiaoping, compared to Xi, was symbolically dwarfed. The party constitution has only recognised the con-

tribution of Deng's Theory-a rung below that of Mao and Xi's Thoughts. In 2016, Xi had also been designated as "core" leader-a title that was reserved only for select Chinese leaders with near absolute power including Mao and Deng.

Yesterday, the mandarins in Beijing decided that reaffirming Xi's unchallenged authority on top of the China's ruling tree, at par with Mao-the unrivaled strong-man that the

People's Republic of China (PRC) has produced so far-had become urgent, following the COVID-19 pandemic.

China has been facing a tsunami of accusations that it had either deliberately or inadvertently spread the COVID-19 pandemic, forcing the CPC to make a fundamental choice. The party could either dig into the trenches or defend against the global onslaught. Conversely, it could go on the offensive, by demonstrating its raw military power as a deterrent, backed by a demonstration of complete political

cohesion under Xi. Faced with the dilemma, Beijing decided to mount a raging-bull approach. It began flexing its muscles in two geographic theaters simultaneously. The People's Liberation Army (PLA), headed by Xi as the commander-in-chief, intruded into Ladakh in a face-off with a resurgent India. In the West Pacific, the PLA Navy (PLAN) began to show the flag to enforce its maritime claims in resource rich South China Sea.

In the back-and-forth play, the Chinese decided to institutionalise Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy, with the formation of Xi Jinping Diplomatic Thought Research Center. This was to let the world know that current CPC leadership under Xi was

rock solid-perhaps even stronger after the onset of COVID-19.

During the inaugural of the Center, Chinese Foreign Minister and state councillor Wang Yi also made it astonishingly transparent that Xi's China continued to harbour ambitions of a Middle Kingdom 2.0. Under the refurbished doctrine, Beijing, as in imperial China, aspired to become the principal "universal" hegemon, replenished by several tributary states which, in turn, will be offered protection by the "suzerain" residing in Beijing.

"China today is approaching the realization of the dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation as never before, and approaching the center of the world stage as never before," Wang said.



leisure



LOVATO GETS ENGAGED TO EHRICH

Singer-actress Demi Lovato has shared the news of her engagement with actor boyfriend Max Ehrich, showing off her diamond ring on Instagram. She posted a series of pictures, too, to share her excitement.

DIAZ OPENS UP ON MOTHERHOOD

Actress Cameron Diaz says daughter Raddix is the best thing that has ever happened to her. The actress has opened up about embracing motherhood and her six-month-old daughter Raddix in an episode of *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon*, reports *people.com*.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
You are likely to give in to the demands of your children today. Ganesh says it is for times like this that you labour so hard. You will finish the tasks that you have been postponing for a long time. It is a good day for people in the medical field and in the public sector.

TAURUS
Today, you will be as creative and as competitive as you can get. Your work style, the deft way you handle things will awe and amaze your colleagues and superiors. Your subordinates will be highly impressed and motivated. They will be eager and compliant and will support and assist you to the utmost. The project you are working will progress speedily. This will turn out to be an exceptionally fruitful day, assures Ganesh.

GEMINI
You will listen to your heart over your head, swept away as you will be in a flood of emotions today. This could mean that you will be unable to distinguish between good and bad. However, looking back upon your day in the evening, you are unlikely to regret any of the decisions you made, says Ganesh.

CANCER
You will begin the day with a definite plan for a bright future. You will resolutely implement plans that you have made thoughtfully. Such methodical decisions will save you a lot of time in the future. Ganesh says that you will succeed in every endeavour today.

LEO
Your natural self-confidence and capability will help you attain a position of strength today. As a result, all your tasks will be completed easily and you will reap rewards greater than your expectations, says Ganesh.

VIRGO
An unusual dose of creativity will motivate you to make a trip to some exotic place and mingle with new people. You will have some experiences that will enrich you mentally and emotionally. But don't unpack yet, there may be another adventure on the cards. Ganesh says you will be very flexible and adaptable today.

LIBRA
Ganesh says that you shall soon be able to travel or plan a trip, not for family or business matters, but for getting away from the mundane life. You will pay more importance to your professional matters as opposed to your personal matters. Today you will be able to attain success in every thing you do with the blessings of Ganesh.

SCORPIO
Today, you are like a balloon that may burst any time. You may vent out all the sweet and bitter experiences and feel much lighter. Or it may have adverse effects on your health, says Ganesh. You prefer to stay in your cocoon, in the warmth of your near and dear ones.

SAGITTARIUS
Suddenly, you become ambidextrous and plan to multi task today, says Ganesh. Your instincts will guide you today; trust them and move ahead. You may come across few challenges. But, anyway, who wants an easy way out, right?

CAPRICORN
You firmly believe in the concept of 'health is wealth'. You have maintained a very good health so far and it will not be an issue today, also. Successful completion of current projects seem to be a distant target, however, you will finish them off. Your boss may get upset with you for not completing the work on time.

AQUARIUS
You are disappointed and you seek solace in spirituality. Don't run away from the problems; rather face them with strength and confidence, advises Ganesh, to bring your life back on track. With patience and belief in the Almighty, you will be sail through the storm. Understand that challenges are a part of everyone's life.

PISCES
You will display kindness and generosity today and will do your best to help anyone in need. At work you will receive praise for the efforts that you've put in and your dedication will be validated. Even though you intend to give utmost importance to your family, this intention will trail in the shadow of pending work which will require long hours. Find a way to balance your professional and personal life.



TAMANNAAH'S 'PAWFECT' LOVE

MUMBAI: Actress Tamannaah Bhatia is an ardent animal lover and says there is no love like puppy love.

Tamannaah took to Instagram, where she posted a motley of pictures of herself along with stray puppies. She captioned the image, which currently has 349K likes on the photo-sharing website: "There's no love like puppy love #DogsAreTheBest #furryfriends#doglover #pawfect."

Meanwhile, Tamannaah is excited about the Telugu remake of the Kannada superhit *Love Mocktail*.

Director Nagashekar has roped in the actress along with Satya Dev as protagonists of the untitled remake. The makers are hoping that the film will go on floors in mid-September and will be shot in Visakhapatnam and Hyderabad.

The original film was released in January, 2020. Directed by Krishna, *Love Mocktail* follows the story of Aadi and his quest for love. IANS



Kunal recalls being a naughty kid

MUMBAI: Kunal Kemmu made an incredible impression as a child artiste before his debut as a lead actor in Hindi cinema.

Notable roles where Kunal showcased his talent as a child artiste include *Zakhm*, *Raja Hindustani*, and *Hum Hain Rahi Pyar Ke*, before he made his debut as a traditional hero in the 2005 release, *Kalyug*.

Kunal reminisced about working in the Aamir Khan-Juhi Chawla comedy *Hum Hain Rahi Pyar Ke*, which released in 1993. "Although I'm not sure about the exact day but it released in this month 27 years ago (I trust google)," he wrote about the film on Instagram.

Along with his post, Kunal shared a poster of the film, which cast him in the role of a naughty kid.

The Mahesh Bhatt-directed *Hum Hain Raahi Pyar Ke* is inspired by the 1958 Hollywood rom-com hit, *Houseboat*, starring Cary Grant and Sophia Loren. IANS

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Priyanka imparts words of wisdom

MUMBAI: Actress Priyanka Chopra Jonas Thursday shared a motivational post on Instagram for her fans.

"Don't let the challenges of today stop us from achieving our dreams of a better tomorrow", Priyanka wrote. She captioned the post as, "You got this!"

It seems several fans were waiting for such motivation to inspire them.

"I needed this kind of motivation. Thank you for sharing," a user commented.

"Your journey has always inspired me. You are an idol for so many people," another one wrote.

Priyanka will soon complete 20 years in show business. A few days ago, she shared a video in which she spoke about her plans of sharing "20 monumental moments" of her career in the coming days to "celebrate 20 years in the entertainment business".

Currently Priyanka is spending time with her husband Nick Jonas in Los Angeles. IANS

Authors' way to keep sanity in quarantine

Planning for the future is another way to fight fear of contracting the virus, and it's good for the mind too, says Mutual Funds author RK Mohapatra

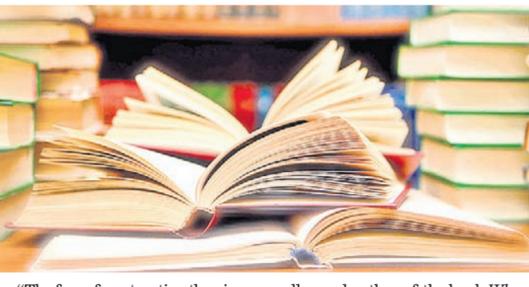
NEW DELHI: Life in lockdown and the pandemic has made people go through a whole spectrum of emotions, they may have never expected.

Many people are taking out time for books, picking their favorites off of dusty bookshelves or trying some new genres. Budding authors take about how they are keeping their sanity during this crisis.

focus on the positives; eliminating negative thoughts to a very large extent. I have also been writing and working passionately on my upcoming ideas and trying to keep my days as productive as I can," he said.

Planning brings relaxation
RK Mohapatra, author of *Mutual Funds*, shares that planning for the future and writing during the pandemic puts him at ease. "It gives new ideas and outlook and creates a parallel reality of intellect, sometimes tuning off the depressing talk about the pandemic as there is constant stress that needs to meddle."

Meditation as a way forward
Nitish Bhushan, author of *Love Swipe Blackmail* talks about how meditating and writing bring peace during the hustle. "Since the lockdown started I have made it a point to meditate every single day. It helps me keep my mind at peace and it also helps me



"The fear of contracting the virus is always going to be on our minds. Planning for the future is another way to keep ourselves busy, and it's good for the mind too," he advised.

Experimenting with writing style
Clinical psychologist Pulkrit Sharma who is also a spiritual coun-

sellor and author of the book *When The Soul Heals* has tweaked with his style of writing and shifted from long pieces to short ones during the lockdown. "I have been re-reading some great classics to keep my motivation levels up. *Man's Search for Meaning* by Viktor Frankl, a book based on his journey from a Nazi concen-

tration camp prisoner to an evolved psychotherapist; *Siddhartha* by Hermann Hesse and *Ramayana*, the great Indian epic which focus on human perseverance and the ultimate victory of good over evil are the books that I find truly inspiring," he said.

Writing journals for healing
Aarti V Raman, author of the book *The Worst Daughter* shared an excerpt from her book talking about how the pandemic has taken over our sanity.

"The opening scene from *The Worst Daughter Ever* has the heroine, LJ Raghavan, locked up at home for the New Year. Voluntarily!



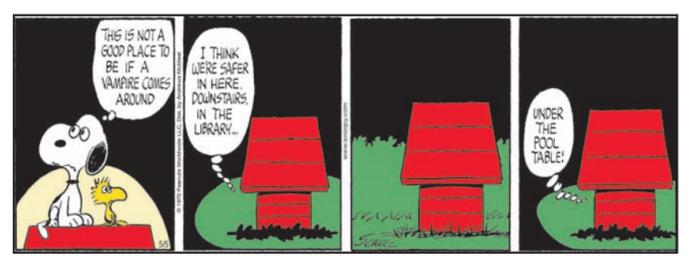
This is because she has serious self-esteem issues, possibly undiagnosed anxieties and definite body positivity issues all of which lead her to choosing to spend the first day of the New Year alone. Eating pizza. Feeling really bad about how alone she is," she said.

According to Raman, writing down your thoughts and feelings in a journal or diary helps gain perspective.

"That is what I have been doing and it really relaxes the mind and prepares it for future.

Mental sanity, much like physical sanity, requires a lot of care, whether from professionals or ourselves and our existing support systems," she added. IANS

PEANUTS



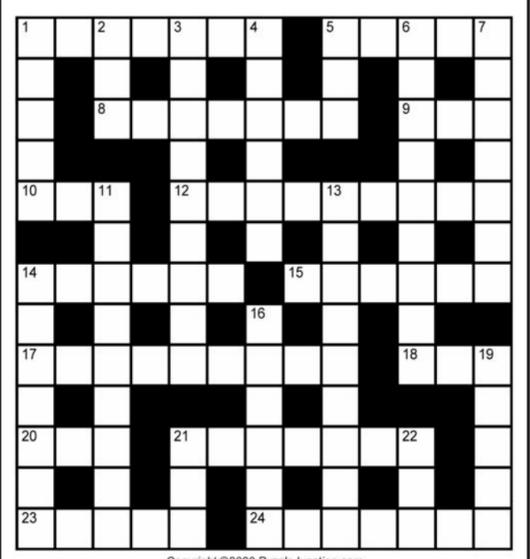
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



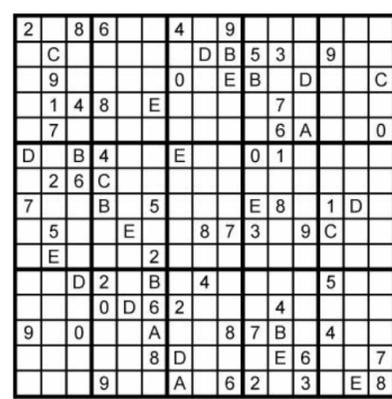
FUN post CROSSWORD



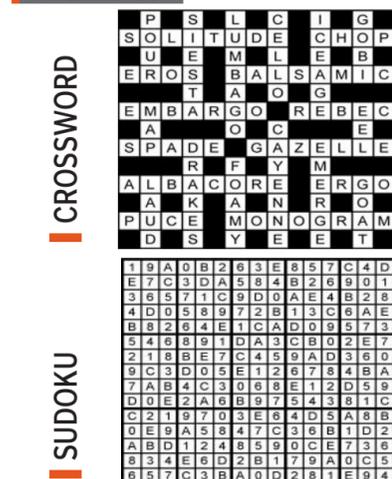
- Across**
- 1 Wardrobe
 - 5 Thicket
 - 8 Hot-air item
 - 9 Court divider
 - 10 Fly catcher
 - 12 Howling
 - 14 Chinese soup ingredient (3,3)
 - 15 Quatrain
 - 17 Squeeze box
 - 18 Dead letters?
 - 20 Kimono tie
 - 21 Bugle display, possibly
 - 23 After the wedding words
 - 24 Bowl over
 - Down**
 - 1 Permit
 - 2 Unruly crowd
 - 3 Irritability (3,6)
 - 4 Mass flight
 - 5 Hoodwink
 - 6 Retiree
 - 7 Baltic Republic
 - 11 Fine porcelain (4,5)
 - 13 Steward
 - 14 Exhaust (4,3)
 - 16 Old maid flower
 - 19 Beseech
 - 21 Portly plus
 - 22 Ratite bird

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



GRAZING TIME

A herdsman grazing his sheep on a grassland near Puri-Konark road, Thursday

MOBILE MANIA

Policemen check their cellphones while enforcing the Covid-induced lockdown at Vani Vihar Square in Bhubaneswar, Thursday



No large gathering on I-Day: MHA to states

SOCIAL DISTANCING, WEARING OF MASKS AND SANITISATION MADE MANDATORY FOR THE FETE

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 23: The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has asked all the state governments to follow certain preventive measures like social distancing, wearing of masks and proper sanitisation, avoiding large congregations among others for the ensuing Independence Day celebrations.

In a circular issued to the Chief Secretaries, the ministry has stated that in state-level celebrations, the ceremony which would start after 9am in the state Capitals will have unfurling of national flag by the chief ministers of the respective states, playing of the national anthem; presentation of guard of honour by the police including paramilitary forces, home guards, NCC, scouts, and speech by the CMs.

The letter says that large gathering must be avoided. Also, it is imperative that social distancing and wearing of masks are followed.

It would also be appropriate to invite doctors, health workers and sanitisation workers as recogni-

COVID & NATIONAL FEST



- Doctors, health workers, sanitisation workers and other Covid warriors will be called for recognition of their noble services
- Performance of police/military bands may be recorded at places of historic significance associated with Freedom Movement

tion for their noble services. As regards holding of "At Home" reception at Raj Bhawan /Raj Niwas by the Governor/Lt. Governor on the Independence Day, the matter is left to the discretion of Governors/Lt. Governors.

Performance of Police/Military bands may be recorded at places of historic significance associated with Freedom Movement; and recorded versions thereof may be displayed through large screens/digital media, during public functions

and on social media.

Other functions of the day may include activities like planting of saplings; interschool/inter-college debates on digital platforms; on-line quiz contests/patriotic essay writing and poetry competitions; launching of any important scheme, singing patriotic songs/delivering patriotic talks by selected boys/girls on the social media; thematic webinars; online campaign by NSS and NYKS centered around patriotic themes.

Other innovative ways of celebrating the Independence Day may be considered like propagating patriotic or national integration messages/songs through digital and social media platforms, sound shows/lighting of important public buildings, waving of national flags by people at rooftops/balconies, etc.

The letter also says, "It would be appropriate that the theme of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' is suitably spread and publicised amongst the masses through various activities during Independence Day celebrations."

State seeks central nod to cancel UG, PG examinations

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 23: State Higher Education Minister Arun Sahoo Thursday wrote to the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) seeking permission to cancel the Undergraduate (UG) and Postgraduate (PG) term examinations.

This was Sahoo's second letter to the MHRD seeking permission for the cancellation of final semester examinations of UG and PG courses in state universities.

"We did not get any response to our first letter to the MHRD. The state government as well as the government-run universities is in a dilemma to conduct the final semester examinations of UG and PG courses," said the Higher Education Minister.

Sahoo further claimed that the students and parents have become very anxious with regard to the examinations and they have started contacting the Higher Education department over phone to know any updates on the issue.

"The Covid-19 situation has



This is Sahoo's second letter to MHRD seeking permission for cancellation of final semester exams of UG and PG courses

worsened in the last 15 days. The situation is most likely to aggravate further in the coming days. Therefore, I request you once again to kindly reconsider the matter and allow the state universities of Odisha to adopt alternative methods issued by the state government June 18, 2020 in lieu of conducting the final semester examinations in September," Sahoo said in the letter.

Notably, the MHRD had earlier sought responses on the final semester examinations from the universities across the nation. A total of 181 universities including 121 deemed universities, 291 private

universities, 51 central universities and 355 state universities had sent their replies.

Out of the 818 universities, 603 universities have either conducted the examinations or are planning to conduct the same. At least 209 universities have already conducted the examinations in online/offline mode while 394 universities are planning to conduct examinations in online/offline/blended mode in August/September.

However, the first batch is yet to become eligible for final examinations in 35 universities including 27 private universities and seven state universities.

Talcher fert plant likely by 2023: Min

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, July 23: Union Minister of State for Chemicals and Fertilisers, Mansukh Mandaviya, Thursday said that the coal gasification based urea plant of Talcher Fertilisers Limited (TFL) in Angul would be commissioned by 2023.

The Union Minister said that the NDA government took various initiatives to boost fertiliser sector so that adequate amount of fertiliser could be made available to farmers during the sowing season.

He said that the Talcher project has achieved 59.48 per cent of overall progress. Similarly, the minister said that Gorakhpur, Sindri and Barauni fertiliser plants have achieved 88.10 per cent, 77.80 per cent and 77.60 per cent of overall progress respectively. It is expected that Gorakhpur, Barauni and Sindri plants will be commissioned by 2021.

He stated that with a view to becoming self-sufficient in urea production, the government has started reviving the closed fertiliser units of FCI at Ramagundam, Talcher, Gorakhpur & Sindri and HFCL unit at Barauni. This is a joint venture of nominated public sector undertakings (PSUs) to set up gas-based fertiliser plants of 1.27 MMTPA capacity each.

It is to be mentioned here that the Union government had announced New Investment Policy (NIP), 2012 to facilitate fresh investments in urea sector and to make India self-



MEETING UREA DEMAND

- The Talcher project has achieved 59.48 per cent overall progress
- Gorakhpur, Sindri and Barauni fertiliser plants have achieved 88.10 per cent, 77.80 per cent and 77.60 per cent progress
- It is expected that Gorakhpur, Barauni and Sindri plants will be commissioned by 2021

sufficient in the urea sector. Under NIP, the government is reviving the closed fertiliser plants of FCI at Ramagundam, Talcher, Gorakhpur & Sindri and HFCL unit at Barauni. This is a joint venture of nominated public sector undertakings (PSUs) to set up gas-based fertiliser plants of 1.27 MMTPA capacity each.

The minister further stated that as per Modified New Pricing Scheme (NPS-III), all of the Units which are using Naptha as feedstock are to be converted on natural gas. Madras Fertilizers Ltd. has already moved from Naptha feedstock to natural gas as feedstock. After getting pipeline connectivity, this unit has started producing Urea w.e.f July 29, 2019 on natural gas feedstock.

Donate plasma, DGP urges cops

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, July 23: Police personnel who have recovered from Covid-19 infections would donate plasma for the treatment of people infected with the deadly virus.

The Odisha Police has issued a standard operating procedure (SOP) for the plasma donation. Moreover, Director General of Police (DGP) Abhay has also written to the Superintendents of Police (SPs) in this connection, sources said.

The DGP has called upon the police personnel to donate plasma after their recovery. As per the SOP, the age limit for plasma donation has been fixed at 60 years. Besides, the donors must not be below 55kg in weight. The police personnel can donate plasma at least 28 days after their recovery from the Covid-19 infections.

Monsoon plays truant; rain deficit 4%

Nine districts record deficit rainfall of 20% to 59%

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 23: The state has recorded 4 per cent deficit rainfall till July 23 due to a weak southwest monsoon this season.

According to India Meteorological Department (IMD) reports, the average normal rainfall of the state is 447.2 mm whereas it has received

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



4 per cent less rain till Thursday.

As many as nine districts have recorded a deficit rainfall of 20 per cent to 59 per cent. The districts are—Puri (45 per cent), Khurda (38 per cent), Kendrapara (38 per cent), Jajpur (37 per cent), Cuttack (34

per cent), Balasore (31 per cent deficit), Sonepur (24 per cent deficit), Jagatsinghpur (21 per cent) and Bhadrak (20 per cent).

Only two districts – Nuapada and Jharsuguda – have received surplus rainfall of 30 per cent and 20 per cent respectively. All other remaining districts have received normal rainfall so far, the IMD report said.

Meanwhile, the Bhubaneswar Met Centre said southwest monsoon has again become active in state resulting heavy rain in some places during past 24 hours.

Heavy rainfall is very likely to occur at a few places over the districts of Nuapada, Bolangir, Kalahandi, Nabarangpur, Bargarh, Boudh and Angul, Friday. Light to moderate rainfall will continue to occur all over the state, it said.

2 Maoists gunned down in Kandhamal

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 23: Odisha police gunned down two Maoists including a woman in Kandhamal district Thursday. Director General of Police (DGP) Abhay informed this through a virtual press briefing from the DGP camp office here.

Abhay informed the media that following a tip-off regarding the presence and movement of Naxals in Tumudibandha area of Kandhamal, a team of Special Operations Group (SOG) and District Voluntary Force (DVF), a special constabulary unit of the Odisha Police, rushed to the spot.

Subsequently, the armed ultras opened fire on the team as soon as it reached the spot where the Maoists were hiding. The SOG and DVF team also started firing in retaliation and self-defense. The teams found two bodies in Maoist uniforms after the end of the exchange of fire. The cops also recovered 1 INSAS, 1 carbine and 2 country-made weapons.



The DGP also said that more details are gradually emerging as the combing operation and mopping are currently going on at the spot.

Earlier, the Union Home secretary in a letter to the state chief secretary and DGP praised the team of Odisha Police for successful operations against Left Wing Extremists in which four ultras died recently.

Only 3% pay income tax in Odisha: SK Dash

ON THE OCCASION OF INCOME TAX DAY, ORISSA POST SPOKE TO SARAT KUMAR DASH, FORMER PRINCIPAL INCOME TAX COMMISSIONER OF ODISHA, WHO HAS RECENTLY RETIRED FROM THE DEPARTMENT. EXCERPTS

MANISH KUMAR, OP

■ **How many people in Odisha are paying income tax? How rampant is I-T evasion?**
■ In 2019-20, Odisha region of Income Tax department mobilised a net collection of Rs 13,413 crore – a growth of around 2.35 per cent as compared to 2018-19 financial year. At present, the total number of taxpayers/assessees in Odisha is slightly more than 13 lakh – around 3 per cent of the total population. It's definitely a fact that all the taxpayers may not be filing I-T returns and paying taxes. For some, tax payment is waste of money.

■ **Why should all eligible citizens pay taxes?**

■ Tax is stated to be a price we pay for a civilised society. According to Kautilya's Arthashastra, finance or treasury is at the root of the government or administration. Hence, one has to pay taxes as his contribution towards the cost of administration and development of the country.

■ **Do you think I-T collection has got a setback due to Covid-19?**
■ Covid crisis has given a lethal blow to the country's economy. Both direct and indirect tax collections have taken a nosedive



Sarat Kumar Dash

during the last four months. Odisha I-T Region is no exception and the Direct Tax collection has been around Rs 1,200 crore till end of June 2020 as against Rs 1,900 crore collected till this time last year.

■ **How the department is dealing with tax evaders?**
■ I-T department is collecting, collating and analysing details of financial transactions from many sources and authorities in respect of the taxpayers and

others. The same are being linked to PAN and analysed. If the taxpayer is found to have not disclosed the transaction either fully or partially in his I-T return, necessary action is being taken to bring him to book. A 360-degree profiling of the assessee has started paying rich dividends. e-Notices are being issued to non-tax payers who are found to have taxable income or wealth.

■ **Has the dept simplified I-T return filing for the ease of taxpayers?**
■ Forms like 'Sahaj' and 'Sahaj' have been formulated to ease I-T return filing. Employees with salaries, income from one property and interest can use one of the options. Frankly speaking, I-T returns for other assesseees are quite voluminous and too complicated for a taxpayer to understand and fill the forms on his own. Simple I-T return forms will be possible only when the taxation law is simplified.

■ **Do you think the I-T dept has evolved to better manage tax evasion?**

■ I-T department is now fully computerised and many of the processes now take place on e-mode. A large volume of financial transactions are now received and analysed with the help of analytical tools based on computers. The department is keeping constant vigil on cash transactions and introduced TDS on big cash withdrawals so that the same may be kept track of. We are fast approaching a tax evader free regime. The cost of tax evasion has been made much heavier than the tax evaded.

Aditya wrote his suicide note: SFSL

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 23: Although the reason behind the death of social activist Aditya Kumar Dash is still shrouded in mystery, experts at the handwriting bureau of State Forensic Science Laboratory (SFSL) here have confirmed that the suicide note collected from his diary was written by Aditya himself.

The Additional Director General (ADG) of Police for Railways, Pranabindu Acharya, revealed this while speaking to media persons here Thursday.

In another development, the Government Railway Police (GRP) officials have mailed a letter to Facebook, the popular social media site, seeking the details regarding the person who had posted the last message on Aditya's timeline on the social media platform. The GRP officials are hopeful of getting the response from the Facebook soon.

The cops are also finding it difficult to expedite the investigation as many, who were asked to be interrogated, are yet to turn up due to the lockdown, a source in GRP said. The cops are able to record the

statements of around 25 persons including Aditya's wife and in-laws out of the 40-odd people directed to appear for interrogation. Biswa Mohan Bhoi, one of the closest friends of Aditya, from Boudh district has sought more time to appear before the investigating officers due to lockdown.

Sources also claimed that Aditya was under severe mental stress due to the drying up of funds for his NGO since the imposition of lockdown.

Union minister Paratap Sarangi has recently requested Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik to direct the Commissionerate Police to initiate a joint probe into Aditya's death with the GRP team.

Notably, the body of Aditya was found from the railway track near Lingaraj Temple Road railway station July 7, 2020.

Police have been looking into the murder angle by registering a case (81/20) under sections 302 and 34 of the IPC.

Aditya, popularly known as 'Manab Premi Aditya Dash', was a resident of Talasarada village in Boudh district.

COVID-19 death toll reaches 114

Rumours swirl as City's flour mill cases top 60

PNN/AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, July 23: State's COVID-19 caseload Thursday breached the 21,000 mark as the state reported its highest single-day spike of 1,264 new cases, and the death toll increased to 114, with six more patients succumbing to the disease, an official of Health department said.

With new cases, the number of cases in the state rose to 21,099. A total of 540 cases were reported from the coronavirus hotspot of Ganjam district followed by 137 in Khurda.

Five of the six fatalities were reported from Ganjam. With this, state's death toll has mounted to 114, the official said.

"Regret to inform the demise of six COVID positive patients while under treatment in hospitals," the Health department tweeted.

The victims from Ganjam were identified as a 51-year-old woman and four men between the ages of 41 to 69. All the Ganjam victims were suffering from either diabetes or hypertension, the official said.

The victim from Khurda district was an 86-year-old woman also suffered from the comorbidities.

Of the 114 fatalities, Ganjam reported the highest of deaths at 67 followed by Khurda at 15, Cuttack nine, Gajapati at six, two each from Angul, Jagatsinghpur, Kendrapara, Puri, Rayagada and Sundargarh, while one casualty each was reported in Nayagarh, Bargarh, Bhadrak, Jajpur and Kandhamal.

Meanwhile, 643 persons recovered from the viral infection

Thursday

The recoveries include 407 from Ganjam, 44 from Khurda, 31 from Balasore, 28 from Mayurbhanj, 27 from Cuttack and 15 from Jagatsinghpur.

With this, the number of active cases in Odisha stands at 6,561 while 14,392 persons have recovered from the disease so far.

Ganjam District Magistrate VA Kulange appealed to people not to panic over high detection of positive cases. He said door-to-door surveillance helped detect more cases. "This will help check transmission of the disease by isolating positive cases and providing them treatment at the proper time," Kulange said.

With the detection of 540 new cases, the Ganjam district caseload increased to 6,902

of which 2,754 are active and 4,076 patients have recovered and 67 have died.

126 FRESH CASES TAKE CITY'S COVID TALLY TO 1,469

As many as 126 COVID-19 cases, including 35 from a flour mill at Mancheswar, were detected in the Capital city here Thursday, a Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) official said.

While 93 were quarantine cases, 33 were found during contact tracing exercise, the BMC official said, adding that 81 persons who had earlier tested COVID-19 positive recovered Thursday.

With this, Bhubaneswar has 651 active cases, while 805 have recovered from the disease. The Temple City has so far seen 1,469 virus cases and 11 deaths due to the viral

ECoR's female warriors at forefront



East Coast Railway's women employees at work

With the outbreak of COVID-19, we have a range of 'Corona warriors' celebrated across the country for 'fighting' the 'battle' from the front.

One such group is ECoR's female staff working as Loco Pilots, Station Masters, Guard, Token Porter, Gang women, Technicians, Ticket Collectors and RPF personnel among others.

During the countrywide lockdown, Railways had to suspend all its passenger services from 22nd March, 2020. But during this period,

goods trains kept running, transporting essential goods and commodities across the country. Subsequently Sharmik special Trains and Special Trains were started to carry stranded passengers from different places and to cater to the emergent needs of the people.

The women warriors of East Coast Railway were at the forefront of running these trains and helping in Train operation. At one end they are working as Loco Pilots, Station Masters and Guards and involving in direct train running du-

ties, at other end they are working as Gang women, Supervisor, Helper, Technician, Electricians, carriage staff, gate keeper and taking on the most arduous jobs of Track, Wagon, Overhead equipment, coach maintenance, signal maintenance and attending other emergency breakdown jobs round the clock.

These women maintenance employees are working tirelessly to ensure safe running of trains. They are also working as RPF personnel, ticket checking cleanliness staff and are directly involved in ensuring COVID safety protocols at stations. Women have been working in Train escort, station patrolling and for food distribution to the needy during lockdown. They are working round the clock for safety and security of the passengers.

These women warriors are playing a cohesive role in protecting, safeguarding and transporting the passengers. They have displayed great devotion to their duty in these testing times and their performance has been remarkable.

infection. Cuttack Municipal Corporation, on the other hand, reported 34 cases and 11 recoveries Thursday.

The Silver City has 242 active COVID-19 cases while eight persons have so far succumbed to the infection. As many as 486 COVID-19 cases and 236 recoveries have been reported in Cuttack City.

COVID CARE FACILITIES AT BARABATI, NEHRU STADIUMS

In the backdrop of rising COVID-19 cases in the Silver City here, the Cuttack Municipal Corporation (CMC) has decided to turn Barabati Stadium and Jawahar Lal Nehru Indoor Stadium here into temporary COVID care facilities.

According to sources, CMC

Commissioner Ananya Das, along with other departmental officials, assessed the preparations for the COVID care facilities at the duo stadium here Wednesday.

The civic body has set up around 75 beds at Barabati Stadium, which is ready to accommodate asymptomatic low-risk COVID-19 patients, said an official quoting the CMC's tweet. The move has been taken by the civic body anticipating a further surge in the infected tally, added the official.

GODISAH SI CONTRACTS VIRUS FROM NABBED YOUTH

A sub-inspector (SI) at Godisahi police outpost in Barang has been tested positive for novel coronavirus (COVID-19), Barang block devel-

opment officer (BDO) Pravakar Panda said Thursday. About the turn of events, the BDO said that a youth of Naraj area was brought to the police outpost after being arrested in connection with a case July 19. "The COVID-19 test, which was done on the accused (as per the protocol) before sending him to judicial custody the next day—July 20 morning, came out to be positive by the evening. Soon after, Barang police station and Godisahi police outpost were sanitised. And swab samples of eight Godisahi police officials and two shopkeepers near the outpost were sent for COVID-19 testing July 21," Panda pointed out, adding that except for the SI, swabs of others came out to be negative.

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 23: Following several COVID positive cases from a flour mill in Mancheswar here, rumours spread against the usage

of a particular flour brand allegedly manufactured in the unit. As per the reports from Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC), the city which saw a record surge of 126

new COVID-19 cases had reported 35 cases from the factory in the past 24 hours. A day earlier, the factory had also reported 26 cases taking the total tally above 60 cases.

This sudden surge in cases has led to rumors against use of the particular brand of flour produced by the mill. "Bhubaneswar-based Rishta Flour (Atta) plant is now the hotspot of Covid-19 with all 69 employees and owner himself being

carriers of coronavirus. Thus, all individuals are urged to refrain from purchasing Rishta brand atta and other products from the market presently," a Twitter read.

According to sources from the BMC, the cases surged after a returnee from the COVID-hotspot district turned out to be a super spreader infecting 26 persons. While the flour mill is reportedly said to be sealed, most of the cases detected were from quarantine centres.

However, the BMC officials did not respond to the rumours being circulated. Although health experts were of the opinion that there lies no concrete evidence of spread of virus via a vis grocery items but had advised against purchase of such products unless clarifications are made by the authorities.

JAM for increased testing of jail inmates

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 23: City-based Jana Adhikar Manch (JAM) Thursday presented several demands before the Chief Minister, Naveen Patnaik regarding the safeguard of inmates in prisons across the state amidst rising cases of Covid-19 infection among prisoners.

Swab samples of as many as 43 persons from Berhampur Circle Jail including 33 inmates, jailer and 10 staffers tested positive Wednesday. As many as 20 inmates and two staffers of the Circle Jail had earlier tested positive for COVID-19 infection June 6.

The organisation in a letter to CM claimed that Nirakar Nayak, an inmate of Sorada sub-jail in Ganjam had recently revealed before his family members that around 50 percent of the prisoners in the sub-jail have been suffering from var-

ious symptoms related to Covid-19 like fever and cough.

The demands include swab testing of the prisoners kept in all the jails of the state on a war footing to ascertain the real situation regarding the spread of virus in jails, release of more convicts on parole, taking steps towards the grant of bails to under trials in order to decongest the prisons, special care for the children below the age of six years staying along with their convict mothers in jails, regular health check up of all the inmates at least once in a week and the deployment of adequate number of health workers including doctors in the jails. Around seventy percent of total prisoners in the Odisha are under trials.

Notably, the Orissa POST had recently warned about the impending Covid-19 outbreak in jails of the state.

Plus II evaluation to go on amid lockdown



FILE PHOTO

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 23: The evaluation of answer sheets of Plus II examination 2020 conducted by Council of Higher Secondary Education (CHSE) will continue during lockdown period, an official here said Thursday.

Evaluation duty was adversely affected due to coronavirus-induced shutdown in the state. It was resumed June 1 and continued at various centres across the state.

However, due to the fresh lockdowns imposed in four districts and Rourkela city, the process was halted again. Hence, the council had sought permission from the government in this regard, sources said.

School and Mass Education (S&ME) department Thursday gave necessary approval to the CHSE to continue the valuation work in Khurda, Cuttack, Ganjam and

Jajpur districts along with Rourkela city, where lockdown was imposed till July end.

"Government has been pleased to accord permission of the proposal to take up the valuation work of answer scripts of the annual higher secondary education-2020 conducted by the CHSE, Odisha during the lockdown period so that the results can be published at the earliest," S & ME additional secretary Pratap Kumar Mishra wrote to CHSE chairman.

The government has asked the CHSE to follow all COVID-19 guidelines while conducting the valuation work.

Earlier, following the inordinate delay in the publication of Plus II results in Odisha, the state government has asked college principals to send teachers to their respective evaluation centres immediately.

State govt increases wages of unskilled, skilled workers

Bhubaneswar: In view of the present Covid-19 scenario, the state government has enhanced the minimum wages of unskilled and skilled workers working in the state. The government has announced special allowance -- Variable Dearness Allowance (VDA) of ₹5.40 per day for unskilled, semi-skilled, skilled and highly skilled workers. The wage hike will be applicable retrospectively from April 1, 2020, sources said. Now, the unskilled workers will get ₹303.40 per day while the new daily wages of semi-skilled, skilled and highly skilled workers are—₹343.40, ₹393.40 and ₹453.40.

PURI WOMAN 'KILLED' OVER DOWRY; 2 HELD

POST NEWS NETWORK

Puri, July 23: A married woman was allegedly killed by her husband and in-laws over dowry at Baliguali Kothabadi Sahi under Pethakata marine police station here Wednesday.

Police have arrested the victim's husband and nephew after registering a case in connection with the incident. Victim Rashmita Sahu's brother Bijay Kumar Sahoo of Gopinath Patana near Nimapara lodged a complaint with police, sources said.

As per the complaint, Rashmita had tied the knot with a man from Baliguali Kothabadi Sahi some years ago. Rashmita's family had gifted ₹70,000 and other household goods to her in-laws during the wedding ceremony.

A year after the wedding ceremony, Rashmita's in-laws sought additional ₹30,000 from her parents. They were torturing Rashmita over the issue, said the complaint.

In the meantime, Rashmita was blessed with a baby boy. However, Rashmita's in-laws did not stop torturing her. The in-laws attacked Rashmita July 19 and sought ₹1 lakh as dowry from her parents.

A complaint in this regard was lodged with the Penthakata marine police.

On Wednesday, one of Rashmita's neighbours informed her parents that the former had been killed by her in-laws over dowry.

"Rashmita's in-laws killed her over dowry and hanged her body from a ceiling fan to term the incident as a case of suicide," said victims' brother Bijay in his complaint.

Police, meanwhile, said that they have sent the body for a post-mortem. "We are waiting for the postmortem report to do further investigation into the incident," police said.



UTTER CARELESSNESS

While the state grapples under severe water crisis, a stroll down the streets of Silver City exposes the real picture of the residents' approach towards saving the precious drops. Water flows continuously through public stand posts at (1) Dagarpada Stoney Road, (2) Machhua Bazar, (3)Dagarpada shelter home and (4) Kathagada Sahi

OP PHOTOS

1.4% PEOPLE IN CAPITAL DEVELOPED ANTIBODIES

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 23: In the conclusive study of the first phase of serial sero-survey conducted by ICMR-RMRC, the capital city reported that only 1.4 per cent of all the persons have developed anti-bodies for the Covid-19 infection.

As per the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC), that assisted RMRC in the ongoing survey, a total 951 samples were collected at community level for the study in the first phase. "It has been found that community level exposure to SARS Cov 2 virus is relatively low with a pooled sero-prevalence of 1.4 per cent. This implies that large-scale transmission has probably not occurred in the city," a BMC official said.

However, the civic body cautioned citizen against the infection and stated that large majority of the population is still at high risk

of exposure unless preventive methods are not followed. "Every citizen has a role to play in the fight against Covid-19," said Municipal Commissioner, Prem Chandra Chaudhary.

Furthermore, post completion of first phase of serial sero-survey, the second phase sample collection of the first round is expected to be over by Friday. The second phase, survey by the RMRC teams is focused on sampling high risk groups which include doctors, police, journalists, street vendors and other sections. Meanwhile, the second round of survey will begin after 28 days of the first survey.

"Apart from sero-survey, the civic body is conducting rapid antigen tests with technical support from Health department. On Wednesday, samples were drawn from 55 media personnel for antigen test. The test results were found to be negative for all the samples," a BMC official said.

Home isolation of infected people in rural areas okayed

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 23: The state government Thursday allowed home isolation of COVID 19 patients in rural areas by amending the earlier guidelines. The government also brought a notification in this regard. A special notification to amend the earlier guideline was released Thursday.

"In partial modification of the earlier order it is hereby directed that the guidelines issued vide the said order to allow home isolation to all COVID-19 positive cases, who are asymptomatic/ have mild symptoms and have no co-morbidities in Urban Areas including Urban Local Bodies Area, District, Sub-division and Block Headquarter Towns shall also apply to Rural Areas across the State," the notification said.

It added, "The order will be enforced with immediate effect provided that the person concerned opts for home isolation and satisfies the conditions as mentioned in the said order. The notification said that the Sarpanch(es) of Gram Panchayats or any other officer notified by the Collector of the respective districts shall be the Nodal Officer for this purpose.

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Haridaspur-Paradip railway route sparks hopes of industrialisation

Doctor's promotion shelved a day after issue at VIMSAR

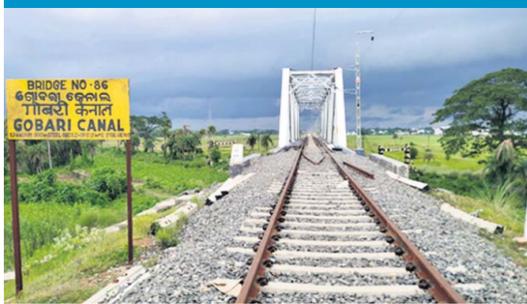
POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, July 23: Controversy shrouds over Veer Surendra Sai Institute of Medical Science and Research (VIMSAR) at Burla in Sambalpur over allegations of irregularities pertaining to promotions of professor and associate professor posts. Director of VIMSAR Dr Lalit Kumar Meher cancelled the promotion order a day after its issue. The process of promotion for some doctors was initiated in 2018 October. The managing committee of VIMSAR as well as the selection committee had given their consent for the same.

However, for reasons unknown, the promotion list could not be finalised at that time. All of a sudden, a list was prepared which accorded promotion to many of the senior doctors. Dr Sunil Kumar Behera, Dr Butungeswar Pradhan, Dr Prakash Chandra Panda, Dr Dulal Kishun Soren, Dr Brajabihari Panda, Dr Kabita Manjari Majhi, Dr Sunil Kumar Sharma, Dr Sachidananda Pandey, Dr Lagendra Kumar Singh, Dr Bipin Kishore Kulu, Dr Sanjay Kujur, Dr Sitanshu Kumar Meher and Dr Mahendra Kumar Ekka were shortlisted by the two committees.

Sources said Dr Ekka did not deserve promotion, as he was lacking adequate experience and was pretty junior to several others doctors. Reacting to this, VIMSAR Director said, "This was pending which I approved. After I realised that Dr Ekka's promotion was improper, I had to cancel this office order". As per norms, the promotion list and approval thereof can be cancelled only after one year. The doctors' community is taken aback as to how the promotion was given and was cancelled again without consent of the managing committee and the selection committee.

KENDRAPARA TO HAVE THERMAL POWER PLANT



Kendrapara, July 23: Hopes for establishment of a thermal power plant in this district soared after completion of works on Haridaspur-Paradip new broad gauge rail route, a report said. The completion of work on the Haridaspur-Paradip rail route has opened up fresh avenues in Kendrapara, a predominantly agricultural district. Establishment of a thermal power plant has now acquired prominence as the new rail route will play an important role in transporting coal to be used as raw material by the power plant. The Chennai-based M/s SPI Port Pvt Ltd (SPIPL) which agreed to establish the plant also has come forward. The company had planned to export coal from Indonesia and Australia through Paradip Port and the new route for transportation of coal from inside the country. The rail route has been examined by running a tower car. Reports said that goods train will start plying on this route by August end. Observers claimed that the rail route would pave the way for establishment of a thermal power plant as promised by the state gov-

at Rs 6609.60 crore which was later raised to Rs 8,845 crore. The plant after completion will produce electricity from which 12 to 14 per cent of power will be purchased by the state energy department at a rate fixed by the Odisha Electricity Regulatory Commission (OERC). Meanwhile, the district administration has acquired 875 acres in the revenue villages of Alailo, Bilipada, Nachhipada and Niyamatpur villages under Mahakalapara tehsil and handed it over to SPIPL. Out of the acquired land, 840 acres are farmlands which are lying unutilised after acquisition. As per the MoU, the company will use 565 acres for establishment of the plant, 125 acres for the rail route and laying of water pipelines while a township will come up on 50 acres and green cover on 260 acres. Residents Sibashis Mohanty, Alaya Samantray, Pratap Chandra Padhi, Banambar Sahu and Rashmi Ranjan Mohapatra have demanded that the state government intervene and speed up the establishment of the thermal power plant following completion of the rail route. They said the power plant will draw more industries to the district.

NEW HORIZON

The plant after completion will produce electricity from which 12 to 14 per cent of power will be purchased by the state energy department at a rate fixed by the Odisha Electricity Regulatory Commission. The district administration has acquired 875 acres in the revenue villages of Alailo, Bilipada, Nachhipada and Niyamatpur villages under Mahakalapara tehsil and handed it over to SPIPL.

SANTISATION DRIVE



A firefighter sanitizing the district excise office after an employee tested positive for Covid-19 in Angul

Malkangiri sub-jail a Covid powder keg

POST NEWS NETWORK

Malkangiri, July 23: Even as Covid cases are spreading fast in Malkangiri, overcrowding in the district sub-jail has come in the way of preventive exercise like social distancing. This basic prevention norm has been thrown to the winds at the sub jail. Most of the jail inmates are from outside the state while their health check-ups are not being done, a report said. Covid infection cases have been reported from various jails in the state while overcrowding in the sub-jail has raised the concern of the administration. According to reports, over 600 lifers and under-trials are lodged in the jail. On an average, about 80 inmates are accommodated in each cell. Given such situation, maintaining social distance has thrown



a challenge for the jail authorities. Lack of social distancing is likely to trigger possibility of an infection outbreak. About 80 per cent of the inmates are from other states like Haryana, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Hyderabad, Kolkota and Telangana. Health check-up of these inmates has not been conducted, admitted jail superintendent Sanjay Burma. He also added that when accused

from other states come here, they are kept in a small cell for some days before they are sent to bigger cells. The jail superintendent said that he had talked to health department officials about health check-ups of inmates. "The health officials, however, said if any of the inmates shows Covid symptoms, only their health check-up will be done," the jail superintendent added.

Returnees to face 14-day quarantine

JHARSUGUDA: With COVID-19 positive cases spiking in Odisha, Jharsuguda district administration through a notification Thursday said all people returning from eight hotspot districts in the state will have to undergo 14-day home or institutional quarantine. District Collector Saraoj Kumar Samal said the new rule is mandatory for all residents of the district and returnees from the eight hotspot districts. The eight hotspot COVID-19 districts that have been identified are Ganjam, Gajapati, Khurda, Cuttack, Jajpur, Balasore, Sundargarh and Bhadrak. Anyone from these eight districts going to Jharsuguda will have to quarantine themselves. Doctors will decide whether the person needs home or institutional quarantine. The returnees have to register at the district medical officer's office on their return. To control the virus, the district administration has already imposed a night curfew in the district. Jharsuguda district reported three COVID-19 positive cases over last 24 hours. The total number of cases so far reported from the district stands at 263. Among those infected by the virus, 194 have already recovered and been discharged. The 69 active cases are being treated at different COVID-19 hospitals. So far the district has not reported any death due to the virus.

Bridge in Aska moved away



POST NEWS NETWORK

NH-23 in Deogarh waterlogged

Deogarh: Heavy downpour in Deogarh district Wednesday night led to water-logging and disruptions of traffic movement on NH 23 of Mardang-Kodopada village connecting Barkote block and Rourkela. While the vehicular movement was severely affected, Barkote-Bonal road was totally cut off due to water-logging. While vehicles were unable to ply on the road last night, heavy vehicles managed to drive through after water receded Thursday morning. Locals demanded immediate step for repair of the road.

Patapur, July 23: Traffic on the Digapahandi-Aska main road was disrupted as a temporary bridge connecting the two towns was washed away in the wee hours Thursday due to heavy rains. At present, no vehicles are plying on the road. Low-lying areas around the bridge have also been submerged by the rain water. Incessant rains have been lashing Sanakhemundi area since Wednesday evening in Ganjam district. The rain water which accumulated in Raghunath Sagar at upstream of Pochaka Nala washed away the bridge at Buddheswar village of Chudangapur panchayat. The temporary bridge had

been constructed after Ganjam District Collector Vijay Amruta Kulange passed instructions to do the same. It was built October 5 last year on Pochaka Nala (drain). This was done due to the collapse of another bridge. With the temporary bridge having collapsed, there is widespread resentment in the region with demand for immediate repair.

Half of Bargarh dist shut till July 28

BARGARH: Amid a spike in COVID-19 cases in Bargarh district, the administration has decided to enforce a six-day shutdown in half of the district where the number of COVID-19 cases is the highest. The shutdown will be in force from 9 pm Thursday to 9 pm of July 28. The complete shutdown will be imposed in six blocks under Bargarh sub-division including Atabira, Atabira NAC, Veden, Bhatti, Bargarh, Bargarh Municipality, Ambavona, Barpali and Barpali NAC. Similarly, Sohela Block, Bijepur Block, Bijepur NAC and Padmapur NAC under Padmapur Sub-division will also remain shut. Sources said, the district administration had earlier plans for a complete shutdown in Bargarh till July 31. However, some business organisations and trade unions objected to the move. The administration, owing to the objection by trade unions, brought some relaxation in the shutdown norms and declared a shutdown in half of Bargarh till July 28. The administration has permitted some essential services.

This's how Ganjam sees a spike in daily infection

CHHATRAPUR: Allaying fear of people in Ganjam district who are in panic as the district reported 540 positive cases Thursday, Ganjam District Collector Vijay Amruta Kulange in a tweet asked people not to panic. Seeking people's cooperation, Kulange said the district is reporting high number of positive cases because of proper door to door survey. "Early detection of COVID-19 is important to save life," he said. "We are doing proper D2D survey. Teams are doing their best to detect symptoms in early stage. Pl don't hide symptoms. We are doing test based on symptoms. We are getting a high number of +ve through this strategy. Don't get

panic because of numbers. Early detection of Covid is important to save life," the tweet read. In another tweet, he wrote, "Expected high numbers in two three days because of aggressive early detection of Covid positive through D2D survey. Please cooperate with the team and don't hide symptoms. We have sufficient beds at CCH, CCC." Notably, Ganjam's COVID-19 tally has gone up to 6,902 after the district reported 540 positive cases Thursday. Of them, while 4,076 patients have so far been recovered from the dis-ease, 2,754 are still undergoing treatment at COVID-19 hospitals. The disease has so far claimed 67 lives in the district.



Covid tally went up to 6,902 in Ganjam after it reported 540 positive cases Thursday



Class-V boy found hanging in orphanage

POST NEWS NETWORK

Koraput, July 23: A Class 5 boy staying in Gopabandhu Ashram (an orphanage) at Jeypore in Koraput district was found hanging in its bathroom Thursday. Sources said the boy had a fight with another inmate of the orphanage this morning. After a while, he ended his life by hanging himself from the ceiling of the bathroom with a towel. On receiving information, police along with Sub-Collector, Block Development Officer (BDO), District Child Protection Officer (DCPO) and Child Welfare Committee (CWC) officials reached the spot and initiated an inquiry. The deceased was studying in Parabada Upper Primary School.

ESIA study begins for Jajpur medical college

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur, July 23: The administration has initiated a process for environmental and social impact assessment (ESIA) study before acquisition of the land for the ambitious government medical college and the expansion of the district headquarters hospital in Jajpur takes place. However, no step was taken for gram sabha or a public hearing in the project area even though a notification to this effect was issued 15 days ago, a report said. The administration has started the ESIA study in the area under Section 4 of the Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Policy-2013. Bhubaneswar-based Life Academy of Vocational Studies has been tasked



A place earmarked for the proposed medical college

to carry out the ESIA study. This was stated by Abhay Kumar Nayak, additional secretary of the revenue and disaster management department in a notification July 7. For the medical college, 0.1600

acres of land at Ankula under Jajpur tehsil and 0.3290 acres of land at Rouraypur were proposed for acquisition. For expansion of the DHH, 1,3070 acres of land has been proposed for acquisition at Sitaleswar vil-

The central government has given approval for a 100-bed medical college while an outlay of ₹384.04 crore for the project has been estimated

lage under Jajpur tehsil. The land belongs to 18 people and Rouraypur Sri Sri Akhandalamani Mahdev Trust. The Centre has given approval for a 100-bed medical college while an outlay of Rs 384.04 crore for the project has been estimated. It was learnt that the ESIA study is being conducted in individual consultation of the local people.

Rules say that public hearing should be done at gram sabhas in all villages if they are affected directly or indirectly by the project. This should be done within 45 days since the notification for the land acquisition. Besides, ESIA study report should be available to all at the ward, the village and panchayat levels. In the notification, the additional secretary stated that the Collector, Sub-Collector and the BDO should take steps for uploading details of the ESIA study on the official website for public knowledge. CDMO Dr Sudhansu Sekhar Bal said the department has provided necessary fund for land acquisition. The tehsildar can only say if the land acquisition has started or not, he added.

OFFICE OF THE SR. GENERAL MANAGER (ELECTRICAL)
UPPER INDRAVATI HYDRO ELECTRIC PROJECT, MUKHIGUDA
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ODISHA HYDRO POWER CORPORATION LTD.
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WEB: www.ohpcitd.com, CIN: U40101OR1995SGC03963

NOTICE INVITING TENDER No. UIHEP-19/2020-21 Date: 21.07.2020
No. CAD-288: Tenders are invited in sealed envelopes from the registered travel agencies/vehicle owners for providing services as mentioned below.

Description of Materials/ Services	Cost of Tender Paper (Non-refundable) in Rs.	EMD in shape of DD/Banker's Cheque only (Refundable) in Rs.	Period of sale of tender document	Last date & time of receipt of tender	Date & time of opening of Techno Commercial Bid
Hiring of Two Nos. petrol run light vehicle i.e. (Triaxle/Bulk/Colony) for the Technical Wing Head and HR Wing Head of UIHEP, Mukhiguda for (03) three years	7,080/- (inclusive of GST)	1% (One percent) of the quoted value for total engagement of period	From 27.07.2020 to 10.08.2020 upto 13.00 Hrs.	10.08.2020 (upto 13.00 Hrs.)	10.08.2020 at 16.00 P.M.

For details of the tender documents, terms and conditions please visit our website www.ohpcitd.com. Sd./- Unit Head, UIHEP, Mukhiguda OIPR-32136/11/0018/2021

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
ELECTRICAL LICENSING BOARD
OFFICE OF THE ENGINEER-IN-CHIEF ELECTRICITY-CUM-PRINCIPAL CHIEF ELECTRICAL INSPECTOR, ODISHA
3rd Floor, Heads of Department Building, Bhubaneswar - 751001
E-mail: secyelbo@nic.in, Fax/Phone: 0674-2394572, 2394873

NOTICE
(Indicative Advertisement)

No. 810 Dated: 20.07.2020
No. AA-04: Department of Energy in Government of Odisha have notified for authorization of "Chartered Electrical Safety Engineer" (CESE) vide No. 6393 dated 17.07.2020 in accordance with clause 5(A) of Central Electricity Authority (Measures Relating to Safety and Electric Supply) Regulation, 2010. As the testing and safety inspection of electrical installation prior to commencement of electricity supply is a mandatory requirement, owner/supplier/consumer of the installation can now self certify their installation upto 440 volts by taking the assistance of CESE. The authorized CESE shall test the installation as per rules/standards and assist the owner in self certification. Detailed notification is available in website: www.eicelectricityodisha.nic.in.
Sd./- EIC(Electricity)-cum-PCEI Odisha, Bhubaneswar
OIPR-04025/11/0002/2021

Doubt is not a sport to indulge in with impunity; it is a poison, which drop by drop corrodes the soul

THE MOTHER



Shun obduracy

Diesel prices have outstripped petrol prices in major metros of the country. In Odisha also, diesel is costlier than petrol – a never seen before scenario. Over last few days, state-run oil marketing companies have hiked diesel rates even as petrol prices remained more or less steady. The runaway rise in diesel price has squeezed its demand. State-owned refiners, who between them own over 90 per cent of the country's fuel outlets, reported a drop in sales in the first half of July from the same period last month. Gradual shrinking of economic activities and renewed lockdowns in parts of the country have put paid to the demand for diesel – a major transport oil. The demand for diesel, which accounts for two-fifths of the overall refined fuel sales in India, has fallen by 18 per cent to 2.2 million tonnes in the first half of July from the same period in June and by about 21 per cent from a year earlier. Consumer sentiments are subdued. In an atmosphere of uncertainty triggered by the pandemic and massive job cuts and loss in wages, people think twice before taking out their four-wheelers. Spiraling fuel rates over last one month have further dampened the public spirit. The spike in rates is playing negatively on the minds of people who are shying away from buying new cars. The impact is much harsher on the two-wheeler front where fuel price is very sensitive and determines the footfalls in outlets. The price jab by the state owned oil firms has worsened the already sluggish automobile markets in the country. Consumption of petrol in financial year 2020 dropped to 6 per cent from a double-digit growth over last four five years. Similarly, diesel usage came down by over one per cent in FY20 against a three per cent rise last year. With the number of Covid-19 infections galloping with every passing day, the government seems ready to further extend the lockdown. In the current scheme of things, the situations look extremely precarious until we have a vaccine.

Lower demand for fuel bodes ill not only for the automobile sector, but for the entire economy. The government makes tall claims about its intentions to do everything possible to kick-start the economy. It took a few major economic steps to provide grist to the economic revival. The Reserve Bank of India on its part has also played ball with the Centre. The central bank has taken a lot of initiatives to cushion the financial hardship on consumers. However, the obstinate stance of the government with regard to fuel prices has torpedoed all these measures. One hand of the government is negating the possible gains that the other hand may be achieving. A bulk of the pump price of fuels comprises taxes. Centre and state levies make up 66 per cent of cost of fuel. The balance 34 per cent comprises basic fuel including refining and its freight cost including the dealer margins. From this it is evident that two thirds of the value of fuel goes towards the state and Centre's exchequers – making Indian retail prices among the highest in Asia and almost double that in Pakistan. Therefore, this is the government, both the Centre and the state government, should explore if there is any headroom available to cushion the fuel rates. Let alone thinking about a solution, the government allows oil companies to go on jacking up the prices. There has been a five-fold increase in taxes since 2014 when Narendra Modi became Prime Minister. A soft fuel regime will have a domino effect on the economy. The government should shun obduracy. In the stressed times like now, with India's economy facing the biggest contraction in four decades, this is the least that the government is expected to do.

WISDOM CORNER

Just as it is impossible to know when a swimming fish is drinking water, so it is impossible to find out when a government servant is stealing money.

ARTHASASTRA

Love me when I least deserve it, because that's when I really need it.

SWEDISH PROVERB

It is not that I'm so smart. But I stay with the questions much longer.

ALBERT EINSTEIN

WORDSWORTH

Swan song

An ancient legend – it goes back to classical Greece – holds that swans are silent throughout their lives but sing once, beautifully, just before they die. Figuratively, the swan song is the final performance or activity of a person's life or career. When Tony Blair announced his plans for resignation, the speech was called his swan song. It isn't quite accurate in this context, since he hasn't got around to telling anybody exactly when he planned to go. But it was his final speech to the Labour Party Conference and the speech was by all accounts a cracker, so in that sense it's fair. The legend is all nonsense. The ancient Greeks and Romans believed it, however, and it's mentioned in the works of Euripides, Aristotle, Plato, Seneca, and Cicero. Plato said that Socrates had explained it as a song of gladness because the swan, sacred to the god Apollo, was shortly to join the god it served. In AD77 Pliny said it was untrue ("olorummortennarraturfillebilis cantus, falso, utarbitror, aliquot experimentis", "observation shows that the story that the dying swan sings is false"). He had no effect on the popularity of the fable; the idea was eventually taken into English in the medieval period, being alluded to by Chaucer and Shakespeare. It's in the latter's The Merchant of Venice: "Let music sound while he doth make his choice; / Then, if he lose, he makes a swan-like end, / Fading in music." But the term itself was created as recently as 1831, in a book by Thomas Carlyle: "The Phoenix soars aloft ... or, as now, she sinks, and with spherical [sphere-like] swan-song immolates herself in flame." He took it from the German Schwanenlied or Schwanengesang with the same sense, which derives of course from the same legend. As the final collection of songs by Franz Schubert was published in the year he died (1828), it is known as his Schwanengesang. That was probably what put the idea for the English word in Carlyle's mind.

Swanning around

The Brits are thoroughly conversant with peacocks and find them to be an excellent analogy for ostentation. If we say that somebody is swanning around we may indeed be implying that they're doing it to impress, but the key idea we're trying to express is that they're being irresponsible or carefree, doing exactly as they like. Envy or disapproval often lies at the back of it – they're a useless drone, the thought goes, and wouldn't it be nice to be like that? But the main point of buying one of these things [bus passes] is to get to school and back, not to swan about the further reaches of the West Country. The early examples are from the end of the nineteenth century and simply refer to swimming like a swan. Since swans glide through the water without any apparent effort, seemingly aimless and laid-back, the idiom "swan about" came to mean ambling about without a care in the world or travelling idly or purely for pleasure. Curiously, the evidence suggests this was initially military slang of the Second World War. The first example in the Oxford English Dictionary dates from 1942.

LOL

DRINKING

Banta met his doctor one day with a health complaint. Doctor asked Banta to cut down his drinking by Three-fourths....!



Banta agreed and went back home. And, what did Banta do? Smart Banta, from then on, stopped adding Soda.

FOCUS LOANS

GAMES BANKS PLAY



Launching criminal proceedings against the wilful defaulters should be the first step to stop banks being duped by the rich and the powerful. Farmers continue to be penalised for petty loan defaults, while the rich get away so easily



Devinder Sharma

ONLY 10 PER CENT OF THE BANK LOANS WRITTEN-OFF IN FOUR YEARS, BETWEEN 2015-16 AND 2018-19, HAVE BEEN RECOVERED. OUT OF A TOTAL OF ₹4,32,584 CRORE WRITTEN-OFF IN THESE FOUR YEARS, PUBLIC SECTOR BANKS COULD RECOVER ONLY ₹45,659-CRORE

Lakshminarayan is a farmer from Shimoga in Karnataka. He had taken a loan of ₹35,000 from a local branch of Canara Bank. About a month ago, he received a threatening call from the bank, asking him to pay back the pending dues or they will be forced to initiate action for recovering the amount. Panicked, he rushed to the bank. Since no bus was available at that time, he walked for 15 km in a hilly terrain to reach the bank. At the bank, he was told to pay ₹3.46 of the pending loan amount.

This story is a grim reminder of the double standards the banks have in place when it comes to treating their customers. While the poor who fail to repay loans often receive inhuman treatment, forcing many of them to either land in jail or commit suicide, the rich are treated with kid gloves and are allowed to get away with their act, with the bank itself taking the blow. Take the case of the lead bank, the State Bank of India (SBI). According to a news report, the bank had written-off ₹1.23-lakh crore of corporate bad loans in the past eight years. We are told that, technically speaking, a bank write-off is not a loan waiver, and the recovery process continues. However, all that the bank has been able to recover in these eight years is ₹8,969-crore which comes to a little over 7 per cent of the outstanding credit.

The biggest defaulters in this particular case were Bhushan Power & Steel Ltd with an outstanding loan of ₹7,705-crore and Videocon Industries Ltd with pending dues of ₹3,411-crore. As per an RTI reply, both the companies had failed to pay back even a single penny. In fact, out of the 56 borrowers in the list that was made available, the recovery from 36 companies was zero. For a balance of ₹3.46, a farmer was asked to come to the bank and pay it up, but what happened to the 36 companies from whom SBI failed to recover even a penny?

Another news report, based on an RTI reply, had revealed that only 10 per cent of the bank loans written-off in four years, between 2015-16 and 2018-19, have been recovered. Out of a total of ₹4,32,584 crore written-off in these four

years, public sector banks could recover only ₹45,659-crore. If 7 to 10 per cent of the total amount is what eventually the banks are able to recover, the question is, why are banks trying to give an impression that the write-offs of corporate debt is in any way different from the farm loan waiver?

Using the 'technical' difference between a write-off and waiver, banks have always maintained that writing-off bad loans does not mean that the recovery proceedings have stopped, but this is simply a clever smoke-screen to cover up the massive corporate defaults.

Strangely, this 'technical' cover up became a banking tradition over a period of time. Prior to that, the RBI had in a circular issued to banks advised them to refrain from the practice. "Banks are required to explore all available means of recovery before writing off any account fully or partly. It is observed that some banks are resorting to technical write-off of accounts, which reduces incentives to recover. Banks resorting to partial and technical write-offs should not show the remaining part of the loan as standard asset."

Probably to cover its own lapses, banks have routinely been claiming that the write-off is simply a

shift of the accounts from one ledger to another while the recovery goes on. But many banking experts say, when bad loans are written-off, banks actually remove the assets from the balance sheets, knowing well they have lost all hope of recovering anything.

This brings up a question. Why the banks should not be asked to first clear all options of recovery before announcing a write-off? Why deliberately create confusion in the minds of the people (as well as policy makers) by presenting a misleading picture of bank profits position by pushing the losses in a separate ledger? This is a mischievous practice and needs to be discontinued.

The RBI must act heavily against banks for such deliberate cover-up. Instead, banks are exerting pressure to set up a bad bank that takes care of the bad loans. Which means instead of addressing the fundamental reasons behind the malaise of increasing bad loans, banks are wanting another cover-up. Setting up a bad bank is a bad idea.

In April, RBI stated that ₹68,067-crore which was due from 50 wilful defaulters over the years has been written-off by nationalised banks. Many absconding businessmen, including the diamond merchant Mehul Choksi, are

among them. Wilful defaulters are those who have the ability to pay back but don't do so. Many banking experts have been seeking criminal proceedings against such defaulters, but the government is simply not listening.

All India Banking Employees Association general secretary CH Venkatachalam recently stated: "It is known that bulk of these bad loans are attributable to big businesses and the affluent. Many cases of default are found to be deliberate, wilful and on account of diversion of funds. Unfortunately, bank loan default is still a civil offence and hence criminal proceedings are not being instituted against them."

Launching criminal proceedings against the wilful defaulters should be the first step to stop banks being duped heavily by the rich and the powerful. Farmers continue to be penalised for petty loan defaults, while the rich get away so easily. If banks can take 'haircut' for thousands of crores of company defaults, why banks can't in general and in this case Canara Bank in particular, take a 'haircut' of ₹3.46? Why make a poor farmer travel all the way, spend a day's hard labour for just depositing a petty amount? When will the banks become a little sensible?

SPECTRUM COVID-19

Vaccine, health-infra push as priority

According to projections, India will have 35 lakh Covid-19 cases by September. The daily nationwide testing of 27 lakh is proving to be inadequate with positivity rate – total confirmed cases per 100 tests – reaching the double digit mark for the first time at 10 per cent in the first two weeks of July.

Adding to the research into the pandemic, around 239 scientists from 32 nations wrote to the WHO, saying there is evidence that the corona virus is airborne and even smaller particles can infect people – a significant departure from its claim so far that it is spread primarily through cough and sneezes. Last month, ICMR Director General stated that an August 15 vaccine-launch plan eroded the agency's credibility. As per WHO report, 18 candidate vaccines against Covid-19 are in clinical trials while over 120 others are undergoing lab or animal studies.

The Indian Academy of Sciences, a body of 1100-odd scientists, stated that while administrative approvals could be expedited, clinical trials process and data analysis have a natural time span that cannot be hastened.

In fact, scientists across the globe believe a vaccine is unlikely to be made available by early next year. Prof. Francis Collins, a top American biomedical researcher, testifying before the US Senate, stated: "We're optimistic that the goal we have set to have a vaccine that works and is safe by the end of 2020 will be met by one of the vaccines".

Independent researchers say no one expects a vaccine to be available for routine public use anywhere before early 2021. The ICMR authorities are expected to grasp the complexity of assessing a brand new medicine or vaccine – something that typically takes years. Thus, it naturally follows there was pressure from the government.

The neglect of health infrastructure over the years is well-known. Successive governments have done little to ensure the bare minimum health facilities for the poor and economically weaker sections. The situation has become worse with the invisible enemy.

India has 519 medical colleges that can admit over 80,000 MBBS students a year. But the requirement

of doctors is several times more, especially in sub-divisions and blocks. Moreover, the number of beds is much less, 40 per cent less than is required. As a result, many patients are dying without getting admission in government hospitals.

As regards doctors' poor strength, there is a growing concern. These could be specialists who have completed or are on the verge of completing training in clinical specialties in medical colleges. Also those who have undergone a fellowship programme for 2-3 years after internship could too be requisitioned, besides those who are trained in Russia and China but couldn't clear the Indian exit exam. Final year nursing students, who finished training and are set to appear for the final exam, is another area that could be looked into.

On another front, there are reports that the Centre is not extending adequate financial help to states, some of whom are fighting the pandemic with scarce resources. As the situation is expected to deteriorate, the health infrastructure needs to be scaled up. Thus, requirement of beds, ventilators, ICU beds etc. need to be beefed up.

With accommodation in government hospitals bursting at the seams, there is need for strict vigilance of private nursing homes to ensure they don't charge the common man in access for beds, ventilator or medicines.

While there is no denying that doctors and nurses in states are doing a splendid job, inadequate health infrastructure is putting them at greater risk and a number of them have succumbed to the virus in the line of duty. It's critical to give them the additional support.

The challenge is daunting, the central government, instead of seeking mileage for an early discovery of a vaccine, may assist states by setting up 150-bed Covid hospitals for, say, six months under the Central Govt. Health Scheme (CGHS) in affected metros.

The nagging question persists – whether the situation shall improve, how soon, and will health infrastructure be given the requisite boost? Will the growing number of patients get adequate treatment? As a matter of priority, the Union Health Ministry may extend infrastructural support to the states.

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

Covid, animal funds

Sir, The prolonged lockdown is posing a survival threat to stray animals like bulls, cows and dogs as hotels and tea stalls are remaining closed. The government has extended funds to feed these animals too during the Covid times. In our municipality, around ₹45 lakh was reportedly spent on 30 wards, each getting ₹1.5 lakh a month for this purpose. But, there hardly is any such street-feeding, other than for a small vehicle roaming around, carrying a banner. Feeding stray dogs, cows, bulls. This is a double shame – that even this money is being pocketed by unscrupulous elements.

JanakiBallav Dash, MAYURBHANJ

Capital, no district

Sir, Bhubaneswar is the only state capital that is not made a district, and it falls under Khurda district. This is surprising, though the city has grown by leaps and bounds over the years and has a high stature of its own. It is high time the government applied its mind to this, and made Bhubaneswar a district separate from Khurda.

Gopal Mittal, PAHAL, BHUBANESWAR

Advantage India

Sir, The recent global shift provides a context for India to win back the territories snatched away from it by Pakistan and China. The US was in favour of Pakistan in 1971, but is now India's ally. India's friendship is growing stronger with Australia and Japan. Israel is also India's strategic friend. The world has a negative opinion about Pakistan and China in relation, respectively, to terrorism and Covid-19. China has hurt India in Ladakh. This is time for India to respond in a strong manner.

Maguni Charan Behera, ITANAGAR

Cops, physique

Sir, The police commissioner's strict instruction to cops to maintain good physique is well-taken. Without a strong body and stamina, cops cannot effectively discharge their duties. At the same time, police stations and cops must function in better ways. People are scared more of cops than of gangsters. A copy of FIR is a right of an individual when a case is registered, but this is not being given. Cops are often seen to be hand-in-glove with anti-social elements. The poor are victims of custodial deaths. Corruption among cops is high, as ever.

Pratyus Harichandan, BHUBANESWAR

DELUGE IN BIHAR

FLOODWATERS CONTINUE TO WREAK HAVOC IN THE COUNTRY'S THIRD-MOST POPULOUS STATE



A flooded street in Patna, Thursday

IT RAINED WOES

- 6.5 lakh people across 55 blocks of 282 panchayats in 10 districts affected
- 134 community kitchens operating in flood-affected areas
- Gandak river has caused havoc in Gopalganj
- However, water level of Gandak river is now on the decline
- Water level of Kosi also coming down rapidly



Vehicles ply on the flooded NH-28A following heavy monsoon rain at Raxaul in East Champaran



People wade through floodwater in Darbhanga

Response Force are working non-stop to rescue the people.

Disaster Management Department Additional Secretary Ramchandra Doo said that the department is on alert in view of the increased water level in various rivers.

The rising water level has affected 55 blocks of 282 panchayats in the 10 districts of Sitamarhi, Shivhar, Supaul, Kishanganj, Darbhanga, Muzaffarpur, Gopalganj, West Champaran, Khagaria and East Champaran.

About six and a half lakh people have been badly affected by the floods. Doo said that relief camps are being run in Supaul, West Champaran, two each in East Champaran, three in Gopalganj and one in Khagaria.

Apart from this, 134 community kitchens are being run in the flood-affected areas.

The Gandak river has caused much havoc in Gopalganj this year. Many villages in Sadar block have been submerged. Some children trapped in a madrasa were evacuated with the help of the district administration.

The same situation is there in Darbhanga. Flood water has entered 81 panchayats in 10 blocks of Darbhanga.

A water resources department official said Thursday that the water level of the Gandak river is decreasing. There was 2.12 lakh cusecs of water discharge at the Valmikinagar Gandak barrage at 8 am.

The water level of the Kosi is also coming down rapidly. The water flow in the Kosi river near the Veerpur barrage was 1.77 lakh cusecs at 6 am Thursday, which had come down to 1.73 lakh cusecs at 8 am.

According to the Water Resources Department, except the Ganga, the Bagmati, Budhi Gandak, Kamla Balan, Punpun, Mahananda and Ghaghra are flowing above the danger mark in most places in the state.

Though situation has improved a bit in Bihar, it's still struggling to limp back to normalcy

HP health official terms Covid spike 'temporary'

Official says the positivity rate in Himachal is 1.3 per cent which is much less than the norm of below 5 per cent set by the WHO and the Centre

AGENCIES

Shimla, July 23: Himachal Pradesh is doing much better in handling the Covid-19 pandemic compared to other states, a top health official has claimed, terming the recent spike in its cases "temporary."

The current situation arising out of the recent spike will stabilise soon, Additional Chief Secretary (Health) RD Dhiman told reporters Wednesday evening, seeking to assure people that the cases would reduce soon.

Attributing the recent spike in cases to the arrival of migrant workers, a marriage function in Sirmaur district and movement of the central armed police forces (CAPF) after Indo-China clash in Ladakh's Galwan valley, he said the testing rate is higher and death rate lower in the hill state.

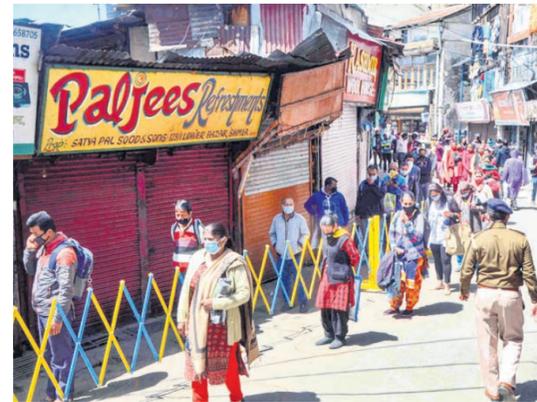
The recent positive cases of around 160 migrant workers of industrial town Baddi-Barotiwala-Nalagarh in Solan district, 80 persons of a marriage party at Gobindgarh in Nahan of Sirmaur district and several ITBP and army jawans are isolated ones, he said adding they have nothing to do with the people of the state in general.

The loopholes have been plugged by making quarantine for incoming industrial labourers mandatory a few days ago while the ITBP and Army jawans found positive were already quarantined with their cases having no chance of affecting locals, he added.

Dhiman said the death rate in the state is 0.84 per cent as compared to 2.45 per cent at the national level.

Every case is appropriately monitored and referred to a higher medical facility in case of any complication, he added.

As many as 17,000 persons out of the per million target population have been tested in HP so far compared to 11,000 at the national level, he added. Thirdly, the pos-



itivity rate in Himachal is 1.3 per cent which is much less than the norm of below 5 per cent set by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the central government, he added.

In reply to a question, Dhiman said there is no need to restrict people from meeting Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur once he starts attending office after a week of testing negative again.

"The Chief Minister is in public life, people meeting him cannot be restricted. Handling Covid-19 and other activities will go side by side. The only requirement is to maintain social distancing and to adopt cough etiquette to check the spread of the virus," he added.

Meanwhile, 44 people tested positive for Covid-19 Thursday in the state, with 42 in Solan alone, said Dhiman Thursday morning.

With this, the total number of Covid-19 cases in the state has risen to 1,770.

Of them, 630 are active cases, while 1,112 patients have recovered so far, he added. Eleven patients succumbed to the virus, whereas 15 patients migrated out of the state.

Need to jointly bear Covid burden, says CM on bus fare hike

SHIMLA: Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur Thursday hit out at the opposition Congress for criticising the Himachal Pradesh government over the recent hike in bus fares and for allowing tourists to the hill state during the Covid-19 pandemic. Thakur said it is the need of the hour to jointly bear the burden of handling Covid-19 and several other states, including Punjab, have also hiked the bus fare. The Chief Minister was addressing BJP workers of the Doon assembly segment in the Shimla parliamentary constituency online from his official residence here. He has been in self-quarantine since Wednesday afternoon after a deputy secretary in his office tested positive for coronavirus. The Congress, CITU and ABVP Tuesday demanded rollback of the 25 pc hike in bus fares in Himachal Pradesh.

AGENCIES

Patna, July 23: Flood waters have now started entering new areas in Bihar, triggering fears of more loss of life and property. Almost 6.50 lakh people in 10 districts have been affected by the floods so far.

Buildings in Gopalganj have all been submerged by the flood waters. The National Disaster Response Force and the State Disaster

Elusive snow leopards caught on camera in Kullu sanctuary

AGENCIES

Manali, July 23: For the first time, snow leopards — an adult and two cubs — have been documented on camera in the Great Himalayan National Park (GHNP) of Himachal Pradesh's Kullu district. The elusive snow leopards, the state animal of Himachal Pradesh, were spotted multiple times last winter in Lahaul-Spiti district along human habitations and their videos recorded by residents of Hikkim village had gone viral on social media early



this year. They are generally found above the altitude of 4,000 metres in summers and descend a bit lower during the winter season.

There have been multiple claims of sightings of snow leopards in the

national park, but their presence has been recorded on cameras for the first time. Now, similar cameras have captured a grown-up snow leopard at 19 locations in Kullu's Great Himalayan National Park, a World Heritage site, and it is accompanied by cubs at two locations. This is the first documented sighting of a snow leopard at multiple spots in the national park, leading to confirmation that the endangered big cat is breeding safely not only in Lahaul-Spiti district but also in Kullu.

Amid Covid, Patna AIIMS' nursing staff go on strike

AGENCIES

Patna, July 23: At least 400 nursing staff at the Patna AIIMS have gone on strike. It has added to the hospital administration's problems in managing the treatment of patients in this coronavirus crisis situation, officials said Thursday.

The striking non-permanent nurses have a number of demands including job security, increase in salary, health insurance, leave benefits like that of permanent employees.

The striking nurses said they have made a big contribution in the fight against Covid-19 and in such a situation if any of them fall ill, they



should get medical facilities like the permanent staff. The Patna AIIMS has been converted into a full-fledged Covid-19 treatment facility.

Meanwhile, the AIIMS administration said that it has accepted some

of the demands of the striking staff. However, the nurses' strike is still on and the administration officials are constantly talking to them.

In Bihar, the number of coronavirus positive patients has crossed

- Who are on strike?
- Non-permanent nurses
- What are their demands?
- Job security, increase in salary, health insurance, leave benefits like permanent employees'
- Their rationale
- They say they have made a big contribution in fight against Covid-19 and in such a situation if any of them falls ill, s/he should get medical facilities like permanent staff

30,000 out of which more than 200 infected people have died so far.

BIHAR POLLS

Manjhi 'won't jump ship' after Rahul's 'assurance'

AGENCIES

Patna, July 23: Former Bihar Chief Minister and Hindustani Awam Morcha (HAM) chief Jitan Ram Manjhi Thursday claimed to have received an assurance from Rahul Gandhi that his concerns about need for better "coordination" in the Grand Alliance will be squarely addressed.

The veteran leader also said that Gandhi's assurance was the reason why he has not jumped the ship despite repeated rebuffs from the RJD, which helms the five-party coalition. Manjhi, the founding president of the HAM, has been demanding establishment of a "coordination committee" of representatives of all coalition partners, drawing ridicule from the RJD which said that the former CM was venting his frustration over Tejashwi Yadav, four decades his junior, occupying the centre stage.

"I am aware that many people must be wondering what kind of a man Jitan Ram Manjhi is that he keeps setting deadlines for the formation of a coordination committee, despite nobody taking note of his ultimatums."

I have been in touch with the Congress. I have spoken to Rahul Gandhi and he has asked me to wait for some time. I understand the AICC in-charge for Bihar Shaktisinh Gohil has been entrusted with setting things right in the state

JITAN RAM MANJHI | CHIEF, HINDUSTANI AWAM MORCHA

"I strongly believe that if we put up a strong fight in Bihar against the NDA, it will be in the interests of the state. The RJD's stance is that of 'duragraha' (obstinacy). Still, I would not regret if good sense prevails on them in time," the HAM president told reporters here.

Manjhi, however, made it clear that he has had no discussions in the matter with the RJD, the party founded and headed by Lalu Prasad, at whose beckoning he had quit the NDA and joined the Grand Alliance and who had also played an instrumental role in getting the HAM president's son a berth in the legislative council, despite the fledgling party having a negligible presence in the Assembly.

AGENCIES

Shimla, July 23: It may come as a surprise, but a poor family in the BJP-ruled Himachal Pradesh had to sell their cow, a substantial source of income, for just Rs 6,000 to buy a smartphone so that their two children could stay connected with online studies amid the Covid-19 lockdown.

Considering the fact that the cow is regarded as holy and often referred to as mother in the rural setup, the sacrifice cannot be described as small by any means.

The man - Kuldeep Kumar - belonging to the Scheduled Caste lives in a dingy cowshed at Gummer village in Jwalamukhi tehsil, Kangra district. His daughter Anu and son Vansh are studying in Class IV and Class II, respectively, in a government school meant to serve the economically weaker section students, who are entitled to free education.

As the schools across the state started online classes in the wake of the pandemic, his children do not have a smartphone or an internet connection to keep up with online learning. "I purchased a smartphone for the children to continue the study," Kumar, for whom the Right to Education Act holds no relevance, told IANS.

"I was feeling bad that I could not



Kuldeep at his house

afford a device for my children so that they could attend online classes." "So I decided to sell one of my cows for Rs 6,000," an emotional Kumar said. He earns his livelihood by selling milk and his wife is a daily-wage earner. Before parting with the cow, Kumar and his family knocked on banks and private lenders to get a loan to buy a smartphone.

"With the switch from classroom teaching to online education, teachers are putting pressure on us that if you want to pursue education for your children, you have to buy a device. With no means of getting a smartphone with our meagre means, we finally decided to sell a

cow," he said.

Now, he has the lone cow to support his family. His struggle now is that the smartphone cannot simultaneously support the education of two children.

He foresees constant fights between them to attend classes. Kumar is deprived of getting the benefits meant for the poor. He is entitled to government privileges meant for BPL families or under the IRDP.

"I have applied for financial assistance for the construction of a house and inclusion of my name in the IRDP and the BPL schemes, but failed to get due to red-tapism," he rued. When local BJP legislator Ramesh

Dhawal was apprised about the poor financial condition of Kumar, he assured to extend government help.

"I have asked the BDO and the SDM to provide financial help to him immediately," he told IANS.

The digital divide

NEW DELHI: The government has been touting online classes as a viable alternative, but unequal and patchy access to the internet has meant the experience is vastly different depending on location and household income.

With more than 630 million subscribers, India is home to the world's second-largest internet user base. But connectivity is still an issue, especially since mobile data - rather than fixed line internet - is the main source. The signal is often uneven, making it hard to stream videos smoothly, and electricity supply is erratic, which means devices often

run out of charge.

All of this was recently flagged by state representatives to the federal ministry of human resource development, which oversees education in India. A newspaper quoted senior officials warning that almost 30 per cent of the central state of Jharkhand had poor connectivity, while similar complaints had been made in Arunachal Pradesh in the north-east.

There are other issues too. The internet device most Indians use is a mobile phone - so many students follow classes on cheap phones rather than laptops. Many poor households have only one phone, and access to it is unreliable.

And then there are those who cannot afford any device at all.

In the southern state of Kerala, for instance, a teenager killed herself, allegedly because her family could not afford a mobile phone or a television (lessons are being aired on a special educational channel). Her father told local journalists that he was a daily-wage earner and could not afford either.

"She was very worried that she would not be able to attend the classes. I had told her that some solution will be found by the teachers, but she was very upset," he said.

of the day quote

The party whose leaders are either out on bail or in jail, are talking about democracy. But I think the people too have now understood that instability in this state began under the rule of Gehlot

SATISH POONIA | BJP LEADER

Health camps, blood and plasma donation camps should be organized. Last four months' efforts are bearing fruit but we have to be alert

UDDHAV THACKERAY | MAHARASHTRA CM

The Maharashtra government will give single-window clearance to renewable energy projects in a bid to move towards cleaner sources of energy

NITIN RAUT | MAHARASHTRA MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Bangalore hosp bans dupatta

Bangalore: A city hospital here has banned woman Covid patients from wearing dupatta (long scarf) or similar garments, after two women committed suicide, said an official Thursday. "Two patients committed suicides with their sarees, that's why we have changed the dress code," KC General Hospital superintendent Venkateshaiah said. As part of the new dress code, the hospital has mandated that women patients should wear operation theatre dress, even though some older patients are not in favour of it. Incidentally, both the deceased women went to the bathroom and hanged themselves with their sarees. Meanwhile, the hospital has also asked the neighbouring patients to be vigilant and accompany them to the washroom.

One more Cong MLA resigns

Bhopal: The Congress in Madhya Pradesh suffered yet another setback Thursday after one more party MLA resigned from the Legislative Assembly, becoming the third legislator from the grand old party in the state to do so in less than two weeks. Narayan Patel, who represented the Mandhata constituency in Khandwa district, tendered his resignation to Assembly pro-tem Speaker Rameshwar Sharma, who accepted it. Sharma said, "Yes, I have accepted the resignation of the MLA."

Student found dead in hostel

Kolkata: A 26-year-old student of a state-run dental college was found hanging in her hostel room in Kolkata Thursday in a suspected case of suicide, police said. Manasi Mondal, a second-year post-graduate trainee of Dr R Ahmed Dental College and Hospital, did not attend her classes on Thursday. Her friends telephoned her but she did not answer. Her friends then reached Mondal's room and found that the door was bolted from inside. After repeated knocks on the door and calls failed to elicit a response, they informed the hospital authorities and subsequently the police were called.

Fine increased

Chandigarh: The Punjab government Thursday increased the fine for coronavirus patients violating home isolation rules from Rs 2,000 to Rs 5,000. At present, 951 patients are in home isolation across the state.



Prime Minister is 100 per cent focused on building his own image. India's captured institutions are all busy doing this task. One man's image is not a substitute for a national vision

RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

BOOST YOUR IMMUNITY

In an initiative to boost the immunity of officials working at Dabolim airport in Goa, a medicated tea service has been started by the Airports Authority of India in association with the Central Industrial Security Force



INTERNAL BICKERINGS

Bhopal, July 23: After the BJP took strong note of the dissidence and internal bickerings in the party in Madhya Pradesh ahead of the by-elections for 26 assembly seats and threatened action, the exercise seems to have paid off. Leaders who were openly expressing resentment against their own party have calmed down. By-elections are to be held in 26

BJP trying to quell voices of dissent in MP

assembly constituencies in the state and the BJP is going to field 24 of those turncoats who switched to the saffron fold from the Congress, from March to July. Due to this, many BJP leaders are dissatisfied and have also expressed anger on different occasions at various party forums. They have been questioning the party's changing character. Prominent among those who openly expressed anger are former minister and ex-MLA Deepak Joshi,

former minister Jaibhan Singh Pawaiya and Ajay Vishnoi, former MLA from Patan in Jabalpur. All three have voiced concern and anger over the newcomers getting preference in the party. They also posed this question to the party organization. BJP sources said that in addition to these three leaders, there are many more who have expressed disapproval about the influx of Congress leaders into the BJP. The reason for this is believed to be



their concern about their political future in the party. This prompted state BJP president Vishnu Dutt Sharma, general sec-

retary (Organization) Suhas Bhagat and Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan to discuss the issues with the dissidents, giving them an assurance that they will be accommodated as per their experience and capabilities either in the government or in the organization. Sharma denied that there is growing dissidence in the party and said that people keep on coming to meet him. They are satisfied now and there is no discontentment, he

added. Political analyst Arvind Mishra said that it is a big challenge for the BJP to manage the dissatisfaction of its long time leaders during this phase of change. The government and the organization are trying their best, but only time will tell how much success they will achieve. At the moment it seems that the party has managed to either convince the dissidents to remain silent or threatened them with action if they speak out.

Another stern message to China

In his weekly briefing, the Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said, "India is fully committed to observing and respecting the LAC and that we will not accept any unilateral attempts to change the status quo along the LAC"

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, July 23: India Thursday forcefully reiterated that it will not accept any unilateral attempts to change the status quo along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China.

In his weekly briefing, the Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said, "India is fully committed to observing and respecting the LAC and that we will not accept any unilateral attempts to change the status quo along the LAC."

The statement comes amid speculation that the talks between India and China are running into a stalemate over the LAC issue in Ladakh. Recalling his June 26 statement, Srivastava said, "I had noted that the conduct of Chinese forces this year, including the deployment of a large body of troops and changes in behaviour, accompanied by unjustified and untenable claims, has been in complete disregard of all the mutual agreements."

The spokesperson said, "Respecting and strictly abiding by the LAC is the basis of peace and tranquility in the border areas."



Several agreements concluded by India and China since 1993 firmly acknowledge this.

The two sides, he said, have agreed during the conversation of the Special Representatives to work towards complete disengagement of the troops along the LAC and de-escalation from India-China border areas for full restoration of peace and tranquility.

"Both sides are engaged in discussions through the established diplomatic and military channels to achieve this objective expeditiously," Srivastava said. The fourth round of the meeting of the Senior Commanders was held on July 14, where they also discussed further

steps to ensure complete disengagement.

Another meeting of the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on India-China Border Affairs (WMCC) is also expected to be scheduled soon, he said. The maintenance of peace and tranquility in the border areas is the basis of India-China bilateral relationship, the spokesperson said.

"Therefore, it is our expectation that the Chinese side will sincerely work with us for complete disengagement and de-escalation and full restoration of peace and tranquility in the border areas at the earliest as agreed to by the Special Representatives," Srivastava said.

EC defers bypolls till Sept 7

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, July 23: Amid the ongoing coronavirus pandemic and floods in some states, the Election Commission (EC) has deferred bye-elections to seven Assembly constituencies and one parliamentary constituency till September 7.

The EC will hold a detailed discussion on Friday in its full panel meeting related to the timing and other matters of the elections. The Assembly constituencies include Sibsagar in Assam, Thiruvottiyur and Gudiyattam in Tamil Nadu, Agar in Madhya Pradesh, Bulandshahr and Tundla in Uttar Pradesh and Chavara in Kerala.

The Parliamentary constituency where the bypoll stands deferred till September 7 is Valmiki Nagar in Bihar.

The Election Commission has said that the election at these constituencies will be conducted as soon as the conditions become conducive.

As per the provision, vacancies are required to be filled through bypolls within six months from the date of occurrence of vacancies. Besides these eight seats, bypolls for 49 more Assembly seats are to be held in the country for which the commission has clarified that the polls will be conducted as per the provisions of the law.

CREDIT SOCIETY SCAM

Shekhawat in trouble

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Jaipur, July 23: Four days after the Special Operation Group (SOG) sent a notice to Union minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat in connection with the purported audio clips indicating his alleged involvement in horse trading of MLAs in Rajasthan, a city court has directed the Rajasthan police to probe a complaint alleging Shekhawat's role in a credit society scam worth Rs 840 crore.

The additional district judge Pawan Kumar, on Tuesday, directed the additional chief judicial magistrate's court to send the complaint against Shekhawat to the SOG. Shekhawat, his wife and other partners have been named in the complaint in the Sanjivani Credit Cooperative Society scam in which around 50,000 investors allegedly lost about Rs 840 crore.

The Jaipur unit of the SOG has been probing the scam since last year after an FIR was registered on August 23, 2019.

Now, Jaipur ADJ Court-8 ordered a fresh inquiry in the case against Gajendra Singh accepting the revised application filed by Lagu Singh and Guman Singh and said that "this is a serious matter and hence SOG should investigate this".

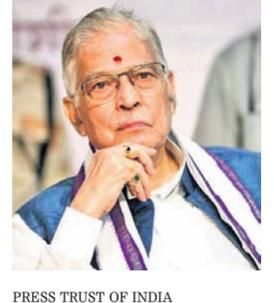
Both the applicants had invested



a huge amount in Sanjivani credit cooperative society. It is alleged in the complaint that a multi-storey building has been built with the money instead of a theatre which was proposed earlier and many properties were also bought in Ethiopia with the money.

An SOG investigation also reveals that a large amount of money has been deposited into accounts of Shekhawat and his wife at different time spans, said sources. Earlier, Shekhawat was not mentioned in the chargesheet filed by the SOG in connection with the case. Later, a magistrate's court also rejected the application to include him in the chargesheet. The applicants then approached the additional district judge's court with a revised application.

Babri demolition case: Joshi pleads innocence



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow, July 23: Veteran BJP leader Murlimanohar Joshi Thursday asserted before a special CBI court holding the 1992 Babri mosque demolition trial that he was innocent and implicated in the case by the then Congress government at the Centre.

The 86-year-old leader pleaded innocence while making his statement under section 313 of the CrPC through video conference to the court of Special Judge S K Yadav. Former Deputy prime minister L K Advani, 92, too is slated to depose before the court through video conference on Friday. In his deposition to the court, Joshi blamed the then central government for "falsely" implicating him due to "political vendetta".

He also refuted the prosecution evidence saying they were "false and inspired by political reasons".

The court is presently at the stage of recording the evidence of various accused, totalling 32, in the Babri mosque demolition trial after examination of the prosecution witnesses.

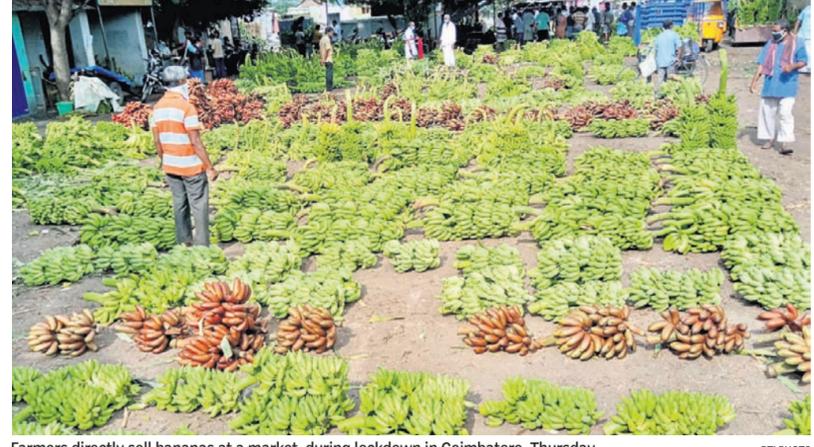
At this stage of the trial, an accused gets the opportunity to refute the prosecution evidence against him. After Joshi completed his deposition to the court, Judge Yadav asked his office to send a copy of his statement to the CBI in New Delhi.

The CBI will then get the Joshi's statement signed by him in New Delhi and send it back to the court in Lucknow. The court recorded Joshi's statement in the presence of his counsel Vimal Kumar Srivastava, K K Mishra and Abhishek Ranjan.

The counsel for prosecution agency CBI, Lalit Singh, R K Yadav and P Chakravarti too were present in the court during its proceedings. The mosque in Ayodhya was demolished on December 6, 1992, by 'kar sevaks' who claimed that an ancient Ram temple existed at the same site.

Advani and Joshi were among the BJP leaders, spearheading the Ram Janmabhoomi temple movement at that time.

FRUITS OF LABOUR



Farmers directly sell bananas at a market, during lockdown in Coimbatore, Thursday

Students don teachers' role in Telangana

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Hyderabad, July 23: At a time when there are no clear-cut guidelines on conducting online classes in Telangana, students of the state social and tribal welfare residential educational institutions have turned teachers for their classmates.

According to RS Praveen Kumar, secretary, Telangana Social Welfare Residential Educational

Institutions Society (TSWREIS) and Telangana Tribal Welfare Residential Educational Institutions Society (TTWREIS), the initiative-Village Learning Circles- is being implemented to promote continuity of studies while schools remain closed due to COVID-19 induced lockdown without any certainty over start of the academic year.

He said though the idea is meant for students of TSWREIS and

TTWREIS, children of other schools are also participating in the VLC. "The VLCs are being operated from homes, panchayat offices, churches, schools, religious places and other makeshift learning centres in villages. Students with good communication and teaching skills take up the role of teachers and impart learning to their younger school-mates and peers in his or her village," Praveen Kumar said.

ANXIETY AND TRAUMA

Jolted by quakes, many spending nights in tents

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Aizawl, July 23: Many people in Mizoram's Champhai district bordering Myanmar are spending nights outside their homes in makeshift tents after a series of earthquakes hit the northeastern state in a month, an official said.

So far, at least 22 earthquakes have rocked four districts - Champhai, Saitual, Siaha and Serchhip since June 18. The tremors ranged from 4.2 to 5.5 in magnitude. Champhai was the hardest-hit

district.

Champhai district Deputy Commissioner Maria CT Zuali said that makeshift tents were set up at several villages by people and the district administration provided tarpaulins, water barrels, solar lamps and first-aid kits to them.

She said that biscuits and sorazo (food supplements) were also provided to old people. According to the deputy commissioner, at least 20 earthquakes have hit Champhai district in a month. She said that more than 16 villages have been af-



ected by the earthquakes and over 170 houses, including churches and community halls were damaged.

At Dungle, one of the worst-hit villages in Champhai district, at least five makeshift camps have

been set up, Dungle Young Mizo Association (YMA) Assistant Secretary John Zothanmawia Fanai said.

Monday, the government sent three teams of doctors that con-

sisted of psychiatrists, clinical psychologists and medical specialists to the quake-hit areas to assist the people, who developed mental trauma following the quakes.

The teams are currently touring affected villages in Champhai district. Dr C Lalhrekima, a psychiatrist in a government hospital, leading one of the teams, said that many people have anxiety due to frequent earthquakes.

"We are giving counselling to the panic-stricken people apart from giving medical care," he said.

Corona stings Karnataka's 'pond digger'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bangalore, July 23: Karnataka's octogenarian farmer Kamegowda, whom Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently praised for digging 16 ponds around his village to conserve water in Mandya district, has tested Covid positive, his son Krishna said Wednesday.

"As my 85-year-old father (Kamegowda) is an asthma patient and was having breathing problem, he was admitted to the state-run hospital in Mandya on Tuesday where his swab sample tested positive," Krishna said.

Kamegowda's village Dasanadoddi is 27 km from Mandya and 120 km southwest of Bangalore.

"The district officials sent an ambulance to our home on Monday night and took my father and admitted him to the district hospital. As Covid test is mandatory for all patients, especially the elderly, his swab sample was taken on Tuesday and its result returned positive," Krishna said.

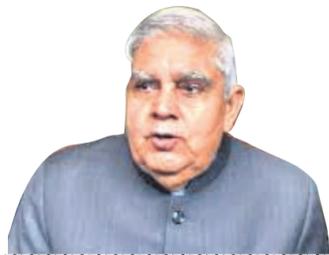
Kamegowda's family, including his two sons and daughters-in-law, have also given their swab samples for testing.

"We are under home quarantine awaiting our test results. As my father is asymptomatic and responding to the treatment, we hope and pray to god that he recovers soon," said Krishna.

Mandya Deputy Commissioner M.V. Venkatesh also said that Kamegowda was asymptomatic and was responding well to the treatment.

Meanwhile, the district health-care personnel are doing contact tracing to isolate and quarantine people besides Kamegowda's family members.

In his monthly radio programme "Mann Ki Baat" on June 28, Prime Minister Modi had said that with the onset of southwest monsoon in many parts of the country, people should practice rain-water harvesting to protect the environment, just like Kamegowda was doing in Karnataka even though he was over 80 years old.



As the Governor of the state, I am extremely worried to see this alarming decline in the law and order situation
JAGDEEP THAKUR | GOVERNOR OF WEST BENGAL

MP MINISTER TESTS COVID+

Arvind Bhadoria, the Cooperative Minister in the Shivraj Singh Chouhan-led Madhya Pradesh government, has tested positive for the Novel Coronavirus



of the day quote

You must have seen the chaotic conditions in hospitals of Bareilly, Lucknow. The CM, who is boasting about good health facilities, is interested in hiding these conditions, not improving them
PRİYANKA GANDHI VADRA | CONGRESS GENERAL SECRETARY

We have decided to invest roughly about ₹75 crore in PHCs and CHCs to improve their infrastructure, including power and water supplies
CONRAD SANGMA | CHIEF MINISTER OF MEGHALAYA

The total money spent on COVID management is Rs 4,167 crore whereas state Health Minister B Srimamulu says only ₹324 crore has been spent. Equipment and materials were purchased double or triple the existing cost. At least Rs 2,000 crore has been pocketed by the ministers and officials
SIDDARAMAIAH | EX-KARNATAKA CM

Covid tally crosses 12-lakh mark

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 23: With the highest single-day spike of 45,720 cases, India's COVID-19 tally crossed the 12-lakh mark on Thursday, while the death toll mounted to 29,861 with a record 1,129 fatalities in a day, according to the Union Health Ministry data.

The country crossed the 12-lakh mark, just three days after it went past the 11-lakh milestone. The coronavirus caseload in the country surged to 12,38,635 on Thursday, while 7,82,606 people have recovered so far in the country, the data updated at 8 am showed.

There are 4,26,167 active cases of coronavirus infection presently in the country. Around 63.18 per cent people have recovered so far. Maharashtra (10,576), Tamil Nadu (5,849), Karnataka (4,764), Uttar Pradesh (2,300), West Bengal (2,291), Telangana (1,554), Bihar (1,417), Assam (1,390), Delhi (1,227), Odisha (1,078), Kerala (1,038) and Gujarat (1,020) contributed to around 75 per cent of the total single-day spike of 45,720.

Of the 1,129 deaths reported in the last 24 hours, 518 are from Tamil Nadu, 280 from Maharashtra, 65 from Andhra Pradesh, 55 from Karnataka, 39 from West Bengal, 34 from Uttar Pradesh, 29 from Delhi,



28 from Gujarat, 14 from Madhya Pradesh and 10 from Jammu and Kashmir.

Telangana and Jharkhand have reported nine fatalities each followed by Haryana with eight deaths, Assam, Punjab and Rajasthan six each, Goa and Uttarakhand two each while Kerala, Puducherry, Tripura and Chandigarh have registered a fatality each.

The number of tests for detection of the COVID-19 has crossed the 15 crore-mark in the country. According to the ICMR, a cumulative total of 1,50,75,369 samples have been tested up to July 22 with 3,50,823 samples being tested on Wednesday.

The country crossed the 12-lakh mark, just three days after it went past the 11-lakh milestone

There are 4,26,167 active cases of coronavirus infection presently

7,82,606 people have recovered so far

Of the total 29,861 deaths reported so far, Maharashtra tops the tally with 12,556 fatalities followed by Delhi with 3,719 deaths, Tamil Nadu 3,144, Gujarat 2,224, Karnataka 1,519, Uttar Pradesh 1,263, West Bengal 1,221, Andhra Pradesh 823 and Madhya Pradesh 770.

So far, 583 people have died of COVID-19 in Rajasthan, 438 in Telangana, 372 in Haryana, 273 in Jammu and Kashmir, 269 in Punjab, 217 in Bihar, 108 in Odisha, 64 in Assam and Jharkhand each, 57 in Uttarakhand and 45 in Kerala.

Puducherry has registered 31 deaths, Chhattisgarh 29, Goa 28, Chandigarh 13, Himachal Pradesh 11, Tripura 9, Meghalaya 4,

Jadhav case: India lashes out at Pak

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 23: India Thursday said Pakistan has once again exposed its "farcical" approach by denying available legal remedies to Kulbushan Jadhav against his death sentence which is also in contravention of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) verdict, and asserted that it will explore further options in the case.

External affairs ministry spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said India appointed a Pakistani lawyer as advised by Islamabad to help Jadhav file a review petition in a court but it could not be done in the absence of a Power of Attorney and supporting documents related to the case. He said Pakistan has blocked all the avenues for an effective remedy available to India in the case, while noting that New Delhi has so far requested consular access to Jadhav for 12 times over the past one year.

"The whole exercise of not providing documents related to the case even after repeated requests, not providing an unimpeded consular access and some reported unilateral action of approaching the High Court on part of Pakistan



again exposes the farcical nature of Pakistan's approach," he said. The MEA spokesperson said Pakistan is not only in violation of the judgment of ICJ, but also of its own Ordinance.

"Pakistan has completely failed to provide the remedy as directed by the ICJ and India reserves its position in the matter, including its rights to avail of further remedies," Srivastava added. It is believed that India will seek legal advice on its next possible step in the case which could include again approaching the ICJ on the ground that Pakistan did not comply with the tribunal's order.

Earlier, Pakistan said July 20 is the last date to file a review petition in Islamabad High Court against Jadhav's conviction on charges of espionage and terrorism.

SHORT TAKES

2 Naxals killed

Raipur: Two Naxals were allegedly killed by their colleagues after they refused to carry out an order to destroy a road built in their village in Chhattisgarh's insurgency-hit Dantewada district, police said Thursday. Three villagers were also injured in the incident after they were thrashed by ultras for trying to save the two cadres, an official said. The incident took place at Potali village under Aranpur police station limits late on Wednesday night, Dantewada superintendent of police Abhishek Pallava said.

Girl ends life

Durg: Upset about the death of actor Sushant Singh Rajput, a 13-year-old girl allegedly committed suicide in Chhattisgarh's Durg district, police said Thursday. The Class 7 student was found hanging from the ceiling of her home in sector-7 of Bhalai town on Wednesday evening, said Trinath Tirpathi, station house officer of Bhalai Nagar police station. "A suicide note was recovered from the scene, in which the girl has stated that she was taking the extreme step as she was upset about the death of actor Sushant Singh Rajput," he said.

History-sheeter gunned down

Jaipur: A history-sheeter was gunned down outside his house by some unidentified assailants in Rajasthan's Ajmer city, police said Thursday. Ajmer Superintendent of Police Kunwar Rashtadeep said the slain man Vikram Sharma was a history-sheeter and shot dead by the accused who were on a motorcycle on Wednesday night in Christianganj police station area. The body was handed over to family members after a post-mortem Thursday.

Woman gangraped

Pratapgarh (UP): A 32-year-old woman was allegedly gang-raped in a village under Fatanpur police station area here, police said Thursday. The victim lodged a complaint in which it is alleged that she had contacted Sangam Lal alias Lala and Dinesh for renting a house. Both of them had called her to a secluded place to talk about the rent where they allegedly raped her on Wednesday, Raniganj Deputy Superintendent of Police Atul Anjan said.

Doctor tries to rape corona patient in UP

ACCORDING TO REPORTS, DOCTOR TUFAIL AHMAD, 30, WAS BOOKED AND LATER ARRESTED FROM A HOTEL WHERE HE HAD QUARANTINED HIMSELF AFTER COMPLETING HIS DUTY IN THE ISOLATION WARD

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Aligarh (Uttar Pradesh), July 23: A government doctor at Aligarh's Deen Dayal hospital was arrested Wednesday on charges of molesting and attempting to rape a 25-year-old woman, who was recuperating in the isolation ward after being tested positive for coronavirus.

According to reports, Doctor Tufail Ahmad, 30, was booked and later arrested from a hotel where he had quarantined himself after completing his duty in the isolation ward. The victim said in her complaint that Tufail visited the women's ward on Tuesday night and allegedly touched the private parts of the patient on the pretext of examining her. Wednesday morning, the doctor again visited her and repeated the same act. The case was filed against him on the basis of a complaint lodged by the girl, who works

in a private company in Delhi and had come to her home in Aligarh where she developed symptoms of coronavirus.

She was admitted at the hospital on Monday with Covid-19 symptoms and the test report confirmed the positive status a day later. After examining the CCTV footage, police said that the doctor went to the isolation ward without wearing PPE kit and gloves.

Circle officer of the Civil Lines police station, Anil Samaniya, said that the doctor has been booked under section 376(2)(d) (takes advantage of his official position and commits rape on a woman in his custody) of IPC at the Quawarsi police station.

Additional City Magistrate, Ranjeet Singh, said that a report has been sought from the Chief Medical Superintendent (CMS) of the hospital and it will be submitted to the state government for further action.



An artist giving finishing touches to Ganesha idols in Mumbai, Thursday

UNI PHOTO

Robbers return to ask ATM card pin, held

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Noida, July 23: Two men on a bike, who were trying to escape after robbing the mobile phone and wallet of a man, were caught in Noida following a gunfight with the police, officials said Thursday.

The incident took place Wednesday night on a road near a village under Phase-3 police station limits, Central Noida Deputy Commissioner of Police Harish Chander said.

"The accused were escaping after robbing the mobile phone



and wallet of a man, who was out for dinner, at gunpoint.

There was some cash, driver's license, Aadhaar card and an ATM card in the wallet of the victim. After going to some distance, the robbers returned to the victim to

ask for the pin code of his ATM card and then escaped again," he said.

The matter was immediately reported to the local police station and the bike was stopped at a security check in the area, the officer said.

"When asked to stop for checking, they opened fire on the police team and sped away. They were chased by the policemen and the two got injured in retaliatory firing after which they were caught and taken to a nearby hospital for treatment," DCP Chander said.

Covid prompts farmers to use machines

THE DSR MACHINES ALLOW FARMERS TO GROW MORE THAN 30 SAPPLINGS PER SQUARE METRE AGAINST THE USUAL 15 TO 18 SEEDLINGS, SAID NARESH GULATI, A STATE GOVERNMENT FARM OFFICIAL IN PUNJAB

REUTERS

Raipur Jattan, July 23: For more than two decades, farmer Ravindra Kajal cultivated rice the way his forefathers had - every June he flooded his fields with water before hiring an army of farmhands to plant paddy seedlings.

But a scarcity of workers this year because of the coronavirus forced Mr Kajal to change. He irrigated the field just enough to moisten the soil and leased a drilling machine to directly sow seeds on his 9-acre plot.

"Since I was more than comfortable with the tried-and-tested way of growing rice, I opted for the new method with some trepidation," said Mr Kajal, 46, looking over his field, green with rice saplings, in Raipur Jattan village in Haryana.



"But I've already saved around ₹7,500 per acre because I hardly spent on water and workers this year," he said. India is the world's biggest exporter of rice and the world's second-biggest producer after China. Across the country's grain bowl states of Haryana and neighbouring Punjab, thousands of farmers like Mr Kajal have been forced by the coronavirus

to mechanise planting.

They are still wary of the technology and overturning the time-honoured use of manual labour.

But Kahan Singh Pannu, Punjab's Agriculture Secretary, is convinced a historic change is underway that could dramatically increase India's rice output, which in turn could impact world markets.

"It is no less than a revolution in Indian agriculture," he told Reuters. Government officials say the so-called direct seeding of rice (DSR) method could increase yields by about one-third and slash costs on workers and water.

The DSR machines allow farmers to grow more than 30 saplings per square metre against the usual 15 to 18 seedlings, said Naresh Gulati, a state government farm official in Punjab.

Punjab is the home of the 1960s Green Revolution that led to a spike in crop yields. This year, farmers there have used seed drilling machines to sow rice on more than half a million hectares, a big increase compared with less than 50,000 hectares in 2019, growers and government officials said. Mr Pannu expects DSR use to

jump again next year.

"More and more farmers are using the DSR technology which seems to be so promising that the entire 2.7 million hectares of Punjab's rice area could come under it next year, which will be a watershed for India's rice production," he said.

Avinash Kishore, a research fellow at the Washington-based International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), said if this year's crop was good, DSR would be the way forward. "The scale of this year's shift to the DSR is a momentous change in rice cultivation in India," he said.

Sudhanshu Singh, a senior agronomist at the International Rice Research Institute in the Philippines, said the shift to DSR was "one of the rare positive fallouts from COVID."

ASSAM TO RELEASE 376 PRISONERS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Guwahati, July 23: The Assam government will release 376 prisoners in the next few days to decongest jails across the state after 535 inmates tested positive for COVID-19, an official said on Thursday.

Of the 376 prisoners to be released, 111 are presently lodged in Guwahati Central Jail, he said. The rest of the prisoners are now lodged in the district jails of Nalbari, Dhubri, Karimganj, North Lakhimpur, Golaghat, Diphu and Udalguri, he added.

Assam Inspector General of Prisons Dasarath Das told PTI that 535 prisoners in 10 jails across the state have been affected by the pandemic. The highest number of 435 is from Guwahati. Das said the authorities were releasing prisoners at regular intervals according to the direction of the Supreme Court to decongest the jails and another set of inmates will be released soon.

"The High Powered Committee formed after the SC set the guidelines met yesterday. We have sent a proposal to release 376 prisoners from eight overcrowded jails. This includes 111 inmates from Guwahati Central Jail," he said.

MONKEYS WREAK HAVOC IN T'GANA

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Hyderabad, July 23: Monkeys wreaked havoc, killing around 30 lambs in a village in Telangana's Suryapet district Wednesday, officials said.

The incident occurred in Shobanadrigudem village, notorious for monkey menace. A group of about 20 monkeys attacked the lambs in a shed left behind by a shepherd while taking the herd of sheep for grazing in agriculture fields. No one was present in the house, the simians attacked the hapless lambs which were about 30 days old. Some neighbours tried to chase away the monkeys but failed. All the lambs died of being bitten by monkeys.

Suryapet is one of the districts in the state facing monkey menace. Hordes of monkeys enter homes, raid business establishments and harass people. Shopkeepers in some villages in the districts keep huge stuffed tiger toys to keep away the monkeys. There are thousands of monkeys and they attack the homes and shops in hordes, steal eatables and even bite the villagers.

Districts like Peddapalli in north Telangana have come out with a novel solution. They have developed Vanara Vanams (monkey sanctuaries) in the worst affected districts. Fruit bearing trees are being grown to ensure that the monkeys don't venture into human habitations.

international



The way Trump deals with people based on the colour of their skin, their national origin, where they're from, is absolutely sickening
JOE BIDEN | FORMER VICE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

FIGHT AGAINST nCoV

Scientists have developed a rapid test to detect antibodies in COVID-19 patients that specifically block the novel coronavirus, an advance that may lead to faster methods for estimating the population level infection rate of the disease



of the day quote

North Korea's weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missile programs undermine our shared strategic interest in peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula
STEPHEN BIEGUN | DEPUTY SECRETARY OF US STATE

Pakistan has witnessed a decline in the number of coronavirus cases after the government implemented a smart lockdown in various cities
SHAH MAHMOOD QURESHI | PAK FOREIGN MINISTER

It's very, very valuable in terms of the support we've been able to give everybody throughout all corners of the UK
BORIS JOHNSON | BRITISH PRIME MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Sri Lanka port workers protest

Colombo: Wearing black arm bands, the workers of the strategic Colombo Port have restarted their protest against a proposed deal with India to develop a deep-sea container terminal of the country's largest and busiest port. The workers ended their protest July 3 following a meeting with Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa, a day after they had threatened to go on an indefinite strike if the government allowed a foreign country to develop the Eastern Container Terminal (ECT).

Saudi king, 84, undergoes surgery

Dubai: Saudi Arabia's King Salman underwent a successful surgery that removed his gallbladder, the kingdom said Thursday, just days after being admitted to the hospital over an inflammation of the organ. Surgeons at Riyadh's King Faisal Specialist Hospital operated on the king, the state-run Saudi Press Agency reported, describing the procedure as a laparoscopic surgery. That's a low-risk procedure that usually involves only small incisions and a small camera to aid the surgeons' work.

Rome could face second lockdown

Rome: Rome could be forced into a second lockdown after the Italian region of Lazio, which includes the capital city, witnessed a resurgence of coronavirus cases, it was reported. Authorities in the Lazio warned Wednesday that restrictions to curb the spread of the virus may be reintroduced if cases continued to increase in the region, reports the Metro newspaper.

20 injured in Pak bomb blast

Peshawar: A bomb planted on a vegetable cart went off at a busy open-air market in a tribal district in northwestern Pakistan Thursday, injuring at least 20 people including a child, police said. The bomb blast occurred in Turi Bazar in the city of Parachinar when the explosives went off as people were busy buying groceries and vegetables. Parachinar District Superintendent of Police Najab Ali said the cause of the explosion was an improvised explosive device (IED) that was fitted inside a vegetable cart. The injured were rushed to the District Headquarters Hospital.

India, Israel to jointly develop rapid COVID-19 testing tools

India and Israel will join forces for research and development of rapid testing tools for Covid-19 that can detect the virus under 30 seconds

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jerusalem, July 23: Merging Israel's technological expertise with India's mass production capabilities, experts from the two countries have joined hands to develop rapid testing for COVID-19 in under 30 seconds. Israel will soon send a high level research delegation to India to conduct a series of "final stages of testing" as part of the joint effort to develop the rapid testing kits for COVID-19.

A high ranking team from the Directorate of Defence Research and Development (DDR&D), in the Ministry of Defense, which has been working with India's DRDO to develop rapid testing for COVID-19 in under 30 seconds, is to leave from Tel Aviv to New Delhi on a special flight in a few days, Israel's Ministry of Defence said in a statement Thursday. Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and Ministry of Health are also involved in this unprecedented cooperation between the two countries which aims at "merging Israeli technology with Indian development and production capabilities to allow a swift resumption of normal life alongside the virus".

The DDR&D team will conduct a series of "final stages of testing" to determine the effectiveness of a number of rapid diagnostic solutions with their Indian counterparts. Since the start of the pandemic, the DDR&D has tested dozens of diagnostic technologies. Some of them have matured and passed initial trials in



Israel, however in order to complete testing and prove their effectiveness, these must be tested on a wide range of patients, IMoD said. The four tech systems that will be tested are - voice test, breathalyzer test based on terra-hertz waves, isothermal test, and polyamino acids test. "What they all have in common is the ability to detect the presence of the virus in the body quickly - usually within minutes. Developing diagnostic capabilities is a goal for the State of Israel and of many additional countries around the world. It is the most effective way to cut off 'chains of infection', prevent prolonged quarantine and enable the reopening of the global economy," the statement said.

"We hope that the research and development led by the DDR&D together with our excellent industries and academic institutions, will lead to a breakthrough that will change the way we diagnose and fight the virus, while giving the boost necessary to 'restart' our economy,"

Defense Minister Benny Gantz said. Foreign Minister Gabi Ashkenazi noted that this cooperation provides a unique opportunity for scientific and technological cooperation that can assist Israel, India and the world in coping both with the pandemic and with the economic crisis that came with it. The cooperation between Israel and India will enable the delegation and its Indian counterparts, to collect tens of thousands of samples in just ten days, and analyze them using computer systems based on artificial intelligence. This massive sampling will shorten processes and advance the approval of effective technology. All tests will be validated using PCR tests.

The flight will be carrying some breakthrough emerging Israeli technologies for combatting COVID-19, which have been donated by the Israeli foreign ministry and the private sector, in order to bolster India's response to the virus outbreak.

China launches first Mars mission

China aims to catch up with India, the US, Russia and the European Union to reach the red planet

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Beijing, July 23: China successfully launched its first Mars probe Thursday, aiming to complete orbiting, landing and roving in a single mission, taking an ambitious step towards planetary exploration of the solar system.

A Long March-5 rocket, China's largest and most powerful launch vehicle, carrying the spacecraft with a mass of about five tonnes, soared into the sky from the Wenchang Spacecraft Launch Site on the coast of southern China's island province of Hainan, the official Xinhua news agency reported.



About 36 minutes after the launch, the spacecraft, including an orbiter and a rover, was sent into the Earth-Mars transfer orbit, embarking on an almost seven-month journey to the red planet, according to the China National Space Administration (CNSA).

The Chinese Mars probe named Tianwen 1 or Quest for Heavenly Truth 1, will fulfil three scientific objectives: orbiting the red planet for comprehensive observation, landing on Martian soil and sending a rover to roam the landing site. It should arrive in orbit around the red planet in February. The Long March 5 rocket will transport the robotic probe to the Earth-Mars transfer trajectory before the spacecraft begins its self-propelled flight toward Mars' gravity field.

According to China Aerospace Science and Technology Corp, a State-owned space conglomerate, the probe will travel for about seven months before it reaches Mars, which is at the farthest point of its orbit is about 400 million kilometres from Earth and 55 million kilometres at the nearest point. It said the probe consists of three parts - the orbiter, the lander and the rover - and they will separate in Mars orbit. The orbiter will remain in the orbit for scientific operations and to relay signals while the lander-rover combination makes an autonomous descent and landing.

The rover has six wheels and four solar panels and carries six scientific instruments.

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N Korea ranks worst in nuclear material security

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Seoul, July 23: North Korea's handling of nuclear materials remains the worst in the world, a non-profit group said Thursday.

According to the report by the Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI), a Washington-based group working to curb the threat of nuclear terrorism and accidents, North Korea ranked the last among the 22 countries reviewed in terms of the security of its nuclear materials, scoring just 19 points out of a total of 100, reports Yonhap News Agency.



North Korea has ranked last on five consecutive reports since the group created the index in 2012. The NTI conducts the index on countries with 1 kg or more of weapons-usable nuclear materials to assess their level of security based on several indices, including the amount of nuclear materials and sites.

North Korea was also among the four countries that are increasing the quantity of their weapons-usable nuclear materials, the report said.

Trump hints at closure of more Chinese consulates

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, July 23: The US does not rule out the possibility of closing more Chinese diplomatic missions in the country, President Donald Trump has said, hours after Washington ordered the closure of Beijing's consulate in Houston to "protect American intellectual property and private information".

The US move came amid a growing number of disputes between the two countries over Beijing's increasingly aggressive actions that have led Washington to take strong actions, including closing the consulate in Houston, according to senior Trump administration officials. The consulate in Houston, Texas, is one of five Chinese diplomatic missions in the US, not count-



ing the embassy in Washington DC. The US move came after the Justice Department said that hackers working with the Chinese government targeted firms developing vaccines for the coronavirus and stole hundreds of millions of dollars worth of intellectual property and trade secrets from com-

panies across the world. "As far as closing additional embassies, it's always possible," Trump told reporters Wednesday during a daily press briefing at the White House when asked if he is looking at closing more Chinese diplomatic missions in the US.

The US State Department in a brief statement Wednesday said it has "directed the closure of PRC (People's Republic of China) Consulate General Houston, in order to protect American intellectual property and American's private information".

Reacting strongly to the US move, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin Wednesday termed it as an "unprecedented escalation" and warned retaliatory measures.



A helicopter sprays water as a wildfire burns near the village of Kechries, Greece

REUTERS

'Wear a mask even at home'



REUTERS

Madrid, July 23: Face masks should be worn even at home if you are with people you do not live with, an official from the Madrid region said Thursday, even though he conceded there was no way to enforce such a recommendation.

In Madrid they are mandatory everywhere in public unless people are outdoors and can keep a 1.5 metre distance. In most of the country, they must be worn in public regardless of safe distances, but with no rules on wearing them at home.

"We recommend, as a precaution, the wearing of masks in private spaces when there are meetings or gatherings of people who don't live together," Enrique Ruiz Escudero, the health chief of the Madrid region, told a news conference.

"We feel it is important since the majority of outbreaks happen in family or friends meetings or celebrations gathering people who don't live together."

The official said it was up to each citizen to wear a mask in private gatherings, adding that most people in Madrid were already wearing one outdoors even without it being mandatory.

Madrid was one of the hardest-hit regions at the peak of the pandemic, but has over the past weeks reported far fewer cases than Catalonia and Aragon, where most of the new clusters have been reported.

The Canary islands region popular with tourists, the only other area in Spain where masks are not mandatory outdoors if people can keep a safe distance, has issued a video with a similar message.

A surge of new users for Twitter

ASSOCIATED PRESS

London, July 23: The global pandemic and US protests are forcing a pullback by advertisers on Twitter, but it's also led to an unprecedented surge of users.

Average daily user growth spiked 34 per cent in the second quarter, the company said Thursday, the largest jump in users ever recorded by the company. In an earnings call, CEO Jack Dorsey addressed an embarrassing hacking incident last week that compromised the accounts of high profile users, saying he felt "terrible" about it.



Shares of Twitter surged more than 6% before the opening bell. But the company took a huge tax hit to earnings, posting a net loss of \$1.2 billion, or \$1.56 per share, in the April-June period, compared with profit of \$1.1 billion, or \$1.43 per share, a year earlier.

Twitter's advertising business was hit harder than its larger rivals Google and Facebook, and analysts had expected the bleeding to continue in the second quarter.

UNGA MEET TO GO VIRTUAL FOR FIRST TIME IN 75 YEARS

The landmark 75th session of the UN General Assembly is expected to begin September 15 and the first day of the high-level general debate is likely to be held September 22

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

United Nations, July 23: World leaders will submit pre-recorded video statements for the United Nations General Assembly session in September, the 193-member organisation has decided, as heads of state and government will not be physically attending the annual gathering due to the coronavirus pandemic and the high-level session goes virtual for the first time in the UN's 75-year history.

The landmark 75th session of the UN General Assembly will begin September 15. The General Debate is held at the beginning of each session of the General Assembly and usually runs for over a week when

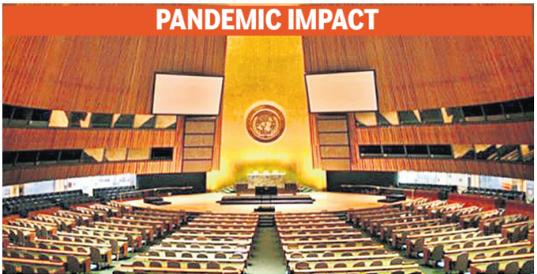
leaders and ministers from the 193 UN member states address the world from the iconic lectern in the General Assembly hall.

The General Assembly adopted a decision Wednesday that "each Member State, observer State and the European Union can submit a pre-recorded statement of its Head of State, Vice-President, Crown Prince or Princess, Head of Government, Minister or Vice-Minister, which will be played in the General Assembly Hall during the general debate of the Assembly at its seventy-fifth session, the high-level meeting to commemorate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations and the high-level meetings after introduction by their

representative who is physically present in the Assembly Hall."

The new format will mean that it will be for the first time in the world organisation's 75-year history that global leaders will not gather here for the high-level week that annually brings thousands of diplomats, government officials, civil society members and media persons from around the world to New York City. Telecommuting arrangements have been in place at the UN headquarters here since mid-March as coronavirus spread rapidly across New York, making the state the epicentre of the pandemic in the US.

The UN headquarters began its first phase of re-opening July 20, under which no more than 400 peo-



ple will be allowed to be present at the premises on any given day, in order to minimise the risk of exposure to the virus and to allow for physical distancing. Those present in the premises will have to follow

strict social distancing guidelines. The General Assembly meeting to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the United Nations will take place September 21 and the Declaration will be formally adopted

at the meeting. The General Debate of the 75th session of the Assembly will commence from September 22.

Along with the General Debate and 75th anniversary commemoration, key sessions will also be held virtually at the UN, the Assembly decided.

The summit on bio-diversity will be held September 30, meeting of the General Assembly on the 25th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women on October 1 and the meeting to commemorate and promote the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons October 2.

Member states will submit their pre-recorded video statements for these meetings as well.

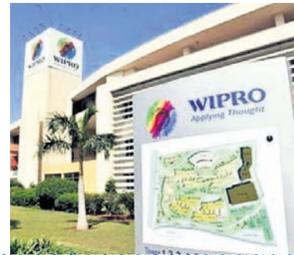


India is a unique market, not only in terms of its large and youthful labour pool, but also in the way that it is woven into the global economy. It is one of the few countries in the world that has a very high rate of mobility

SASHI KUMAR | MD, INDEED INDIA

WIPRO ACQUIRES SALESFORCE PARTNER 4C

Wipro has signed a definitive agreement to acquire 4C, one of the largest Salesforce partners in the UK, Europe and the Middle East, for an undisclosed sum. The move will help make the Indian tech major a leading provider of Salesforce solutions in these key markets



of the day quote

The 10% crop loss (due to floods in Assam) is expected to be compensated by a 12% price rise after eight years of price stagnation, but next year prices may decline on likely reports of higher production

PRABHAT BEZBORUAH | CHAIRMAN, TEA BOARD, INDIA

The MCE industry witnessed some demand recovery in June 2020 after a prolonged downturn, driven mainly by rural demand for construction equipment. It was found that rural demand has been up with vehicle utilisation levels and had been trending up since May 2020

PAVETHRA PONNIAH | VP AND SECTOR HEAD, ICRA

India has become a hotbed of fintech innovation with inception of the UIDAI and NPCI over a decade ago and products like IMPS, FastTag and UPI have made transactions easier

NANDAN NILEKANI | NON-EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN, INFOSYS

SHORT TAKES

K'taka to lure ₹5L cr investments

Bangalore: Karnataka aims to attract investments worth ₹5 lakh crore and create job opportunities for 20 lakh people in the next five years, according to the states new industrial policy for 2020-2025, an official said Thursday. In five years' time, the southern state wants to be the third largest merchandise exporter, maintaining an industrial growth rate of 10% p.a. The state issues industrial policies regularly in intervals of five years to ensure well-balanced and inclusive industrial development throughout Karnataka.

Unilever to retain tea biz

New Delhi: FMCG major Unilever has said it will retain its tea business in India and Indonesia, months after it announced a global review of its portfolio in January this year. The tea business for other markets would be separated into a different unit. In January, Unilever had announced a strategic review of the global tea business, which includes leading brands such as Lipton, Brooke Bond and PG Tips.

TN govt inks 16 MoUs

Chennai: The Tamil Nadu government Thursday signed MoUs with 16 investors for a potential investment of ₹5,137 crore in various projects, an official statement said. The MoUs were signed at the state secretariat, in the presence of Chief Minister K Palaniswami. The MoUs, when converted into actual projects, are expected to generate about 6,555 jobs. Among the proposed projects is Adani Enterprises' information data centre in Chengalpattu district at an investment of ₹2,300 crore.

Maruti's Nexa completes 5 years

New Delhi: The country's largest carmaker Maruti Suzuki India (MSI) Thursday said its premium retail chain Nexa has completed five years, having served over 11 lakh customers during the period. With over 370 showrooms across 200 plus cities, Nexa is the third largest retail automobile brand in terms of volume, MSI said in a statement. The auto major sells five models -- Ignis, Baleno, Ciaz, S-Cross and XL6 through the Nexa sales network.

GOVT TO OFFER OUTPUT LINKED INCENTIVES

AGENCIES

New Delhi, July 23: The government is working on offering production linked incentives for up to five sectors to boost domestic manufacturing, a top finance ministry official said Thursday bolstering efforts to attract new investments in the coronavirus-stricken economy

This would be in addition to the ₹20 lakh crore economic package announced by the government recently to help different sectors of the economy, tide over the crisis due to the outbreak of COVID-19.

Asia's third-largest economy, India, is expected to contract by as much as 10% in the current fiscal year beginning April, some private economists' estimate, after the outbreak crippled business and consumer activity since late March, compared to the government's earlier target of about 6% growth.

The government has announced a raft of measures including direct food subsidy to nearly 810 million people and credit guarantees of ₹3 trillion (\$40.17 billion) on loans to small businesses.

Tarun Bajaj, economic affairs secretary at the Ministry of Finance, told a virtual conference that incentives would be offered to sectors to push manufacturing and help struggling industries. He didn't specify the sectors that may be eligible for incentives.

The government earlier an-

BOOSTING MANUFACTURING



The latest data on 14-15 economic indicators including railway freight and tax collections has showed a pick-up in economic activities

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The economic affairs secretary said the government was expecting a "V" shape economic recovery beginning next fiscal year

nounced production linked incentives for large scale electronic goods makers for five years, to attract investments in mobile phone manufacturing and electronic component units.

Incentives have also been announced for pharmaceutical companies for production of bulk drugs and on medical devices.

Speaking at a virtual conference organised by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) Thursday, finance ministry official said the government was expecting a "V" shape economic recovery beginning next fiscal year.

Reuters earlier reported that India is drawing up an incentive scheme for the autos sector aimed at doubling exports of vehicles and components in the next five years.

Industry and government sources said sectors such as textile and food processing manufacturers could be offered production linked incentives.

The latest data on 14-15 economic indicators including railway freight and tax collections showed a pick up in economic activities, Bajaj said, adding the government was open to borrow more from the market to meet spending targets for infrastructure projects.

'Monetisation by RBI cannot be everlasting'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, July 23: Former RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan Thursday said the central bank has been expanding its balance sheet and buying government debt on the back of excess liquidity amid the economic slowdown but cautioned that this comes at a cost and cannot be a lasting solution.

He said central banks in many emerging markets are resorting to such strategies and disagreed with votaries of the "modern monetary theory" who support this, making it clear that there are no free lunches.

The RBI has been expanding its balance sheet and it has been buying government debt. But effectively, in that process, what it is doing is borrowing from the banks at the reverse repo rate and lending on to the government

RAGHURAM RAJAN | FORMER RBI GOVERNOR

there is excess liquidity in the system as people get more risk averse and save more and the demand for credit is sluggish.

Banks are parking the money with the RBI in the reverse repo window, earning very less.

It can be noted that monetisation of the fiscal deficit is one of the suggestions put forth by a slew of economists and analysts as a prescription to tackle the current environment.

Rajan said there are limits to monetisation and the process can go long only for a limited period of time.

"When does this process end?"



"The RBI has been expanding its balance sheet and it has been buying government debt. But effectively, in that process, what it is doing is borrowing from the banks at the reverse repo rate and lending on to the government," Rajan said speaking at a conference organised by Singaporean lender DBS Bank.

It can be noted that at present

When people start fearing the extent of monetisation that is going on, when they start worrying about inflation, when they start worrying about whether the debt that has been accumulated will be paid back. Or, once growth starts picking up and banks find other uses for the money than passively holding on to central bank reserves," he explained.

BIZ BUZZ

Amazon in talks to buy 9.9% stake in Reliance's retail arm

Bangalore: Amazon is in talks to buy a 9.9% stake in the retail arm of Indian conglomerate Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL), a private news channel reported Thursday, citing sources. Amazon wants a preferred, strategic stake in Reliance Retail for JioMart, according to tweets by the television channel. JioMart, the e-commerce venture of Reliance's retail arm, was launched in May and poses a formidable challenge to Amazon's local unit and Walmart Inc's Flipkart.

Earlier this year, Amazon India launched a program to add small local shops on its platform after India went into a lockdown to curb the spread of the coronavirus outbreak. An Amazon spokeswoman through email said the company does not comment on speculation, while Reliance did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

PNB distributes Covid preventive items

Bhubaneswar: As a part of its CSR initiative, Punjab National Bank (PNB) launched a nationwide initiative to combat the spread of COVID-19 pandemic. Under the leadership of Ashwani Kumar, Zonal Manager, Bhubaneswar, the bank has been distributing face masks and hand sanitizers; covering almost all the districts in the state. Kumar has also handed over COVID-19 preventive items to the district administration in Puri.



'GST mop up in Q1 indicates economic recovery'

AGENCIES

New Delhi, July 23: Tax mop up in first quarter of the current fiscal is "very encouraging" and indicates that the economy is recovering sooner than what was anticipated at the time of imposition of lockdown, Finance Secretary Ajay Bhushan Pandey said Thursday.

He said the Revenue Department wants to bring in self-compliance among taxpayers by making available data of all financial transactions via Form 26AS at the time of filing income tax (IT) return.

Pandey, who is also the Revenue Secretary, said about 70 per cent of the Rs 91,000 crore Goods and Services Tax (GST) collected in June is on ac-

count of transactions in May.

"For the month of June, going by the current trends, we have certain trend about how many people have made payment so far, and also the e-way bill...truck movement...all these things are giving encouraging signals that the economy is coming back to the realm sooner than what was being anticipated when the lockdown was started in March," he said while addressing a Ficci event here.



GLOBAL MARKET

India to contribute 2.2% of digital payments by 2023

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, July 23: With the rise in usage of digital modes of transactions and the growing market of digital payment services, India is likely to contribute around 2.2% to the sector by 2023, said a report by the Payments Council of India and PWC.

The report titled 'Empowering payments: Digital India on the path of revolution' said that with global transaction value for digital payments expected to reach \$12.4 trillion by 2025, India is expected to contribute 2.2% of the world's digital payment market by 2023 alone.

Underlining UPI is among the largest real-time payment systems in the world, the report estimates



the home-grown platform to reach nearly 59 billion transactions in volume by 2023, owing to its high P2P type of transaction penetration. "Clocking over 1 billion trans-

actions every month, the platform has witnessed a CAGR of 785% in volume and 570% in terms of value from financial year FY 2017 to FY 2020," it said.

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With the sharp rise in demand for contactless payments increasing amid the pandemic, businesses are looking at integrating their online and offline channels to provide an omni-channel experience to its customers

As per the report, India is one of the fastest-growing countries in the world, showing rapid progression in transformation of digital payments, largely due to its large

population and demographics. It has been attracting significant investments from private equity and venture capital firms and other international payment companies that

SpiceJet permitted to operate flights between India, US



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, July 23: Airline major SpiceJet has been allowed to operate flights between India and US. Accordingly the Centre has designated the airline as an Indian scheduled carrier to operate between India and the US.

The designation allows for the international expansion of the airline. However, commence dates or destinations have not been revealed.

"It gives me immense pleasure to share that SpiceJet has been designated as an Indian scheduled carrier to operate between India and the US," said Ajay Singh, Chairman & MD, SpiceJet Thursday.

"This designation would help us plan for our international expansion in a much better and calibrated manner. I have always maintained that there is an opportunity in every adversity and the present crisis situation has seen SpiceJet rise to the occasion and play a pivotal role."

According to Singh, from operating over 4,300 cargo flights to carrying over 24,000 tonnes of cargo to operating over 400 charter flights to bring back thousands of stranded Indian nationals back home, SpiceJet has worked non-stop during the Covid-19 outbreak.

want to enter India in the near future. According to the report, India has been identified as a leader across parameters - regulation of costs of payment systems, laws in place, availability of alternate payment systems, share of e-money in payment systems among others.

With the sharp rise in demand for contactless payments increasing amid the pandemic, businesses are looking at integrating their online and offline channels to provide an omni-channel experience to its customers.

From the statistics of UPI, BBPS and NETC for the months of February to June 2020, the report suggested that a V-shaped recovery in the digital payment sector is being prompted.

LIVERPOOL PLAYERS RECEIVE PREMIER LEAGUE TROPHY ON KOP



30-year wait ends

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Liverpool, July 23: Standing on the Kop that should have been filled with Liverpool's most ardent supporters, Jordan Henderson did what no captain of the team had done before: Lift the Premier League trophy.

As fireworks exploded from the roofs of the mostly empty Anfield stands, red smoke filled the void. Not since 1990 — two years before the inception of the Premier League — has Liverpool been crowned champion of England.

Only a late government reprieve ensured players at least had a few family members inside the stadium to witness the crowning moment of a season like no other in the history of English football.

Top-flight football trophies are never handed out in July in England, but the chilly weather inside Anfield felt more like winter when Liverpool started to run away with the championship. Only the pandemic — no opponent — put glory in doubt.

For three months, players and fans agonized whether the season would even resume. The only way it could was with fans shut out of the stadiums. No exemptions, even for a title party.

Instead seats in the center of the Kop were removed and replaced by the purple podium where manager Jurgen Klopp followed by his coaching team and players went up to collect their winners' medals.

"I was never on the Kop before, it was pretty special," Klopp said. "It makes sense in the moment

when the people are not in that we use the Kop to celebrate it with them together in our hearts."

Mohamed Salah, whose goals have transformed Liverpool into English, European and World Champions, was wrapped in an Egypt flag.

Trent Alexander-Arnold, the 21-year-old Liverpool-born defender, peered down as he inspected his medal. He really was a Premier League champion, achieving what hometown greats Steven Gerrard and Jamie Carragher had been unable to as the drought persisted.

In the Main Stand, Kenny Dalglish — wearing a red face mask featuring a club crest — sipped champagne. He was manager in 1990 when Liverpool won what was then

the Division One title.

Now Liverpool is finally a 19-time champion of England, one behind the record held by Manchester United, which usurped the Reds by collecting the Premier League trophy 13 times from 1993 to 2013.

Not even a police order to disperse from outside Anfield could deter Liverpool fans from getting as close as possible to the trophy lift. They couldn't see it but they made their presence felt by setting off pyrotechnics in nearby streets that boomed around the stadium.

"Everything would be better with fans," Klopp said. "It would be perfect with the stadium full. But you cannot change it."

The players even delivered an explosive performance on the pitch

before the trophy lift. In the last home game of the season, Liverpool beat Chelsea 5-3 to record an 18th win in 19 league matches at Anfield. There were five different scorers: Naby Keita, Alexander-Arnold, Georginio Wijnaldum, Roberto Firmino and Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain.

"I am surprised," Klopp said. "How can you put a shift in like this when everyone thinks you want to be partying afterwards?"

As his players did eventually party around him on a field covered in confetti, they gathered for a rendition of "You'll Never Walk Alone."

Usually it would be the fans on the Kop most vocal in singing the club anthem. "I don't know when this (expletive) virus is gone," the German said in a message to fans from the pitch. "Then we will have a party all together. Make sure you are all ready then."

Liverpool's 19th title was clinched the earliest of any time in English top-flight football history stretching back into the 19th century, by winning with seven games to spare.

"The expectation is so high," Henderson said. "It's been a process, it's been a journey. It hasn't happened overnight."

And they don't want the journey to end. The motivation now is to defend the title so they can celebrate next year with fans inside Anfield.

"The feeling you get now is the feeling you want so much," Alexander-Arnold said. "It's something that will drive us."

3 TEAMS VIE FOR 2 CL SPOTS

Reds down Blues in eight-goal thriller at Anfield

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Liverpool, July 23: Chelsea was too charitable as Anfield title party guests. Before collecting the Premier League trophy, Liverpool won 5-3 to prevent Chelsea from sealing a Champions League spot.

It leaves two of the four spots in Europe's elite competition still up for grabs in Sunday's final round. Chelsea just need a point against Europa League-chasing Wolverhampton to seal a top four finish. And there will be a Champions League qualification showdown between Manchester United and Leicester.

For the first time since September, United are back in the top four and Leicester have dropped out after Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's side drew 1-1 with West Ham Wednesday.

Liverpool as champions and second-place Manchester City have already qualified for the Champions League.

ANFIELD THRILLER

The title sealed last month, all that was at stake for Liverpool against Chelsea was preserving its unbeaten record in the league at home this season. It's now 18 wins out of 19. The only dropped points were from a draw against Burnley in the previous home game.

Naby Keita's thunderbolt of a shot, Trent Alexander-Arnold's stunning dipping free-kick and Gini Wijnaldum's close-range strike sent Liverpool into a 3-0 lead.

Olivier Giroud was able to pull one back before halftime after goalkeeper Alisson parried Willian's shot into the striker's path.

But Roberto Firmino waited until the final home game of the season to end his wait for a league



Roberto Firmino (R) wheels away in celebration after scoring Liverpool's fourth goal against Chelsea at Anfield, Wednesday

goal at Anfield this campaign, heading in from Alexander-Arnold's cross ten minutes into the second half.

Chelsea threatened a comeback when Christian Pulisic set up Tammy Abraham's goal and got on the scoresheet himself, swiveling before striking into the net.

But Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain completed the job for Liverpool with a fifth goal in front of the Kop where the players later collected the trophy. The presentation took place on a podium placed where fans sat before the pandemic shut them out of stadiums.

GREENWOOD TO RESCUE

One of the revelations for the season at Old Trafford has been 18-year-old forward Mason Greenwood who clinched the point against West Ham. A 17th goal of the campaign moved him level with George Best, Brian Kidd and Wayne Rooney as United's top-scoring teenager in a season.

The goal canceled out Michail Antonio's penalty that was awarded after Paul Pogba's handball. A point was still enough to secure Premier League survival for West Ham, which is led by former Manchester United manager David Moyes.

Inter draw clears way for Juve

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Rome, July 23: Juventus is one win away from a record-extending ninth straight Serie A title. Inter Milan twice hit the post but was held to a 0-0 draw by Fiorentina on Wednesday, meaning that rival Juventus can clinch the trophy Thursday.

If Juventus win at Udinese, they will move nine points clear of Atalanta with three rounds remaining — and the Bianconeri hold the tie-breaker over the Bergamo squad courtesy of a better head-to-head record. Inter are



Inter's Lautaro Martinez looks disappointed after missing out on a scoring chance against Fiorentina

third, one point behind Atalanta, and remain in the running for second place.

Romelu Lukaku and Alexis Sanchez each hit the woodwork for Inter, which also had a potential goal from Antonio Candreva waved off for offside.

Parma beat Napoli 2-1 in a match with three penalties. Gianluca Caprari and Dejan Kustulevski converted for Parma while Lorenzo Insigne converted for Napoli.

It was the second time this season that Parma beat Napoli, who dropped behind Roma and AC Milan in the race for fifth place.

SECOND CONSECUTIVE DEFEAT FOR INDIAN AT LEGENDS OF CHESS TOURNEY

Anand loses against Carlsen in 2nd round

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, July 23: India's Viswanathan Anand suffered his second consecutive loss, going down to World No.1 Magnus Carlsen in the second round of the USD 150,000 chess24 Legends of Chess online tournament.

The former World Champion had kept the Norwegian ace in check in three games of the best-of-four contest before slipping 1.5-2.5 by in the final game late Wednesday.

The Indian ace is making his maiden appearance on the Magnus Carlsen Chess Tour. He had gone down by a similar margin to Russia's Peter Svidler in the opening round. He takes on another former World Champion Vladimir Kramnik in the third round.

Anand is back in action after having last participated in the Online Nations Cup in May. Carlsen is in joint lead with veteran Israeli Boris Gelfand and Svidler. All of them have six points after two victories each.

Anish Giri got off the mark with a win over Vladimir Kramnik, while World No.3 Ding Liren's struggles continued as the Chinese lost to Ian Nepomniachtchi of Russia.

All the round-robin games are best-of-four game contests. Legends of Chess is a unique event where Carlsen, Liren, Nepomniachtchi and Giri, semifinalists at the Chessable Masters (part of the Magnus Carlsen Tour), received an automatic invite.

They are up against six legends aged 40-52, who have been at the top of world chess at various points in their career.

The tournament is part of the Magnus Carlsen Chess Tour. The winner of this event will qualify for the USD 300,000 Grand Final scheduled from August 9 to 20.

RESULTS (ROUND 2): Ian Nepomniachtchi beat Ding Liren 2.5-1.5; Magnus Carlsen beat Viswanathan Anand 2.5-1.5; Peter Svidler beat Peter Leko 2.5-1.5; Boris Gelfand beat Vasily Ivanchuk 2.5-1.5; Anish Giri beat Vladimir Kramnik 2.5-1.5.

Indian 4x400 mixed relay team's silver at Asiad upgraded to gold

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 23: The Indian 4x400m mixed relay team's silver medal in the 2018 Asian Games has been upgraded to gold following the disqualification of original winners Bahrain on account of a doping ban handed to one of its runners.

Bahrain, which had topped the 4x400 mixed relay final, was disqualified after Kemi Adekoya was handed a four-year ban by the Athletics Integrity Unit (AIU) for failing a dope test.

Besides this, Anu Raghavan's fourth-place finish in the women's 400m hurdles event has been upgraded to bronze medal after the AIU annulled the results of Adekoya, who originally won the race.

The Indian quartet of Mohammed Anas, MR Poovamma, Hima Das and Arokia Rajiv had clocked 3:15:71 behind Bahrain (3:11:89). Raghavan had clocked 56.92 to finish fourth in the final race in Jakarta.



Athletics Federation of India President Adile Sumariwalla said the AFI is delighted to see the World Athletics website ranking India's 4x400m mixed relay team as the winner of the Asian Games and Anu Raghavan as the bronze winner in 400m hurdles.

"The additional medal takes our tally to 20, including eight gold and

nine silver," he said. "The news comes as a fillip to us as we are aiming to build on the Asian Games showing and make a mark at the global level in the Olympic Games in Tokyo next year," he added.

He said the 4x400m relay squad will be particularly pleased that it now has two gold and a silver from Jakarta.

On track for a podium finish in Tokyo: Manpreet & Rani

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 23: Neither of them has particularly good Olympic memories to share, but men's hockey skipper Manpreet Singh and his women's counterpart Rani feel that their teams have learnt enough lessons to ensure that next year's Tokyo Games become a historic success story.

The past year has been quite productive for the Manpreet-led men's team which managed to maintain its consistency and qualify for the Olympics while also notching up good results in its maiden FIH Hockey Pro League campaign with

wins against Netherlands, world champions Belgium and Australia.

"Looking at the way our squad has been performing in the last year, we certainly have a good chance to win a medal at the Olympics...we have enough time to evolve as a team as well," Manpreet was quoted as saying by Hockey India in a release.

"We just have to keep concentrating on carrying out the processes well and the results will take care of itself," he added.

Like the men, the year gone by has been a fruitful one for the women as well, which saw them produce some outstanding performances across tournaments.

They won the FIH Women's Series Finals Hiroshima 2019, the Olympic Test Event in Japan, and the FIH Hockey Olympic Qualifiers Odisha, along with victories in their tours of Spain, Malaysia, Republic of Korea and England.

"We have competed against top teams in the recent past and we have shown that our team has the capability of winning a medal and making our country proud at the Olympics," Rani said.

"Our team have been getting better with each tournament we have played and we will definitely improve our game even further in the next one year," she added.

