



## GENDER DISPARITY

Actor Bhumi Pednekar says female characters are whitewashed on screen and there is a need to change that notion

LEISURE P2



## LOCKDOWN IN KOLKATA

Restrictions were imposed as part of Bengal govt's decision to enforce biweekly total lockdown to curb COVID-19

TWO STATES P7



## PENCE WARNS VOTERS

US VP Mike Pence warned Americans that they will not be safe if Democrat Joe Biden wins the prez election

INTERNATIONAL P10



Students are young. They should be brave. They shouldn't be afraid of COVID!

## SHORT TAKES

### Petrol price hiked 10 times in 12 days

**Bhubaneswar:** The price of petrol was hiked by 10 paise in the state capital Thursday, while the price of diesel remained unchanged. Now petrol is available for ₹82.44 in City and diesel price for ₹80.09. Diesel price has remained unchanged in Bhubaneswar since August 1. Meanwhile, state-owned oil marketing companies (OMCs) increased the price of petrol by 10 paise per litre in Delhi, while it was hiked by nine paise/litre in Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai.

### 4 killed as vehicles collide in City

**Bhubaneswar:** Four persons were killed in a major road mishap after a speeding car hit their vehicle at Nalco Square here late Wednesday night. The deceased were identified as Debabrata Dash (30), Subhadra Dash (60), Priyabrata Dash (32) and Barada Prasad Parida, 30. The deceased were close friends, staying at Sector II in Niladri Vihar area under Chandrasekharpur police limits. Barada Prasad Parida who was an employee of a private firm here had gone to Balasore for some company related work along with his friends.

MARKET WATCH	
INDEX	VARIATION
SENSEX	39113.47 ↑ 39.55
NIFTY	11559.30 ↑ 9.70
DOLLAR	74.20 ↓ ₹0.07
EURO	87.56 ↓ ₹0.43
GOLD	₹50,694 ↓ ₹1085
SILVER	₹65,104 ↓ ₹2425

WEATHER		
	BHUB	CTK
TEMP MAX	31.5°C	32.2°C
TEMP MIN	24.0°C	22.5°C
Humidity	98%	85%
Rainfall	5.4mm	Nil
Forecast	Generally cloudy sky	

# No money, borrow via RBI: FM

Even as states stare at ₹2.35L cr GST revenue shortfall; Centre gives 2 options

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, August 27:** Amid a chorus by non-NDA ruled states for compensation of GST revenue shortfall, the Centre Thursday presented two options to states under which they can borrow from the market to make up for the estimated deficit of ₹2.35 lakh crore this fiscal.

At the end of a five-hour long meeting of the GST Council, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said there was no proposal to raise tax rates to make up for the shortfall that has been compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic. Citing a legal opinion from the Attorney General, she ruled out the Centre making good the shortfall from either its coffers or borrowing against its balance sheet.

The deficit can be made good by states borrowing using a special window, she said, adding this loan can be repaid after five years from the collection of GST cess. If states agree to either of the options, it would effectively mean that cess would continue beyond five years of the GST rollout.

In 2017, all states agreed to subsume their local taxes such as VAT into the new, nationwide Goods and Services Tax (GST) in return for the Centre promising to make good any loss of revenue in the first five years.

But with the economy slowing down, ₹70,000-crore shortfall was seen in the



last fiscal and this year it is estimated to widen to ₹2.35 lakh crore.

Revenue Secretary Ajay Bhushan Pandey said out of this amount, only about ₹97,000 crore is attributable to the implementation of GST, while the rest in on account of the coronavirus pandemic hitting the economy.

Pandey, who is also the Finance Secretary, said while GST collections have been impacted by the pandemic this year, there was a shortfall of ₹70,000 crore in 2019-20 (April 2019 to March 2020) which was made good from the surplus of previous two years.

When GST was implemented in 2017, the Centre had promised to compensate states for any revenue loss for five years from a pool created by levying cess

Citing a legal opinion from the Attorney General, Finance Minister ruled out the Centre making good the shortfall from either its coffers or borrowing against its balance sheet

The deficit can be made good by states borrowing using a special window, she said, adding this loan can be repaid after five years from the collection of GST cess

over and above the GST on luxury and sin goods. This cess pool generated a surplus in the first two years but witnessed a deficit in FY20 as well as the current fiscal. Detailing the options presented to the states, Sitharaman

## STATE DEMANDS PENDING DUES

**BHUBANESWAR:** With the revenue collection of Odisha declining drastically due to COVID-19 pandemic, the state government has once again raised the demand for early release of ₹3647 crore compensation from the Centre under the Goods and Services Tax (GST). State Finance Minister Niranjan Pujari has raised the demand during the GST Council meeting Thursday. The state government has estimated compensation of ₹3,647 crore for the first four months of the current financial year 2020-21. The dues for the first two months were ₹2,443 crore, which increased to ₹3,647 crore by the end of July. However, the Centre has not released a single paise as GST compensation for 2020-21 fiscal, official sources said. Apart from ₹3,674 crore pending as on date for the current fiscal, the Centre is yet to clear dues of the previous financial years. The total dues pending with the Centre add up to over ₹4,200 crore. After receiving a written communication from the Centre on the options offered by the Union Finance Minister during the meeting, the state government said it will examine the proposals and act accordingly, the source said.

## State's COVID-19 tally crosses 90,000 mark

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, August 27:** Odisha's COVID-19 tally Thursday crossed the 90,000-mark with the highest single-day spike of 3,384 fresh cases, while the death toll rose to 448 as seven more patients succumbed to the disease, a health department official said.

The total number of coronavirus cases in the state now stands at 90,986, he said. The new cases were reported from all the 30 districts, while the fatalities were registered in four, he said. "Regret to inform the demise of seven #COVID-19 positive patients while under treatment in hospitals," the Health and Family Welfare Department said on Twitter.

Sambalpur reported three fresh fatalities, while Bargarh registered two deaths and one patient each from Bhandrak and Khurda districts succumbed to infection, the official said.

Ganjam accounted for 183 of the 448 COVID-19 deaths reported in Odisha so far, followed by 57 in Khurda district, he said. Fifty-three coronavirus patients have died in the state due to other ailments so far, he said. Of the fresh cases, 2,128 were detected in quarantine centres, while 1,256 people tested positive for the infection during contact tracing, the official said.

The state had registered its previous highest single day spike of 3,371 new cases Wednesday.

Odisha has 27,672 active cases at present, while 62,813 patients have recovered from the disease so far. The state has so far tested 15,53,257 samples for COVID-19, including 68,090 Wednesday, the official added.

# 7 killed, 2 missing in floods

## Over 3,000 houses damaged, standing crops affected

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, August 27:** At least seven people were killed and two persons went missing in the state due to heavy rain and subsequent flood.

"As per preliminary reports, seven people died due to heavy rainfall followed by floods in last three days. Of the dead, four were from Mayurbhanj district, while two from Keonjhar and one in Sundergarh district," Special Relief Commissioner (SRC) PK Jena said here Thursday. One person from Mayurbhanj district and another from Bargarh district are 'missing' in the flood, he said.

The government has so far evacuated about 7,000 people from low lying areas and sheltered them in safe places. Cooked food is being served to them, Jena said.

A number of villages have been marooned as road have been cut-off in some places and train services have been halted in Jharsuguda district, he said, adding, 3,000 houses are partially damaged, while few others are severely damaged.

The field officials reported that standing agricultural crops have been damaged in many districts. Officials will make assessment of damages and assistance will be paid to the affected as per relief code when water recedes, the SRC said.

Major rivers such as Baitarani, Brahmani, Jalaka, Subarnarekha



A marooned area in Balasore district

OP PHOTO

and Budhabalanga are in spate with their water flowing above the danger-mark, submerging low-lying areas and paddy fields in several districts, he said.

As the water level in Mahanadi is also increasing, adjacent areas may witness low to medium level flood in next couple of days, he stated. The water level in Mahanadi at Naraj was at 26.25 metres as against the danger mark of 26.41 metres.

The water level of Baitarani river at Anandpur in Keonjhar district stood at 39.5 metres at 6 pm as against the danger-mark of 38.36 metres, while the water level at Akhuapada in Bhandrak district was close to 20.06 metres as against the red-mark of 17.83 metres.

Budhabalanga and Subarnarekha

and Budhabalanga are in spate with their water flowing above the danger level at different places. Besides, the water level of the Jalaka river was at 6.89 metres as against the danger mark of 5.5 metres at Mathani in Balasore district, Jena said.

Medium-level floods in Baitarani, Brahmani and Subarnarekha rivers are expected and all precautionary measures have been taken to deal with the situation, he said.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik reviewed the preparedness Wednesday, he said. Chief Secretary AK Tripathy also held a review meeting with senior officials, including three revenue divisional commissioners and Collectors of Mayurbhanj, Balasore, Bhandrak, Jajpur, Kendrapara, Subarnapur and Boudh districts.

# Aadhaar not must for getting pension



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, August 27:** The Social Security and Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (SSEPD) department, Thursday, rolled back its order regarding mandatory requirement of Aadhaar for receiving pensions under different social security schemes.

In an order issued to all the District Collectors Thursday, SSEPD secretary Bhaskar Jyoti Sarma has asked the former to ensure that eligible beneficiaries are not deprived of any of pension schemes due to non-availability of Aadhaar.

"The state government has decided that an eligible beneficiary should not be denied pension for not having Aadhaar. If somebody is alive and identifiable as a beneficiary he/she should not be denied pension for not having Aadhaar," the letter from the department to the Collectors said.

It, however, asked them to ensure the issuance of Aadhaar to all the beneficiaries. The letter added, "It will be the responsibility of the local administration to identify these cases and provide them Aadhaar ID before the next phase of disbursement. A web-based system has now been put in place by which this data will be captured and monitored."

The department has decided to upload block-level information of uncovered beneficiaries (without Aadhaar) on the department website for monitoring of the officials and taking corrective measures.

The department has given the task to block/municipal authorities for providing Aadhaar cards to the deprived beneficiaries before the next round of pension disbursement.

## SOCIAL SECURITY SCHEMES

SSEPD secretary Bhaskar Jyoti Sarma has asked the District Collectors to ensure that eligible beneficiaries are not deprived of pensions due to non-availability of Aadhaar

Local administration was asked to identify those not having Aadhaar and provide them Aadhaar ID before the next phase of disbursement

This comes after several reports of the most vulnerable sections of society being allegedly denied pension by the government officials due to the order of the SSEPD dept

This comes after several reports of the most vulnerable sections of society being allegedly denied pension by the government officials due to the order of the SSEPD department.

"Please identify the pensioners whose Aadhaar could not be processed due to their disability such as blind persons/leprosy patients/very old persons/mentally retarded persons etc. Approval of competent authority may be expeditiously obtained for Aadhaar generation in such cases," Collectors were told in the official communication.

As per government figures, close to 8.5 lakh pension beneficiaries were expected to be deprived of pensions if Aadhaar was made mandatory for withdrawal of pensions.

The department handles the pensions given under the central scheme of National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) and state's pension scheme of Madhu Babu Pension Yojana (MBPY). These pensions are meant for the most vulnerable sections of the society like old, sick, transgender, widow and the differently-abled.

# Farmers driven to debt as banks turn risk-averse

AMID THE ECONOMIC SLOWDOWN, MILLIONS OF FARMERS ARE BEING SHUNNED BY BANKS AS LENDERS TURN CAUTIOUS DUE TO RISING BAD LOANS

REUTERS

**Mumbai, August 27:** Last month, Dnyaneshwar Siddhanth, a farmer from Maharashtra, was in desperate need of money to buy seed and fertilizer as the monsoon sowing season approached.

But after being rejected by his bank for a loan despite several attempts, Siddhanth finally borrowed ₹1.50,000 from a moneylender at an annual rate of 60%.

Amid the worst economic slowdown in decades due to the novel coronavirus pandemic, millions of farmers like Siddhanth are being shunned by banks as lenders turn cautious due to rising bad loans. That is forcing them to turn to il-

legal moneylenders who are charging exorbitant rates, according to over a dozen farmers and bankers.

Agriculture accounts for near 15% of India's \$2.8 trillion economy and is a source of livelihood for more than half of its 1.3 billion people. Higher interest rates will reduce farm earnings, impacting overall rural incomes which are key to reviving the economy.

"Most of the profit goes to paying interest to a private moneylender," Siddhanth said. "Everything now depends on monsoon rains. If the crops fail, then I will have to sell land to repay the loan."

## Lenders hamstrung

Till last year private moneylenders were charging 24-36% in-



terest, but are now asking for 48-60% as more farmers seek loans, said Prashant Kathe, another farmer who has borrowed 300,000 rupees at a 60% interest rate. Typically, banks charge anywhere between 4-10%

for crop related loans.

The Centre has been instructing banks to increase lending, but bankers say they are choosing to be cautious. Economists forecast India's economy to shrink by 5.1% in the

current fiscal year, the weakest performance since 1979.

Lenders also complain that they are caught up by farm loan waiver schemes announced by several governments to win over farmers ahead of elections.

"Even though some of the states announced the scheme years ago, the money has still not reached the bank so technically the farmer's account is a non-performing asset for us and we can't give more loans till the outstanding is cleared," said the head of agriculture lending at a large state-owned bank.

Last year, Maharashtra, the richest state in the country, had announced that banks will write off loans of up to ₹2,00,000 to distressed farmers.

Siddhanth, who already owed a bank 178,000 rupees from a previous loan, was covered under the scheme. However, the state government is yet to provide funds to repay it, and nearly one-third of the loan remains outstanding.

As of October 2019, 10 states that had announced farm loan waivers since 2014-15 had yet to complete the promised loan write-offs, according to local media reports.

"Only about 30-35% of the promised amount by the various state governments has been sanctioned to the bank," said a senior banker who didn't wish to be identified. The high level of bad loans in the agriculture sector is another deterrent to more lending. **MORE P11**

## BIG BROWN SUGAR HAUL SEIZED IN CITY

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, August 27:** The Special Task Force (STF) of Odisha Police has seized contraband brown sugar weighing over 4 kgs during a raid on the National Highway at Jamalpur in Jaleswar area of Balasore district late Wednesday night. The cops also succeeded in arresting two drug peddlers caught during the raid.

Speaking to the media, Director General of Police Abhay said that the seizure this time is the second biggest by the Odisha police. He however refused divulge further information in this regard as the investigation in a primary stage and sleuths have been trying to unearth all the links in connection with the racket.

# leisure

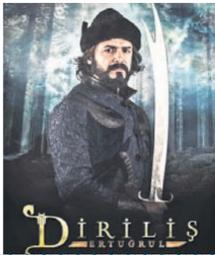


## KATY, ORLANDO BECOME PARENTS TO BABY GIRL

Pop star Katy Perry and her fiancé, actor Orlando Bloom, have welcomed their first child together. They have named her Daisy Dove Bloom. The Grammy-nominated singer and Bloom shared the news through UNICEF, where they serve as Goodwill Ambassadors.

## 'WATCHING TURKISH SERIES ERTUGRUL IS AGAINST SHARIAH'

The Turkish drama series *Dirilis Ertugrul* (Resurrection) is Pakistan's most viewed, loved and adored series. However, the country's biggest Islamic educational institution has declared watching the series against Shariah.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

GaneshSpeaks.com  
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FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181

**ARIES**  
You will be impulsive today, and this may throw up unexpected results. In a rush of enthusiasm, you may finish pending work and even be left with enough time to plan long-term goals. You may also realise and make amends for your past mistakes, says Ganesh.

**TAURUS**  
You may spend a majority of your time on your health and well-being today. Business lunch may see some pending negotiations reaching a successful outcome. Research work will progress better than expected, says Ganesh.

**GEMINI**  
Today, the bond that you share with your friends will get stronger. You are also likely to fall in love. If you are already in a relationship, you will plan to validate your bond either through an engagement or marriage. If you are a student, this is a good phase for you. Along with love, you will also get good grades.

**CANCER**  
There is every possibility that today, you will be probing and prying about your future, predicts Ganesh. A visit to a well-known astrologer cannot be ruled out. Also, you are likely to consult a doctor. It is all due to your bad lifestyle and habits.

**LEO**  
Fortune smiles on but a few, and when it does, it can take you to places you have never even dreamt of. Today is an exceptional day, in the sense that Lady Luck is backing you in all earnestness. So go with the flow and take your chances.

**VIRGO**  
If being humanitarian needed a definite physical form, you are most likely to be nominated. Such is the mix of values and practicality today, says Ganesh. Devise strategies to achieve more productivity. See the bigger picture, says Ganesh. This is not difficult considering you have a broad vision - with or without the glasses.

**LIBRA**  
If there's a knock on your door today, there's a very strong possibility it might be a marriage proposal. Don't get startled, and grab opportunities that come knocking (literally!). The stars send you a partner who shall be your match in every way. Have a long and happy married life, says Ganesh.

**SCORPIO**  
A happening day where a lot may happen today, suggests Ganesh. Grey hairs will teach valuable lessons, so keep your ears open to bosses and elders. Seniors will extend their best possible cooperation to you. Stay clear of courtrooms, warns Ganesh, lest the legalities sink you deep.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
Running helter-skelter and muddling of affairs is on the menu. Expect not to find even a moment's peace. But take a break, says Ganesh. And dive right back in the chaos and make the most of it.

**CAPRICORN**  
If wasteful expenditure has left your bank balance a tad below what you had anticipated, you will have reasons to rejoice today, says Ganesh. Cash inflow - and a substantial amount of it - is likely and will make you feel nice about your finances. Work will go on as usual. The only change may be a discernible change in the work ambience; it may get a little more comfortable.

**AQUARIUS**  
You are ambitious, and quite unapologetic about the way you pursue your goals! You will work hard and push your way through if you have to. Not just that, you will see to it that you have all the skills and competency required to make it big. Success is never served on a plate, and you know it, says Ganesh.

**PISCES**  
Fear is a part and parcel of life, and while it can not be eliminated, it can certainly be tamed, and that is what you will be doing today. All your suppressed audacity will be on full display, says Ganesh.

## Unit -VIII DAV launches Golden Jubilee celebrations



POST NEWS NETWORK

**BHUBANESWAR:** DAV Public School, Unit-VIII Thursday launched its Golden Jubilee celebrations here amidst a gathering of special invitees and staff maintaining all protocols of Covid-19. The celebration was inaugurated with the lighting of lamp by chairman of school managing committee Madan Mohan Panda, regional officer, DAV Institutions, K.C Satapathy and others. This was followed by the release of the Golden Jubilee innovative model 'NOVUSxpose' developed by the Atal Thinking Lab of the school depicting the amalgamation of ancient Indian Culture and modern science & technology. The occasion was also marked a memorable release of a special postal cover by the CPMG, Odisha Circle, Col. Jaleswar

Kanhar. The august gathering was motivated with a special address by Nisha Peshin, Director (Academics & Public Schools) and Brigadier A K Adlakha, Director (Administration) of DAV CMC New Delhi. The star attraction of the day, however, was the Foundation Day lecture by Shiv Khera, author, activist and motivational speaker. He spellbound the audience with his inspiring insights about coping up with the present scenario as an emotionally strong warrior. A storytelling session was also conducted by two eminent alumni of the school, storyteller Jhanja Das and cine artiste Bhoomika Dash. Principal Ipsita Das appealed the student community to prove themselves as good human beings having highest moral values to bring name and glory to their parents, school and society.

## Need to change depiction of genders: BHUMI

**Mumbai:** Actress Bhumi Pednekar says female characters are whitewashed on screen and there is a need to change that notion, because she believes women have superpowers.

"We need to change the depiction of genders. We need to change how we show women and men. Women are not supposed to be whitewashed - we have desires, we have ambition, we have physical needs and emotions, and we have the capacity to balance. I believe women have superpowers. I think we need to see a lot more of that in our cinema," Bhumi said. She added that there has to be a change also in the way men are shown on screen. "Similarly, we must alter the way men are shown in films. We put so much pressure on the male gender, telling them that they are supposed to be strong, that they can't cry, can't show emotion. That is so wrong. This narrative - 'mard ko dard nahi hota' or 'a man doesn't hurt' - needs to change," she said. Bhumi says cinema has a huge impact on its audience and it can be used to change the mindset of people in the most positive way. "I also be-

lieve we need to stop objectifying women and there needs to be a lot more inclusivity in films, including the LGBTQIA+ community. I know change is in the air. I just wish we could accelerate it. Like, I just watched *Super Deluxe* and I couldn't believe what I was watching," she said. Bhumi says there is great work happening in cinema. "I feel lucky to be part of the Hindi film industry at this point," she added.



Padmini Kolhapure

## 'Was called from school to help Lata Ji'

**Mumbai:** Actress Padmini Kolhapure got nostalgic about how she was once called from school to help legendary singer Lata Mangeshkar record a song for the Raj Kapoor hit, *Satyam Shivam Sundaram*.

The song Yashomati maiya se was picturised on Padmini for Kapoor's 1978 release starring Shashi Kapoor and Zeenat Aman. "I remember I was in school when I got a message from the Eros office that my father was there and I had to rush over immediately. Upon my arrival, I saw Lata ji and she made me sit close to her. She then asked me to sing a few lines of the song to her," recalled Padmini. "The way Lata ji sang the song, till today people think that I sang it. She sang it with such conviction and observed me so well to capture my image in the song that I was flabbergasted. This idea of Lata ji im-



itating me while I sing was the brain-child of Raj Kapoor," Padmini shared the anecdote, while shooting for an episode of *Sa Re Ga Ma Pa Li'l Champs*.

## Virushka set to welcome their first born in January

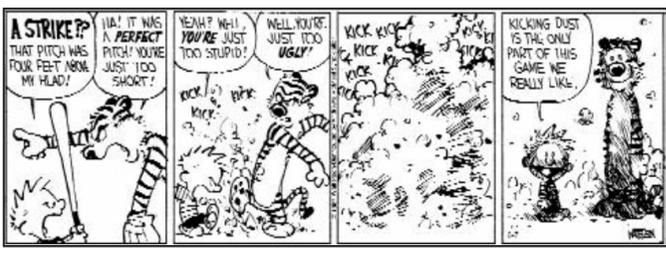


**A**ctress Anushka Sharma and her husband, Team India captain Virat Kohli, are set to become parents for the first time. The couple confirmed Thursday that they will welcome their first born in January 2021. The announcement came with a picture of the couple on Anushka and Virat's respective Instagram accounts, where her baby bump is visible. In the photograph, Anushka wears a black and white polka dotted dress, while Virat is seen in grey T-shirt and white pants. "And then, we were three! Arriving Jan 2021," Anushka captioned the image. Virat shared the same caption on his Instagram page. The couple tied the knot in December 2017 in Italy.

### PEANUTS



### CALVIN AND HOBBS

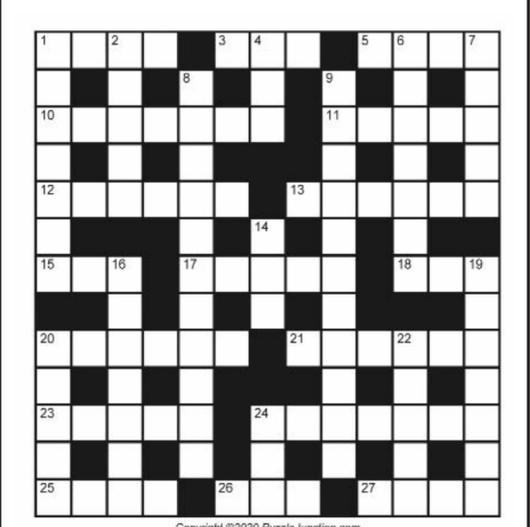


### BREVITY



### FUN post

### CROSSWORD



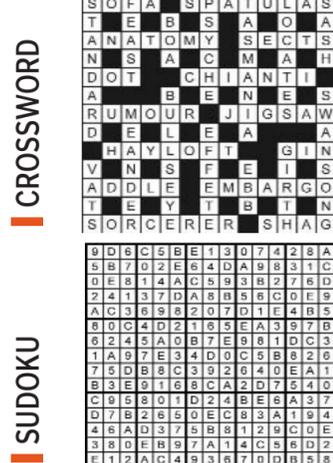
- Across**
- 1 Pitfall
  - 3 Like a wallflower
  - 5 Piquancy
  - 10 Shoreline problem
  - 11 Blood line
  - 12 Hangout for bats?
  - 13 Dense
  - 15 Dissolve
  - 17 Bakery emanation
  - 18 Jellied delicacy
  - 20 Crows
  - 21 Infirmary
  - 23 Kind of boom
  - 24 Sitting room
  - 25 Silent assents
  - 26 Bearded beast
  - 27 Like the Sahara
  - 6 On the way (2,5)
  - 7 Swap
  - 8 Communication wires (5,6)
  - 9 Agile crooks (3,8)
  - 14 Fiddle stick
  - 16 Emptied
  - 19 Swiss city
  - 20 Buffalo
  - 22 Weeper of myth
  - 24 Prospector's need
- Down**
- 1 Shake in one's boots
  - 2 Coral reef
  - 4 Rooster's mate

### SUDOKU

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



### SOLUTIONS

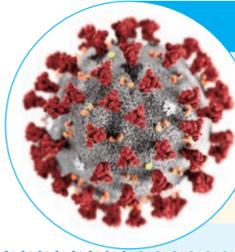


CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



## WOOD FOR HEARTH

A woman carrying firewood to home on the outskirts of Bhubaneswar, Thursday



## COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	2,44,66,049	1,69,67,210	8,32,242
India	33,10,234	25,23,771	60,472
Odisha	90,986	65,323	448

## MINERAL BLOCK AUCTION

# Mines and 'nepotism': The story continues

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, August 27:** Supreme Court advocate and activist Manohar Lal Sharma has sent a legal notice to the Centre and the Odisha state government accusing authorities in both of being 'hand in glove' with 10 bidders who were given mining lease of 20 mining blocks in the state through an e-auction.

The legal notice was sent to Union Minister of Coal Pralhad Joshi, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Principal Secretary PK Mishra, Union Mines Secretary Anil Kumar Jain, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, Odisha Mining Department Secretary Surendra Kumar and Director of Mines Debidutta Biswal. The notice alleges that their actions to alter or tweak conditions of the mandatory terms of auction/agreement/tenders for 20 iron ore mines to favour the new mine owners who bagged mines only this January even after the tender process was over will result in financial losses worth lakhs of crores of rupees to the state and central exchequer and thereby the people.

The legal notice says according to the notification issued for the e-auction 6 December 2020, the reserve price was set at 35% of the value of mineral dispatched for the mineral block and that the "value of mineral dispatched" shall be an amount equal to the product of (i) mineral dispatched in a month; and (ii) sale price of the mineral (grade-wise and state-wise) as published by the Indian Bureau of Mines.

It was also clarified that payment in accordance with the final price offer should be paid monthly in addition to the payment of royalty or dead rent, as applicable. According to the legal notice, the model of this auction was forward ascending as the successful bidder agreed to pay highest premium in terms of revenue share based on the average sale price of mineral as per the rules under the Mineral Concession Rules 2016.

Advocate Sharma stated that he had learnt from reliable sources that the successful bidders have approached all the 'accused' and the latter allegedly changed the terms of the tender documents/agreement to favour the successful bidders by converting av-



**THE LEGAL NOTICE WAS SENT TO UNION MINISTER OF COAL PRALHAD JOSHI, PM'S PRINCIPAL SECRETARY PK MISHRA, UNION MINES SECRETARY ANIL KUMAR JAIN, CHIEF MINISTER NAVEEN PATNAIK, ODISHA MINES DEPARTMENT SECRETARY SURENDRA KUMAR AND DIRECTOR OF MINES DEBIDUTTA BISWAL**

**THE 20 MINES INCLUDE 12 BLOCKS OF IRON ORE, SIX BLOCKS OF MANGANESE AND TWO BLOCKS OF IRON ORE AND MANGANESE BLOCKS**

erage rate of sale price.

Sharma further alleged that the 'above mentioned' people intend to include the transactions or transfers done by mining companies for their self-consumption or to some associated companies on cost plus basis to be included in the average sale price of IBM or National Mineral Index to bring down the IBM price of iron ore. This will unduly benefit these large companies as they would be exempt from paying royalty and premium.

Moreover, they are changing terms of payment for royalty upon iron ore from 15% to 5% which was one of the basic foundations for arriving at the cost to participate in bidding. Sharma also accused the recipients of the legal notice of lowering the percentage of "Fe" grade in iron ore from the auctioned mineral blocks from 62% even as all these mines have been producing high grade iron ore of above 62% Fe content for 50 years. Lowering the "Fe" contents of the iron ore to about 58% to 45% will reduce the actual value of the ore and give unlawful benefits to the bidders.

After the Cabinet gave consent to commercial mining of coal, it has now proposed certain "Aatmanirbhar" structural reforms for non-coal mineral sector. Joshi, Minister for Coal and Mines, described these as "more industry-friendly production friendly reforms" addressing a webinar organised by industry association FICCI earlier this month.

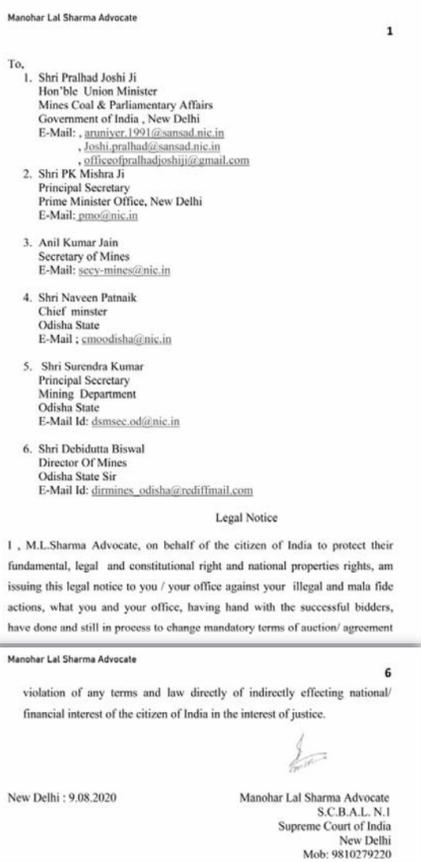
The proposed reforms have been put up on the Ministry's website on Monday 24 Aug 2020 which seeks comments before 3 September 2020. They in-

clude a rationalisation of taxes, a National Mineral Index (which royalty, DMF and other taxes will be based on) and relaxing conditions for mines allocated as 'captive'. These will be allowed to sell, from the current 25 percent up to 50 per cent of their raised ore in the open market, thus giving these companies an opportunity to rake in super normal profits at a high cost to the state.

While the going was good, which it has been for a long time for Odisha's high grade and bountiful iron ore mines, miners were happy to overlook some of the state's practices. Odisha charged royalty on the highest grade of ore and it did the same while calculating stamp duty. Indian Bureau of Mines (IBM) also included royalty—a cost that miners happily passed on to consumers—in its consideration of average sale price, in effect charging royalty on royalty. All of this is expected to be addressed by a National Mineral Index. Sharma's notice however contends that it can only result in lower collection of royalty for the state.

More importantly that it was unfair and illegal to change the rules of the game that decided who participated and who won mining rights only six months ago. The notice, a copy of which OrissaPost has reviewed, accuses successful bidders of "directly and indirectly approaching the ministry to influence it to manipulate mandatory terms of the tender documents and mining agreement (at the time of auction) to now favour them."

The activist advocate sometimes exasperates the Supreme Court with his persistent petitions. They



The first and last pages of advocate Manohar Lal Sharma's legal notice to Union Mines Minister Pralhad Joshi

aren't however, always dismissed. In July last year the SC asked the Centre to respond to Sharma's petition accusing the Government of causing huge losses to the exchequer by allowing more than 358 mines to continue while introducing auctions into the MMDR Act in 2015.

Quoting the landmark coal block allocation case in which he was the first petitioner; the notice warns, "...changes of any terms with effect to directly or indirectly attract financially injury to the state and central exchequer or a serious financial loss to public money will attract prosecution under Sections 309, 120-b, 420 of IPC read with PC Act jointly and severally to all involved persons as already applied in the WP (CRL) 120 of 2012 in Manohar Lal Sharma vs Principal Secretary and others."

The Odisha government is seeing its revenues shrinking as swiftly as the spread of the virus. Overwhelmed by both, it takes solace in the

fact that mining has managed to do better than other sectors through the lockdown period.

Covid19 brought the state to its knees – Odisha was among the first to announce a lockdown – but not the mining sector; apparently.

With permission of the district Collectors, the new owners of these mines – JSW Steel, ArcelorMittal-Nippon JV, Jagat Janani and others conducted 'bhumi pujas' for an auspicious start.

The auction, in January this year, of some of the best endowed deposits in the country was a whopping success by the state's own estimates, based on the committed premiums, some as high as 154 per cent. What this translates to is an additional cost greater than the value of the ore. Speaking on condition of confidentiality, senior bureaucrats in the central ministry concede this is an "unviable business model that can only lead to rent-seeking."

## POLITICKLE by MANJUL



## STATE INSTITUTE OF HOTEL MANAGEMENT, BALANGIR

Titilagarh Road, Balangir - 767001 (Odisha)  
(ESTABLISHED BY MINISTRY OF TOURISM, GOVT. OF INDIA & DEPT. OF TOURISM, GOVT. OF ODISHA) NCHMCT

### ADMISSION OPEN FOR HOTEL MANAGEMENT COURSES

COURSES	DURATION	QUALIFICATION	AGE LIMIT
1. Diploma In Front Office Operation	1 1/2 Year	10+2 pass or equivalent	25 Years as on 1st July 2020 for General/OBC candidates & 28 Years for SC/ST candidates
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. Craftsmanship Certificate Course In Food & Beverage Service	06 Months	10th pass	
6. Craftsmanship Certificate Course In Food Production	1 1/2 Year	10th pass	

**LAST DATE OF ADMISSION: 31.08.2020 FOR FURTHER DETAILS**  
Visit our website - [www.sihmbalangir.org](http://www.sihmbalangir.org), e-mail: [admissions@sihmbalangir.org](mailto:admissions@sihmbalangir.org)  
Contact No. 9348849484, 6370180040, 9437140772, 9437030720

## Naveen dials PM for deferment of NEET, JEE

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, August 27:** Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, Thursday, spoke to Prime Minister Narendra Modi over phone and requested him to postpone NEET and JEE exams, in view of COVID-19 pandemic and the flood situation in the state, a senior official said.

Two days ago, the CM had written a letter in this regard to Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank'. Patnaik, during his conversation

with the Prime Minister, explained that Odisha is in the grip of a pandemic as well as flood, and students might face difficulties in appearing for the examinations, the official at the Chief Minister's office told reporters.

The CM, in his letter to Nishank Tuesday, had urged the Centre to take steps for postponing the Joint Entrance Examination (Main) and the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) as it "will be unsafe for students to physically appear for the exams amid the pandemic".

The National Testing Agency (NTA) has scheduled medical and engineering entrance exams – NEET and JEE (Main) – in September.

Around 50,000 students in Odisha are set to appear for NEET and over 40,000 for JEE (Main), officials said.

Over the past week, heavy rain, triggered by back-to-back formation of low-pressure systems over the Bay of Bengal, battered the state, submerging low-lying areas, snapping road links and claiming at least two lives.

## CB's 70 posers for Aditya's wife

**Bhubaneswar:** The Crime Branch, which is probing the motivational speaker Aditya Dash's death case, Thursday, carried out a lie detection test on the deceased's wife Bidyashree. The test was conducted at State Forensic Science Laboratory (SFL) here. The test reportedly lasted for five hours and as many as 70 questions were posed to Bidyashree during the test. The investigating agency will reportedly do the test on three more persons: Papu, Bikash and Pritam.

## State bags 2 Tech Sabha awards

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, August 27:** Driven by the talisman of 5T model of governance, the state government has bagged two awards at the recently concluded Tech Sabha awards for its technology applications – ILM & Covid Dashboard.

Technology Sabha awards are given to government departments that demonstrate innovative use of technology for distinct benefits

to the stakeholders.

State government's Integrated Legal Monitoring System (ILMS) has been rolled out in 12 departments to take on the critical challenge of case pendency. Electronic and IT department has developed the system, which was first implemented in School and Mass Education department. Within two years of implementation of the system, the pendency has been reduced to 24,000 in 2020 from 80,000 cases in 2017.

Engineered with precision and now recognised globally, state government's COVID dashboard won the award for excellence in analytics and big data applications category. The state government has been continuously introducing new practices in governance amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, many of which are driven by technology and also focusing on bridging the digital divide through digital literacy missions at the grassroots.

## Will cooperate with agencies probing SSR death: DGP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, August 27:** The Odisha Police Thursday said that it would cooperate with the agencies probing the death case of actor Sushant Singh Rajput if its help is sought regarding purported messages that suggested the availability of weed in Bhubaneswar.

Director General of Police Abhay said there is no clarity on the issue and he came to know about it from discussions on social media and the press. The entire drugs issue came to fore on Wednesday. If the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) or any other agencies seek any help from the Odisha Police, we will definitely cooperate in the investiga-



tion, he told reporters. Rhea has been questioned by the ED about these suspected drug deal messages deleted from her phone and her statement on these allegations has been recorded by it under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), they said. It is understood that the "deleted WhatsApp messages" pertain to Rhea reportedly talking to her friends and some of Rajput's domestic helpers about certain banned narcotics.

The NCB, they said, will probe the possible "source, trade, consumption and handling" of these banned drugs and their possible links to Rajput as well as his death, they said. The messages reportedly had references to the availability of "best weed ever" in Bhubaneswar.

On the availability of banned drugs in the state, Abhay said, Our efforts are on to curb such illegal activity and we have seized over 630 quintals of ganja so far this year, which is higher than the total seizures made in 2018 and 2019." Replying to a query on Rhea's visit to Odisha, the DGP said it is not under the purview of the state police and another agency is probing the matter.

## Delay in shifting Covid patient sparks row

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Puri, August 27:** It took over 12 hours to shift an elderly COVID-19 patient from Puri district headquarters hospital (DHH) to COVID-19 hospital just 300 metres away from the DHH.

The above incident Wednesday evening has exposed the tall claims of the district administration about the COVID-19 management.

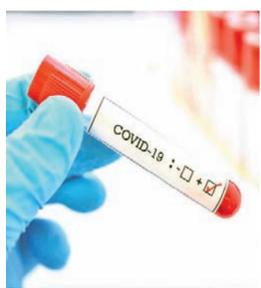
An 82-year-old resident of Bhudan area in Puri complained of uneasiness Tuesday: His family members immediately rushed him to Puri DHH.

His COVID report came out positive Wednesday morning. The pa-

tient's wife and son then asked health workers to shift him to a COVID-19 hospital. To their utter dismay the health workers took the case casually and said the ambulance of the COVID hospital had been contacted and they would shift the patient when the ambulance arrived.

Fortunately, Swadhin Kumar Panda, a local social activist, visited the hospital owing to personal work Wednesday afternoon and came to know about the incident. He asked the health workers about the reason for the inordinate delay but did not get a satisfactory answer from them.

Panda himself called up the ambulance. The ambulance arrived in the evening when there was no



staff to shift the patient. The driver also refused to help them with shifting the patient. With no way out, Swadhin, with-

out a PPE kit, carried the patient to the ambulance.

When asked why he did so, Swadhin said none of the hospital staff nor even the driver helped the family in shifting the patient. "Realising that the longer the patient stays at the DHH the more chances there will be for other patients to contract the virus, I took him to the ambulance," he said.

When contacted, CDMO Sujata Mishra termed the incident as pathetic. "The ADMO has been asked to file a detailed report on why it took so much time in shifting a COVID patient to the COVID hospital. Once the report is received, the guilty will be punished," she added.

# BMC mulls bio-mining of waste at Bhuasuni

## NOVEL APPROACH

As the Capital generates about 520 metric tonnes waste per day, BMC is considering bio-mining of heaps of legacy waste at Bhuasuni dump yard

Collected and kept for years at some barren land, legacy wastes are said to often contaminate soil and groundwater in an area

About 9 lakh tonnes of waste has been dumped in the area spreading across 50-60 acres. The pile of waste is said to be 10 meters high



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, August 27:** Following a brief hiatus and a poor rank in Swachh Bharat Survekshan (SBS), the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) has shifted its focus on bio-mining of legacy waste at Bhuasuni here.

The state capital which generates about 520 metric tonnes waste per day has now looked towards the method of bio-mining of heaps of legacy waste at Bhuasuni dumpyard in Daruthenga here. Managing waste through most sustainable way, Biomining is a process that involves extracting metals of economic interest from rock ores or mine waste using microorganisms.

Collected and kept for years at some barren land, legacy wastes are

said to often contaminate soil and groundwater in an area. Individual studies have indicated that the city which is seeing an increase in population has led to collection of about 9 lakh tonnes of waste at the dump yard spreading across length of 50-60 acres and towering at height of about 10 metres.

“The population density is increasing and thus per day waste generation is also on rise. We are looking for efficient management of the waste without putting further stress on Bhuasuni dump yard. Once the tenders are finalised and process takes effect, we are expecting about 40-50 acres of land reclamation in 4-5 years,” a senior BMC official said.

While the RFP was issued earlier in August, the move is said to be taken after capital city’s poor

rankings in SBS. While it failed to fair in top 200 cities on cleanest cities, it ranked 233 only behind Cuttack and just ahead of Puri. Although the city climbed 60 spots while ranking 288 in last year’s survey, its dismal performance continued owing to poor solid waste management programme, a key factor in SBS survey.

“We have shown improvement but still have a long way to go. However, we have lined up many projects considering solid waste management. Projects as bio-mining and Micro Composting Centres (MCCs), will not only improve garbage collection but will also help in effective management of existing waste. These proposals will surely improve the city’s rankings,” BMC Commissioner, Prem Chandra Chaudhary earlier said.

## RU shut till Aug 31

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Cuttack, August 27:** All departments and offices of Ravenshaw University here have been shut till August 31 after a few employees of the university were tested positive for novel coronavirus.

University sources said a hostel employee’s son had been found with Covid-19 some days ago. The employee’s family was asked to stay in quarantine. The campus was sanitised to check virus spread.

However, at least 15 employees of the university have been tested positive for Covid-19 in last few days. “Employees at the administrative offices and various departments have been found with Covid-19 infections. An employee of the Vice-Chancellor’s office and two of his family members were tested positive Thursday,” said an official. VC Ishan Kumar Patro has decided to shut all offices and departments of the university till August 31 to check the spread of Covid-19.

## BASKING IN THE SUN



Turtles bask in the sun at Godavari pond in Old Town of Bhubaneswar, Thursday

PHOTO: MAUSAM NANDA

# Cuttack gives nod to community Durga puja

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Cuttack, August 27:** The Cuttack district administration has granted permission to organise community Durga pujas without any congregation in pandals and in strict adherence to social distancing norms, an official said.

The puja committees can celebrate the festival in the silver city of Odisha without violating the COVID-19 guidelines, Cuttack Collector Bhabani Shankar Chayani said.

“Maintaining social distancing

**Maintaining social distancing norms, avoiding mass gatherings and wearing masks, the organisers can hold Durga puja at their respective pandals**

BHABANI SHANKAR CHAYANI | CUTTACK COLLECTOR



norms, avoiding mass gatherings and wearing masks, the organisers can hold Durga puja at their respective pandals,” Chayani said.

Puja organisers can perform the rituals but no congregation

will be allowed in the pandals, he said.

The Durga puja committees welcomed the district administration’s decision and said they will follow the health safety guidelines in the

pandals and also during immersion of the idols.

Earlier, the district collector had refused to give permission to organise the Durga pujas in October in the wake of the current coronavirus pandemic, following which the Balu Bazaar Puja Committee, one of the oldest community puja organisers in the city, approached the Orissa High Court, seeking its intervention for the continuation of a 500-year-old tradition.

At least 167 committees celebrate the Durga puja festival in the city with pomp and gaiety.

## Protests over NEET, JEE

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, August 27:** State-wide protests against the NEET and JEE exam still continues despite the ministry’s strict denial of postponing the exam. Some parents and protesters Thursday sat on protest near Souchana Bhawan demanding cancellation of both exams.

They alleged that there are only seven exam centres in the state which puts the students and their parents in great danger.

This apart, many districts such as Khurda are hotspots of the virus spread as the cases are rising steadily in these areas. The flood situation in the state also makes it very difficult for students to travel to these centres.

Earlier, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik spoke to Prime Minister Narendra Modi over phone and requested him to postpone NEET and JEE exams, in view of the COVID-19 pandemic and the flood situation in the state, a senior official said. Two days ago, the CM had written a letter in this regard to Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank.

## Honing skills of women trainees

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, August 27:** The Industrial Training Institute (ITI), Bhubaneswar Thursday signed an MoU with Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI) Ladies Organisation (FICCI FLO) Bhubaneswar and Humara Bachpan Trust to mobilise, mentor and enhance the capacity of women trainees of the ITI.

The agreement will focus on providing mentorship for need-based vocational training for future employability and business acumen in the girls.

Dharitri Patnaik, Chairperson of FICCI FLO Bhubaneswar, said that the focus was to impart skill training to women to make them self dependent and try to implement the initiative of 3C - confidence, competence and capacity enhancement among the women.

Principal of ITI Bhubaneswar Jeetamitra Satpathy said, “The main focus of the institute is always to empower girls and youth women by providing technical and vocational training to them and for that we have signed this MoU and had also signed MoU with other industries.” One should not be complacent after accomplishing and standing at the pedestal of a simple education rather should try to become proficient in technical field



also, she added. Skilled girls from ITI, Bhubaneswar prepared masks for 1,500 servitors during return Car Festival in Puri this year. The Puri district administration and especially Collector Balwant Singh had requested the institute to supply the masks and the team just complied with the order in a couple of days amidst COVID-19 pandemic.

During the last academic session, the ITI introduced four smart

trades for the first time in Odisha to make students tap the latest career opportunities in job sector with IoT (Internet of Things) based curriculum. IoT is a system of interrelated computing devices, mechanical and digital machines, objects, animals or people that are provided with unique identifiers (UIDs) and the ability to transfer data over a network without requiring human-to-human or human-to-computer interactions.

## Sixth plasma bank comes up in state

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, August 27:** Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Thursday inaugurated the state’s sixth plasma bank at Koraput through video-conferencing mode. With the launch of the new plasma bank in Koraput, Covid patients in all parts of the state will be able to avail plasma treatment.

Speaking on this occasion, Naveen said plasma therapy treatment has been successful in the state as more Covid patients are recovering due to the novel technique. In the field of plasma therapy treatment, Odisha has earned a leading position in not only in India but also in the world.

“This happened due to the hard work and dedication of doctors and medical teams. We are proud of our doctors and medical teams,” he further stated.

Reiterating the state government’s commitment to provide latest medical treatment to all citizens of the state, the Chief Minister said, “No patient in the state would be deprived of latest treatment.”

With the opening of this new plasma bank in the tribal-dominated Koraput district, Patnaik



said, it has become another milestone in healthcare sector in the area and has strengthened the faith and trust of the tribal people on the modern healthcare system.

The CM once again appealed all recovered persons to come forward to donate plasma for treatment of other critical patients.

Among others, Health Minister Naba Das and Ministers Padmini Dian, Jagannath Sarka, Nabarangpur MP, local MLAs, Chief Secretary Asit Kumar Tripathy, Development Commissioner Suresh Chandra Mohapatra, Chief Minister’s Secretary (5T) VK Pandian attended the event.

## DCP suspends constable for indiscipline

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, August 27:** Deputy Commissioner of Police, Umashankar Dash has put one constable, Pravat Kumar Samal(c/1389), engaged in beat patrolling duty, under suspension on the charges of indiscipline and verbally abusing Deepak Kumar Mishra, the Inspector In-Charge of Airfield Police station.

Mishra alleged in his complaint that Samal under the influence of alcohol verbally abused him and used filthy language at the Police station here Tuesday.

The whole episode regarding the constable’s behavior at the police station has been recorded too, informed Mishra in his complaint.

Rubbishing the charges of coming to office drunk, Samal narrated a completely different story regarding the incident. Samal claimed that he heard noisy commotion in front of the police station when he appeared there Tuesday night. Samal, who had reportedly not noticed the IIC sitting there, asked the gathering to be silent that irked Mishra. Subsequently, a heated argument ensued between the IIC and the constable.

## RAIN WOES



Rainwater inundates Sujata Nagar in Puri, Thursday

OP PHOTO

# State-of-the-art fish market at Puri soon

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Puri, August 27:** Fish and seafood lovers, there’s a piece of good news for you. If things go well, an ultra-modern fish market with state-of-the-art facilities would come up soon at Talabania here.

Envisioned by the Fisheries department with an initial cost estimation of Rs 6 crore, the mega fish market would come up on a 2.5 acre land at Talabania area in the Pilgrim City here.

Puri, being one of the biggest tourist destinations in eastern India, draws people from far and wide. Besides visiting the Srimandir, tourists and devotees usually prefer spending time at the golden beach. At a time when such experiences give solace to the restless minds, roadside vendors selling fish and seafood hither and thither in an untidy condition are nothing short of a mood spoiler.



## UNDER ONE ROOF

Envisioned by the Fisheries department with an initial cost estimation of Rs 6 crore, the mega fish market would come up on a 2.5 acre land at Talabania area

Initially, arrangements would be done for 100 sellers. Depending upon the demand, it will be upgraded to multi-storey

Instead of selling the stuff here and there, fish vendors will be allotted dedicated space at the upcoming marketplace

Fresh fish and seafood will be made available at the marketplace under hygienic conditions

A vegetable market would also come up near the fish market

“The state government has been spending crores of rupees to transform Puri as a World Heritage City. This would help draw more tourists from across the globe. Amid such a scenario, fish waste to rainwater passing through to trash and making the localities complete eyesore would definitely leave a scar in

the minds of tourists. Even those residing near the makeshift fish shops in the Holy City have expressed displeasure over the untidy scenario,” an official of the Fisheries department said explaining the need for such a one-stop destination for all types of fish and seafood buyers.

The official added that instead of selling the stuff here and there, the fish vendors will be allotted dedicated space at the upcoming marketplace. Initially, arrangements will be done for 100 sellers. Depending upon the demand, it will be upgraded to multi-storey. Fresh fish and seafood will be made available at the marketplace under hygienic conditions.

“Wastewater from the marketplace will be filtered before being released into drain. This apart, trash from the market will be collected and dumped at a faraway place on a regular basis—no foul odour or swampy environment anymore,” said the official, adding that a vegetable market would also come up near the fish market.

Asked, district fisheries officer Debendra Behera said that the marketplace would be a one-stop destination for fish sellers and buyers with hygiene being paramount.

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Don't foresee difficulties - it does not help to surmount them and helps them to come.

THE MOTHER

## Realty check

Real estate is one of the most battered of the lot in India in the wake of the Covid-19 outbreak. The economic slump stretching over a decade compounded by faulty economic policies by the Centre such as demonetisation and a rushed-through GST had already taken a heavy toll on the housing sector. The Covid-19 crushed whatever little hope was left for the industry. The economic recession had silenced the real estate boom over the last decade leading to a demand slump, while the pandemic has delivered a knockout punch. In a country like India, home to a massive upwardly mobile middle-class population, real estate has long provided a big platform for employment. The sector saw a lot of traction following economic liberalisation and fast urbanisation happening across the country. Even as a lot still remains to be done for the sector in terms of easing the regulatory framework, the government, nevertheless, has introduced in phases some policy initiatives to help propel the housing sector. However, the pandemic has triggered massive uncertainties in the economy resulting in loss of millions of jobs. People across the country left their workplaces for homes creating a huge shortage of manpower. The Covid-19 forced private companies to trim their workforce and reduce salaries of the leftover staff. The fast spread of Covid-19 and the current pick-up in infections has aggravated the miseries and desperation of people.

The pandemic could not have come at a worse time for India's real estate sector. Many aspiring home-buyers were on the verge of making purchases when an avalanche of uncertainties struck them, pushing many onto the fence of indecision. The fact that the pandemic has hit the urban pockets relatively harder, has made the housing sector one of the biggest casualties of Covid-19. The Rs 20 lakh crore economic package unveiled by the Centre and parallel easing in repo rate by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) have failed to revive sentiments in the country. Lack of demand coupled with record unemployment in the country has combined to emerge as the biggest hurdle for the housing market now. Revival of the sector is heavily contingent on a pick-up in the economy which cannot happen overnight. What the government should do to alleviate the situations? Increasing tax benefits for home buyers and incentivizing banks to extend home loans are not just enough. The Alternative Investment Fund launched by the government in the middle of the pandemic to help builders complete stuck projects is a step in the right direction. But that is not enough. Giving industry status to real estate can help the sector become more organised and transparent. This will also help developers reduce their capital cost and pass on the benefits to home-buyers. Removing red-tape besetting the sector is also another measure before the government. At present, developers have to deal with multiple government agencies for project approvals. There should be a single window system for project clearance. Developers should also be allowed to put their properties on rent for regular accrued income, and not just capital sales approach. From buyers' perspective also, it makes sense to opt for rental accommodation rather than purchase a house. Developers should be encouraged to adopt technologies to minimize cost and pass on the benefit to customers. Lack of liquidity is a big hurdle for developers. The government may look at the possibility of lowering GST rates. Reduction or abolition of stamp duty or its inclusion under GST can also boost sentiments. This is high time the government did a reality check to boost the sagging housing sector.



Ashok Mahapatra

**WE NEED TO RECOGNISE THAT INVASIONS AND MIGRATIONS HAVE COME FROM ACROSS THE PATKAIS IN THE PAST AND THIS PATH COULD ALSO BE USED IN THE FUTURE**

Our history teaches us that invaders and migrants to our country came from the Northwest. Our instinct has always been to defend our North-Western borders. This was one of the main reasons why the Chinese aggression of 1962 left such a scar that it has not healed even after six decades. Problem is, we engaged in a selective reading of history. Hence we were not psychologically prepared for such an invasion. We also have a blinkered perception that a Chinese threat will always come via the Tibetan Plateau. A logical analysis of history will tell us a different story.

Notably, there exists a place called Lekhapani in Assam which had a signboard indicating that CHONQING was 1773 km away. This was the World War II capital of China, and is situated in Sichuan Province. The Stillwell Road used to run from India to China. It would be worthwhile to mention that Kolkata is a similar distance away from Lekhapani, while Delhi is almost 2000km away.

In addition, the Stillwell Road passes by Northern Myanmar, where even today the writ of Myanmar government is non-existent. This is because different ethnic groups keep resisting the Burman domination. These groups have been aided and abetted since the time of Mao Zedong by China, both covertly and overtly. Furthermore, these groups have also become self-financing warlord states, with income being derived from smuggling, drug trafficking, and extortion on trade. All these are to the advantage of China.

The Ahom State, which lasted until the first quarter of the 19th Century, was founded by a branch of the Shan-Thai. They trace their origin to people who crossed the Patkai from Yunnan. The Patkai is the hills on India's north-eastern border with Myanmar. We have also had invasions from Myanmar several times into the Brahmaputra Valley to devastating effect. This continued till their power was checked

### FOCUS INDIA-CHINA

# CHINA'S EYE VIA EAST



**India should not have any illusion that Chinese intrusions via the Patkai are a myth and be prepared to ensure that they fail in this endeavour. We ignore the Patkai at our own peril**

by the British through the signing of the 1826 Treaty of Yandabo.

In addition, the Singhphos section of the Kachins in Northern Myanmar periodically raided Assam for slaves.

It is sad but true that our historians are obsessed with the invaders and migration from the Northwest. They have never done justice to the invasions and migrations that affected the other parts of the country. Hardly any historical research has been carried out in the regions adjoining the Patkai. The Patkai is not as rugged as the Himalayas and the peaks are much lower. Hence, it must be appreciated that these mountains, unlike the Hindu Kush and the Himalayas, are unable to provide any sustainable barrier to prevent the movement of both men and material.

In 2016, it was proposed by China that the Stilwell Road be restored in order to revitalise trade and mutual cooperation in the region. The Stillwell Road that starts from Ledo goes across the Nampong and Pangsau Passes in Arunachal Pradesh, continues through Shindbwiyang, Bhamo, and

Myitkyina in Myanmar, and finally ends at Kunming in China. In 2016, Myanmar contracted a Chinese firm to reconstruct the 312km road from Myitkyina to Pangsau pass on the India-Myanmar border. The present state of reconstruction, as per the contract awarded by the Myanmar Government, is not available. While this road had been reclaimed by the jungle and falls within the rebel Kachin state, there have been unconfirmed reports that it has been rebuilt, allegedly with forced Naga and Kachin labour. In the meantime, India has renovated its portion of Stilwell Road and upgraded it to a two-lane highway, while China has made its part into a six-lane highway.

Myanmar and China have agreed to begin work on key projects under the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC) agreement, part of China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). However, recently Myanmar's generals have publicly expressed their anguish against the government, citing China's duplicity in supporting the peace process with in-

urgent groups while at the same time supplying arms to the insurgent groups in the country.

Against this background, let us examine China's possible course of action in this sector. First, the physical infrastructure both in China and India has been upgraded. The proposed Myanmar-China belt road which links Kunming with Kyaukpadaung and Yangon passes by the Sino-Myanmar border at Muse. The distance from Muse to Myitkyina is only 328km, which can be covered by road in less than five hours, and may not be to the same standards on the Indian and Chinese side. The state of the 312km section between the Myitkyina and Pangsau passes could be difficult to move men and material. Nonetheless, noting that China has been supporting the rebel Kachins from Mao's time, we should not be surprised if, covertly, this road also has been upgraded.

It needs to be borne in mind that any potential Chinese duplicity may not be initially visible when the agreements are being finalised. One needs to recall that Chou En Lai had lulled Nehru to believe China had no border issues with India. The world and India in particular, should wake up to the fact that China has a history of renegeing on agreements.

Even today, China claims Arunachal Pradesh, which they call South Tibet, as their territory. Today's China has progressed significantly since 1963, and has upgraded its military, equipment, and logistics to sustain such an endeavour.

Xi Jinping's declared ambition is to make China a superpower; if not the only superpower, by 2050. This is a cause for concern not only for India but for the world. Hence, India should not have any illusion that Chinese intrusions via the Patkai are a myth and be prepared to ensure that they fail in this endeavour. We ignore the Patkai at our own peril.

*The writer is a former UN functionary attached to its global maritime security apparatus.*

### WISDOM CORNER

Hell is empty and all the devils are here. **WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE**

Learn this from water: loud splashes the brook but the oceans depth are calm. **LORD BUDDHA**

There is no austerity equal to a balanced mind, and there is no happiness equal to contentment; there is no disease like covetousness, and no virtue like mercy. **CHANAKYA**

### WORDSWORTH

#### The Mighty Burger

Hunting through an electronic database of ancient US newspapers the other day, one came across this squib by the editor of the Mansfield News Journal of Ohio, dated March 1942: "Hamburgers are known to everybody. Newer, but still familiar, are steakburgers and cheeseburgers. Now comes a Florida restaurant advertising turtleburgers. The idea has possibilities. There could be fishburgers, jellyburgers, eggburgers and chickenburgers. No one contemplating these developments could call our language dead." It set off a trail to discover more about the linguistic legacy of this iconic American food. It's well known that the original was Hamburger steak, a thin patty made of ground beef seasoned with onions and fried. It began in (or became associated with) the north German port of Hamburg in the middle decades of the 19th Century, the ending -er being the standard German way of making adjectives that related to place. The hamburger concept was introduced into North America by immigrants from Germany from the 1870s onwards (the exact sequence of events still being a matter of historical controversy), with the term being recorded in print for the first time in The Caterer and Household Magazine in August 1885. The idea of putting it in a sandwich followed in the 1880s (it's often said it was invented at the 1904 World's Fair in St Louis, but it certainly predates that event) and the classic bun seems to have followed shortly afterwards. Despite the fact that it was well-known that hamburgers were made from beef, Americans somehow got the idea that the word was made up from ham and burger. When inventive cooks started to make the patties from other sorts of meat, or add other ingredients, the linguistic basis was there for -burger to become a semi-detached ending to be stuck on to other words (what grammarians call a combining form); it began life around 1930 and became so popular during that decade that a writer in American Speech in 1939 was able to call it "a favorite broth of the word-brewers". The first compound that is evidence for this is lamburger. An example turned up in the Helena Independent of Montana in September 1930: "The dinner ... originally planned has been called off but Eddy Gallivan will serve 'lamburger' sandwiches and coffee during the sale. Lamburger is a comparatively new dish, the principal ingredient of which is lamb meat, which takes the place of beef in the old-time hamburger." Cheeseburger was next up, which is listed in diner menus in newspaper advertisements from 1936 onwards. Also from that year is beefburger, perhaps created by some literal-minded cook worried that the name hamburger would confuse people about its principal ingredient, or just conceivably a signal to word watchers that people were beginning to be unsure about what actually went into those flat fried slabs. The following year, fishburgers and steakburgers appeared, as does another variety, one promoted in the Limestone Democrat of Athens, Alabama: "These chickenburgers are a versatile dish, too, for they go equally well as the entree of a Sunday supper or luncheon and as a "snack," disguised like its more lowly relative, the hamburger." Turtleburgers appeared in 1940; a newspaper in Massachusetts reported that the residents of Key West, Florida, had solved the problem of being 180 miles from their nearest suppliers of meat by making creative use of what was available.

### LOL

#### STOP SIGN

There's a blond and a brunette in a car. The brunette is driving while the blonde is in the passenger seat. They're going down a steep hill when the brunette realizes that the brakes



don't work. The brunette tells the blonde that the brakes don't work and they will drive off the side of the cliff because they failed to stop. The blonde then replies, "Don't worry! There's a stop sign ahead."

### SPECTRUM JUDICIARY

# Time now to revisit law of contempt

Dr S. Saraswathi

**CONTEMPT OF COURT IS NO LONGER CONSIDERED A PUNISHABLE OFFENCE IN MANY COUNTRIES. LONG DISUSE LED TO PRACTICAL ABOLITION OF CONTEMPT LAW IN ENGLAND AS INSIGNIFICANT**

Controversies over the contempt of court law will go on irrespective of the final scene in the Supreme Court in the Prashant Bhusan case. For, the case has raised the crucial question of the need for a relook into the law, which is more important than the proceedings of this particular case.

If there is a law, courts have to apply the law and judge according to the merits of the case. Lay public can debate whether such a law is relevant today, and if considered necessary, review the details and provide suggestions for amendments to make it specific, clearer, and appropriate to our times. Bhusan may be doing a service in reopening the debate.

Contempt of court is the offence of being disobedient to or disrespectful towards a court of law and its officers by behaviour that opposes or defies the authority, justice, and dignity of the court. Same behaviour towards a legislative body is treated as contempt of Parliament.

Law of contempt may be traced to ancient kingdoms and treatises like Arthashastra; but in its present form, it is rooted in a common

perception of holding justice, judges, and judicial institutions beyond reproach. The law is intended to prevent indignities to a court of justice and to maintain and uphold the dignity and respect of courts in the eyes of the public.

Public confidence and trust in courts is very important for the justice system. Justice Marshall has elucidated this in the US by his observation that the "power of judiciary lies neither in deciding cases, nor in imposing sentences, nor in giving punishments for its contempt, but in the trust, confidence and faith of the general public". It is this trust and confidence that is targeted in contempt cases.

Contempt of court is different from criminal defamation increasingly occurring today which can be initiated by an aggrieved person against the accused. Contempt of court can be initiated suo motu by the Supreme Court or any high court or on a motion by Advocate-General/Law Officers or on a reference made to High Court by a subordinate court.

Article 129 of the Constitution provides powers to the Supreme Court to punish an offence aimed at tarnishing its image. The victim



is the judge. Similar power is given to High Courts under Article 215. Article 142(2) grants the Supreme Court power to issue any order for securing the attendance of any person or discovery and production of any documents, or investigation or punishment of any contempt of itself. Contempt law has its roots in the Constitution itself.

In India, there is a specific Contempt of Court Act of 1971, which recognises three types of contempt. Civil contempt is disobedience to any judgement, decree, direction, or order of a court. Criminal contempt is publication of any matter which scandalises or lowers the authority of any court, or interferes in due course of judicial proceedings, or obstructs administration of justice in any other manner. Even if the publication tends to scandalise, or in-

terfere, or obstruct judicial process, it may be treated as contempt of court.

The first Contempt of Courts Act was passed in India during British rule in 1926 and was amended in 1937. After independence, the first contempt law was adopted in 1952. The existing Act was made in 1971 and amended in 2006 which accepts truth as a valid defence if made in public interest. The preamble to the 1971 Act is clear that it is not the dignity of individual judges that the Act seeks to protect, but the administration of justice and judicial proceedings. Rendering justice is always respected as a sacred responsibility.

The Law Commission's Review on Amendment to Contempt of Court Act in its 274th Report in 2018 refers to the constitutional provisions and has declared that any amendment to the law will not impact the power of the SC to punish for contempt of court as these powers are independent of statutory provisions. A relook into the law is needed to protect freedom and prevent scandal.

*The writer is a former director, ICSSR, New Delhi.*

#### Two terms for leaders

Sir, Political leaders around the world should seek no more than two terms for a post. In the US, an individual can become President only twice. This is a good practice. Eight or ten years are a good time for an individual to do good for a nation. After this, he must step aside. A leader remaining in a post for more than two terms results in stagnation. Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. The practice of one leader for two terms for a post should be the norm, though there can be exceptions if a leader is proving himself to be exceptionally great.

Sunil Pradhan, NUPADA

#### Re-opening schools

Sir, WHO chief scientist Soumya Swaminathan has stated that despite the Covid lurking around, schools and colleges should reopen sooner than later. Union education minister Ramesh Pokhriyal has stated that this matter was being discussed with the ministries of Health and Home Affairs and a decision could be expected soon. It is noted that large numbers of parents are hesitant to send their children to schools and colleges for fear of contracting Covid. There are those who argue that let this year pass, and reopening of educational institutions can wait from January 1. Till then, focus can be on equipping schools for online education, television and radio-based classes and/or alliance with industry through CSR programmes. Another view is that schools may reopen soon and the government release detailed guidelines and precautionary measures. Masks and sanitizers should be mandatory, seating arrangements be modified, and change in timings done.

Hitesh Kumar Parida, JAJPUR

#### Recruitment, NRA

Sir, When governments have to pick multitalented aspirants to multi-layered organisations, it has to exhibit probity and transparency in its appointments. The National Recruitment Agency (NRA) will soon be a reality to conduct an online common eligibility test (CET) to surf candidates appearing for various non-gazetted posts in departments and ministries under the Centre, like the Railways and the Public Sector Banks. Based on the marks in the CET, qualified candidates can apply for a vacancy in their respective category/department. We have a terrible scenario of more than 2.5 crore job-seekers for some two lakh vacancies. The NRA will hopefully herald uniformity in the selection process, facilitate free application of mind and avoid long-distance travel for exams. In the next stage of the recruitment, scope for corrupt practices still exists, though.

Ganapathi Bhat, EMAIL

## Letters

### TO THE EDITOR

Readers of Orissa POST are most welcome to contribute letters (200 words), articles and columns (between 750-1250 words). Contributors are requested to send their contact numbers and full postal address/email ID. They may also send in their valuable comments, opinion and suggestions, preferably by email, to: [edit@orissapost.com](mailto:edit@orissapost.com)

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# Kolkata locked down again

The restrictions were imposed Thursday as part of the West Bengal gov't decision to enforce biweekly total lockdown to curb the increasing number of coronavirus cases in the state

AGENCIES

Kolkata, August 27: Normal life was affected in the city Thursday as a complete shutdown was enforced across West Bengal to stem the spread of COVID-19 cases, while violation of the lockdown restrictions was witnessed in some districts.

All public transport, government and private offices, banks and other commercial establishments, barring those dealing with essential services, were closed due to the lockdown.

Flight operations in and out of the Kolkata international airport were suspended for the day, while long-distance trains were rescheduled.

Ferry services through inland waterways were also suspended. Essential services like medicine shops and health establishments remained open as these were kept out of the purview of the complete shutdown. Petrol pumps were also allowed to remain open on the lockdown days.

Schools, colleges and other educational institutes have remained closed in the state since late March when the first phase of the nationwide lockdown started.

The restrictions were imposed Thursday as part of the West Bengal government's decision to enforce bi-weekly total lockdown to curb the increasing number of coronavirus cases in the state.

Streets in the city wore a deserted look as there was no vehicular movement due to the shut-



A TOTAL SHUTDOWN WAS EARLIER IMPOSED IN THE STATE JULY 23, 25 AND 29 AND AUGUST 5, 8, 20 AND 21

THERE WILL BE A COMPLETE LOCKDOWN AUGUST 31

down. Overnight rain that continued Thursday morning also forced people to stay indoors in the eastern metropolis and most other places in south Bengal.

Security has been tightened to enforce the lockdown and police personnel were seen patrolling major traffic intersections in Kolkata.

Violation of the shutdown norms was, however, witnessed in some districts where police personnel baton-charged the offenders.

A total shutdown was earlier imposed in West Bengal July 23, 25 and 29 and August 5, 8, 20 and 21.

There will be a complete lock-

down August 31.

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had Wednesday announced the extension of closure of educational institutes till September 20 and complete lockdown across West Bengal September 7, 11 and 12, saying coronavirus cases are rising in many places.

The COVID-19 death toll in the state rose to 2,964 Wednesday after 55 people succumbed to the disease, a bulletin issued by the health department said.

The state's coronavirus tally went up to 1,47,775 with 2,974 fresh cases, it added.

## CITY METRO AWAITS CENTRE'S NOD

The Metro Railway here said Thursday that it will restart services on receiving the go-ahead from the Union Home Ministry and the Railway Ministry. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said Wednesday that the Metro Railway authorities can resume services, maintaining all COVID-related safety protocols. "We will start the process of resuming services once we receive directives from the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Railway Ministry," Metro Railway spokesperson Indrani Banerjee said. After receiving the go-ahead, the Metro authorities will discuss the modalities of running the services in the city with the West Bengal government, she told PTI. The Chief Minister announced a series of relaxations Wednesday. Regarding the resumption of Metro and local train services, she has said that the Railway authorities should speak to state officials to work out the modalities. Metro Railway stopped services as the nationwide lockdown began in March to control the spread of the coronavirus.



# Holding NEET, JEE will be at the 'cost' of students' lives

PUNJAB WILL SOON FILE A COLLECTIVE REVIEW PETITION IN THE SUPREME COURT AGAINST THE CENTRE'S DECISION

AGENCIES

Chandigarh, August 27: Punjab Education minister has slammed the Union government for its decision to conduct the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) and Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) next month amid the coronavirus pandemic. Thursday, the minister Vijay Inder Singla said that the government is going ahead with the examinations at the cost of the lives of the aspiring students.

"We will not compromise with the lives of the students. That is why the Congress has taken a decision to stand with the protesting students and their parents," he said in a statement here.

Singla said the state would soon file a collective review petition in the Supreme Court.

Amid fears that the COVID-19 pandemic may reach its peak in September, Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh has directed the Advocate General to take up the matter with his counterparts in other opposition ruled states for filing a collective review petition seeking postponement of the examinations, said the Education Minister.



We won't compromise with the lives of the students. That is why the Congress has taken a decision to stand with the protesting students and their parents

VIJAY INDER SINGLA | EDUCATION MINISTER, PUNJAB



"The safety of students is paramount for us," he said, adding, "Keeping this in mind, the state has closed all schools and colleges of the state. But if the Central government is adamant to conduct the examinations, these should be held online by shunning the practice of holding physical examinations."

Singla said the students and their parents should have to be free minded for such examinations, but during the pandemic, everyone is suffering from mental stress.

Besides this, many restrictions, including on movements, have also been imposed by various state governments in view of the Covid-19 outbreak, which may cause difficulties to the students and parents while travelling.

Also, the deteriorating flood situation in many states and lack of examination centres in several places will create further trouble for them, he added.

## NOT A SOUL IN SIGHT



The New Market area wears a deserted look during the biweekly lockdown in the wake of coronavirus pandemic in Kolkata, Thursday

PTI PHOTO

# Will Shillong Sikhs be evicted from Harijan Colony

Ancestors of Dalit Sikhs living at the colony in Shillong had come primarily from Gurdaspur area of Punjab

AGENCIES

Kolkata, August 27: Meghalaya government's latest attempt to evict Dalit Sikhs from Harijan Colony located at the heart of state capital Shillong is all set to gain fresh momentum Friday when a sub-committee headed by urban affairs minister Hamletson Dohling will submit its report to the High-Level committee formed by the state government to suggest measures for relocating the Sikh residents of the area.

The issue has raised heckles in Punjab with the Congress-led state government sending a delegation to Shillong last year under minister Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa to take up the matter with Meghalaya authorities.



The Punjab government step was preceded by a visit to Shillong by a SGPC team from Amritsar who met Meghalaya Home Minister James Sangma and urged him to stop the attempts being made to "relocate" the Sikh residents of Harijan Colony.

Deputy Chief Minister Prestone Tynsong, chief of the High-Level Committee (HLC), set up the sub-

committee under Dohling to take up with the 'Hima Mylliem', a traditional Khasi tribal institution, the issue of the land inhabited by the Harijan Colony residents.

The National People's Party (NPP)-led government of Meghalaya, which enjoys support of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), had constituted the High-Level

Committee in June 2018.

Receipt of the report from Dohling-led sub-committee is expected to be followed by the HLC submitting its recommendations to the state government without further delay. According to Gurjit Singh, chief of Harijan Panchayat Committee and a spokesman of the Dalit Sikhs of Shillong's Harijan Colony, the land in question was granted to a group of people (ancestors of the current residents) by the then tribal chief of the area more than 150 years back.

"Disregarding the history of the settlement, the Shillong Municipal Board and other official agencies are now asking for proof of individual ownership of the plots and ramshackle structures."

# WB's pvt hosps seek more clarity on medical charges

AGENCIES

Kolkata, August 27: Around 16 private hospitals in West Bengal have decided to seek more clarity from the state's clinical regulatory panel on its recent advisories regarding revision of bed charges and discount on medicines.

A delegation of authorities from the state's private hospitals will meet Justice Ashim Kumar Banerjee, the chairman of West Bengal Clinical Establishment Regulatory Commission (WBCERC), Friday and discuss matters related to the recent notification, officials at the medical institutions said.

The delegation, under the banner of Association of Hospitals of Eastern India (AHEI), will decide on the implementation of the WBCERC advisories following the meeting, the officials said.

"We will be meeting the chairman tomorrow (Friday) to seek more clarity on the advisories issued by the commission because there are some technical issues involved," a representative of the as-

sociation said.

Incidentally, most private hospitals affiliated to AHEI have expressed strong reservations on the commission's advisories, fearing 'financial constraints'.

Last week, the WBCERC asked the private hospitals to revert to the bed charges that were applicable in March. It also sought 10 per cent discount on medicines and 20 per cent on consumables for all patients.

"Providing a 10 per cent discount on all medicines is a tough task as, in most cases, we manage to earn a profit of just about 5 per cent. We need clarity on this. There also has to be a clear idea on the process of offering discounts to patients covered by medical insurance or corporate tie-ups."

"For beds, we have been asked to levy charges which were applicable in March, which means at the rates that were in effect in 2019-20 fiscal. This is also difficult, going by the kind of service we are providing at the moment," a senior official of a super-specialty hospital here said.

# Water-logging plagues Kolkata as heavy rains continue to lash

BT ROAD, CENTRAL AVENUE, COLLEGE STREET AND EM BYPASS AREAS GOT INUNDATED

AGENCIES

Kolkata, August 27: Heavy rains lashed Kolkata and the coastal districts of West Bengal Thursday, inundating low-lying areas, officials said.

Several thoroughfares were waterlogged in different parts of Kolkata, including BT Road, Central Avenue, College Street, Amherst Street and EM Bypass, due to the showers that began Wednesday evening, the weather office said.

However, there were no traffic snarls in the metropolis as COVID-related restrictions were in place but those who went out on essential work or are



associated with emergency services had a tough time reaching their destinations.

Many low-lying areas in Ghatol in West Midnapore district and Khanakul in Hooghly, and some places in South 24

Parganas district were submerged owing to the heavy overnight rains.

Diamond Harbour recorded the highest rainfall in the state at 67 mm in the 24 hours till 8.30 am, followed by Dum Dum at

56 mm and Salt Lake at 52 mm, the Met department said.

Alipore in the southern part of Kolkata recorded 48 mm rainfall during the period, it said. The other places in south Bengal that recorded significant downpour during the period are Canning (52 mm), Barrackpore (44 mm) and Haldia (39 mm).

In north Bengal, Kalimpong recorded the highest rainfall at 64 mm, while Darjeeling received 19 mm rain, the MeT Department said.

The weather office has forecast light to moderate in all the districts of north Bengal during the next few days.

# A truncated Punjab Assembly session under COVID shadow

Punjab Assembly Speaker Rana KP Singh has made coronavirus negative test report mandatory for anyone attending the session

AGENCIES

Chandigarh, August 27: The Punjab Assembly will meet August 27 for a truncated, one-day session with strict protocols in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

A total of 30 legislators including three ministers have tested positive for coronavirus, though a few of them have recovered.

Punjab Assembly Speaker Rana KP Singh has made coronavirus negative test report mandatory for ministers, MLAs, officers and employees to attend the 12th session of the 15th Vidhan Sabha.

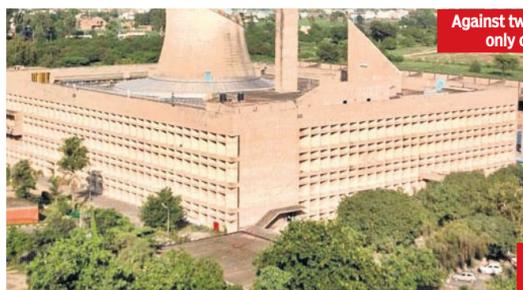
It is a constitutional requirement to hold a session within six months of the previous Assembly session. In order to ensure social distancing in the House, one member per bench will be allowed to sit, an official of the Punjab Vidhan Sabha said.

"Against two members per bench

earlier, this time only one member will occupy the bench in order to maintain social distancing norms," the official said. "Some additional benches have also been kept in the House to accommodate all the members," the official said.

In the 117-member House, there are a total 105 benches. However, with many MLAs getting infected, the requirement for additional benches may not arise. Visitors and journalists will not be allowed inside the Assembly, the official said. Social distancing norms will also be followed by the bureaucrats concerned in the officers' gallery. A kit comprising masks, gloves and hand sanitizer will be provided to each member of the House, the official said.

The Speaker has notified the Punjab Bhawan as an extended precinct of the House for media coverage of the session. Live streaming of the session would be pro-



Against two members per bench earlier, this time only one member will occupy the bench

Some additional benches have also been kept in the House to accommodate all the members

In the 117-member House, there are a total 105 benches

However, with many MLAs getting infected, the requirement for additional benches may not arise

Visitors and journalists will not be allowed inside the Assembly

vided in the hall of the Punjab Bhawan, though no camera or mobile phone will be allowed, the official said. Legislators can hold press conferences in the open area of the Punjab Bhawan. A COVID-19 test has also been made mandatory for journalists who will cover the session.

Meanwhile, several bills and ordinances are likely to be presented

during the one-day Vidhan Sabha session for enactment.

These are related to regulation of private clinical establishments, temporary release of some prisoners amid the pandemic, control of drugs dispensation by private dealers, industrial disputes and child labour. The 'Sri Guru Teg Bahadur State University

of Law Bill - 2020' for the establishment of a law university in Tarn Taran to commemorate the 400th birth anniversary of Guru Teg Bahadur is also likely to be tabled in the House. Meanwhile, the opposition has slammed the state government for the truncated session, accusing it of running away from discussing the important issues of the state.

# national



**Funny and illogical things are being spread by the BJP which says when people can come out for other work, why can't they give exams. It has forgotten that people are moving out in compulsion and even those who want to stay at home to save themselves are now being forced to come out of their homes in the name of examination**  
AKHILESH YADAV | SP PRESIDENT

## WHAT SURVEY SAYS

In view of the Covid-19 pandemic, at least 78 per cent of Indian parents are unwilling to send their wards to school immediately post lockdown, even if that entails repeating an academic year, a new survey said Thursday



## of the day quote

India's armed forces are committed to hand-hold the domestic industry in developing next generation military platforms and equipment to make the country self-reliant in defence manufacturing  
BIPIN RAWAT | CHIEF OF DEFENCE STAFF GEN



The Grand Alliance in Bihar should begin the process of distribution of seats among its parties soon, as any delay may hurt its prospects of putting up a formidable show in the upcoming Assembly elections  
UPENDRA KUSHWAHA | RASHTRIYA LOK SAMATA PARTY PRESIDENT



I will provide water to irrigate each farmland if people give me opportunity to serve them for another term  
NITISH KUMAR | BIHAR CM



# I WAS NOT LIVING OFF SUSHANT'S MONEY: RHEA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, August 27: Actor Rhea Chakraborty, who is accused of abetting Sushant Singh Rajput's suicide by his family, has opened up about her relationship with the late actor on Thursday, denying that she was "living off" his money. Chakraborty, along with her family members, is also accused of misappropriating Rajput's wealth by the actor's family but she dismissed the allegations in an interview. After Mumbai Police, Enforcement Directorate and Central Bureau of Investigation are investigating various angles in the actor's death.

Opening up about her much-talked-about Europe trip with the late Bollywood star, who died by suicide on June 14 in Mumbai, the young actor said in the interview that she was set to go to Paris on a professional assignment. She said it was Rajput's idea to

make a "Europe trip" about it and he cancelled the tickets booked by the company that was sponsoring her trip. She said her brother joined them in Italy at the insistence of the late actor.

"He paid for the rest of the trip and the hotels. He wanted to and I didn't have a problem with that. I had a problem with how much he was spending. But Sushant lived king size, he was like that," she said, adding that he once went on a trip to Thailand with his friends and spent "Rs 70 lakh" on that vacation.

"These were his lifestyle choices. Who are we to say how Sushant should live his life? He lived like a star, he loved it. It was his choice to take those men on that trip, did they also force him? No, I was not living off Sushant Singh Rajput's money. We were living like a couple," she said.

Asked about why her brother Showik joined them on their Europe



trip, Chakraborty said all three of them had formed an artificial intelligence company called Rheaityx, which was named after her and invested Rs 33,000 each in the firm. The actor said she was not on the list for his funeral as "his family members don't like me". Chakraborty said she wanted to

attend the funeral but dropped the idea at the suggestion of her friends as the family did not want her there. The actor said her friends told her that "you will be ridiculed, you will be thrown out. You are already not in a sound mental state. Don't come here".

Chakraborty said two of her friends told her to see his body to get closure. She said she saw Rajput's body for three-four seconds "said sorry and touched his feet". "Yes, I said 'Sorry babu'. When you see a dead person, what else will you say? I said sorry as he was no more. When you love someone and they die, you say sorry. Sorry that you aren't here. Sorry that a joke has been made out of your death," she said.

Asked about allegations that she was controlling Rajput's lifestyle and staff, Chakraborty rubbished them as "baseless."

# Students want exams at any cost: Pokhriyal



AGENCIES

New Delhi, August 27: Over 17 lakh candidates have already downloaded their admit cards for JEE and NEET, and this shows that the students want the exams to be conducted at any cost, Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' said Thursday.

The minister's comments come against the backdrop of a growing chorus for postponement of the medical and engineering entrance exams in view of spike in COVID-19 cases.

"National Testing Agency (NTA) officials told me that over 7 lakh candidates have downloaded JEE-Main admit cards while over 10 lakh aspirants have downloaded NEET admit cards. This shows that students want the exams to be held at any cost," Pokhriyal said. "We have received mails from students and parents who are in favour of holding exams as they have been preparing for the exams from at least two three years," he added.

While the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) is scheduled to be held on September 13, engineering entrance exam JEE-Main has been planned from September 1-6. Around 8.58 lakh candidates have registered for Joint Entrance Examination (JEE)-Main and 15.97 lakh students have registered for NEET. These exams have already been deferred twice in the wake

## CONG DOING POLITICS: BJP

New Delhi: The BJP Thursday accused the Congress of doing "politics" over the issue of JEE-Mains and NEET exams, and said the Modi government won't let the opposition party "spoil" students' future to find relevance. Congress and various opposition parties have demanded that the examinations be deferred due to the COVID-19 pandemic and floods in parts of the country, even as the Union government has made it clear that they will be held as per schedule with due precautions. "The Congress believes students must lose a year so it doesn't lose an opportunity for politics. Over 85% #JEENEET candidates don't agree and have downloaded admit cards. The Modi government won't let Congress spoil students' future to find relevance," BJP general secretary Bhopender Yadav said.

of the coronavirus pandemic. The JEE-Mains was originally scheduled to be held from April 7-11, but postponed to July 18-23, NEET-UG was originally scheduled for May 3, then pushed to July 26. They were postponed again and are now scheduled in September.

## Manjhi meets Nitish

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Patna, August 27: Hindustani Awam Morcha (Secular) president Jitan Ram Manjhi Thursday met Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar amid speculations of his talks over seat sharing before joining the ruling NDA.

Manjhi paid a visit to Kumar, who is also national president of the JD(U), at his official residence 1, Aney Marg here. The HAM chief, however, denied having any political deliberations with Kumar and asserted that the talks were centred on local issues and problems.

Notably, Manjhi had on August 20 severed his ties with Grand Alliance (Mahagathbandhan) after spending two and a half years in the opposition coalition. "No political talks took place (with Kumar), rather it (talks) was centred on some local issues," Manjhi said emerging out of the CM's residence.

## VENTING ANGER



Police personnel baton charge on Samajwadi Party workers during a protest against the government for conducting NEET and JEE exam amid the coronavirus pandemic, near Raj Bhavan in Lucknow, Thursday

## SHORT TAKES

### Drug peddlers held

Bangalore: The Bangalore police have arrested three drug peddlers who had been supplying drugs at multiple locations in Karnataka, and also seized 204 kg of cannabis worth ₹one crore from their possession, an official said Thursday. "Large haul of drugs seized by the Central Crime Branch (CCB) anti-narcotics wing and three drug peddlers were arrested," said Sandeep Patil, Joint Commissioner of Police, Crime. The peddlers -- Kaisar Pasha, 41, Sameer, 37, both from Mysuru and Ismail Sharif, 38, -- were held under the Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act. They were supplying drugs in Bangalore, Ramnagar, Mysuru, Chikkaballapura and other places.

### 4 prisoners escape

Hyderabad: Four prisoners undergoing treatment for Covid-19 at Gandhi hospital here escaped in the wee hours Thursday, officials said. The inmates escaped after allegedly removing the iron grills of a bathroom window on the second floor of the main building of the government-run hospital, where they were undergoing treatment. Police suspect that the incident happened around 3 a.m. Special teams have been formed to track down the escaped convicts. The police are scanning the CCTV footage at the hospital premises. Senior police officials are investigating how the prisoners managed to escape despite tight security at the facility.

### 1 killed, 6 hurt

Begusarai: One person was killed and six people were injured when a pick-up van carrying them hit a height gauge of a rail overbridge in Bihar's Begusarai district Thursday, police said. The incident took place near Subhash Chowk here around 7.30 am. The deceased has been identified as Ram Bhagat Paswan, Additional SHO (station house officer) of Town police station Barun Kumar said. The injured have been admitted to nearby nursing homes, Kumar said.

### Sisters die

Bharuch: Two minor sisters died on the spot when a wall of their house suddenly collapsed at a village in Gujarat's Bharuch district on Thursday morning, said police. The collapse was triggered by a wall from an adjoining house crashing on a portion of their residential structure, a police official said. While 12-year-old Virali Parmar and Heena Parmar (13) were buried alive under the debris, their third sister Bhumika has been hospitalised with injuries, they said.

# Pulwama: India slams Pak

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, August 27: India Thursday hit out at Pakistan for continuing to evade responsibility for the Pulwama terror attack and shelter Jaish-e-Mohammad chief Masood Azhar, named as the number one accused in the National Investigation Agency (NIA) charge sheet in the case.

External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Anurag Srivastava also slammed Pakistan's flip-flop on the presence of Dawood Ibrahim in the country, saying it "lays bare" the insincerity of Islamabad in responding to legitimate expectations of the world that it will track down international terrorists operating from its soil.

On the Pulwama attack case, Srivastava told an online media briefing that enough evidence has been shared with Pakistan but the country continues to evade responsibility. "Jaish-e-Mohammad had claimed the responsibility of Pulwama attack. The organisation and its leadership are in Pakistan. It is regrettable that Masood Azhar, the first accused in the charge sheet continues to find shelter in Pakistan. Enough evidence has been shared with Pakistan but it continues to



evade responsibility," he said.

Forty CRPF personnel were killed in the Pulwama attack on February 14 last year that triggered massive escalation in tension between India and Pakistan. India struck a Jaish-e-Mohammad terrorist training camp in Pakistan's Balakot on February 26 last year, in response to the attack.

"The charge sheet has been filed after investigation of a year-and-a-half since the attack took place on 14 February, 2019. It has been filed to address the act of terrorism and to bring perpetrators of such a heinous crime to justice. Our aim is not to simply issue statements or notifications," Srivastava said.

The NIA on Tuesday filed a charge sheet in the case, detailing how the attack was planned and executed by JeM. The NIA named Azhar, his brother Abdul Rauf Asghar and several others in the charge sheet. Srivastava also added that Pakistan has not yet taken any credible action against perpetrators of the Mumbai terror attack of 2008 which had resulted in the loss of 165 innocent lives.

On Pakistan's U-turn on presence of Dawood in the country, Srivastava said Islamabad has never taken "any credible and verifiable action" against terror entities or listed individuals, including the most wanted ones.

# Woman's mail to UK PM sends Delhi police into tizzy

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, August 27: A woman in her forties created quite a stir after she addressed an email to the Prime Minister of Britain and threatened to kill herself if she didn't get assistance within 2 hours.

Due to the sensitive contents of the email, the Indian embassy in London swiftly got into action mode, as it contacted MEA officials in New Delhi and sought an immediate response as the life of the victim appeared to be at stake.

Police said that on August 26, a woman residing in Sector 21 of Rohini sent a mail to the UK Prime Minister saying that "If help is not met out in 2 hours, would commit suicide". When the information was shared with the Delhi police by the FRRO, a team was swiftly formed to locate the woman and rescue her.

The police undertook a physical checking of all the houses in Rohini's Aman Vihar area after they failed to locate the address mentioned in the email.

It was around 1.00 a.m. when the police conducted physical check-

ing in each house of the locality, questioned security guards and eventually managed to locate her house after a tiresome exercise of 2 hours. The Police staff got suspicious when they received no response after they reached the house and called the fire brigade. Just as the fire brigade were about to throw open the main door of the house, a woman appeared from within. She seemed fraught with anxiety and fear.

Inside her house, the police and fire brigade staff found around 16 to 18 cats. The entire house and its occupant were stinking leading the rescue staff to realise that the woman required medical attention.

"During the course of counselling, she revealed that she used to be a teacher in MCD School but left the job due to some personal reasons. She further revealed that she is a divorcee and had incurred some loans a few years back. Due to some reasons she also failed to pay EMIs. This stress of financial burden has taken a serious toll on the mental health of the lady," said PK Mishra, DCP Rohini.

# 2004 VERDICT NEEDS TO BE RECONSIDERED: SC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, August 27: In a significant verdict, the Supreme Court Thursday ruled that its 2004 verdict holding that states do not have the power to further sub-classify the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes for grant of quotas needed to be revisited by a seven or more judges bench.



The apex court said states should be allowed to provide preferential treatment to the "poorest of the poor" among SCs and STs and advocated that an "authoritative pronouncement" was needed with respect to the effect of Constitutional provisions and whether sub-classification is permissible only with respect to the socially and educationally backward classes and not with respect to SCs and STs.

The top court observed that the benefit of quota by and large is not percolating down to the "neediest and poorest of the poor" and it was "crystal clear" that creamy layer concept for excluding affluent people "can be applied to" SCs and STs.

A five-judge constitution bench headed by Justice Arun Mishra said the 2004 verdict of a bench of same strength in the E V Chinniah case had held that states cannot give preference to certain Scheduled Castes as it would amount to "tinkering with" the Presidential list of SCs and STs under the Constitution and this required to be relooked.

"Reservation was not contemplated for all the time by the framers of the Constitution. On the one hand, there is no exclusion of those who have come up, on the other hand, if subclassification is denied, it would defeat right to equality by treating unequal as equal," the top court said.

It further said "The State cannot be deprived of the power to take care of the qualitative and quantitative difference between different classes to take ameliorative measures."

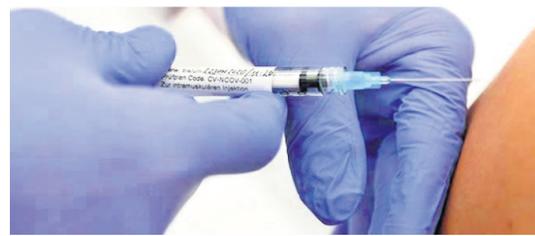
## SHOWING THE WAY

# Who inspired Pune vaccine trial volunteer

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Pune, August 27: A 48-year-old doctor, who was inspired by immunology pioneers Louis Pasteur and Edward Jenner, said Thursday his vital signs are normal and he has resumed routine work, a day after becoming one of the first volunteers to be inoculated with Oxford COVID-19 vaccine candidate in phase II trials.

The man, who was administered the vaccine candidate dose Wednesday, said his 21-year-old daughter had also volunteered during the trial of a vaccine on cervical cancer in 2014. "As I work in healthcare sector, I know vaccines have made a huge difference in the quality of human life. When I read the history of vaccination, I got in-



spired by pioneers Louis Pasteur and Edward Jenner who performed the trials on themselves. They inspired me to volunteer," he said.

Louis Pasteur (1822-1895) was a French chemist who proved that germs cause disease, and developed vaccines for anthrax and rabies, while Edward Jenner (1749-1823) was an English doctor and

discoverer of vaccination for smallpox. The Pune doctor said he had also volunteered 10 years ago for clinical trials for a vaccine against the H1N1 (swine flu) virus.

The phase-II clinical trial of the COVID-19 vaccine developed by Oxford University and being manufactured by Pune-based Serum Institute of India, started at the

Bharati Vidyapeeth Medical College and Hospital here on Wednesday, with two volunteers being administered the Covishield vaccine. Hospital authorities said the identity of the volunteers cannot be revealed.

"My daughter, who is pursuing a B Tech degree, has volunteered and become eligible for the (Covishield) trial as her reports COVID-19 and antibody came negative," the doctor said. He said he is feeling good that he and his daughter could become a small part in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic by volunteering for the trial. This is a noble and global effort for mankind, he added.

"Since yesterday, my vital signs are normal and I have started my routine work," he said. He said he has worked as a teacher at the medical

college and tried to create awareness among the medical students about the vaccination trials. "To lead by an example, I volunteered myself for the H1N1 vaccine trial," he said.

The volunteer said as per the ICMR panel norms, he is entitled to get travelling allowance for the hospital visits. "If the volunteer has some health issues during the trial period, the treatment is free," he said. The second volunteer, a 32-year-old man, who is a PhD holder in statistics and works in a private firm, said he was excited to become a part of the trial.

"When I came to know about the trials through social media, I approached the hospital and enrolled myself for the voluntary vaccination trial," said the person, who hails from Aurangabad in Maharashtra.

## of the day quote

India is the only country that has been able to stare down China with the might of its border troops and the Chinese will be forced to realise the strategic mistake they are making by provoking a powerful neighbour

**VARUN GANDHI** | BJP LEADER

Paid news is much milder than what fake news is. Fake news has a very potent power of disturbing the peace. The manipulation of public opinion over social media platforms has emerged as a critical threat to public life

**PRAKASH JAVADEKAR** | INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING MINISTER

A fair and inclusive Covid vaccine access strategy should have been in place by now. But there are still no signs of it

**RAHUL GANDHI** | CONGRESS LEADER



India's concept of self-reliance is not about being ultra-nationalist and protectionist, but to become a more significant partner in global welfare

**M VENKAIAH NAIDU** | VICE PRESIDENT

## UP MINISTER COVID POSITIVE

Senior Uttar Pradesh minister Siddharth Nath Singh said Thursday that he has tested positive for COVID-19. The 56-year-old cabinet minister has quarantined himself at his home on medical advice



## NATURE'S FURY



A firefighter clears a tree that fell on vehicles after heavy rainfall at Wagle Estate in Thane, Thursday

PTI PHOTO

## APEX COURT NO TO MUHARRAM PROCESSIONS

The bench reiterated that it is not possible to pass general direction, as it will create chaos and one particular community will be targeted for spreading Covid

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, August 27:** The Supreme Court Thursday declined permission to hold Muharram processions across the country during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

A bench comprising Chief Justice S.A. Bobde and Justices A.S. Bopanna and V. Ramasubramanian said, "Cannot grant general directions...case different from Puri (Rath Yatra) or Jain temples, as they had identified areas of access."

The bench reiterated that it is not possible to pass general direction, as it will "create chaos and one particular community will be targeted for spreading Covid." The petitioner cited the apex court order giving permission to offer prayers in select Jain temples in Mumbai. The bench replied that it was limited to prayers.

The court also disallowed the petitioner to hold a procession in Lucknow. When petitioner said Shias were concentrated in Lucknow and permission be given there, the Supreme Court asked him to approach the Allahabad High Court.

August 25, the Supreme Court took up a plea seeking permission to carry out Muharram processions in a limited manner in the

backdrop of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

A bench comprising Chief Justice S. A. Bobde and Justices A. S. Bopanna and V. Ramasubramanian allowed the petitioner Sipte Mohammad to implead all 28 state governments as a party in the matter within a period of four weeks. The petitioner had moved the top court seeking a direction to allow the conduct of the mourning procession by the Shia Muslim community. In the backdrop of Covid-19 pandemic, restrictions have been imposed on large gatherings.

Wasi Haider, counsel appearing for the petitioner, contended before the bench that the permission is sought for the procession where only five participants are allowed ensuring that they follow the safety norms. The bench observed that the petitioner has not made all the state governments parties in the matter. The state governments are empowered to enforce the Centre's guidelines under the Disaster Management Act.

The top court noted that it needed to hear the state governments before it passed any order in the matter. The bench said the procession would take place in various states and it cannot pass orders without hearing them.



## SHORT TAKES

### Union minister Gurjar Covid+ve

**Chandigarh:** Union Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment Krishan Pal Gurjar tested positive for coronavirus Thursday. He is the fourth Parliamentarian representing Haryana, to have tested positive for Covid-19. The 67-year-old BJP MP from Faridabad asked all those who had come in contact with him over the past few days to take coronavirus seriously and get themselves tested. He tweeted that he had been experiencing health problems and got his Covid-19 test done.

### Bizman shot dead

**Agra:** A 44-year-old businessman, Lalit Kathpal, was shot dead allegedly by three bike-borne men near his home in Agra's posh Kamla Nagar colony. The attack happened on Wednesday evening. The victim's brother Rinku told the police that three men on a motorbike snatched away the bag that Kathpal was carrying and fired a shot that killed his brother, who was driving a two wheeler. The bag that was snatched away contained a tiffin and had no cash, according to the family. The family runs a cycle-rickshaw assembling unit at Ghatiya market. The two brothers were returning home after closing the establishment.

### Woman killed

**Kolkata:** An elderly woman was killed when a portion of a dilapidated building in the city's Beliaghata area collapsed in the early hours Thursday, police said. The about 150-year-old building collapsed after a heavy shower, the police said. The woman, who was in her early 70s, her son and grandson were residents of the building on Beliaghata Main Road. They were trapped under the debris when it collapsed at around 5 AM on Thursday, they said.

## Unfortunate Jitin being targeted: Sibal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, August 27:** Congress leader Kapil Sibal, a key member of 'Group of 23' that has sought an urgent organisational overhaul, on Thursday said it was "unfortunate" that the party was targeting its own member Jitin Prasada when it needed to target the ruling BJP with "surgical strikes".

Prasada, a former union minister, was also among the signatories to the letter that sought an active and full-time party president among other changes. He is also a special



invitee to the Congress Working Committee, where the 23 letter writers were dissed on Monday on various issues concerning their com-

munication including its timing. "Unfortunate that Jitin Prasada is being officially targeted in UP. Congress needs to target the BJP with surgical strikes instead of wasting its energy by targeting its own," Sibal said on Twitter. Reacting to it, another Congress leader, Manish Tewari who was also a signatory to the letter, tweeted a single word "Prescient".

While Prasada did not make any comment himself, he retweeted the posts of Sibal and Tewari. The Lakhimpur Khairi District Congress reportedly passed a resolution de-

manding action against Prasada, a leader from Uttar Pradesh, and has accused his family of being against the Gandhi family.

Jitendra Prasada, the father of Jitin Prasada, had also unsuccessfully contested for the post of Congress president against Sonia Gandhi in the past, the District Congress Committee reportedly said.

The charge was made days after the Congress Working Committee urged Sonia Gandhi to continue as party president and bring about organisational changes.

## 6 held for acid attack on Dalits

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Jhansi (Uttar Pradesh), August 27:** Over two dozen people suffered burn injuries after they were attacked with acid by a group following a dispute over collecting water from a hand pump in Uttar Pradesh's Jhansi. Six of the accused have been arrested.

Senior Superintendent of Police Dinesh Kumar P. said: "We have arrested all the six accused. Additional police force has been deployed in the village to prevent any unwanted incident while a detailed investigation is on." The incident occurred in the Basaar village Tuesday night.

Five people suffered serious injuries and were rushed to the Jhansi medical college while police registered an FIR against six persons. All the injured were from the Scheduled Caste community.

According to reports, there are only two hand pumps in Basaar village. The incident took place when one Angoori Devi went to fetch water from the hand pump and one of the accused Rajesh objected.

This led to an argument which escalated soon as people from both sides gathered. As the argument heated up, a crowd collected around



**FIVE PEOPLE SUFFERED SERIOUS INJURIES AND WERE RUSHED TO THE JHANSI MEDICAL COLLEGE WHILE POLICE REGISTERED AN FIR AGAINST SIX PERSONS**

the house of the accused who threw acid on them from the roof. One accused was caught by the

victims and thrashed severely while locals informed police about the clash and acid attack.

A police team reached the village and took the injured to the community health centre from where five with serious injuries were referred to the Jhansi medical college.

An FIR was lodged against six accused, namely Rajesh, Santosh, Devendra, Umesh, Sonu and Banmali in Uldan police station and all of them were arrested on Wednesday evening.

## NEED FULFILLED

### APP FOR TRAINING OF NCC CADETS LAUNCHED

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, August 27:** Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh launched a mobile training application Thursday that will assist in conducting countrywide online training of the National Cadet Corps (NCC) cadets.

In view of the restrictions imposed by Covid-19, training of NCC cadets has been affected adversely as it is mostly contact based training. "Since schools and colleges are not likely to open in near future, a need was felt that training to NCC cadets should be imparted utilising the digital medium," the Defence Ministry said.

Rajnath Singh also interacted with the NCC cadets through video conferencing during the launch of the application and also answered their questions.

In his address to the cadets, he said the app will be useful to them in digital learning and overcoming the difficulties posed by Covid-19 due to restrictions on direct physical interactions. But if one moves ahead with determination



and self-confidence, he or she would be able to clear all hurdles and achieve success, he added.

The Defence Minister praised the contribution of more than one lakh NCC cadets who supported the frontline corona warriors by executing various tasks in the fight against the pandemic.

The Directorate General National Cadet Corps mobile training application aims at providing NCC cadets entire training material, syllabus, precis, training videos and frequently asked questions, on one platform.

The app has been made interactive by including a query option. By using this option, a cadet can post his question related to the training syllabus and the same will be answered by a panel of qualified instructors.

## UP SHOCKER

### Couple thrashed, paraded in village

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Kannauj (Uttar Pradesh), August 27:** A widow and a differently-abled man were thrashed, their heads tonsured, their faces blackened before being paraded in a village as punishment for their alleged illicit relationship.

The incident took place in Gursahaiganj Kotwali area of Kannauj. The woman, a mother of five children, and the differently-abled man were reportedly caught in a compromising position by her uncle and his sons.

"They locked them in a room, thrashed them severely, shaved their heads, garlanded them with shoes and painted their faces black before parading them across the village on Wednesday," said a local resident.

The locals informed the village head who went and rescued the two. A video of the incident went viral on social media.

It showed the couple being taken through the village while little children hooted.

The police rushed to the spot on getting information about the viral video and launched an investigation.

## EXTREMELY ALARMING

# Covid hits fast dwindling tribe in Andaman

REUTERS

**Kolkata, August 27:** Four members of a dwindling tribe in India's far off Andaman Islands have tested positive for coronavirus, officials said Thursday as the country reported 75,760 new infections, the highest single-day rise.

The Great Andamanese are one of the six tribes of Mongoloid and African origin, who have lived in the Andamans in the Bay of Bengal for thousands of years. Only about 50 members survive, after thou-



**The Great Andamanese are one of the six tribes of Mongoloid and African origin, who have lived in the Andamans in the Bay of Bengal for thousands of years**

**Only about 50 members survive, after thousands were killed by British colonisers in the 19th century or died later due to diseases**

sands were killed by British colonisers in the 19th century or died later due to diseases. Indian officials have since tried to protect their way of life while opening up the is-

lands to the fruits of development such as access to healthcare.

Dr Avijit Roy, who is leading the fight against the outbreak of COVID-19 in the islands, said they

had run tests on the Great Andamanese living on one of the coral-reef islands in the archipelago and four of the men had turned out to be positive.

"They have been moved to hospital," he said. Officials believe the men may have travelled to the main Andaman islands and caught the disease. The London-based Survival International said authorities must work to prevent the virus reaching other remote tribes. "It is extremely alarming that members of the Great Andamanese

tribe tested positive for Covid-19. They will be all too aware of the devastating impact of epidemics that have decimated their people," said Sophie Grig, senior researcher.

Cases have been rising steadily across India with the total number of cases standing at 3.2 million behind the United States and Brazil. The world's second-most populous country has posted the highest single-day caseload in the world every day since August 7, a Reuters tally based on official reporting showed.

## Relief for Patanjali

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, August 27:** The Supreme Court Thursday declined to entertain a plea by Chennai-based firm assailing a Madras High Court order that stayed a ₹10 lakh penalty on Patanjali Ayurved and restrained it from using the trademark Coroniil.

A bench comprising Chief Justice S. A. Bobde and Justices A. S. Bopanna and V. Ramasubramanian allowed the petitioner to withdraw the plea. The top court also allowed the petitioner to pursue the matter in the Madras High Court, as it was informed that this matter was

slated for hearing on September 3. The high court passed the order on an appeal filed by Patanjali and Divya Yog Mandir Trust. The petitioner has claimed that Coroniil is its trademark product owned by it since 1993 and the product with this name is an acid inhibitor used to clean heavy machinery and chemical preparations for industrial use.

A single judge had slapped the penalty for promoting Coroniil as a cure for Covid-19 viral infection, but this was stayed by the division bench of the Madras High Court. Chennai based Arudra Engineers Private Limited, had moved the court against Patanjali.

# international



Turkey has no intentions on anyone's land, sovereignty or interests, but it will not make concessions on its rights  
RECEP TAYYIP ERDOGAN | TURKEY PRESIDENT

## GOOD NEWS FOR PASTA EATERS

Pasta consumption in both children and adults is associated with better diet quality and nutrient intakes than that of those adults and children who do not eat pasta, say researchers



## of the day quote

The pandemic has further aggravated Iraq's already existing economic, social and political challenges  
JEANINE HENNIS-PLASSCHAERT | UN SECRETARY-GENERAL'S SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE FOR IRAQ



My mother taught me from a young age that I had a responsibility to fight for justice. She was a woman who believed in solving problems  
KAMALA HARRIS | DEMOCRATIC VP CANDIDATE



The risk of accidental conflict is rising because of tension in the South China Sea and around Taiwan and communication must be maintained to reduce the risk of miscalculation  
TSAI ING-WEN | TAIWAN PRESIDENT



# AMERICANS 'WON'T BE SAFE' IF BIDEN WINS: PENCE

AGENCIES

Washington, August 27: US Vice President Mike Pence has warned Americans that violence will spread in their cities if Democrat Joe Biden, a "Trojan horse" for the radical left, wins the presidential election against Donald Trump in November.

Pence, 61, formally accepted the Republican Party's vice-presidential nomination on the third night of the National Republican Convention on Wednesday as Republican supporters in Baltimore, Maryland, cheered, "Four more years."

Launching a frontal attack against Biden in his acceptance speech, Pence said the Democratic Party's presidential candidate against President Trump has been a "cheerleader" for communist China and would be nothing more than a "Trojan horse" for a radical left. "The choice is clear to bring America all the way back, we need four more years of President Donald Trump in the White House," he said.



Mike Pence is joined onstage by President Donald Trump after delivering his acceptance speech as the 2020 Republican vice presidential nominee

Pence said that he has been watching Trump enduring unrelenting attacks and fighting to keep the promises he made to the American people. "So, with gratitude for the confidence President Donald Trump has placed in me, the support of our Republican Party, and the grace of God, I humbly accept your nomination to run and serve as Vice President of the United States," Pence said. Biden would double

down on the very policies that are leading to unsafe streets and violence in America's cities, he said. "The hard truth is... you won't be safe in Joe Biden's America," the vice president warned the voters. Trump and Pence are being challenged by Biden and his running mate Indian-origin Senator Kamala Harris on the Democratic Party in the November 3 presidential election. Portraying President

Pence formally accepted the Republican Party's vice-presidential nomination

Trump and Pence are being challenged by Biden and his running mate Kamala Harris from the Democratic Party in the presidential election

Kamala Harris will deliver a speech Thursday to counter Trump's remarks

Blake Blake, 29, multiple times in the back, reigniting protests against racism and police brutality that erupted across the US earlier in the year after the death of George Floyd.

"President Trump and I will always support the right of Americans to peaceful protest, but rioting and looting is not peaceful protest, tearing down statues is not free speech. Those who do so will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law," Pence said. Last week, Biden didn't say one word about the violence and chaos engulfing cities across this country, he said.

"Let me be clear: the violence must stop - whether in Minneapolis, Portland, or Kenosha. Too many heroes have died defending our freedoms to see Americans strike each other down," the vice president said. "We will have law and order on the streets of America," he said. He also criticised Biden for saying there is an "implicit bias" against minorities and "systemic racism" in the US.

## NO SIGNS OF CRIME IN NAVALNY COMA CASE SO FAR: RUSSIA



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Moscow, August 27: Russian authorities said Thursday they have found no indication so far that opposition leader Alexei Navalny's coma, which his allies and German doctors treating him believe may have been brought about by poisoning, was caused by a criminal act.

A preliminary inquiry launched last week hasn't found any indication of "deliberate criminal acts committed against" Navalny, Russia's Prosecutor General's office said.

The statement comes amid growing pressure from the West to investigate the sudden illness of the Kremlin's fiercest critic and authorities' apparent reluctance to do so. Navalny, an opposition politician and corruption investigator who is a longtime foe of President Vladimir Putin, fell ill on a flight back to Moscow from Siberia on Aug. 20 and was taken to a hospital in the Siberian city of Omsk after the plane made an emergency landing.

Over the weekend, he was transferred to the Charité hospital in Berlin, where doctors found indications of "cholinesterase inhibitors" in his system. They are yet to identify a specific substance. Found in some drugs, pesticides and chemical nerve agents, cholinesterase inhibitors act by blocking the breakdown of a key chemical in the body, acetylcholine, which transmits signals between nerve cells. Navalny's allies insist he was deliberately poisoned and say the Kremlin was behind it, accusations that officials denounced as "empty noise."

## New Zealand mosque shooter sentenced to life without parole

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Christchurch, August 27: The gunman who killed 51 people at two mosques in New Zealand's Christchurch city in 2019 was sentenced to life in prison without parole, a court announced Thursday.

The verdict, which is the first of its kind in New Zealand, came after three days of the final hearing of the case at the High Court in Christchurch, reports Xinhua news agency.

The 29-year-old Australian gunman, Brenton Harrison Tarrant, was sentenced on 51 murder charges, 40 attempted murder charges and one terrorism charge. A total of 91 victims or their families gave impact statements at the hearing that started Monday. According to the description of the shooting read at the court, "the defendant turned to his right and fired 32 shots from his AR-15 into

the mass of people in the north-eastern corner of the room".

The rate of fire was extremely high and the defendant moved the AR-15 across and back many times." Tarrant murdered 44 people at the Al Noor Mosque and killed seven more at the nearby Linwood Mosque.

He also injured 40 others in the mass shootings, according to the prosecutor Mark Zarifeh who called Tarrant "New Zealand's worst murderer".

The gunman conducted a research of the view of the Al Noor Mosque by flying a drone over the mosque in January 2019. He was on the way to another mosque in Ashburton, 85 km southwest of Christchurch, to carry out another attack when he was stopped by the police. It is the first time the sentence of life imprisonment without parole has been handed down in New Zealand.

## SHORT TAKES

### Ready to help Belarus: Putin

Minsk: Russian President Vladimir Putin warned that he stands ready to send police to Belarus if protests there turn violent, but added in an interview broadcast Thursday that there is no such need now and voiced hope for stabilizing the situation in the neighbouring country. Belarus' authoritarian president of 26 years, Alexander Lukashenko, is facing weeks of protests against his reelection to a sixth term in the August 9 vote, which the opposition says was rigged.

### Teen held for Wisconsin shooting

Washington: A 17-year-old teenager has been arrested on murder charges in the US city of Kenosha, Wisconsin after two people were killed amid violent protests against the police shooting of an African-American man in the state earlier this week. On Wednesday, Kyle Rittenhouse was charged with first-degree intentional homicide and was arrested in his hometown of Antioch, Illinois, about 30 minutes away from Kenosha, Xinhua news agency reported.

### Decline in nCoV cases in Africa

Johannesburg: Africa's top public health official says the continent has seen a 20 per cent decrease in confirmed coronavirus cases in the past week, but he warns that "we shouldn't go home celebrating that our pandemic is over". John Nkengasong with the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention tells reporters that testing and other efforts to contain the virus are largely working, but just one or two cases could reignite infections.

### Trump calls for drug tests

Washington: US President Donald Trump has called for drug tests to be administered before his first presidential debate with Democratic candidate Joe Biden next month, it was reported.

### Masks mandatory

Paris: France is to order the mandatory wearing of face masks across Paris to curb surging coronavirus infections, Prime Minister Jean Castex said Thursday, warning that the outbreak could spiral out of control if swift action is not taken. "The virus is spreading all over the country," Castex told a news conference, flanked by his health and education ministers.

## China fired 2 deadly missiles in SCS ahead of US visa ban

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Washington, August 27: Just before the US imposed a visa ban on Chinese government members in response to the militarisation of the South China Sea, Beijing had fired two missiles, including an 'aircraft-carrier killer', into the disputed sea.

As per a South China Morning Post (SCMP) report, China fired one intermediate-range ballistic missile, DF-26B, from Qinghai province and another medium-range ballistic missile, DF-21D, from Zhejiang Wednesday into the sea, provoking the US to take an unprecedented action against the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) regime, People's Liberation Army (PLA) and their businesses.

The DF-26B missile is capable of smashing moving targets at the sea, according to the Global Times, the mouthpiece of the CCP.

The missile's destruction capabilities have given it the name 'aircraft-carrier killer'.

China's Defence Ministry spokesperson, Senior Colonel Wu Qian, has claimed that the missile



can carry conventional or nuclear warheads and is capable of launching precision strikes against targets on land and sea. The missile has a range of 4,500 km, which effectively means that it can reach the West Pacific and the Indian Ocean, as well as American facilities in Guam, the British island of Diego Garcia and even the Australian city of Darwin. The DF-21 is also an anti-ship ballistic missile system, meant for destroying moving ships at sea.

The CCP justified the firing of the two missiles in the area between Hainan province and the disputed Paracel Islands, by arguing that it was in response to the US U-2 spy

plane flying in the Chinese-designated "no-fly zone" on Tuesday when China was conducting a live-fire naval drill conducted in the Bohai Sea off its north coast.

US President Donald Trump's administration has persistently disputed China's sovereignty over the South China Sea, which serves as a lifeline to all the Asian countries.

The relationship between the two countries has deteriorated to a historic low since China attempted to initially cover up the coronavirus pandemic which originated in its Wuhan city, Hubei province, from where it spread to the whole world.

## THE PERFECT SHOT



A girl clicks picture of her beagle who reacts to high wind ahead of Hurricane Laura in Galveston, Texas REUTERS

## Laura makes landfall

REUTERS

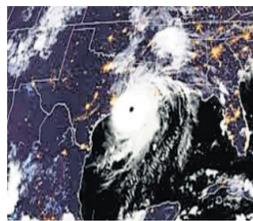
Beaumont, Texas, August 27: Hurricane Laura barreled through southwest Louisiana, destroying buildings in the city of Lake Charles and killing a 14-year-old girl after making landfall early on Thursday as one of the most powerful storms to hit the state.

The hurricane's first reported U.S. fatality was a 14-year-old girl in Leesville, Louisiana, who died when a tree fell on her house, a spokeswoman for Governor John Bel Edwards said.

"We do expect that there could be more fatalities," the spokeswoman, Christina Stephens, said on Twitter.

Residents of Lake Charles heard Laura's winds howling and the sound of breaking glass as the storm passed through the city of 78,000 with winds of 85 miles per hour (137 km per hour) and gusts up to 128 mph (206 kph) in the hour after landfall.

The windows of the city's 22-floor Capital One Tower were blown out, street signs were toppled and pieces of wooden fence and debris from collapsed buildings lay scattered in the streets, video footage on Twitter and Snapchat showed. Lake Charles resident Borden Wilson, a 33-year-old pediatrician,



was anxiously anticipating his return home after evacuating to Minden, Louisiana.

"I never even boarded up my windows. I didn't think to do that. This is the first hurricane I've experienced. I just hope my house is fine," he told Reuters in a telephone interview.

Laura made landfall just before 1 a.m. as a Category 4 storm packing winds of 150 mph (240 kph) in the small town of Cameron, Louisiana, the National Hurricane Center (NHC) said.

Typhoon batters Korean Peninsula: A typhoon damaged homes and other buildings, flooded roads and toppled utility poles on Thursday on the Korean Peninsula before weakening to a tropical storm. South Korean authorities said no casualties have been reported, and North Korean state media did not mention any deaths or injuries.

## DEATH TOLL FROM AFGHAN FLOODING SURPASSES 150

AGENCIES

Charikar, August 27: The death toll from two days of heavy flooding in northern and eastern Afghanistan rose to at least 150 Thursday, with scores more injured as rescue crews searched for survivors beneath the mud and rubble of collapsed houses, officials said.

Heavy rains, compounded by mudslides, often threaten remote areas of Afghanistan, where infrastructure is poor. Summer often brings heavy rainfall and flooding to the country's north and east.

Floods inundated the city of Charikar in northern Parwan province starting Tuesday night.

The Health Ministry said the local hospital was partially destroyed and many injured were being transferred to the capital Kabul. Powerful flood waters in the mountainous province dislocated thousands of large rocks that caused major injuries and destroyed entire homes, burying people under the rubble, officials said. Several excavators reached the area and were digging for those stuck beneath the rubble.

# A third of world's kids missed remote learning: UNICEF

AGENCIES

United Nations, August 27: The UN children's agency says at least a third of children couldn't access remote learning when the COVID-19 pandemic closed schools, creating "a global education emergency".

At the height of lockdowns meant to curb the pandemic, nearly 1.5 billion children were affected by school closures, UNICEF said. "For at least 463 million children whose schools closed due to COVID-19, there was no such thing as remote learning," UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore said.

"The sheer number of children whose education was completely

disrupted for months on end is a global education emergency," she said in a statement. "The repercussions could be felt in economies and societies for decades to come."

The report released late Wednesday night highlights significant inequality across regions, with school children in sub-Saharan Africa the most affected. The highest number of children affected by region were in South Asia, at least 147 million, according to the report.

UNICEF said the report used a globally representative analysis on the availability of home-based technology and tools needed for remote learning, such as access to television,



radio and internet, and the availability of curricula delivered by

the platforms. Children in the poorest house-

## WHO warns of risk of young infecting the old

Geneva: The World Health Organisation's chief for Europe has warned COVID-19 is a "tornado with a long tail" and says increased case counts among young people could ultimately pass on to more vulnerable older people and cause an uptick in deaths. Dr. Hans Kluge said younger people are likely to come into closer contact with the elderly as the weather cools in Europe. "We don't want to do unnecessary predictions, but this is definitely one of the options: That at one point there would be more hospitalizations and an uptick in mortality," he told reporters from Copenhagen, the WHO Europe headquarters.

holds and in rural areas were most affected. The youngest children are also most likely to miss out on remote learning during critical years, the report said, largely due to challenges and limitations to online learning for young children and

lack of assets at home. UNICEF warned that the situation is likely far worse, because even where technology exists at home, children may not be able to learn due to pressures to do chores or work.



**India can take advantage of the shifting global trade dynamics by entering into bilateral or multilateral trade pacts with a wide spectrum of nations that intend to reduce their large dependence on China**

SANKAR CHAKRABORTI | GROUP CEO, ACUTE RATINGS AND RESEARCH

## US ECONOMY PLUNGES 31.7%

The US economy shrank at an alarming annual rate of 31.7% during the April-June quarter as it struggled under the weight of the viral pandemic, the government estimated. It was the sharpest quarterly drop on record



## of the day quote

The bank has shareholders' approval for raising ₹14,000 crore, comprising ₹7,000 crore of the equity alone, from the market to meet Covid-related impact and finance growth



SS MALLIKARJUNA RAO | MD, PNB

In the lockdown period, there was a temporary change in consumer behaviour that resorted to bulk buying and hoarding for the fear of stepping out and unavailability of items. The offerings from food and personal hygiene firms too focussed on large packs given the operating constraints at their end



RAJESH BHATIA | PRESIDENT (F&A) AND CFO, UFLX

Increased consumer awareness of health and wellness-consciousness is fuelling industries to make a shift in their focus on product development



JAYANT ACHARYA | DIRECTOR & BOARD MEMBER, JSW STEEL

# 'Smell vulnerabilities early to prevent frauds'

THE RBI ANNUAL REPORT RELEASED EARLIER THIS WEEK SAID FRAUDS DOUBLED TO ₹1.85 LAKH CRORE IN FY'20

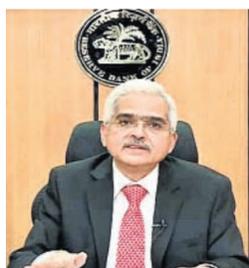
AGENCIES

**Mumbai, August 27:** Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Shaktikanta Das Thursday asked banks to avoid extreme risk-aversion, terming it "self-defeating", and also advised them to "smell vulnerabilities" in businesses early to avoid frauds, which have been growing lately.

He said the banking system continues to be sound and stable, but acknowledged that the COVID-19 crisis will lead to an erosion of capital for banks.

The remarks, made at a webinar, come at a time when credit growth has slowed down to under 6%, leading many to wonder if the banks have become risk-averse because of concerns over asset quality. The RBI annual report released earlier this week said frauds doubled to ₹1.85 lakh crore in FY20.

"The risk management systems (of banks) should be sophisticated enough to smell vulnerabilities brewing within various businesses well in advance and should be dynamic enough to capture the looming risks in sync with changes in the external environment," Das said. "One visible area of concern in the arena of risk management is the



Das said that the banking system continues to be sound and stable

The banks have to focus on governance, risk management, quality of decision-making, he added

inability or the ability to manage the incidence of frauds, both cyber related and otherwise," he added.

Das said the higher incidence of frauds which have come to light in recent times have their origins in "not so efficient risk management capacity of the concerned banks both at the time of sanctioning the loans and also post-sanction credit monitoring".

Das also trained his guns at the

sluggish credit growth, warning banks that extreme risk aversion will be "self-defeating" which will deprive the banks of their income sources. "It would create a situation where the banks will not be able to win their bread. In other words, it will impact their income also. Extreme risk-aversion is certainly not desirable," he said.

The banks have to focus on governance, risk management, quality of decision-making and going forward building resilience, he added.

At the same event, Aditya Puri, head of largest private sector lender HDFC Bank, denied any aversion at his bank and pointed to the 20% growth in core interest income it reported in the last quarter. Das said there will be an impact on banks' capital base because of the impact of the ongoing pandemic, and reiterated his wishes from them of being forthcoming in capital raising.

"The current pandemic-related shock is likely to place greater pressures on the balance sheets of banks, leading to erosion of their capital. I am stating the obvious," he said, clarifying that what is more important is how the banks proactively react and respond to this challenge.

## STATE'S TELECOM SUBSCRIBER BASE DROPS IN MAY: TRAI



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, August 27:** The mobile subscriber base in Odisha witnessed a decline of 88,801 subscribers in the month of May, 2020 compared to April. The data was revealed by Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI).

According to TRAI, present telecom subscribers base stood 3.3 crore in the state. Odisha is witnessing decline in subscriber base as major telecom service providers have failed to add new customers in the recent past.

Major telecom operators like Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea lost lakhs of subscribers in May 2020, revealed the data released by TRAI. According to data, Airtel lost 2,16,180 subscribers in this period, Vodafone-Idea lost 1,12,295 subscribers during this period.

As per TRAI's report for May 2020, only two operators Reliance Jio and BSNL added new subscribers in Odisha. "Jio added 1,87,345 new subscribers in Odisha in May, taking its total mobile subscriber base in Odisha to over 1.27 crores. This was followed by BSNL which added 52,329 subscribers during this period," TRAI report said.

## ANIL AMBANI CASE

# Delhi High Court stays bankruptcy proceedings

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, August 27:** The Delhi High Court Thursday put on hold the insolvency resolution process (IRP) proceedings against Reliance Communications (RCOM) Chairman Anil Ambani in relation to recovery of ₹1,200 crore loans given by SBI to his two firms. Ambani had given personal guarantees for the ₹565 crore and ₹635 crore SBI loans to RCOM and Reliance Infratel Ltd (RITL), respectively, in August 2016.

A bench of Justices Vipin Sanghi and Rajnish Bhatnagar, while putting on hold the IRP under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), also restrained Ambani from "transferring, alienating, encumbering or disposing of his assets or legal rights and interests therein till the next date of hearing".

It issued notice to the Centre, the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) and State Bank of India (SBI) seeking their stand on the plea by October 6, the next date of hearing.

The court also said that the proceedings would continue in relation to the corporate debtor (the companies), and while dealing with those proceedings, the liability of the petitioner-personal guarantor (Ambani) may also be examined by the IRP. "However, proceedings against the petitioner (Ambani) under Part 3 of the IBC shall remain



stayed," it said.

Ambani in his plea has challenged the constitutionality of the IBBI (Insolvency Resolution Process for Personal Guarantors to Corporate Debtors) Regulations, 2019. During the hearing via video conferencing, the Centre and the IBBI - represented by Additional Solicitor General Chetan Sharma, central government standing counsel Akshay Madhija and advocate Madhavi Divan opposed stay of the IRP saying it could lead to the guarantor "frittering" away his assets.

SBI too raised similar apprehensions during the hearing. It also urged the court to allow the resolution professional appointed by the NCLT to go on with his work and give a report, but the bench did not agree to it.

The National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) on August 20 had directed initiation of insolvency proceedings against Ambani under the personal guarantee clause of the bankruptcy law. It had ordered the appointment of a resolution professional and asked SBI to take the necessary action.

## SHORT TAKES

### TikTok CEO steps down

**Hong Kong:** TikTok CEO Kevin Mayer resigned Thursday amid US pressure for its Chinese owner to sell the popular video app, which the White House says is a security risk. In a letter to employees, Mayer said that his decision to leave comes after the "political environment has sharply changed". His resignation follows President Donald Trump's order to ban TikTok unless its parent company, ByteDance, sells its US operations to an American company within 90 days.

### 'Don't fall for fake websites'

**New Delhi:** Reliance Retail Ltd's online grocery shopping portal JioMart has warned of fake websites seeking franchisees in its name, saying it is not operating any dealership or franchisee model at present. "We have been informed about certain unscrupulous individuals who are creating fake websites, pretending to be us or associated with us and duping innocent individuals under the pretense of granting franchisee of JioMart services," the firm said in a notice.

### Goyal launches land bank system

**New Delhi:** Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal Thursday launched the national GIS-enabled land bank system, which will help investors to get real-time information about the availability of industrial land and resources. Launching the system, Goyal expressed confidence that other states/UTs will be onboarded by December 2020, as the project has been launched for six states. The system is being developed by integrating the Industrial Information System (IIS) with state GIS (Geographic Information System).

### HAI ties up with Naukri.com

**Mumbai:** The Hotel Association of India (HAI) Thursday said it has entered into a partnership with Naukri.com to create alternative employment opportunities for hotel industry workforce hit hard by the COVID-19 crisis. HAI and Naukri.com have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to assist those whose jobs have been affected due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the association said in a statement.

## Honda rolls out Hornet 2.0



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar/New Delhi, August 27:** Honda Motorcycle and Scooter India Pvt Ltd. (HMSI) Thursday made a grand entry in 180-200cc motorcycle segment with its all new muscular, sporty and advanced Hornet 2.0.

Hornet 2.0 is equipped with dual, petal disc brakes with single channel ABS. An ultimate combination of advanced technology and superior image is the Golden Upside Down (USD) front fork - a first in sub 200cc segment.

The all-new Hornet 2.0 is powered by a new Bharat Stage VI compliant higher capacity and advanced 184cc PGM-FI HET (Honda Eco Technology) engine. PGM-FI system uses 8 onboard sensors to constantly inject optimum fuel and

air mixture to provide greater performance and superior efficiency.

Honda will also be offering a special NEW 6-year warranty package (3 years standard + 3 years optional extended warranty) on Hornet 2.0.

The new model will be available in four colors - Pearl Igneous Black, Matte Sangria Red Metallic, Matte Axis Grey Metallic and Matte Marvel Blue Metallic. The Hornet 2.0 is attractively priced at ₹126,345 ex-showroom Gurugram (Haryana).

MD, President-CEO of HMSI Atsushi Ogata said, "Inspired by the dreams of the new age customers and their passion for riding, we are pleased to introduce all new Honda Hornet 2.0. With its advanced technology and thrilling performance, Hornet 2.0 is set to create a new benchmark among the young motorcycle enthusiasts."

# State-owned oil refiners halt imports from Chinese firms

REUTERS

**New Delhi, August 27:** Indian state refiners have stopped buying crude oil from China-linked companies, three sources said, after New Delhi's recent regulation aimed at restricting imports from countries that it shares a border with.

The new regulation, put in place July 23, comes after a border clash between India and China that killed 20 Indian soldiers and soured relations between the two neighbours.

Since the new order was issued, state refiners have been inserting a clause in their import tenders on new rules restricting dealings with companies from countries sharing a border with India, the sources said and the tender documents show.

Last week, Indian state refiners decided to stop sending crude import tenders to Chinese trading firm like CNOOC Ltd, Unipet and PetroChina, among others, one of the sources said.

To participate in Indian tenders, the July 23 order makes registration with a department in the federal commerce ministry "mandatory"



for any bidders from nations sharing a border with India.

India shares borders with China, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal and Bhutan, but the government statement did not name any specific country.

State refiners, which control 60% of India's 5 million barrel-per-day refining capacity, regularly tap spot markets for crude.

India is the world's third biggest

oil consumer and importer and imports nearly 84% of its oil needs.

China does not export crude to India but Chinese firms are major traders of the commodity globally.

Chinese companies also hold equity stakes in many oilfields across the globe ranging from the Middle East to Africa and the Americas and often submit competitive bids in crude import tenders by Indian state refiners.

# COVID-19 AN 'ACT OF GOD': SITHARAMAN

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, August 27:** Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman Thursday said the economy has been hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, which is an 'Act of God', and it will see a contraction in the current fiscal. As per the Centre's calculations, states will be facing a shortfall of ₹2.35 lakh crore in GST

revenues in 2020-21.

Briefing reporters after the 41st meeting of the GST Council, Sitharaman said the Centre will pay the states the compensation which strictly arises out of GST implementation.

In the current fiscal, the compensation requirement of states has been estimated at ₹3 lakh crore, of which ₹65,000 crore would be



funded from the revenues garnered by levy of cess. This leaves a shortfall of ₹2.35 lakh crore.

The Centre has estimated that

of this ₹2.35 lakh crore, ₹97,000 crore compensation requirement is due to GST rollout and the remaining is on account of the impact of COVID-19 on the economy.

"This year we are facing an extraordinary situation that even below 10% approximate estimation you are facing an 'Act of God' which might even result in a contraction of the economy..."

Sitharaman said.

Earlier this week, the Reserve Bank of India had said that the contraction in economic activity was likely to continue in the second quarter of the current fiscal as upticks witnessed in May and June appears to have lost strength following reimposition of lockdowns to contain the coronavirus pandemic.

# Skill development top priority in present job scenario: Survey

Competencies such as communication and resilience are key in the new normal. With the recently-enacted NEP, we hope to see reform in the education system with a shift from rote learning to individuals imbibing 'core essential skills'

SHVETA RAINA | FOUNDER AND CEO, TALERANG

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, August 27:** Skill development has taken the lead over academic qualifications in the current employment scenario, according to a recent survey. The survey conducted by Vasisitum, a recruitment startup, and Talerang, an employability and training organisation, showed that many companies now look for individuals who do not just have a bag full of academic qualifications, but rather skills and experience that they bring with them making them work-ready.

It showed that there is a consensus among all about the importance of skill development for jobs. Skill development is no longer a matter of choice. It is inevitable



to adapt, survive and succeed.

The survey saw maximum participation from millennials, who are currently employed and received feedback from more than 1,000 people.

About 45.5% of the respondents are graduates and 31.8% are em-

ployed full-time with various companies, but not necessarily having years of experience. About 14.9% are trained professionals who say that they acquired the necessary skill-sets on the job and not during their education.

"This goes to show the skill gap that the existing education regime needs to address on an urgent basis. Over 86.5% of participants feel that skill development plays an important role in one's career," a statement said.

The survey found that "problem-solving" emerged as the most important skill with about 64.7% saying it was required for a successful career. Problem-solving is having the competence and capability to gauge an issue and find a way to solve it, rather than wait for

things to fall in place. This was followed closely by communication skills at 60.9% and creativity at 57.1%.

About 47.4% of the respondents said that their formal education has not helped much to develop skills required for their workplace. Thus, there is a uniform consensus that skill development does play a critical role in the success of one's career.

Commenting about the survey results, Vikram Wadhawan, Founder & CEO of Vasisitum said: "The findings haven't really been eye-opening because it's a long-held opinion about the current education regime and the employment scenario that skill development plays a significant role in making one job-ready."

# RAHANE 'OPEN TO FINISHER'S ROLE'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, August 27: Ajinkya Rahane 'enjoys opening' in the shortest format but a packed Delhi Capitals top order could mean a potential 'finisher's role' for India's Test vice-captain which he is not averse to exploring during the upcoming Indian Premier League in the UAE.

Rahane, who joined Delhi Capitals this year, may find it difficult to find a slot in the top order as Shikhar Dhawan and Prithvi Shaw are set to open the batting with Shreyas Iyer, Shimron Hetmyer and Rishabh Pant being next in line.

Asked about his role in the team, Rahane said: "I don't know. We have to wait and watch as we start our practice sessions, then only we will have that communication."

"I have opened throughout my career and I have enjoyed that. But (it is) completely up to the team management as to what role they want to give me in the team. I will 100 per cent do that," the 32-year-old told mediapersons in a web conference Thursday.

So, does he think that a finisher's role in T20 can work for him? The senior batsman said he is open to the idea. "If I am told to bat at No.5 or 6, I will definitely take it as it will be a new role for me and help me explore my game. So if you ask me, my answer is yes, I am ready," said Rahane, who is only 12 runs short of career 5,000 runs in T20 cricket



(4,988 from 196 games).

But will two to three weeks of net sessions be enough to help him acquire the mindset of a finisher? Rahane said five to six sessions along with proper communication from the team management about the assigned role should be enough.

However, he agreed that field restrictions work to the advantage of top-three in white ball cricket. "Frankly speaking, when you have two fielders outside the circle, you have the freedom to express yourself. Also the field is completely spread in T20 cricket (after first six overs). Till No.3, you can play with freedom... You get 15 to 20 runs and you are on," he said.

He is still not over the pain of missing out on last year's World Cup and didn't hide his disappointment about not being India's No.4 in England.

"I was actually thinking I would be there at the World Cup as No.4. That's gone now and the goal is to make a comeback into the ODI team and do well in white ball cricket."

"People talk about strike rates and



averages. Before getting dropped, my record in 50-over cricket was good. I believe in having faith in myself rather than what people are saying. I am sure I will be back," he asserted.

It will be Rahane's first stint under Ricky Ponting, the DC head coach, and he is sure that the tips from the legendary former Australian captain will help him become a better cricketer overall.

"For any player, growth is important. Playing under Ricky Ponting (is something) I am excited about. As a player you want to grow and learn. This is the best opportunity to take my game one step forward."

"Because of this COVID-19, you can't spend too much time together but we can call him and discuss cricket," he said.

On Ponting, he was also asked about the difference of opinion between the coach and senior spinner Ravichandran Ashwin on the contentious topic of running out non-strikers who back up too far.

"Ashwin can answer that better and Ricky has already answered that question. The news is all over," Rahane responded.

"Let's keep it that way. We are playing for the same team now, so it is important that we stick by each other and back each other," added Rahane, who was the Rajasthan Royals skipper when Ashwin had run Jos Buttler out at the non-striker's end last season.

## DC HEAD COACH LANDS IN DUBAI

# Ponting goes into 6-day quarantine

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dubai, August 27: Delhi Capitals (DC) head coach and former Australia captain Ricky Ponting Thursday arrived here and went into mandatory six-day quarantine at his hotel ahead of the 13th Indian Premier League to be played in the UAE, starting September 19.

"My view for the next six days, hotel quarantine is officially underway," Ponting tweeted from his hotel room after landing here.

The 13th IPL has been shifted out of India to the UAE because of the ongoing COVID-19 crisis across the world. Delhi Capitals players and other support had already reached here August 23.

Ponting had triggered quite a debate recently when he said that he won't allow senior off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin to run out batsmen at the non-strikers' end if they back up too far.

Ashwin recently said that he has spoken to his IPL coach on the contentious issue and will reveal the details after a face-to-face meeting with Ponting.

Ashwin ran out England batsman Jos Buttler at the non-strikers' end last season when he backed up too far, drawing criticism for his act as



many called it against the 'spirit of the game'.

After Ponting's statement, Ashwin had suggested the introduction of a free ball for bowlers in case the batsmen backed up too far. The senior bowler said such an arrangement would make the contest between bat and ball more even.

# 3 Nat'l Sports Award winners test virus +ve

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, August 27: Three winners of this year's National Sports Awards, including badminton player Satwiksairaj Rankireddy, have tested positive for COVID-19 and will not attend the virtual ceremony August 29, the Sports Authority of India (SAI) said Thursday.

The SAI said that 65 of the 74 awardees will attend the first-ever virtual National Sports Awards from its centres across the country due to the pandemic.

"There are 74 awards in seven categories. Total 65 award winners will be attending the function from various locations. Nine award winners will not attend due to several reasons like being quarantined, tested positive, ill health or not in the country etc.," the SAI said in a statement.

"Three award winners after having tested positive will not attend the function," it added without giving any names. However, Satwiksairaj Rankireddy earlier confirmed his positive test while talking to this agency.

The country will honour an unparalleled five Khel Ratna winners and 27 Arjuna awardees among others. The five chosen for the high-

est honour are cricketer Rohit Sharma, wrestler Vinesh Phogat, Paralympian Mariyappan Thangavelu, TT player Manika Batra and women's hockey captain Rani Rampal.

The SAI further said all health and safety protocols, keeping with the guidelines of the Health Ministry, are being followed at the venues where dignitaries and awardees will be present.

"Further, the Sports Ministry has advised every award winner to undergo a COVID-19 test before reporting to the venue. All centers have been thoroughly sanitised and arrangements have been made to ensure social distancing during the awards function," it said.

President Ram Nath Kovind will present the awards to the winners in virtual mode. In the virtual format, President Kovind will be attending from the President's house, via video conferencing, while the recipients will be present at SAI centres in various locations across the country.

Sports Minister Kiren Rijju and other officials of the ministry and dignitaries will be present in Vigyan Bhawan for the award ceremony. The programme will be telecast live on Doordarshan.

# Pogba tests COVID-19 positive

AGENCIES

Manchester, August 27: France head coach Didier Deschamps has confirmed that Manchester United midfielder Paul Pogba tested positive for coronavirus which resulted his exile from the national squad.

The 27-year-old had been named in the World Champions' squad for upcoming fixtures against Croatia and Sweden but has now been forced out of consideration for selection.

Pogba has been replaced in Deschamps' squad by Rennes midfielder Eduardo Camavinga, while international team mate Tanguy Ndombele of Tottenham Hotspur also misses out.

It means Pogba will have to spend 14 days in isolation - meaning he will miss the start of Man United's pre-season preparations, which begin next week following their extended



2019-20 season as they reached the Europa League semifinals. However, he should be able to play in United's first game of the 2020-21 Premier League season, against

Crystal Palace September 19. The Red Devils start their domestic season a week later than most of their rivals to allow them additional rest due to their exploits in Europe.

He is said to be asymptomatic, however the positive test means Deschamps has no option but to leave out one of his key players for the first set of men's international fixtures played in Europe this calendar year.

On a footballing level, the absence of Pogba and Dembele provides opportunities for teenage talent Camavinga - linked with a move to Real Madrid this summer - and Lyon midfielder Houssem Aouar, who have been called up to the France senior squad for the first time.

## Six Chelsea players hit by coronavirus

London: Chelsea's preparations for the new season have been thrown into turmoil after they were hit by a coronavirus outbreak with eight of their players missing pre-season as they self-isolate. It is not known which of the players have tested positive. "The Telegraph" reported that six players have the virus and a further two are quarantining because of close contact with those affected. The Blues have confirmed a number of players have tested positive and are in quarantine to limit the threat of further spreading among Frank Lampard's squad. Mason Mount, Tammy Abraham, Christian Pulisic and Fikayo Tomori are all understood to be in self-isolation after they were pictured on holiday on the Greek island of Mykonos before pre-season training began last weekend. Jorginho, Ross Barkley, Emerson and Michy Batshuayi are also reported to be staying away from Chelsea's Cobham base.

# No CL glory: PSG's focus on expensive strikers proves costly

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Paris, August 27: Paying for the world's most expensive strikers cost PSG 402 million euro (USD 476 million), but Neymar and Kylian Mbappe failed to score a single goal during the final stages of the Champions League.

Overall, the pair had 23 shots during the last eight in the tournament in Lisbon without finding the net. PSG lost the final 0-1 to Bayern Munich.

PSG remain overly dependent on two big stars and traditionally has not drawn enough on a huge local talent pool.

Mbappe was recovering from an ankle injury, but still played a full part in the semifinals and the final. Neymar was in great shape physically but squandered chances galore in the quarterfinal and was fairly anonymous in the final.

One of the world's best finishers with 30 goals in 37 games this season, Mbappe missed a big chance on the stroke of halftime at 0-0 against Bayern. Neymar wasted an earlier one.

Costly players, even costlier misses.

Both posted a photo of their disappointment to millions of followers on social networks: Neymar weeping into his hand and Mbappe walking solemnly past the winners' trophy behind him.

Appropriate gravitas shown. Job done in the virtual world. But on the field they got a reality check by a Parisian who came through the club's academy only to be sold to



Kylian Mbappe (L), Neymar & PSG owner Nasser Al-Khelaifi (inset)

Juventus when he was 18.

Kingsley Coman was released by PSG at the end of his contract, ambitions of forging a career at his hometown in tatters. The youngest player to play for the club at 16 years and eight months made just four appearances.

Six years later his bullet header sank PSG's hopes of becoming only the second French club to win the Champions League. Instead bitter rival Marseille stands alone, bragging rights intact 27 years after captain Didier Deschamps lifted the trophy in Munich.

PSG's pursuit of stars, at a time when Zlatan Ibrahimovic ruled the roost, pushed Coman out of the door and led the club on a cash-laden path toward Neymar and Mbappe.

Coman's match-deciding moment symbolizes how PSG's fast-track-

ing process to European glory ultimately remains flawed. If PSG had fully backed their youth academy, perhaps Coman would have been on the PSG flank rather than tormenting right back Thilo Kehrer all night.

Perhaps Mbappe, raised in the Paris suburb of Bondy, would have come through PSG's academy rather than joining Monaco's - and then costing PSG 180 million euro in 2017 and a Financial Fair Play headache.

That he slipped off the radar is baffling, but players falling through PSG's net dates even further back.

France great Thierry Henry grew up in the southwestern suburbs but never passed through PSG. Like Mbappe he went to Monaco.

World Cup winners Paul Pogba (Manchester United) and N'Golo Kante (Chelsea); Riyad Mahrez (Manchester City) and Anthony Martial (Man United) are all Parisians whose paths went away from PSG.

A look at the other semifinalists in Lisbon reveals a trend of Paris-born players simply being overlooked, sold, released - or even not signing - as well as the limitations of its scouting network.

Tanguy Kouassi, a tall and elegant player at either center half or midfield, joined Bayern last month despite making a strong impression for PSG last season. He turned 18 in June but PSG failed to get him to sign professional terms.

Leipzig's imposing 21-year-old center half David Upamecano was born 100 kilometers (about 60 miles)

from Paris in the Normandy commune of Evreux. But he joined the Valenciennes academy 300 kilometers (180 miles) away in his mid-teens. He was outstanding in the quarterfinal win against Atletico Madrid and is touted as a future star.

His 22-year-old teammate Christopher Nkunku was sold by PSG last year after coming through the academy and was impressive when given opportunities. There's also Jeff Reine-Adelaide, Lyon's super-slick 22-year-old midfielder, who grew up in the Paris suburb of Champigny-sur-Marne, played for the local team and then another regional side, Torcy.

Instead of going to PSG, he journeyed 200 kilometers to join Lens aged 12; then went to Premier League club Arsenal before ending up at Lyon.

Last summer, other highly-rated young players who did come through PSG's ranks left. The 25-year-old midfielder Adrien Rabiot joined Italian champion Juventus after tense contract talks ended with a bitter separation.

Winger Moussa Diaby (21) was bought by Bayer Leverkusen and defender Stanley Nsoke (21) was signed by Nice. The season before, attacking midfielder Yacine Adli (20) was sold to Bordeaux, having played one game for the club as a promising youth from the suburbs.

For all the sizzling talent on display when Neymar and Mbappe hit form, it seems the players leaving the club too soon, or not getting scouted or signed, are costing PSG.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, August 27: The India Open Super 500 and the Syed Modi International Super 300 tournaments were on Thursday cancelled by the Badminton World Federation in its adjusted calendar to salvage a season thrown haywire by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The India Open, which was originally scheduled in March, was to be played December 8-13 in New Delhi and Syed Modi was slated for November 17-22 in Lucknow in the previously revised calendar.

"The Badminton World Federation (BWF) will implement an adjusted tournament calendar for the HSBC BWF World Tour in 2020," the world body said in a statement.

"The TOTAL BWF Thomas & Uber Cup Finals 2020 in Aarhus, Denmark will remain part of the international tournament calendar and will proceed on the planned dates of 3-11 October 2020."

"All remaining HSBC BWF World

Tour tournaments on the calendar will no longer take place at the dates and locations originally listed."

The badminton season has been on hold after the All England Championship in March. "...after weighing the concerns of COVID pandemic it's been decided that both #SyedModiInternational & #IndiaOpen stand cancelled for this year. The safety of players & other stakeholders connected to

the game is paramount. We hope to return in 2021," the Badminton Association of India tweeted.

According to BWF's adjusted calendar the Thomas and Uber Cup Finals will be followed by the HSBC BWF World Tour, which will resume with a two-week European leg in Odense, Denmark. "Both of these tournaments - DANISA Denmark Open I and Denmark Open II - will be Super 750 events."

The BWF calendar will take a two week break to allow the players time to follow the necessary quarantine rules as they move to the next tour - Asia - where back-to-back Super 1000 events will be held.



# Bryan brothers finally call time on their careers

REUTERS

New York, August 27: Bob and Mike Bryan, the most successful men's doubles team in the history of tennis, are bringing the curtain down on their 22-year professional careers days ahead of the U.S. Open, the site of their major debut in 1995, the ATP said Thursday.

The Bryans, 42, captured a professional era record 119 titles together, including 16 Grand Slams, 39 ATP Masters 1000s and the ATP Finals title four times.

"We feel it's the right time to walk away," said Mike. "We've given over 20 years to the Tour, and we are now looking forward to the next chapter of our lives. We feel blessed to have been able to play the game of doubles for so long. We are grateful to have had the opportunities in the beginning of the year to play and say our goodbyes to the fans."

The Californian pair were the top-ranked doubles team in the world for 438 weeks and became the first team to clinch a Career Golden Masters in 2014 with their Shanghai triumph which meant they had won all nine ATP World Tour Masters 1000 tournaments.

They also won Olympic gold at London 2012 and were part of the US Davis Cup-winning team in 2007. The Bryans will exit on a winning note, having lifted the Delray Beach Open title in February. They finish their careers with a 1,108-359 team record.