



DIFFICULT EXPERIENCE

Actor Kriti Sanon finds it difficult to watch 'Dil Bechara', the last film of late actor Sushant Singh Rajput

LEISURE P2



A DIWALI BEFORE DIWALI

Ayodhya city will be illuminated with lakhs of diyas from Aug 3 to 5 to mark the Ram temple 'bhoomi puja'

TWO STATES P7



JAISH ACTIVE IN AFGHAN

Pakistani terror outfit Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) has become active in Afghanistan

INTERNATIONAL P10

Schools, metros to remain shut; cinemas, gyms likely to open

For Unlock 3.0, the third installation in the phased easing of lockdown restrictions, a few more relaxations are being worked upon by the Centre

AGENCIES

New Delhi, July 26: With the COVID-19 restrictions of 'Unlock 2.0' ending July 31, the Centre is formulating guidelines for Unlock 3.0 which will come into force from August, sources said Sunday.

For Unlock 3.0, the third installation in the phased easing of lockdown restrictions, a few more relaxations are being worked upon by the government.

These might include relaxations in reopening of cinema halls from August 1 but with some SOPs such as strict social distancing in place, sources said.

However, some restrictions are likely to continue in Unlock 3.0. Schools and metro train services are likely to remain shut across the country, sources said.

The HRD Ministry began consultation with states on reopening of schools in a meeting chaired by Secretary of School Education, Anita Karwal. HRD



Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal had earlier said that feedback would be sought from parents on the issue. Subsequently, the ministry said that parents were not in favour of reopening of schools.

According to sources, gyms are also likely to be reopened in the third phase.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has proposed the reopening of cinema halls to the Ministry of Home Affairs. The IB ministry had consulted the

owners of cinema halls before presenting the proposal.

Cinema hall owners are in favour of reopening theatres with 50 per cent seating capacity. However, the ministry has suggested reopening theatres with 25 per cent seating initially and following all the social distancing protocols. Further, states might be given more authority to set their own guidelines as per their COVID-19 case load and situation.

RAJ ASSEMBLY SESSION

Gehlot mentions corona, not floor test to Guv

The petition filed by former Deputy Chief Minister and 18 rebel Congress MLAs will come up for hearing in the SC Monday

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Jaipur, July 26: Two days after Rajasthan Governor Kalraj Mishra sent a letter to the state government to seek reasons to call a special Assembly session, Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot has sent a fresh proposal to convene the session July 31 but without mentioning a floor test.

Gehlot, in his letter, has sought to reply to the six points raised by the Governor, but the reason given for the Assembly session is coronavirus situation. There is no mention of his government seeking to test its majority on the floor of the House after the rebellion by Sachin Pilot and 18 supporting MLAs.

The Governor had Friday turned down an earlier proposal forwarded by the CM, saying that the letter did not mention any date or the reason for calling the special Assembly session.



The Congress, meanwhile, has launched a countrywide protest against the BJP and to highlight the growing confrontation between the Raj Bhavan and the Rajasthan government. The party is running a #SpeakUpForDemocracy campaign Sunday.

Congress general secretary KC Venugopal Saturday said that party workers will also demonstrate in front of the Raj Bhavans across the country on Monday as part of their protests against the political developments in Rajasthan.

Meanwhile, the petition filed by former Deputy Chief Minister and 18 rebel Congress MLAs will come up for hearing in the Supreme Court Monday.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



We are working hard to engineer a deflection, break the virus and make your body corona mukta, Sir

Doctor shortage plagues health sector

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 26: Amidst the alarming rise in COVID-19 cases in the state, shortage of doctors has become a cause of concern for the state government. In a bid to contain shortage of doctors, the government has initially raised the retirement of medics from 58 to 60 years and later, further increased it to 62 years. Two days back, the state government again increased the retirement age of doctors to 65 years.

This apart, the state government has also appointed doctors, staff nurses, pharmacists and other healthcare professionals on contractual basis at many places to contain the rapid spread of the pandemic. In other words, many government hospitals are facing an acute shortage of doctors and other healthcare professionals leaving the government with no option.

According to data available from the state Assembly, the population of the state as per 2011 census is 4.20 crore. Given this population, there is a need for 1,315 primary health centres (PHCs) and 328 community health centres in the state to cater to the medical needs of the people properly.

However, there are only 1,287 PHCs



SORDID STATE

Given the population of Odisha, there is a need for 1,315 primary health centres (PHCs) and 328 community health centres, but there are only 1,287 PHCs and 374 CHCs in the state

Going by the data regarding the state's healthcare infrastructure, there is a need for 7,449 doctors, while 6,218 doctors have been appointed so far

According to the WHO, one doctor is needed for every 1,000 people. As per the population of Odisha, there is need for 43,000 doctors, but only 24,000 are registered

and 374 CHCs in the state. Going by the data regarding the state's healthcare infrastructure, there is a need for 7,449 doctors, while 6,218 doctors have been appointed so far.

Of these doctors, many have retired while others have been on leave for higher studies. The number of staff nurses too is not encouraging. The state needs 22,337 staff nurses, while only 4,529 are on duty. There are only 879 laboratory assistants against the need for 2,909. In addition, there is need for

11,727 woman health workers compared to just 8,562 who are in service. Similarly, as many as 7,975 male health workers are needed, but currently 3,290 are in service.

As per government data, the total number of seats in all medical colleges in the state is 1,550 and 99 per cent of the students pass out every year.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), one doctor is needed for every 1,000 people. As per the population of Odisha, there is need

for 43,000 doctors, but only 24,000 are registered. The total number of sanctioned posts of assistant professors, associate professors and professors in all the medical college in the state is 1,266. Against the, 942 posts are functioning. Of these, 325 posts are lying vacant. What is worse is that the state does not have a health university, but there is a need for such an institution, the government admits.

In such a scenario, battling COVID-19 has become all the more difficult.

LOCKDOWN EFFECT

State suffers trade loss of ₹3K cr

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 26: The COVID-induced lockdowns have taken a heavy toll on the retail business in the state. Retail traders have suffered losses to the tune of ₹3000 crore, according to Odisha Traders' Association.

Moreover, the business worth over ₹30,000 crore has been caught in stalemate.

During the ongoing pandemic, monthly retail business turnover remains confined to ₹6,500 crore in the state, as per the data provided by the traders' body. There are 20 lakh retail traders in the state including 16 lakh small traders.

Similarly, the number of traders with medium turnover is 3.5 lakh in the state. There are also 50,000 wholesalers.

The retail market value of the state is dependent on these traders. Sadly, these traders have been suffering huge losses owing to COVID-induced lockdowns.

To prevent the spread of COVID, the government had announced lockdowns repeatedly for three

The Central government has not provided any assistance to the traders despite Finance Minister's announcement that 'PM Swanidhi' Yojana would benefit over 50 lakh traders in the country

months since March. The economy was badly battered. To bring back the sagging economy to track, the government started unlocking process in phases to give some breathing space to traders and revive their businesses.

When the unlock process was brought into play, traders had expected that things will limp back to normal, but COVID situation continued to worsen, forcing the government to effect the lockdown again.

Four districts and Bhubaneswar, Cuttack and Rourkela came under lockdown for 14 days. Consequently, the business of the retail traders took a heavy beating again.

In normal times, the retail market value of the state is usually pegged at ₹1.50 lakh crore per annum. The monthly turnover is estimated at ₹12,500 crore, while the daily turnover is estimated at ₹415 crore.

During the pandemic, 50 per cent of the retail trade has been running on loss. Traders have to face ₹20-crore loss every day, said Sudhakar Panda, the secretary of the traders' body. He added that in the last four months, sales worth ₹30,000 crore are down. Traders dealing with non-essential items have been more affected.

On the other hand, the Central government has not provided any assistance to the traders. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had announced that 'PM Swanidhi' Yojana would benefit over 50 lakh traders in the country.

Under this scheme, street vendors and small traders were allowed to get loans up to ₹10,000 and to repay the amount within a year.

But, no traders have received this assistance. Such situation is a pointer the reality of the financial package for the traders.

BPCL offers VRS to staff ahead of privatisation

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, July 26: Just a week ahead of the closure of bid submissions for Bharat Petroleum Corporation (BPCL) stake, the company has offered voluntary retirement to its employees.

The last date for submitting the expressions of interest (EOIs) for the 52.98 per cent BPCL stake is July 31. The deadline has been postponed twice. The Bharat Petroleum Voluntary Retirement Scheme - 2020 (BPVRS-2020) opened July 23 and will close August 13.

According to the notice to employees, the voluntary retirement scheme (VRS) has been offered keeping in mind those who may not be in a position to continue in the company's service due to personal reasons.

Employees above 45 years of age are eligible for the VRS.

Those opting for the VRS would either receive a compensation payment equivalent to two months' salary for each completed year of service, or the monthly salary at the time of voluntary retirement

multiplied by the months of service left before retirement, whichever is less.

Further, compensation for any part-period served in a year will be worked out on a pro-rata basis and the salary drawn as on date of release shall be reckoned for the purpose.

Meanwhile, according to official sources, the government is confident that EOIs will sail through within time with several bidders joining the fray.

The BPCL disinvestment has received interest from several large global oil & gas firms as well as a few Indian entities.

The process, so far, has generated around 100 enquiries, indicating that investors are interested in the Maharatna oil PSU despite the disruptions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, according to official sources privy to the development.

Saudi Aramco, Abu Dhabi National Oil Co (Adnoc), Rosneft of Russia and ExxonMobil plan to participate in the bidding. Indian oil majors are not far behind their global counterparts.

Gurgaon court issues summons to Jack Ma

A former employee alleges that he was fired after objecting to 'censorship and fake news' on company apps

REUTERS

New Delhi, July 26: The district court of Gurgaon has summoned Alibaba and its founder Jack Ma in a case in which a former employee in India says he was wrongfully fired after objecting to what he saw as censorship and fake news on company apps.

The case comes weeks after India cited security concerns in banning Alibaba's UC News, UC Browser and 57 other Chinese apps after a clash between the two countries' forces on their border.

In court filings dated July 20 and previously not reported, the former employee of Alibaba's UC Web, Pushpandra Singh Parmar, alleges the company used to censor content seen as unfavourable to China and its apps UC Browser and UC News showcased false news "to cause social and political turmoil".

Civil Judge Sonia Sheokand of a district court in Gurgaon has issued summons for Alibaba, Jack Ma and about a dozen individuals or company units, asking them to appear in court or through a lawyer July 29, court documents showed.

The judge has also sought written responses from the company and its executives within 30 days, according to the summons.

UC India said in a statement it had been "unwavering in its commitment to the India market and the welfare of its local employees, and its policies are in compliance with local laws."



Separatism in J&K now under control of handlers

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Srinagar, July 26: The separatist campaign in Kashmir, both its political face and the underground militant arm, has fallen into the hands of handlers of militancy across the border, thanks to the local separatist leaders fading into oblivion.

Senior hardline separatist leader, Syed Ali Shah Geelani announced publicly that he was dissociating himself from the separatist political conglomerate, the All Party Hurriyat Conference. Almost all other prominent separatist politicians have been 'hibernating' after

August 5, 2019 when Article 370 was abrogated and the state bifurcated into two union territories.

All prominent separatist leaders were detained after August 5 last year, but their detention was obviously not the only reason for them to go into hibernation.

Delhi decided to give complete freedom to the security forces to fight militancy after the state was split into two union territories. Security forces have killed all the prominent mil-

itant commanders, both foreigners and locals, since August 5, 2019. Despite huge successes against the militants, the top brass of the security forces still believe there are over 300 militants active in J&K and an ever larger number of them waiting across the line of control (LoC) to sneak into the Union Territory.

Displeased with their inability to convert the post August 5, 2019 period into a mass agitation the master-

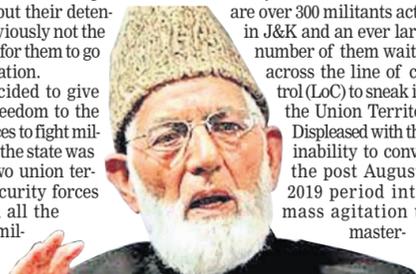
mind of separatist campaign across the LoC decided to dump the local separatist leaders. Geelani was the most prominent separatist leader and to sack him was a clear message. He was also the first whose ouster was managed by using his own cadre.

Geelani made no secret of the fact that his own men had been used to sideline him. He said constituents of the Hurriyat had fallen victim to their personal interests.

Known among the separatist rank and file as the 'Qaid-e-Karvana' (Leader of the separatist campaign), Geelani's ouster was a clear signal that powers across the LoC had de-

ceded to take direct control of separatism, both political and armed. Militant commanders including young local boys who could have joined militancy just before one or two years were made in charge of the gun and its underground political face. The decision to let the militant commanders handle the separatist political roles had one advantage in the eyes of their handlers.

They were all local faces without any Valley-wide acceptance or influence. This ensures that none of them could go beyond the brief dictated to them by their masters sitting across.



	BHB	CTK
MAX	35.9°C	36.2°C
MIN	26.8°C	24.6°C
Humidity	79%	70%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil

Forecast: Mainly dry weather



LOPEZ FLAUNTS HER FIT FIGURE IN B'DAY SELFIE

Actress-singer Jennifer Lopez used Instagram to show off her fit figure after celebrating her 51st birthday. She flaunted her figure as she took to Instagram with a mirror selfie in black active wear, after celebrating her birthday on Friday, reports *dailymail.co.uk*.

COX HASN'T SEEN HER BOYFRIEND IN 133 DAYS

Actress Courtney Cox has revealed that she did not meet her boyfriend Johnny McDaid for the last 133 days amid the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. She wished McDaid a happy birthday virtually, and shared a picture of their recent video chat, reports *etonline.com*.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
Just grab any chance you get to demonstrate your expressive abilities, as it will fetch widespread appreciation. Something about your children may make you proud. However, Ganesh says, don't neglect the aged members of your family.

TAURUS
This day, your heart is likely to rule your head. You will be driven by your moods feelings and sentiments. Most of the decisions will be based on your emotions, instead of your reason and experience. Ganesh urges you not to allow your emotionality to enter your professional activities.

GEMINI
You will be able to express your thoughts and opinions to the people you come in contact with today. They will also reciprocate and echo your feelings and emotions. This will give you validation and satisfaction. The day should be filled with fun and entertainment overall, says Ganesh.

CANCER
Your career will reach a decisive moment. You can expect a transfer, promotion or pay hike. Alongside your responsibilities will also increase. A chance of new job is also indicated. You can reject a tempting job offer.

LEO
Your expenses may shoot through the roof if you do not pay careful attention to your finances. You will want to splurge on expensive perfumes and clothing. You will be able to attract those of the opposite sex. You must guard against coming off as a show-off.

VIRGO
Consummation of work and success will be the high points today, says Ganesh. You will gain the much needed appreciation for your dedication to work and your desire to succeed in whatever you do.

LIBRA
Ganesh says you will be more aware about your beauty and outward appearance and try to enhance it by going to a beauty parlor. You will spend most of your time looking after your external beauty. Due to this you will not be able to pay attention to anything else other than your looks.

SCORPIO
Your stars indicate splurging of money today. And this time, you do it for your near and dear ones. After all, what is money without friends and family? You may even go out of your way to make them happy by entertaining them with outings and celebrations.

SAGITTARIUS
Staying away from home, for a long business trip may be painful. But, when you strike great deals, it's worth it. Besides good returns from business, Ganesh also has many other surprises in store for you. Be hopeful!

CAPRICORN
You love your family and you will try your best to live up to the expectations of your family members. If you are student, you will finish up your existing projects and get on with some fresh assignments, foretells Ganesh. Don't block your imagination; give yourself some freedom so that you can test your creativity and talent.

AQUARIUS
You may have to remain indoors today. But, don't think that you will get bored. You can do a lot of things, like playing cards and other board games, reading, watching the natural world around, and what not.

PISCES
You will race ahead of you competition today. No matter what field you are in, you will find yourself at an advantageous point, well ahead of your contemporaries. You will be able to complete the task at hand with lesser effort than required. Do not let this translate into arrogance as it may come to haunt you in the future, advises Ganesh.

SHIBANI GOES ALL PRAISES FOR FARHAN



Mumbai: Intelligent, creative and artistic - this is how actress, popular VJ Shibani Dandekar describes her beau Farhan Akhtar.

Shibani conducted an interactive Q&A session with her followers Sunday. When a user asked her about her views about Farhan as an actor and director, Shibani could not resist herself from praising the latter.

"Literally the most artistic, intelligent, creative person I know! Writer, director, actor, producer I can't decide... skill level and vision is beyond! What a mind," Shibani wrote on Instagram Stories.

Along with it, she posted a picture of Farhan.

Farhan and Shibani started dating a couple of years ago. Farhan was previously married to Adhuna Bhabani with whom he has two daughters Akira and Shakya.

Kriti's emotional note for Sushant



Mumbai: It was not easy for Kriti Sanon to watch the last film of the late actor Sushant Singh Rajput.

Her heart literally broke while watching Sushant's performance in *Dil Bechara*.

Taking to Instagram, Kriti penned an emotional note for Sushant, sharing how does she feel seeing the latter in his last movie. "It's not seri (ok) And it will never sink in.. This broke my

heart..again. In Manny, I saw YOU come alive in so so many moments. I knew exactly where you had put in a bit of yourself in the character..And as always, your most magical bits were your silences.. those bits where you said nothing and yet you said so much," Kriti wrote.

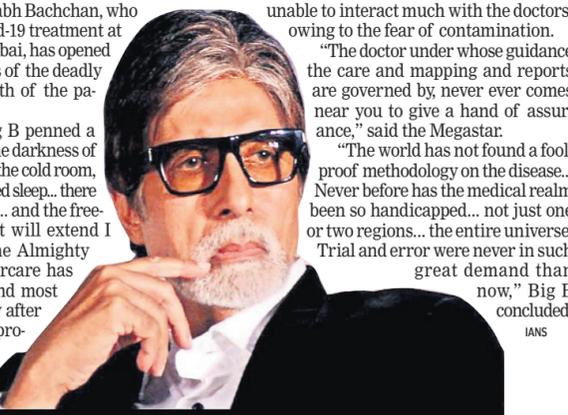
Directed by Mukesh Chhabra, *Dil Bechara*, which released a few days ago on the OTT platform, is the official remake of 2014 Hollywood romantic drama *The Fault in our Stars*, based on John Green's popular novel of the same name. Kriti was rumoured to be in a relationship with Sushant. The two even starred in the 2017 film *Raabta*.

Big B on how Covid-19 affects mental health

Mumbai: Megastar Amitabh Bachchan, who is currently seeking Covid-19 treatment at Nanavati Hospital in Mumbai, has opened up on the alarming effects of the deadly virus on the mental health of the patients.

Taking to his blog, Big B penned a lengthy note, saying, "In the darkness of the night and the shiver of the cold room, I sing... eyes shut in attempted sleep... there is no one about or around... and the freedom to be able to do that will extend I know if in the Will of the Almighty there is release. The aftercare has ever been the deciding and most valuable time on recovery after the incident of medical professional doctoring in the patient's life."

He shared how he's



unable to interact much with the doctors, owing to the fear of contamination.

"The doctor under whose guidance the care and mapping and reports are governed by, never ever comes near you to give a hand of assurance," said the Megastar.

"The world has not found a fool-proof methodology on the disease... Never before has the medical realm been so handicapped... not just one or two regions... the entire universe. Trial and error were never in such great demand than now," Big B concluded.

Int'l art expo concludes on a high note

POST NEWS NETWORK

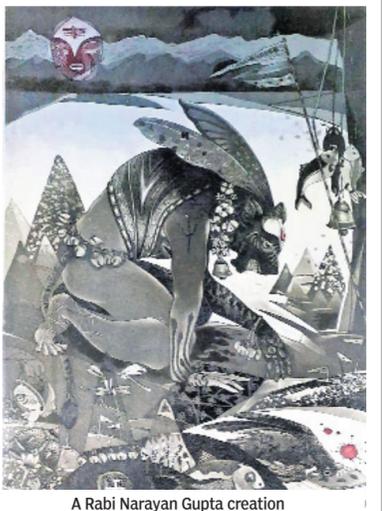
BHUBANESWAR: A 10-day international art exhibition titled *Artists for Artist*, organised by Dhauri College of Art and Crafts, Bhubaneswar in collaboration with Kala Mitra Foundation, Hyderabad came to an end here Saturday.

Among others CS Krishna Shetty, a retired administrator of Lalit Kala Akademi (New Delhi), Gajendra Sahu, the secretary of Odisha Lalit Kala Akademi and Hungarian artist Duros

A special video based on the works of artists of the likes of MRamesh, president of Kala Mitra foundation, Panchanan Samal, principal of Dhauri College of Art and Crafts, Manoranjana Herath of Sri Lanka, Hagop Sulahan of Lebanon was displayed online.

More than 150 painters and sculptors from nine countries took part in the 10-day online exhibition. Some of the prominent names from India

who showed their creations included Prem Singh, Moninder Puri, Onkar Rahi, Bairy Raghuram, Rabi Narayan Gupta, Sunita Lamba, Pradosh Swain, Sajal Patra, Subhra Chand, Nibedita Pattnaik, Kalinkar Dey, Anup Chand and Tapan Das.



A Rabi Narayan Gupta creation

PEANUTS



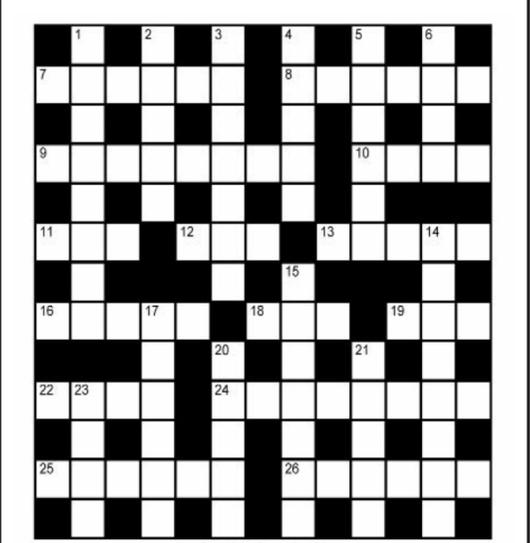
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



FUN post CROSSWORD



- Copyright ©2020 PuzzleJunction.com
- Across**
- 7 Royal home
 - 8 Large lizard
 - 9 Unfledged
 - 10 Portcullis
 - 11 Mine find
 - 12 Grimm character
 - 13 Fencing swords
 - 16 Water sources
 - 18 Watch pocket
 - 19 Salad ingredient
 - 22 Baby's bed
 - 24 Booby traps
 - 25 Flood
 - 26 Hair gel
 - Down**
 - 1 Ruffia ruffia (4,4)
 - 2 Recipe direction
 - 3 Agave drink
 - 4 Toys with tails
 - 5 Enthusiastic (4,2)
 - 6 Shoelace problem
 - 14 Decriminalise
 - 15 Masquerade attire
 - 17 Drudgery
 - 20 Secret agents
 - 21 Hard to pin down
 - 23 Marsh plant

SUDOKU

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

B	E	3	7	5				C	9	
7	8	1	5	B						6
			0	2	A	1		D		
6		A	2		B			D	0	C
2				3				9	6	
D					8			1		
	C			4				3	D	2
		B	0	9				A	C	8
	9	2			1					E
		A	6	7	9	E	5	B		
					4	7		D	E	5
	4	C	E		A			7	9	2
		B	A	C			9	4		
E			1	D			8			A
		0			B	8	6	2		

SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD

H	A	R	B	O	U	R	E	B	E	C
O	A	A	A	I	U	H				
U	M	I	A	K	P	A	P	R	I	K
N	N	S	I		L	L	U			
D	A	B	A	D	R	I	A	T	I	C
K	U	W	A	T	C	O	N	C	U	R
O	L	E	C	N	A					
N	A	P	O	L	E	O	N	A	L	O
T	A	V	F	A	M	P	H			
I	G	N	O	B	L	E	A	M	P	L
K	I	A	R	L	S	N				
I	T	C	H	Y	T	I	M	E	O	U

SUDOKU

0	1	5	6	8	4	2	7	E	C	9	A	3		
7	9	5	4	0	1	3	E	C	D	A	8	6	2	
E	6	8	2	7	A	0	9	5	8	3	4	1	D	C
4	3	B	D	C	E	A	6	8	1	9	0	4	7	5
2	C	A	9	B	3	1	7	D	5	6	2	0	8	E
8	1	2	3	E	0	7	B	9	A	C	6	5	4	D
6	E	7	C	4	9	5	2	A	3	1	D	0	B	8
A	4	3	1	8	7	0	6	2	B	6	E	6	9	C
C	A	E	8	1	2	0	4	6	0	3	7	6	0	
0	9	8	5	6	2	0	7	C	4	1	3	E	A	
1	8	4	7	3	C	6	8	0	E	5	A	D	9	2
5	7	6	E	9	D	C	A	3	0	2	B	8	1	4
3	2	D	0	A	4	E	1	B	8	7	9	C	5	6

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



KUTCHA HOUSE

Workers thatching a kutcha house at Kathagada Sahi in Cuttack, Sunday

KITCHEN ESSENTIAL

Potatoes being unloaded from trucks at Chhatra Bazar vegetable wholesale market in Cuttack, Sunday



They build chariots but live in damaged houses

THE MIDAS TOUCH OF THEIR DEFT HANDS TURNS WOODEN LOGS INTO MAGNIFICENT CHARIOTS BUT THEY THEMSELVES RESIDE IN DAMAGED HOUSES

POST NEWS NETWORK

Puri, July 26: Their expertise in chariot construction for the annual Rath Yatra of Srimandir deities has been appreciated by devotees from across the globe, but they are living a life of misery due to poor financial condition.

Even, these Maharana (carpenter) and Rupakara (sculptor) servitors of the 12th century shrine have been facing financial crunch to repair their cyclone-ravaged houses, sources said.

Maharana servitor Narasingha Mahapatra has been performing his duty as the main carpenter (Vishwakarma) for the construction of Taladhawaja chariot of Lord Balabhadra for last several years. His deft hands have been turning woods into a majestic chariot for the Rath Yatra.

But, Narasingha and five other members of his family have been residing in a damaged house at the Gudia Sahi here for last 15 months. Narasingha's house had been damaged by cyclonic storm Fani that made a landfall on Odisha coast May 3 last year.

Narasingha had approached the administration time and again for some assistance to repair his house



Fani-ravaged house of Purnachandra Mahapatra

OP PHOTOS



Maharana servitor Narasingha Mahapatra and five other members of his family reside in this damaged house at Gudia Sahi in Puri

I do not know when I would be able to repair my house. I have left the issue to Lord Jagannath

PURNACHANDRA MAHAPATRA | HEAD SCULPTOR (RUPAKARA), TALADHWAJA CHARIOT

I received remuneration for this year's chariot construction. But, the amount was spent on our daily expenses. I couldn't arrange money to repair my house. This Covid-19 pandemic has also prevented us from doing some carpentry work

NARASINGHA MAHAPATRA | HEAD CARPENTER (VISHWAKARMA), TALADHWAJA CHARIOT

but to no avail. "I received remuneration for this year's chariot construction. But, the amount was spent on our daily expenses. I couldn't arrange money to repair my house. This Covid-19 pandemic has also prevented us from doing some carpentry work," rued Narasingha.

Rupakar servitor Purnachandra Mahapatra has also been living in a cyclone-damaged house at the Pala Harchandi Sahi here. He had

also raised his plight before the government officials several times. But, no one has come forward to assist him. "I do not know when I would be able to repair my house. I have left the issue to Lord Jagannath," said Purnachandra, the head sculptor for Taladhawaja chariot.

Not only Narasingha and Purnachandra but also many other servitors of Srimandir are also living under acute financial distress.

But, the Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) and the Puri district administration are yet to extend a helping hand to these poor servitors, sources said.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC SURVEY

It is worth mentioning here that the SJTA had conducted a socio-economic survey on the Srimandir servitors in 2014-15 financial year. But, no concrete step was taken to improve the financial condition of poor servitors, sources added.

Recently, SJTA chief administrator Krishan Kumar announced that the temple authorities would once again conduct a socio-economic survey on the servitors.

Meanwhile, Shree Jagannath Temple Managing Committee member, Madhab Chandra Mahapatra, visited Narasingha's house and took stock of his financial condition. "We will do something for him," he said.

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



Odia artist PK Mahanandia is consultant to Swedish Govt Art Dept, CM congrats

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 26: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Sunday congratulated Odia artist PK Mahanandia for his appointment as the consultant to the Swedish Government's Art Department.

"Greetings and congratulations to PK Mahanandia, an Oriya artist who has been appointed as a consultant to the Swedish government's Art Department. His success has brought glory to the entire state. May he gain more fame in the days to come," (sic) tweeted the CM.

PK Mahanandia had become famous for his bicycle journey from New Delhi to Gothenburg in 1977 to meet his love interest Charlotte Von Schedvin of Sweden.

Mahanandia was born in a weaver family in Kandhapada under Athamallik sub-division in Angul



PK Mahanandia with his wife

PK Mahanandia had become famous for his bicycle journey from New Delhi to Gothenburg in 1977 to meet his love interest Charlotte Von Schedvin of Sweden

district in 1949. After his school education at Athamallik, Mahanandia joined Visva-Bharati to study art. However, he returned home due to his inability to pay tuition fee. He later joined Government College of Art and Crafts at Khallikote to study art. Subsequently, Mahanandia went to the College of Art in Delhi to

study fine arts in 1971. While studying in Delhi College of Art, he rose to fame in portraiture by drawing the portrait of former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. He sought permission from the authorities to sit under the holy fountain at Connaught Place and draw portraits. It is here that he met Von Schedvin December 17, 1975.

Needn't visit police station, 'WhatsApp your complaint'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, July 26: The Commissionerate Police (CP) has introduced alternative arrangement to accept complaints from people in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Commissionerate Police has issued a WhatsApp no. (8763068167) for accepting complaints from people. "People can lodge their complaints through the WhatsApp no. So, there is no need to visit to the police stations in the city amid the pandemic," said a senior police officer.

Earlier, many police stations in the Silver City here were asking people not to enter into their premises to lodge complaints due to the outbreak of novel coronavirus. The police officials were accepting complaints outside their premises.



Many police stations in the Silver City had asked people not to enter into their premises to lodge complaints due to the outbreak of Covid-19

"We have received four complaints through the WhatsApp no. on the first day. A senior police officer has been assigned to look into

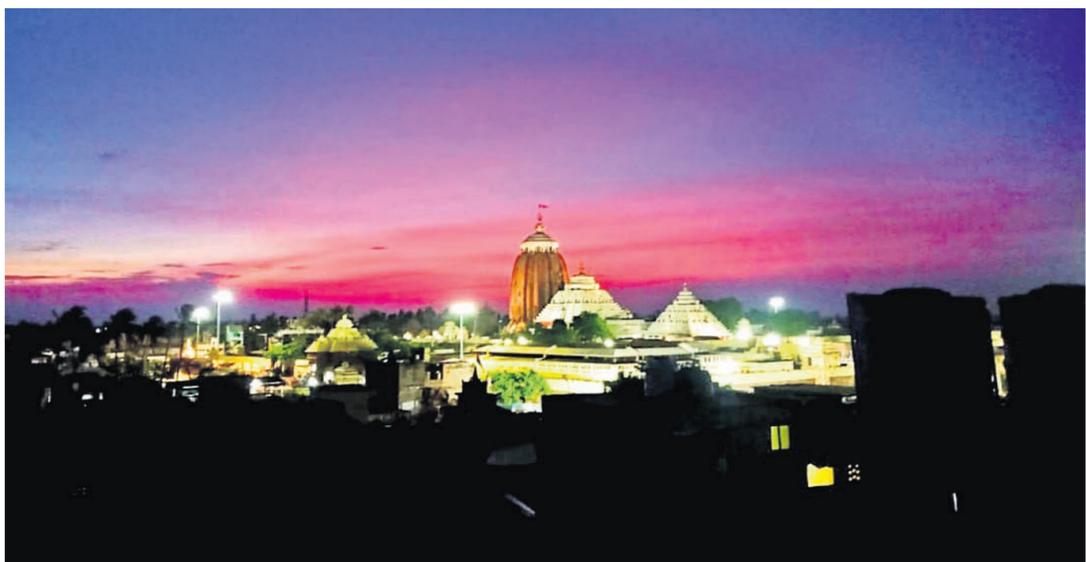
the complaints. We hope that this alternative arrangement to accept complaints would be more helpful to people during the pandemic," said Cuttack Deputy Commissioner of Police Prateek Singh.

Singh further revealed that people can lodge their complaints in the form of messages and videos to the WhatsApp no.

The Commissionerate Police, meanwhile, put restrictions on people's entry into the office of city's Deputy Commissioner of Police to check the spread of Covid-19.

Earlier, there were reports that members of many social and voluntary outfits visited the DCP office to felicitate Singh who had assumed office a few days ago. Apprehensions were raised that gatherings at the DCP office may lead to the spread of novel coronavirus.

SUNSET IN HOLY CITY



With the evening sky turning red, the beauty of Srimandir and its surroundings in Puri goes up manifold, Sunday

OP PHOTO

Saffron targets state govt over 'ineligible' KALIA beneficiaries

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 26: Leader of Opposition in the state Assembly and BJP leader Pradipta Kumar Naik Sunday asked the state government to book government officials involved in irregularities in the KALIA scheme.

Naik termed the recent decision of the state government to send notices to selected ineligible KALIA beneficiaries as "unjustified" and asked the farmers who received

notice from the government to not pay the refund as demanded.

"Let us identify the officials who selected them at first place and sell their movable and immovable properties. Let the government compensate the losses from the irresponsible officials of the state government," he said.

Naik added, "The Naveen government has now sent letters to close to 3.41 lakh beneficiaries of KALIA scheme asking them to refund the financial incentives they received from the state government under the scheme. In the letter, it has said that they are ineligible candidate and must return the amount back to the government."

The BJP leader said that the scheme must have started with application, scrutiny of the government and disbursement at last. "The Naveen government came to power after boasting about the KALIA funds given to them and now after elections is asking them to refund the money," he said.



BMC preps for further spike in Covid cases

WHILE THE CITY HAD BEEN RECORDING 50 CASES DAILY ON AN AVERAGE, THE NUMBER HAS CROSSED THE 100-MARK AND THE TREND IS GETTING 'DANGEROUS'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 26: The state capital which has seen unprecedented surge in Covid cases is likely to see further spikes in coming days as the civic authorities ramp up testing in the city.

From March 17, when Bhubaneswar recorded its first case, the active cases tally has surged to 1,991 cases with 163 fresh cases recorded, Sunday. While the city had been recording 50 cases daily on an average, the number has crossed the 100-mark and the trend is getting dangerous, experts say.

"The sudden rise in cases is only because of increased tests. Up until now, we were able to carry around 800 tests per day on an average basis but Saturday alone we did 1,185 tests. We will be conducting 1,400 tests a day. The increase in tests



Citizens need not panic. 80 per cent of the cases detected till now have been asymptomatic

PREM CHANDRA CHAUDHARY | COMMISSIONER, BMC

will help in better screening and thus, we can move fast towards isolating them and secure others," explained Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) Commissioner, Prem Chandra Chaudhary.

As per sources, the city hospitals are equipped with various Covid tests broadly divided into three categories: RT-PCR, Antigen Test and True-NAT. While RT-PCR test, which includes process that copies and amplifies specific genetic fragments of the coronavirus, is available in Capital Hospital, IMS-SUM Hospital, AIIMS, Apollo and Shree Hospital

among others. Meanwhile, Antigen Test that detects a particular protein material in the coronavirus related to the human being's natural immune response is available at Capital Hospital, IMS-SUM Hospital. Similarly, True NAT tests which produce results relatively quicker is facilitated at Capital Hospital,

AMRI, Shree Hospital and at various camps organised by the BMC from time to time.

Requesting denizens not to panic after seeing the surge in cases, BMC Commissioner in a press conference, Saturday said, "80 per cent of the cases detected till now have been asymptomatic." Moreover, detailing city's preparedness for rising cases, Chaudhary stated that the city has capacity of 3,321 COVID beds with 85 ICU beds.

"Moreover, not all cases need COVID care centres and hospitals. Until now, the city has had 909 recoveries and much of these have been asymptomatic which got cured at home quarantine only. Saturday, the city saw 1,185 tests out of which 789 tests were done through RT-PCR, 293 through Antigen Tests and 103 through TrueNAT tests. These tests will result in detection of more cases and ultimately, faster decision making," he concluded.

COVID TALLY CROSSES 25K-MARK

Of the fresh 1,376 cases, 917 were reported from quarantine centres and rest were detected during local contact tracing



In Cuttack, nCoV had stung 211 COVID Warriors

BHUBANESWAR: The state government Sunday said that a total of 211 COVID Warriors from Cuttack district contracted the viral infection in line of duty.

Saurabh Garg, Agriculture department Secretary and COVID Observer for Cuttack Sunday held a press conference and provided the details to the media. He said that out of the 211 infected COVID Warriors, only 38 of them are active cases now.

"In Cuttack district we have 1,614 cases till now. 612 cases are from Cuttack city and rest are from other parts of the district. A total of 211 COVID warriors have also tested positive in the district. 38 such cases are active," he added.

He said that the total bed capacity in the district to cater to healthcare needs of COVID patients in the district, except Cuttack city, is 6,500. "This includes 373 COVID Care Homes with bed capacity of 4,000 and Cluster Temporary Medical Centres with 2,500 beds," he highlighted.

The officer also said that the COVID Care Homes in panchayats need volunteers and urged the cured Covid patients to come forward. "Volunteers are needed to manage the COVID Care Homes in panchayats which can host up to 10-12 persons. I would like to urge the cured Covid patients to come forward and volunteer for this."

The Cuttack Municipal Corporation (CMC) Commissioner Ananya Das meanwhile said that the civic body has increased the testing in the area and also plans to rope in antigen test for public. "Between July 19 and 24, we received a total of 264 new Covid 19



We need volunteers to manage the COVID Care Homes in panchayats which can host up to 10-12 persons. I urge the cured Covid patients to come forward and volunteer for this

SAURABH GARG | AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT SECY & COVID OBSERVER FOR CUTTACK

cases. Almost 71 per cent had contacts with previous positive patients. Our frontline workers are giving the list of ILI and SARI cases detected through field visits to the PHC. Every day we are getting the list and sending them to testing," she said.

She added, "We had earlier two mobile sampling units, which we have planned to increase to four. Focus would be on the vulnerable population like kids, elderly and pregnant women for testing. Besides door-to-door survey, we are also testing fever patients in hospitals using antigen tests."

Das said that earlier CMC conducted antigen tests only for hospitals but later it was also used in areas like Malgondown to screen patients and treat them timely. The officials added that the city has now three COVID Care Centres and is likely to add two more such centres soon.

Bhubaneswar, July 26: State's Covid-19 case count crossed the 25,000-mark with 1,376 new infections, while the toll mounted to 140 as 10 more patients succumbed to the disease Sunday, an official of the Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) department said.

Odisha's Covid-19 tally now stands at 25,389, said the official, adding that of the fresh cases, 917 were reported from quarantine centres and 459 detected during local contact tracing.

Ganjam, the district in state worst affected by coronavirus, reported the highest number of fresh cases at 484, followed by Khurda (187), Keonjhar (103), Puri (91), Cuttack (75) and Gajapati (74). New cases were reported from all 30 districts of Odisha, added the official.

Of the 10 fatalities, Ganjam reported six, Khurda two, and Gajapati and Sundargarh one each, the official pointed out.

With the latest deaths, the toll in Ganjam rose to 79. There are 8,678 Covid-19 cases in the district,

CAPITAL IN FOCUS

Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation detects 163 cases in the Capital city

While 104 were quarantine cases, 59 were local contact cases

Bhubaneswar has 1,069 active Covid-19 cases, while 909 persons have recovered

added the official.

Another Covid-19 patient died in Ganjam due to eclampsia pregnancy, taking the number of patients who died due to other ailments to 34.

Meanwhile, the state recorded the highest single-day recoveries 864 cases Sunday.

"Happy to share that today we

have achieved another high, with the recovery of 864 #COVID19 patients in a day..." the H&FW department tweeted.

The recoveries include 432 from Ganjam, 137

from Rayagada, 31 from Bargarh, 28 from Khurda, 26 from Cuttack and 26 from Keonjhar. The total recovered cases of Odisha now stand at 16,792.

The Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC), meanwhile,

detected 163 cases in the Capital city. While 104 were quarantine cases, 59 were local contact cases.

"As many as 46 persons who had earlier tested positive for Covid-19 recovered Sunday," the civic body said.

With this, Bhubaneswar has 1,069 active Covid-19 cases, while 909 persons have so far recovered from the viral infection.

The Temple City has recorded 1,991 cases and 11 deaths due to the disease.

The Cuttack Municipal Corporation, on the other hand, recorded 57 fresh coronavirus cases, taking the tally to 671 in the Silver City.

While 11 were from institutional quarantine, 36 were from home quarantine, two from paid quarantine and eight are local contact cases. The Millennium City also witnessed 23 recoveries.

Cuttack has 367 active Covid-19 cases, while 296 persons have so far recovered from the infection. Eight persons have succumbed to the disease in Cuttack.

Week-long blood donation drive

CUTTACK: In a bid to ensure availability of blood during Covid-19 pandemic, a seven-day blood donation camp will be launched in the Silver City under 'Odisha Mo Paribar' initiative Monday.

Mo Paribar convener Arup Patnaik said, "Blood banks usually witness shortage during summer. Hence, there is a need to ensure availability of blood, especially during this lockdown."

"Keeping this in view, we recently started blood donation camps at different places. On the first day, 37 units were collected while on the second day, we received 57 units of blood," Patnaik said.

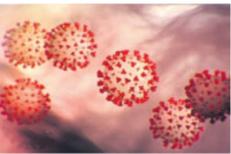
Mo Parivar joint convener Atanu Sabyasachi Nayak said, "I request local MLAs, leaders and institutions to encourage people to donate blood during the seven-day long blood donation drive."

Free edu for children of Covid deceased

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, July 26: KIIT Deemed to be University here Sunday announced its decision to provide technical and professional education free of cost to children of the people succumbing to COVID-19 in state.

Noting that COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted and devastated normal life and livelihoods of the people of Odisha, KIIT Deemed to be University said it has extended a helping hand to the families of the Covid deceased.



"Sons and daughters of the Covid deceased, who are interested, can apply to different technical and professional courses of KIIT-DU, including ITI and Diploma, as per their eligibility for admission," it said in a statement.

This facility will be available for two academic years, 2020-21 and 2021-22 only, informed KIIT authorities. Preference will be given to the children of Covid deceased from below poverty level, Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe and Socially and Educationally Backward Classes categories.

SPCB submits report on Subarnarekha sand mining to NGT

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 26: The Odisha State Pollution Control Board (OSPCB) has submitted its report to the National Green Tribunal (NGT) on Subarnarekha sand mining case as per the direction of the tribunal.

The SPCB after a joint inspection of the site in Balasore district with other officials recommended meas-

ures to minimise the flouting of sand mining norms as alleged before the NGT in the case.

The joint report said that locals alleged use of machines in sand mining which was prohibited but during the site visit, no machines were found. It also said that a portion of wooden bridge into the river needs to be removed to ensure complete flow of river water. The panel said that more than per-

missible extraction was being done and a penalty has already been imposed on the violators. The panel report claims that vehicles carrying the sand are not covered and causing air pollution. The panel has given seven recommendations to the NGT as per their inspection for ensuring compliance of norms and ensuring welfare of the adjoining villages.

The panel with the SPCB as

nodal body has recommended asking the Baripada Mining Officer to estimate excess mining and levy penalty as per calculations. "The use of machineries by leaseholders shall be prohibited and ensured by Jaleshwar Tehsildar. Movement period in the day from 8am to 4pm and speed limit at 20km/hr of transport vehicles on village roads shall be ensured by the lessees," the recommendations said.

Chandipur ITR's drone sanitises premises

AGENCIES

Balasore, July 26: India's premiere Defense laboratory ITR, Chandipur Sunday used heavy duty drone for spraying disinfectants to sanitise its premises and several places in the district to curb spread of coronavirus.

The heavy duty drone developed with IIT Chennai was seen in action while spraying disinfectants along the OT road near Police Line Square.

ITR sanitisation team led by its Director, BK Das later on carried out disinfection of traffic police stations, SP office premises, reserve police line as part of the town sanitisation programme organised by the District Emergency Office.

The drone in use has a capacity to carry up to 16litre of different types of disinfectants and spray from a height of up to 20 meters with



four nozzles operating in tandem. Without payload, however, the drone can go up to several hundreds of meters in height.

"The drone-based sanitisation has the advantage of sanitising potentially contaminated areas remotely without exposing the operator to any sort of risk.

"Moreover, the drone can easily sanitise the areas which otherwise cannot be accessed by the large fire tender based wide area sanitisation system," said Das.

"The system has been designed for sanitisation of containment

zones and quarantine facilities, where earlier our personnel had to go with PPEs. The areas are now being sanitised by our team remotely," he further said.

Besides BK Das, a number of other senior officers including associate director HK Ratha, additional directors B Sucharita, RK Behera, Sanjay Kumar and Niladri Roy, group directors PK Mohanty, MK Pal and Sukanta Das were also present.

ITR handed over 25 litres of hand sanitiser produced by it to the Balasore traffic police on this occasion.

During the nation-wide lockdown, when not too many resources were commercially available, ITR came up with in-house development of compressed air based mist sanitizers to disinfect its technical and residential premises.

Sons refuse to cremate man over infection fear

AGENCIES

Sambalpur, July 26: The novel coronavirus has not only developed a fear psychosis among the common people, but it has also shattered the family bonding.

In a shocking incident in Deogarh, 90 km from here, a cancer patient was cremated by some social workers as the sons of the deceased refused to perform the last rites fearing their father was infected with coronavirus. Premananda Sahu, a resident of Gudeinali village under Banei sub-division in Sundargarh district, was working in a cinema hall in Deogarh.

However, after closure of the cinema hall due to coronavirus-induced lockdowns, Sahu was sell-



Social workers cremate a cancer patient as the departed's sons refuse to perform his last rites fearing their father was infected with coronavirus

after a Covid-19 case was detected in the ward. Soon after, Sahu and his wife returned to their village. Their sons, however, did not allow the couple to stay with them out of fear for coronavirus.

With no other alternative in sight, the couple returned to dwell at their hut in Deogarh.

The owner of the closed cinema hall, Kshireswar Pradhan, and local

volunteers came to their rescue and provided medicine and food. After a few days, Premanada, however, breathed his last.

Santilata and neighbours informed the sons about the death and asked them to perform the last rites of their father, but they refused. However, Pradhan, accompanied by district sports association secretary Dharendra Nayak, district bar association secretary Sidheswar Guru, journalist Prithwiraj Patnaik and many other social workers performed Sahu's last rites.

They also extended financial support to Sahu's widow and requested the district administration to provide all help and assistance to the distressed woman.

FIGHT AGAINST VIRUS



Fire brigade personnel sanitise the Toshali Bhawan in Bhubaneswar in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, Sunday

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Gurupriya bridge becomes game changer for Swabhiman Anchal

Jajpur PDS scam: BJP seeks sacking of BDO

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur, July 26: With millions struggling to survive amid a raging pandemic, scores of poor families in Dharmashala block of Jajpur were deprived of subsidised food thanks to an alleged scam.

This has come when the Centre and the State governments have been laying stress on proper execution of the Food Security Act.

A huge quantity of essential commodities under the Public Distribution System (PDS) has been misappropriated in Dharmashala block. Allegations are also there that names of several eligible beneficiaries have been struck off the PDS list by the Dharmashala BDO.

Condemning such act, BJP leader Lekhashree Samantsinghar alleged that the BDO has also submitted a false affidavit in the High Court. "Dharmashala BDO has struck



Representative picture

off the names of Swarnalata and Ramadei from PDS for having concrete houses (see their real houses in pic) & even given false affidavit in Hon'ble High Court. We demand enquiry & dismissal from service for false reporting to Court & malafide intent @Naveen_Odisha," tweeted Samantsinghar. Rama Dei of Choramuhan village

in Jajpur district is presently living in a thatched house. Citing that Rama Dei has a concrete room, her name was deleted from the beneficiary list. Apart from Rama Dei, several other poor families have also sought intervention of the local administration into the matter. However, the administration is yet to take any step to resolve their

grievances. Earlier, social activist Sarbeswar Behura had moved the High Court challenging the list of beneficiaries prepared under the Odisha Public Distribution System (Control) order of 2016.

In his PIL, Behura claimed that beneficiaries of the food security scheme are not getting essential commodities in Dharmashala block.

Behura had alleged that several beneficiaries in the block are yet to get the allowance of Rs 1,000 granted by the state government to each ration card holder.

He pointed out, "The information presented by the BDO in the affidavit before the Orissa High Court is not correct. Citing several reasons, names of several beneficiaries have been dropped. There has been massive corruption in the PDS and stern action should be taken against the BDO and other erring officials of the civil supplies department."



BRIDGING GAPS

It was more than a bridge as it linked around 30,000 people from 151 villages to the mainland

The ultras have over the decades exploited the region's backwardness and isolation. They had tried to prevent the construction of the bridge but their efforts were frustrated and the bridge became a reality

The Chief Minister while unveiling the bridge renamed the region as Swabhiman Anchal and announced a financial package of Rs 100 crore for its development. This brought cheer among residents

last month and unveiled a new police station at Jodamba. Remote areas like Jodamba, Dhuliputa, Hantalguda and Double Pahada were connected with roads. Many villages were connected following construction of hanging bridges at Sakrubandha and Jantapai.

The rural development department has constructed 31 roads and 24 culverts with a fund of Rs 110 crore. The road construction has paved the way for laying drinking water pipelines and installation of 250 tube wells. The administration has launched turmeric cultivation, pisciculture, MGNREGS works, electrification works and a mega water supply project for irrigating farmlands in the area.

The administration launched a fish cultivation programme at a cost of Rs 20 crore to provide livelihood to 2,000 people.

Bus services were launched between Jodaamba and Malkangiri town due to efforts of the Collector and the Chittrakonda MLA.

Many panchayats in the area have become free of Maoists due to frequent combing operations.

The bridge has instilled a sense of hope and faith among the people. The residents of Janturai retaliated against the Maoists during a recent face-off.

The administration is now planning to cash in on the scenic beauty around the bridge by constructing a park which will draw tourists to the area. Vehicular movement, trade and commerce have improved in the area.

Turmeric farmer Mangala Khil, residents Daitari Golori, Sadan Khil, and Sambaru Nayak said Gurupriya has become a game changer and brought in a lot of changes in their lives.

Collector Manish Agarwal said the establishment of the bridge has helped provide education, healthcare services, transportation facilities and livelihood to the people. MLA Purnachandra Baka expressed similar views.

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT



Women of SHGs, during an agitation seeking total prohibition, ransack a country liquor-making unit at Rauliguda in Malkangiri.

OP PHOTO

River Ramial poses threat to ancient Kapileswar temple

The Shaivite shrine has run down over the years and is on the verge of losing its existence



POST NEWS NETWORK

Kamakhyaganagar, July 26: As it seems, the Dhenkanal district administration is least bothered about the historical Lord Kapileswar shrine under Kamakhyaganagar block which dates back to the Ganga dynasty.

Crores of rupees are being spent every year by the state government on restoration, beautification and development of historical monuments across Odisha. But the apathetic attitude of the district administration has astonished local denizens and intelligentsia.

Kapileswar shrine bears testimony to the exquisite craftsmanship of the then artists in stone carving. Due to lack of administrative empathy as well as adequate maintenance, the Shaivite shrine has run down over the years and is on the verge of losing its existence.

Floodwaters have been constantly posing a threat to the temple every year. One would reach Badasuano Chhak after covering a distance of nearly 7 km on Kamakhyaganagar-Bhuban national highway (NH-53). Again, after proceeding around 2 km further from there on Hatuari-Jagannathpur road, one can reach the Kapileswar temple.

Notably, the shrine is entirely surrounded by river Ramial.

In 1994-95, the management of this temple was entrusted to the endowment department. Due to lack of proper coordination between servitors and the endowment department, the Lord's properties

gradually went to the possession of local encroachers.

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) took over the maintenance in 1996. For over 20 years there was no development. A master plan was then chalked out for constructing a compound wall of stone around the temple. As against this, ASI carried out stone-packing works only at a few places of the shrine in 2015.

"The dilapidated condition of Kapileswar temple might fail to stand the test of time, if not repaired. Being hit often by floodwater, west side of the temple has developed large cracks. Parswa Devatas around the shrine have almost lost their existence," some villagers fumed.

However, residents belonging to 15 villages of Jagannathpur, Baligorada and Badasuano panchayats had attempted several times to restoration the temple in between 2010 and 2012.

Renowned researcher and Angul Additional Collector Tapan Kumar Satpathy said, "It is believed that Kapileswar shrine was built in 12th century AD, during the reign of Ganga dynasty. As Hindu royal families at that time were mostly devoted to Lord Shiva, Ganga rulers had constructed the temple."

Attempts should be made at all levels for restoration of the temple. If given proper maintenance, this old historical monument of Dhenkanal district could ever remain a good testimony of our past and a source of information for researchers, Satpathy added.

Protesting dairy farmers of Bargarh dump milk on NH

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bargarh, July 26: Amid travel restrictions, market closure and various forms of lockdown in place, the agricultural sector has been badly hit in Bargarh district. It is especially so for the dairy farmers of the district.

The dairy farmers of Bargarh block Sunday dumped their day's yield on National Highway-53 alleging negligence on part of the government and the Sambalpur Milk Producer Association managed by OMFED in collecting milk from them.

"If the state government can allow liquor shops to open, why harass milk vendors," a farmer rued. According to a farmer, at least 5,000 litres of milk was



pooured on the road. This was the second time that milk producers staged such a protest. Some of the protesters said they started supplying milk to OMFED after the state government announced certain relaxations in COVID-19 lockdown in May. However, Sambalpur Milk Producer Association refused to procure milk from the registered

dairy farmers in the district after another lockdown was announced in some parts of the state from July 17. As a result, many milk producers here have suffered huge losses. The farmers said the agitation would be intensified from next week if the district administration does not take proper steps to allow milk procurement from them.

Lemon grower finds sweet success

POST NEWS NETWORK

Simulia, July 26: In contrast to other cash crops that require high input costs, farmers can earn high returns with lemon farming. Surendra Kumar Senapati, 65, of Simulia block in Balasore has proved this.

"I can manage my expenses from this farming," Senapati asserted.

He has raised lemon trees on nine acres of land near his house at Kainisi village in Kanheibindha panchayat. The farmer first began paddy cultivation on his nine acres

of farmland. Senapati recalls his initial days. His father Upendra and uncle Sudarshan had raised some lemon saplings. Now, they have grown up and their number is 300. In December, lemon trees have blossoms. In April, lemons are collected and sold.

"Hundred lemons are sold for Rs 100 or Rs 150, depending on the demand. I invest Rs 15,000 every year towards maintenance and get Rs 80,000 in return," he added.

Senapati also raised some inter

crops like chilli and plantain. "There are certain rules for lemon farming. People from outside should not be allowed. I myself collect lemons and sell to traders. However, at times, some labourers are allowed for work." He has married off three daughters and two sons.

"Now, I have no financial burden. Whatever I earn from lemon farming is sufficient for me," Senapati added.

Unemployed youths should take up such income-generating farming and make profits, he observed.

Kalahandi Anganwadis get ISO certification

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhawanipatna, July 26: Tribal-dominated Kalahandi district which remains etched in public memory as one of the most backward regions in the state has broken the shackles of stereotypes after five Anganwadi centres including three Nanda Ghars of the district received ISO certification.

The centres were awarded with ISO 9001:2015 certification for providing supplementary nutrition, immunisation, health check-up, referral services, pre-school, non-formal education with nutrition and health education and healthcare and empowering women with skill development.

The centres which received the certification are Jodabandha Anganwadi Centre at



BREAKING THE SHACKLES

Nanda Ghar is committed to the Prime Minister's national vision of eradicating child malnutrition, providing education, healthcare and empowering women with skill development

The Anganwadi and Nanda Ghar buildings' exteriors have been painted with colourful flowers and fruits to give students a feel that they are special and not attending a poorly maintained government structure

Champadeipur and Lanjigarh Road-2 Anganwadi Centre under Lanjigarh block and three Nanda Ghars situated at Basantapada, Kansari and Kendubardi gram panchayats under Lanjigarh block.

Notably, Nanda Ghars are a transformative leap dedicated to

benefit rural children and women in India. A measure undertaken by Vedanta together with the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MoWCD), the project aims to ensure rural India is not left behind in India's march towards progress. The case for state-of-the-art

Anganwadis in the form of Nanda Ghars all over India has not merely arrived - it is now imperative.

Nanda Ghar is committed to the Prime Minister's national vision of eradicating child malnutrition, providing education, healthcare and empowering women with

skill development. The Anganwadi Centres and Nanda Ghar buildings' exteriors have been painted with colourful flowers and fruits to give students a feel that they are special and not attending a poorly maintained government structure.

Efforts were also made to improve the interior to give them a learning atmosphere.

The certification was issued for a period of three years with effect from July 17. Expressing his satisfaction for the achievement, Kalahandi Collector Dr Parag Harshad Gavali said the process of transformation has begun in the district and they are aiming to achieve 100 per cent ISO certification. He has credited W&CD, Block, Vedanta, Nanda Ghar team and KPMG for the certification.

There is nothing mind can do that cannot be better done in the mind's immobility and thought-free stillness.

SRI AUROBINDO



Irrelevant Urjit

Former RBI governor, Urjit Patel, has suddenly felt the need to explain the context in which he abruptly quit the post he held for less than three years, by end 2018. Patel has cited differences he had with the Modi government over handling of Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) or bad loans. This is a critical issue hanging round the neck of India's Public Sector Banks (PSBs) for the past several years. Even granted that governments cannot look at matters of economy or banking loans purely from an economist's point of view, it is imperative that both sides adhere to the fundamentals of good banking practices.

Patel cites in his book, 'Overdraft: Saving the Indian Saver' some situations that led to the present critical times in the banking sector. Notably, he refers to the pre-2014 UPA period as a time when the "government did not question risk controls in government banks (GBs)" even as it received significant dividends. He notes that a number of GBs did not have senior management in place, too much of bureaucratic inertia and political meddling. "Places on the banks' boards of directors had become sinecures to be handed out to political supporters of the ruling party," he has stated. It may be noted that Patel himself was a creation of a similar situation where the BJP brought him in as a substitute for Raghuram Rajan who did not wish to play ball in the time leading up to Demonetization.

Patel, coming from a well known corporate background, was a simple pawn in the hands of the Modi government. He may claim some credit for actions like the cleaning up of the bank books during his tenure, which exposed the extent of bad loans in the system - of the order of Rs 10 lakh crore. However, these events may have played out because of earlier steps taken by Raghuram Rajan and other officials and also because of Demonetization. Patel claims a governmental insistence, apparently from then finance minister-in-charge Piyush Goel, that loans cannot be arithmetically classified as NPAs at the end of 90 days, was among the reasons why he quit his job.

The foreboding about the state of India's banking system is there for all to see even if the common man cannot understand all the nuances. The banks, both public and private, are in a terrible state of health principally due to poor management and a pile of bad loans. A collapse of the banking sector would mean a virtual collapse of the Indian economy - and the signs of a disaster for the nation have been visible for quite some time now.

Governmental steps to restore the health of the banking system have not been of much help under the two terms of the NDA government. It has taken some steps to check the dangerous drift in the banking sector, but they are proving to be too little, too late. The latest attempt too, to merge PSBs - a process that is already under way in phases - might not produce the desired results. The worse is perhaps yet to come. There is tangible fear that while handing over the PSBs to private players, the government may retain a high percentage of the deposits. While this would inject great amounts of much needed cash into the government's pockets, it would also under-value the banks on the basis of the deposits not being there. In return, the government may expect the new owners to manipulate the books and keep the system going without actual assets in cash.

Massive resort to risk-taking by American banks, free-wheeling loan-taking with less repayments, and a downturn in sub-prime lending market, led to the bankruptcy of Lehman Brothers in September 2008. That had initially hurt the US economy. Later, this took on the form of a global economic crisis or Great Recession, cited as the worst since the Great Depression of the 1930s.

The Covid-19 spread resulting in a lockdown of the nation, in full and in parts over a quarter of the fiscal, with no end in sight yet, would mean a massive hit to the national economy. This will have a huge adverse impact on the banking system, with more of bad debt piling up. Almost every industrial and commercial unit is in ruins. They all operate not by investors' money but with loans taken from banks. With the sharp downturn in business, many more business establishments are likely to default, and will be less prepared to repay their EMIs. With massive job losses and salary cuts, the EMIs from individual loanees too are bound to fall foul. How the banking sector - and the national economy - faces this situation is a scary thought.

It is people like Urjit Patel who, by their silence and Yesmanship, have wreaked the most damage on the Indian economy. The nation has not forgotten how he lorded over and messed up the Reserve Bank of India during the Nov 2016 Demonetization that broke the economic spine of this nation. His present opinions would have been truly appreciated had he spoken this kind of truth while in that powerful post. Now, he is irrelevant.

WISDOM CORNER

There are basically two types of people. People who accomplish things, and people who claim to have accomplished things. The first group is less crowded.

MARK TWAIN

The fool doth think he is wise, but the wise man knows himself to be a fool.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Be slow to fall into friendship, but when you are in, continue firm and constant.

SOCRATES

WORDSWORTH

Swazzle

In the traditional Punch-and-Judy show, Mr Punch speaks with a high squeaky, rasping voice, interspersed with ear-splitting cries when he perpetrates some piece of devilry or is thwarted. The showman makes these noises by means of a device in his mouth, these days usually called a swazzle. This has taken various forms but in essence is a small pair of bowed plates with tape across the middle. The Punch-and-Judy man holds it near the back of his mouth and blows through it, much as a clarinet player does with the reeds in his instrument. It takes a lot of practice to make recognisable words and to swap between Punch's swazzled rasp and the unswazzled voices of the other characters. Swazzle is a modified form of the older swatchel; this might be a variant of swatch but is more probably from German schwätzeln, taken in turn from schwatzen, to chatter or tattle. One reason that experts think this is the source is that the very earliest example, dated 1854, spells the word schwassle. In the latter part of that century, the swatchel-cove was the Punch-and-Judy man or his assistant who did the supporting patter and who interpreted Punch's less intelligible squawks, and the swatchel-box was the booth in which the Punchman stood. Incidentally, there are some risks attached to using the swazzle: tradition requires that the performer shall swallow it at least twice before he can call himself a Punch-and-Judy man.

LOL

CHICKEN FARM

Santa decided to start a chicken farm so he bought a hundred chicks to begin with. A month later he returned to the dealer for another hundred chicks because all of the first lot had died. Another month later he was back at



the dealers for another hundred chicks, for the second lot had also died. "But I think I know where I'm going wrong," said Santa. "I think I'm planting them too deep."

POPULISM, FUNDAMENTALISM

FOCUS TURKEY

The Saint Sophia museum in Istanbul being reverted into a mosque has brought back, like a powerful refrain, that couplet of Mir Taqi Mir which has been an emotional crutch for me. For instance, when I visited the great Cordoba mosque built in Southern Spain in 786 AD and which was converted in 1236 into a live Church. Mir said:

"Mut ranja kar kisi ko, ke apne te aeteqaad,
Jee dhaaye ke jo kaaba banaya to kya kya?"

(Never hurt a human being. It is not worth building even the House of God or Kaaba, if the project breaks human hearts.)

Mir's contemporary, Mirza Rafi Sauda, inverts Mir's image: "Kaaba agar che dhaya to kya jae ghum hai Sheikh;
Yeh qasr e dil naheen ke banaya na jaa e ga."

(Destruction of Kaaba is not as catastrophic as the breaking of the heart, which is irreparable.)

From the Bosphorus, the Istanbul skyline is exactly like its picture postcards, a skillful contrast of domes and minarets, slim as thermometers. The brooding Ayasofya Museum stands apart. The greatest Byzantine Cathedral, built at the edge of Europe in 537 was designed to dominate the panorama of the Marmara Sea and the Asian mainland beyond.

The first Arab probe of Sindh by Mohammad bin Qasim was in 711 AD, exactly the date when Tariq Ibne Ziad crossed over from Morocco to set up station at what he called Jabal al Tariq or the Rock of Tariq which the British renamed Gibraltar in 1704 after the famous Spanish-British naval engagements including the "Spanish Armada".

Before the Iberian Peninsula turned into a cauldron of intra-European conflict, 800 years of Muslim rule was somewhat unevenly spread across Spain. To flavour this phase of history, one has to read Maria Rosa Menocal's masterly Ornament of the World: How Muslims, Jews and Christians created a Culture of Tolerance in Medieval Spain. The title itself tells the story. It is astonishing that, in the past three decades of grueling Islamophobia, not one of our liberals had the width of vi-



After Erdogan's mishandling of Syria, misreading of Europe, the US and Russia, his popularity in serious question, he has fallen back on the oldest trick in the politician's book - religious extremism

sion to recall phases in history when robust multiculturalism thrived under Muslim rule. After Reconquista in 1492 by the Christians, the Inquisition was much harsher on the Jews who found refuge in Morocco and later in the Ottoman Empire.

The glory of the greatest Eastern Orthodox Cathedral came under partial eclipse when the Roman Catholic Church occupied it for six decades. But it was Sultan Mehmet's establishment of the Ottoman Empire in 1453 that caused the Cathedral to face a predictable total eclipse. It was transformed into a mosque.

From the debris of the Ottoman Empire after the First World War, Mustafa Kemal Pasha "Ataturk" resurrected what is modern Turkey. He was determined to take his country from "backwardness" into "modernism".

In other words, he turned his back on "Muslim traditionalism" and dreamt of a secular Turkey, custom-made for Europe. He replaced the Arabian alphabet with Roman script for the Turkish language. He banned the Fez cap, brought the practice of Islam under a department of Religious Affairs attached to the Prime Minister, and so on. Little wonder the texture of life in Istanbul

and Ankara was more European than Islamic, rather like North Tehran under the Shah of Iran.

But what was the ingredient that made Turkey's secularism comparatively more durable? It was the Turkish army which became the guarantor of the Republic's secularism. Ataturk divined, and quite rightly too, that Sophia mosque would be an eyesore for Europe, in perpetuity. With one executive order in 1934, it was reinvented as a museum of Byzantine history.

It was western callousness which, in the ultimate analysis, made Turkey's secular edifice vulnerable. Western, mostly American, Israeli hostility to Arab Socialism (Egypt), Ba'athism (Iraq, Syria), and Libya's cradle-to-grave welfare system (details for the Afghan tumult are only slightly different) which promoted Islamic extremism on an unspeakable scale.

Details for Turkey's upheaval need to be explained. With the breakup of former Yugoslavia, Serbian and Croatian nationalisms turned upon Bosnian Muslims with vicious brutality Srebrenica is only one chapter in that bleak and shoddy history. Briefings by the UN military commander, Gen. Sir Michael Rose, were laden with more gruesome detail by the day

particularly the four year long siege of Sarajevo. Balkans, the turf for continuous conflict throughout history between the Ottoman and the Austro-Hungarian Empires, became a wide open killing field when Belgrade could not hold Yugoslavia together.

The helplessness of the Bosnian Muslims was unbelievable. Europe's reason for not intervening rang hollow. Its intervention, it was argued, would cause individual European countries to take sides in a conflict in which World War II adversaries, Serbia and Croatia were fighting each other over the spoils of Bosnia.

Europe being sucked into the Bosnian war carried the risk of undermining the very purpose for which EU was being forged - to avoid conflict between member states. This was sophistry, said Salman Rushdie. Reverse the religious affiliations of the combatants, and European troops would be in Bosnia within a day.

Mornings, evenings and afternoons, the Turks watched the brutalisation of Bosnia and Sarajevo, both an evocative part of Turkish historical memory. A powerful anti-West, Islamist party, Refah or Welfare took shape and spread like prairie fire. Necmettin Erbakan, founder of Refah, became Prime Minister. Citing the secular Constitution, the Army summarily dethroned the "Islamist" Prime Minister.

Erbakan's protégés, Abdullah Gul and Tayyip Erdogan, dismantled "Refah" and reappeared in a secular garb as leaders of AK or Justice and Development Party. As evidence of their secular credentials, they kept alive their application for membership of the EU, European callousness notwithstanding. In fact, French President Giscard d'Estaing virtually slapped Turkey across its face. "European civilization is Christian civilization."

After Erdogan's mishandling of Syria, misreading of Europe, the US and Russia, his popularity in serious question, he has fallen back on the oldest trick in the politician's book - religious extremism. "Look," he will address Islamists, "like Mehmet, the conqueror, I have restored for your supplications a great mosque." IANS

SPECTRUM ECONOMY

Jobs, not doles, as way forward



Prof SN Misra

INDIA MUST NOT GET INTO A SYNDROME OF GIVING ENDLESS DOLES TO ITS POOR BUT MUST REV-UP ITS PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT SCHEMES LIKE MNREGA

After the fall of Berlin Wall, Francis Fukuyama had said that the fall epitomised the end of all ideology, particularly of Socialism, and the advent of liberal democracy. When the book 'End of History' was slipped under the door of Margaret Thatcher, the promoter of free market, the iron lady had observed, "Do not be too sure of history." Covid-19 seems to convey that neo-liberal capitalism and free market philosophy do not form the end point of public policy. It has to give a way to a more empathetic and interventionist state, which takes charge of the most vulnerable of the populations.

Milton Friedman, the apostle of privatisation, had observed: "The government solution to a problem is usually as bad as the problem." He would be turning in his graves, the way the Indian government handled the problem of mass hunger by bailing out the migrants and the poor from the quagmire of starvation.

One of the swirling debates globally has been whether life is more important or livelihood. The Supreme Court in the famous case

of Olga Tellis Vs. Bombay Municipal Corporation (1985) had decreed that Right to Livelihood for pavement dwellers was indeed a Right to Life as incorporated in Article 21. Because of such expansive reading of what life constitutes, Right to Livelihood had become the sine quanon of Right to Life. Therefore, most countries have chosen to embrace the path of finding employment opportunities for all those who have been seriously affected by the lockdown of economic activities, rather than forcing them to scurry for cover behind closed walls.

The worst possible nightmare that the USA faced was the great economic depression of the 1930s. This was a time when classical economists were proven wrong, that the economy would recover in due course. John Maynard Keynes in his magnum opus "General Theory" (1936) suggested that providing employment to people affected by the economic depression would break the logjam of perennial depression. President Franklin D. Roosevelt adopted the New Deal Programme and the US, by 1944, not

only achieved near-full employment but became the most dominant global power.

Therefore, India must not get into a syndrome of giving endless doles to its poor but must rev-up its public employment schemes like MNREGA, invest far more in health, education, skilling and infrastructure - some 10 per cent of GDP, as against 5 per cent allocation now. India must also come out of the rigid mindset of adhering to the FRBM target, and contain fiscal deficit to around 3 per cent of GDP. Unusual times call for new approaches. Government must encourage greater fiscal stimulus than it has done so far and increase its investment in the neglected social sector which is responsible for the low Human Development Index of India. The NCAER believes that fiscal deficit can zoom up to 10 per cent!

The lockdown must not waylay our public policy on populist lines but on a pragmatic premise of re-deeming the Gandhian pledge of providing economic justice to the lowest rungs of society. India has to embrace an alternative devel-

opment model which gives higher priority to human development rather than pursuing mindless growth, by allowing market forces to proliferate. Neo-liberalism must give way to an alternative development model, which assures five basic rights to all - namely, quality education and health at affordable cost, adequate nutritional intake, old age support and pension and employment. Even Boris Johnson Britain's PM from Conservative party, has called for a New Deal in Britain and he breaks free from Adam Smith's dictum that "Market forces, as if by an invisible hand, will promote welfare of all." The pandemic has disproved such romanticisation of unregulated markets.

Thomas Burton Bottomore believed that the role of elites is invaluable for a society. Those like teachers in a society, as knowledge warriors, have a major role to play, both in clearing cobwebs of old ideas and ushering in a just society, where technology will be a great enabler and students will be its helmsmen.

The writer is a professor of Economics.

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

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Banks, mergers

Sir, The government is at work on sweeping reforms for the public sector banks. Due to calibrated consumer expectations, cut-throat competition, changes in economy and voluminous regulations, technology too has been embraced by this vibrant sector to live up to the expectations of the people. As the government contemplates reducing the number of public sector banks from the existing 12 to a select five, the young and talented youths feel frustrated over likely loss of job opportunities. Amid the Covid-19 pandemic, the aspirants were only waiting for the recruitment process to begin.

Sanjib Das, CUTTACK

Hail Bijay Mohanty

Sir, Veteran actor Bijay Mohanty was the gem of Odisha. He was born in 1950 at Pandiri in Kendrapara district, and brought up at Baripada in Mayurbhanj district. He was a gentle soul, and respected by all. His death is a great loss to the Odia film industry.

Hitesh Kumar Parida, Panikoiili, JAJPUR

Less work, full salary

Sir, There is constant outcry for funds requirement during the Covid-19 pandemic and the government is constantly facing a financial crunch. It is directing the government staff to attend to office work in lesser numbers. Now the public is also prohibited from entering any office and all their work shall be communicated via phone or by way of grievances in writing to be put in boxes before each office. Work has come down, but the entire government staff is drawing full salary. The need of the hour is to cut the salaries of all government staff, those in PSUs, PSBs etc to save the government treasury from a virtual collapse.

Janaki Ballav Dash, MAYURBHANJ

Uddhav's decision

Sir, In spite of stringent action taken by the Maharashtra government, many people in the state are not abiding by Covid-19 safety norms. In this case we cannot blame the government. Maharashtra tops the list of corona affected states in the country and an alarming situation lies ahead. This pandemic is a global war. Those countries which had lifted lockdown in haste thinking that it was over were again forced to impose it to curb the spread. In this scenario, Maharashtra CM Uddhav Thackeray has taken the right decision not to lift lockdown. The WHO and Washington Post have taken note of the state's Covid response positively.

Naresh Mandal, PRACHI NAGAR, BHADRAK

RAJASTHAN POLITICAL CRISIS

Guv listening to 'master's voice'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Jaipur, July 26: Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot sent a fresh proposal to Rajasthan Governor Kalraj Mishra for convening assembly session July 31 amid allegations that Mishra was acting in a partisan way and listening to what Congress dubbed as voice of his masters at the Centre.

Gehlot, in his letter, has sought to reply to the six points raised by the Governor, but the reason given for the Assembly session is coronavirus situation. There is no mention of his government seeking to test its majority on the floor of the House after the rebellion by Sachin Pilot and 18 supporting MLAs.

The Governor had Friday turned down an earlier proposal forwarded by the CM, saying that the letter did not mention any date or the reason for calling the special Assembly session.

The Congress, meanwhile, has launched a countrywide protest against the BJP and to highlight the growing confrontation between the Raj Bhavan and the Rajasthan government.

Governor's powers in the spotlight
A governor's powers and role in the state legislature's affairs are



back in focus amid the political crisis in Rajasthan. Congress legislators backing Rajasthan chief minister Ashok Gehlot staged a five-hour sit-in on Friday asking governor Kalraj Mishra to call a special assembly session for a floor test. They accused Mishra of acting under pressure and not listening to their demand even as Gehlot expressed confidence of winning the trust vote necessitated by his tussle with his former deputy Sachin Pilot.

Is Mishra bound by the advice of the chief minister-led council of

ministers when it comes to convening the assembly session and to what extent can the governor exercise his discretion?

Former Chief Justice of India P Sathasivam said normally, as per the Constitution, the advice is binding — but, he added, when there is a dispute about issues such as the number of lawmakers supporting a chief minister, then it is a special case.

"The governor can summon MLAs to Raj Bhavan [governor's house], make inquiries, and have discussions with MLA groups,

What does the Constitution say?

The Constitution's Articles 163 and 174 are relevant in the context of the governor's powers to convene the state assembly. Article 163 says there shall be a CM-led council of ministers to aid and advise the governor except when he is required, under the Constitution, to exercise functions in his/her discretion. When can a governor exercise discretion disregarding the advice of the council of ministers? Can he do the same when convening assembly? The answer to this lies in certain Supreme Court judgments and Article 174, which says the governor "shall from time to time summon the House of the state...as he thinks fit but six months shall not intervene between its last sitting in one session and the date appointed for first sitting in the next session".

etc. The general rule that the governor is bound by aid and advice of the council of ministers might not be relevant here," said Sathasivam, who has also served as Kerala governor:

AYODHYA PREPARES FOR A DIWALI BEFORE DIWALI

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Ayodhya, July 26: This will be a Diwali before Diwali. The entire Ayodhya city will be illuminated with lakhs of 'diyas' (earthen lamps) from August 3 to 5 to mark the 'bhoomi puja' for the proposed Ram temple.

UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, who visited Ayodhya Saturday to review the arrangements for the 'bhoomi puja', said, "We have to make this auspicious hour reach every corner of the country and make Ayodhya the pride of India and the world. There will be 'Deepotsav' at every house and temple on nights of August 3, 4 and 5. Cleanliness should be the first condition and this is an opportunity for Ayodhya to set an example through self-discipline."

"The idea of a three-day 'Deepotsav' was given by the Chief Minister and we are now going all out to arrange for the three-day event. We will be asking every individual to join in and celebrate by lighting diyas at his house," said a senior district official on Sunday.

BJP MLA from Ayodhya, Ved Prakash Gupta, said, "Diwali will be celebrated in Ayodhya for three days, culminating in the bhoomi puja August 5. The town will be decorated like a bride to mark this historic event. At least 11,000 diyas will be lit on the banks of Saryu



The 'Deepotsav' programme, held on the eve of Diwali, was initiated in 2017 by Yogi Adityanath when 1.7 lakh diyas were lit on the banks of Saryu river

and every house and temple will be illuminated."

The 'Deepotsav' programme, held on the eve of Diwali, was initiated in 2017 by Yogi Adityanath when 1.7 lakh diyas were lit on the banks of Saryu river:

The event, since then, has become bigger with every passing year and in 2019, the state claimed a record when 5.5 lakh diyas were lit in Ayodhya during 'Deepotsav'.

Street lighting, a 'shobha yatra' (pageant) of various overseas Ramlila performances, a mahaaarti one the Ghats of Saryu, a light-and-sound show on the river and lighting of earthen oil lamps have been a part of the event.

Meanwhile, Triloki Nath Pandey, decree holder of Ram Janambhoomi said, "The Chief Minister has said that the auspicious occasion has arrived after a struggle of five centuries. The nation is celebrating and we should cherish this moment by welcoming the day by lighting lamps."

UP among worst states in Covid data reporting



DISPARITY ACROSS STATES

THE FINDINGS SHOWED THAT CDRS VARIED FROM 0.61 (GOOD) IN KARNATAKA TO 0.0 (POOR) IN BIHAR AND UTTAR PRADESH, WITH A MEDIAN VALUE OF 0.26

RESEARCHERS IDENTIFIED THAT PUNJAB AND CHANDIGARH COMPROMISED THE PRIVACY OF INDIVIDUALS UNDER QUARANTINE BY RELEASING THEIR PERSONALLY IDENTIFIABLE INFORMATION

THE STUDY SHOWS THE LACK OF A UNIFIED FRAMEWORK FOR REPORTING COVID-19 DATA IN INDIA AND HIGHLIGHTS THE NEED FOR A CENTRAL AGENCY TO MONITOR THE SAME

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, July 26: Researchers from the Stanford University have found that while Karnataka has done good Covid-19 data reporting, states like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh have fared the worst across India.

The study, published in the preprint repository medRxiv, found a disparity in the quality of Covid-19 data reporting across India.

According to the researchers, transparent and accessible reporting of Covid-19 data is critical for public health efforts.

"We presented a comprehensive assessment of the quality of Covid-19 data reporting done by the Indian states and Union Territories," the study researchers from the Stanford University in the US wrote.

"This assessment informs the

public health efforts in India and serves as a guideline for pandemic data reporting by other governments," they added.

For the findings, the research team designed a semi-quantitative framework to assess the quality of Covid-19 data reporting done by the states and UTs of the country.

This framework captures four key aspects of public health data reporting — availability, accessibility, granularity and privacy. The research team then used this framework to calculate a 'Covid-19 Data Reporting Score' (CDRS), ranging from 0 to 1) for 29 states based on the quality of Covid-19 data reporting done by them in the two-week period from May 19 to June 1.

"Our results indicate a strong disparity in the quality of Covid-19 data reporting done by the state

governments in India," the researchers wrote. The findings showed that CDRS varied from 0.61 (good) in Karnataka to 0.0 (poor) in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, with a median value of 0.26.

In addition, the researchers identified that Punjab and Chandigarh compromised the privacy of individuals under quarantine by releasing their personally identifiable information on the official websites. According to the study, the disparity in CDRS across states highlights three important findings.

On the national level, it shows the lack of a unified framework for reporting Covid-19 data and highlights the need for a central agency to monitor or audit the quality of data reporting done by the states.



DESERTED STREET

A city road wears a deserted look during complete lockdown on weekends to curb the spread of coronavirus, near Vidhan Sabha in Lucknow, Sunday

Speak up for democracy: RG

AGENCIES

New Delhi, July 26: Congress's Rahul Gandhi tweeted a video today attempting to mobilise the people against the BJP over the events in Rajasthan. Using hashtag #SpeakUpForDemocracy, his Hindi post urged the people to "Unite and raise our voice for democracy".

The Congress is planning a countrywide protest on Monday over the situation in Rajasthan, where the Ashok Gehlot government is struggling to survive. While the party said a protest will be held outside the Rashtrapati Bhavan,

the official residence of President Ram Nath Kovind.

In the video, the Congress has accused the BJP of "Ripping up the constitution and demolishing democracy" while the whole country is fighting the coronavirus. It has done the same in Madhya Pradesh, the Congress said. "We demand to immediately convene an assembly session which is within our constitutional rights," the party said in the video.

Meanwhile, Congress leader Ajay Maken told the media here that the most worrying fact was that the Constitution and established con-



stitutional traditions were getting ruthlessly trampled by the BJP.

"It appears that the justice expected from the judiciary is also over. People sitting in constitutional posts like Governors are seen as helpless and unable to protect the Constitution," he said at a press

conference here this afternoon.

"Does the country accept the BJP attack on democracy and Constitution? Will the majority mandate be decided by the vote of 8 crore people of Rajasthan or by the use of muscle and money power of leaders seated in Delhi? Can the Governor disregard the Constitution by refusing to allow the special Assembly session being called by the Rajasthan government elected by majority votes? Can a Governor unconstitutionally interfere in the legislature's base area? Will this not lead to a confrontation between the legislature and the judiciary?"

Alleging poor law & order, CM transfers 15 IPS officers

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, July 26: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has cracked the whip on police officers who allegedly failed to control law and order in their respective districts and ordered the transfer and posting orders of 15 IPS officers.

As per the transfer and posting orders issued Saturday night, Kanpur SSP Dinesh Kumar Prabhru has been shifted to Jhansi in the same capacity. His transfer comes in the wake of killing of eight police officials in Bikru village on July 2-3 night and the kidnapping-murder of a lab technician.

Prabhru's tenure in Kanpur was marked by controversies and the police role in most cases was suspect. The 'encounter' of gangster Vikas Dubey July 10 and the ransom money paid for the release of the

lab technician had put the police role under a scanner.

Preetinder Singh, till now posted as DIG of Aligarh Range, will now be the new DIG/SSP of Kanpur. Amethi SP Khyati Garg has been transferred as DCP (Central) in Lucknow Police Commissionerate while DCP Central Dinesh Singh will be the new SP of Amethi.

Garg hit the headlines after a woman from the district immolated herself in Lucknow last week, following a dispute over a drain with her neighbours. She claimed that the police did not act on her complaints.

In another incident, the father of an Army jawan was hacked to death by miscreants July 21. The police swung into action and arrested the five accused only after a video clip went viral wherein the jawan is seen clinging to his father's blood-soaked body.

Women played key roles in two UP kidnap dramas

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, July 26: Two recent high-profile cases of kidnapping in Uttar Pradesh showcase the increasing involvement of women in crime.

The kidnapping and murder of a Kanpur lab technician, Sanjeet Yadav, which has led to political outrage after the police asked the victim's family to pay the ransom but failed to retrieve the money as promised or get the accused back alive, has now led to the arrest of a young woman named Preeti Sharma.

Preeti, posed as the wife of one of the other accused to take a house on rent where they held lab technician Sanjeet Yadav hostage.

Preeti also visited Sanjeet's house and interacted with neighbours and landlord to avoid suspicion.

According to sources, Preeti was assured a share in the ransom and she agreed to join the plot because she wanted to set up her own business. In the kidnapping of the eight-



NEW PHENOMENON IN CRIME

THE KIDNAPPING AND MURDER OF A KANPUR LAB TECHNICIAN, SANJEET YADAV, WHICH LED TO POLITICAL OUTRAGE, HAS NOW LED TO THE ARREST OF A YOUNG WOMAN NAMED PREETI SHARMA

IN THE KIDNAPPING OF THE EIGHT-YEAR-OLD SON OF A GUTKA TRADER IN GONDA, CHHAVI PANDEY, WIFE OF THE MAIN ACCUSED SURAJ PANDEY, PLAYED A KEY ROLE IN THE CRIME

year-old son of a gutka trader in Gonda, Chhavi Pandey, wife of the main accused Suraj Pandey played a key role in the crime.

Chhavi Pandey made the Rs 4

crore ransom call to the family and threatened to kill the boy if they did not pay the money.

"During interrogation, Chhavi disclosed that they had planned to

chop the boy's body and dump it in the river," said an officer in the crime branch that finally managed to get the boy back and arrested the accused.

According to investigators, the arrested men have disclosed that the kidnapping was plotted by Chhavi.

An 84-second audio clip of Chhavi had also gone viral in which she is heard purportedly demanding ransom from the family.

"This is a new phenomenon that is emerging in the world of crime. Women are now playing a front-line role in crime and the state police will also have to change its attitude towards investigations," said a retired director general of police.



The central government is constantly monitoring the flood situation in Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and other affected states in the northeast
JITENDRA SINGH | UNION MINISTER

ONLINE CLASSES A HIT

The virtual classes, introduced by the Kerala government from June 1 in the backdrop of schools remaining shut due to the COVID-19 pandemic, has now crossed the 1000-mark



of the day quote

The situation is alarming. The Goans are expecting a detailed discussion on the pandemic and its effect on the state's economy. If the government doesn't accept the Opposition demand to discuss the Covid-19 situation, we will be compelled to take other course of action



DIGAMBAR KAMAT | LEADER OF OPPOSITION IN THE GOA ASSEMBLY

The Centre, in collaboration with the World Bank, has decided to convert large area of ravines in Gwalior-Chambal belt of Madhya Pradesh into arable land, and a preliminary report for the same will be prepared in a month



NARENDRA SINGH TOMAR | AGRICULTURE MINISTER

The AAP government will launch a special programme to generate more employment opportunities in the city



GOPAL RAI | DELHI MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Hyd Mayor tests Covid positive

Hyderabad: Greater Hyderabad Mayor Bonthu Rammoan tested positive for Covid-19, said his office here Sunday. He is asymptomatic and under home isolation. His family members have tested negative. After one member of his staff tested coronavirus positive recently, the Mayor went into self-quarantine and underwent the test on Saturday. Rammoan is holding review meetings with the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) officials on various civic issues through video link.

Corona stings K'taka minister

Ballari (Karnataka): Karnataka Forest Minister Anand Singh has tested positive for COVID-19, sources close to him said Sunday. Anand Singh, whose swab was collected Friday, was found infected with the coronavirus Saturday night. However, he is asymptomatic, his close aides said. "He has been tested positive but he is asymptomatic and is quarantined," his confidante said requesting anonymity. He also said that a few days ago, the minister's driver tested positive.

Arms seized

Srinagar: Security forces arrested three persons and seized a consignment of drugs, arms and ammunition in the Kupwara district of North Kashmir Sunday, officials said. A joint team of the army and the police seized 10 kg of brown sugar, 20 grenades, an AK-47 rifle & two pistols, and two vehicles at Sadhna Top in Kupwara. More arrests were expected, the police said.

Engineer held

Damoh (MP): A gang of six people, including an engineering graduate, which robbed ATMs by blowing them up with explosives, was busted in Madhya Pradesh, police said Sunday. The gang had blown up seven ATMs so far and looted Rs 46 lakh. Inspector General of Police (Sagar Zone) Anil Sharma told reporters here Sunday. "They would conduct reconnaissance of ATMs to find out how much cash was stored in them. They would open the ATM by exploding a gelatin stick near the cash tray using a motorcycle battery," the IG said.

PM LAUDS KARGIL HEROES

In his monthly 'Mann ki Baat' radio address, which coincided with the 21st anniversary of Kargil Vijay Diwas, the Prime Minister hit out at Pakistan for the conflict and said Islamabad responded to New Delhi's hand of friendship by stabbing it in the back

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 26: Hailing the valour of the armed forces during the Kargil war, Prime Minister Narendra Modi Sunday asked people to speak and act keeping in mind the morale of soldiers and asserted that wars are fought not just on borders but on many fronts within the country too.

In his monthly 'Mann ki Baat' radio address, which coincided with the 21st anniversary of Kargil Vijay Diwas, the Prime Minister also hit out at Pakistan for the conflict and said Islamabad responded to New Delhi's hand of friendship by stabbing it in the back.

The Kargil war was declared over on July 26, 1999 after Indian soldiers pushed back Pakistani troops, a bulk of them drawn from the neighbouring country's Northern Light Infantry, from the captured peaks in Kargil. People must remember that their conduct and remarks should boost the morale and respect of soldiers, Modi said, urging everyone to do everything to further national unity.

"People bound by a thread of unity with the mantra that the nation is above everything else bolster the strength of our soldiers more than a thousand times," he said. Modi also spoke of the dangers of social media. At times, without paying heed to the essence, people encourage certain things on social media "that are detrimental to the country," he said.

"There are times when we forward things out of sheer curiosity. Despite knowing that it is wrong, we keep doing it. These days, wars are fought not just on borders, they



Soldiers pay tribute to the martyrs of Kargil war on the occasion of Kargil Vijay Diwas, at National War Memorial in New Delhi, Sunday

are fought on many fronts simultaneously within the country too. "And every citizen has to decide his or her role in that. We, too, should determine our roles, fully keeping in mind the soldiers fighting on the borders under the harshest of conditions," he said.

The prime minister's comments come as Indian and Chinese armies are locked in a standoff in Ladakh. Modi recalled the late Atal Bihari Vajpayee's Independence Day speech after the Kargil war and said it is relevant even today.

Vajpayee, he said, had then reminded the nation of Gandhi's mantra -- in the face of any dilemma, in order to decide what to do or what not to do, one must think of the poorest and the most helpless person of India; one must assess whether one's deed will result in benefitting that particular person or not. India can never forget the circumstances under which the conflict took place, he

stressed. "Pakistan had embarked upon this misadventure, nursing delusions of encroaching upon Indian soil, to distract attention from the internal strife prevailing there. India was then in the process of making efforts to foster good relations with Pakistan," he said. Modi also said when India extended a hand of friendship, Pakistan tried to respond, "stabbing in the back".

In an indirect warning to China, without naming it, PM Modi said it is in some people's nature to keep becoming enemies. Referring to an old saying, he said, "To the wicked, enmity with one and all for no reason comes naturally. People with such a disposition keep thinking of harming even their well-wishers."

The whole world watched when the Indian Army displayed deeds of valour in Kargil and India demonstrated its might, the Prime Minister said.

ASSAM FLOOD SITUATION STILL GRIM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Guwahati, July 26: The flood situation in Assam remained critical with five more persons losing their lives, while nearly 25 lakh people have been affected by the deluge in 23 districts, an official bulletin said Sunday.

Barpeta and Kokrajhar districts reported two deaths each and one fatality was reported from Morigaon district, according to the daily flood report of the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA). With this, the total number of people losing their lives in this year's flood and landslide has gone up to 128 across the state. Of them, 102 were killed in flood-related incidents and 26 in landslides.

Over 24.76 lakh people are hit due to floods in Dhemaji, Sonitpur, Biswanath, Darrang, Baksa, Nalbari, Barpeta, Chirang, Bongaigaon, Kokrajhar, Dhubri, South Salmara, Goalpara, Kamrup, Kamrup Metropolitan, Morigaon, Nagaon, Golaghat, Jorhat, Majuli, Sivasagar, Charaideo and Dibrugarh districts, the ASDMA said.

Goalpara is the worst-hit with over 4.7 lakh people affected. In Barpeta, more than 3.95 lakh people were affected and in Morigaon, around 3.33 lakh people have been hit by the deluge. The SDRF, district administrations and locals have rescued 188 people in the last 24 hours by deploying 101 boats across the state. Till Saturday, more than 26.37 lakh persons were affected by the deluge across 27 districts. The Centre said it was in touch with the state government and has committed to offer all possible help to mitigate the flood situation.

Panel to probe harassment complaints to be set up soon



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 26: Delhi Women and Child Development Minister Rajendra Pal Gautam Sunday directed his department to form a five-member committee to prevent sexual harassment of women at workplaces in the national capital.

Such a committee will include members from the government, NGOs and civil society, a statement from the Delhi government said. The decision was taken after the minister chaired a review meeting on implementation of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013.

The meeting was attended by senior officers of the Department of Women and Child Development. "Gautam directed the Department of Women and Child Development to constitute a five-member committee to overview and monitor the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 and the composition may include some representatives from government, Non Government Organisation

(NGO) sector and civil society," the statement said.

"The minister also instructed that a meeting should be convened through video conferencing with government department heads, in the first phase, in order to have an interface regarding implementation of the Act in their respective departments," it said.

The department was also directed to ensure the issuance of advertisements, in the form of display and text notices, for creating awareness among citizens along with all government and private sector entities on the provisions, facilitations and penalty clauses of the Act.

For this, the Department of Women and Child Development has organised several workshops along with media campaigns. It has also issued necessary instructions on regular intervals to all departments of the city government, autonomous bodies and private sector companies for constitution of internal committees, it said. All district magistrates have also been instructed for constitution of local committee as statutory requirement under the Act, the statement added.

Pondicherry CM to undergo Covid-19 test

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Pondicherry, July 26: Pondicherry Chief Minister V Narayanasamy, his cabinet colleagues, the territorial Assembly Speaker V P Sivakolundhu and all the legislators will undergo COVID-19 test after an AINRC MLA who attended the budget session tested positive for the virus.



The tests would be done for all 32 MLAs Monday and Tuesday at the assembly premises and the nearby Health Department office, a spokesman of the Assembly Secretariat said Sunday. This has become necessary after an opposition AINRC legislator N S J Jayabal had tested positive on Saturday and was admitted to a private hospital, the spokesman said adding a watch and ward staff had also tested positive and was admitted to the government medical college hospital Saturday. The spokesman said all the officials housed in the Assembly premises were sanitised and shut till Tuesday.

Steering in my hands: Uddhav

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, July 26: Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray has dared the opposition to topple his government and said though it is a "three-wheeler" government, he is firmly in control of its steering wheel.

Thackeray, who is also president of the Shiv Sena, said his alliance partners - NCP and Congress - are "positive" and the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government is benefitting from their experience. He also took an aim at the Centre's ambitious Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet train project, saying he would rather prefer such a high speed link between the state capital and Nagpur.

"The future of my government



is not in the hands of the opposition. The steering is in my hands. A three-wheeler (auto-rickshaw) is a vehicle of poor people. The other two are sitting behind," Thackeray said in the second and last part of his interview published in Shiv Sena mouthpiece 'Saamana' Sunday, ahead of his 60th birthday Monday. "Why wait for September-October as is being speculated. Topple the government right now since you get

pleasure in toppling. Some people derive pleasure in constructive work while some are happy in destruction. If you feel happy in destruction, go ahead," he said.

"You say the MVA government is formed against the democratic principles but when you topple it, is it democracy?" the chief minister asked. Notably, his predecessor Devendra Fadnis earlier compared the ruling MVA, comprising the Shiv Sena and its ideological opponents Congress and NCP, with a three-wheeler, auto-rickshaw, and raised doubts over its stability.

To a question, Thackeray said he hadn't switched sides, but only entered into an alliance. "I did this because the purpose with which I had joined hands earlier turned out to be hollow," he said.

BJP welcomes Afghan Sikhs post CAA

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, July 26: Months after the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) came into force, the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its ally Akali Dal leaders welcomed the first batch of Afghan Sikhs who reached India on Sunday, flee religious persecution. BJP Delhi chief Adesh Gupta, national secretary R.P. Singh and Akali Dal leader Manjinder Singh Sirsa welcomed the Afghan Sikhs with saffron stoles, as all of them were visibly relieved to flee from a life of uncertainty. This first batch of

Afghan Sikhs reached Delhi on a special flight. They will be accommodated in India under a long term visa arrangement. Many in the first batch lost their near and dear ones in terror attacks in Kabul. Many more persecuted Afghan Sikhs are expected to join in the next few days.

This is significant, given that their arrival comes after the much debated Citizenship Amendment Act becomes operational that allows religious minorities other than Muslims from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh, fleeing religious persecution, to get a fast track entry in seeking Indian

citizenship.

Akali Dal leader Sirsa, who too was present to welcome the first delegation of Afghan Sikhs, said that this batch includes Nidan Singh Sachdeva, who was earlier abducted by militia groups affiliated to Haqqani network, in Afghanistan.

Adesh Gupta credited Prime Minister Narendra Modi for bringing the CAA which, he claimed, helped the arrival of Afghan Sikhs. "Those who have been vocal and animatedly criticized the Citizenship Amendment Act, should know by now, how significant the amendment has been," he said.

UNLOCKING MIND



Children play football during Unlock 2.0 in Kolkata, Sunday

PFI PHOTO

BOND OF LOVE

Covid ties rakhi celebrations to post, video call

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 26: Nidhi Rawat has got a sweet tooth and her brother, who lives in Mumbai, brings her 'Bombay halwa' on Raksha Bandhan every year. This year, he won't come home.

Pummy Saini sent a rakhi and a letter to his Ahmedabad-based elder brother and nephew. She says the restrictions made her realise how much she loves them. Like Rawat and Saini, many women will not be able to tie rakhi to their brothers due to the coronavirus-induced travel restrictions. Most of them

have opted to send rakhi -- some hand-made or in the shape of masks -- through post or e-commerce firms.

"He is my younger brother and he knows I have got a sweet tooth," Rawat said. "He brings me Bombay halwa every time." The Delhi-based banker says she talks to him over video call every day, but expressed sadness that she "won't be able to hug him" on Raksha Bandhan on August 3.

The woman visited the post office twice, but returned seeing the long queues as more and more people have been sending rakhis through post. "So, I decided to send rakhi



through an e-commerce website," she said. "I also had the option to send a gift along with it."

Having lost her father early, Delhi-based teacher Saini recalls that her

brother, who is eight years older, took care of her since she was a child. "He left the city when he got a job in Ahmedabad. He last came home in December," she said. "The restric-

tions due to the pandemic have made me realise how much I love him."

Nisha Yadav's brother, who has been living in Rohtak, Haryana, for the past 10 years, used to make sure he brings her a gift on the festival. "I sent him a handmade rakhi through post. I know he will love it," Yadav said.

Rashmi Gupta, a resident of Mayur Vihar, knew his brother won't be able to travel from Coimbatore to Delhi. So, she made a mask-shaped rakhi and sent it through speed post 10 days ago so that it reaches him in time. "He

comes every year... The Tamil Nadu government has stricter quarantine rules for interstate travellers. So, it's 100 per cent not possible," she rued.

Gupta feels it is wise for people to wait out this period, and cause no harm to themselves and others. The brothers, too, have been feeling nostalgic. Vikas Tripathi says travelling to his sister's place in Allahabad is not possible due to the pandemic. "Also, her family got affected by the virus and are under quarantine. So, I will wish her over a video call," the media professional said.



Today other countries are worried because all border roads, tunnels and bridges are complete. Now we can take defence requirements to borders in a few hours

SIKKIM EXTENDS LOCKDOWN

The Sikkim government has extended the statewide lockdown till August 1 to curb the spread of the novel coronavirus, according to a notification



of the day quote

The need of the hour is to fight prejudice and nip it in the bud. Otherwise, it can become more toxic than fake news and misinformation



M VENKAIAH NAIDU | VICE PRESIDENT

The country is battling against the coronavirus pandemic. The countrymen are facing a severe economic crisis. More than 14 crore jobs have been lost according to the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE).



AJAY MAKEN | CONGRESS LEADER

There is a loss of trust and Delhi has to rebuild the trust. That trust will come only when the statehood is restored and other changes are reversed.



FAROOQ ABDULLAH | FORMER J&K CM

Record 36,145 patients recover in a day

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 26: As many as 36,145 patients have recuperated from COVID-19 in a span of 24 hours, the highest recorded in a day, pushing the recovery rate to 63.92 per cent, the Union Health Ministry said Sunday.

The COVID-19 case fatality rate has further dropped to 2.31 per cent, the ministry said. The total recoveries has surged to 8,85,576 so far, as India's COVID-19 tally climbed to 13,85,522 Sunday.

More patients are recovering and their total number exceeds active coronavirus infections by 4,17,694. "Recovered cases are 1.89 times the active cases," the ministry said.



4,40,000 tests have been conducted in a single day. Also, the number of tests for detection of the COVID-19 has crossed the 16 million mark

in the country. "With 4,42,263 samples being tested in the last 24 hours, the number of Test Per Million (TPM) has

THE COVID-19 CASE FATALITY RATE HAS FURTHER DROPPED TO 2.31 PER CENT, THE MINISTRY SAID

THE TOTAL RECOVERIES HAS SURGED TO 8,85,576 SO FAR, AS INDIA'S COVID-19 TALLY CLIMBED TO 13,85,522 SUNDAY

further increased to 11,805 and cumulative testing to 1,62,91,331," the ministry said.

"For the first time, the government labs have set a new record of testing 3,62,153 samples. The private labs have also scaled a new high of 79,878 samples tested in a single day," it said in the statement.

The Union government has advised all state and union territory

governments to keep up with and effectively implement the strategy of "test, track and treat".

The aggressive testing, along with ramped up hospital infrastructure by combining public and private sector efforts, has enabled early identification and prompt triaging of COVID-19 patients leading to lower fatalities.

"As a result, the case fatality rate is progressively falling and currently, it is 2.31 per cent. India has one of the lowest fatality rates in the world," the ministry said. With 48,661 people testing positive for coronavirus infection in a day, India's COVID-19 tally climbed to 13,85,522 on Sunday, while the death toll rose to 32,063 with 705 new fatalities, the data updated at 8 am showed.

NAXAL MENACE

40 kg IED recovered in Chhattisgarh

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bijapur, July 26: A powerful 40 kg improvised explosive device (IED) planted by Maoists was recovered in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district Sunday, police said.

The explosive, packed in a big plastic container, was unearthed by a joint team of various security forces on Basaguda-Tarrem road, Bijapur Superintendent of Police Kamlochan Kashyap said. Personnel belonging to CRPF's 168th battalion, 204th battalion of CoBRA (Commando Battalion for Resolute Action- an elite unit of CRPF) and the district force were involved in the operation, he said.

While carrying out the de-mining exercise on the route, security personnel spotted the IED planted beneath the road near a bridge between Sarkeguda and Pegdapalli villages, averting a major mishap, he said.

As per preliminary information, Naxals are going to observe the martyrs' week from July 28 to August 3 and had planted the IED to target security forces during that time, the official said.

Security forces often carry out patrolling on the Basaguda-Tarrem route where road construction work is underway, he said. Meanwhile, security has been stepped up in the Naxal-hit districts of the state, particularly in seven districts of Bastar division - Dantewada, Bijapur, Bastar, Narayanpur, Kondagaon, Sukma and Kanker in view of the martyrs' week, which the rebels observe in the memory of their slain leaders.

Woman delivers on NDRF boat

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi/Patna, July 26: A 25-year-old woman gave birth to a baby girl on board an NDRF rescue boat plying on the swollen Burhi Gandak river in flood-affected Bihar on Sunday, officials said.

The woman was being rescued from her marooned house in Gobari village of East Champaran district when she developed severe labour pain and later delivered the baby around 1:40 pm, they said. The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) team was accompanied by an ASHA (accredited social health activist) worker who helped in the childbirth, an NDRF spokesperson said in Delhi.

The rescuers from the 9th battalion of the NDRF were attending to a drowning incident in the vicinity when they were informed about the pregnant woman whose village was hit by floodwaters of the Budhi Gandak river, the spokesperson said.

"The mother and the newborn girl have been shifted to a public health facility in Banjariya village of Motihari district by an ambulance and their condition is stated to be stable," he said. The spokesperson said NDRF personnel are trained in medical first responder course and all rescuers are taught handling of childbirth during an emergency.

"This is the 10th childbirth (including a case of twins) on an NDRF boat while evacuating expecting mothers from flood-hit areas since year 2013," the spokesperson said. A total of 21 NDRF teams are deployed in a dozen districts of Bihar for conducting flood rescue and relief work.

AGE JUST A NUMBER 101-YEAR-OLD ANDHRA WOMAN DEFEATS COVID

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Tirupati, July 26: At a time when many people may be panicky over coronavirus spread, a 101-year-old woman in Andhra Pradesh has won the battle against the disease as her doctor asserted that her willpower made her survive the health ordeal.

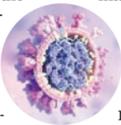
The centenarian has since become an inspiration for other patients infected by the dreaded virus. Her amazing recovery comes at a time when a spike in the number of coronavirus cases and deaths in the state has set alarm bells ringing.

Palakuri Mangamma was discharged from the Sri Venkateswara Institute of Medical Sciences (SVIMS) in this temple town on Saturday. She is the oldest patient to recover from COVID-19 in the state.

A resident of Tirupati, she was admitted to SVIMS, one of the state-level COVID hospitals, about 10 days ago after she tested positive. Despite being the most vulnerable, the woman showed remarkable recovery.

"She responded well to the treatment. She could beat the disease with her willpower. This is definitely an inspiration for many," said SVIMS Medical Superintendent Dr R Ram. He hoped that her recovery will inspire many others.

"Willpower is very important. Many people lose hope once they test corona positive. Mangamma is an example for all such people," said Dr Ram, who touched the feet of the centenarian to seek her blessings as she was leaving the hospital on a wheelchair. The MS said they took special care of Mangamma, considering her age.



SHORT TAKES

Four killed

Begusarai: Four persons were killed and one man was injured after the car carrying them hit a road divider and overturned, and a truck rammed into it in Begusarai district of Bihar, a police officer said Sunday. The police had earlier said that five people were killed in the accident. The mishap took place on National Highway-31 near Lakho village on Saturday evening, he said. The driver had apparently lost control of the car and hit the road divider. The vehicle overturned and then the truck rammed into it, Lakho police outpost officer-in-charge Santosh Kumar Sharma said.

Three arrested

Thane: Three persons, including a "tantrik", were arrested for allegedly beating to death an elderly woman and her son under the pretext of driving away evil spirits in Maharashtra's Thane district, police said Sunday. The incident took place at Atade village in Kalyan township here Saturday when the victims, a 76-year-old woman and her son aged 50, were allegedly beaten up severely by the "tantrik" (occult practitioner) following which the duo collapsed and died, a police official said.

Judge dies

Betul (MP): A 56-year-old judge of the district court in Madhya Pradesh's Betul and his son died in a hospital in Nagpur in neighbouring Maharashtra while being treated for suspected food poisoning, police said Sunday. Additional Superintendent of Police Shradha Jhosai said Betul Additional District and Sessions Judge Mahendra Tripathi died on Sunday morning while his son Abhiyanraj (33) died Saturday night.

Fishermen rescued

Rameswaram/Chennai: Nine fishermen were rescued from their boat which began to sink in sea after hitting a rock off Pamban near Rameswaram in Tamil Nadu Sunday, authorities said. The fishermen from Tharuvaikulam in Tuticorin district attempted to cross the century-old cantilever Pamban railway bridge when their vessel veered off the path and hit a rock, Mandapam Coast Guard station Commander M Venkatesh said. The fishing trawler, on its way to Nagapattinam, suffered damage and all the nine men onboard were safely rescued in the operation.

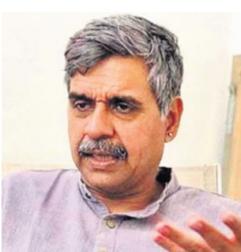
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 26: It is "high time" that the Congress appoints a full-time president by "selection or election", party leader Sandeep Dikshit said Sunday, asserting that the Congress Working Committee (CWC) comprising senior leaders should have settled the leadership issue earlier, dealing with it on priority.

There is a "sense of drift" and a feeling that "we need to get on with the job" in the party with an interim president at the helm, Dikshit said.

The Congress leader said that for him, there was no "particular fixation" with any person, and Rahul Gandhi or anyone else could be appointed by "selection or election", but the important thing is that the party needs a full-time president. Dikshit's remarks assume significance as Sonia Gandhi nears completion of one-year as interim Congress president in early August and the party is abuzz with hectic parleys on the way forward.

He also hit out at Jyotiraditya Scindia for switching to the BJP



and Sachin Pilot for his rebellion in Rajasthan, asserting that the fight was not between the young and the old in the party, but between the "usurpers" and those persevering through hard work.

"Much as I would say that Mrs (Sonia) Gandhi is doing a very able and commendable job (as president), one of the reasons that she left earlier was that she felt that it is time for her to take to the background and for other people to take over. In her case, it was Mr (Rahul) Gandhi," Dikshit said.

"Here's an interim arrangement. Interim is a very iffy word because you know if you are interim you

'HIGH TIME'

'Sense of drift' in Cong: Dikshit

Dikshit's remarks assume significance as Sonia Gandhi nears completion of one-year as interim Congress president in early August and the party is abuzz with hectic parleys on the way forward

won't take long term decisions for the Congress. So, it is high time we get a full time president, whoever it is," the 55-year-old former MP said. Whether it is through "selection or election" there is no issue, he said.

"We should have a full-time president, whether it is Mr. A or Mr. B or Mr. Gandhi that is not an issue at all. Party ideology and collective leadership make a party," Dikshit said. He said initially it was thought that the CWC, the party's highest decision making body, will come together and select a president or maybe among themselves elect one, but that has not happened.

It is not a bad idea to leave it open to the All India Congress Committee (AICC), where one can also have an election to the working committee, he said. "It (appointment of full-time president) should have happened earlier. I constantly maintain that here is the place where I point towards the inability of our senior leaders (CWC members) to have risen to the challenge, got together and got this thing done," Dikshit said.

Family flogs to death two 'possessed' kin

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Thane, July 26: A woman and her son, suspected to be 'possessed' by evil spirits, were allegedly flogged to death during an exorcism ritual by their relatives and an occultist, Kalyan police officials said here Sunday.

It happened in the Khadakpada area of Kalyan Saturday. Four persons, including a minor boy and a senior woman citizen, were arrested for the crime Sunday. According to an official, Chandubai Tare, 76, and her son Pandharinath Tare, 50, were suspected to be possessed by evil spirits by the family, which sought the help of a local occultist Surendra Patil, 35.

Patil claimed he could rid them of the ghosts and ensure return of happy times for the family. He reached their home on Sunday evening and performed some occult rituals with the help of family members.

After the rituals, they smeared turmeric powder on the two victims and started flogging them with sticks and canes to drive away the ghost. After a few hours of the assault, Chandubai Tare and Pandharinath Tare collapsed on the floor and died later.



It happened in the Khadakpada area of Kalyan Saturday. Four persons, including a minor boy and a senior woman citizen, were arrested for the crime Sunday

Seeing this, the occultist and the family members panicked and ran away. Later in the night, another relative, Devendra Bhoir, who had gone there, lodged a police complaint. "We have arrested Surendra Patil, Kavita Kailas Tare and Vinayaka Kailas Tare, and sent to a juvenile home the fourth accused, who is a minor. They will be produced before a court later," said an official.



Why PM deputed Shah

When Narendra Modi directed the Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Lieutenant Governor of Delhi Anil Bajjal to stop fighting with Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, the Delhi BJP leadership was angry. But the PM had a plan in mind; he wanted to tell the country that the Union

Territory of Delhi has fought Covid collectively. Delhi had turned into the Covid capital of India leaving Mumbai, Chennai and other cities far behind. He firmly directed the Home Minister to bring the situation under control and work in close coordination with AAP and bring the BJP on board. And suddenly Amit Shah appeared in the fore-front of fighting the battle against Covid. He was seen batting on the front foot giving a dressing down to LG who was on his own trip and summoned all the top leaders of the BJP to fall in line to fight Covid.

Pact in tatters

The four-decade old "pact" between the Congress and RSS-BJP is on the verge of being annulled. The "secret pact" was clinched between top RSS leadership and late Rajiv Gandhi in the 80s. These talks

were initiated at the instance of Indira Gandhi who was fighting the militancy in Punjab in the 80s. But it could not be concluded due to her assassination in 1984. It was Rajiv Gandhi who is reported to have clinched it. Since Rajiv Gandhi was part of these talks as party leader when Indira ji was alive, he continued with the task. The "secret pact" envisaged that both political groupings will be free to pursue their own political path and take no coercive action against each other. But the old script is now falling apart and the pact is in tatters.

Sharma sulking

Deputy Leader of the Congress in Rajya Sabha Anand Sharma is sulking and angry these days. He was hoping to become the Leader of Opposition after Ghulam Nabi Azad was denied RS ticket.

Instead, the high command decided to bring Mallikarjune Kharge in RS who may eventually become LoP. He was defeated in Lok Sabha polls and was CPP Leader in Lok Sabha. Anand Sharma is reported to have flared up at the CWC's last meeting when it was pointed out that many of the senior leaders don't speak against Modi strongly. Sharma said that many leaders who had quit the party earlier and sitting in the CWC have hardly spoken against Modi. On the contrary, he had always been in the forefront- be it in Rajya Sabha or outside to criticize Modi. If insiders are to be believed, he even named Kharge among one of them.

Vacancies galore in CIC

The Modi administration seems to be in no hurry to fill the vacancies in the Central Information Commission, a

watchdog body implementing the key RTI weapon in the hands of the citizens. While the four vacancies of Information Commissioners already exist in the CIC, two more are falling vacant. Chief Information Commissioner Vimal Julka (Retd IAS) is completing his tenure this month whereas Member Divya Prakash Sinha (Retd IPS) will be completing his term in the month of September. The CIC is an autonomous 11-member body and with six posts vacant the pendency will be up further. The Opposition parties are already making an allegation that Modi administration is not keen for transparency in governance and weakening the institutions. Similarly, there are vacancies galore in other tribunals and boards and corporations. But when it comes to filling the vacancy in the Vigilance Commission of a Commissioner, the government is moving with alacrity.

international



Spain is safe, it is safe for Spaniards, it is safe for tourists
ARANCHA GONZALEZ LAYA | SPANISH FOREIGN MINISTER

NORTH KOREA ON ALERT

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un convened an emergency meeting of the ruling Workers' Party and adopted a 'maximum emergency system' against the COVID-19 pandemic after a defector returned from South Korea with symptoms of the virus, state-media reported Sunday



of the day quote

People should avoid going to public places and ensure social distancing during prayers and gatherings



ASAD UMAR | PAKISTANI MINISTER FOR PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT AND SPECIAL INITIATIVES

The pandemic has forced the election authorities to set an advance polling day for those under quarantine



MAHINDA DESHAPRIYA | SRI LANKA ELECTIONS COMMISSION CHAIRMAN

US was witnessing the new surge in the number of COVID-19 cases was because the country never shut down entirely



ANTHONY FAUCI | AMERICA'S TOP INFECTIOUS DISEASES EXPERT

SHORT TAKES

Virus aid package soon: Mnuchin

Washington: Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said Saturday that Republicans were set to roll out the next COVID-19 aid package Monday and assured there was backing from the White House after he and President Donald Trump's top aide met to salvage the \$1 trillion proposal that had floundered just days before. Mnuchin told reporters at the Capitol that extending an expiring unemployment benefit — but reducing it substantially — was a top priority for Trump.

Car ploughs into crowd, five hurt

Berlin: Five people were injured Sunday after a car swerved off a road and ploughed into pedestrians outside a train station in Berlin, the media reported. The incident took place in Hardenbergplatz, outside the Zoological Garden railway station, the Metro daily quoted the German DPA news agency as saying in a report.

PIO couple found dead in Abu Dhabi

Abu Dhabi: An Indian couple has been found dead in their flat in Abu Dhabi, where they lived for nearly 18 years, a media report said. Hailing from Kozhikode, Kerala, Janardhanan Pattieriy, 57, worked at a travel agency and his wife Minija, 52, at a chartered accountant and audit firm, reports said.

Kuwait thanks Donald Trump

Kuwait City: Kuwaiti Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah has sent a letter to US President Donald Trump thanking him for sending an American Air Force plane to transport Emir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to Washington for treatment, a media report said.

Protests in Israel

Tel Aviv: Police said Sunday they arrested more than a dozen Israelis in country-wide protests the previous night that drew thousands of people in a growing and persistent show of force against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his handling of the coronavirus crisis. Thousands of people demonstrated outside Netanyahu's official residence in Jerusalem and hundreds gathered in a seaside park in Tel Aviv, demanding Netanyahu's resignation and slamming his response to the crisis.

US-CHINA TENSION

Police corral crowds as movers leave consulate

Consulate closures in Houston and Chengdu have escalated a sharp deterioration in US-China ties

AGENCIES

Chengdu, July 26: Moving trucks and vehicles with diplomatic plates pulled out of a US Consulate in southwest China Sunday, as its impending closure over rising bilateral tensions drew a steady stream of on-lookers for the second straight day.

People stopped to take selfies and photos, jamming a sidewalk busy with shoppers and families with strollers on a sunny day in the city of Chengdu. A little boy posed with a small Chinese flag before plainclothes police shooed him away as foreign media cameras zoomed in.

The capital of Sichuan province, along with Houston in Texas, has found itself in the limelight of international politics as China and the US exchanged tit-for-tat orders last week to close each other's consulates in the two heartland cities.

Police in Chengdu have shut the street and sidewalk in front of the consulate and set up metal barriers along the sidewalk on the other side of the tree-lined road.

Uniformed and plainclothes officers kept watch on both sides of the barriers after scattered incidents following the Chengdu announcement Friday, including a man who set off firecrackers and hecklers who cursed at foreign media shooting video and photos of the scene. A man who tried to unfurl a banner or sign late Sunday that he called an open letter to the



Chinese government was quickly taken away. Earlier, a bus left the consulate grounds and what appeared to be embassy staff spoke with plainclothes police before retreating back behind the property's solid black gates. It wasn't clear who or what was on the bus.

Three medium-size trucks arrived and left a few hours later, and cars with diplomatic plates departed in between.

China ordered the closing of the Chengdu consulate in retaliation for a US order earlier in the week to close the Chinese Consulate in Houston.

The US alleged that the Houston consulate was a nest of Chinese spies who tried to steal data from facilities in Texas, including the Texas A&M medical system and the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston. The consulate closings were a significant escalation in the tensions between the two countries over a range of issues, including trade, technology, security and human rights.

Hurricane Hanna batters Covid-hit Texas coast

REUTERS

Galveston, Texas, July 26: Hurricane Hanna's winds lashed the south Texas coast early Sunday, knocking out power to thousands before it was downgraded to a tropical storm that still threatened flash flooding in the area already badly hit by COVID-19 infections.

Hanna came ashore on Padre Island on Saturday afternoon as a Category 1 hurricane on the five-step Saffir-Simpson scale, and later made a second landfall in Kenedy County, Texas.

More than 283,104 homes and businesses were without electricity by mid-morning Sunday, according to poweroutage.us. But some locals took advantage of the wild weather, with Alejandro Carcano, 16, and Jesse Garewal, 18, both residents of Galveston, surfing the high swells whipped up by Hanna.



Weakening as it headed west over land, Hanna was a tropical storm by Sunday morning, with its center about 40 miles (65 km) from McAllen, Texas and about 65 miles (105 km) from Monterrey, Mexico, the U.S. National Hurricane Center (NHC) said.

At 0400 CDT (0900 GMT), the storm's top sustained winds were around 60 miles per hour (95 kph), the center said.

TERRITORY 'VIOLATIONS' BY PAK

Afghanistan writes to UNSC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

United Nations, July 26: Afghanistan has written to the UN Security Council over continued "violations" of its territory by Pakistani military forces and said it will ask the 15-nation UN body to take necessary measures and actions to end them if the situation is not de-escalated bilaterally.

Afghanistan's Permanent Representative to the UN Adela Raz wrote to the President of the Security Council, Germany, to report on the most recent violations of the Afghan territory by Pakistan's military forces and said the "incursion" represents a reiteration of violations as Kabul had previously expressed its concerns to the Security Council in February and August 2019.

The attacks included 12 heavy artillery strikes targeting Asad Abad district and more than 160 artillery rounds fired at Sarakano district.

In addition to four casualties among members of the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces, the attacks claimed the lives of six civilians, including two women, and eight injuries and resulted in significant damage to civilian property.

Rift between royal brothers laid bare in new book extract

REUTERS

London, July 26: Britain's Prince Harry took offence at what he thought was Prince William's "snob-bishness" when he advised his brother to "take as much time as you need to get to know this girl" when he was dating Meghan Markle, a new book says.

Harry and his wife, Meghan, have distanced themselves from the book called "Finding Freedom", saying they were not interviewed for the biography being serialised by The Times and The Sunday Times newspapers and made no contributions to it.

The book documents, citing sources, a time when Harry and Meghan were dating and William wanted to make sure the American



actress had the right intentions, The Sunday Times said.

"Don't feel you need to rush this," William told Harry, according to sources cited by the book. "Take as much time as you need to get to know this girl."

The Sunday Times said Harry heard a tone of snobishness in

the last two words, "this girl", and that Harry no longer felt he needed looking after. Harry and Meghan married in May 2018 in a wedding heralded at the time as infusing a blast of Hollywood glamour and modernity into the British monarchy and which made them one of the world's biggest celebrity couples.

Man fatally shot in Texas

BLACK LIVES MATTER PROTEST

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Houston, July 26: A man was killed in a shooting during a Black Lives Matter protest in the city of Austin in Texas state, authorities said.

The incident took place at around 9.52 p.m. Saturday near East Sixth Street and Congress Avenue, the Austin-based KVUE TV station said in a report.

"One adult male victim was lo-

cated with a gunshot wound. That victim was transported to Dell Seton (Medical Center) but was pronounced deceased shortly thereafter," Xinhua news agency quoted police officer Katrina Ratcliff as saying to the media after the incident.

"Initial reports indicate that the victim may have been carrying a rifle and approached suspect vehicle. Suspect was in the vehicle

and shot at the victim," she added.

The suspect has been detained. Live streams of the protest showed the crowd of demonstrators as shots rang out, the city-based KXAN-TV reported.

The crowd then scatters and screams can be heard.

The Austin Police Department said it was still an early and active investigation and did not release further information.

Oz forecasts migration intake drop due to Covid

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Melbourne, July 26: Australia's migration intake will drop significantly to 31,000 in 2020-21 from 232,000 in 2018-19 due to the effects of the coronavirus pandemic, impacting thousands of Indians planning to emigrate to this country.

While the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Australian economy are still evolving, migration, which is a key driver of the economy, has been hit following the travel bans, border closures imposed earlier this year since the contagion began.

The Australian Economic and Fiscal Update report, released Thursday by the treasury department, said that the Net Overseas Migration (NOM) is significantly affected by the international travel restrictions and constraints on the ability of applications to meet visa application requirements.

"The NOM is assumed to fall from 232,000 in 2018-19 to be 154,000 in 2019-20 and 31,000 in 2020-21," it said. The report further said that the international borders were expected to re-open in January next year, but a two-week quarantine period would remain in place for arrivals to Australia.

"Future migration levels remain highly uncertain, due to the

INDIANS AFFECTED



The Indian community in Australia is comprised of nearly seven lakh people

India is one of the top sources of skilled immigrants to Australia

Approximately 90,000 students are studying in Australian universities

path of the pandemic and the nature and duration of measures taken to contain its spread at home and abroad.

"The government implemented international travel bans in March 2020. This prevented all arrivals on visitor and temporary migration visas and prevented Australian citizens and permanent residents from departing Australia," the document read. According to the treasurer, Josh Frydenberg, no decision was taken yet on when Australia's travel ban will be lifted. According to Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center, the contagion has infected over 16 million people and killed more than 6,44,000 across the world.

Kashmir-centric Pak terror group Jaish active in Afghan

AGENCIES

Kabul, July 26: Pakistani terror outfit Jaish-e-Mohammad, which runs its terror activities in Indian Kashmir, has become active in Afghanistan.

In the last two days, at least 13 Pakistani Jaish terrorists were killed by Afghan security forces in the Khogyani district in Afghanistan. The banned Pakistani terror outfit, headed by Masood Azhar, usually targets civilians and soldiers in Indian Kashmir.

In February 2019, a Jaish suicide bomber blew up an Indian paramilitary bus in Pulwama in south Kashmir, killing over 40 CRPF personnel. India retaliated by launching a surgical strike deep into Pakistan targeting Jaish terror

camps in Balakot. Sources said Pakistan's spy agency Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), which trains, arms and sponsors Islamist terror groups, has been reorganising and restructuring terror infrastructure against India and Afghanistan.

In a joint operation, the National Directorate of Security (NDS) and the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) have killed 13 and captured one Jaish terrorist in Mirza Khel in Khogyani district in Afghanistan. Along with them, 18 Afghan Taliban terrorists were also killed. The operation is still underway, sources added. On June 29, the Afghan Security Forces (ASF) had destroyed a camp of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) - another Kashmir-centric terror outfit - on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border and killed two LeT terrorists.



One of the two terrorists was Abu Bakr, an LeT commander from Khyber Agency in Pakistan. Taliban terrorists were also present in the camp, sources in Kabul said.

Sources said Afghan intelligence had credible inputs that LeT and Taliban had established camps in

Wargah and Tordarah on the border to launch attacks on Afghan forces. After the operation, several Lashkar and Taliban terrorists fled back to Pakistani side of the border in their vehicles, taking along a high number of casualties.

In June, a UN Security Council

report had said that not only do the Taliban and the Al Qaeda continue to cooperate with each other, but Kashmir-specific Pakistani terror groups, Jaish-e-Mohammed and Lashkar-e-Taiba, are sending their trainers to Afghanistan to carry out target assassinations. The report had said that around 6,500 Pakistani terrorists, including 1,000 from

Jaish and Lashkar, are present in Afghanistan. This was followed by a Pentagon report, which said the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region remains a sanctuary for al-Qaeda (AQ), al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS), Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and ISIS-Khorasan (ISIS-K).

ISIL-K, AQIS, TTP NOT YET BLACKLISTED: UN

United Nations: Pakistani nationals remain at the leadership levels in terror groups such as al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent, Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant - Khorasan and Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, and many of them are yet to be blacklisted, according to a UN report. The 26th report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team concerning ISIL, al-Qaeda and associated individuals and entities said that in April and May, the Afghan special forces conducted a series of countrywide operations and arrested the head of the ISIL-K Aslam Farooqi (also known as Abdullah Orozkai) and his predecessor Zia ul-Haq (also known as Abu Omar Khorasani) and others.

business



A decision by European leaders to issue joint debt to finance coronavirus aid for weaker member states should remain an exemption and not serve as a blueprint for future budget challenges

JENS WEIDMANN | PRESIDENT, BUNDESBANK

ARCELORMITTAL CHALLENGES ESSAR GROUP

ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel India Ltd (AMNSIL) has filed a petition in the Gujarat High Court against the Government of Gujarat and Essar Bulk Terminal Ltd seeking transfer of Hazira port licence in its name



of the day quote

Our path to profitability has accelerated during the lockdown, and after achieving operational profitability in January, we are on track to become EBITDA and cash positive by the end of 2021

ALBINDER DHINDSA
CO-FOUNDER AND CEO, GROFERS

Demand from mass housing statement has started picking up post relaxations in coronavirus-induced lockdowns and gradual reopening of economy. We were expecting that we would be touching sometime in September disbursements of ₹500 crore, but we have already crossed that mark

NEERAJ VYAS
MD AND CEO, PNB HOUSING FINANCE

The IBC is evolving to offer innovative ways of servicing emerging needs of the economy. A special insolvency resolution framework for MSMEs under section 240A of the Code is at an advanced stage of preparation. A pre-pack insolvency resolution framework is under works

MS SAHOO | CHAIRPERSON, INSOLVENCY AND BANKRUPTCY BOARD OF INDIA

SHORT TAKES

Droom to add 150 Eco centres

New Delhi: Automobile marketplace Droom is betting on its 'Germ Shield' service to be a major revenue driver this fiscal as it looks to tap into the estimated ₹1,250-crore anti-microbial treatment market in the country amid the coronavirus pandemic. Germ Shield service, which was launched in March, offers an anti-microbial coating for vehicles, homes and offices. "In our view, sanitisation, cleaning and surface protection is estimated to be ₹5,000 crore market annually," founder and CEO Sandeep Aggarwal said.

Exposure to US G-secs hiked

New Delhi: India's holdings of American government securities increased by nearly \$13 billion to \$169.9 billion at the end of May, according to latest official data. So far this year, the country's exposure has seen significant fluctuations and had touched a record high of \$177.5 billion in February.

'Hopeful of sales recovery'

New Delhi: With consumer sentiment "developing positively" in pockets in India where there is stability in terms of COVID-19 related restrictions, luxury carmaker Mercedes Benz is hoping that by festive season sales recovery will be better, according to a senior company official. The company which had planned at least ten new introductions this year in India is also sticking with its plans, although some products may be late due to global supply chain issues.

Revenue dept plans stern action

New Delhi: The revenue department is planning stern action against 1,474 'risky exporters' who were untraceable but claimed GST refunds worth ₹2,029 crore, sources said. Integrated GST (IGST) refund is suspended in all such cases where there is adverse report post verification about the exporter or his suppliers, they said. So far, IGST refunds of more than ₹1.37 lakh crore have been disbursed and only about ₹2,026 crore is pending.

25 bps rate cut likely on the cards: Experts

AGENCIES

Mumbai, July 26: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is likely to go in for a minimum 25 basis points cut in key lending rate in the forthcoming monetary policy review as the need to revive the coronavirus-hit economy is pressing notwithstanding marginal uptick in inflation, feel experts.

The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), headed by RBI Governor, is scheduled to meet for three days beginning August 4 and announce its decision August 6.

The central bank has been taking steps proactively to limit the damage to the economy caused by the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns to prevent the spread of the disease. A fast-changing macroeconomic environment and deteriorating outlook for growth necessitated off-cycle meetings of the MPC - first in March and then again in May 2020.

The MPC cumulatively cut the policy repo rate by 115 basis points over these two meetings. Higher prices of food items especially meat, fish, cereals and pulses pushed the retail inflation based on Consumer Price Index (CPI) to 6.09 per cent in June. The



government has tasked the RBI to keep inflation at 4 per cent (+, - 2%). The central bank mainly factors in CPI while arriving at its monetary policy.

"We anticipate a further asymmetric cut of 25 basis points in the Repo Rate and 35 basis points in the Reverse Repo Rate, in a split decision from the MPC," opined Aditi Nayar, Principal Economist, ICRA.

Expressing similar views, Union Bank of India MD and CEO Rajkiran Rai said, "There is a possibility of a 25 basis points cut or they may hold on (the rate)." Nayar said further said although

the retail (CPI) inflation has exceeded the MPC's target range of 2-6 per cent for three consecutive months in the lockdown and initial unlock period, it is expected to recede within this range by August 2020. Industry chamber Assocham, however, wants the RBI to focus more on loan restructuring given the problems being faced by the industry.

"Industry requires an urgent restructuring of loans across all the sectors to avert large scale defaults. As is clear from the latest RBI report, restructuring is imperative both for the banks and borrowers.

'Extreme risk aversion to have adverse outcomes'

New Delhi: As the economy reels under the pandemic and post lockdown woes, Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor **Shaktikanta Das** is of the view that extreme risk aversion by financial institutions will have adverse outcomes for all. Noting that India's financial system remains sound, Das, in his foreword to the RBI's latest Financial Stability Report, wrote that in the current environment, the need for financial intermediaries to proactively augment capital and improve their resilience has acquired top priority. "In the evolving milieu, while risk management has to be prudent, extreme risk aversion would have adverse outcomes for all," he wrote. The Governor's statement gains significance as concerns have been raised that banks are still risk averse and are largely shying away from lending in general, except for the sovereign guaranteed ECLGS loans for MSMEs.



Govt plans to develop world-class textile park

State MSME minister Ditya Shankar Mishra urged the Orissa High Court for an early decision over the long pending issue on Odisha Textiles Mills

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, July 26: The Government of Odisha is eyeing to revamp the now-defunct Odisha Textiles Mills (OTM) at Choudwar and aiming to develop a world-class textile park. State MSME minister Ditya Shankar Mishra urged the Orissa High Court for an early decision over the long pending OTM issues. He said that once the decision is cleared by the HC, the government will propose a textile park by inviting large-scale investments, thereby creating enormous employment opportunities for the people of the state.

He also mentioned that once the HC's decides on the issue, Odisha Industrial Infrastructure Development Corporation (IDCO) and Department of Handlooms, Textiles & Handicrafts Department will take all necessary steps to develop the OTM into a world-class textile park. The minister also directed Cuttack's Collector to discuss with the management of Ballaupur



Industries for an early start of units by resolving any land issues in consultation of Revenue Department.

The decision on restarting the OTM has been pending in the Orissa High Court since 2001. According to a media report, the state government had deposited ₹30 crore with the official liquidator to revive OTM. The media report claimed that the amount was deposited in pursuance of an order by the HC on a petition, filed by the government for a rollback in the liquidation process of OTM.

Moreover, Energy minister reviewed on Pepsi Co's Jagatpur plant and Balapur Paper Mills in Choudwar in presence of Choudwar MLA via video conferencing.

BIZ BUZZ

'GeM to be integrated with railways' e-procurement system'

New Delhi: Government e-Marketplace (GeM) and Indian Railways' e-procurement system are working on ways to integrate both the platforms with a view to further widen the ambit of the Commerce Ministry's portal by enhancing its buying and selling process, a senior official said Sunday. The official said that currently a feasibility assessment is going on for integration of government procurement portal GeM with Indian Railway Electronic Procurement System (IREPS) and Integrated Material Management System (IMMS). "This is a technical integration. It will also help in creating a uniform procurement system. We are looking at the possibility of integration. We are doing the assessment first and then we will integrate," the official from Commerce Ministry added.

Aditya Puri sells HDFC shares worth ₹843 cr

Mumbai: The MD of HDFC Bank, Aditya Puri has sold over 74.2 lakh shares, 95% of his stake in the bank for around ₹842.87 crore during the week gone by. Prior to the transaction, Puri held 0.14% stake - 77.96 lakh shares - and post the sale he holds 0.01% stake, 3.76 lakh shares, according to the latest data released by the exchanges. Puri sold the shares during July 21-23. The development gains significance as Puri is set to retire from the top post of the bank in October after serving as the MD since its establishment in 1994. The bank's board last year set up a 6-member search committee to identify his successor. Puri is credited with building India's largest and most valued private sector bank. The bank's market capitalisation currently stands at ₹6.14 lakh crore.



Tata education trust gets ₹220 cr exemption

New Delhi: In a major relief for the Tata Education and Development Trust, the Income Tax Appellate Tribunal (ITAT) has ruled in its favour against the Commissioner Income Tax (CIT) appeal order wherein a demand of more than ₹220 crore was levied by the tax department. A bench of ITA President Justice P.P. Bhatt, in the ruling given on July 24, stayed the demand raised by the Income Tax Department. The case pertains to assessment years 2011-12 and 2012-13 on money spent by the Trust for creating an endowment fund at Cornell University, US, to provide scholarships to Indian students, and granting financial assistance to the Harvard Business School for constructing an executive building to be named Tata Hall. It donated ₹197.79 crore in 2011-12 and ₹25.37 crore in 2012-13.



Need reforms in land acquisition, skill building: Naik



(L&T) Group Chairman AM Naik

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, July 26: Emphasising that it is an opportune time for India to increase self-reliance, Larsen & Toubro (L&T) Group Chairman AM Naik has said that the government needs to bring in reforms in several areas including land acquisition, competency and skill building.

His statement to the shareholders in L&T's Annual Report for 2019-20, Naik noted that if these measures are adopted and the nation remains united the country will overcome the challenges ahead.

"To ensure that the PM's thrust on self-dependence achieves the desired outcomes swiftly, it is es-

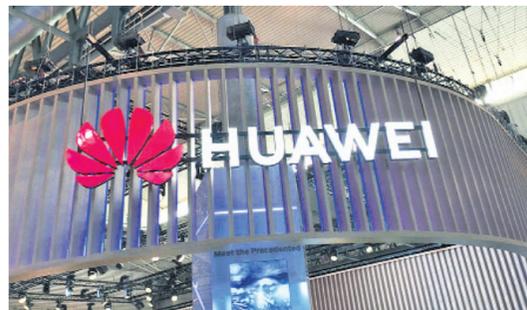
AATMANIRBHAR BHARAT

sential for the government to introduce much-needed reforms in several areas including land acquisition, competency and skill building. In tandem, the administration would do well to streamline processes and accelerate the pace of decision making," Naik said.

On the performance of the group in 2019-20, the Chairman said that L&T exhibited growth and strength on all key performance parameters, even in the face of a stressed economic environment.

"Your company's strategically diversified business portfolio, geographical dispersion, robust balance sheet, strong order book position and execution strengths have stood L&T in good stead," he said.

'Huawei's 5G equipment poses no security risk'



AGENCIES

Seoul, July 26: Faced with mounting pressure to replace Huawei 5G equipment, South Korean telecom giant LG Uplus has stressed the Chinese firm's telecom equipment does not pose any security risks.

Earlier this week, Robert Strayer, the US deputy assistant secretary of state for cyber and international communications and information policy, urged telecom operators using Huawei's equipment, including LG Uplus, to switch to "trusted vendors," citing security issues. The US has long accused Huawei, the world's leading vendor of 5G network equipment, of spying, claiming that the company can compromise the country's internet communications and steal sensitive information.

In response to the US official's comments, LG Uplus, the only local carrier using Huawei's 5G equipment, said the Chinese tech giant has proven its equipment's security, hinting that it will not

cut ties with Huawei.

"The carrier and the equipment provider have done all they can in terms of proving security," an LG Uplus spokesperson was quoted as saying.

Local industry experts say LG Uplus has much to lose if it decides to replace Huawei products, considering the two companies' business partnership over the years, reports Yonhap news agency.

"LG Uplus faces equipment compatibility issues if it switches to other 5G equipment providers since it has used Huawei products for 4G LTE services," said Kim Jong-ki, a research fellow at the Korea Institute for Industrial Economics & Trade. "An abrupt change would be costly and delay its plans to deploy 5G."

The company currently uses 5G equipment from not only Huawei, but also other major 5G equipment vendors, like Samsung, Nokia and Ericsson.

DIESEL PRICE RISES AGAIN, NEARS ₹80/LITRE IN CITY



PNN/AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, July 26: Diesel prices rose for the second straight day Sunday, nearing ₹82 per litre in the national capital. Petrol prices, however, were unchanged for the 27th consecutive day in Bhubaneswar and across the four metros.

In Bhubaneswar, diesel price was hiked by 15 paise and reached ₹80.08 per litre.

In Delhi, diesel was priced at ₹81.94 a litre. With a 15-paise hike Sunday, diesel is now ₹1.51 costlier than petrol in the city.

After the hike, Diesel prices in Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata were ₹80.11, ₹78.86 and ₹77.04 respectively, higher than ₹79.97, ₹78.73 and ₹76.91 a litre Saturday. Unexpected rise in diesel prices despite slower demand has put the transport sector at a big disadvantage as rising fuel cost has further shrunk its margins.

The price of diesel in the national capital has also made automobile companies concerned about the prospects of the sale of diesel-run cars in the country's largest car market.

Petrol prices, which were last hiked June 29, again remained unchanged across the four metros.

RSP offers incentives to state-based MSMEs

PNN/AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, July 26: The Rourkela Steel Plant (RSP) Sunday said it has started offering price-based incentives to local industries to boost consumption of the metal.

According to an RSP official, the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) can get an incentive of ₹100 per tonne on distribution charge and ₹300 on supplies from the local warehouse.

"A rebate of ₹250 will be given to new units for five years. Besides, incentive of ₹600 per tonne of plates, sheets and coils will be offered if they lift total quantity ordered," official said.

The RSP and the central marketing organisation of SAIL are working jointly to bring MSMEs under this scheme, he said.

The steel maker has launched a scheme - 'Ispatti Ilakon ka Vikas: SAIL ke Sath'. It aims at providing the local MSMEs, based in the districts in which SAIL's plants are located, the required impetus to be competitive, the official said.

Higher reserves, rising inflows to strengthen rupee

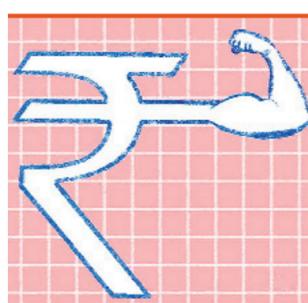
INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, July 26: Rising foreign reserves along with healthy Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflows are expected to strengthen the Indian rupee in the immediate-to-short run.

Accordingly, analysts opined that the currency will move into a range between 74 and 75 as healthy forex reserves and consistent inflows strengthens it further.

"Falling US dollar index globally is a good trend for emerging markets' currencies and thus rupee should trade with a stronger bias," Sajal Gupta, Head, Forex and Rates, Edelweiss Securities, told IANS.

"Market is ignoring the tensions between the US and China and is an-



GLOBAL BOOST
Market is ignoring the tensions between the US and China and is anticipating fast progress on the development of vaccines. More FDI inflows are also helping the rupee sentiments

SAJAL GUPTA | HEAD, FOREX AND RATES, EDELWEISS SECURITIES

icipating fast progress on the development of vaccines. More FDI inflows are also helping the rupee sentiments," he added.

Presently, India's foreign ex-

change reserves increased by \$1.275 billion, during the week ended July 17.

The reserves grew to \$517.637 billion from \$516.362 billion reported

for the week ended July 10.

India's forex reserves comprise foreign currency assets (FCAs), gold reserves, special drawing rights (SDRs) and the RBI's position with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). According to Anindya Banerjee, DVP, Currency and Rates, Kotak Securities: "Dollar-Rupee is caught between Central bank intervention and speculative selling. This may keep the pair boxed within a range of 74.45 and 75 levels for the time being."

The RBI is known to enter the markets via intermediaries to either sell or buy US dollars to keep the rupee in a stable orbit. Last Friday, the rupee marginally appreciated to 74.83 against a greenback. "The RBI's dollar buying at reg-

ular intervals has been reflected in the FX Reserves, which are at a record high of \$516.36 billion as on July 10. Also, this week Asian currencies remained positive because dollar continued to plunge on fears of a full-blown financial crisis, and rupee followed the suit," said Rahul Gupta, Head of Research, Currency, Emkay Global Financial Services.

"Going ahead, if the trade tiff escalates then fears of US ending the Phase-One deal will arise and USDINR will finally break the psychological level of 75 and trade higher. But we don't expect a sharp rally as traders are focusing on the coronavirus vaccine developments and are pretty convinced over getting additional stimulus packages."

Srabani aims for second Olympics

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 26: Ace sprinter Srabani Nanda has not been a regular in the Indian athletics team for a while now but she is leaving no stone unturned to make a second Olympic appearance, spending whatever she has to train in far off Jamaica amid a raging pandemic.

The 29-year-old Nanda became the first Indian track-and-field athlete to participate in a competition amid the COVID-19 pandemic, running the 100m race at the Velocity Fest meeting in Kingston earlier this week.

She has been based in Jamaica since the beginning of the year and is counts herself fortunate to have employers, who gave her the freedom to train with full salary.

"I work with Hydropower Corporation of Odisha government, they give me salary and support to train full-time. Whatever is the (financial) gap, I manage myself and friends also help me," she told PTI from Jamaica.

"I am here from the beginning of this season. I do train sometimes and compete sometimes. I chose to train at a better place no matter the struggles I have to face," said Nanda, who has been taking part in athletic meets in Jamaica since 2017.

Representing the MVP Track club, she won heat two in 11.78 seconds for a third-place finish overall in the meet which also featured the likes of reigning Olympic champion Elaine Thompson and sprint great Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce.

Nanda's last international medal — a bronze in 4x100m relay — came from the Asian Athletics Championships in 2017 held at the Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar.

Since then, she has not been a part of the Indian team, which competed in top meets like the Asian and World Championships in 2019.

She is, however, hopeful of making the cut for Tokyo Olympics, which will not be an easy task with the qualifying timings in both the 100m and 200m events (11.5sec and 22.80sec respectively) being well above her personal best.

"Right now I am training for both (100m and 200m). I am confident about both the events. I focus on myself and to do well is my priority. I have to be confident with hope," she said when asked whether she truly sees herself making the cut for the Olympics next year.



Nanda competed in the 2016 Rio Olympics in the 200m event and finished sixth in her heat race. She has personal bests of 11.45 and 23.07 seconds in 100m and 200m respectively.

Asked if competing in the middle of a pandemic was disconcerting, Nanda said she did not feel anything special. "Now everywhere people are competing according to situations. Yes, we do maintain social distancing, it is compulsory and spectators are not allowed in the stadium when we raced," she said.

Jamaica is one of the least COVID-19 affected countries in the world with just 116 active cases at present (837 total cases with 711 already recovered).

Asked about competing along with some of the world's best sprinters like Thomson and Fraser-Pryce, she said, "Elaine Thomson is in my club MVP Track Club and all of them are good. It is a huge experience and I am learning a lot."

Asked if she will return to India to take part in the domestic events planned later this year, Nanda said, "I am not sure about anything in this situation. My coach will decide, it depends on the situation."

The Athletics Federation of India has tentatively fixed September 12 as the start date for the domestic season.

ACE INDIAN SHUTTLE OPENS UP ON STRENGTHENING HER RESOLVE TO SUCCEED

Win over Xuerui turning point: Sindhu

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, July 26: World champion PV Sindhu on Sunday said initial failures at the international stage were disappointing but defeating the then reigning Olympic champion Li Xuerui at the China Open in 2012 strengthened her resolve to succeed in the senior circuit.

Sindhu had burst onto the scene when as a 16-year-old she had stunned London Olympics gold medalist Li in the quarterfinals of China Masters. A year later, she claimed a maiden bronze medal at the prestigious World Championships.

She eventually went on to win five medals in the prestigious tournament — two bronze, two silver and a gold, besides the Olympic silver medal four years ago in Rio de Janeiro.

"When I started playing I was doing well but international standards are not the same. In the beginning, I kept losing in first rounds, qualifying rounds. I realised I needed to go out harder, that is when I kept working hard," Sindhu told paddler Mudit Dani on his online show 'In The Spotlight'.

"I used to feel sad and thinking what mistake I'm making, I am also working hard as others. I think that turning point I would say I got in 2012 where I beat Li Xuerui, she was current Olympic champion at

that time. Since then I worked extra hard and I have been improving step by step, year by year."

A big fan of 2004 Olympic gold medalist Taufik Hidayat's backhand and two-time Olympic champion Lin Dan's style of play, Sindhu still fondly remembers how a fan on her arrival in Hyderabad from Rio presented her with a month's salary for her exploits at the mega event.

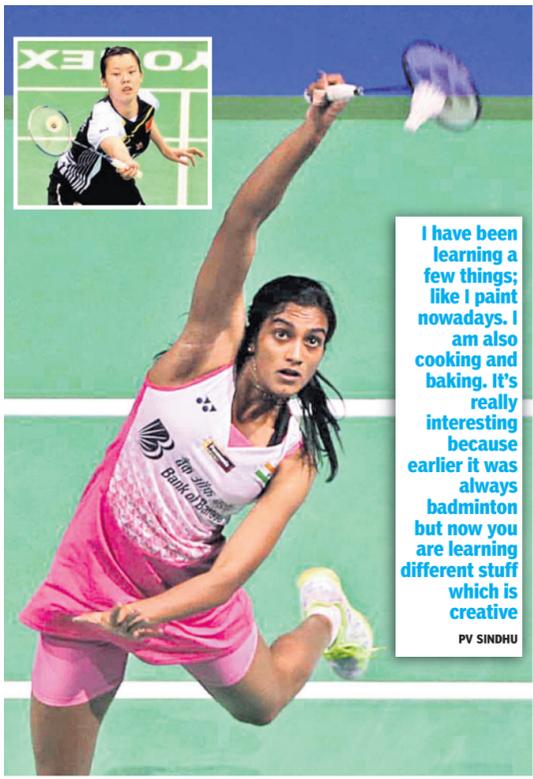
"It was so touching that I remember it even today. I wrote him a letter and sent him some money," said the Sindhu No.7.

While Sindhu currently continues to train at home and is having a relaxed time with her family during the COVID-19 pandemic, she has also picked up new skills.

"I have been learning a few things; like I paint nowadays. I am also cooking and baking. It's really interesting because earlier it was always badminton but now you are learning different stuff which is creative," said Sindhu.

Sindhu along with her badminton colleagues are waiting for a green light from the Telangana government to resume their training amid the coronavirus pandemic.

The Badminton Association of India (BAI) had planned to conduct the training camp at Hyderabad from July 1 but the Telangana government still hasn't given a go ahead due to the increasing COVID-19 cases in the state.



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PV SINDHU

Halep withdraws from Palermo Open

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Palermo, July 26: Second-ranked Simona Halep withdrew from the Palermo Ladies Open Sunday following a quarantine ordinance issued by Italy's health ministry.

"Given the recent rise in COVID-19 cases in Romania and my anxieties around international air travel at this time, I have made the tough decision to withdraw from Palermo," Halep tweeted. "I want to thank the tournament director and the Italian ministry of health for all efforts on my behalf."

The August 3-9 tournament announced Sunday that the Romanian player's manager, Virginia Ruzici, had informed Palermo officials of the decision.

The move comes after Italy's health minister Friday signed an ordinance requiring all those who have in the last 14 days stayed in Romania or Bulgaria to quarantine.

"We were filled with regret when

informed of the news," tournament director Oliviero Palma said. "We had informed Halep's staff in detail about the fact that professional players shouldn't have to go into quarantine."

"But nevertheless Halep's staff informed us when their decision was already taken. We are disheartened and deeply upset," Palma added.

Palma also said that a regional

health minister had sent Halep a notice explaining that the government ordinance does not apply to workers, and therefore to professional athletes.

Four other top-20 players remain entered: No.14 Johanna Konta of Britain, No.15 Petra Martic of Croatia, No.18 Marketa Vondrousova of the Czech Republic and No. 20 Maria Sakkari of Greece.



5TH STRAIGHT DEFEAT

Anand loses at Legends of Chess event

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, July 26: Indian Grandmaster Viswanathan Anand suffered his fifth straight defeat in the USD 150,000 Legends of Chess online tournament, going down 2-3 to Peter Leko of Hungary.

The former World Champion got off to a good start and won the first game of the best-of-four contest. The next two games were drawn before Leko levelled by winning the fourth.

The Hungarian then claimed the Armageddon (a tie-breaker) to ensure Anand remain winless and at the bottom of the points table.

Anand, who is making his maiden appearance on the Magnus Carlsen Chess Tour, had earlier lost to Peter Svidler, Magnus Carlsen, Vladimir Kramnik and Anish Giri.

World No.1 Carlsen bounced back strongly to avoid an upset, beating veteran Vasily Ivanchuk 3-2 to stay on top.

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 and 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 OF ROUND 5: Peter Leko beat Viswanathan Anand 3-2; Magnus Carlsen beat Vasily Ivanchuk 3-2; Vladimir Kramnik beat Ding Liren 2.5-1.5; Anish Giri beat Boris Gelfand 2.5-1.5; Ian Nepomniachtchi beat Peter Svidler 3-1.

Sanga backs Dada for ICC's top post

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, July 26: Sri Lanka cricket legend Kumar Sangakkara has backed Sourav Ganguly for the ICC chairman's post, saying the BCCI president's 'astute cricket brain' and vast experience as an administrator make him a 'very suitable' candidate for the role.

Admitting that he is a big fan of Ganguly, Sangakkara said the former India captain has an international mindset which is necessary to remain unbiased in an important position.

"I think Sourav definitely can make that change. Quite a big fan of Dada not just because of his stature as a cricketer but I think he has a very astute cricket brain," Sangakkara, who is currently the Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) Chairman, told 'India Today'.

"He has the best interests of the game at heart and that should not change just because you are the BCCI president or the ECB or SLC or any other cricket board when you are at the ICC."

"Your mindset should be truly international and not just constrained by partisanship in terms

of where I come from — am I Indian, Sri Lankan or Australia or English but really understand 'yes I am a cricketer and what I am doing is what is best for all cricketing countries'."

The former Sri Lanka skipper said Ganguly has the potential to build relationships, which is vital for the influential position in cricket's governing body.

"I have seen his work even before he took over as the BCCI president, even before administration and coaching, and how he has built relationships with players around the world, his standing in the MCC cricket committee," he added.

Former BCCI chief Shashank Manohar stepped down as the ICC Chairman earlier this month. Hong Kong's Imran Khwaja, Manohar's deputy in the ICC, has been given interim charge till the time elections are not conducted for the post.

Sangakkara is not the only former international skipper to have vouched for Ganguly. Former South Africa captain and Cricket South Africa's (CSA) director of cricket, Graeme Smith had also supported Ganguly for the role. Ganguly, on his part, recently stated that he is in no hurry to take up the ICC role.



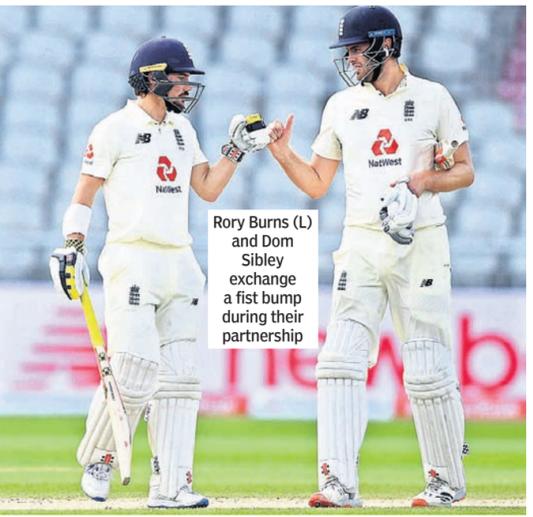
Openers hold fort after Broad exploits

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Manchester, July 26: Rory Burns (38 batting) and Dom Sibley (40 batting) were sharing an unbeaten opening stand of 86 as England built up a 258-run lead over the West Indies by tea on day three of the deciding third Test at Old Trafford Sunday.

By dismissing the Windies for 197 before lunch thanks to four wickets from Stuart Broad (6/31), England took a lead of 172 runs into the second innings and was on course to take a formidable advantage into the final two days in Manchester.

Earlier, resuming on 137/6, Jason Holder and Shane Dowrich reached their first target — getting the West Indies past the follow-on mark — as England started Day 3 with the same pacemen who finished Saturday, Jofra Archer and Chris Woakes.



Rory Burns (L) and Dom Sibley exchange a fist bump during their partnership

However, it all changed when veterans Broad and James Anderson came into the attack. Off his third delivery of the day, Broad trapped Holder lbw for 46, with a review backing up the on-field decision.

In his third over, Broad removed Raheem Cornwall (10) and Kamar Roach (0) in the space of four balls. Broad then took the sixth wicket when Dowrich (37) slashed at a short ball and Woakes snaffled the catch after getting round from mid-on.

The West Indies were further hampered when wicketkeeper Dowrich had to leave the field after taking a ball from Shannon Gabriel in the mouth. Joshua da Silva came on as a replacement for Dowrich.

BRIEF SCORES (AT TEA): England 369 & 86/0 (Dom Sibley 40 batting, Rory Burns 38 batting); West Indies 197 (Jason Holder 46, Shane Dowrich 37; Stuart Broad 6/31). Match to continue.

1908 Games: Protests, disqualifications & controversies

ASSOCIATED PRESS

London, July 26: Through the summer heat, Dorando Pietri had completed 26 miles from Windsor Castle still leading the marathon.

But there were still another 365 yards to go. A lap of the track at the White City Stadium was required so the Italian would finish in front of Queen Alexandra at the 1908 London Olympics.

Dazed, perhaps by the roar of tens of thousands of spectators, and certainly weary, Pietri staggered into the stadium and collapsed several times. Doctors and race officials rushed to his side and helped him across the line.

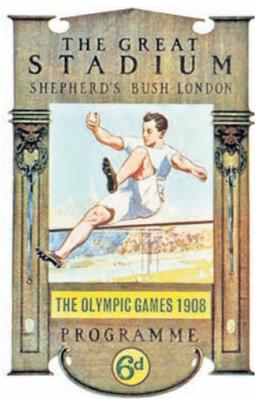
Even though he finished seconds ahead of American rival Johnny Hayes, Pietri was denied gold because of the act of altruism. Hayes protested against the assistance re-

ceived and Pietri was disqualified. The British public was outraged. Even Queen Alexandra expressed sympathy and later ensured Pietri still left London with gold — in the form of a cup.

The first marathon over what became the official distance of 26 miles, 365 yards was one of the most dramatic seen at an Olympics. It produced a defining moment, captured on film, in the early days of the modern Olympics that had begun 12 years earlier.

The 1908 Games weren't even meant to be in London. They ended up being the longest-ever. An eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 1906 led to London staging the first of its three Olympics.

With funds diverted from Olympic preparations in Rome to rebuild areas at the foot of the volcano near the southern city of Naples, Italy re-



linquished its hosting rights. London still found time to build the White City Stadium in west London in only ten months. It was the scene

of the first parade by athletes during the opening ceremony attended by King Edward VII July 13, 1908 — almost three months after the first events in the Olympics. Competition did not finish until October 31.

By then, across 110 events in 22 different sports, 1,971 men and 37 men had competed for medals.

Hayes wasn't the only American athlete embroiled in disputed a gold medal moment. Compatriot John Carpenter crossed the 400-meter final in first. But judges ruled he illegally obstructed Wyndham Halswelle while passing his British rival in a race run without race lines.

The maneuver was allowed in under American rules but not British regulations that these games were subject to. The race was declared void and re-run two days later. Taylor did not turn up. Never did fellow American Robbins.

Carpenter was the only competitor, winning in a walkover.

The United States took a black athlete to an Olympics for the first time, and John Taylor was part of the gold-medal winning 4x400-meter team. It was the first time relays had featured in track and field at the Olympics.

The first Winter Games were not held until 1924 but London saw the introduction of the first winter sport at an Olympics. There were four events in figure skating, with men and women competing separately and as mixed pairs.

It took the arrival of American swimmer a century later for Ray Ewry's record of winning eight gold medals in an individual event to be surpassed. The American won both the standing long jump and standing high jump for the third time at the 1908 Games.