



DADDY'S GIRL

Actor Priyanka Chopra describes late father Ashok Chopra, on his 70th birth anniv, as her forever cheerleader

LEISURE P2



'1 DISTRICT, 1 PRODUCT'

45 districts of UP have been included in Ministry of Agriculture's 'One District, One Product' scheme

TWO STATES P7



CALIFORNIA BURNS AGAIN

Massive wildfires continue to wreak havoc across the US state of California

INTERNATIONAL P10



I'm all for a non-Gandhi as party chief. Just waiting for Gandhis to decide whom!

FIND A PRESIDENT, SONIA TELLS CONG

A letter signed by 23 Congress leaders call for elections to pick members of the CWC - highest decision-making body of the party

AGENCIES

New Delhi, August 23: Congress interim president Sonia Gandhi has reportedly conveyed her aides that she would step down from the party's top post after a letter signed by more than 20 top leaders, seeking "full-time", "visible" leadership, became public.

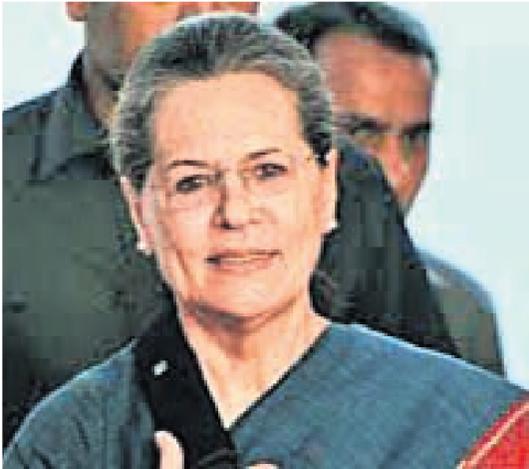
According to sources, Sonia has sent a formal reply saying that her stint as interim president for one year is complete and she would like to step down from the party top post. Hence, the party should choose a new president.

Earlier, 23 Congress leaders wrote a five-page letter, dated August 7, to Sonia seeking reforms in the party and a full-time president. The signatories, however, made it clear there is no criticism of Rahul Gandhi. "We have not criticised Sonia Gandhi or Rahul Gandhi, but we want a complete overhaul of the Congress party in its management and style," sources said.

Meanwhile, a meeting of the Congress Working Committee (CWC) has been called Monday. Sources added that this meeting was called in response to the letter to discuss the organisational issues pointed out by Congress leaders.

All India Congress Committee (AICC) spokesperson Randeep Singh Surjewala responded to reports suggesting that Sonia Gandhi has decided to step down as the party's interim president. Surjewala said, "Mrs Gandhi has not spoken to any leader, nor written a letter to anyone, we completely deny this."

However, a number of Congress leaders, including Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh, said that this internal deliberation is



LETTER ROW

23 Cong leaders wrote the 5-page letter, dated August 7, to Sonia seeking reforms in the party and a full-time prez

A meeting of the CWC has been called Monday to discuss organisational issues pointed out by party leaders

ill-timed and has further strengthened the BJP. He and several Congress Chief Ministers felt that the Gandhis had contributed to the party's development for decades and, hence, they need to be at the helm to strengthen the organisation in this crisis. Already, a strategy to counter the letter that has indirectly questioned the present leadership is already on the cards. Various state units of the party

have started gathering and a resolution will be passed condemning the signature campaign of the veterans on the said letter.

Many Congress members feel that the letter is more of a last-ditch effort by certain leaders to save their own political future, terming it the decision to choose self-interest over the interests of the party. CWC members Jitin Prasad, Mukul Wasnik and several others who signed the letter never mentioned these issues during the three meetings held during the lockdown. However, they chose to sign the letter questioning the role of the CWC itself.

Meanwhile, a lot of speculation is in the air as far as the signatures of Congress Members of Parliament are concerned and also regarding who would succeed Sonia Gandhi if she eventually steps down.

COVID-19 cloud on 'Nuakhai' festivity

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Sambalpur, August 23: 'Nuakhai', a major harvest festival of western Odisha, was celebrated in a low-key manner Sunday due to the prevailing COVID-19 situation.

People had to give 'Nuakhai Bhet' or social gathering on the occasion a miss due to the outbreak of the pandemic.

Authorities of the renowned Samaleswari temple here made arrangements to live stream the rituals as people were not allowed to enter the place of worship. Similar restrictions were imposed in other temples as well.

Though the state government relaxed the weekend shutdown in Rourkela city on the occasion, it advised people to celebrate the festival indoors without congregating. Shops in the city remained closed during the day, officials said.

Farmers offered their first grains to their household deities, before distributing 'prasad' among other members of their families.

All family members eat together on the occasion and people working outside visit their homes to celebrate the festival.

"Socio-cultural aspect of the festival, however, was missing this year due to the COVID-19 outbreak," Sambalpur-based writer Siddharth Panda said, adding many people could not visit their homes due to the pandemic.

Extending his greetings on the occasion, the Vice-President tweeted: "Nuakhai Juhar! An ancient festival for the worship of foodgrain, #Nuakhai celebrates our farmers' hard labour and their joy of new harvest season... It reflects man's close relationship with nature. May this festival bring peace, prosperity and happiness in everyone's life."

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the nation is fed due to the farmers' efforts.

"The special occasion of Nuakhai is about celebrating the hard work of our farmers. It is due to their efforts that our nation is fed. May this auspicious day bring prosperity and good health for everyone. Nuakhai Juhar!" he tweeted.



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Heavy rains predicted for next three days



Motorists move through a waterlogged street at Rasulgarh in the Capital after a spell of heavy rain, Sunday PHOTO: BIKASH NAYAK

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, August 23: The Bhubaneswar Meteorological Department has predicted heavy rains over the next three days in parts of Odisha due to build-up of a low pressure area in the Bay of Bengal. It is anticipated that different parts of the state may see enhanced rains in the coming days, starting Monday.

The MET department said that heavy to very heavy rainfall is likely at one or two places over Balasore, Bhadrak, Jagatsinghpur, Cuttack, Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar and Dhenkanal districts.

"Light to moderate rain or thundershower is likely to occur at most places over all districts of North Odisha and at many places over South Odisha August 24," the MET department bulletin said.

On August 25, light to moderate rain or thundershower is predicted at most places over Odisha. "However, heavy to very heavy rainfall and extremely heavy rainfall is likely to occur at one or two places over Balasore, Bhadrak, Jagatsinghpur, Cuttack, Mayurbhanj, Dhenkanal, Sambalpur, Deogarh, Keonjhar and Angul districts," the department said.

On the third day, August 26, heavy to very heavy rainfall is predicted at one or two places over Jharsuguda, Bargarh, Sundargarh, Deogarh, Sambalpur, Angul, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj, Sonapur, Boudh and Bolangir districts.

The department has already issued Orange Warning for the next three days in the light of heavy rainfall in different parts of the state.

SHORT TAKES

Petrol prices hiked for 4th straight day

New Delhi: Petrol prices across the four metros rose for the fourth straight day Sunday. In Bhubaneswar, petrol price was hiked from ₹82.10 to ₹80.09/litre, while diesel price remained stable at ₹80.09/litre. In Kolkata, petrol was sold for ₹83.01, higher by 14 paise from its previous level of ₹82.87 per litre. Similarly, in Delhi and Mumbai, price of the fuel increased by 14 paise to ₹81.49 and ₹88.16 per litre, respectively on Sunday. The price of the transportation fuel in Chennai was at ₹84.52 per litre, higher by 12 paise from ₹84.40 Saturday. Diesel prices are, however, same across the metros. In the national capital, diesel prices have remained stable since the Delhi government announced a 13.25 per cent reduction in the Value Added Tax July 30, which had caused the price to fall by ₹8.36 per litre.

Maoist surrenders

Malkangiri: A Maoist, Mahadev Madkani, carrying a cash reward of ₹2 lakh on his head and allegedly involved in several incidents of crime, surrendered before the police in Malkangiri district, Sunday, Superintendent of Police Rishikesh Khilari said. The Red rebel now desires to return to the mainstream society, Khilari added. Madkani, a resident of Kankeprapra village of Dantebada district in Chhattisgarh district, was in-charge and area committee secretary of Darvha division and Chaitu Surakhya Committee. He was active mostly in Malkangiri and nearby areas in Odisha and he carried a cash reward of ₹2 lakh announced by the Government of Odisha, the SP said.

WEATHER		BHUB	CTK
TEMP			
MAX	31.7°C	31.8°C	
MIN	26.5°C	24.6°C	
Humidity	98%	79%	Forecast
Rainfall	6.8mm	Nil	Light rain likely

Projects worth ₹20L cr show cost overruns of ₹4.11 trn

THE MINISTRY OF STATISTICS AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION MONITORS INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS WORTH ₹150 CR AND ABOVE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, August 23: As many as 412 infrastructure projects, each worth ₹150 crore or more; have been hit by cost overruns of over ₹4.11 trillion owing to delays and other reasons, according to a report.

The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation monitors infrastructure projects worth ₹150 crore and above. Of the 1,683 such projects, 412 reported cost overruns and 471 time escalation. "Total original cost of implementation of the 1,683 projects was ₹20,65,336.20 crore and their anticipated completion cost is likely to be ₹24,77,167.67 crore, which reflects overall cost overruns of ₹4,11,831.47 crore (19.94 per cent of original

cost)," the ministry's latest report for June 2020 said.

The expenditure incurred on these projects till June 2020 is ₹11,21,435.29 crore, which is 45.27 per cent of the anticipated cost.

However, it said that the number of delayed projects decreases to 418 if delay is calculated on the basis of latest schedule of completion.

Further, it said that for 979 projects neither the year of commissioning nor the tentative gestation period has been reported.

Out of 471 delayed projects, 127 have overall delay in the range of one to 12 months, 112 have delay of 13 to 24 months, 127 reflect delay in the range of 25 to 60 months and 105 projects show delay of 61 months and



above. The average time overrun in these 471 delayed projects is 43.34 months.

The brief reasons for time overruns as reported by various project implementing agencies are delay in

land acquisition, delay in obtaining forest/environment clearances and lack of infrastructure support and linkages.

Besides, there are other reasons like delay in tie-up of project financing, delay in finalisation of detailed engineering, change in scope, delay in tendering, ordering and equipment supply, law and order problems, geological surprises, pre-commissioning teething troubles and contractual issues, among others, the report said.

It also observed that project agencies are not reporting revised cost estimates and commissioning schedules for many projects, indicating that time or cost overrun figures are under-reported.

Man kills self after poisoning wife, daughter

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bijepur, August 23: In a tragic incident, a man allegedly gave poison to his wife and daughter before consuming the toxic substance to end their lives, police said Sunday.

The incident was reported from Beniachal village under Bijepur police limits in Bargarh district.

The deceased have been identified as Ratha Mahananda, 45, his wife Kumudini Mahananda, 40, and their daughter Kavita Mahananda, 12.

Police said the incident is fall-out of a severe quarrel between the couple over some issue on the eve of Nuakhai, Saturday. Ratha lost his cool during the fight and forcefully fed poison to his wife.

He also did not spare his minor daughter and forced her to consume poison when she tried to resist. After this Ratha himself consumed poison seeing his wife and daughter wreathing in pain.

On being informed, they were rescued by their kin in a critical condition and admitted to Bijepur community health centre (CHC). Doctors there pronounced the girl brought dead and shifted the couple to the district headquarters hospital (DHH) in Bargarh.

As their conditions deteriorated, they were referred them to VSS Institute of Medical Sciences and Research (VIMSAR) in Burla. However, the duo breathed their last while undergoing treatment at Burla.

Trump campaign releases first video featuring PM Modi

THE VIDEO COMMERCIAL AIMS TO WOO THE INFLUENTIAL INDIAN-AMERICAN VOTERS NUMBERING OVER 2 MILLION

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, August 23: Aiming to woo the influential Indian-American voters numbering over 2 million, the Trump campaign has released its first video commercial that has short clips from Prime Minister Narendra Modi's speeches and US President Donald Trump's historic address in Ahmedabad.

Modi and Trump addressed a huge crowd in Ahmedabad during the US President's visit to India in February this year. Trump was also accompanied by his wife Melania, daughter Ivanka, son-in-law Jared Kushner and top brass of his administration on his trip to India. "America enjoys a great rela-

tionship with India and our campaign enjoys great support from Indian-Americans!" Kimberly Guilfoyle, national chair of Trump Victory Finance Committee said in a tweet releasing the video commercial.

The President's son Donald Trump Jr, who is leading the campaign and is well connected with the Indian-American community, also retweeted it as the commercial soon became viral on social

media with over 66,000 views on Twitter in the first few hours.

Titled "Four More Years" the 107-second video starts with the iconic footage of Modi and Trump walking hand in hand at the NRG Stadium in Houston during the prime minister's visit to the US last year wherein the leaders of the world's two



largest democracies made a joint address before a strong crowd of Indian-Americans numbering more than 50,000. Amidst cheering of thousands of his supporters in the US, Modi is seen as saying that Trump "needs no introduction" and that "his name comes up in almost every conversation."

He is the President of the United States of America "Mr Donald Trump", the prime minister says at the start of the video that has been conceptualised by Al Mason, co-chair of the Trump Victory Indian American Finance Committee.

Modi is highly popular among Indian-Americans. His star appeal has at-

tracted record crowds. His address at the Madison Square Garden in Houston last September was attended by a record 50,000 people. Trump made a solo trip to Houston to join Modi in addressing the historic rally. After Modi introduces Trump to "my family", the second part of the commercial has clips from Trump's address in Ahmedabad this February. "America loves India. America re-

spects India. And America will always be a faithful and loyal friend to the Indian people," Trump says in the commercial in which he praises the contribution of four million Indian-Americans.

"They are truly spectacular people," the President said.

The commercial comes following a research by Mason in battleground States according to which the Indian-Americans, who traditionally vote for the Democrats, are switching over to the Republican Party in significant numbers because the friendship that Trump has with Modi and the latter's high popularity among a large section of the community of which 2.5 million are eligible to vote.

leisure

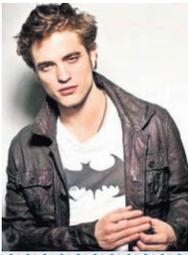


MOMOA'S AQUAMAN 2 TO BE MORE RELEVANT

Filmmaker James Wan is working on expanding the world of Jason Momoa-starrer *Aquaman*, and says the second chapter will come with more serious and relevant tones. *Aquaman 2* also stars Amber Heard and Yahya Abdul-Mateen II. It is slated to open in December 2022.

ROBERT PATTINSON EMBRACES DARKNESS IN THE BATMAN TRAILER

Filmmaker Matt Reeves has unveiled the first trailer of his film, *The Batman*, which shows actor Robert Pattinson taking on the avatar of the caped crusader for vengeance. The teaser shows a new dark, gritty, and violent take on the iconic superhero.



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ARIES
Someone new in your life is going to make you smile; remember, however, that it doesn't always have to be fun and diamonds. A song sung straight from the heart makes a greater impact, says Ganesh.

TAURUS
Today, Ganesh sees your feelings and emotions running high. There is a strong possibility of an emotional encounter with some close to you. You are likely to be swayed and influenced by the other in course of this meeting.

GEMINI
You will be able to put forward your proposal and explain your feelings to someone dear to you, and can expect a positive response from them. You will come across as honest and sincere and hence will be accepted. An auspicious and joy-filled day awaits, says Ganesh.

CANCER
You will help others and be cheerful, feels Ganesh. you will inspire and encourage others. Closeness with beloved will gladden you. You will be attracted to special person, and it could benefit you.

LEO
You will spend the day with your family and friends today and feel closer to them. You will try to help others, as always. You will like to guide someone if your own situation is comfortable today. You will be able to fulfill the expectations placed upon you by someone and will garner a lot of well-wishes, says Ganesh.

VIRGO
You will be the flag-bearer for people around you, spreading hope and inspiration. Ganesh advises you to be the ideal family man today. By doing this you will radiate affection and love. This will, in turn, work remarkably in cultivating positive relationships.

LIBRA
Ganesh says that today will be a day where you will want to look good and feel good too. You will be able to attract people with your speech and your impressive personality today at social gatherings. Your social stature will also rise today. Romantic liaisons may take a serious turn today.

SCORPIO
Today, you must spend most of the time in meditation and introspection. If you do not meditate, you will be surrounded by negative thoughts and bitterness for others. According to Ganesh, this may hinder your progress and growth in career.

SAGITTARIUS
Your stars are mighty today and plan a pleasant day for you, says Ganesh. You are a thorough professional and garner compliments for this attitude. You also have a knack to sail through all the troubles at work. This approach of yours is sure to win hearts of people and add some names in your friends' list

CAPRICORN
Normally, others, especially colleagues get jealous of one's success, but yours is a different case. They will not only motivate you, but also guide you while you take up new projects and assignments.

AQUARIUS
You will finally end today and you will enjoy the fruits of your hard-work. You are very good at considering all the pros and cons of every situation/project, drawing a plan on paper and distribution of responsibilities, however, execution of those plans is a problem area for you.

PISCES
You will come up trumps against your competition today. This will make you enthusiastic about your future prospects. You shy away from the spotlight usually, but today you will find yourself thrust into the role of a leader, as you take on new assignments.



Priyanka remembers her biggest cheerleader

Los Angeles: Actress Priyanka Chopra is missing her father, Ashok Chopra, on his 70th birth anniversary, and described him as her forever cheerleader. The actress took to Twitter and Instagram to remember her father by sharing an old video of him accepting an award on her behalf. "My forever cheerleader: You would have been 70 today. Miss you dad," she wrote along with the clip. In the video, Priyanka's father is seen accepting an

award on her behalf, as she was running late to the ceremony. Expressing pride at her achievements, he said: "I dedicate this award to those artists who come from small towns. They believe in God and they believe in themselves, and by their mere grit, determination and talent, they make their mark. God bless you, Priyanka." Priyanka, who lost her father in 2013 to cancer, incidentally has a tattoo on her forearm that reads, "Daddy's lil girl".



'IN MY HEAD I'VE ALWAYS BEEN A STAR'

New Delhi: Actor Siddhant Chaturvedi roared as the rap star MC Sher in *Gully Boy* last year, and life has never been the same. The talented actor, who has had his share of struggles to reach where he is today, says in his head he has always been a star even when he was standing in the audition lines.

Today, Siddhant has a fan following of over 31.5k on Twitter and a whopping 1.5 million on Instagram.

With so much love pouring in for performance as an actor and for his single *Dhoop*, which he released during lockdown, does he consider himself a star yet?

"Star toh nahi (not a star)... I used to say one thing to myself always when I was nothing and used to go for auditions - whenever I used to dream, or before going to sleep, I would say 'I am a star already and it is just that the world doesn't know'," Siddhant said.

The 27-year-old actor doesn't want his work to be limited just to India and is confident of creating waves with his upcoming performances.

Yami self-tutors to overcome neck injury

Mumbai: Actress Yami Gautam has tried to give proper time to her fitness and well being during the lockdown.

Yami took to Instagram Sunday and shared how she dealt with the serious neck injury.

"This lockdown, I got to explore something which I couldn't before! Everytime I would try practising Yoga, I would be left more in pain owing to my condition, hence my experience never encouraged me to continue.. but this time I self-tutored my way through and allowed my body to heal itself inside out and it has worked like never before!" she wrote.

"This lockdown was not about 'looking fit' or 'a workout of the day' ... it was the time where I listened & just went with the flow! I am no expert! I took my first baby step towards this journey, which shall not stop."

On the work front, Yami will be seen opposite Vikrant Massey in *Ginny weds Sunny*.



Virtual celebrations of Ganesh Puja, Nuakhai

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar: Viswa Odia Mahasangha (VOM), a non-profit organisation working on various social issues, Sunday celebrated Ganesh Puja and Nuakhai, the most important socio-religious event of Western Odisha. The organisation, on the occasion, also felicitated two members of Odisha Legislative Assembly (OLA) for their good performances. With ban on public gatherings, the event was organised through video conferencing.

OLA Speaker Surya Narayan Patro joined the programme as Chief Guest and lighted the lamps.

VISWA ODISA MAHASANGHA HONOURS LAWMAKERS FROM JAJPUR, JEYPORE

Among others who attended the virtual conference included Agriculture and Higher Education Minister Arun Sahoo, Science and Technology Minister Ashok Panda, Bolangir MLA Narasingha Mishra and Debasish Samantray, former MLA of Cuttack (Barabati). Dejaln Mahapatra, member, Mo Pariatvar was also present.

Minister Panda felicitated Pranab Prakash Das and Tara Prasad Bahinipati - MLAs from Jajpur and Jeypore respectively - as Best MLAs

of the year. He also appreciated VOM for organising such a programme to encourage the lawmakers.

Das, while dedicating the honour to the people of the state, said he has reached this stage due to the guidance of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik. On the other hand, Bahinipati appreciated VOM members for recognising the role of the people's representatives and promoting harmony in the society. The guests spoke on the low-key

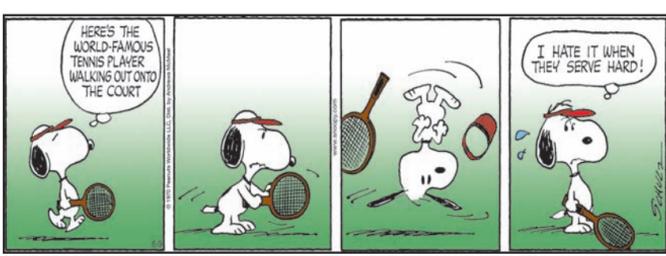
celebration of Ganesh Puja this year and elaborated on the significance of Nuakhai for the farmers and agricultural community.

Manas Patnaik, treasurer, VOM, spoke briefly on the objective of the programme while organisation's president Surendranath Mohapatra moderated the digital event.

Organisation's other members Prakash Ranjan Mallick, Sanjay Mahakud, Ramakrushna Padhi, Rudranarayan Das and Jitendra Panda were also present on the occasion. VOM's social media planner Saumya Swapna Sarit Ratsingh delivered the vote of thanks.



PEANUTS



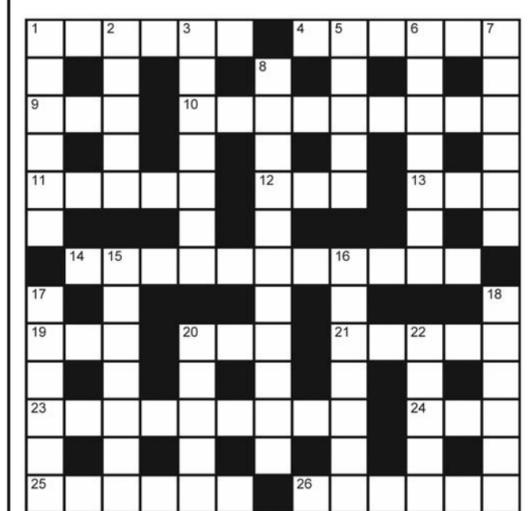
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY

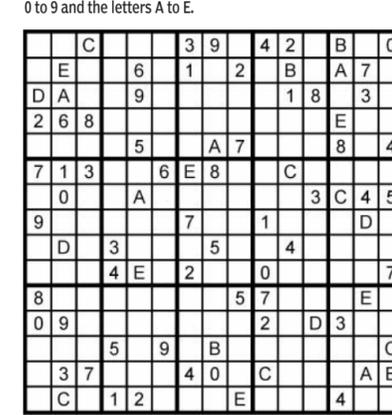


FUN post CROSSWORD

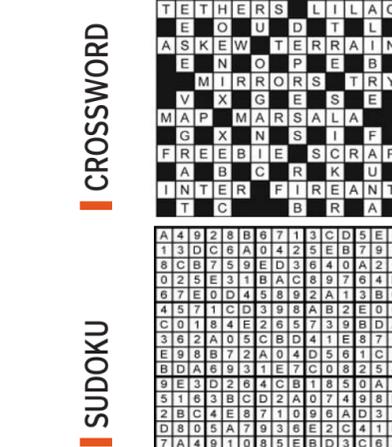


- Across**
- 1 Mexican shawl
 - 4 Cry like a pig
 - 9 Friend, in Paris (4,3)
 - 10 Kind of park
 - 11 Give a leg up
 - 12 Malaysian export
 - 13 Chef's phrase
 - 14 Baccarat variation (6,2,3)
 - 19 Aspiration
 - 20 Behold
 - 21 Type of berth or crust
 - 23 Water pistol (6,3)
 - 24 Knight's title
 - 25 Capital of Saskatchewan
 - 26 Master hand
 - Down**
 - 1 Moth-eaten
 - 2 Safari sight
 - 3 Disembodied spirit
 - 5 Head bee
 - 6 Raise
 - 7 Deadly (7,4)
 - 8 Technology type (7,4)
 - 15 German port city
 - 16 Spring or Fall time
 - 17 Rubicon crosser
 - 18 Plant disease (3-3)
 - 20 Femme fatale
 - 22 Old-hat

SUDOKU



SOLUTIONS

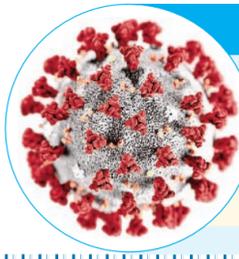


CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



HUNT FOR FOOD

Ducks search for food at a pond in Potapokhari area of Cuttack, Sunday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	2,34,65,552	1,59,88,517	8,10,178
India	30,46,862	22,81,982	56,865
Odisha	78,530	54,406	409

Row over Bagala land continues

BJP, CPM DEMONSTRATE SEPARATELY TO PROTEST THE ALLEGED SALE OF DHARMASHALA LAND



The youth wing of BJP sits in protest, Sunday

POST NEWS NETWORK

Puri, August 23: The row over the alleged sale of Bagala Dharmashala land in the Holy City here refused to die down even though the administration issued a clarification in this regard Saturday.

The youth wing of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Puri district unit of CPI (M) Sunday held separate demonstrations to protest the alleged sale of Bagala Dharmashala land to a few lodging house owners who had been evicted for the construction of a heritage corridor around Srimandir.

BJP Yuva Morcha activists led by their Puri district president Jayanta Dash held a protest meet in front of Bagala Dharmashala. Participating in the meeting, BJP state unit vice-president Pravati Parida criticised the state government and the district administration for selling the shelter house land to lodging house owners.

“Kanheiyalal Bagala, a benevolent person, had set up the dharmashala for providing shelter facility to poor devotees who come to Puri to visit Srimandir. Bagala had donated the dharmashala to the administration. The state government and the district administration have no right to sell the donated property,” Parida said.

She also asked the district administration to cancel its land sale deeds with the lodging house owners. Among others, BJP’s Puri district unit president Ashrit Patnaik and his predecessor Pravanjana Mahapatra were present at the protest meet.

Similarly, CPM activists led by party’s Puri district secretary Sarat Rayguru held a demonstration in front of Bagala Dharmashala and vowed to intensify their agitation over the alleged land sale. “A PIL on Bagala Dharmashala is pending in the High Court. How could the administration sell the dharmashala

Kanheiyalal Bagala, a benevolent person, had set up the dharmashala for providing shelter facility to poor devotees who come to Puri to visit Srimandir. Bagala had donated the dharmashala to the administration. The state government and the district administration have no right to sell the donated property

PRAVATI PARIDA
VICE-PRESIDENT, BJP-ODISHA

A PIL on Bagala Dharmashala is pending in the High Court. How could the administration sell the dharmashala land to private parties? It should immediately cancel its sale deeds with the private parties

SARAT RAYGURU
DISTRICT SECRETARY, CPI(M)- PURI

land to private parties? It should immediately cancel its sale deeds with the private parties,” Rayguru said.

Among others, CPM leaders Jagannath Deo, Purnachandra Muduli, Yamini Mishra and Bibhuti Routray participated in the demonstration.

Meanwhile, Biju Janata Dal (BJD) youth wing leader Subhashis Khuntia urged political parties to cooperate with the state government for its plan to make Puri a heritage city. “The state government is moving ahead with its developmental plan for Puri. Parties should not do politics on the issue. The state government is making all arrangement to provide shelter facilities to poor devotees,” he said.

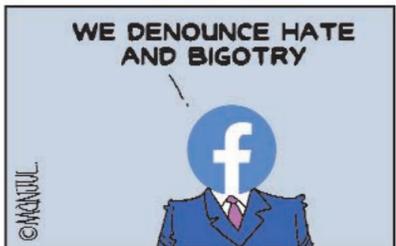
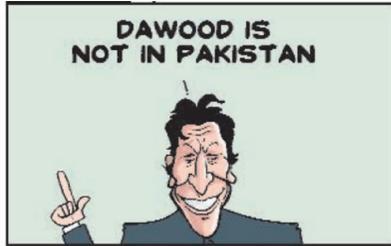
Earlier, the district administration claimed that it had not sold the shelter house land to anyone. In a press statement, the administration Saturday claimed that it has only rehabilitated a few evicted Srimandir servants and other individuals on the dharmashala land for smooth implementation of the heritage corridor project.



Puri district unit of CPI (M) holds demonstration

OP PHOTOS

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



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2. Diploma In Food & Beverage Service	1 1/2 Year	10+2 pass or equivalent	
3. Diploma In Food Production	1 1/2 Year	10+2 pass or equivalent	
4. Diploma In Housekeeping Operation	1 1/2 Year	10+2 pass or equivalent	
5. Craftmanship Certificate Course In Food & Beverage Service	06 Months	10th pass	
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BIDDING ADIEU



People immersing a clay idol of Lord Ganesh in Kuakhai river in Bhubaneswar, Sunday. This year the civic authorities put restrictions on community celebrations of Ganesh Puja due to the Covid-19 pandemic

(PIC: BIKASH NAYAK)

Decision on reduction of syllabi 'by Aug-end'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, August 23: School Education minister Samir Ranjan Dash Sunday said, “Looking at the rapid cases of coronavirus in the state, the government will take the decision of reducing the school syllabus of students for the academic year 2020-21 by August last.”

Dash said that the principal secretary is looking after the expert committee proposals sent by higher secondary committee and by August end they will take the decision. The percentage of the syllabus reduction will be taken looking at the situation, he added.

The schools are closed till August 31 and after that the Centre will take the decision on their reopening. The state government will take the decision after analysing the Centre’s decision.

Earlier in July, considering the loss of classroom teaching time due to COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown, Odisha School and Mass Education department (S&ME) had decided to reduce the syllabus for Class I to XII students with the help and suggestion from SCERT ex-



Representative pic

To reduce the syllabi of Class I to X students, the S&ME dept will take the help of SCERT

To finalise the reduced Class XI to XII syllabi, the dept will take suggestions of Council of Higher Secondary Education

STATE SCHOOLS ARE CLOSED TILL AUGUST 31 AND ANY FURTHER DECISION WILL BE TAKEN DEPENDING UPON CENTRE’S MOVE

pert committee and CHSE officials for the academic year 2020-21.

“To reduce the syllabus of Class I to X students, the SME depart-

ment will take the help of State Council of Educational Research & Training (SCERT) and to finalise the reduced Class XI to XII syllabus, the department will take suggestions of Council of Higher Secondary Education.”

On being asked about the extent of reduction in syllabus, the minister said, “At this point of time, we cannot confirm how much syllabus will be reduced because we are yet to decide on reopening of schools.”

Notably, all schools across Odisha have been closed till August 31 in view of the COVID-19 pandemic. Earlier, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) had eased the syllabus for Class IX to XII by up to 30 per cent amid the COVID-19 outbreak.

Beware of vagrants’ gangs operating in Bhubaneswar

These vagrants used to sell stationary items, toys and balloons at busy traffic junctions or alongside the city roads before the onset of the pandemic

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, August 23: A gang of vagrants roaming across the city have turned to theft due to the economic distress caused by the Covid-induced lockdown, sources said. Many incidents of theft perpetrated by such distressed families have come to fore at different parts of the city recently, sources added.

The accused miscreants used to sell stationary items, toys and balloons at busy traffic junctions or alongside the city roads before the onset of the pandemic. However, they have lost their means of livelihood due to the lockdowns and shutdowns during the past few months.



As a result, they have been roaming across various localities on the pretext of collecting waste products and scraps as rag pickers. Sources explained their modus operandi: the women members and their kids enter the victims’ houses where they find the doors and windows open. They decamp with mobiles, wallets and other valuables from the house. Recently, locals in Nayapalli caught a lady and her children while stealing a mobile phone from a house. They were later handed over to the police. Similarly, Saturday, a gang of such vagrants stole a purse and a mobile phone from the house of one Batshal Mansingh at Bhimtangir in Airfield police limits. These are not some isolated incidents but ubiquitous occurrence in the capital.

Where the admin will place Bapu’s 3D sculpture

CUTTACK DISTRICT HAD MADE A BUDGETARY PROVISION OF RS 32 LAKH FOR THE PROJECT

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, August 23: The district administration is facing criticism from several quarters for its alleged failure to find a suitable place on Kathajodi riverbank here for the installation of a 3D bronze sculpture on Mahatma Gandhi.

The sculpture would be installed on Kathajodi riverbank to commemorate Mahatma Gandhi’s visit to the Silver City in 1921. Gandhiji had addressed a public meeting on Kathajodi riverbank March 23 that year. The district administration had earlier decided to install a 3D bronze sculpture on Gandhiji to observe the centenary of his public meeting on Kathajodi riverbank. It had made a budgetary provision of Rs 32 lakh for the project, sources said.

However, construction of the 20 ft wide and 10 ft high bronze sculpture has been stopped in the mid-way due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Moreover, the administration is facing a tough task to find a suitable place on Kathajodi riverbank to install the sculpture, sources added. It is learnt that the administra-



Construction for the public park underway on Kathajodi riverbank in Cuttack

OP PHOTO

tion had identified a place near Netaji Subhas bridge for installation of the bronze sculpture. However, the place on Kathajodi riverbank has also been selected for the construction of a public park.

“The place near Netaji Subhas bridge was earlier identified for the construction of a public park. Though the administration was quite aware of the park project, it

had selected that particular place for installation of the bronze sculpture on Gandhiji,” said a source.

A few days ago, a 14-member team of the state Culture department had visited the place selected for the installation of the bronze sculpture. A few members of the team reportedly expressed their unhappiness over construction of a public park on the place. Subsequently,

the administration had proposed to identify a new place in the same locality for displaying the 3D art work on Gandhiji, sources said.

“The sculpture was supposed to be installed at the identified place near Netaji Subhas bridge March 23 this year. At present, the construction work for the public park is going on at the place. But, the sculpture project is likely to be de-

layed further due to the prevailing uncertainty over the identification of a suitable place for it,” said a social activist.

However, Culture department deputy director Debanand Baraha ruled out any uncertainty over the sculpture project. “The 3D sculpture on Gandhiji would be installed inside the proposed public park near Netaji Setu. The issue has been resolved,” he said.

THE ADMIN HAD IDENTIFIED A PLACE NEAR NETAJI SUBHAS BRIDGE FOR INSTALLATION OF THE BRONZE SCULPTURE

HOWEVER, THAT PLACE ON KATHAJODI RIVERBANK HAS ALSO BEEN SELECTED FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF A PUBLIC PARK

NOW, THE ADMIN SAYS THAT THE SCULPTURE WOULD BE INSTALLED INSIDE THE PROPOSED PUBLIC PARK NEAR NETAJI SETU

2,993 nCoV cases in one day

ODISHA SEES ITS HIGHEST SINGLE-DAY RECOVERY OF 2,129 COVID-19 CASES, SUNDAY



Numbers vis-à-vis national data

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, August 23: The state Sunday registered its highest single-day spike of 2,993 COVID-19 cases and 10 more deaths due to the infection, an official of Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) department said.

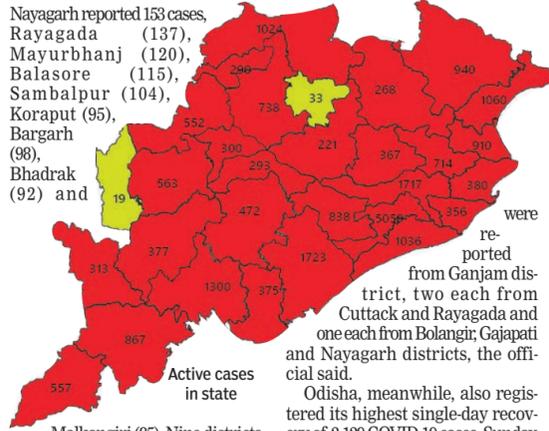
With this, Odisha's COVID-19 death toll has mounted to 409 and the infection tally reached 78,530, added the official.

The official added that 53 other coronavirus patients have also died, but the cause of their deaths has been attributed to some other reasons.

Of the fresh 2,993 cases, 1,879 were reported from different quarantine centres, while the remaining 1,114 were detected during contact tracing exercise.

The state had last reported its highest single-day surge of 2,924 cases August 15.

The fresh cases were reported from all the 30 districts. Khurda district reported the highest 606 cases, followed by Ganjam (271).



Nayagarh reported 153 cases, Rayagada (137), Mayurbhanj (120), Balasore (115), Sambalpur (104), Koraput (95), Bargarh (98), Bhadrak (92) and

were reported from Ganjam district, two each from Cuttack and Rayagada and one each from Bolangir, Gajapati and Nayagarh districts, the official said.

Odisha, meanwhile, also registered its highest single-day recovery of 2,129 COVID-19 cases, Sunday. 317 fresh cases take City's case-load to 7,332.

The COVID-19 tally increased to 7,332 in Bhubaneswar with another 317 positive cases being detected in the city, Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) tweeted.

Of new 317 cases, 206 were quar-

IT WORSENS

With 10 more fatalities, Odisha's COVID death toll mounts to 409

3 of the fresh 10 COVID deaths reported from Ganjam, two each from Cuttack and Rayagada and one each from Bolangir, Gajapati and Nayagarh

Infection tally reaches 78,530

Khurda reports the highest 606 cases

antine cases including one with travel history and 111 are local contact ones. With fresh cases, the number of active cases in the Capital city now stands at 2,901.

Besides, 170 COVID-19 patients recovered from the disease Sunday, taking the total recoveries in Bhubaneswar to 4,389.

The virus has so far claimed 33 lives in Bhubaneswar.

Cuttack's second COVID hospital to start ops soon

The new COVID Hospital, Sadguru, is likely to offer 24 ICU beds and a total of 11 dialysis beds



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, August 23: The second COVID hospital in Cuttack, with a capacity of 150 beds, will soon start functioning, the district administration said Sunday.

In a virtual conference, Cuttack District Collector Bhabani Shankar Chayani said that this would be addition to the Ashwini COVID Hospital in the city. The new COVID Hospital-Sadguru is likely to offer 24 Intensive Care Unit (ICU) beds and a total of 11 dialysis beds.

"This will ensure general beds from 116 to 223. The numbers of ICU will be increased from 34 to 58. Sadguru Hospital is likely to have 11 dialysis facilities and also make avail the gynecology ward. The occupancy of Ashwini COVID Hospital as per latest information stands at 66 per cent," Chayani said.

He also said that the district has a dedicated COVID Health Centre at the 150-bedded GIMSAR which is running at 79 per cent occupancy. The Collector added that there are around eight COVID Care Centres with total bed capacity of 1,230 beds.

"We are trying to increase the number of COVID patients under

home isolation. A total of 542 COVID asymptomatic patients are availing the facility of home isolation in the district," he said.

The official also said that the district administration has been able to conduct a total of 69,217 sample tests by now. Majority of the positive cases are, as per the government data, have been reported from Cuttack city.

"62.18 per cent cases were reported from Cuttack city while 37.82 per cent cases were from rural areas. In the last one week, we have seen 65.77 per cent recovery rate while 33.51 per cent cases are active in the district. The mortality rate in the district now stands at 0.39 per cent," he said.

Chayani said that the government was able to conduct more

testing this week (21,486) compared to last week (17,435). He said that the SCB Medical College has conducted

a total of 1,44,782 sample tests till now from 21 different districts out of which 5,174 (3.6 per cent) samples tested positive.

He said that the district administration has identified 155 villages in rural areas from which it saw COVID cases and increased surveillance in such areas and door to door

campaign was organised accordingly.

"There have also been 168 plasma donations at SCB Medical College and out of this a total of 336 plasma units were prepared. A total of 287 plasma units have also been utilised till now," he concluded.

RAIN AND THE CITY



Vehicles ply on a waterlogged road near the Iskon temple in Bhubaneswar as heavy rain lashed the Capital city, Sunday (PIC: MAUSAM NANDA)

Silver City's 30% active cases in home isolation

THE POSITIVITY RATE IN THE LAST WEEK STANDS AT 5.97 PER CENT

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, August 23: The Cuttack Municipal Corporation (CMC) Sunday said that 30 per cent of the active cases in the city are now under home isolation while majority of the cases are in COVID Care Centres.

CMC Commissioner Ananya Das said that while 30 per cent cases are under home isolation, 64 per cent of them were from the COVID Care Centres while only six per cent of them required hospitalisation and critical care in COVID Hospitals.

Cuttack city saw testing of 26,748 samples while a total of 1,560 tested positive. The positivity rate in the last week stood at 5.97 per cent.

"Up to 60 per cent tests done for COVID 19 are RT-PCR tests. We are trying to increase the testing. We have observed that the maximum cases of patients of COVID-19 are from the working group between 21 to 40 years. Out of the total 953 cases detected this week, 442 were from this group," Das said.

Das also said that mortality is often reported from the elderly



Active surveillance is underway at New Nimba Sahi in Chauliaganj, Cuttack. The CMC is regularly conducting testing camps at Malgodown and Chhatra Bazar areas which are other risk areas. The third risk areas are said to be the densely populated slums and sahi areas

group. "I request people to keep the elderly under isolation and away from the middle aged family members," Das said. The official said that a total of nine Urban Public Health Centres (UPHC) and Community Health Centres (CHC) are conducting antigen tests for symptomatic persons while RT-PCR tests are done at two hospi-

tals in the city.

"Our risk analysis of the positive reports concluded that the highest risk groups against COVID-19 were the healthcare workers. We are trying to comply with all norms and protocols at healthcare institutions. We are emphasising on testing of symptomatic patients," she said. The official also said that the

We are trying to increase the testing. We've observed that the maximum cases of COVID-19 are from the working group between 21 to 40 years. Of the total 953 cases detected this week, 442 were from this group

ANANYA DAS | CMC COMMISSIONER

CMC is regularly conducting testing camps at Malgodown and Chhatra Bazar areas which are other risk areas. The third risk areas, she claimed were the densely populated slums and sahi areas.

"We are roping in the Mobile Testing Units, testing at Primary Health Centres to screen the vulnerable population in a better way. We are also regularly conducting testing of elderly and pregnant women," she concluded.

PPE kits being dumped in open in Cuttack city

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, August 23: Although norms mandate proper disposal of biomedical waste, a few discarded Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) kits were found to have been dumped on the road near Satichoura dump yard here. This has sent shivers down the spine of the locals as they fear spread of COVID-19.

The localities under Cuttack Municipal Corporation (CMC) have reported more than 3,000 cases of novel coronavirus and 14 fatalities. In a bid to curb spread of the virus, the district administration, along with the civic body, has undertaken a slew of measures like door-to-door sanitisation and maintenance of hygiene on a regular basis.

However, a few vehicles engaged by the CMC in ferrying trash to Satichoura dump yard were seen dumping garbage containing dis-

carded PPE kits on road near the dump yard in the wee hours of Sunday.

"Frontline doctors and support staff of healthcare facilities are using PPE kits to minimise the risk of contracting the infection. Although guidelines mandate proper disposal of biomedical waste including PPE kits in colour coded bags, the trash-carrying vehicles dumping those in open shows how careful the administration is," said a local of Satichoura area, pointing out that many rag pickers can get infected by it.

Asked, CMC deputy commissioner Sanjeebata Ray said many agencies have been roped in to ensure proper disposal of PPE kits from several COVID hospitals and COVID Care Centres.

"They were ensuring proper disposal of the discarded PPE kits. PPE kits were not being dumped in the open," Ray said brushing aside the allegation.

State launches scheme on bio-floc fish farming

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, August 23: Fisheries and Animal Resources Department, Government of Odisha, has brought out a new scheme for promoting aquaculture through bio-floc technology. This is an advanced fish farming technology introduced in the state to provide livelihood support to entrepreneurs, unemployed youth and interested progressive fish farmers of the state, aimed at increasing fish productivity and make the state self-sufficient in fish production, officials said.

Introducing the scheme, the state government provides a subsidy of 40 per cent while 60 per cent subsidy is provided to SC& ST beneficiaries.

Bio-floc based farming system is a new technology for promotion of intensive fish or shrimp production in a limited area without significantly increasing the usage of the basic natural resources of water and land. A person having small land holding, as small as 150-200 square meter of land, and having either municipal piped water sup-



Representative pic

40% subsidy in general 60% subsidy to SC& ST beneficiaries

ply or bore well water supply can establish business with small investment, they added. This programme aims to support fish farmers and young entrepreneurs for generation of income and livelihood support, added another official.

Bio-floc system is suitable for growing freshwater fish species such as GIFT Tilapia, Magur, Pangasius, Anabas and Common

Carp among others depending on local market demands. In bio-floc technology, the waste organic matter in the tank such as feed waste, are digested using pro biotics (helpful bacteria) and carbon source such as molasses and gets converted to fish feed.

In normal pond based farming system, one acre of earthen tank (4,000 square meter area) produces

ECONOMICAL & INNOVATIVE

The technology aims to promote intensive fish or shrimp production in a limited area without significantly increasing the usage of the basic natural resources of water and land. A person having small land holding, even as small as 150-200 square meter of land, and having either municipal piped water supply or bore well water supply can establish business. Each bio-floc tank is stocked with about 1,000-1500 numbers of quality fish fry (2-3 cm) or fingerlings (8-10 cm) with a target of 500 kg fish production over six months period

about 2,000 kg of fish in six months; while in bio-floc fish farming system, the two same 2,000 kg fish can be produced only from four small tanks of each four meter diameter and 1.2 meter depth installed in a floor area of about 100-150 square

meter. Each bio-floc tank is stocked with about 1,000-1500 numbers of quality fish fry (2-3 cm) or fingerlings (8-10 cm) with a target of 500 kg fish production over six months period. Fish grows to about 200 grams within three months and 700-800 grams within six months. Therefore, depending on the local market demand, fish can be partially harvested on daily basis to generate daily income for farmers.

Bio-floc farming system is also suitable for urban and semi-urban areas. It can be set up even on terraces building terrace and backyard. It offers live or fresh fish to surrounding customers thus fetching higher market prices for the producer. The unit cost for installation of a bio-floc unit of two tanks is Rs 1.50 lakh, while a unit of six tanks costs approximately Rs.4.00 lakh, officials informed.

Introducing the scheme, the state government provides a subsidy of 40 per cent while 60 per cent subsidy is provided to SC& ST beneficiaries.

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Fertilizer crunch takes toll on farming in Bolangir

POLICE ACTION TRIGGERS TENSION IN HINJILICUT

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bolangir, August 23: The farming community is already battered by the Covid-induced restrictions and erratic monsoon. At this time, short supply and black marketing of fertilizer have added to their woes when the farming season is at its peak in Bolangir district. This is in sharp contrast to the state and the central governments' stress on farming to tide over the after-effects of the pandemic.

The government laid stress on extending cooperation in supply of seeds, pesticides, fertilizers and agriculture implements. But the ground reality in the district is the reverse.

Like previous years, farmers in many parts of the district have been facing difficulties in availing fertilizers amid allegation of black marketing.

At this time, paddy farmers badly require urea and other fertilizers for growth of plants. "Urea is not available with the dealers and the primary agricultural co-operative societies (PACS) in the district. Wholesalers and dealers are deliberately creating artificial shortage of fertilizers," a farmer alleged.

All such illegality is going on in the knowledge of the administration and officials of the agriculture department, farmers lamented.

They pointed out that black marketers are ruling the roost in the district where only three percent of the land is said to be irrigated.

AGRI-WOES

■ The ground reality in Bolangir district is just the opposite when the government lays stress on extending cooperation in supply of seeds, pesticides, fertilizers and agriculture implements

■ The farmers said the government has made a provision to supply fertilizers at subsidized rates through the agriculture department and the cooperative societies, but this has become a farce

■ The district agriculture officer has failed to contain the black marketing. The Collector and the Sub-collector should take immediate action against the illegal hoarders, lamented MLA Narasingha Mishra



The farmers said the government has made a provision to supply fertilizers at subsidized rates through the agriculture department and the cooperative societies, but this has become a farce.

"As farmers fail to get fertilizers at PACSs, they have to buy from traders at prices much higher than Rs 266.50 per packet (government rate)," the farmers said. Zilla Krushak Sangh and farmers have submitted a memorandum to the

Chief Minister about black marketing and short supply of urea.

"The district agriculture officer has failed to contain the black marketing. The Collector and the Sub-collector should take immediate action against the illegal hoarders," lamented MLA Narasingha Mishra.

It was learnt that this year, the district requires 22,300 tonnes of urea, but by July 13, the district was supplied with 19,654 tonnes of fertilizers. Radhakant Pradhan, a farmer

of Uparjhar, had talked to the district agriculture officer in this regard a few days ago.

District agriculture officer Ashok Kumar Mohanty said, "Following the allegation, I had visited Titilagarh, Saintala and Kantabanji areas and took stock of the black marketing of urea. But urea is well stocked in those areas. 158 PACSs in the district have short supply of fertilizers. The shortage will be plugged in a few days."

POST NEWS NETWORK

Hinjilicut, August 23: Tension ran high near Hinjili police station in Ganjam district after police lathi-charged residents of Kolidaspur village who were staging a demonstration outside the police station, Sunday.

The agitators had gheraoed the police station demanding the release of five persons who were detained by the police for allegedly torching vehicles engaged in illegal sand mining and transport in the area.

The irate locals of Kolidaspur had torched seven vehicles, including three trucks, a tractor, two bikes and a JCB earthmover Friday.

A villager Sanjay Polai was critically injured during the incident. Rama Krushna Barad of Sikiri village had lodged a complaint against 10 persons of Kolidaspur for the attack on Polai and torching of the vehicles.

It is alleged that the vehicles were used in illegal transport of sand from Rushikulya riverbed. Police swung into action and picked five persons from Kolidaspur and detained them in the police station Saturday.

The vandalism was the outcome of the people's anguish over the inaction of the administration against the illegal activity, sources said.

The police action sparked ten-



sion among the locals following which hundreds of villagers gheraoed the Hinjili police station demanding immediate release of the detainees.

According to the villagers, though the vehicles were set on fire by unidentified miscreants, police under the pressure of some influential persons of the area arrested the five innocent villagers.

The villagers further alleged that though they have been complaining to the local administration about the illegal sand mining in the area for years, the administration is not taking any steps to stop the illegal activity.

Aska SDPO Suryamani Pradhan, Patapur IIC Ajay Barik, Aska IIC Prasant Kumar Sahu and Sheragad IIC Ramesh Chandra Das rushed to the spot with armed police and tried to placate the agitating villagers. However, they insisted on their de-

mand and refused to listen.

Police tried to disperse the agitators and drove them till Biju Square in the area. Protesting the alleged police excesses, the villagers squatted on the road and staged a dharna.

Later, Hinjili BDO Prasanna Kumar Patra and SDPO Pradhan tried to diffuse tension by holding talks with a delegation of the villagers in the police station.

However, talks failed after villagers insisted on unconditional release of the five detainees. As tension mounted, the police started lathi-charge following which many villagers fled from the spot.

Sensing further trouble, the administration again held talks with Zilla Parishad member (zone no-35) P Narayan Rao and others and handed over the five detainees to Rao. Tension was palpable in the area when reports last came in.

40 Dalit families ostracised

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dhenkanal, August 23: Around 40 Dalit families were subjected to social boycott for over a fortnight after a 15-year-old girl plucked flowers from the garden of an upper-caste man in Dhenkanal district, officials said Sunday.

Their ordeal ended following the intervention of police and administration, a police officer said.

The incident took place in Kantio Kateni village in Tumusinga police station area, he said.

"The two groups were at loggerheads for a long time due to an old rivalry and it snowballed into a major controversy after the girl plucked flowers from the garden of an upper-caste man," Tumusinga police station inspector in-charge AK Dungdung said.

The Dalit families were then subjected to social boycott. They were denied ration from a local shop and barred from attending social events, he said.



Steps were taken to resolve the issue after representatives of the Dalit families approached the police and the district administration a few days ago, sub-collector of Kamakhyanagar sub-division, BP Acharya, said.

They also submitted memoranda to the administration and the police, he said.

The village comprises over 700 families, of which 40 belong to the Scheduled Caste Naik community, the official said.

The girl's father claimed that the Dalit representatives had also tendered an apology following the incident but still they were sub-

jected to the social boycott, he said.

Sarpanch Pranabandhu Das admitted that the villagers were asked not to communicate with the Dalit families but claimed that the restrictions were limited to only that.

He said the matter between the two groups was bound to be resolved in due course of time, adding that members of the majority community did not intend to 'invite trouble' keeping in mind the provisions of the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act.

Acharya said a peace meeting was held between the two groups in the village in the presence of senior district administration and police officials Friday and the issue was resolved.

Both groups arrived at a compromise forgetting the bitterness of the past and normalcy has been restored in the village, he said.

Dungdung said police did not file an FIR over the issue as both sides wanted to arrive at a compromise and sort out the matter.

NUAKHAI FEST



As celebrations of Nuakhai festival in western Odisha kick off, priests are on their way to offer 'nabanna'(new rice) to deities at Samaleswari temple in Sambalpur, Sunday

Missing man's body found in jungle

POST NEWS NETWORK

Patna, August 23: Police recovered the body of a 45-year-old man from Karanjapada reserve forest by the side of Kapundi-Tendera road under Patna police limits in Keonjhar district Sunday morning.

The deceased was identified as Govind Poida, a resident of Nuagaon in Tendera panchayat.



Family members alleged that miscreants might have killed him and dumped his body in the jungle. They demanded an investigation with the help of a forensic team

ITI, Berhampur files for three patents

POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, August 23: The Industrial Training Institute (ITI) in Berhampur has registered three of its innovative products developed to fight Covid-19 in the patent journal, a press release of the Union Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship said.

The sanction has been given to UVC Robo Warrior, UVC shoe sole sanitiser and mobile sample collection kiosk.

The DG of Empowerment and Training twitted this. The filing of the patent rights has also been included in the Atmanirbhar Bharat scheme of the Centre. This will give priority right to the institute over invention.

Notably, this ITI manufactured face shield, mobile sample collection kiosk, UVC shoe sole sanitiser, and UVC Robo Warrior received recognition from the Centre.

Wanted Maoist lays down arms

POST NEWS NETWORK

Malkangiri, August 23: A Maoist, carrying a cash reward of Rs 2 lakh on his head and allegedly involved in several incidents of violence, surrendered before the police in Malkangiri district, Sunday, Superintendent of Police Rishikesh Khilari said.

Madkami told the police that he decided to give up the path of violence as he was disillusioned by the Maoist leaders

The ultra did this with a desire to return to the mainstream, Khilari added.

Mahadev Madkami, a resident of Kankerapra in Dantewada district of Chhattisgarh, was a member of the Darvha division of the banned



CPI(Maoist). He was active mostly in Malkangiri and nearby areas.

Madkami told the police that he decided to give up the path of violence as he was disillusioned by the Maoist leaders.

Madkami saw various developmental activities being undertaken by the government in this area and

realised the futility of the violent path of Naxalism before deciding to join the mainstream of the society, Khilari said.

Madkami will be provided monetary assistance as per the Surrender and Rehabilitation Scheme of the Odisha government, the SP added.

Man hacks elder brother to death

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kaniha, August 23: A man hacked his elder brother to death with an axe over a family feud at Shipur village under Samal police limits in Angul district Sunday, police said.

The deceased was identified as Ranjan Barik, elder brother of the accused Niranjan Barik.

According to locals, the two brothers had a fight over some family issue. Niranjan and Ranjan had a duel Saturday 11:30 pm. Later, Niranjan lost his cool and planned to kill his elder brother. While Ranjan was sleeping after the fight, Niranjan attacked him with an axe at about 1:00am.

Ranjan died on the spot due to excessive bleeding.

After committing the crime

TRAGIC INCIDENT



Niranjan walked to the local police station and surrendered, police said.

After arresting Niranjan, a police team reached the village and recovered the body. The body was later sent for post-mortem to the district headquarters hospital.

A case was registered and the body was handed over to the family members after post-mortem.

Two killed as truck hits van

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sundargarh, August 23: Two persons, including a woman, were killed and two others sustained critical injuries after a truck hit a van in which the victims were travelling near Sukha Bandha under Lahunipada police limits in Sundargarh district in the wee hours of Sunday.

The deceased were identified as Hemelata Patra and Narottam Patra, a minor, of Lasmi village.

Sources said the victims were going to a hospital as one of them had consumed poison. Suddenly, a truck hit the van from the rear. The woman who consumed poison and the minor boy died on the spot. The driver of the ambulance and another family member sustained critical injuries.

After rescuing the injured, the



locals admitted them to Lahunipada Hospital. However, doctors in the hospital referred the injured duo to Ispat General Hospital (IGH) in Rourkela as their condition deteriorated.

Police recovered the bodies and sent them for post-mortem. Police also seized the truck from the scene of the accident while the truck driver is absconding.

Jumbos look for 'corridor' to return to their habitat

POST NEWS NETWORK

Dhenkanal, August 23: In an unprecedented development in Dhenkanal district, 39 elephants are now unable to return to their wild habitat.

The absence of elephant corridors, a swollen river Brahmani and a flooded Rengali south canal have hindered their way back to forests.

Notably, these jumbos of Parjang forest range had entered nearby human settlements in Rasasingh area under Jharagadia outpost in Sadar police limits a few days back after crossing Brahmani.

According to reports, the pachyderms have divided themselves into two groups and are wandering here and there. Local villagers remain in panic as the herd of elephants had rampaged farmlands at Rasasingh



village after crossing national highway (NH-55) two days ago. This had wreaked havoc among residents of nearby riverside villages. The elephants were seen returning back to Matharagadi reserve forest Saturday

In two separate herds, the pachyderms again went to Rasasingh area to feed on palm fruits.

Even as 21 elephants were seen wandering near Brahmani, 18 others have been trying to move out

AILING JUMBO CALF RESCUED

Baripada: Forest officials rescued an ailing elephant calf in Bhalapada forest under Rasgobindapur range in Mayurbhanj district Sunday. It is aged about two years. A team of officials comprising DFO Shyam Mallick, honorary wildlife warden Bhanupittra Acharya, the ranger and a wildlife doctor provided treatment to the calf and shifted it to a safe place. The DFO said that if necessary, the calf will be provided with further medical care. For the last few days, a herd of elephants was seen moving in Rasgobindapur. The herd had left behind the sick elephant calf.



from Matharagadi reserve forest. Gadashila section forester Rabinarayan Nayak said, "One herd is wandering in the nearby area of

Brahmani and the other herd is looking for a way out to forest, after the groups split. We are watchful of their movements."

FOCUS EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

A BLAST & A GAS BONANZA



Who knows, an oil and gas rich Israel may in the future be nice to a people it has been particularly nasty with: the Palestinians. The credit for affecting a change of heart will go to a Gulf Cooperation Council country which will, to that extent, have helped weaken the Iran-Nasrallah ticket in the region

Rothschild and all others in this club leap out of the documents. The gas bonanza is in the territorial water of Israel, Syria, Lebanon and Cyprus. Note, therefore, the energy in Tayyip Erdogan's swagger, his eye keenly settled on northern Cyprus, under Turkey's occupation and stretching the gas fields to Adana.

Meanwhile, the London-based World Energy Council has for quite some time been researching the 250 billion barrels of oil from the Shfela basin south of Jerusalem and extending into the sea. The Wall Street Journal has quoted Howard Jonas, CEO of US based IDT Corporation, which owns Shfela basin that, "there is much more oil under Israel than under Saudi Arabia."

While British Petroleum is busy in Egypt, the French giant, Total is in Beirut. Little wonder Macron was navigated expertly across the port area devastated by the blast. In addition to the hydrocarbons, there is now the possibility of re-designing the entire Beirut port, not just for trade and transport but for gas explorations on the horizon.

Russia, Iran, Qatar, in that order, have the world's largest reserves of gas. This formidable line-up now has, in its opposition, a team with rich prospects in oil and gas. This latter group is what the UAE's Zayed has joined. It will please Trump before the election. Former Saudi Ambassador, Bandar bin Sultan, was so identified with Bush as to acquire a nickname, Bandar Bush. The UAE's powerful ambassador Yousef al Otaiba, in Washington since 2008, is by comparison more nimble. Should Joe Biden win, Otaiba will be well plugged in there too.

Who knows, an oil and gas rich Israel may in the future be nice to a people it has been particularly nasty with: the Palestinians. The credit for affecting a change of heart will go to a GCC country which will, to that extent, have helped weaken the Iran-Nasrallah ticket in the region.

The writer is a senior commentator on political and diplomatic issues.

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The mother of all blasts at the Beirut port August 4 would have qualified as the West Asian 9/11 though the objective circumstances are totally different. But 9/11, the great tragedy though it was, happened just when a muscular US, victorious in the Cold War, was spurred on by the neo-cons towards a goal of comprehensive global dominance. Osama bin Laden became the rabbit in that greyhound race. The hounds are still parked in their Afghan kennel.

The Beirut blast happened when the US is a shadow of what it was two decades ago, President Donald Trump is shuffling his feet in the ring but has no punch, Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is dancing around a minefield of corruption charges. French President Emmanuel Macron, facing massive popular protests, looked pathetic turning up in Beirut barely two days after the event, walking around the port area with the authority of old Masters.

The French are prone to wear their colonialism on their sleeve. In 1992-94, when Left Liberals in Paris were writhing in pain at Europe's indifference towards the Bosnian carnage, a brief exchange with a senior French official has remained with me: "The balance of power shifted against the Christians in Lebanon; it is shifting against the Muslims in Bosnia." The restoration of that balance may have crossed Macron's mind, after surveying the scene. Macron was forthright: "What is now needed is political change; the explosion should be the start of a new era."

The most respected of journalists in Beirut, Robert Fisk has, after talking to many witnesses, distributed damages in appropriate proportion. The sea took 70 per cent of the blast. That's a revealing figure. In other words only 30 per cent of the blast killed 300 people, left 6,000 injured, and 3,00,000 homeless in a population of a million.

According to the distinguished Palestinian columnist, once a regular on BBC discussions, Abdel Bari Atwan, "the angry demonstrations and protests in Beirut and the hanging of an effigy of the Hezbollah leader, Hasan

Nasrallah, are telling: it is Nasrallah's head they want."

How does an opponent like Israel go for Nasrallah's jugular, protected as he is by a cavernous security system? Well, in sheer desperation, the war cry could well be: to block that leak let's sink the ship. This is not the yearning of deranged enemies: this is the headline of an article made available by Carnegie, Middle East Centre - the headline itself is the story: Destroying Lebanon to Save It.

It remains a whodunit. Whichever direction the needle of suspicion goes, yields a conspiracy theory. The blast would provoke Hezbollah-Iran into action which would help Trump's dwindling fortunes. The absurdity of this thesis is exposed by the UAE's Mohammad bin Zayed turning up in Washington to embrace Netanyahu. If there were to be a 'retaliation' to the port blasts, his magnificent towers would be the first in line of fire. So, no one is likely to rush into battle until all of Trump's beneficiaries are cent per cent sure that he is losing.

What is all this adding up to? So far all the major post 9/11 US military engagements in West Asia

have been in theatres endowed with hydrocarbons or gas pipelines. It is generally forgotten that US involvement even in Afghanistan, after Soviet departure, was to push for TAPI, the Turkmenistan-Afghan-Pakistan-India gas pipeline. The Taliban would control Afghanistan; Americans would control the Taliban. This reporter was witness to the collapse of that scheme on which more later. Osama bin Laden provided the US with a reason for entering Afghanistan. But Iraq, Syria, Libya, even Sudan (remember how George W. Bush pronounced Janjaweed in Darfur with expert ease) attracted Americans for their oil, gas and pipelines.

How does Beirut fit into this framework? That Nasrallah's mesmeric hold on the region's non GCC Muslims, his unquantifiable arsenal of missiles, his reliable support structure in Iran gives Israel nightmares, is the narrative being sold. But there has to be something more compelling in the mix. Global energy giants are focused on the world's biggest reserves of gas in the Eastern Mediterranean. Names like Dick Cheney, Rupert Murdoch,



Saeed Naqvi

GLOBAL ENERGY GIANTS ARE FOCUSED ON THE WORLD'S BIGGEST RESERVES OF GAS IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

SPECTRUM ECONOMY

Needed: A two-minute noodle solution

The Indian economy is on life-saving policies such as incentives, special packages and lending. Even the daily wage workers and small farmers are being considered to be brought under bank-funded credit schemes. RBI hints at severe inflation risk and the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) shrinks by 36 per cent in the first quarter, 16.6 per cent in June alone.

In May, World Bank had said that the economy was to contract by 3.2 per cent in 2020-21. Now it says the contraction would be steeper and fiscal deficit to rise to 6.6 per cent. Consumer durables, electronics, fashion and lifestyle are amid steep demand slump. Apparel vendors see about 30 per cent fall in orders. In some other items the demand crash by about 50 per cent.

The Modi government needs to take bold steps to open up the economy to the village weekly local market level. The economy has never been at such a nadir since World War II. The shutdown has crippled the economy. The export market is dull as destinations are either in lockdown or in abysmal economic situation with their own demands plummeting.

Though the government is working on various strategies, most plans are time-consuming. The nation is in need for immediate relief at the grassroots level. Depressing income of farmers, small businesses, white collar and tiny workers hits hard and if nothing else the government needs to find out a two-minute noodle solution.

The divestment in BPL and the privatisation of Air India have been stalled due to the pandemic. The divest plans in 18 strategic sectors are being reworked. It seems the government is caught in a dilemma. On the one hand, we are banning imports of over 100 defence items to boost indigenous production and on the other the sickness of the Steel Authority of India and various other public sector units is causing concern. And then banning Chinese apps is a good move but indigenous manufacturing is yet to pick up.

Concern is being expressed over the apathy to revive Indian Railways and instead steam ahead with "privatisation" of prime trains, which in all likelihood shall add to its woes. The higher recovery rate in Covid-19, in some areas up to 90 per cent or more, calls for re-

sumption of public transport, railways, metro, tourism and hotel industry employing about 10 crore people. Similarly, normal air traffic too needs to be restored. Local passenger air traffic in July fell by 82.3 per cent in the year, which is neither good for airlines nor the people and strained finances can risk safety of aircraft as well!

The fear of the pandemic should not lead to creating a non-productive nation. The government has a bit of anxiety but it would have people's support if normality is actively considered and restored. According to filings of 40 leading BSE 100 companies' results till June 2020, every sector is under severe stress. It has hit aviation to automobiles, capital goods, consumer items including alcoholic beverages. The deepest impact is seen on non-essential manufacturing and services. Even the education sector is hit. Many have reduced aggregate employee expenditures - United Spirits 12.7 per cent; Bajaj Finserv 14.8 per cent; Suzuki India 15 per cent; HDFCLife 21 per cent; Tata Motors 26 per cent; Havells India 27 per cent and Mahindra 36.7 per cent. In urban India, hi-tech firms of

Bangalore have sacked, reduced wages or not paid salaries for the past many months. The rural sector is equally hit. Despite direct benefit transfers, cash is in short supply and rural workers are without jobs. Distressed people are hit by rising retail inflation, which shot to 6 per cent in April and almost 7 (6.93) per cent in July against 3.15 per cent last year. The CPI data in June was 6.23 per cent due to rising food, personal care and transportation costs owing to high fuel prices.

The National Statistical Office notes 9.62 per cent inflation in vegetables, pulses, spices, meat, fish, fruits and other food items. In June, the food inflation was 8.72 per cent. Higher inflation is due to supply side disruptions. It is abetted by higher transportation costs. Disruptions in economic activities and localised lockdown have affected free movement of goods.

Modi must intervene to correct this anomaly. If people pay high taxes, they are forced to compromise on their demands. Modi has done well in ensuring transparent tax environment. Exempting interest accrual from I-T would go a long way in fast revival of the economy as well as the banking sector.

INF A

Shivaji Sarkar

EXEMPTING INTEREST ACCRUAL FROM I-T WOULD GO A LONG WAY IN FAST REVIVAL OF THE ECONOMY AS WELL AS THE BANKING SECTOR

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Don't seek, don't search, don't ask, don't knock, don't demand - relax. If you relax it comes, if you relax it is there. If you relax, you start vibrating with it. OSHO
Success needs action. Action needs initiative. ARTHASASHTRA

LOL
The scientist and philosopher are being chased by a hungry lion. The scientist makes some quick calculations and says, "It's no good trying to outrun it. It's catching up!"
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WISDOM CORNER<

ISIS PLAN FOILED

LONE WOLF'S DEN BUSTED

AGENCIES
New Delhi/Lucknow, August 23: The Delhi Police has recovered a large quantity of explosives and an ISIS flag from the house of Mohammad Mustakim Khan in Uttar Pradesh's Balrampur two days after he was arrested in the national capital, officials said Sunday.

trics wires were coming out from it," Deputy Commissioner of Police (Special Cell) P S Kushwah said in Delhi.

Police Sunday conducted raids at several places. Two bicycle shop owners were among those questioned in Uttar Pradesh, possibly over the origin of the ball bearings found by police.

"One ISIS flag, one leather belt containing around three kilogram explosives, eight to nine kilogram explosives in four different polythenes, three cylindrical metal boxes containing explosives and electric wires wrapped with transparent tape and two cylindrical metal boxes in which ball bearings were pasted were recovered from his



KHAN, 36, PLANNED TO STRIKE IN THE NATIONAL CAPITAL AUGUST 15, BUT COULD NOT DO SO DUE TO HEAVY SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS

SECURITY WAS STEPPED UP IN THE NATIONAL CAPITAL AND NEIGHBOURING UTTAR PRADESH FOLLOWING THE ARREST

KHAN WAS FIRST HANDLED BY YUSUF-AL HINDI, ISIS CHIEF OF INDIA OPERATIONS, WHO WAS KILLED IN SYRIA IN 2017

An alleged ISIS operative, Khan, armed with two pressure cooker IEDs, was arrested in central Delhi's Ridge Road area Friday night following a brief exchange of fire.

A Delhi Police Special Cell team took him to his Badhiyaa Bhausaahi village in Balrampur district.

A brown jacket containing three explosive packets and a blue-check jacket containing four explosive packets were recovered from his house, a senior Delhi Police officer said.

"Each explosives packet, removed from the jackets, was wrapped with transparent tape which contained explosives and cardboard sheet pasted with ball bearings, and elec-

Khan's father Kafeel Ahmed and wife Ayesha were also questioned, an official said.

Ayesha told a television channel that she had told Khan not to indulge in "wrong activities" but he did not listen to her. She appeared to be referring to activities that indicated he was being radicalised.

Ahmed said people knew his son as a good, polite person and never imagined that he would take the path of terrorism. He claimed he had never gone into his son's room where the explosives were found.

Mustakim Khan had planned to carry out a "lone wolf" strike at a heavy footfall area in the national capital, police said.

house," the DCP said.

Other material recovered from his house included: "One wooden broken box (for target practice), 30 ball bearings of different diameters, one packet containing 12 small boxes of ball bearings, three lithium batteries - two of 4V and one of 9V, two cylindrical metal boxes, one ampere meter, yellow colour."

Security was stepped up in the national capital and neighbouring Uttar Pradesh following the arrest.

Khan, 36, planned to strike in the national capital August 15, but could not do so due to heavy security arrangements, police said.

He had been under the watch of security agencies for the last year.

GREAT DAY TO RIDE



Youngsters pose with their bicycles at Raisina Hills, during Unlock 3.0, in New Delhi, Sunday

'1 district, 1 product' to benefit farmers

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, August 23: The Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare has announced that it will implement 'One District, One Product' (ODOP) scheme for the farmers, for which 45 districts of Uttar Pradesh have been included. The successful implementation of the scheme is expected to benefit lakhs of the farmers of the state.

Agricultural products will be selected on the basis of agro-climatic zone, product quality, taste, aroma, nutritional and medicinal properties, and export potential. Farmers of the respective districts have been recommended about growing specific crops.

Additional Chief Secretary for



Small, Micro and Medium Industries, Navneet Sehgal, said, "Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath is working for the betterment of the farmers. The products of many districts included in the ODOP scheme are related to farming only. With the help of the Centre, we will implement the scheme in a better way."

The prospects for the farmers cultivating green chillies in Varanasi, the constituency of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and for those who are producing black salt in Gorakhpur, the home district of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, will also improve.

The CM had announced the ODOP scheme in January 2018. Products like 'Kalanamak rice' of Siddharthanagar, banana fibre of Kushinagar; banana of Kaushambi, jaggery of Ayodhya, aamla of Pratapgarh, pulses of Balrampur and Gonda, desi ghee of Auraiya, handicraft made of wheat stalk in Bahraich, wooden toys of Chitrakoot, wooden artifacts of Saharanpur, Basti, Bijnor, Rae Bareilly etc. are included in the ODOP scheme.

Jeweller fakes robbery to escape paying EMIs

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, August 23: In a scene straight out of Bollywood, a jeweller in central Delhi's Chandni Mahal conspired with two of his associates to fake a robbery at his own shop as one of them donned a burqa and brandished a dummy pistol. All three have been arrested.

According to police, the jeweller named Abhijit Samanta also arranged fake jewellery in an attempt to get the insurance money and dodge the police.

The police received a call Friday that a woman had robbed 2.6 kg of gold after making the caller unconscious. The police reached the spot at Gali Jatwara, Chandni Mahal and recorded the statements of the complainant. The complainant supplied prepared gold jewellery to other jewellers.

"He stated that at about 8:35 PM he collected a payment of ₹50,000 from a jeweller and came to his office. As he entered his office a 'woman' in a burqa also came inside and put a gun to his head. He claimed the 'woman' slapped him and also snatched ₹50,000 and keys of the locker from him. She then forced him to open the locker and tied his hands, legs and stuffed his mouth with cloth and took away all the gold jewellery kept in three plastic boxes weighing about 1.6 kg and a 1 kg gold bar from the locker," said DCP (Central) Sanjay Bhatia.

Accordingly a case at Chandni Mahal police station was registered. However, soon the police found several discrepancies in his statement.

"During the investigation, the CCTV footage of three hours from

CAREFUL PLANNING

- The jeweller named Abhijit Samanta also arranged fake jewellery in an attempt to dodge the police
- During the investigation, the CCTV footage of three hours from three different cameras were analysed
- It was noticed that the entry of the alleged woman was friendly and behaviour of the complainant was also suspicious

three different cameras were analysed and it was noticed that the entry of the alleged woman was friendly and behaviour of the complainant was also suspicious during the commission of the alleged crime," Bhatia said.

Samanta broke down after a six-hour prolonged interrogation and admitted that he had hatched the whole conspiracy along with co-accused Farhan, a resident of Darya Ganj and Munna, a resident of Narela.

The accused Samanta in order to get his loan amount waived, which he had availed from three different banks against the gold stock, hatched the conspiracy of a fake robbery of gold jewellery from his own office.

Samanta arranged the artificial gold bar and jewellery, co-accused Farhan arranged the toy gun and burqa and the other co-accused Munna executed the alleged robbery wearing the burqa.



'Who is Chetan?' asked docs

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, August 23: Samajwadi Party MLC, Sunil Kumar Sajjan, has alleged that UP minister and former cricketer Chetan Chauhan, who succumbed to Covid-19 in a Gurugram hospital, died due to carelessness in his treatment earlier at the state-run Sanjay Gandhi Post Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences (SGPGIMS) here.

Sajjan raised the issue in the UP Vidhan Parishad Saturday and his recorded speech has been put on the social media.

The upper house member, who was also admitted to SGPGIMS with corona at the same time as Chetan Chauhan, said in the house, "Once during a round, a doctor and a nurse asked 'Who is Chetan?', to which the minister raised his hand since he was a simple person.

He was asked as to when he got infected with the virus, to which he explained the entire matter to the hospital staff. At that time, another personnel asked Chauhan what do you do, to which he said he is a minister in the Yogi Adityanath government."

"When I could not control my anger, I told the doctor that Chauhan had played cricket for India, to



While comparing UP's preparations for Covid-19 to that of the US, the CM had forgotten the kind of behaviour his cabinet colleague Chetan Chauhan experienced at a govt hospital

AKHILESH YADAV | PRESIDENT, SP

which the doctor said 'Oh, he is that Chetan'. After this, the doctor and the other staff left."

Chauhan, 73, who was admitted to the SGPGIMS after he tested positive for Covid-19, was shifted to the Medanta hospital in Haryana's Gurugram when his condition deteriorated.

The cricketer-turned-politician died last week due to Covid-related complications, after being put on life support for nearly 36 hours.

Contacted for comment, SGPGIMS Director, Dr R.K. Dhiman, expressed surprise at Sajjan's statement.

"During treatment, I had spoken to Chauhan a number of times, but he never brought up the incident. He went to the Medanta hospital in Gurugram citing family reasons. If there were any complaints, it should have been conveyed. The incident will be probed," he said.

Meanwhile, SP President Akhilesh Yadav tweeted, "While comparing the so-called better preparations for Covid-19 to that of the USA, the UP Chief Minister had forgotten the kind of behaviour his cabinet colleague Chetan Chauhan experienced at a government hospital."

Taj Mahal dazzles with Yamuna in spate

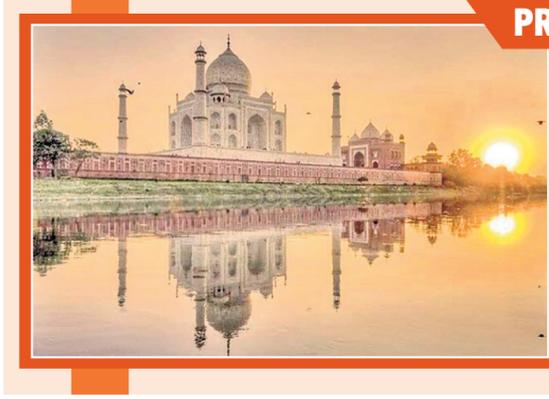
INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Agra, August 23: With the Yamuna still continuing to remain in spate in Agra, the rear view of the Taj Mahal stands transformed as the river is full of life-sustaining water, following incessant rains, providing a magnificent view from the Mehtab Bagh.

From a "sickly sewage canal" the Yamuna river stands as a vibrant and attractive water body which is said to be the lifeline of the city. Heaps of garbage that had accumulated along the banks have now been swept away.

"The banks are now cleaner and greener thanks to the monsoon rains. The chirping birds are back and people stop by for a while to enjoy the spectacle of the Yamuna in its pristine glory," said Nandan Shrotriya, a temple priest of the Yamuna Kinara road.

Though the Taj Mahal remains closed for visitors due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the ambience of the area stands transformed as the Yamuna at the rear of the monument provides a magnificent view from the Mehtab Bagh. Emperor



PRISTINE GLORY

FOR ALMOST EIGHT MONTHS IN A YEAR, THE YAMUNA REMAINS DRY AND POLLUTED AS UPSTREAM BARRAGES FROM HATHINI KUND TO WAZIRABAD, OKHLA AND GOKUL HOLD BACK ALL THE WATER

THE DOWNSTREAM CITIES SUFFER AS A RESULT. THE NEED IS TO ENSURE A MINIMUM FLOW OF WATER ROUND THE YEAR SO THAT THE RIVER REMAINS ALIVE AND THE AQUA-LIFE IS NOT DISTURBED

Shah Jahan built the Taj Mahal because of the Yamuna river, but in the past few decades, the river has become a dying lifeline. For most part of the year "it remains a sickly drain," said a river activist Shrawan Kumar Singh.

Right now the river is full of water, but for how long?

"For almost eight months in a year, the Yamuna remains dry and

polluted as upstream barrages from Hathini Kund to Wazirabad, Okhla and Gokul hold back all the water. The downstream cities suffer as a result.

The need is to ensure a minimum flow of water round the year so that the river remains alive and the aqua-life is not disturbed," says environmentalist Devashish Bhattacharya.

Over 500 years ago, it was the grandeur of the Yamuna that had attracted the founder of the Mughal dynasty to open shops in Agra.

In later years, his descendants chose to build some of the finest monuments like the Taj Mahal and the Etamaduddaula along its banks.

While the younger folk have generally stayed away from the stinking river which holds no charm for

them, people of the older generations do occasionally venture out to conduct ritualistic pujas and baths.

The dozen-odd ghats along the riverfront, which once was the centre of a thriving commercial activity and river culture, have disappeared without a trace, reducing the 20 km-long riverfront to a vast wasteland.

From the Kailash temple to the Dussehra Ghat adjacent to the Taj, there were more than a score of permanent ghats, some of red sandstone and others of marble.

Behind the Red Fort there were permanent ghats with highly decorative canopies for the royal females of the Mughals.

Today, the river of decadence is an eyesore. Those who take the Yamuna Kinara road are often seen covering their noses to keep away the foul odour of the stinking mess.

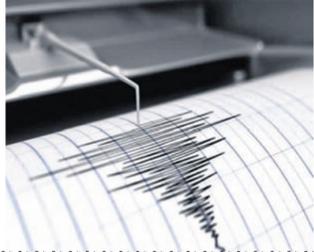
"Modi's minister Nitin Gadkari had promised steamers in Yamuna will bring tourists from Delhi to Agra. Now he seems to have forgotten or has given up the project," commented Wake Up Agra president Shishir Bhagat.



Urge CM to unshackle political caging/chaining of police and administration.... This menacing stance of police and administration would generate consequences
JAGDEEP THAKUR | WEST BENGAL GOVERNOR

MILD QUAKE HITS PALGHAR

A 2.8 magnitude earthquake was recorded in Palghar district of Maharashtra Sunday, an official said. No casualty or damage to property was reported, he said



of the day quote

Former Chief Justice of India, Ranjan Gogoi, who headed benches that pronounced several key judgements including in the Ayodhya land dispute case, might be the BJP's chief ministerial candidate in Assam in the Assembly election next year



TARUN GOGOI | CONGRESS LEADER

A decision on allowing all journalists to travel in suburban trains in Mumbai, currently being operated for those employed in essential services, will be taken in the next two days



VIJAY WADETTIWAR | MAHARASHTRA RELIEF AND REHABILITATION MINISTER

The government is ensuring that policies and programmes initiated by it reach the intended beneficiaries for their socio-economic uplift



JAI RAM THAKUR | HIMACHAL CM

SHORT TAKES

Man kills sister-in-law

Gaya (Bihar): A man allegedly stabbed his wife's elder sister to death in Bihar's Gaya town Sunday, police said. He then stabbed himself in the stomach, causing serious injuries, a senior police officer said. The man's two children also received injuries when they tried to save the woman, Deputy Superintendent of Police, Raj Kumar, said.

400 families evacuated

Howrah/Kolkata: Around 400 families of Aima and Alipore villages of Shyampur block in West Bengal's Howrah district have been evacuated due to floods triggered by heavy rains during the past three days and high tide, a district official said. These families have been put up in a local primary school building, the official said. The situation has been aggravated in the absence of a concrete guard wall on the embankment of the two villages which are located on the mouth of Hooghly and Damodar rivers, local panchayat official Lutfar Rahman Khan said.

Cop killed

Bijapur: A police jawan was hacked to death with an axe by two unidentified men at a village market in the Naxal-hit Bijapur district of Chhattisgarh Sunday, an official said. Police suspect the involvement of Maoists, but a probe is being carried out to know if the murder was fallout of a personal enmity. "The incident took place when the deceased, Assistant Constable Suresh Komra (42), had gone to the weekly market in Kutru village to buy essentials," a police official said.

Man held

Jabalpur: A man has been arrested here in Madhya Pradesh for allegedly posting morphed photographs of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and obscene comments on a social media platform, police said Sunday. Parvez Alam, aged around 28, has been booked under Indian Penal Code Sections 292 (Sale of obscene books, etc), 504 (intentional insult with intent to provoke breach of peace) and the Information Technology Act Section 67 (publishing or transmitting obscene material in electronic form). Gohalpur police station's inspector Ravindra Goutam said.

GOOD NEWS SOON?

'Covid vaccine likely by year-end'

Three COVID-19 vaccine candidates, including two indigenous ones, are in different phases of development in India



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, August 23: Union Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan has said that if everything goes well, India would get a vaccine against the novel coronavirus by the end of this year.

Three COVID-19 vaccine candidates, including two indigenous ones, are in different phases of development in India. The phase-one human clinical trials of the two indigenous COVID-19 vaccine candidates, one developed by Bharat Biotech in collaboration with ICMR and the other by Zydus Cadila Ltd, have been completed and the trials have moved to phase-two, ICMR Director General Dr Balram Bhargava had said recently.

The Serum Institute of India, which has partnered with AstraZeneca for manufacturing the COVID-19 vaccine candidate

developed by the University of Oxford has been permitted for conducting its phase two and three human clinical trials in India. It is likely to start the trials next week.

In a tweet in Hindi, Vardhan said on Saturday, "I hope that if everything goes well, India will get a coronavirus vaccine by the end of this year."

Meanwhile, the apex health research body, ICMR, is in the process of developing an online vaccine portal which will provide information related to COVID-19 vaccine development in India and abroad, with the majority of the updates in several regional languages in addition to English.

The aim of creating the website is to provide all information and up-

dates relating to the COVID-19 vaccine development on one platform as all the information in this regard is scattered as of now, Samiran Panda, Head of Epidemiology and Communicable Diseases at ICMR, said Saturday.

The idea behind making the updates available in regional languages is to make sure that every citizen is able to access the information. The portal is likely to be functional by next week, Panda said.

With a single-day spike of 69,239 infections, India's COVID-19 case-load mounted to 30,44,940 on Sunday, while the death toll climbed to 56,706 with 912 fatalities being reported in 24 hours, the data updated at 8 am showed.

PAK TO USE DRONES TO DROP BOMBS: BSF

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, August 23: Pakistan will use drones to bomb security establishments near the International Border in Jammu and Kashmir's RS Pura and Samba sectors, the intelligence wing of the Border Security Force (BSF) has alerted.

The security establishments, including the Indian Army, have been informed about the plans of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) to carry out the attacks in Indian Territory. The BSF had alerted other security forces about Pakistan's activities earlier this week.

Pakistan has increased bombardment in the Indian territories, while China has started transgression in Eastern Ladakh by creating a two-front war like situation. The BSF, India's first line of defence with Pakistan and Bangladesh, has also alerted that "ISI plans to pump in consignment of drugs/arms/ammunitions inside India with the help of drones".

It guards around 2,280 kms of the front with Pakistan and the 4,096-km-long Indo-Bangla border. A senior BSF officer said that activities have increased across the International Border with Pakistan in Jammu and Punjab after terrorists were unable to infiltrate across Line of Control in Kashmir.

CBI grills Sushant's friend, house helps

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



Mumbai, August 23: CBI sleuths Sunday questioned actor Sushant Singh Rajput's friend Siddharth Pithani, cook Neeraj Singh and domestic help Deepesh Sawant at the DRDO guest house here in connection with his death case and later visited the actor's flat in Bandra along with them, an official said.

In the morning, Pithani, Neeraj and Sawant arrived separately at the DRDO guest house in Kalina area of Santacruz, where the Central Bureau of Investigation's (CBI) officials probing the case are staying, an official said.

These three persons, who were present in the flat when Rajput (34) was found hanging in his room on June 14, were questioned for about five hours following which the CBI sleuths took them to the late actor's residence at Mont Blanc Apartments in suburban Bandra around 2.45 pm, he said.

Forensic science experts were also part of the CBI team which visited Rajput's residence, the official said. Mumbai Police officials were also present at the actor's house, he added. On Saturday also, the CBI team accompanied by Pithani, Neeraj and Sawant visited the late actor's house in Bandra to recon-

struct the sequence of events before he was found dead.

Another CBI team on Saturday visited the state-run Cooper Hospital in the city, where autopsy had been performed on Rajput's body. A third CBI team had visited the Bandra police station to meet Mumbai Police officials who were investigating Rajput's alleged suicide earlier.

Friday the CBI officials recorded the statements of Pithani and Neeraj. The Supreme Court Wednesday upheld the transfer of an FIR, lodged by Rajput's father in Patna against actor Rhea Chakraborty and others for allegedly abetting his suicide, to the CBI. After Rajput was found hanging in his apartment in June, the Mumbai Police registered a case of accidental death. Later, Rajput's father filed a police complaint in Patna, accusing Chakraborty and her family of abetting the actor's suicide and misappropriating his money.

POLL PLANK

BJP to fight Bengal polls sans CM face

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, August 23: The BJP will not project any chief ministerial candidate for West Bengal Assembly polls and bank on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's development plank to fight against the TMC, the party's Bengal minder, Kailash Vijayvargiya, said. The saffron camp will pick its chief minister, once voted to power, he said Sunday.

"As of now, it has been decided that we won't project anyone as our chief ministerial face. We will fight under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and win the election. Once voted to power, the legislative party in consultation with central leadership will decide on its chief ministerial choice," Vijayvargiya said. Asked if the party has anyone in mind for the post, he said that "time has the answer".

"Right now, our target is to win 220-230 seats in the 294-member Assembly. We will achieve our target as we did in the Lok Sabha polls. The issue of projecting a CM face won't be a factor," he said.

Incidentally in 2016, too, the BJP had fought the Assembly polls without any CM face. But a lot of water

has flown under the Howrah Bridge over the last four years, with the saffron party having emerged as the prime challenger of the ruling TMC in Bengal, by pushing the traditional opposition parties - the CPI (M) and the Congress - to distant third and fourth positions.

The saffron camp reached its all-time high in Bengal politics last year when it stunned political pundits by bagging 18 of the 42 Lok Sabha seats in the state, four less than the ruling TMC, and with a staggering vote share of 41 per cent.

According to BJP sources, the decision of anointing a chief ministerial face before elections could be a double-edged sword for the party, so it would "be wiser to rely on the negatives of the opposition camp" to win the elections.

"We will fight elections on the development plank of Narendra Modi and by highlighting the failures of the TMC government. Elections are won and lost depending on the performance of the incumbent government. That is what had happened in 1977 and 2011 when the Left Front was voted to power and also when it lost the polls," a senior BJP leader said.

IT RAINED WOES



A cyclist rides through a flooded locality in Kolkata, Sunday

PTI PHOTO

PALGHAR LYNCHINGS

Top seer body seeks CBI probe

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Prayagraj (Uttar Pradesh), August 23: The Mumbai Police is now facing flak from an unexpected quarter, with an apex body of saints now demanding a CBI inquiry into the Palghar lynchings.

The Akhil Bharatiya Akhara Parishad (ABAP) said that the Supreme Court's decision to entrust the probe into actor Sushant Singh Rajput's death to the CBI had proved the "incompetence" of the Mumbai Police.

The ABAP demanded the CBI probe the lynching of two sadhus in Palghar, Maharashtra, on April 16. ABAP President Mahant Narendra Giri said: "The ABAP is holding an important meeting on August 26 in Haridwar in which, besides discussing preparations for the Kumbh next year, it will also pass a resolution for a CBI inquiry in the killings in Palghar."

If the need arises, the Akhara Parishad would also go to the court, he added.

On the night of April 16, two sadhus and their driver travelling from Kandivali in Mumbai to Surat in Gujarat for attending a funeral amid the nationwide lockdown were brutally attacked and killed by a mob in Gadchinchile village in the presence of police officials.

MAJOR CONCERN

915 women caught crossing border in 2020

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, August 23: With human trafficking across the India-Bangladesh borders an area of major concern for authorities on both the sides, the BSF has caught 915 women while they were illegally crossing the borders between the two countries till mid-August this year.

Those arrested included women who tried to enter India as well as those who attempted to cross over to Bangladesh between January 1 and August 15 with the help of touts, data collated by the Ministry of Home Affairs reveals.

The numbers are significant since it could break the past few years' record by the time 2020 ends. As per an estimate, if the number of women caught during trafficking has crossed 900 in seven-and-a-half months, it could cross the 1,400-mark by the end of this year.

The number of women caught on the International Border between India and Bangladesh was 936 in 2019, a record 1,107 in 2018, and 572 in 2017. Of the total 915 women apprehended on the borders this year, a maximum of 888 were caught



from south Bengal, 14 from Tripura, six from Guwahati in Assam, four from north Bengal, two from Mizoram and Cachar, and one from Meghalaya.

India and Bangladesh share 4,096.7-km-long International Border in West Bengal (2,216.7 km), Assam (263 km), Meghalaya (443 km), Tripura (856 km), and Mizoram (318 km). The report mentions that maximum women trafficking cases were registered from south Bengal, from where 850 women were caught

while crossing over to Bangladesh or entering India. These figures were 620 in 2018 and 462 in 2017.

The data shows that Tripura has been in second position in women trafficking through India's borders with Bangladesh in 2019, reporting 52 such cases. A total of 47 women were caught on the Tripura frontier in 2018 and 14 in 2017.

Guwahati in Assam was in second place in 2018 after south Bengal, reporting the arrest of 394 women while crossing the border. The fig-

ures were eight in 2019 and six in 2017. Cases of women's trafficking through the north Bengal frontier though has registered a drastic decline in the last few years. The figure was 87 in 2017, but went down to 39 in 2018, 12 in 2019 and only four till August 15 this year.

Only one case of a woman's trafficking was registered till August 15 from Meghalaya frontier, from where 11 women were caught last year. Six women were caught from the said frontier in 2018 and three in 2017.

The lowest women trafficking cases were registered in Mizoram and Cachar in Assam. Only two women were caught from these areas till August 15 this year. The cases were three in 2019 and one in 2018.

HEROIC RESCUE

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Dehradun, August 23: Flooded 'nallahs', broken routes, landslide-prone areas, 40 kms and 15 hours on a stretcher, the 'Himveers' of Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) rescued an injured woman from a remote village in Uttarakhand's Pithoragarh district and saved



her life by providing her crucial medication at a hospital.

A group of 25 ITBP men took the initiative to save the life of the woman when the chopper could not land to rescue her for two days. In an immense effort in saving the life of the injured woman, who accidentally fell off a hillside near a remote village in Pithoragarh, the 14th Battalion ITBP personnel braved all odds

to rescue and evacuate her to the nearest road head facing all hardships in a monsoon-hit area.

The woman fell and broke her legs on August 20. She hails from a remote village Laspa of Munsiyari division in Pithoragarh district. On receiving information, the ITBP personnel went to the village from their Border Outpost to rescue the woman whose condition was worsening every passing day due to lack of treatment.

The ITBP personnel reached the village - which is 22 kms from their Milam base - on Saturday (August 22) covering most of the stretch on foot. After reaching the village, the 25 ITBP men carried the woman on stretcher one by one for 15 hours through flooded nallahs, landslide zone areas and slippery slopes to take her 40 kms to a distant road head from where she was further evacuated to the hospital where her condition is stated to be stable now.

of the day quote

The move by the Congress leaders to demand a rehaul of the party at this critical juncture would be detrimental to its interests, and the interests of the nation

AMARINDER SINGH | PUNJAB CM

Salute the unity and courage of six mainstream Opposition parties who came together yesterday (Saturday) to fight the repeal of Article 370

P CHIDAMBARAM | CONGRESS LEADER

During Lalu Prasad's regime, Bihar was tagged as a crime state in the country. I appeal to the BJP workers to point it out to the voters during the door-to-door poll campaign

DEVENDRA FADNAVIS | BJP LEADER

SHORT TAKES

Property dealer gunned down

Patna: Six unidentified criminals gunned down a property dealer and injured three others this morning in Patna's Beur locality, an official said Sunday. The attackers used a carbine for committing the crime. Area police recovered many spent cartridges from the crime scene. The accused arrived at the spot on three motorcycles at around 11.30 am and barged into the office of property dealer Rajesh Yadav, firing indiscriminately.

Man arrested

Panaji: A 30-year-old man was arrested by the north Goa district police Sunday for allegedly raping a differently-abled 13-year-old girl, an official said. The accused Varun Nayyar has been arrested by officials of the Porvorim police station after a complaint was filed by the victim's parents. "Nayyar has been booked under sections of the Prevention of Children from Sexual Offences Act and relevant sections of the Goa Children's Act," Inspector in-charge of the Porvorim police station Ninad Deulkar said.

Drone recovered

New Delhi: The Delhi Police has recovered a drone from near the residence of an official of the Israeli embassy in southwest Delhi's Vasant Vihar area, officials said Sunday. The police, however, do not suspect any foul play in this matter and said the drone was being operated by a child. It went out of range and landed near the residence of the official, they said. A staff of the residence of the official made a PCR call on Saturday following which a police team visited the spot and recovered a drone. "After verification, we found that the drone was operated by a child and it went out of range," a senior police officer said.



We need to show in action and in deeds that gender discrimination no longer exists. That should be our goal

M VENKAIAH NAIDU | VICE PRESIDENT

PM FEEDS PEACOCKS

Prime Minister Narendra Modi Sunday posted a video on his social media accounts in which he is seen feeding peacocks at his residence during his morning exercise routine



BJP, JD(U), LJP to fight Bihar polls jointly: Nadda

The coming polls will be the first time when the three parties fight together in an Assembly election after their superlative show by winning all but one seat in the state in the 2019 Lok Sabha election as allies

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, August 23: All the three NDA constituents in Bihar - the BJP, the JD(U) and the LJP - will together fight the coming assembly polls in the state with Chief Minister Nitish Kumar as the face of the alliance, BJP president J P Nadda said Sunday and expressed confidence that they will emerge victorious.

Nadda's remarks at a virtual address to the Bihar BJP executive meeting come amid a bitter war of words between Kumar's Janata Dal (United) and Chirag Paswan-headed Lok Janshakti Party. Whenever the three parties have fought together, their National Democratic Alliance has notched up a big victory, he said.

The coming polls will be the first time when the three parties fight together in an Assembly election after their superlative show by winning all but one seat in the state in the 2019 Lok Sabha election as allies. "We are going to the polls under the leadership of Chief Minister



Nitish Kumar: Our victory is certain," Nadda said.

While Chirag Paswan has often questioned the Nitish Kumar-led state government over a host of issues, the BJP has done the balancing act and maintained that the ruling NDA is intact in the state.

It has also been endorsing Kumar as the alliance's chief ministerial face.

In his address from the national capital where he was joined by several Union ministers elected from Bihar, Nadda also claimed that the opposition in the state as well as elsewhere has become a "spent force" and asserted that the BJP is the only party which is being looked at by people with hope.

The opposition has neither ideology nor vision nor any spirit to serve people, and it can't rise above

petty politics, he added. He praised the Bihar government's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic and floods in the state, while noting that the assembly elections are expected at a time when the state faces the twin challenges.

The Election Commission is yet to announce the election schedule, but there have been indications that it will be held on time.

The assembly elections in the state are due in October-November. Nadda asked party leaders to organise small meetings and door-to-door campaign in line with the COVID guidelines while preparing for the polls.

He said the special package announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the state has been implemented in "letter and spirit" and asked party members to go to the people with its details. Nadda also shared highlights of the Modi government's work to boost health care measures to battle the pandemic and to provide relief to people, especially the poor, with several packages.

EXAMS AMID PANDEMIC

Defer NEET, JEE: Cong

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, August 23: Top Congress leaders, including Rahul Gandhi, Sunday requested the government to defer the all-India medical and engineering entrance examinations taking into consideration the concerns raised by a section of students and parents amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Rahul Gandhi said the government must listen to the 'mann ki baat' of students and arrive at "an acceptable solution", while party general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra sought the postponement of the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) and the Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) till the coronavirus situation improves in the country.

Congress leader in Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi suggesting that the exams be deferred, while Kapil Sibal said these needed to be postponed.

"GOI must listen to the #StudentsKeMannKiBaat about NEET, JEE exams and arrive at an acceptable solution," Rahul Gandhi tweeted. In a tweet in Hindi, Priyanka Gandhi said, "The COVID-



19 situation in the country is yet to normalise. In such a situation, if students who are taking NEET and JEE, and their parents have raised concerns, then these should be taken into consideration by the government and those conducting these exams."

Chowdhury requested PM Modi to intervene and postpone the exams. "The aspirants of national examination are under tremendous mental pressure as to how they could remain immune to the infection while attending the examination physically. Right at this pandemic situation their concerns should be given due consideration. The spectre of corona will be haunting the students during the examination period stretching from September 1 to 6," he said in his letter.

BIDDING ADIEU



Civic workers carry idols of Ganesha for immersion in an artificial pond at Dadar in Mumbai, Sunday

PTI PHOTO

DIFFERENT THERAPY

Fighting Covid with music

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bangalore, August 23: In addition to the regular Covid-19 treatment, patients in Karnataka's Ballari district are also being helped with music therapy, an official said Sunday.

"We are offering music therapy for all patients," Ballari Deputy Commissioner S. S. Nakul said. In a video shared by Nakul, patients in a Covid hospital in the town were seen joyfully clapping, snapping, dancing and going in rounds inside the hospital.

Most of the patients came out of their beds, including some old men and women to clap around to a Bollywood song. To make the music therapy more participative, patients have also been given an opportunity to croon.

A young man was seen singing a Kannada song, holding a microphone as he stood. The medical staff provided the patient with a microphone right up to his bed, located in the middle of a row of

To make the music therapy more participative, patients have also been given an opportunity to croon

beds, enabling him to sing from his bedside even as the medical staff were seen encouraging him from outside the treatment room.

Along with music therapy, the hospital authorities are also guiding the patients to do yoga and breathing exercises. A yoga instructor speaks through a public address system from outside the treatment room as the patients sit on their beds to practice the breathing technique which he explains in Kannada.

Lead by Nakul, Ballari district had already become famous for employing innovative techniques to hasten the healing process of Covid patients. Earlier on the Independence Day doctors at Ballari town's Trauma Care Hospital,

which has been designated as a Covid hospital had played the national anthem to give the patients an opportunity to celebrate in a small way. Doctors distributed fruits to the patients as part of the celebration. In the first week of August, a 28-year-old orthopedic doctor, Inamdar, had celebrated his birthday with coronavirus patients to cheer them up and shatter their gloomy isolation for some time.

Prior to that, viral videos emerged from a Ballari hospital where patients were seen dancing away to a Kannada song from the movie Upendra. Ballari is the second most coronavirus infected place in the southern state after Bengaluru Urban, accounting for 17,273 Covid cases, out of which 6,064 are active.

After Bengaluru Urban's 34,224 active cases, Ballari has the second highest number of active cases. Likewise, the district has also been consistently reporting the second highest number of Covid infections after Bengaluru on a daily basis.

GUIDELINES RELEASED

Films, serials to resume shooting

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, August 23: The Centre Sunday announced standard operating procedures (SOPs) for resuming shooting of films and TV programmes, and these include measures such as social distancing and mandatory use of face cover or masks for cast and crew, except for actors in front of camera.

The guiding principles and SOPs on preventive measures for media production to contain the spread of COVID-19 were announced by Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar. He asserted that these measures will facilitate resumption of shooting and provide employment to scores of people impacted due to the film industry being hit in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

These SOPs have been finalised after consulting the health and home ministries, Javadekar said. Shooting of films and TV serials can be started using these SOPs issued in the wake of the pandemic, the minister said. Sharing details of the SOPs, Javadekar said barring those who are in front of cameras



all others will have to wear masks.

"We are laying down SOPs as per international experience, and with the consultation of the health ministry and the home ministry, we have issued these SOPs," he said. "This is an important aspect of the economy and it employs millions of people, therefore, we have issued this to facilitate now the production activity to resume. I am sure everyone will welcome this and all states will implement this," Javadekar said.

The I&B document also emphasised on the health and family wel-

fare ministry's guiding principles which state that non-essential activities will not be allowed in COVID-19 containment zones.

The guiding principles also said that employees who are at higher risk, such as older employees, pregnant employees, employees who have underlying medical conditions, should take extra precautions. They should preferably not be exposed to any frontline work requiring direct contact with the public, according to the health ministry guiding principles.

1.78 crore railway tickets cancelled

NEW DELHI: The Railways has cancelled more than 1.78 crore tickets since March this year due to the coronavirus pandemic and refunded an amount to the tune of Rs 2,727 crore, a RTI has found. The RTI has found that the Railways, which had suspended its passenger train services since March 25, cancelled 1, 78, 70,644 tickets. Last year, while the Railways had refunded Rs 3,660.08 crore for the April 1-August 11 period, it also earned Rs 17,309.1 crore in the same period. This is the first time when the refunds were more than the amount earned by the Railways from sale of tickets. An official explained that due to the suspension of services, tickets booked for travel in April, May and June were offered refunds.



Many waiting for gubernatorial post

With the induction of Manoj Sinha as new L-G of Jammu & Kashmir, talk of gubernatorial changes has gained momentum in the ruling BJP. In fact, many aspirants are already in the waiting lounge after the death of Madhya Pradesh Governor Lalji Tandon last month. Anandiben Patel, UP Governor was given additional charge of Madhya Pradesh. Interestingly, the tenures of Draupadi Murmu (Jharkhand) and Vajubhai Vala (Karnataka) have also ended. Now Goa will also need a Governor as Satya Pal Malik has been transferred to Meghalaya. But Murmu and Vala were appointed Governors in the first tenure of PM Modi. The President has not issued any formal order extending their tenures either. Kiran Bedi and Anil Bajjal, Lieutenant Governors of Pondicherry and Delhi respectively, are also sitting in the exit lounges.

Desperate search for vaccine

After the Prime Minister gave a clarion call for a Covid vaccine from the ramparts of the Red Fort August 15, bureau-

crats have been running for cover. The Prime Minister's own task force on vaccine headed by Dr VK Paul swung into action and started scouting to procure the vaccine. Though the task force on vaccine was created in early March this year, it virtually made no progress. India is the global hub for producing vaccines for leading drug companies, but no effort was made to talk to them. It may be mentioned here that there are seven leading vaccine manufacturers in India which have a capacity to produce three billion doses per annum. Considering that the Covid pandemic has affected almost 20% of the world's population and a minimum of 5% population may require the vaccine, there is a huge demand globally.

Modi's message to RSS

The Prime Minister is understood to have conveyed to the top RSS leadership that full focus be given on the construction of the Ram temple. Having delivered the Ram temple, for which the RSS was fighting since 1949 and the Hindus were fighting for 500 years, the focus should be on construction of the temple in the shortest possible time. The most contentious issue of Ram temple has been resolved in a historic way. Even the Muslims have broadly maintained peace. A few saints and hardliners in the RSS now want Mathura and Kashi to be restored. They have started issuing statements to this effect. But Modi wants Ayodhya to be made a model global religious township.

WAR AGAINST VIRUS

Homeopathic drug given to half of Gujarat

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ahmedabad, August 23: The Gujarat health department has said it distributed homeopathic drug Arsenicum Album-30 to more than half of the state's population as prophylaxis since March after the outbreak of COVID-19.

In its presentation made before the World Health Organisation on August 20 on Gujarat's COVID-19 prevention strategy, the health department said it distributed Arsenicum Album-30 to 3.48 crore people, which is more than half of the state's population of 6.6 crore.

There is no scientific evidence that the drug works against COVID-19, a fact stressed not only by medical

scientists but by some homeopathic practitioners themselves. The state government also claimed that 99.6 per cent of people who availed AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy) remedies as prophylaxis during their quarantine period tested negative for coronavirus.

In its presentation, which was shared with the media, the health department said "AYUSH interventions have proven to be immunity boosters, and the AYUSH treatment protocol was developed and a research carried out for assessing efficacy of treatment."

As many as 33,268 people benefited from AYUSH medicines in the quarantine period, half of whom



availed homeopathic medicines," it said. The state government claimed that 99.69 per cent of people who availed AYUSH remedies as prophylaxis during their quarantine period tested negative for coronavirus.

However, a clinical trial related to the prophylaxis nature of Arsenicum Album-30 for coron-

avirus in the state has not yet yielded any conclusive result, an official said. Gujarat Principal Secretary, Health, Jayanti Ravi on Sunday said the government has some reason to believe about the efficacy of Arsenicum Album-30 medicine, as out of thousands of quarantined people who were given the dosage of Arsenicum Album-30, "99.69 per cent eventually tested negative for coronavirus."

"Even 0.3 per cent who tested positive had only mild symptoms. We have prima facie reason to believe in some effectiveness of Arsenicum Album-30 against coronavirus. But to actually establish this, we need more rigorous analysis," Ravi said.

The government has so far distributed 3.48 crore dosages of Arsenicum Album-30 starting March, including repeat dosages as the medicine remains effective for 1.5 to two months, she said.

As per Bhavna Patel, director of state AYUSH department, the result of a clinical trial on Arsenicum Album-30 going on at a private clinic in Bhavnagar as prophylaxis has not yet shown any clear result. Patel said the homeopathic medicine has been distributed since March on the recommendation of an expert committee, including homeopathic doctors, and a repeat order has also been given by the state health department for people who used it over a month ago.



If you don't believe in climate change, come to California
 GAVIN NEWSOM | CALIFORNIA GOVERNOR

ANTI-SMOKING WEBSITE

North Korea has launched an anti-smoking Website on its domestic-only Internet network, a state-media outlet reported Sunday, even though leader Kim Jong-un was yet to ditch the habit



of the day quote

Our government will continue supporting citizens stranded overseas as a result of the coronavirus crisis
 SCOTT MORRISON | AUSTRALIA'S PM

The right to freedom of religion or belief is firmly entrenched in international human rights law
 ANTONIO GUTERRES | UN SECRETARY-GENERAL

Our government would fulfil the requirements of the transitional period, improve the economic conditions, achieve development and reach consensus on a national project for ruling Sudan through fair and transparent elections
 ABDALLA HAMDOK | SUDANESE PM

SHORT TAKES

'Navalny was under police surveillance'

Moscow: Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny, who fell gravely ill Thursday after what his allies believe was a poisoning, was under intense police surveillance in preceding days, a Russian tabloid newspaper cited law enforcement sources as saying. Before he collapsed on a flight during a trip to Siberia Navalny was followed by plainclothes FSB officers and his movements were closely monitored via CCTV, the report in the Moskovsky Komsomolets newspaper said.

Black man's killing sparks outrage

Lafayette (US): The mother of a man fatally shot by Louisiana police said her son was intelligent, shy and had sought therapy for social anxiety. Her lawyers said they plan to sue over the death of Trayford Pellerin, who police said had a knife and was trying to enter a convenience store. The shooting Friday night was captured on video, and the state ACLU condemned what it described as a "horrific and deadly incident of police violence against a Black person." Both the ACLU and the Southern Poverty Law Center quickly called for an investigation.

13 die in Peru disco stampede

Lima: Thirteen people died in a stampede at a disco in Peru after a police raid to enforce the country's lockdown during the coronavirus pandemic, officials said Sunday. The stampede happened at the Thomas disco in Lima, where about 120 people had gathered for a party on Saturday night, the Interior Ministry said. People tried to escape through the only door of the second-floor disco, trampling one another and becoming trapped in the confined space, according to authorities. After the stampede, police had to force open the door.

Portland protest turns violent

Portland: Federal authorities Saturday forced demonstrators away from a plaza near a federal building as dueling demonstrations in Portland by right-wing and left-wing protesters turned violent. The area includes county and federal buildings and has been the site of numerous recent protests. Department of Homeland Security officers moved through the plaza across from an 18-story federal building.

CALIFORNIA BURNS AGAIN



Firefighters make a stand in the backyard of a home



A plume billows over Healdsburg



A firefighter watching the fires spread through the Berryessa Estates

AGENCIES

San Francisco, August 23: Weary firefighters in California raced Saturday to slow the spread of wildfires that burned nearly one million acres statewide in a week and destroyed hundreds of homes ahead an expected weather change that could bring more lightning strikes like the ones that sparked many of the blazes.

Responding to the emergency, President Donald Trump issued a major disaster declaration to provide federal assistance. Gov. Gavin Newsom said in a statement that the declaration will also help people in counties affected by the fires with crisis counseling, housing and other social services.

Two clusters of wildfires in the San Francisco Bay Area grew to become the second- and third-largest wildfires in recent state history by size. Light winds and cooler and more humid nighttime weather helped fire crews make progress on those fires and a third group of fires south of San Francisco ahead of the forecast of warm, dry weather, erratic wind gusts and lightning, state fire officials said.

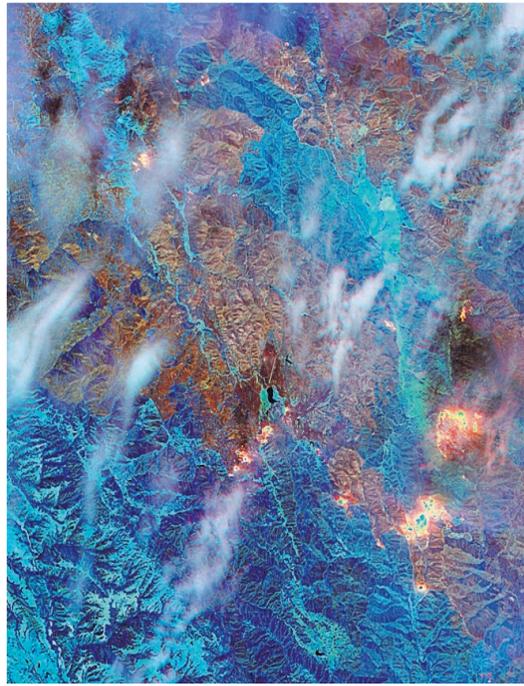
The National Weather Service issued a red flag warning of high fire danger across the Bay Area and along the Central Coast, beginning from Sunday morning to Monday afternoon. "The worst is not behind us. We are in a battle

rhythm," California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal Fire) Chief Thom Porter tweeted. Since thousands of lightning strikes began on Aug. 15, the state reported 585 wildfires that have burned nearly a million acres, or 1,562 square miles (4,046 square kilometers), according to Cal Fire.

Many were small and remote. The bulk of damage was from three fire "complexes" that were ravaging forest and rural areas in and around the San Francisco Bay Area. They have burned 1,045 square miles (2,700 square kilometers). The fires have killed five people, torched nearly 700 homes and other structures and forced tens of thousands from their houses. "Tuesday night when I went to bed I had a beautiful home on a beautiful ranch," said 81-year-old Hank Hanson of Vacaville.

"By Wednesday night, I have nothing but a bunch of ashes." In Santa Cruz County, the fire was threatening Boulder Creek, an old logging community of about 5,000 in the Santa Cruz Mountains on the edge of California's oldest state park - Big Basin Redwoods. Fire officials said they expected the blaze to reach the community, but they took advantage of recent good weather to try to "herd" flames around the town.

Earlier in the week, fire officials in charge of each of the three major wildfires said they were strapped for



This satellite image provided by Maxar Technologies shows an overview of the SCU Lightning Complex wildfires August 22, 2020, in California. **PHOTO**

resources. Some firefighters were working 72-hour shifts instead of the usual 24 hours. By Friday, the ap-

proximately 13,700 firefighters on the line began to get help on the ground and with aircraft from 10

PANDEMIC ADDING A WALLOP

The Covid-19 pandemic has rattled every part of society, and firefighting efforts are not immune. California often relies on prison labor to bolster its firefighting efforts, with almost 200 inmate fire crews. Inmates are paid between \$2 and \$5 a day, plus \$1 per hour when fighting a fire. But with severe Covid-19 prison outbreaks in the state, some inmates were released to relieve overcrowding. Others were hampered by infections, and many remain under quarantine. The number of available inmate fire crews has been nearly halved.

states, along with the National Guard and US military.

Those fires were a top priority. But in a sign of how overburdened the state's firefighting agency is, fire officials said only 1,400 firefighters were assigned to battle the LNU Lightning Complex fire in wine country north of San Francisco, which was only 15% contained.

In comparison, about 5,000 firefighters were assigned to the Mendocino Complex fire in 2018, the largest fire in recent state history. "All of our resources remain stretched to capacity that we have not seen in recent history," said Shana Jones, the chief for Cal Fire's Sonoma-Lake-Napa unit.

In comparison, about 5,000 firefighters were assigned to the Mendocino Complex fire in 2018, the largest fire in recent state history

GLOBAL COVID-19 DEATHS EXCEED 8L

Vienna, August 23: The global death toll from the coronavirus surpassed 800,000 Saturday, according to a Reuters tally, with the United States, Brazil and India leading the rise in fatalities.

Nearly 5,900 people are dying every 24 hours from COVID-19 on average, according to Reuters calculations based on data from the past two weeks that ended Friday.

That equates to 246 people per hour, or one person every 15 seconds. The rate of deaths is holding steady with it taking 17 days to go from 700,000 to 800,000 deaths - the same time it took to go from 600,000 to 700,000. The US death toll surpassed 170,000 Sunday, the highest in the world. While the number of new cases is down from a peak in July, the country is still seeing over 360,000 new cases a week. Many public schools and universities reopened classrooms to students despite positive test rates of nearly 20% in some parts of the country. Less than a week after welcoming students, some schools are switching to online-only learning due to a spike in infections. Case fatality rates are about 3% in the United States and Brazil.

Health experts have raised the alarm that Brazil and the United States still have no coordinated plan to fight the pandemic, as many officials focus on reopening schools and businesses, which is likely to worsen the outbreak. Brazil's death toll from COVID-19 passed 100,000 on Aug. 8 and continues to climb as most Brazilian cities reopen shops and dining even though the pandemic has yet to peak there.



Sharif an 'absconder'; UK approached for his extradition: PM aide

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Islamabad/Lahore, August 23: The Pakistan government has declared former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, currently in London for treatment, an "absconder" and approached the UK government for his extradition.

Adviser to the Prime Minister on Accountability and Interior Shahzad Akbar said that Sharif's four-week bail on medical grounds expired in December last year.

"The government is treating him (Sharif) as an absconder and has already sent a request to the British government to extradite him," Akbar was quoted as saying by the Dawn News Saturday.

The 70-year-old three-time premier, who was sentenced in a graft case by an accountability court, informed a court in Lahore last month that he is unable to return to the country as his doctors have told him not to go out due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Sharif submitted his medical report to the Lahore High Court (LHC) through his counsel and said doctors have recommended him to avoid going outside due to the coronavirus as he has low platelet counts, diabetes, heart, kidney and blood pressure related problems.

Akbar said the government would request the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) to pursue Sharif's extradition as well and it was also looking into legalities of guarantees of Shahbaz Sharif, who was supposed to escort his elder brother back to Pakistan after his medical treatment.

His comments came after a new picture was shared on social media which shows Sharif walking on the streets of London with his son, Hassan Nawaz holding an umbrella.

Iran ready to pay compensations

AGENCIES

Tehran, August 23: Iran is ready to pay compensations pertaining to the case of the Ukrainian passenger plane that crashed near Tehran in January, a top official said.

Touraj Dehqani Zangeneh, head of Iran's Civil Aviation Organisation, made the remarks Saturday ahead of a new round of talks between the two countries' aviation officials slated to be held in October in Tehran, reports Xinhua news agency. "What is evident is that Iran has accepted the responsibility for its mistake and therefore the country is ready for negotiations on paying full compensation for what has been done," Zangeneh was quoted as saying.

UKRAINIAN PLANE CRASH



"Compensations will be paid within international laws and without discrimination," he said, adding that "it will include any group that has been affected in the incident".

The Ukraine passenger plane was hit by Iranian missiles after taking off from Tehran January 8, killing all 176 people on board. Iran said that its forces "accidentally" shot

the plane down. On July 24, an international team in Paris completed preliminary investigative analysis of the data extracted from the black boxes of the plane.

On August 9, Iran's Minister of Transport and Urban Development Mohammad Eslami said that the final report on the Ukrainian plane crash will be published soon.

BUSINESS IN DOLDRUMS

As shoppers stay away, small stores seek refuge online

ASSOCIATED PRESS

New York, August 23: For small retailers across the country, the coronavirus outbreak has turned an already challenging business environment into never-ending uncertainty.

Small retailers, especially those selling non-necessities like apparel, are still struggling months after state and local governments lifted shutdown orders aimed at containing the virus. With the virus far from under control in many areas, however, consumers worried about getting sick are staying home and doing their purchasing online or, if they venture out, going to big stores like Walmart and Target where they can do one-stop shopping.

The weak sales and erratic customer traffic have forced store owners to be creative in hopes of per-



suading customers to stop in rather than order from a big online retailer. But for some owners, disappointing sales and an uncertain outlook have forced them to close their stores for good and stake the future of their businesses on the internet. Washington was one of the first epicenters of the virus, and one of the first states to shut down its

economy. The most recent retail sales tallies from the government show sales at clothing sellers, which tend to have physical locations, fell nearly 36 per cent from May through July. But online and other non-traditional retailers saw their sales soar 26 per cent. Small retailers have also learned to be more customer-friendly. The internet has

been a lifeline for Antonelli's Cheese Shop. The Austin, Texas, store remained open during the government-ordered shutdown, but many consumers stayed home, sharply reducing store traffic.

The shop also sells to restaurants, which stopped ordering as they were forced to close. The shop's business is still down 20 per cent. Owners John and Kendall Antonelli say they've managed to survive by taking the events they normally run on their premises, like cheese tastings, and putting them online.

They've had as many as 150 people take part in a tasting, with many people ordering cheese in advance and picking it up curbside. More recently, with fewer people sheltering at home, they've been more likely to get 50 people, but that is still about double the number of attendees they had pre-pandemic.

The Antonellis revamped their website so local customers can order a la carte instead of pre-selected packages - that's more expensive for the store, but it keeps people happy and shopping. The Antonellis have learned that several cheese shops in other cities have gone out of business, so they know they too could be at risk.

Business has been slow since Mallory Shelter's Washington, D.C., jewelry store reopened in June. Shelter, whose store bears her name, responded to the pandemic and shutdown by pouring her marketing efforts into her website. It now accounts for 75 per cent of her revenue, up from 8 per cent before the virus struck, but her overall revenue is down by half. She also has changed her product mix, focusing more on custom items that can have a more personal meaning for buyers.

business



Exports growth in the pandemic-dominated world is inversely related to the rise in the caseloads in its export destinations. Stated differently, exports are flowing back to economies that have checked the affliction
PANKHURI TANDON | ECONOMIST AT CRISIL LIMITED

NESCO PLANS OVER ₹2K cr INVESTMENT

Diversified firm Nesco has said it is planning to invest over ₹2,000 crore in the next 5 to 7 years to foray into the hospitality segment as well as expand its existing IT space offerings and add new exhibition centres



of the day quote

Though Indian economy contracted due to global slowdown and impact of COVID-19 on businesses, we believe the long-term growth potential of the economy is still intact

JAKOB FRIIS SORENSEN | MD, APM TERMINALS PIPAVAV

Digital enablement and the right set of products have paved the growth path for ABSLI. Based on our initial performance and growth in the first four months of this fiscal, we intend to achieve double digit growth, around 15-20%, by the end of this FY

KAMLESH RAO | MD AND CEO, ADITYA BIRLA SUN LIFE INSURANCE

WFH has become a norm since the nationwide lockdown and is expected to continue till the foreseeable future due to social distancing norms, making it stressful for working professionals as most are not equipped with comfortable office furniture

SIDHANT LAMBA | FOUNDER, FABRENTO

'DON'T READ TOO MUCH INTO GREEN SHOOTS'

BEFORE THE COVID-19 CRISIS HIT INDIA, THE REAL GDP GROWTH HAD MODERATED FROM 7% IN 2017-18 TO 4.2% IN 2019-20

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, August 23: Calling 'green shoots' of economic revival as a mechanical rebound, former Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor D Subbarao says India's short and medium term growth prospects continue to remain grim and the government should not read too much into the economic activity coming back from the depressed base of lockdown.

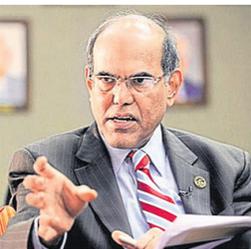
Indian economy was in a troubled state when the pandemic hit the world. Before the COVID-19 crisis hit India, the real GDP growth had moderated from 7% in 2017-18 to 6.1% in 2018-19 and to 4.2% in 2019-20.

"I don't believe we should read too much into the green shoots that you refer to. What we've been seeing is just a mechanical rebound from the depressed base of the lockdown; it will be misleading to see it as a signal of a durable recovery," Subbarao told PTI.

He said the "short-term as well as medium-term prospects (for Indian economy) continue to be grim".

"The pandemic is still spiralling, the number of daily cases is rising and it is spreading to newer regions," he added.

On India's medium-term growth prospect, the former RBI governor said that the economy was in a troubled state when the COVID-19 crisis hit India.



D Subbarao, former RBI Governor

"When the crisis is behind us – and I hope that is soon enough – these problems are going to be much bigger. Fiscal deficit is going to be much higher; the debt burden much

larger and the financial sector in a worse shape," he said.

The World Bank last week projected India's fiscal deficit to rise to 6.6% of GDP in 2020-21 (April 2020 to March 2021) and remain elevated at 5.5% in the following year. This compares to the 3.5% target set by the government.

"Our medium-term prospects will depend on how effectively we resolve these challenges," Subbarao said.

With India's economic growth in pre-COVID 2019-20 fiscal slipping to the lowest in a decade, global and domestic agencies have indicated a sharp contraction in the GDP in the current fiscal. The estimated contraction ranges from

3.2% to 9.5%. This will be the first contraction in four decades.

Asked whether he sees any positive at all in this grim scenario, he noted that the rural economy has recovered better than the urban economy helped by several factors and the expanded MNREGA provided a lifeline when most needed.

Subbarao said that another big although less acknowledged positive is that the economy today has some basic safety-nets in place.

Citing an example, Subbarao said that 40 million urban labour went back to their villages post COVID-19 induced lockdown and despite that there have been no reported cases of mass starvation or hunger.

AAROGYA SETU'S NEW FEATURE TO HELP BIZ



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, August 23: Aarogya Setu has rolled out a new feature that will enable organisations to get the health status of their employees or any other user without violating their data privacy, said an official release.

Aarogya Setu has now emerged as the most downloaded contact tracing app in the world, with more than 15 crore users, it said.

The new feature called 'Open API Service' will help people, businesses and the economy to return to normalcy, and aims to address the fear/risk of COVID-19 infection.

The service can be availed by organisations and business entities, who are registered in India with more than 50 employees, and they can use it to query the Aarogya Setu application in real-time and get the health status of their employees or any other Aarogya Setu user, who have provided their consent for sharing their health status with that entity, the release added.

"In order to help businesses and economy to start functioning while being safe, the Open API Service enables organisations to check the status of Aarogya Setu and integrate it into its various Work from Home features," the release by Ministry of Electronics and IT said.

The Open API (application programme interface) shall only provide the Aarogya Setu status and name of the Aarogya Setu User with their consent. No other personal data shall be provided through the API, the release added.

US-based WeChat users sue Trump

AGENCIES

Los Angeles, August 23: Some US-based users of WeChat are suing President Donald Trump in a bid to block an executive order that they say would effectively bar access in the U.S. to the hugely popular Chinese messaging app.

The complaint, filed Friday in San Francisco, is being brought by the nonprofit U.S. WeChat Users Alliance and several people who say they rely on the app for work, worship and staying in touch with relatives in China.

The plaintiffs said they are not affiliated with WeChat, nor its parent company, Tencent Holdings.

In the lawsuit, they asked a federal court judge to stop Trump's executive order from being enforced, claiming it would violate its U.S. users' freedom of speech, free exercise of religion and other constitutional rights. Trump August 6 ordered sweeping but vague bans on transactions with the Chinese owners of WeChat and another popular consumer app, TikTok, saying they are a threat to US national security, foreign policy and the economy.

The twin executive orders — one for each app — is expected to take effect Sept. 20, or 45 days from when they were issued. The orders call on Commerce Secretary



Wilbur Ross, who is also named as a defendant in the U.S. WeChat Users Alliance lawsuit, to define the banned dealings by that time.

It remains unclear what the orders will mean for the apps' millions of users in the U.S., but experts have said the orders appear intended to bar WeChat and TikTok from the app stores run by Apple and Google. That would make them more difficult to use in the U.S.

WeChat, which has more than 1 billion users, is less well-known than TikTok to Americans without a connection to China.

Mobile research firm Sensor Tower estimates about 19 million U.S. downloads of the app. But it is crucial infrastructure for Chinese people in the US to connect with friends and family in China and for anyone who does business with China. Within China, WeChat is censored and expected to adhere to content restrictions set by authorities. The Citizen Lab internet watchdog group in Toronto has said WeChat monitors files and images shared abroad to aid its censorship in China.

Centre issues 'Rules of Origin' norms for imports under FTAs

AGENCIES

New Delhi, August 23: The Union government has come up with guidelines for the enforcement of the 'rules of origin' for imports under trade agreements. The Customs (Administration of Rules of Origin under Trade Agreements) Rules, 2020 (CAROTAR) will come into effect September 21, 2020.

The Department of Revenue circular noted that the 'Rules of Origin', by virtue of which a good attains origin of a country, have evolved with subsequent reviews of trade agreements and most trade agreements have moved from single general rule to specific rule for most of the tariff lines, with inclusion of vast array of processes which can confer origin.

Section 28DA of the Customs Act, 1962 makes it incumbent upon an importer to possess sufficient information as regards the manner in which country of origin criteria, including the regional value content and product-specific criteria, specified in the Rules of Origin in the trade agreement, are satisfied.

For this purpose, CAROTAR, 2020 has provided a form, containing a list of basic minimum information which an importer is required to obtain while importing



The Department of Revenue circular noted that the 'Rules of Origin', by virtue of which a good attains origin of a country, have evolved with subsequent reviews of trade agreements

Section 28DA of the Customs Act, 1962 makes it incumbent upon an importer to possess sufficient information as regards the manner in which country of origin criteria, specified in the Rules of Origin in the trade agreement

goods under claim of preferential rate of duty.

"Therefore, in case there is a doubt with regard to origin of goods, information should be first called upon from the importer of the goods, in terms of rule 5 read with rule 4 of CAROTAR, 2020, before initiating verification with the partner country in terms of rule 6," said the circular dated August 21.

The CAROTAR, 2020 and 'Rules of Origin' notified for a trade agreement in terms of sub-section (1) of section 5 of the Customs Tariff Act, 1975, broadly provide the following grounds for verification including - in case of a doubt regarding the genuineness of the Certificate of Origin (CoO) such as any deficiency in the format of the certificate or mismatch of signatures or seal when compared with specimens on record. Verification requests should be forwarded to the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) based upon standard operating procedures.

In case several certificates pertaining to identical items are under review or scrutiny, only representative certificates should be forwarded to the board to cause verification along with a list of all Certifications of Origin to which the field formation aims to apply the result of such verification.

Representative CoOs may be selected in such a manner to ensure that they cover each of the exporters, importers and the prescribed originating criteria. Similarly, should the proper officer feel the need to verify documents to establish compliance of direct consignments, the circular said.

SHORT TAKES

'Housing finance next key focus'

Mumbai: Having stabilised the ship after some reverses on its flagship micro loans due to demonetisation and the humbling experience with large corporate exposures, Bandhan Bank now wants to focus on the home loan segment, a top executive has said. The housing finance book is targeted to grow five times to ₹1 lakh crore in the next five years from the present level of nearly ₹20,000 crore, its CEO and MD Chandra Shekhar Ghosh said.

PSBs may go for share sale

New Delhi: As many as five large banks, including SBI, PNB and BoB, are likely to sell shares to institutional investors in the second half of this fiscal as they look to shore up their capital base amid the coronavirus pandemic impacting the economy. Qualified Institutional Placement would be the most preferred way and public sector banks (PSBs) are likely to take a call on taking this route after finalisation of their second quarter results, merchant banking sources said.

FPIs invest ₹41K cr in Aug so far

New Delhi: Overseas investors have put in ₹41,330 crore in Indian markets on net basis in August so far as the excess liquidity in global markets found its way to emerging markets like India. According to the depositories data, foreign portfolio investors (FPI) pumped in ₹40,262 crore into equities and ₹1,068 crore in the debt segment between August 3-21. Prior to this, FPIs were net buyers for two consecutive months.

Auto demand picking up: TKM

New Delhi: Automobile demand is picking up but the over-sensitivity and jitteriness of financial companies such as banks and NBFCs are dampening the real conversion of orders to deliveries, according to a senior official of Toyota Kirloskar Motor (TKM). With the kicking off of festive season, TKM has witnessed up to 30% higher flow of orders in August compared to July, although in the last four months it has ensured that 25% of wholesale is reduced every month in order to avoid inventory pile-up at its dealers.

BIZ BUZZ

Gadkari to inaugurate 35 highway projects

New Delhi: Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari will Tuesday inaugurate and lay the foundation stones of 35 highway projects in Madhya Pradesh. These projects for inauguration and foundation-laying account for a road length of 1,139 km, and involving construction value of more than ₹9,400 crore, an official statement said. The projects include construction of a four-lane road over bridge (ROB) on the Katin-Beena section of NH-934 and a two-lane ROB on the Sagur-Khuraj-Bina section of NH-934, both under EPC mode. The construction of a major bridge at Betwa river (436 metre) at km 81/2 on NH-539 on EPC mode and construction of high-level bridge across Kshipra river at Km 20/2 on Indore Betul section of NH-47 on EPC mode" are also among the planned projects to be inaugurated Tuesday.



'Jindal Aluminium increasing focus on defence'

Mumbai: Jindal Aluminium, which controls over 30% of the domestic market, is increasing its focus on the defence and aerospace segments as it expects these sectors to be more active given the policy changes allowing private players, says a senior company official. The ₹3,000-crore Bangalore-based company is also the second largest maker of aluminium flat rolled products, producing 50,000 million tonnes of rolled products, giving it 10-12% of the market; and 120,000 million tonnes of extruded products per annum. Its products reach 42 countries globally, contributing 15-20% of its topline annually, says vice-chairman and MD Pragnu Jindal Khaitan, the grandson of the group founder and chairman Sitaram Jindal.



RINL, POSCO to form JWG

New Delhi: The Ministry of Steel has asked RINL and South Korean player POSCO to form a joint working group to oversee their plans of setting a green-field project in Andhra Pradesh. The South Korean steel major and state-owned RINL have been in talks for quite some time over their plans to set up a joint venture (JV) for manufacturing value-added special grade of steel.



According to a ministry update, "The way forward for the proposed greenfield investment project by POSCO Steel at Visakhapatnam was discussed with the representatives of POSCO Steel...through a video conference. "It was agreed to set up a Joint Working Group (JWG) consisting of representatives from POSCO and RINL to facilitate the implementation of MoU signed between the two companies regarding investment on land owned by RINL."

Rising risk of stagflation hovers over Indian economy

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, August 23: India's economy which is already reeling under immense turbulence unleashed by the COVID-19 pandemic, now faces an ever increasing risk of stagflation, experts opined.

The economic trend of stagflation is marked by rising inflation and falling GDP growth.

"In our opinion, the risks of stagflation which is a painful phase of low or negative growth and high inflation have visibly increased for the Indian economy," Suman Chowdhury, Chief Analytical Officer at Acuite Ratings and Research, told IANS.

"Unless food inflation is controlled in the short term, such an environment may set in where mon-

etary and fiscal policies may not easily be effective, aggravating the challenge for the policy makers."

Experts have blamed intermittent local lockdowns and higher money supply for the flare-up in inflationary pressures.

"Current set of data showing high retail inflation and a contraction in growth. This is akin to the phenomenon of stagflation. However, the current situation has emerged due to the impact of pandemic and is more cyclical in nature," Sunil Kumar Sinha, Principal Economist, India Ratings & Research, told IANS.

"Nevertheless, if these data trends continue in the medium term then the economy runs the risk of entering into stagflation."

The local lockdowns have espe-



Liquidity is not the reason for the recession. The economy was decelerating even before the crisis but after the pandemic struck, there is a decline in GDP which is mainly due to the lockdown that has caused both the demand and supply to contract

M GOVINDA RAO | CHIEF ECONOMIC ADVISOR, BRICKWORK RATINGS

cially been cited as a key factor for the supply side disruptions, particularly for perishable agricultural products which have massively contributed to the rise in inflation of certain food items.

Consequently the rise in retail inflation in the short term led the

RBI's MPC to hold the interest rates in August and has diminished the likelihood of any further rate cut in the near term.

"At present, supply disruptions caused by localised lockdowns and

intermittent heavy rainfall, as well as taxation changes and modifications necessitated by social distancing, are outweighing faltering demand,

which is raising the unpalatable likelihood of a stagflation-like scenario arising," said Aditi Nayar, Principal Economist, ICRA.

According to Madhavi Arora, Lead Economist, FX and Rates for Edelweiss Securities: "Amid consistent supply shocks, we now see inflation hovering above 6 per cent in the near term, and av-

eraging over 5.5 per cent in FY21."

"Headline CPI inflation will likely be below 4 per cent by year-end with rebalancing of effective demand-supply dynamics, sharply widening output gap and favourable base effect. We maintain further scope for upto 50 bps cut in the current cycle, but with MPC's desire for statistical reflection of durably low inflation, near term cuts may be ruled out. Irrespective of the policy stance, RBI's yield curve management in the form of outright OMOs and operation twist will continue."

However, M Govinda Rao, Chief Economic Advisor, Brickwork Ratings, said: "What we see now is a recession combined with inflation. The decline in the GDP two successive quarters is called recession."

SHORT TAKES

Backing IPL to show right way

New Delhi: Top Indian wrestler Bajrang Punia has said that the start of the IPL will bring positivity among all the sports disciplines worldwide. He said that if the UAE manages to host the lucrative league without any hassles then other sports disciplines can also think of resuming events. "Safety of everybody is important. If the IPL finishes without any bad news of coronavirus, then I think other sports organisers can also plan on holding the events (with all precautions) in future," Bajrang said. Former World Championship bronze medalist boxer Gaurav Bidhuri had also shared the same sentiment. "Yes, it would be good for us once the IPL begins. We all will get an idea of what precautions and steps we need to take," Bidhuri stated.

3 honoured

Dubai: Legendary South African all-rounder Jaques Kallis, Pakistan batting great Zaheer Abbas and Pune-born former Australian captain Lisa Sthalekar were Sunday inducted into the International Cricket Council's (ICC) Hall of Fame in a virtual ceremony. Kallis represented South Africa in 166 Tests, 328 ODIs and 25 T20s between 1995 and 2014. He is the only player to score at least 10,000 runs and take at least 250 wickets in both Test and ODI formats. The ICC conducted the ceremony virtually owing to the COVID-19 pandemic. "It is something that I never expected when I started playing. I certainly did not play for any accolades. I only wanted to win games for whoever I was playing for," said Kallis in an ICC release.

Stay extended

Chennai: Two-time ISL champion Chennaiyin FC announced Sunday that Indian midfielder Germanpreet Singh has extended his stay at the club by signing a new multi-year contract. The 24-year old player from Punjab will be featuring for the club for a fourth straight season. "I am incredibly proud to continue playing for Chennaiyin FC. I have witnessed three great years here already, and the journey so far has been amazing with lots of learning and development," Germanpreet was quoted as saying in a release. "But I believe the best is ahead of me. Chennai is my adopted home with CFC. Our passionate fans are my family. I view this as a new start of an exciting journey," he added.

Some relief

Athens: Manchester United captain Harry Maguire's trial on charges of assault and attempted bribery has been postponed until Tuesday after he testified before a prosecutor. The three defendants are not obliged to attend the trial and are free to return home, a source from the prosecutor's office said here Sunday. The footballer left the court building in a van for an undisclosed place. He and two others were charged with multiple instances of assault and battery in regard to a fight they had with others on Mykonos, an island in the Aegean Sea. They have also been charged with attempted bribery and assault against a policeman.

Missing fans

Sydney: The Australian cricket team departed Sunday for a tour to England like no other in the long history between the two nations. The teams will meet in three one-day and three T20 games in stadiums without fans, played under strict bio-security protocols. Australia haven't played a match since March 13. England however have played a series against West Indies and are currently playing against Pakistan. Steve Smith who is back at the helm as skipper said he is eager to play again, but will miss crowds. "I do like batting there (England)," Smith said at the airport here. "But unfortunately there's no crowd there to egg me on and give me a bit more motivation. I will miss the booping of the fans," he added.

STAR SPRINTER FEELS AWARD WILL MOTIVATE HER TO QUALIFY FOR TOKYO OLYMPICS

Arjuna, a huge booster: Dutee

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, August 23: Her personal best is not yet enough to make the cut for the Tokyo Games. However, India's top sprinter and national record holder in the 100 metres, Dutee Chand has said her selection for the Arjuna Award has come at the right time. It would motivate her to breach the 'difficult' Olympic qualification mark.

The 24-year-old Dutee, silver medalist in both the 100m and 200m in the 2018 Asian Games, was Friday selected for the honour along with 26 others. She has a personal best of 11.22 seconds which she recorded last year. The Olympic qualification mark is set at 11.15 seconds.

"The Arjuna has come at the right time. Any recognition by the government for your performances and achievements always boosts the confidence of an athlete," Dutee stated Sunday.

"This should give me more strength and confidence in my efforts to do well in the Olympics. I hope to qualify for my second Olympics in Tokyo next year and do my best there. It will be tough (to breach 11.15 seconds), but I am confident to breach it. This award will give

me the boost in my efforts," added Dutee.

Currently, however, the pandemic has affected her training schedule. However, she is doing the best she can as the place she stays here has all the training facilities.

Dutee, the reigning World University Games 100m champion, said she does not mind

ernment, I do not require anything else," she added.

Dutee is keenly waiting to start the full-intensity training which she can't undertake at present

For any athlete government recognition is important. The same holds true for me. It will be tough to qualify (for Olympics), but I am confident I will do it

DUTEE CHAND

missing out on receiving the award from President Ram Nath Kovind. This time the ceremony will be held online, August 29 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"An award or an honour from the government is always welcomed any time. Of course, it would be a great occasion to receive the award from the president in a (physical) ceremony. But it is all right, I am happy that I have been chosen for the award," Dutee informed. "My achievements through hard work have been recognised by the gov-

due to coronavirus-forced restrictions.

"I don't have a physio, no masseur. They cannot be here due to the pandemic. My coach (N Ramesh) can only talk through WhatsApp video what I have to do. But that is not enough," Dutee informed.

"I don't think any athlete can do intensive training till the pandemic is there. I really want to start full-fledged training, but I don't know when that is possible," the athlete signed off.



TAGS MODI, RIJITU IN TWEET

Sakshi miffed at not getting the nod



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, August 23: Olympic bronze medalist Sakshi Malik expressed Sunday her displeasure at missing out on the Arjuna Award this year in a tweet. It has been tagged also to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju.

"I am proud to have been conferred with the 'Khel Ratna'. Every sports person dreams of winning all the awards. A sports person puts life at risk for it. I also dream of seeing Arjuna Award winner tag against my name," the 27-year old wrestler wrote.

"Which other medal should I get for the country to be honoured with the Arjuna Award? Or in this wrestling life, I would never have the good luck of winning this award?" Sakshi, who has also won the Padma Shri, said.

The Justice (ret'd) Mukundakam Sharma-led selection committee had recommended 29 names for the Arjuna Award to the Sports Ministry. The list included Sakshi

A sports person puts life at risk for achieving success. I have dreamt of seeing the Arjuna Award winner tag against my name always

SAKSHI MALIK

and 2017 weightlifting World Champion Mirabai Chanu, but the decision of bestowing the Arjuna on them was left to the discretion of the Sports Ministry.

The Ministry decided against bestowing the Arjuna on Sakshi and Mirabai as the two have already been conferred with the 'Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna Award'.

It should be stated here that since winning the bronze medal at the Rio Olympics in 2016, the wrestler has not done much of note save getting a medal of the same colour at the Gold Coast Commonwealth Games. Her form has been on the downside for the last couple of years.

FIDE ONLINE CHESS OLYMPIAD

Praggnanandhaa, Deshmukh help India overpower China

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, August 23: R Praggnanandhaa and Divya Deshmukh started with crucial wins as India stunned Sunday a formidable China 4-2 in the ninth and final preliminary round to make the quarterfinals of the FIDE Online Chess Olympiad. The Indian team, finished at the top of Pool A. They will play the quarterfinals against a yet-to-be-decided opponent August 28.

Four draws and two wins on under-20 boards helped India pull off the victory against China. The 15-year-old Praggnanandhaa appeared to be on the ropes, but managed to turn the tables on Liu Yan and finished with a perfect 6/6

score. Divya, a former World under-10 and 12 champion beat Jiner Zhu to underline her potential.

Vidit Gujrathi, the Indian captain, then held World No.3 Ding Liren to a creditable draw on the top board while P Harikrishna also shared honours with Yangyi Yu. Then Koneru Humpy signed peace with the women's World No.1 Yifan Hou as did D Harika against the current World Champion Wenjun Ju.

India claimed the top spot in Pool A with 17 points and 39.5 board points and became the first team to qualify for the quarterfinals. China were second with 16 points.

Harikrishna said he was delighted with the win over China and credited youngsters - Praggnanandhaa and Divya for it.



GOOD SHOW: R Praggnanandhaa achieved a vital win for the Indian chess team

No 'rest' for skipper Kohli

AGENCIES

Dubai, August 23: For India and captain of the Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) teams Virat Kohli the word 'rest' doesn't exist. Kohli has reached here with other members of the RCB team Friday. Since then, he is keeping himself busy in isolation by doing strenuous workouts. It should also be stated here that RCB's South African cricketers - AB de Villiers and Dale Steyn reached here Saturday.

All the players will be in quarantine for the next few days and they will undergo multiple coronavirus tests. Only after their reports come out negative they will be allowed to enter the training arena. But for Kohli the quarantine period does not mean 'rest'.

Kohli posted a picture of his Sunday on his Instagram account after a strenuous workout session. He captioned the picture, "Keep putting in the work." Later in the day RCB shared the same picture on their official Twitter handle captioning it, "No days off

for captain Kohli."

IPL-2020 is crucial for RCB. Kohli and his mates will be very keen to break their IPL jinx. RCB has reached the final of the event a number of times, but have not been able to lay their hands on the trophy. This year, they will certainly put in their very best to get the title.

The IPL-13 matches will be played across three venues in the UAE - Sharjah, Abu Dhabi and Dubai. The tournament will last 53 days.



BFI not surprised at ministry rebuff for Bardhan, Sarkar

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kolkata, August 23: The Bridge Federation of India (BFI) is not surprised by the omission of 2018 Asian Games gold medal winners Pranab Bardhan and Shibnath Sarkar from the Arjuna Awards list this year. Officials of the BFI said they knew that the recognition will take time to come.

Sarkar and Bardhan were nominated for Arjuna by the BFI but their names were not there in the list of 27 recommended to the Sports Ministry.

The names picked for the national sports awards this time however, have raised a few eyebrows. The name that has evoked the maximum amount of surprise is that of padder Manika Batra. She was recommended for the Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna award despite her winning the Arjuna in 2018.

BFI general secretary Anand (KS) Samant was asked if Sarkar and Bardhan had got a raw deal. "There is a process where an athlete's performance is measured over a period of four years and not just by one achievement. Unfortunately, Bardhan and Sarkar have not won anything significant after the 2018 Asian Games gold. To be fair to them, this COVID-19 pandemic has also played a big part in curtailing their chances," said Samant.

MEN'S TENNIS RESTARTS AFTER A FIVE-MONTH HIATUS

Murray grinds to first victory in nine months

ASSOCIATED PRESS

New York, August 23: Andy Murray wore a coronavirus-conscious mask on his way to the unusual, no-spectators setting and avoided handshakes when he left. In between, the three-time Grand Slam champion offered his usual mix of hustling and muttering.

Murray's first match in nine months as he resumes his climb back from two hip operations came at the first ATP tournament for anyone in five months. In the match Murray achieved a 7-6 (8-6), 3-6, 6-1 victory over Frances Tiafoe at the Western & Southern Open here Saturday.

"Physically, I thought I did pretty well," said Murray, who won Wimbledon twice and the US Open in 2012. "I moved maybe better than what I expected to," the former World No. 1 added.

The men's tennis tour had been suspended since March because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Murray moved into a second-round test against No. 5 seed Alexander Zverev. Other men advancing Saturday included two-time Grand Slam runner-up Kevin



WINNING RETURN: Andy Murray clenches his fist after winning a point during his encounter Saturday against Frances Tiafoe at New York. PTI PHOTO

Anderson, Canadians Milos Raonic, Felix Auger-Aliassime and Denis Shapovalov, and Americans Taylor Fritz and Reilly Opelka.

"To have no sound during the whole match, it was really odd," said No. 15 seed Auger-Aliassime, the

first winner of an ATP match since March, 6-4, 6-1 against Nikoloz Basilashvili.

Shapovalov had a similarly straightforward victory over 2014 US Open champion Marin Cilic, winning the day's last match 6-3, 6-3.

ALL PLAYERS TO UNDERGO SIX-DAY QUARANTINE

DC, SRH last teams to arrive in UAE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dubai, August 23: Wearing masks and face shields, Delhi Capitals (DC) and Sunrisers Hyderabad's (SRH) Indian players and support staff arrived Sunday here for the upcoming IPL-13. The tournament will be played in the UAE from September 19 to November 10.

The Hyderabad-based franchise landed in the city first. They were soon followed by the team from the Indian capital, which flew into the UAE via Mumbai. The players will be undergoing a mandatory six-day quarantine which is in line with the standard operating procedure (SOP) issued by the BCCI.

RT-PCR tests will be performed on everyone on day one, three and six of the quarantine period. All the players who return negative for all the three tests will be entering the tournament bio-bubble.

Delhi Capitals chief executive officer Dhiraj Malhotra and assistant coach Mohammad Kaif shared



Shikhar Dhawan of DC with a health worker upon his arrival in Dubai, Sunday

their thoughts, having met their players after a long time.

"We are all really excited that cricket is back, and that the team are together again. It is like meeting your own family, meeting your long lost friends. So it is just a really overwhelming phase for all of

us," Malhotra was quoted as saying in a press release.

"We will be undergoing three more tests, and hopefully everyone's reports will come out negative, and then we can get back on to the field to start practicing," added Kaif.

Azhar scripts Pak fightback

AGENCIES

Southampton, August 23: Pakistan fought back to reach 158 for five at tea on the third day of the third and final cricket match against England at the Rose Bowl here Sunday. Skipper Azhar Ali (82 batting, 183b, 12x4) held the innings together with an 83-run for the sixth wicket with Mohammad Rizwan (13 batting). England in their first innings had scored a mammoth 583 for eight declared.

Earlier, resuming at their overnight score of 24 for three, Pakistan lost Asad Shafiq (5) early on. The batsman was dismissed by James Anderson, his fourth wicket of the innings. It took Anderson's tally to 597 wickets in Tests, just three short of the magic 600-wicket mark. However then first with Fawad Alam (21) and then with Riwan a fightback was scripted by Ali. **Brief scores:** England 583 for 8 declared, Pakistan 158 for 5 (Azhar Ali 82 batting, James Anderson 4/38).