



EMOTION RUNS HIGH

Actor Rhea Chakraborty says late actor Sushant Singh Rajput has now turned a guardian angel for her

LEISURE

P2



RARE AGREEMENT

India, Pakistan agree to share ownership of Basmati rice, a solution considered the most workable to reach European markets

INTERNATIONAL

P10



CLASH OF TITANS

France meet Germany in the group stage of a Euro or World Cup for the first time when they face off today

SPORTS

P12

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BHUBANESWAR | TUESDAY, JUNE 15 | 2021

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IRREGULAR by MANJUL



The best part of these virtual addresses is that one can lie as much as one wants and still avoid getting beaten up!

ASI monuments to reopen tomorrow

BHUBANESWAR: The Archaeological Survey of India Monday announced that all Centrally-protected monuments and sites in Odisha which were closed two months back in the wake of the second wave of Covid-19 will be reopened June 16. This reopening, however, shall be in strict compliance with executive orders, if any issued by state/district disaster management authority. Appropriate guidelines and SOPs issued by Union ministries and state departments in this regard shall be followed while regulating the flow of visitors. Odisha has 80 Centrally-protected monuments and three museums.

| MARKET WATCH | | | |
|--------------|----------|---|-----------|
| INDEX | | | VARIATION |
| SENSEX | 52551.53 | ▲ | 76.77 |
| NIFTY | 15811.90 | ▲ | 12.50 |
| DOLLAR | 73.60 | ▲ | ₹0.16 |
| EURO | 89.25 | ▼ | ₹0.28 |
| GOLD | ₹48,590 | ▼ | ₹313 |
| SILVER | ₹71,973 | ▼ | ₹254 |

| WEATHER | | | |
|----------|--------|--------|----------------------|
| | BHUB | CTK | |
| TEMP | | | |
| MAX | 30.3°C | 31.2°C | |
| MIN | 25.2°C | 24.0°C | |
| Humidity | 98% | 97% | Forecast |
| Rainfall | 1.4mm | 1.4mm | Generally cloudy sky |

Monsoon covers two-thirds of India earlier than usual

NEARLY HALF OF THE COUNTRY'S FARMLAND GETS NO IRRIGATION AND IS DEPENDENT ON THE ANNUAL RAINS FROM JUNE TO SEPTEMBER

REUTERS

Mumbai, June 14: India's annual monsoon rains have covered two-thirds of the country, nearly a fortnight ahead of the normal schedule, a weather department official said Monday, adding that conditions are favourable for further advancement into the north-western parts this week. The early arrival of monsoon rains in central and northern India will help farmers accelerate sowing of summer-sown crops such as paddy rice, cotton, soybean and pulses, and may boost crop yields too. "Monsoon has already covered some parts of Punjab. Usually, it enters Punjab in the last week of June,"



said an official at the India Meteorological Department (IMD), who declined to be named. Monsoon arrived in the southern state of Kerala June 3 against the usual June 1, but has advanced quickly since. Since the start of the season, the monsoon has delivered 25 per cent more-than-normal rainfall, boosted by higher rainfall in the central India region, data compiled by IMD showed. Monsoon is crucial for India's \$2.7-trillion economy, as it delivers nearly 70 per cent of the rain needed by farms, besides replenishing reservoirs and aquifers. Sowing of summer-sown crops such as cotton, rice, soybean, corn and pulses has already started in

southern and western states, and could start in central and northern India this week, said a Mumbai-based dealer with a global trading firm. "Farmers are interested in rice and oilseeds due to higher prices. We might see higher area under soybean and paddy," the dealer said. India is the world's biggest exporter of rice and top importer of edible oils such as palm oil, soyoil and sunflower oil. Nearly half of India's farmland gets no irrigation and is dependent on the annual rains from June to September. Farming accounts for nearly 15 per cent of the economy but sustains more than half of a population of 1.3 billion.

FESTIVE SPIRIT



Children enjoy a swing ride on the first day of Raja festival on the outskirts of Bhubaneswar, Monday

PIC: BIKASH NAYAK

Crime Branch to probe fake Covid drugs

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, June 14: Following a hue and cry over the seizure of a huge quantity of fake anti-Covid drugs in various parts of Odisha, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Monday asked the Crime Branch to investigate the case. Hinting toward strong action against those involved in the illegal practice, Health and Family Welfare Minister Naba Das had Sunday said counterfeiting business will not be tolerated. The state drugs controller officials have seized huge quantities of spurious anti-Covid drugs during raids in Cuttack, Bolangir, Jharsuguda, Sambalpur, Bhubaneswar, Kalahandi and Rourkela. So far 10 varieties of fake drugs have been seized during the raids. After getting information from the Food and Drug Administration, Maharashtra about spurious Favipiravir tablets (Favimax-400), the state officials swung into action. Max Relief Health Care, a non-existing drug manufacturer from Solan in Himachal Pradesh, had sold the drugs to a Cuttack-based pharmaceutical wholesaler. The first raid was recently conducted on the premises of Medilloyd Medicament Private Limited, Cuttack that had purchased the drugs. During the raid, the officials found that the firm had purchased 58,000 tablets of 'Favimax-400' from Max Relief Health Care, Gautam Budh Nagar, Uttar Pradesh. The UP firm is also a non-existing one. Since then the officials have been continuously raiding various drug stores across the state.

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Fuel price hikes push inflation up

AGENCIES

New Delhi, June 14: Retail inflation rose to 6.3 per cent in May, breaching the RBI's comfort level, while the wholesale price-based inflation accelerated to a record 12.94 per cent in May, on account of rising prices of crude oil, manufactured goods and a low base of last year, government data showed Monday. The Consumer Price Index (CPI) based inflation stood at 4.23 per cent in April. As per the data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO), inflation in the food basket was 5.01 per cent in May, significantly up from 1.96 per cent in the preceding month. In May last year, WPI inflation was (-) 3.37 per cent and in April 2021, WPI inflation hit double digit at 10.49 per cent. This is the fifth straight month of uptick seen in the wholesale price index (WPI)-based inflation. "The high rate of inflation in May 2021 is primarily due to low base effect and rise in prices of crude petroleum, mineral oils viz.

petrol, diesel, naphtha, furnace oil etc. And manufactured products as compared to the corresponding month of the previous year," the Commerce and Industry Ministry said. Inflation in fuel and power basket spiked to 37.61 per cent during May, against 20.94 per cent in April, amid hardening of global commodity prices. Meanwhile, fuel prices continued to soar across the country. Monday. Petrol price was hiked by 29 paise per litre and diesel by 30 paise, according to a price notification of state-owned fuel retailers. The hike, the 24th in six weeks, pushed fuel prices across the country to new historic highs. In Delhi, petrol hit an all-time high of ₹96.41 a litre, while diesel is now priced at ₹87.28 per litre. Fuel prices differ from state to state depending on the incidence of local taxes such as VAT and freight charges.

| CITY FUEL PRICES | |
|------------------|----------------|
| PETROL | ₹97.22 (+0.29) |
| DIESEL | ₹95.17 (+0.32) |

Govt seeks 95% vax

State government urges Centre to allocate vaccines to Odisha in 95:5 ratio for government and private hospitals instead of 75:25

1,92,549 beneficiaries in Odisha are due for the second dose but are yet to be vaccinated

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, June 14: In view of the poor presence of private hospitals, the state government Monday urged the Centre to allocate Covid-19 vaccines to Odisha in the ratio of 95:5 for government and private hospitals instead of 75:25 fixed by the later. The Centre has revised its guidelines for implementation of Covid vaccination programme, which will come into effect from June 21 across the country. As per the fresh guidelines, 25 per cent of monthly production of vaccines by domestic manufacturers will be directly procured by private hospitals while the Union government will procure 75 per cent of the vaccines and supply to states. In a letter to Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan, Additional Chief Secretary (Health) PK Mohapatra said only four private hospitals in Odisha have been able to procure vaccines directly from manufacturers so far. "The presence of private hospitals in Odisha is very low and limited to only about 5 per cent of the total

FREE EDU FOR KIDS ORPHANED BY VIRUS

BHUBANESWAR: The state government has decided to provide free education to children orphaned due to Covid-19 pandemic in the state. Speaking to reporters here, advisor to Women and Child Development department, Sulata Deo said, "The children, who are orphaned due to Covid will get free education from Odisha government. The government will bear the cost of their higher education including admission into engineering and medical colleges." If the children join private educational institutions, the government has the Green Passage scheme, under which financial aid will be provided to such kids, she said. Green Passage scheme was launched in May 2016. Under this, the state government is bearing the cost of admission, tuition, examination and laboratories for homeless children. At present, orphan children are being provided with ₹2,000 monthly allowance. Plans are afoot to extend the benefit to children who lost their parents to Covid-19, Deo said.

health care sector in the state. Hence, the Odisha government apprehends that as per the existing guidelines, the state will lose out on its proportionate share of 25 per cent allocation of vaccines to the private sector," Mohapatra wrote to Bhushan. In this backdrop, he urged the Union Health Secretary to revise the vaccine allocation ratio to 95:5 for government and private hospitals. Moreover, Mohapatra has urged the Centre to provide the vaccine allocation for private hospitals to the

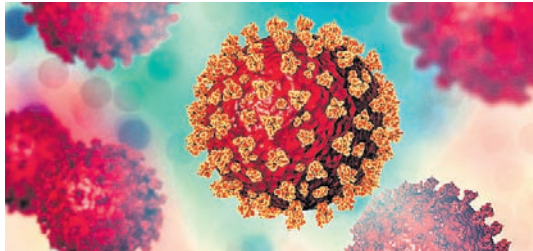
state government for subsequent mobilisation and allocation to private hospitals. Last Monday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had announced that the Centre will provide free vaccines to all people above 18 years of age from June 21. At that time, he had set the new rules of vaccine allocation. Meanwhile, the Health department ACS has asked all collectors, municipal commissioners and CDMOs to conduct vaccination of the beneficiaries, whose second dose was due since

The presence of private hospitals in Odisha is very low... Hence, the Odisha government apprehends that as per the existing guidelines, the state will lose out on its proportionate share of 25 per cent allocation of vaccines to the private sector

PK MOHAPATRA | ACS (HEALTH)

June 10, on priority basis. The officials have been asked to regularly monitor the second dose coverage of Covid vaccination centre-wise and block-wise for timely vaccination of beneficiaries. Mohapatra advised them to conduct on-site vaccination of left out beneficiaries on priority basis. As per the database on CoWin portal (June 9, 2021), 64,465 health care workers, 34,893 frontline workers and 93,191 citizens in the state, are already due for second dose but are yet to be vaccinated.

Delta Plus: New Covid variant



AGENCIES

New Delhi, June 14: The highly transmissible Delta variant of SARS-CoV-2 has mutated further to form the 'Delta Plus' or 'AY.1' variant but there is no immediate cause for concern in India as its incidence in the country is still low, scientists said. The new Delta Plus variant has been formed due to a mutation in the Delta or B.1.617.2 variant, first identified in India and one of the drivers of the deadly second wave. Though there is no indication yet of the severity of the disease due to the new variant, Delta Plus is resistant to the monoclonal antibody cocktail treatment for COVID-19 recently authorised in India. "One of the emerging variants is B.1.617.2.1 also known as AY1 characterised by the acquisition of K417N mutation," Vinod Scaria, clinician and scientist at Delhi's CSIR-Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology, tweeted Sunday. The mutation, he said, is in the spike protein of SARS-CoV-2, which helps the virus enter and infect the human cells. According to Public Health England, 63 genomes

of Delta (B.1.617.2) with the new K417N mutation have been identified so far on the global science initiative GISAID. In its latest report on coronavirus variants, updated till last Friday, the health agency said Delta Plus was present in six genomes from India as of June 7. "The variant frequency for K417N is not much in India at this point in time. The sequences are mostly from Europe, Asia and America," Scaria wrote on Twitter. The earliest sequence of this genome was found in Europe in late March this year. Allaying fears, immunologist Vineeta Bal noted that while there may be some setback in the use of commercial antibody cocktail due to the new variant, resistance to the therapy is not an indication of higher virulence or severity of a disease. "How transmissible this new variant is will be a crucial factor to determine its rapid spread or otherwise," Bal told PTI. Pulmonologist and medical researcher Anurag Agrawal concurred. "There is no cause of concern due to the new variant in India as of now," Agrawal said.

FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES

You can make a difference to others' lives. Considerate and thoughtful, today, you will be treasured more than ever as a boss, colleague, parent or beloved. Utilise this exchange of energy to sort out difficult issues. Ganesha gives a thumbs up to mega projects.

TAURUS

You will find comfort, perched on a branch in the family tree, today. Your maturity will help you deal with emotional issues with ease. Energy and exuberance will be an investment you make today, the results of which you will reap in the days to come, hopes Ganesha.

GEMINI

Today, you will toil as if you have to conquer Mt. Everest. And you will, says Ganesha. You may not get a standing ovation or a medal of honour for your hard work and dedication, but you will be lavishly appreciated by your superiors and colleagues.

CANCER

When the going gets tough, it's better to go with the flow. But you belong to a school of thought that believes that in such troubled times, it's better to stay out of water altogether. Since it is not your day today, you are likely to postpone all important decisions and work. Ganesha approves.

LEO

People involved in Sales and Marketing related jobs will attend productive meetings and will make effective presentations. However, delays in journeying are a possibility. It is a good time to recognise your inherent capabilities. You will be able to prove your worth in the next 2-3 days, says Ganesha.

VIRGO

Ganesha suggests that you take a much-needed break from the daily rigmarole. Introduce an element of the exotic in order to replace all the mundane work that fills up your day. You may attend private and social get-togethers, and Ganesha advises you to mingle with other people to keep your spirits high.

LIBRA

Ganesha says you will spend time with your family members by putting them above other commitments. There may be plans made to go out for dinner or for a short excursion with them. Ganesha says that the health of a close relative maybe a cause of concern for you today.

SCORPIO

Just another mundane day in store for you. At work, pressure may mount and lead to a hectic and tedious day. You may even feel irritated at times. Thus, feeling the need to unwind, you may invite your sweetheart for the cup of coffee and spend quality time together.

SAGITTARIUS

Whatever you take up today, you are on a winning spree, foresees Ganesha. A leader, you will guide and instruct your subordinates when they seek your advice. In a way, you even encourage and motivate them. All in all, you are a happy soul at the end of the day!

CAPRICORN

Often, sentiments take over your mind. Making you impractical, at times, this tendency proves to be harmful for you. Don't show it on your face as others may take advantage of your weakness, advises Ganesha. If you don't control your emotions, it may become an obstacle in your path to success.

AQUARIUS

You will go through some heavy mood swings today. And the people who know you well will get shocked and find it difficult to deal with you. Keep your guards on, and don't take uncalled-for decisions, advises Ganesha, rather get your current assignments cross the finishing line.

PISCES

Today will be a hectic day for you. Most of your time will be spent in making your relationships on the business as well as the personal front more meaningful. You will likely find yourself attending social events. There is also the possibility that you will attend some religious ritual today. Apart from this, nothing substantial is likely to occur today, says Ganesha.



EVANS IS ALWAYS NO. 1 IN HEMSWORTH'S BOOK

Hollywood's *Thor* Chris Hemsworth wished Chris Evans on his 40th birthday, saying the *Captain America* star would always be 'No. 1' in his book. Evans turned 40 Sunday according to India time and Hemsworth pranked Evans by giving him a shout-out on Instagram.

KATE MOSS TRAINING TO BE A TATTOO ARTIST

Model Kate Moss has revealed that she has been taking lessons from her tattoo artist friend Daniel Casone, as she wants to go to Glastonbury to ink people. "Kate called me to go up and tattoo her and she ended up tattooing me as well," Casone told The Sunday Mirror.



Rhea calls SSR her guardian angel



Mumbai: Sushant Singh Rajput's girlfriend, actress Rhea Chakraborty, posted a note in remembrance of the late actor Monday, on the occasion of his first death anniversary. "There isn't a moment where I believe that you aren't here anymore. They said that time heals everything but you were my time and my everything. I know that you are my guardian angel now-watching me with your telescope from the moon and protecting me," Rhea wrote on Instagram.

"I wait for you everyday to come pick me up, I look for you everywhere -- I know you're here with me. It breaks me every day, then I think of you saying -- you've got this beb and I carry on to the next day. A barrage of emotions crosses my body everytime I think of you not being here. My heart aches to write this, my heart aches to feel anymore.." she further wrote.

Sushant was found dead in his Mumbai apartment June 14 last year.

IAN S

KIRTI'S MANTRA TO LIFT SPIRITS

Mumbai: The ongoing second wave of the pandemic has affected people in many different ways, including taking a toll on mental health. Actress Kirti Kulhari reveals what she does to lift her spirits when she feels down.

"I travel. I know it's been a very tough time, but for me traveling is a time when I really connect with myself and I just look at how much life has to offer! Also, what helps me is the attitude of acceptance. When something is the way it is, you just have to accept and look at what you can do to

make yourself and people around you feel better in that situation," said the *Uri* actress.

The actress recently went on a solo trip to Uttarakhand and shared photographs and videos on social media of what she calls her 'experience of a lifetime'.

IAN S



Virtual celebration of 3rd Loka Kala Diwas



A screengrab of the event

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar: With restrictions in place, Odia Language, Literature and Culture Department celebrated the state level 3rd Loka Kala Diwas virtually Monday.

Organised in collaboration with Unicef, the event showcased the skills of more than 300 folk artists of Odisha.

Folk dances such as Ghumura (Kalahandi), Dhamsa (Koraput), Dalkhai (Bargarh), Ghoda Nacha (Khurda) and Bagha Nacha (Ganjam) were performed on the occasion. Popular Sambalpuri singer Padmini Dora also regaled the audience with her soulful renditions.

This apart, two songs written by Culture department director Ranjan Kumar Das and project coordinator Basudev Malbisoi were presented to the audience. Speaking on the occasion, Culture Minister Jyoti Prakash Panigrahi said, "The day is being celebrated to support the folk artists and promote their skills." The government is committed to preserve the folk culture and traditions of the state, added Panigrahi.

A video message from Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik was shared with the viewers at the event.

Loka Kala Diwas was first celebrated in 2019 but the Dept had to organise it in virtual mode last year due to pandemic situation.

Easing digital eye strain

ACCORDING TO 20-20-20 RULE ONE SHOULD TAKE 20 SECONDS TO LOOK AT SOMETHING 20 FEET AWAY EVERY 20 MINUTES WHICH HELPS RESET THE FOCUS AND HELP EYES FEEL LESS FATIGUED

If you have felt increased screen time is doing a number on your eyes and potentially contributing to digital eye strain, a survey shows you're not alone. Findings show that 80 per cent of respondents say pandemic-prompted screen time put their eyes in 'overdrive'.

In fact, two-thirds of respondents report experiencing some degree of eye discomfort every day and nearly a quarter say



A representational image

their eyes feel worse now than they did a year ago.

Causes, symptoms of eye strain

Digital eye strain can occur from prolonged and frequent use of screens, which engages the near vision, and exposes eyes to the blue light emitted by screens. Symptoms can appear as watery, dry, sore eyes, blurred vision and headaches.

Getting relief

Use of lens: Even if one has perfect vision, prolonged screen time -- pandemic-related or not -- can tire out the eyes. During an eye exam, doctor may suggest a computer lens or a blue light-reducing, anti-reflective lens coating that can help reduce the exposure and combat digital eye strain. If a person does-

n't wear prescription glasses, non-prescription lenses with a blue light-reducing, anti-reflective coating can be used.

20-20-20 rule: In this rule, where every 20 minutes, one should take 20 seconds to look at something 20 feet away. This will help to reset the focus and help the eyes feel less fatigued due to digital eye strain. Blinking more frequently also helps to relieve discomfort by moistening your eyes.

Keeping an eye on kids

The survey found that more than half of parents are worried about the effects of their children's increased screen time. Men are more likely than women to be worried about their children's eyes and, when it comes to millennial dads, 6 in 10 are concerned about their children's vision due to increased screen time.

Eye care is health care, and through a comprehensive eye exam, an eye doctor can detect early signs of serious health conditions like diabetes and hypertension. A

GENCIES

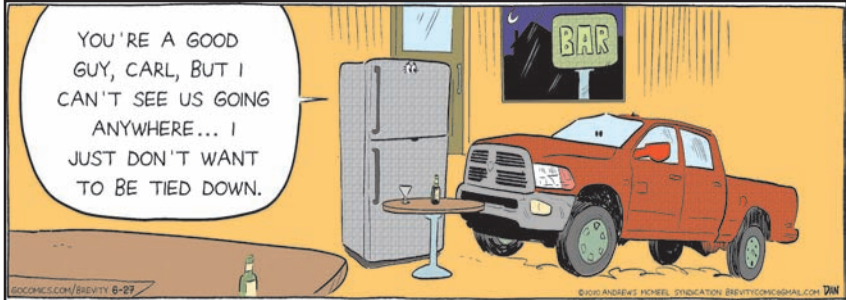
PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

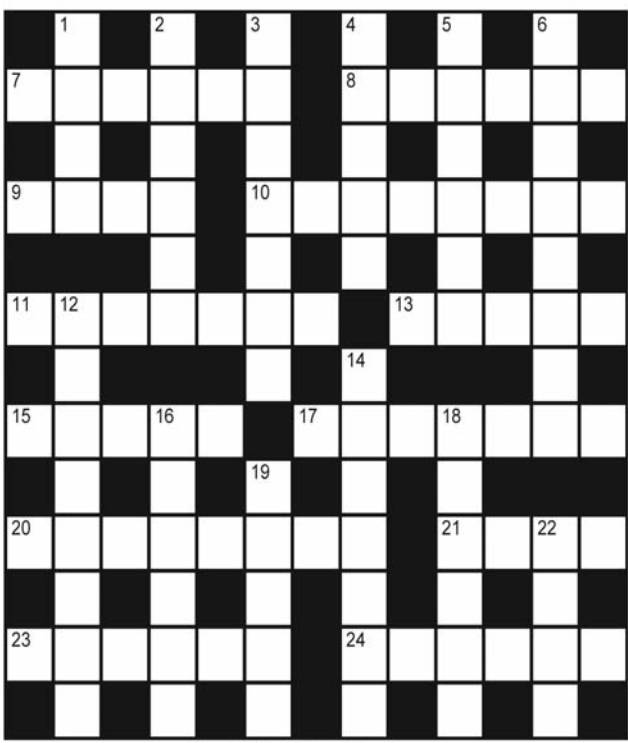


BREVITY



FUN post

CROSSWORD



Across

- 7 Like an ox
- 8 On the train
- 9 Bird of prey
- 10 Behemoth
- 11 Birthday items
- 13 Carpenter's tool
- 15 Building uprights
- 17 Fall back

Down

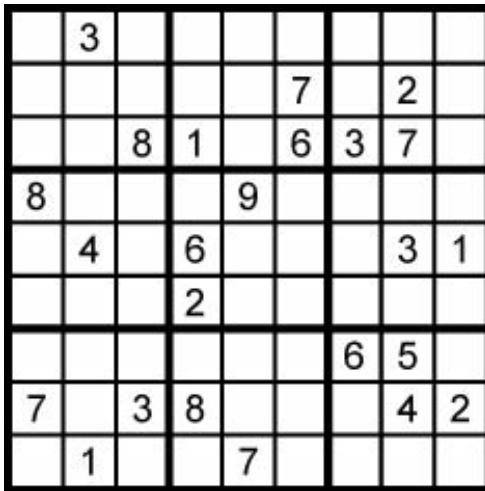
- 1 Exploding star
- 2 Evil
- 3 Holiday destinations
- 20 Pencil lead
- 21 Carryall
- 23 Despise
- 24 Alibi

- 4 Angel and Iguazu, e.g.
- 5 Creamy dessert
- 6 Pants
- 12 Vestibule
- 14 Erases
- 16 Terminals
- 18 Artistic style
- 19 Margarita fruits
- 22 Mediocre (2-2)

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD



SUDOKU

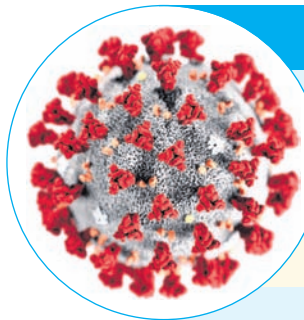


downtown



POURING WOES

Commuters negotiate a waterlogged road in Shankarpur area of Cuttack following a downpour, Monday



COVID-19 TRACKER

| | INFECTED | RECOVERED | DEAD |
|--------|--------------|--------------|-----------|
| World | 17,67,95,403 | 16,08,62,042 | 38,21,005 |
| India | 2,95,10,410 | 2,81,62,947 | 3,74,305 |
| Odisha | 8,56,121 | 8,04,981 | 3,346 |

Viral load in fresh nCoV cases down

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, June 14: The viral load in the fresh Covid-19 infections has come down substantially as compared to the cases reported during peak period of the pandemic, said Institute of Life Sciences (ILS) director Ajay Parida here Monday.

Parida said that the CT (cycle threshold) value in the RT-PCR test reports was ranging from 14 to 15 while it has now increased up to 28. The lower the CT value, the higher is the viral load and the higher the CT value the lower is the viral load.

Parida said that not only children but also people from other age groups may get infected in the possible third wave of the Covid-19. However, there is no concrete information shared by any nation and international medical research organisation till now about the third wave, he added.

On the infectivity of the virus during the probable third wave, Parida said, "The possibility of infection rate of another wave of

FAST FACTS



CT (cycle threshold) value in the RT-PCR test reports was ranging from 14 to 15 while now it has increased up to 28

The lower the CT value, the higher is the viral load and the higher the CT value the lower is the viral load

Not only children but also people from other age groups may get infected in the possible third wave of the Covid-19, said ILS director Ajay Parida

Covid-19 would depend on the human behaviour, adherence to Covid guidelines, anti-Covid vaccination and mutation of the virus, which is an ongoing process."

Genome sequencing of the novel coronavirus is being carried out at 28 laboratories across India. The result may ascertain the nature of the strain and its consequences, he stated.

As the daily positive cases have come down to below 5,000 now, the senior public health expert opined in favour of a gradual unlock process in Odisha.

Meanwhile, the state reported 4,339 new Covid-19 cases Monday, taking the tally to 8,56,121, a Health department official said. Forty-four more people died in the state, pushing the toll to 3,346.

Realtor couple dupes man of ₹18.60 lakh

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, June 14: A man lodged a complaint with Khandagiri police Monday alleging that a couple duped him of several lakhs on the pretext of constructing a residential house on his plot at Panchasakha Nagar.

The victim, Gyana Ranjan Mohanty, said that the realtor couple has an office at Panchasakha Nagar and the victim has a landed plot near their office.

They assured Mohanty that they would construct a house on his plot within six months. Accordingly, the victim signed a pact with the couple and gave them ₹18.60 lakh January 22, 2020. However, they did not start construction work despite several reminders. Police have started a probe after registering a case.

Sero survey in three districts from June 16

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, June 14: The state government Monday instructed local authorities to prepare for the second round of serological survey which is set to be conducted in Ganjam, Rayagada and Koraput from June 16 to 19.

In a letter to all the Collectors, District Magistrates and municipal commissioners, the Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) department said that as ICMR-RMRC, Bhubaneswar is set to conduct the sero survey, the authorities are requested to provide the necessary logistic support.

"The three districts of Odisha – Ganjam, Rayagada and Koraput – are having 10 clusters each. Thus the four-day sero survey will be conducted in these districts. You are therefore required to provide all necessary cooperation to the team of ICMR-RMRC," the letter read.

Notably, the state government, for the first time, will be including children above six years in the survey to assess the presence of antibodies.

Health experts said that the outcome of the sero-survey will help the state government prepare strategies to face a possible third wave of the pandemic.

OJEE-2021 postponed

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, June 14: The Odisha Joint Entrance Examination-2021 (OJEE-2021) has been postponed in view of Covid-19 pandemic, said an official notification issued by the chairman, OJEE.

As per the notification, OJEE chairman SK Chand said, "In view of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Odisha Joint Entrance Examination (OJEE – 2021), which was tentatively scheduled during 17th to 24th June, 2021, has been postponed. The revised dates of the examination will be notified, on assessment of the situation, in the 1st week of July."

Further, the last date for submission of online application forms for all the courses under OJEE-2021 is extended up to July 12 and the last date for fee payment up to July 14. Students interested in admission to B.Pharm/ MBA/ MCA/ MTech/ M.Arch/ M.Pharm/Integrated MBA courses and others can apply online at www.ojee.nic.in.

12-yr-old girl rescued from ex-Collector's house in City

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, June 14: Childline officials here Monday rescued a 12-year-old girl engaged as a housemaid from the residence of a retired Collector at IRC Village under Nayapalli police limits.

According to sources, the girl was trafficked from Berhampur in Ganjam district to the Capital city in November 2020. She was studying in Class VI when some alleged middlemen brought the girl to the city last year. Sources also revealed that victim's father is a rickshaw puller in Ganjam.

The family living in abject poverty allowed the minor girl to work as a housemaid in Bhubaneswar, sources claimed.

Following a tip-off, the Childline team with the help of Nayapalli

Childline demanded action against the accused under Sections 70, 374, 342, 34 of the IPC and Sections 79 and 75 of Juvenile Justice Act, 2015

police rescued the victim from the ex-Collector's residence.

Subsequently, the child was produced before Additional child welfare committee (CWC) who directed the child to be kept at a shelter home run by Viswa Jeevan Seva Sangha. The Childline foundation reportedly filed petitions before the Odisha State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (OS-CPCR), District Child Protection Officer, Khurda and DCP,

Bhubaneswar in this regard. A complaint has also been lodged with Nayapalli police. However, the police had not registered a case till the last report came in.

The Childline demanded exemplary action against the accused under Sections 70, 374, 342, 34 of the IPC and Sections 79 and 75 of Juvenile Justice Act, 2015 'so that no one should dare to exploit the children and take advantage of their vulnerability'.

Speaking to Orissa POST, Benudhar Senapati, child rights activist and Director, Childline, Bhubaneswar, revealed that the incidents child trafficking escalated due to the financial strain on the poor during the lockdowns. The foundation had reportedly rescued 555 children here after the easing of lockdown in 2020.

Lockdown, rain take sheen off Raja festival

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, June 14: Amid Covid-19 pandemic and state-wide lockdown, the most popular socio-cultural festival of Odisha – 'Raja Parba' – started on a low-key note with all activities confined to the houses only.

Normally the three-day festival witnesses a lot of merrymaking, swinging, singing and eating sweet cakes prepared at home. But this year, like last year too, the pandemic has dampened the spirit of the joyride and merry-making as public celebration of the festival and swings have been banned.

The state government has not only banned swings at public places but also sealed exit and entry points at many places across the state to prevent congregation of unmarried girls over there.

Heavy rains that lashed several parts of Odisha and the forecast by India Meteorological Department (IMD) of further rains in the next two days, in view of a low pressure area over Bay of Bengal, also played a spoilsport. This dampened the spirits of the people to celebrate the festival. The girls had made alternative arrangements of swings in their houses.

Raja is an abbreviation used for Rajaswala (meaning a menstruating



Raja celebrations remained confined to indoors as children install a swing at their home in GGP Colony of Bhubaneswar. (Bottom) Girls enjoy sweet cakes at their residence in Cuttack's Kalfa Bazar area, Monday

OP PHOTOS

woman). It signifies the menstrual cycle of the mother earth similar to that of a woman. The earth, like a

woman, is considered to be in a latent stage during the three days. It is believed that the earth, perceived to

LOW-KEY AFFAIR

The pandemic has dampened the spirits of young girls as public celebration of the festival and swings have been banned in Odisha

The state govt has not only banned swings at public places but also sealed exit and entry points at many places across the state to prevent congregation of unmarried girls over there

OTDC in collaboration with Mission Shakti members Monday launched 'Pitha on Wheels' programme in Bhubaneswar, Cuttack and Sambalpur

be a woman, menstruates during these days and takes a ceremonial bath after the three-day long festival ends.

During the period, ploughing and other digging activities on the soil are prohibited as a mark of respect to the mother earth.

Unmarried girls and women of Odisha are also barred from doing any activities in the kitchen and spend the three days in merrymaking with friends and relatives.

On these days, different types of cakes (pitha in Odia) are prepared at home and exchanged by the families with their neighbours.

The Odisha Tourism Development Corporation (OTDC) in collaboration with mothers in Mission Shakti Monday launched 'Pitha on Wheels' programme in Bhubaneswar, Cuttack and Sambalpur on the occasion of Raja festival. The programme was seen at various important places in the Capital city selling various kinds of pancakes prepared by the OTDC to the people.

Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, Union Ministers Dharmendra Pradhan and Pratap Sarangi have greeted the people of Odisha on the occasion and prayed for good health and well-being.

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44 more succumb to Covid

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, June 14: Odisha Monday reported 4, 339 new Covid-19 cases, taking the tally to 8, 56, 121, while 44 fresh fatalities due to the infection pushed the coastal state's toll to 3,346, a Health department official said.

Of the new infections, 2,475 were detected at quarantine centres, while the rest 1,864 are local contact cases.

Khurda district, where state capital Bhubaneswar is located, reported the highest 700 new cases, followed by Cuttack (480), Balasore (296) and Puri (255).

Health and Family Welfare department sources said that out of 44 deaths registered in the past 24 hours in 18 districts, Khurda accounted for a maximum of five deaths followed by three each in nine districts, two each in three districts and one each in six districts.

This apart, 53 Covid-19 patients have died due to comorbidities. The state tested 68,535 samples Sunday. Odisha has so far administered as many as 88,71,397 doses of Covid-19 vaccines.

The average total positivity rate in the state stands at 6.3 per cent. As many as 13 districts in the state



have a TPR of less than 5 per cent while nine districts have between 5 to 10 per cent and eight districts have a TPR above 10 per cent.

The eight districts where the TPR is above 10 per cent are: Khurda, Puri, Jajpur, Cuttack, Nayagarh, Rayagada, Dhenkanal and Keonjhar. Jajpur district has the highest TPR of 20.8 per cent in the state.

Even as Odisha witnesses a decline in Covid cases, the steep rise

in the number of deaths has raised concerns.

Additional Chief Secretary to Health PK Mohapatra said that there was no reason to disbelieve the government data.

He said the number of deaths is released after a proper audit at the district and state levels as per the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) guidelines.

Mohapatra rejected allegations that the number of deaths is being

CLEARING AIR

Additional Chief Secretary to Health PK Mohapatra says that there is no reason to disbelieve govt data

The number of deaths is released after a proper audit at the district and state levels as per ICMR guidelines, he says

Although the state govt has declared 3,346 Covid-19 fatalities so far, about 800 cases are still under audit

suppressed by the state government. Although the state government has declared 3,346 Covid-19 fatalities so far, about 800 cases are still under audit, as per official sources. These deaths will be attributed to Covid-19 only after proper verification and audit, they said.

Meanwhile, special relief commissioner PK Jena said the state government is yet to announce fresh guidelines about the restrictions, whether to continue or withdraw them after June 17. "Whatever is circulating on social media is fake. All are requested not to be misled by such news," he said.

RUSH AMID LOCKDOWN



Bapuji Nagar market in Bhubaneswar witnesses a rush despite lockdown, Monday

OP PHOTO

Small traders' festive biz takes a beating

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, June 14: Small traders in the Capital city bore the brunt of Covid-induced lockdowns for the second straight year causing much losses to their businesses during Raja festival.

The three-day festival which celebrates womanhood brings huge demand for sarees, bangles, bindis, flowers and other such stationery items used by young women. However, with the state government providing no relaxation in lockdowns, businesses dealing with such commodities have taken a huge beating.

"This is the second year that our business has suffered due to Covid-19. Normally, we make ₹40,000 profit during Raja festival - 20% more than our normal period. We are incurring heavy losses due to lockdowns," said Laxmikanth Behera, a trader at Market Building.

It can be mentioned here that the state capital which has about 5,000 garment stores saw an eerie silence as the government refused to provide any relaxation.

Meanwhile, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC), Monday, sealed at least five shops which remained open on the occasion of Raja in violation of Covid-19 guidelines. Sources said that a fine of ₹7,000 was also imposed on the owner of these shops.

Delang woman found dead; family cries foul

POST NEWS NETWORK

Pipli/Delang, June 14: A 23-year-old married woman was found dead under suspicious circumstances at Surangpur under Delang police limits here, an official said Monday.

Delang inspector in-charge (IIC) Rashmi Ranjan Patnaik said that they have recovered the body of Deptimayee Baral from her residence in the morning and sent it for an autopsy to Puri.

Deptimayee had married Suryakant, a driver by profession, around five years back.

"It was a love-turned-arranged marriage. Things were rosy for around two years or so. Then, Deptimayee's in-laws frequently harassed her for dowry. Although we gave them a motorcycle, cash and jewellery, it couldn't satiate their greed as their demands kept growing," Deptimayee's mother Pravishini Swain said in her police complaint.

Pravishini said that it was Sunday night when she got a call from Deptimayee's in-laws informing that she had hanged herself from the ceiling.

"This is a blatant lie. My daughter can never ever take such an extreme step. Suryakant often comes home drunk and beats her. I believe Suryakant and his family



Deptimayee's mother Pravishini said that it was Sunday night when she got a call from Deptimayee's in-laws informing that she had hanged herself from the ceiling

have killed my daughter just for money. They are cooking a story to avoid arrest," Pravishini alleged.

Suryakant's mother confirmed that her son had come home drunk and quarrelled with Deptimayee Sunday night. "However, he didn't kill her. Following the quarrel, a frustrated Deptimayee hanged herself," Suryakant's mother said.

Delang police has registered a case (143) under several Sections of the IPC including 498, 302, 304B and 34 and the Dowry Prohibition Act. Suryakant has been arrested, the IIC said.

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, June 14: The India Meteorological Department (IMD) Monday said that heavy rain will lash a few places in the state for the next two days.

"Heavy rainfall would occur at one or two places of Sundargarh, Jharsuguda, Sambalpur, Bargarh, Bolangir, Sonepur, Angul and Deogarh districts, Tuesday. A few places in Sundargarh, Deogarh, Jharsuguda, Sambalpur and Keonjhar districts will witness heavy rain Wednesday," the IMD said. Under the influence of the low pressure, squally weather

4 more vax centres in Capital city

Bhubaneswar: Looking to expedite inoculation among the younger age group, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation Monday, added four more vaccination centres here. BMC said that new centres have been made available at Urban Primary Health Centre (UPHC), Satyanagar; CGHS Hospital at Unit-4; ESI Hospital at Jaydev Vihar and Central Ayurvedic Institute at Bharatpur. Meanwhile, the civic authority also issued new slots for the 1st dose for the 18-44 age group and for both types of doses for 45+ age group.



with surface wind speed reaching 40-50 kmph is likely to prevail over North Bay of Bengal and adjoining Central Bay Bengal off Odisha coast till June 15.

Therefore, the IMD advised fishermen not to venture into the sea along and off Odisha coast.

Astaranga in Puri district recorded a maximum rainfall

of 17 cm during past 24 hours, while the rainfall was 13 cm at Kakatpur, 9 cm at Niali (Cuttack), 9 cm at Mathili (Malkangiri), 8 cm at Tigiria (Cuttack), 8 cm at Lamataput (Koraput), 7 cm at each of Kankadahada (Dhenkanal), Kolabira (Jharsuguda), Komna (Nuapada), 6 cm each at Champua (Keonjhar), Bangiriposi (Mayurbhanj), Satyabadi (Puri), Deogaon (Jharsuguda), Swam-Patna (Keonjhar), Ambabhona (Bargarh) and Attabira (Bargarh), the weatherman said, adding that many other places in rural Odisha have received rainfall during past 24 hours.

8 monitor lizards rescued in City

Bhubaneswar: Police Monday rescued eight adult Indian monitor lizards from Laxmisagar area here. Two persons were detained in this connection. The accused were identified as G Krishna of Tarini Basti and G Raghav of Mancheswar area. Sources claimed that the accused used to capture the monitor lizards for meat purposes. They had kept the lizards near a chicken shop. Informed, police rescued the animals who were later handed over to the Forest officials. The monitor lizards are considered as species facing extinction threat.

Aid sought for kin of Covid-hit lawyers

Bhubaneswar: All Odisha Lawyers' Association Monday sought financial aid to the families of advocates, who have succumbed to Covid-19. Association's president Gyan Ranjan Mohanty urged the Welfare Trust Committee for advocates to provide Rs 10 lakh financial aid to the next kin of the deceased lawyers. The association also claimed that the committee has been empowered under Odisha Advocates Welfare Committee (Amendment) Act, 2021 to increase the financial assistance amount in case of any emergency situation.

Tribute to SAI Int'l founder Bijaya Sahoo

Bhubaneswar: A virtual prayer meet was organised by SAI International School Monday in the memory of Late Bijaya Kumar Sahoo, Founder of SAI International School who passed away recently. On the occasion, several students of the school and alumni paid their tributes to the departed soul. On the occasion, a special memoir site was created where anyone can write about him and share their memory about him in the website. His son Vikram Aditya, Vishal Aditya daughter Vijisha and son-in-law Neelesh were also present.

CLASSIFIED

AFFIDAVIT

I, Pradyumna Kumar Mahapatra, S/o. Mr. Mahendra Kumar Mahapatra, Village: Chhachina, P.O.: Kanikapada, Dist.- Jajpur have changed my name to Pradyumna Kumar Mahapatra for all purposes.

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A member of youth Congress distributes cooked food among the needy in Nayapalli area of Bhubaneswar, Monday

Citizens beat lockdown blues ordering Raja paan online

SINCE BETEL SHOPS ARE CLOSED OWING TO THE LOCKDOWN, THE SHOP OWNERS ARE USING ONLINE ROUTE TO SELL THEIR SPECIAL PAANS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, June 14: Raja celebrations are never complete without the traditional 'Raja Paan'. Chewing paan during the festival is a ritual and betel shop owners come up with a variety of flavours to draw customers.

The major places in Capital city where the shops sell special Raja paan are Rajmahal Square, Master Canteen Square, near Kesari talkies, Acharya Vihar, Nayapalli and Pantha Niwas.

Since these betel shops are closed owing to lockdown, the shop owners are using online route to give the paan lovers the taste of their special paans. Ramakant Senapati of Banarasi Paan Bhandar, who started the one-of-its-kind paan app 'www.upahar.com' in Odisha in 2018, is selling the paans like hot cakes since Sunday.

Senapati said, "We are selling more than 100 varieties of paan including Dilkhush, Dilruba, Dil



Dewane, Dilwale, Navratna and Moti Mahal and since yesterday more than 500 orders delivered."

According to him, the prices range from ₹100 to ₹1,000. "We are delivering the paan in Bhubaneswar and Cuttack within 4 hours of the order placed," he said, adding that they have also collaborated with Swiggy and Zomato for the delivery of the savoury snack.

"I get the betel leaf from Kolkata and procure different masalas (ingredients) from Jaypore. Apart from Bhubaneswar and Cuttack,

Banarasi Paan Bhandar has branches at numerous places in the state, including Baramunda, ITR and Nimapada."

Similarly, Prakash Chandra Sahoo of Litu Betel shop at Sahid Nagar here said, "The lockdowns and shutdowns have seriously affected paan sales but due to demands from old customers and Raja festival we were able to sell more than 2,000 Raja paans during the last two days." Sahoo said that they are offering discounts ranging from 10-50 per cent on the orders.

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Riverine port project in Kendrapara a non-starter even after two years



Proposed site for the riverine port project in Kendrapara district OP PHOTO

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kendrapara, June 14: Odisha's first ever riverine port project, which was proposed over two-and-half-years ago and was to come up on the Mahanadi near Akhadasali village under Mahakalpara block of Kendrapara, has reached a dead end due to alleged administrative apathy, a report said Monday.

During a visit to Kendrapara district December 8, 2018, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik had announced the establishment of the ambitious project. A special meeting was also convened by the state government to discuss the modalities with the ArcelorMittal Group in July 2018.

The proposed project had raised the hopes of the locals. Even the Union Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, while visiting the district, assured the residents about setting up the riverine port project

Sources said that the govern-

ment had then chalked out plans to construct the proposed port in public-private-partnership (PPP) mode and Paradip Port authorities would have developed its infrastructure. Accordingly, ST and Private Secretary to Chief Minister VK Pandian had visited the demarcated site in December, 2020.

It was estimated that ₹2,110 crore would be spent in the first phase for construction of the port project. Similarly, the annual turnover in cargo-handling was expected to be around 18.43 million tonnes, sources added. Two-and-a-half years have passed since the announcement of the project by the Chief Minister but the riverine port project has remained a non-starter.

Residents alleged that the proposed riverine port project, construction of a power plant in the district and the plan to develop Kendrapara like Gurgram in Haryana are slowly melting away like hollow poll promises.

FACT FILE

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik had announced the establishment of the ambitious project during a visit to Kendrapara district December 8, 2018. A special meeting was also convened by the state government to discuss the modalities with the ArcelorMittal Group in July 2018

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Residents alleged that the announcement of a port project, construction of a power plant in the district and the plan to develop Kendrapara like Gurgram in Haryana are slowly melting away like hollow poll promises

The project has witnessed very little progress in the last couple of years. Locals Radhakanta Mohanty, lawyer Ramaniranjan Routray, social activists Gayadhar Dhal, Sumil Kumar Gantayat and Sushil Kumar Rout were very critical about the administrative apathy.

They alleged that Kendrapara, which is ranked 26th in the economic development index of the state, is among the most neglected districts of Odisha.

There are no plans to utilise the large human resources in the district, while political leaders continue to make tall promises. The state government had also announced setting up a power plant at Alailo under Marshaghai block but that promise faded away too.

If the riverine port was set up it would have provided employment to over 15,000 people in the district, the locals opined.

STIR FOR HOSPITAL

People of Tushra staging a demonstration outside the Bolangir collectorate demanding that community health centre status be accorded to the local hospital and recruitment of doctors after undertaking a 32-km-long padayatra from Tushra to Bolangir, Monday OP PHOTO

Erosion of river banks poses threat to old Balasore residents

POST NEWS NETWORK

Balasore, June 14: More than 5,000 residents of old Balasore located near Budhabalanga river are panic-stricken as incessant rains are constantly eroding the embankments. The residents are apprehensive that the river will swallow their dwellings soon.

Old Balasore is not far away from the mouth where the Budhabalanga river meets the Bay of Bengal. Strengthening of the riverbanks with stone-packing is the need of the hour, local residents said. However, they alleged that the attitude of the local administration is very lackadaisical leading to frequent floods in the area. They also pointed out that erosion of the river banks have assumed alarming proportions.

It may be mention here that the Ward No 1 under Balasore civic limits is badly affected by floods every year during the monsoon. A one-kilometre-long stretch



of embankment along with a two-storied building was swept away by flood waters a few years ago.

Local Irrigation department had temporarily put sand-filled sacks along the breached embankment at an estimated cost of ₹40 lakh.

Notably, the villagers belonging to Patanasahi, Malladiha, Tulasipada, Udupada, Mahanapur;

Two killed in road mishap in Keonjhar

POST NEWS NETWORK

Patana, June 14: In a road mishap, two persons were killed after the SUV they were travelling by hit a stationary truck from the rear late Sunday night. The accident occurred close to a petrol pump at Turumunga under Patna block in Keonjhar district.

The deceased have been identified as Gopal Chandra Mohanta (33) and Dilip Kumar Mohanta (35). Both were residents of Khireitangiri village in the district. Dilip, who was driving the vehicle, died on the spot while Gopal breathed his last near Ghatagaon while being shifted from Keonjhar to SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack.

Sources said that the truck was parked on the side of NH-49 near the petrol pump. Dilip and Gopal were travelling by a Bolero. However, Dilip failed to realise that the truck was stationary and rammed into it from the rear. On getting information, a team from Turumunga police station reached the spot and launched a probe into the mishap. The bodies of the deceased have been sent for post-mortem.

Undertrial nabbed while trying to escape



POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur Town, June 14: An undertrial prisoner lodged in Jajpur Road sub-jail was apprehended while trying to escape from a hospital where he was admitted for treatment in this district, Monday. The prisoner was identified as Sheikh Harif.

According to reports, Sheikh was lodged at Jajpur Road sub-jail and admitted to the medicine ward of district headquarters hospital (DHH) after he developed some ailments. He was undergoing treatment in this hospital.

During his treatment Sheikh sought permission to go to the washroom Monday morning. Thereafter, taking advantage of the situation, he locked the door of the washroom from inside and managed to escape from the hospital.

However, the doctors and jail officials were successful in nabbing him with the help of a security guard.

He was brought back to the hospital where the treatment of the prisoner is underway under special security arrangements, reports added.

Covid-19 orphans toddler in Angul

POST NEWS NETWORK

Banarpal, June 14: The second wave of Covid-19 has orphaned a 14-month-old boy as his parents and grandmother have succumbed to the deadly virus. A family of three, other than the toddler, residing at Angul district's Nalco township died with days of one another last week leaving the relatives sorrow-stricken. The surviving infant is now in the care of his relatives.



Sources said Malay Basant Dehury (42), a resident of Rankasinga, worked as a technician at the Nalco smelter plant. He was living with his family at the Nalco township. The others in his family included his mother, wife and 14-

month-old son.

Malay's wife first tested positive for Covid-19. She had been suffering from fever and cough for long a time. So she underwent RT-PCR test which confirmed she was infected by the dreaded virus.

She was immediately admitted to a Bhubaneswar-based private hospital. While undergoing treatment, she breathed her last June 8.

As if, it was not enough for the toddler, Malay and his mother also tested positive for the virus. They were admitted to another private hospital in Bhubaneswar. However, they failed to respond to the treatment. While Malay's mother breathed her last Sunday morning, he succumbed to the virus in the evening.

It is certainly good that the toddler hasn't still grown to understand the gravity of the situation. The pain of the losses would have been unbearable even for a mature person

It is certainly good that the toddler hasn't still grown to understand the gravity of the situation. The pain of the losses would have been very hard even for a mature mind to tolerate.

Locals irked over lack of O₂ supply in petrol pumps

POST NEWS NETWORK

Pallahara, June 14: The Angul district administration has recently announced that medical oxygen cylinders will be available at petrol pumps for Covid-19 patients free of cost.

However, some residents alleged that the Pallahara sub-division has deliberately been neglected. "There are nine oxygen-filling centres but the facility is available only at one," they informed.

During the second wave of the pandemic, the requirement of oxygen has increased manifold. Angul district is one of the worst affected due to the resurgence of Covid-19. In order to provide oxygen to Covid-19 patients easily, the administration and the Angul district Petrol Dealers' Association have joined



During the second wave of the pandemic the requirement of oxygen has increased manifold. Angul district is one of the worst affected due to the resurgence of Covid-19

hands. The pumps are providing oxygen free of cost to Covid-19 patients.

The district administration had earlier announced that 50 oxygen cylinders and four concentrators have been kept at 40 petrol pumps.

However, the facility is available only at 'Soumya Prakash Petrol

Pump', located in Khamar area in Pallahara sub-division. There are total nine petrol pumps in the sub-division. The residents alleged that the administration has been meeting out step-motherly behaviour towards the sub-division.

For the past few weeks, the Pallahara sub-division has been

reporting double digit cases on a daily basis. So the residents have urged the administration to facilitate supply of oxygen cylinders from other pumps also.

"It is a welcome move to provide oxygen cylinders at petrol pumps free of cost. But what saddens us is the fact that none of the four petrol pumps in Pallahara Sadar has this facility," rued Dibya Kishore Gadnayak, president, Youth for Pallahara, a social organisation.

In this regard, Ashok Mohanty, state executive member, BJP, said the district administration would be appraised of the facts soon.

When contacted, Biswajit Pattanayak, president, District Petrol Dealers' Association, said the petrol pumps that have not been included will be done so shortly.

KESINGA BLASTING CASE

Dist admin yet to initiate action against the guilty

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kesinga, June 14: Over three weeks have passed since a blast at a stone quarry in Kesinga block of Kalahandi district caused damage to properties of a construction company named DD Builderworth around ₹10,00,000. But no action has been taken against the contractor so far despite written complaint lodged against him.

It was May 20 and lockdown restrictions were in place in the locality. So, the area near the Laterite stone quarry at Rakundabandh village under Kesinga block was devoid of any activities. Taking advantage of this, a contractor identified as Rahas Sahu, allegedly conducted a heavy blasting.

The intensity was so huge that boulders were seen flying in all di-

rections. Some of these boulders fell on DD Builder's office room, which was 200 metres away from the blasting site. They damaged CCTV cameras, computers, printers, electrical equipment and a machine to weigh stones at the office.

Following the incident, Tribhuban Chhatrriya, senior staff of DD Builder, lodged a written complaint at Karlapada outpost.

"The matter has been taken up with the district Collector, Sub-Collector, tehsildar and revenue inspector (RI) requesting action against the contractor. But to no avail," said Chhatrriya.

Chhatrriya urged the administration to take immediate action against the contractor. "It will help reduce such blasting activities in the quarry as well as teach him a lesson," he added.

Rainwater harvesting provides livelihood to returnees

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sundargarh, June 14: The implementation of roof-top rainwater harvesting project has helped in increasing the groundwater level as well as in providing livelihood to the migrants returning to the district following the Covid-induced lockdowns and shutdowns in their workplace outside the state, a report said.

The district administration is implementing the roof-top rainwater harvesting project in all 17 blocks on a priority basis with the funds available from the district mineral foundation (DMF). Voluntary outfits have been assigned the responsibility to implement the project at the field level with the involvement of local residents. Migrants who have returned to the state due to Covid-19 pandemic are being provided with livelihood by engaging them in these projects.

The promptitude shown by the

district administration has helped in making 651 projects functional by May this year while work is underway on 385 projects.

Reports said that the district administration plans to include all government offices, government staff quarters, hospitals, schools, colleges and hostel buildings in the project. A draft plan has been prepared for the project wherein a pipe will be linked to the ground from the roof-top wherever the project is being implemented.

Experts said that climate change has led to erratic monsoon in the

District administration plans to include all government offices, government staff quarters, hospitals, schools, colleges and hostel buildings in the project



state and whatever rain is received flows into the rivers and seas due to lack of conservation. This has led to water crisis and the roof-top rainwater harvesting can go long way in raising the groundwater level in the state.

The rainwater will flow through these pipes and fall into a pit con-

structed in the ground thereby seeping into the soil and help in increase groundwater level in the district. This will ultimately help in more water flow to the wells, ponds, tube wells and bore wells situated close to the pit.

This will help in removing the water scarcity for daily use among


the people. In addition, it will also help in removing the water scarcity during summer season in remote and tribal dominated block like Sundargarh district, Collector Nikhil Pawan Kalyan said.

The district administration has also fixed the criteria for construction of the pits. A single pit is constructed near the buildings whose roofs are about 1,500 sq. ft. or less, while two pits are constructed where the roofs are more than 1,500 sq. ft.

A villager, Hemant Pradhan, of Baragakachhar village under Bargaon block said that he had migrated outside the state due to lack of enough livelihood options in the district but returned home after he lost his job due to Covid-19 pandemic. He, however, got a new lease of life after he received engagement in the roof-top rainwater harvesting project. This has helped him earning a livelihood for his family, he added.

In fact, if one reads attentively what Sri Aurobindo has written, all that he has written, one would have the answer to every question.

THE MOTHER



Exit Netanyahu

Israel's longest-serving Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, mired in controversies ranging from financial fraud to communal polarisation for his own political survival, has been ousted from office June 13 by a loose coalition of rivals from across the political spectrum. The lowest common denominator of the coalition is the constituents' wish to end Netanyahu's 12-year rule. The Opposition leader, Yair Lapid, a centrist and former TV news anchor, won a confidence vote in the Knesset, Israel's parliament, by a wafer thin majority of 60-59 seats to clinch the issue. Interestingly, the Israeli voter, though heavily polarized, never looked for an alternative during the campaign..

Lapid will not, however, become Prime Minister immediately, but his former foe and far-right advocate for the settler movement in the Palestinian territories, Naftali Bennett, has been sworn in as the country's new PM. Under the power-sharing arrangement, Lapid's term will come two years later when Bennett is to hand over power to him for the rest of the four-year term. The big question, of course, remains whether the new government will last till then.

Questions are being asked about the durability of the fragile coalition government for two reasons. First, there is virtually no cohesion among the partners of the coalition which is a medley of ideologically opposed politicians from hardline Jewish religious nationalists to centrists, Leftists and a small Arab Islamist group. Secondly, Netanyahu has made it clear during his speech in the Knesset while stepping down that his efforts from now on will be to topple the government terming it as 'dangerous'.

Netanyahu incurred the wrath of many of his own people for his hawkish, right-wing policies geared towards dividing the people on communal lines.

The general perception is that he exacerbated the division so as to hang on to power. Bennett, who succeeds him, shares his same right wing policies. He was not only his ally, but also his chief of staff. But, there is a difference. Bennett is considered pragmatic and he is not averse to granting rights to the Palestinians. But, in the same breath, he has ruled out a Palestinian state. He wants Israel to maintain ultimate control over all the lands it occupies.

The immediate gain of the new development is that it ends a political deadlock that has seen four snap elections since 2019. During that time, Netanyahu skillfully managed to keep his rivals bickering and divided while he clung to power, even after he had been indicted in three criminal corruption cases on charges he denies.

Over the past few years Netanyahu made enemies of his friends for his egocentrism, personal and public paranoia and avarice. He is himself to blame for the unification of opposition forces cutting across the political spectrum. The 11-day-long war last month, between Israel and the Hamas in Gaza, that left a trail of death and destruction with the loss of about 250 lives, including scores of children, was totally unwarranted. It was the result of Netanyahu's unnecessary support to right wing elements which deliberately confronted the Arabs in Israel when they were observing Ramadan. No wonder, anti-Netanyahu protesters, who held rallies outside the Prime Minister's residence in Jerusalem for months calling for his ouster, gathered June 12 night with a black banner stretched across a wall that read: "Bye Bye, Bibi, Bye bye." After the new government was voted in, thousands of Israelis waving the blue and white David star flag cheered and danced in central Tel Aviv. This summed the mood of a majority of the people in Israel who are tired of Netanyahu's electoral manipulations. They want the new government to act to improve the economy that is faltering due to the pandemic.

It may be noted that the new coalition has put in public domain its agreements that deliberately skirt contentious issues such as the Israel-Palestine conflict, and concentrate on issues of daily bread and butter. They show the new government would focus mostly on issues such as passing a state Budget and building new hospitals, rather than risk an internal fight. Bennett is unlikely to use, any time soon, his executive powers as PM to further solidify the occupation.

The new trajectory is dictated by the nature of the coalition which is an unlikely assortment of eight parties, including the anti-occupation and dovish Meretz, hawkish figures on the right such as Avigdor Lieberman and Arab Islamist members of parliament belonging to the United Arab List. The latter, made up of Palestinian citizens of Israel, will become the first party from the country's sizeable Arab minority ever to join a government. Its leader, Mansour Abbas, is seen as a realist. He has claimed to have secured guarantees from hard-right coalition partners for greater rights for Palestinian citizens of Israel, including non-discriminatory housing policies, as well as several billions of pounds for infrastructure in Arab areas. Predictably, other Arab politicians in Israel have accused Abbas of abandoning his principles.

The Hamas and their supporter, Iran, don't find reasons to expect any fundamental change of policies from the new government. But, given the tension that reached feverish pitch in the past few weeks, the experiment may act as a welcome move to cool down tempers and tone down hawkish rhetoric. If it succeeds, it may have some lessons to offer to other countries in the world currently bearing the brunt of communal polarization.

WISDOM CORNER

- My mission in life is not merely to survive, but to thrive; and to do so with some passion, some compassion, some humor, and some style.

MAYA ANGELOU
- I believe every human has a finite number of heartbeats. I don't intend to waste any of mine.

NEIL ARMSTRONG
- Be brave enough to live life creatively. The creative place where no one else has ever been.

ALAN ALDA


WORDSWORTH

Caffeinol

It's a medical mixture of caffeine and alcohol, which sounds like the refined essence of an Irish coffee, except that it is given to patients intravenously and not by mouth. It has been in the news because researchers at the University of Texas Medical School led by Professor James Grotta have announced that a study has shown that it helps to limit the effect of strokes on the brain in elderly patients. It's an interesting example of synergy, in which two compounds given together have an effect that neither has by itself. A full trial is needed to find the ideal mixture of caffeine and alcohol and study possible side-effects before it can be approved, but doctors are interested in it because there's no equivalent existing treatment.

LOL BLONDE IN FIRING LINE

Three women are about to be executed for crimes. One's a brunette, one's a redhead, and one's a blonde. Two guards bring the brunette forward, and the executioner asks if she has any last requests. She says no, and the executioner shouts, "Ready . . . Aim . . ." Suddenly the brunette yells, "Earthquake!!" Everyone is startled and looks around. She manages to escape. The angry guards then bring the redhead forward, and the executioner



asks if she has any last requests. She says no, and the executioner shouts, "Ready . . . Aim . . ." The redhead then screams, "Tornado!!" Yet again, everyone is startled and looks around. She too escapes execution. By this point, the blonde has figured out what the others did. The guards bring her forward, and the executioner asks if she has any last requests. She also says no, and the executioner shouts, Ready . . . Aim . . ." The blonde shouts, "Fire!!"

Jose Antonio Ocampo & Tommaso Paccio

HISTORIC, GAME-CHANGING, REVOLUTIONARY: SUCH HAS BEEN THE WIDESPREAD REACTION TO THE RECENT AGREEMENT BY G7 FINANCE MINISTERS ON A GLOBAL MINIMUM EFFECTIVE TAX RATE OF "AT LEAST" 15% FOR LARGE MULTINATIONAL FIRMS

SPECTRUM ENTERTAINMENT

India's romance with K-culture is on

Vinayak Chakravorty

IN AN AGE WHEN THE INTERNET AND OTT INCREASINGLY DOMINATE VIEWING AND LISTENING PATTERNS, INDIA SAYS HELLO TO HALLYU. THE K-CRAZE IS TRENDING

Letters TO THE EDITOR

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

OrissaPOST
B-15, Rasulgari Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

Historic, game-changing, revolutionary: such has been the widespread reaction to the recent agreement by G7 Finance Ministers on a global minimum effective tax rate of "at least" 15% for large multinational firms. The ministers also agreed on a new formula for apportioning a share of tax revenues from these companies among countries.

But whatever global tax deal eventually emerges should reflect the interests of the world – including the developing countries – and not just those of seven large, developed economies. The developing world relies more heavily on corporate tax revenue and has thus been hit harder by multinationals' tax avoidance, which results in global revenue losses of at least \$240 billion each year.

Many developing countries – and low-income countries in particular – are not even taking part in the negotiations on the wider OECD/G20 Inclusive Framework on Base Erosion and Profit Shifting. Those participating have been represented by the Intergovernmental Group of Twenty-Four and the African Tax Administration Forum (ATAF), which coordinate the positions of members that are active in the negotiations. Some G24 members, including Argentina, Brazil, India, Mexico, and South Africa, are also in the G20.

The first concern regarding the G7 deal is that the proposed minimum tax rate of 15% is low, close to the rates in tax havens like Switzerland and Ireland. This reflects a preference by several G7 countries to protect their own multinationals rather than follow the lead of US President Joe Biden's administration, which had initially called for a global minimum rate of 21%.

Moreover, under the current proposal, the majority of the additional tax revenues will go to multinationals' home countries, not to the so-called source countries where these firms generate profits. Unsurprisingly, G24 members want source countries to have priority in applying the minimum tax, particularly in respect of payment of services and capital gains, in order to protect

FOCUS CORPORATE TAX

TAX DEAL FOR THE RICH



Despite the recent G7 agreement on corporate taxation, global leadership requires going beyond national interests to ensure all countries have sufficient resources to develop healthier post-pandemic economies

their tax base. Giving priority to global corporations' home countries will reinforce rather than alleviate the unfairness already built into the current international tax system.

How much revenue the minimum tax generates will depend on the rate. A recent study by the EU Tax Observatory estimates that a 21% minimum rate would generate an additional 100 billion (\$122 billion) of corporate income tax revenues in 2021 for the 27 European Union countries, while a 15% levy would yield half that amount. The difference is even starker for developing countries. With a 15% tax rate, South Africa and Brazil stand to gain an additional 600 million and 900 million, respectively, compared to 2 billion and 3.4 billion at a 21% rate.

The Covid-19 crisis has laid bare systemic inequities that will have to be addressed if we are ever going to build more sustainable, resilient, and inclusive societies.

As most African countries have corporate tax rates of 25-35%, a global rate of around 15% is simply too low and thus unlikely to lead to a significant reduction in profit-shifting from the region. G7 and G20 countries must demonstrate global leadership by unilaterally committing to introducing a much higher minimum tax rate than whatever is finally agreed. This should be at least 21%, as the US proposed, or, even better, 25%.

The second part of the G7 agreement introduces a formula to ap-

portion multinational companies' global profits for tax purposes. But the proposal would apply only to the largest firms with global profit margins of at least 10%. And at least 20% of their so-called "residual" profit exceeding this threshold would be subject to tax in the countries where it is generated.

Although this new rule would affect US tech giants like Apple, Facebook, and Google, it may end up being applied to only a tiny fraction of the global profits of 100 or so of the largest multinationals. This means that the measure will generate little additional revenue, perhaps less than \$10 billion globally per year.

The G24 has demanded a bigger reallocation of global profits, with the reallocation percentage ranging from 30% up to 50% for the most profitable firms. Likewise, the ATAF has asked for the rules to apply to all multinationals with annual revenues above 250 million, much lower than the G7 proposed threshold of \$10 billion, and argues that a percentage of all global profits, whether routine or residual, should be apportioned to the countries where these companies do business.

In fact, it is not possible to distinguish conceptually between the "routine" and "residual" profits of a multinational, as all profits are essentially the result of the firm's global activities. A simpler solution would be to allocate global profits among countries on a formulaic basis, according to the key

factors that generate profit, namely employment, sales, and assets.

Such a rule would help to establish a more level playing field, reduce distortions, limit opportunities for tax avoidance, and provide certainty to multinationals and investors. Instead, the G7's proposed distinction – between routine and residual profits – reflects a political agreement to avoid a far-reaching global reallocation of taxation and revenues.

The global tax negotiations seem to mirror the ongoing COVID-19 vaccine discussions at the World Trade Organization, where EU leaders are blocking the temporary exception to intellectual-property rights demanded by developing countries and supported by the US. In both cases, global leadership requires going beyond national interests to ensure that all countries have sufficient resources to develop more equitable and resilient post-pandemic economies. This will require addressing the developing world's demands in a way that is not only historic, but also fair.

José Antonio Ocampo is a professor at Columbia and Chair of the Independent Commission for the Reform of International Corporate Taxation. Tommaso Paccio is Head of the Secretariat of the Independent Commission for the Reform of International Corporate Taxation (ICRICT).

©PROJECT SYNDICATE

Vaccine hesitancy

Sir, It has been reported that tribal populace in Odisha's Rayagada district have been fleeing their homes for the fear being vaccinated against Covid-19. They are being misled by a video that is being circulated in the region. This video wrongly conveys that death is certain after two years if inoculated. Even after organising awareness campaigns such fake information is taking over the cause. This issue is not only limited to tribals in Odisha, but have also been reported from various other states where even the officials trying to spread awareness regarding vaccination have been cast away from the villages. This kind of hesitancy will result in a severe health crisis in the tribal areas. While the health authorities are trying their best to eradicate this notion, the government should essentially track the fake talebearers who spread such kind of absurdity and penalise them heavily. As fake information leads to brain washing of the innocent people, the authorities should come up with new ways to pursue such people to get themselves vaccinated at the earliest. If the matter is taken lightly it may later lead to a deadly surge in infections.

Manoj Kumar Jena, CUTTACK

No complacency

Sir, Apropos "Delhi, TN ease curbs" (OrissaPOST, June 14), when India's daily Covid-19 caseload dropped below 10,000 in the first half of February, weeks after the vaccination programme was rolled out, it was assumed that the country's war against the pandemic was practically over. The general mood was celebratory as well as self-congratulatory. The havoc wreaked by the second wave in April-May was both a rude shock and a wake-up call. Now, with the second wave subsiding and the unlocking process underway in several states, it's imperative to quickly learn lessons from the recent nightmarish experiences. Not for a moment should we be tempted into believing that the worst is behind us. The role of Covid-appropriate behaviour in warding off future waves is vital - the basics are still as relevant as they were last year; if not more: wear a mask properly, maintain social distancing and avoid crowds. The reopening of malls, which draw big crowds, must be closely monitored. Above all, it should dawn on us that there might be no return to the pre-Covid world of reckless abandon in the near future. The new normal ought to become a way of life.

N Sadhasiva Reddy, BANGALORE



Delhi sets up vax centre for people travelling abroad

AGENCIES

New Delhi, June 14: Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia Monday inaugurated a special Covid-19 vaccination centre at a city school for students, athletes and people who have to travel abroad for work.

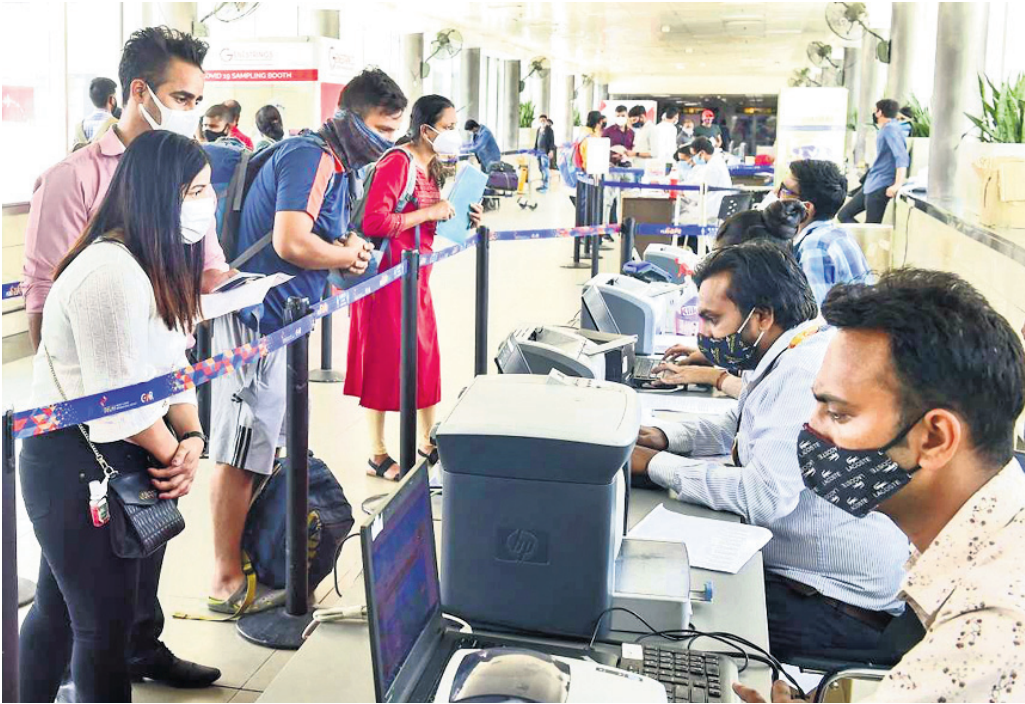
People who come under the above categories will be able to get their second vaccine dose at the camp under special provisions after a gap of 28-84 days from the date of their first shot, Sisodia said.

The centre has been set up at the Navyug School situated on Mandir Marg.

Sisodia said the purpose of the special vaccination centre was to "wish good luck" to those who would be travelling abroad under the specified categories.

"These days, our children are going abroad for further studies, or have attained jobs outside the country or are participating in international sports events. We have opened this special vaccination centre for all these citizens who are leaving for abroad and need to be vaccinated at the earliest, without any hassle," he said at the inauguration.

The minister said Covishield vaccine would be administered at



this centre. Under special provisions of the Delhi government, eligible candidates will be able to get their second dose within 28-84 days of their first shot, he added.

Those who wish to avail the facility will have to carry their pass-

ports and relevant travel documents.

According to an official statement, the facility will be available to those who need to undertake international travel within August 31. The second dose of Covishield vac-

cine can be taken after a gap of 28 to 84 days at this centre by students who have to go abroad for studies, people taking up jobs in foreign countries and athletes, sports persons and accompanying staff of the Indian contingent attending

'20% of Delhi's 18-44 population vaccinated'

New Delhi: 20% of people in the 18-44 age group in Delhi have been vaccinated against COVID-19 despite the inoculation centres for this category remaining closed for several days due to the non-availability of doses, AAP MLA Atishi said Monday. She, however, said the city is again facing a shortage of vaccines and some of the inoculation centres for the 18-44 age group will be shut on Tuesday.

"So far, 20 per cent of Delhi's young population has been vaccinated (one dose) despite the inoculation centres remaining closed for many days due to the shortage of doses," Atishi said during an online briefing.

According to government data, 13,66,731 first doses and 99,046 second doses have been administered to people in the 18-44 age group in Delhi. Delhi started the vaccination drive for this age group on May 3. Around 92 lakh people are eligible for vaccination in this category.

the International Olympics to be held in Tokyo under special provisions, the statement said.

Bengal gears up to combat third wave



AGENCIES

Kolkata, June 14: Taking a lesson from the second Covid wave, the West Bengal government is accelerating the process of infrastructure development to tackle the third wave and control it more effectively. As it has been found that children and consequently the women are more prone to the next Sars-CoV-2 attack, the state health department has taken special measures to protect the vulnerable section from the deadly bite of the third phase.

"In other countries like Canada, we have seen that in the third wave children up to the age group of 12 years are more vulnerable to the disease and the number of cases have doubled in this phase. From that perspective, in our state the per day infection rate among children in the second phase is 3 per cent which figuratively is around 200 per days and so it is likely that it will rise up to 5 per cent to 7 per cent which will be around 500 to 700 per day," Director of Health Services Ajay Chakraborty said.

"Considering the present situation, we can say that the second phase is likely to be over by the end of June or beginning of July and we will get another two to three months. The state government has decided to develop the infrastructure during this period so that the third wave can be tackled more effectively," Chakraborty added.

Sources in the state health department said that there are around 26,000 Covid beds in government and private hospitals with a gender ratio of 60:40 in favour of males but

Lockdown extended in state till July 1

Kolkata: Though there has been a sharp fall in the number of fresh Covid cases in West Bengal, the state government on Monday decided to extend the lockdown for another 15 days till July 1, with some relaxations to give a boost to economic activities. The state government will review the situation in another four days before taking further decisions. A notification issued by the state home department said that all intra-state local trains and buses, Metro rail, and inland water transport shall remain closed, except for special trains for the movement of emergency and essential service providers. Movement of private vehicles, taxis and auto-rickshaws will be prohibited except to and from hospitals, nursing homes, diagnostic centres, clinics, airports, terminal points and media houses. All schools, colleges, universities, polytechnics, Anganwadi centres and other educational institutions shall continue to remain closed. All social, cultural, academic and entertainment related gatherings shall continue to be prohibited.

as the women and children might be more prone to the third wave, so the gender ratio is likely to be reversed and 60 per cent of the beds will be preserved for women and children.

AIIMS Delhi to begin Covaxin trials on children aged 6-12

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, June 14: The All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) is learnt to have started screening of children aged 6-12 years for the clinical trials of India's first indigenously developed Covid-19 vaccine, Bharat Biotech's Covaxin.

Sources said that the recruitment and clinical trials of the children aged 6-12 years will start from Tuesday. The trial on children aged 6-12 has already started at AIIMS Patna.

Participants will be given the vaccine after their screening report comes. The trial would ensure if the Bharat Biotech jab is suitable for children. Delhi AIIMS has decided to start the trial drive after the recruitment and clinical trial for single-dose Covaxin for 12-18

age group is over.

After the recruitment of 6-12 year-old children, AIIMS Delhi will be conducting trials for the age group 2-6 years of children. The trials are taking place at 525 centres.

The screening of children for the trial of single-dose Covaxin among those aged between 2 and 18 years started at the AIIMS in New Delhi on June 7 after India's drug regulator had granted permission for conducting the Phase 2 and 3 clinical trials of Covaxin in the age group 2 to 18 years May 12.

AIIMS Patna, Mysore Medical College and Research Institute in Karnataka have also been selected to conduct clinical trials on children. Covaxin is being used on adults in India's ongoing Covid-19 vaccination drive since January 16 this year.



Private hosps setting up own PSA plants

AGENCIES

New Delhi, June 14: Bracing for a possible third wave of coronavirus, several private hospitals in Delhi have started installing their own oxygen generation plants to avoid a repeat of the oxygen crisis the city witnessed during the second wave.

These include Jaipur Golden Hospital and Batra Hospital, where patients had died due to oxygen shortage during the peak of the second wave of the pandemic.

Recently, the Directorate General of Health Services had asked all private hospitals having 100 or more beds to install their own Pressure Swing Absorption (PSA) oxygen

plants, refilling plants or create any other infrastructure to produce at least two times their normal requirement of oxygen.

Hospitals and nursing homes having 50 to 99 beds have been asked to create an infrastructure enough to meet their normal requirement of oxygen.

Dr PK Bhardwaj, the executive director of Saroj Super Speciality, said the 250-bed private facility got an oxygen generation plant installed around 10 days ago.

"With the installation of oxygen generation plants at most hospitals, the load on vendors supplying liquid medical oxygen will reduce and these will be able to cater to smaller hospitals," he said.



SYMBOLIC OUTCRY



Activists enact a funeral of a scooter as they stage a demonstration against hike in prices of petrol and diesel, near the banks of Ganga river in Kolkata, Monday

Durga puja committee organises vaccination drive for artisans

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, June 14: A prominent Durga puja committee in the city Monday vaccinated 150 artisans while pledging to administer the shot to 500 craftsmen in total, as part of its initiative to protect them from the pandemic.

Gariahat Hindustan Club-Durga Puja Committee will continue the initiative till June 16 aiming to vaccinate all the 500 artisans who find it difficult to afford the vaccine despite the urgency, committee of fice-bearer and West Bengal minister Chandrima Bhattacharya told reporters at the venue.

"This drive is an attempt by Ekmantrik, an NGO, to help the poor artisans who work tirelessly every year to adorn Durga puja pandals all over the city with their



artwork. "We need to keep our artisans safe from contracting the infection," Bhattacharya said.

The initiative was taken in collaboration with a leading private Healthcare group in city. The club has also donated an ambulance to the organisation.

The puja committee has received numerous awards including the Biswa Bangla Sarad Samman and 'Sarad Sammans' instituted by different leading channels over the years.

'New entrants joining saffron party shouldn't feel unwelcome'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, June 14: Senior BJP leader Swapan Dasgupta Monday said it would be wrong to view everyone who joined the saffron party in West Bengal after 2019 as "Trojan horses" obliquely countering his colleague Tathagata Roy's tweet hinting that former BJP national vice president Mukul Roy may have left behind agents in the saffron camp while returning to the Trinamool Congress.

Many new entrants participated in the election with sincerity and they must not be made to feel unwelcome, Dasgupta, a Rajya Sabha MP, who had unsuccessfully contested from Tarakeswar assembly



constituency, said.

Without mincing words, Roy had tweeted after Mukul Roy crossed over to the TMC, "After having been welcomed into the BJP, he gained access to its all-India leaders, hobnobbed with state BJP's gullible... Learnt all about the party and its innermost detail, he went back and leaked everything

to Mamata. But what's done is done. Now the big question is, did Mukul leave back Trojan Horses within this Trojan Horse?" Metaphorically, a "Trojan horse" refers to a trick or a strategy that causes a target to invite a foe into a securely protected bastion.

Mukul Roy, who had left the TMC to join the BJP in 2017, returned to the ruling party Friday and many others have already expressed a desire to return to their old party from the saffron camp.

Alluding to the insinuations by Roy that there could be agents planted by him in the BJP, Dasgupta tweeted, "Politics is not a game of exclusion; it involves adding support & creating new leaders".

Sisodia alleges 'scam' by Ram temple trust

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, June 14: Delhi Deputy Chief Minister and senior AAP leader Manish Sisodia Monday sought a clarification from the Ram temple trust over the purchase of a piece of land for the proposed shrine in Ayodhya by it at an alleged inflated price. Terming it a "scam", the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader said the temple is being built using donations made by people and their hard-earned money should not be misused.

His remarks came a day after AAP Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh alleged that Champat Rai, general secretary of Shriram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust, purchased 1.208 hectares of land worth ₹2 crore in Ayodhya's Bag Baisi village for ₹18.5 crore with the help of trust member Anil Mishra.

Terming it a case of money laundering, Singh and Samajwadi Party leader Pawan Pandey sought a probe by the Central Bureau of



Investigation and the Enforcement Directorate into the matter.

Addressing a press conference here, Sisodia urged the trust to not play with people's sentiments.

"The Ram Janmabhoomi Trust has purchased a piece of land in Ayodhya for ₹18.5 crore. It was sold for just ₹2 crore five minutes before it was bought by the Ram temple

The Ram Janmabhoomi Trust has purchased a piece of land in Ayodhya for ₹18.5Cr. It was sold for just ₹2Cr five minutes before it was bought by the Ram temple trust. There has been a scam in purchasing this land for the pious work of building the Ram temple. The Ram Janmabhoomi Trust must clarify why the land was bought at such a high price

MANISH SISODIA | DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER, DELHI



trust. There has been a scam in purchasing this land for the pious

work of building the Ram temple. The Ram Janmabhoomi Trust must clarify why the land was bought at such a high price," he said.

"The temple is being built using donations made by people and their sentiments are attached to it. My request to them (Ram temple trust) is only that they should not play with the sentiments of the people who donated their hard-earned money for the temple," he said.

Singh, who was also present at the press conference, claimed Anil Mishra, trustee of the Ram temple trust, and Rishikesh Upadhyay, mayor of Ayodhya, were present during the finalisation of both the sale agreements.

Trust general secretary Rai has strongly refuted the allegations.

In a statement issued on Sunday, Rai had said, "Allegations of assassinating Mahatma Gandhi were also levelled against us. We do not fear allegations. I will study the allegations levelled against us and probe them."

of the day quote

In the first wave of the pandemic, the district administration did a commendable job by controlling the infection



AJT PAWAR | MAHA DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER

Excellency Naftali Bennett, congratulations on becoming the Prime Minister of Israel. As we celebrate 30 years of the upgradation of diplomatic relations next year, I look forward to meeting you and deepening the strategic partnership between our two countries



NARENDRA MODI | PRIME MINISTER

Haryana is already a leader in the auto sector, and now by preparing aerospace and defence policy, we are moving forward towards making the state a hub for the aviation and defence equipment production sector



DUSHYANT CHAOTALA | HARYANA DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Stepson kills all of family

Dhanbad: A married couple and their two sons were found dead at their home in Dhanbad town in Jharkhand Monday morning, police said. Munna Yadav (45), his wife Meena Devi (35), and sons Rahul (20) and Rohit (14) were found dead at their rented accommodation in Gandhi Road in the Dhansar police station area, they said. It is suspected that Rahul, who is Meena's son from her previous marriage, stabbed the others to death and then slit his throat with a sharp weapon, police said after the initial investigation.

'Study centres in UP jails'

Lucknow: The Uttar Pradesh Rajarshi Tandon Open University (UPRTOU) will be setting up study centres at 13 jails of the state to help inmates pursue higher learning courses. The UPRTOU is already providing admission to inmates of Naiin central jail and runs a study centre on the jail premises. At present 41 inmates of Naiin jail are set to take their exams conducted by UPRTOU.

Militants open fire at forces

Srinagar: Militants opened fire on a security forces' patrol party in Anantnag district of Jammu and Kashmir Monday, police said. No casualties were reported in the incident, they said. "Terrorists fired upon patrolling party of security forces at Khushipora-Achabal in Anantnag district," a police official said.

51-year-old man shot dead

Chandigarh: A 51-year-old man, who was out on a morning walk, was allegedly shot dead by unidentified armed assailants Monday in Haryana's Jind district, police said. Suresh Kumar was out on a morning walk in Alipura village of Uchana sub-division when some youths shot at him from close range leaving him dead, Uchana police station Sub-Inspector Ravinder Singh said over the phone.

Seven held for raping woman

Agartala: Seven men have been arrested for allegedly raping a woman and three minor girls at a rubber plantation in West Tripura district, around 15 km from here, a police officer said Monday.



Shri Ram himself is justice, truth, faith. Betrayal in his name is unrighteous

RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

GREAT INITIATIVE

The Delhi government Monday banned the sale, storage, transportation, and marketing of soaps and detergents not conforming to the latest BIS standards to curb pollution in the Yamuna river



India gingerly eases Covid rules

AGENCIES

New Delhi, June 14: Many Indian states eased Covid-19 restrictions Monday (Jun 14) including the capital Delhi, where authorities allowed all shops and malls to open, as the number of new infections dropped to the lowest in more than two months.

Experts have cautioned against a full reopening as India has only vaccinated about 5 per cent of its estimated 950 million adults with the necessary two doses, leaving millions vulnerable.

Infections peaked in India in May with about 400,000 new cases a day, but that dropped to 70,421 new infections reported Monday, the lowest daily increase since Mar 31, health ministry data showed.

The number of deaths went up by 3,921, the data showed. India has had the second-highest tally of COVID-19 infections in the world after the United States, with 29.51 million cases and 374,305 deaths, according to ministry data.

Authorities in Delhi allowed all shops and malls to reopen, although bars, gyms, salons, cinemas and parks remained shut.

City chief minister Arvind Kejriwal said that markets and restaurants would be carefully watched this week.

"If we see coronavirus cases are going up, we will have to reimpose strict restrictions," Kejriwal said in a televised address on Sunday. Hospitals in Delhi had struggled



Vehicles stuck in a traffic jam after relaxations in COVID-19 lockdown in Gorakhpur

PTI PHOTO

70,421 fresh cases

India recorded a single-day rise of 70,421 new Covid-19 cases, the lowest in 74 days, taking the country's infection tally to 2,95,10,410, while the count of active cases fell below 10 lakh after over two months, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated Monday. The Covid-19 death toll in the country climbed to 3,74,305 with 3,921 fatalities recorded in a span of 24 hours, the data updated at 8 am showed.

to reopen as the challenge of maintaining a fine balance between lives and livelihoods is very crucial," said Rajib Dasgupta, head of the Centre of Social Medicine and Community Health at New Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru University.

YEAR AFTER GALWAN CLASH

Indian Army deploys around 60,000 troops

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, June 14: A year after the Galwan valley clash in eastern Ladakh, China is still sitting at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) while India has geared up for a long grind.

Indian and Chinese military delegates have had 11 rounds of talks to resolve the border disputes at the friction points. The only thing that has happened is that both the countries have agreed to resolve the dispute peacefully.

The Indian Army has focused on being better prepared to face Chinese belligerence in Ladakh over the last year, as a final resolution seems far off.

India has enhanced military infrastructure, increased troop deployment to 50,000 to 60,000 troops, and constructed better roads to improve connectivity for quick force mobilisation.

The force continues to be on high alert with its enhanced troop de-

ployment of over 50,000 men on the ground in Ladakh for the last one year, including during the harsh winter when the temperature dips to minus 40-degree Celsius.

Last month, Indian Army chief General M.M. Naravane had said that the troops are on high alert along the LAC, keeping a watch on the activities of the Chinese People's Liberation Army.

Naravane said that India wants the status quo ante of April 2020 to be restored. He also stated that India has made it clear to China that de-escalation will only be considered once disengagement is completed to the mutual satisfaction of both sides.

He said that Indian troops are on high alert and deployments have not thinned after the disengagement in Pangong River. The Army chief maintained that China has deployed around 50,000 to 60,000 troops in eastern Ladakh in immediate depth so India has also made mirror deployment in depth.



PROTEST AMID PANDEMIC



National School Qualification Framework (NSQF) teachers union stage a protest against Punjab government demanding hike in salary in Patiala

PTI PHOTO

Climate-based solutions for eliminating malaria in India

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, June 14: The India Meteorological Department (IMD) and the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) Monday partnered with Malaria No More, a non-governmental organisation, to launch an expert committee that will explore and advance climate-based solutions for eliminating malaria in India.

The India Interagency Expert Committee on Malaria and Climate (IEC) will consist of leading experts and researchers from health, climate and technology fields who



will help define and operationalise sophisticated climate-based malaria prediction tools that will be tailored to the Indian context to further propel progress toward the country's goal of eliminating malaria by 2030.

"We are excited to identify a new, multidisciplinary application for our

high-quality climate data services. Malaria is one of India's most pressing health concerns. By combining meteorological information with the information from the health sector, we can examine micro-trends and predict malaria patterns, and accelerate our national progress towards its elimination.

The Interagency Expert Committee announced today will function as a highly effective platform to accomplish this objective," said Mrutyunjay Mohapatra, Director General of Meteorology, IMD, Government of India, in a statement.

Mamata vows to fight for farmers



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, June 14: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee Monday said farmers across the country are suffering due to the Centre's indifference, and vowed to fight for the welfare of the "very backbone" of society.

Banerjee also said the day marked the 10th year of the Singur Land Rehabilitation and Development Bill that was passed in the assembly after a "long struggle". "Today, it pains me that across the nation our farmer brethren are suffering owing to the indifference of the Centre. Together, we shall continue our fight to ensure the well-being of the very backbone of our society. Upholding their rights remains a top priority," the CM tweeted.

"On this day, 10 years back, the Singur Land Rehabilitation and

Development Bill 2011 was passed in the WB assembly after a long & difficult struggle. We unitedly fought for the rights of our farmers & addressed their grievances, bringing in positive change in their lives," she added. The Trinamool Congress supremo has been raising her voice and rendering support to the farmers' protests against the controversial agri laws passed in Parliament last year.

Sha had also assured farmer leaders led by Rakesh Tikait and Yudhvir Singh during a meeting last week of support to their agitation against the three farm laws. The Bhartiya Kisan Union led by Tikait and Singh had supported the 'No vote for BJP' campaign ahead of the West Bengal assembly elections, and have plans to extend that in other upcoming state elections as well.

BENGAL POST-POLL VIOLENCE

Gangrape survivors move SC for SIT probe

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, June 14: A 60-year-old woman and a 17-year-old minor girl from West Bengal have moved the Supreme Court alleging horrific gang-rape by Trinamool Congress workers, for their families supporting the BJP in recently-held Assembly election and sought an SIT probe into all incidents of post-poll violence.

The 60-year-old woman alleged that she was raped in front of her 6-year-old grandson by Trinamool workers on the intervening night of May 4-5 and termed it "a glaring living example of the nature of post-poll violence unleashed throughout the state against family members of those who opposed the ruling party".

The woman said May 3, after declaration of poll results, a mob of 100-200 people, which mainly comprised of Trinamool supporters, surrounded her and asked the family to leave the house. "Despite the BJP having emerged victorious in the assembly constituency (Khejuri), workers of the ruling party in the state got infuriated and started burning down houses of BJP supporters, hurling bombs, even inflicting physical torture, and looting jewellery and other valuables," said the woman's application.

The woman said that "while history is replete with gruesome instances where rape was employed as a strategy to terrorise the enemy civilian population and to demoralise enemy troops, but never have such cruel crimes been committed against a woman citizen for her or her family's participation in the democratic process".

Year after actor SSR's death, CBI probe continues

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, June 14: The CBI probe into actor Sushant Singh Rajput's death is still continuing, even after the AIIMS medical board's report last year that had said it was a case of suicide.

Asked about the developments, Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) officials said the probe is continuing and all angles are being looked into. The central agency that took over the probe from the Bihar police, which had registered a case of abetment to suicide on a complaint from the Patna-based father of Rajput, had formed a special investigation team (SIT) but failed to make much headway into the case except recording statements and receiving the forensic re-

ports from the AIIMS panel led by Sudhir Gupta, the head of the institute's forensics department.

In its conclusive medico-legal opinion to the CBI, the six-member team of forensic doctors had dismissed the claims of "poisoning and strangling" made in the case of Rajput's death. "It is a case of hanging and death by suicide. We have submitted our conclusive report to the CBI," Gupta, the chairman of the forensic medical board, had said in September last year.

After the report was published, Vikas Singh, the lawyer of Rajput's father KK Singh, had said, "We are highly perturbed with the AIIMS report. We are going to request the CBI director to constitute a fresh forensic team." "How could the



Fans of Sushant Singh Rajput commemorate his first death anniversary in Mumbai

PTI PHOTO

AIIMS team give a conclusive report in the absence of the body, that too on such shoddy post-mortem done

by the Cooper hospital, wherein the time of death was also not mentioned?" he had asked.

The CBI did not take the advice of Singh, a noted criminal lawyer, to constitute a fresh board. Asked if he was satisfied about the progress of the CBI probe, Singh told PTI over the phone, "No, I am not satisfied." Last year, after the conclusion of the forensic panel that it was a case of suicide emerged, the agency had issued a statement saying its probe was continuing.

"Certain media reports attributed to the CBI investigation are speculative and not based on facts. It is reiterated that as a matter of policy, the CBI does not share the details of an ongoing investigation. A CBI spokesperson or any team member has not shared any details of the investigation with the media. The details being reported and attributed to the CBI are

not credible," the agency had said. Rajput (34) was found hanging from the ceiling of his apartment in suburban Bandra in Mumbai June 14 last year.

The CBI had recorded the statements of Rhea Chakraborty, the rumoured girlfriend of Rajput, and others in his close circle, and collected the actor's medical records, but is yet to arrive at a conclusion.

It had also sent a questionnaire to the forensic panel to seek clarifications on its findings but failed to conclude its investigation into the matter. In his complaint to the Bihar police, Rajput's father had alleged that Chakraborty, along with her family members, had misappropriated his son's money, which was denied by Chakraborty in television interviews.

of the day quote

PM Modi's speech at the G7 Outreach meeting is inspiring as well as ironic. The Modi government should practise in India what it preaches to the world

P CHIDAMBARAM | CONGRESS LEADER

India's contribution to climate change in the last 200 years is just three per cent. The unbridled carbon emissions particularly by Europe, USA and in the last 40 years by China, caused climate change disaster. These countries prospered economically but polluted the world

PRAKASH JAVADEKAR | UNION ENVIRONMENT MINISTER

We have contained the Covid-19 fresh cases and active cases but have not eradicated it completely

M.K. STALIN | TAMIL NADU CHIEF MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Child rescued from borewell

Agra: Five-year-old Shiva has finally been rescued from inside a borewell Monday evening, almost eight-and-a-half hours after he fell into it. The child is said to be well and conscious and has been sent to a hospital for medical examination. The rescue operation was successfully executed by the SDRF team along with the local police. The incident took place at about 8:30 am under the Nibohara police station area in Fatehabad in Agra rural.

Financial help for mahouts in Raj

Jaipur: The Rajasthan government Monday announced financial assistance for mahouts affected due to the lockdown and restrictions on tourism activities during the Covid pandemic. Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot has decided to provide financial assistance to mahouts for taking care of elephants. According to an official statement, a total financial assistance of Rs 57.37 lakh from the Chief Minister's Relief Fund for 85 elephants will be given to mahouts through Elephant Welfare Society, Jaipur.

Fire at Safdarjung Airport's building

New Delhi: A fire broke out at a building near Safdarjung Airport here Monday. Delhi Fire Service officials said. No injuries have been reported yet and all occupants have been rescued safely, they said. According to the fire department, a call about blaze was received at around 3.24 pm and six fire tenders were pressed into service. The fire-fighting operation is underway. The cause of blaze is not yet known, they said.

Man lynched

Jaipur: A man was lynched while another injured by a group of people who attacked them on suspicion of smuggling cattle in Rajasthan's Chittorgarh district, police said Monday. Police said the victims were taking three oxen to their village in Madhya Pradesh from Begun town of Chittorgarh for agriculture work when a group of people hit them with sticks accusing them of smuggling cows. The incident occurred near Bhilkhanda in the intervening night of June 13-14. "Babu Bhill and Pintu Bhill, both hailing from Jhabua district of Madhya Pradesh, were critically injured in the attack and were rushed to a hospital where Babu Bhill succumbed to injuries," Superintendent of Police Deepak Bhargav said.



The citizens of Delhi and India want seamless vaccination

GOPAL RAI | DELHI ENVIRONMENT MINISTER

SUGAR NOT 'GOOD'

A team of researchers from IIT Mandi has identified the underlying biochemical relationship between the consumption of excessive sugar and the development of a fatty liver, medically known as Non-Alcoholic Fatty Liver Disease (NAFLD)



LJP MPs JOIN HANDS AGAINST CHIRAG

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, June 14: Five of the six Lok Janshakti Party MPs in Lok Sabha have joined hands against their leader Chirag Paswan and elected Pashupati Kumar Paras, the youngest brother of Paswan's late father and party founder Ram Vilas Paswan, in his place, causing a big churn in Bihar politics.

Paras Monday lauded Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar as a good leader and "vikas purush" (development-oriented man), highlighting the deep fault lines within the party as his nephew has been a strong critic of the supreme JD(U) leader.

"I have not broken the party but saved it," Paras, the MP from Hajipur, told reporters. He asserted that 99 per cent of LJP workers were unhappy with the turn of events in Bihar as Paswan led his party against the JD(U) and it fared poorly in the 2020 assembly polls.

The LJP has been on the brink of collapse, he said in reference to its poor show in the polls, and lashed out at "anti-social" elements in the party, an apparent pointer to a close aide of Paswan whose proximity to him has not gone down well with many party leaders. Paras said his group will continue to be



part of the BJP-led NDA, and added that Paswan can remain in the organisation.

The group of five MPs has conveyed their decision of electing Paras as the LJP's leader in Lok Sabha to the Speaker. The five MPs had met Speaker Om Birla Sunday night to inform him about their decision to replace Paswan with Paras as their leader.

Sources in the Speaker's office said that their request is under

consideration. There has been no comment from Paswan on the issue. Soon after Paras spoke to reporters, Paswan drove to his uncle's residence in the national capital to meet him. Paswan's cousin and MP Prince Raj also stays there.

Paswan, who has not been keeping well for some time, waited for over 20 minutes in his car before he was let into the house and then left after spending more than an hour inside. He left without saying

a word to waiting media persons. It is believed that neither of the two rebel MPs met him. A household help said the two were not at home when the LJP chief arrived.

Paras had long been unhappy with Paswan's style of functioning and was joined by other MPs, including Chandan Singh, Veena Devi and Mehboob Ali Kaiser, as they believed that his campaign against Nitish Kumar had left them at a disadvantage in the state's politics. Kaiser has been elected the party's deputy leader. The group is also likely to stake claim in the Election Commission to represent the real LJP with its president now left isolated at the top after taking on the mantle following his father's death last year. It may move to oust Paswan from the top party post in the coming days. Sources close to him have blamed the JD(U) for the split, saying the party had long been working to isolate the LJP president after his decision to go all out against Chief Minister Kumar in the 2020 assembly polls.

The JD(U), which was for the first time reduced to the status of a junior partner to the BJP after it lost more than 35 seats due to the presence of LJP candidates, has been seething and had worked to woo over a number of LJP's or-

ganisational leaders to its fold. The lone LJP MLA joined the JD(U).

Paras denied the charge that Kumar's party had a role in the split. The BJP, which has its share of pro-Paswan voices as well as his critics, maintained a silence over the matter, with some party leaders noting that it was an internal matter of the party.

Though he had left the ruling NDA in Bihar to fight independently in the assembly polls, he has maintained a strong pro-BJP and pro-Prime Minister Narendra Modi stand. With buzz growing about a reshuffle in the Union cabinet, political watchers believe that the development is aimed at thwarting Paswan's chances to join the government but it remains to be seen as to how the saffron party sees the implosion in the LJP.

As such, the equation between the BJP and the JD(U) has been far from smooth despite both parties sharing power in Bihar, and Kumar has been taking various measures to bolster his party's strength after suffering a setback in the assembly polls. Paras is seen as more pro-Nitish Kumar than pro-BJP, and Paswan's complete marginalisation is not something many BJP leaders will wish even though a section of the party has been miffed with his conduct, sources said.

LAKSHADWEEP ROW

Shouts of 'Go back' greet Administrator

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Thiruvananthapuram, June 14: Across Lakshadweep, Monday was observed as a day of protest by islanders, who dressed in black and shouted slogans of "go back" from their homes as Union Territory Administrator Praful Khoda Patel landed there around 2.30 p.m.

Black flags were also raised from some homes as the protests rent the air. Meanwhile, police officials taking the videos of the protest, and also of homes from where black flags were flying.

This is his seventh visit by Patel after taking over as the new Administrator. He is slated to stay there for a week.

For a while now, Kerala's Congress and the ruling Left here have been up in arms and have expressed solidarity with the islanders, who are on a protest mode after new measures and accusing Patel of trying to implement the "Sangh parivar agenda".

Earlier in the day, Patel Monday ducked his travel to the island through the Cochin airport, said Congress MPs from Kerala.

Hibi Eden and TN Prathapan had arrived in the VVIP lounge of the airport here after getting information that Patel is arriving here on a special flight to fly onward to Lakshadweep.

"We had information that Patel would land here on a special flight and from here, would take a scheduled Air India ATR flight to the island. But after we reached here, we found out that he is not landing here and instead is flying from Daman and Diu," said Eden.

Mask developed to kill coronavirus

AGENCIES

New Delhi, June 14: A Pune-based start-up has integrated 3D printing and pharmaceuticals to develop a mask which inactivates viral particles that come in contact with it, the Department Science and Technology said Monday.

Developed by Thincr Technologies India Private Limited, these masks are coated with antiviral agents known otherwise as virucides.



The coating has been tested and shown to inactivate the SARS-CoV-2, the DST said, adding the material used in it is a Sodium Olefin Sulfonate-based mixture, a soap-forming agent. In contact with enveloped viruses, it disrupts the outer membrane of the virus. The ingredients used are stable at room temperature and are widely used in cosmetics.

The DST said that as part of the fight against Covid-19, the virucidal mask initiative was among the earliest projects to have been selected for commercialisation by the Technology Development Board (TDB), a statutory body under the Department of Science and Technology.

A LITTLE RELIEF



A passenger arrives at city railway station after authorities announced relaxations in COVID-19 lockdown in Bangalore

AIADMK expels 17 leaders for having spoken to Sasikala

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, June 14: The AIADMK meeting held at the party headquarters here expelled 17 leaders including party spokesman V Pugazhendi for having contacted former interim general secretary VK Sasikala.

The meeting also passed a resolution against Sasikala, castigating her for "reaching out" to certain party leaders. The resolution also accused her of trying to capture the party and staging a drama by speaking to certain leaders and then selectively leaking parts of the conversations.

Sasikala had tried to enter Tamil Nadu politics with a bang after she was released from Bangalore Central prison after serving four

Former Minister M Anandan and former Member of Parliament Chinnaswamy were among the other senior leaders who were expelled from the party

years' imprisonment in a case related to disproportionate assets.

She had arrived in Tamil Nadu on February 7, 2021, in a convoy of 1000 vehicles from Bengaluru and had received a huge reception along the way taking a full day for a 350 km drive - generally covered in 6 to 7 hours. After a few days of dabbling in state politics, Sasikala suddenly announced that she was with-

drawing from active politics much to the surprise of political observers and party sympathizers.

However after the assembly election results came and AIADMK lost the polls, Sasikala started resuming her meddling in the party and selectively leaked her telephonic conversations with several senior, middle and lower-level leaders and cadres of the AIADMK across the state. She has publicly announced through these chats that she was very much in the reckoning for active politics. AIADMK leaders Edappadi K Palaniswami and O Panneerselvam had openly denounced her statements and had strongly warned party leaders and cadres that if there was any truck with her they would be expelled from the party.

AYODHYA LAND DEAL FRAUD

Oppn attacks BJP, demands probe

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow, June 14: A war of words erupted between the BJP and the opposition parties Monday over allegations of corruption in the purchase of land in Ayodhya by the Ram temple trust, with the Congress demanding a Supreme Court-monitored probe and the saffron party terming it as an attempt to "defame" and "derail" the temple construction.

Latching onto the issue to target the BJP and the RSS, Congress spokesperson Randeep Surjewala alleged that it was a 'big scam' committed using funds collected from devotees and said Prime Minister Narendra Modi should answer the nation.

"How could BJP leaders commit such a big malpractice in the name of Lord Ram," Surjewala asked, and demanded that the apex court direct an audit of all the donations and funds received and spent by the trust and make it public in the traditions of idealism of Lord Ram.

After AAP Rajya Sabha member Sanjay Singh and former UP minister and Samajwadi Party leader Pawan Pandey claimed Sunday that land worth Rs 2 crore was brought at an inflated price of Rs 18.5 crore by Shriram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust, its general secretary Champat Rai dismissed the allegations as politically motivated and aimed at spreading disinformation. Rai asserted that

there was complete transparency in the land transactions, but the opposition parties were unconvicted.

"The BJP is betraying the people. Misusing the money collected for Ram temple is a severe blow to the sentiments and the faith of the people," the Congress alleged on its Twitter handle. The chief justice and the Supreme Court must take cognisance of the matter and order a court-monitored probe into the charges, Surjewala said.

"Shri Ram himself is justice, truth, faith. Betrayal in his name is unrighteous," Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said.

The controversy involving the emotive Ram temple issue has erupted as political parties prepare for the assembly elections in the crucial state of Uttar Pradesh due next year.

Members of the Uttar Pradesh Women Congress held a demonstration near the official residence of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath in Lucknow. "Crores of people made their offerings at the feet of God out of their faith and devotion. Misuse of those donations is unrighteous, a sin and an insult to their faith," Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra tweeted.

Hitting back at the opposition parties, BJP leaders claimed that those who were opposed to the Ram temple construction in Ayodhya were the ones levelling the "false" allegations on the land sale.



'Single dose of nCoV vax sufficient for those already infected'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Hyderabad, June 14: A single dose of vaccine is sufficient for those already infected by Covid-19, revealed a study by Hyderabad's AIG Hospitals.

The hospital announced Monday that it conducted a study on 260 healthcare workers who got vaccinated between January 16 and February 5 to assess the immunological memory response in all those patients. All patients were given the Covishield vaccine.

Two significant observations came out of the study, which has been published in the International Journal of Infectious Diseases, a peer-reviewed journal.

The previously infected group (people who got infected with Covid-19) showed a greater antibody response to a single dose of vaccine compared with those who had no prior infection.

It also revealed that Memory T-cell responses elicited by a single dose of vaccine were significantly higher in the previously infected group compared with those who had no prior infection.

It was concluded that higher memory T and B-cell responses in addition to higher antibody response with a single dose of vaccine given at 3-6 months after recovery from Covid-19 may be considered at par with two doses of vaccine for individuals already



infected with Covid-19.

"The results show that people who got infected with COVID-19 need not take two doses of vaccine yet with a single dose can develop robust antibody and memory cell response at par with two-doses for those who didn't get the infection. This will significantly help at a time when there's a shortage of vaccine in the country and more people can be covered using the saved doses," said Dr. D Nageshwar Reddy, Chairman, AIG Hospitals, and one of the co-authors in the study.

"Once we attain the requisite number of people vaccinated for achieving herd immunity, these patients who got infected and received only one dose can take the

second dose of the vaccine. At this point, all our strategies should be directed at the widespread distribution of available vaccines and to include the maximum number of people at least with a single dose," he added.

During the second Covid wave when cases were growing exponentially, the vaccination rate took a downturn. As of April 27, when the growth rate of active infection was 5%, the growth of vaccinated people was just 1.4 per cent.

"We need to modify vaccination strategy based on scientific evidence and with the objective that a larger set of the population can be covered in the shortest duration," he said.

international

of the day quote

The PML-N are the ones who mishandled the Kulbhushan Jadhav case. We are implementing the recommendations of the ICJ and we took measures on their advice. India didn't want consular access to Jadhav, rather wanted to drag Pakistan to the ICJ once again

SHAH MAHMOOD QURESHI | PAK FOREIGN MINISTER

From economic, healthcare and education ties to the dynamic diaspora, India values partnership with this historic city. The India-US healthcare partnership continues to grow! Visited Ocugen facilities in Philadelphia and met their Board members. Discussed issues relating to bringing #Covaxin into the US

TARANJIT SINGH SANDHU | INDIA'S AMBASSADOR TO THE US

Our government took action to regain the GSP+ from the EU in 2017. An issue has arisen in the European Parliament this week regarding the GSP+ tax concession. We have been warned that this concession will be revoked

RANIL WICKREMESINGHE | FORMER SRI LANKA PM

SHORT TAKES

Taliban commander arrested in Afghan

Kabul: A key Taliban divisional commander has been arrested in Afghanistan's northern province of Takhar, amidst the ongoing violence in country, a local spokesman confirmed Monday. "Rohullah Rohani and one of his protectors have been arrested following an operative task conducted by personnel National Directorate of Security (NDS), or national intelligence agency in Yangi Qala district in Takhar," the spokesman told. The province has been the scene of recent heavy clashes. The Taliban militant group has not responded to the report so far. The report came as Taliban militants have attacked security forces and captured several suburban districts across Afghanistan in recent weeks.

Actress sues six over rape, murder attempt

Dhaka: Top Bangladeshi film star Pori Moni has filed a case against businessman Nasiruddin Mahmud and five other individuals alleging that they attempted to rape and murder her. Shamsunnahar Smrity, popularly known as Pori Moni, is one of the top Bangladeshi film stars, and was recently included in the Forbes list of 'Asia-Pacific's Most Influential Celebrities' on Social Media. The case was filed Sunday night at the Savar police station located in the outskirts of Dhaka under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act and Penal Code 307. Additional Superintendent of Police, Abdullah Hill Kafi told IANS.

Anti-terror forces kill 13 IS militants

Baghdad: The Iraqi Counter-Terrorism Service (CTS) said that its forces have killed 13 Islamic State (IS) militants across the country so far this month. Spokesman of CTS Sabah al-Numan told the official Iraqi News Agency (INA) Sunday that the commandos, backed by aircraft, carried out several security operations in June, killing 13 IS militants and arresting many others, in addition to the destruction of some caves and hideouts. The CTS forces will continue their operations to hunt down IS militants. Xinhua news agency quoted al-Numan as saying to IANA.

US assessing complaint of leak in Chinese N-power plant

The warning included an accusation that the Chinese safety authority was raising the acceptable limits for radiation detection outside the Taishan Nuclear Power Plant in Guangdong province in order to avoid having to shut it down

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Beijing, June 14: The US government is assessing a report of a leak at a Chinese nuclear power plant, after a French company that partly owns and helps to operate it warned of an "imminent radiological threat," a media report said Monday.

The warning included an accusation that the Chinese safety authority was raising the acceptable limits for radiation detection outside the Taishan Nuclear Power Plant in Guangdong province in order to avoid having to shut it down, the CNN quoted a letter from the French company to the US



Department of Energy. There is no reaction yet in Beijing by the Chinese government or officials on this report, it said.

The media report said despite the alarming notification from Framatome, the French company, the Biden administration believes

the facility is not yet at a "crisis level".

While US officials have deemed the situation does not currently pose a severe safety threat to workers at the plant or Chinese public, it is unusual that a foreign company would unilaterally reach out to the American government for help when its Chinese state-owned partner is yet to acknowledge a problem exists.

The scenario could put the US in a complicated situation should the leak continue or become more severe without being fixed, the report said. However, concern was significant enough that the US National Security Council held

multiple meetings to discuss the situation, it said.

The Biden administration has discussed the situation with the French government and their own experts at the Department of Energy, the report said, adding that the US has also been in contact with the Chinese government.

China's nuclear power generation was in news last month as the Chinese President Xi Jinping and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin attended via virtual ground-breaking ceremony of the biggest nuclear energy project to build four nuclear power plants in China by Russia costing about USD 3 billion.

Germany seeks to fine Telegram

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Berlin, June 14: German authorities have launched proceedings against Telegram that could see the messenger app's operators fined for failing to abide by laws requiring social media sites to police their users' actions.



German magazine Der Spiegel reported over the weekend that officials believe use of the Telegram app has reached a threshold where it can be treated in the same way as Facebook, Twitter and TikTok when it comes to requiring cooperation with German authorities.

A Justice Ministry spokeswoman confirmed Monday that authorities have written to Telegram's operators in the United Arab Emirates over its failure to provide a channel for raising complaints and a contact person in Germany.

"The company now has the opportunity to respond," the spokeswoman, Rabea Boennighausen, told reporters in Berlin.

Der Spiegel reported that the company could face fines of up to 5.5 million euros (USD 6.7 million) if it doesn't comply with the requirements.

Telegram couldn't immediately be reached for comment.

Telegram, which was founded by Russian brothers Nikolai and Pavel Durov, has grown in popularity in Germany in recent years, including among right-wing groups and those opposed to the government's response to the coronavirus pandemic.

Novavax more than 90% effective: Study

The study of nearly 30,000 volunteers in the United States and Mexico puts Novavax on track to file for emergency authorisation in the United States and elsewhere

AGENCIES

Washington, June 14: Novavax Inc Monday reported late-stage data from its US-based clinical trial showing its vaccine is more than 90% effective against Covid-19 across a variety of variants of the virus.

The study of nearly 30,000 volunteers in the United States and Mexico puts Novavax on track to file for emergency authorisation in the United States and elsewhere in the third quarter of 2021, the company said.

Novavax's protein-based Covid-19 vaccine candidate was more than 93% effective against the predominant variants of Covid-19 that have been of concern among scientists and public health officials, Novavax said.

Protein-based vaccines are a conventional approach that use purified pieces of the virus to spur an immune response and vaccines against whooping cough and shingles employ this approach.

During the trial, the B.1.1.7 variant first discovered in the United Kingdom became the most common variant in the United States, it said.

Novavax also detected variants of Covid-19 first found in Brazil, South Africa and India among its

trial participants, Novavax's head of research and development, Dr Gregory Glenn, told Reuters.

The vaccine was 91% effective among volunteers at high risk of severe infection and 100% effective in preventing moderate and severe cases of Covid-19. It was roughly 70% effective against Covid-19 variants that Novavax was unable to identify, Glenn said.

"Practically speaking, it's very important that the vaccine can protect against a virus that is wildly swinging around" in terms of new variants, Glenn said.

Novavax said the vaccine was generally well tolerated among participants. Side effects included headache, fatigue and muscle pain and were generally mild. A small number of participants experienced side effects described as severe.

Novavax remains on track to produce 100 million doses per month by the end of the third quarter of 2021 and 150 million doses per month in the fourth quarter of 2021, the company said.

The Maryland-based company has repeatedly pushed back production forecasts and has struggled to access raw materials and equipment needed to make its vaccine.

However, in a May investor call, Chief Executive Stanley Erck said major manufacturing hurdles have been cleared and that all of its facilities can now produce Covid-19 vaccine at commercial scale.

Erck said that Novavax has begun its regulatory filing in India in partnership with the Serum Institute of India, which is contracted to make Novavax shots.



PLAYFUL PROTEST



Protestors wearing giant heads portraying G7 leaders swim in the water during a demonstration outside the G7 meeting in St Ives, Cornwall, England

PTI PHOTO

China a global security challenge, says NATO

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Brussels, June 14: NATO leaders on Monday declared that China poses a constant security challenge and is working to undermine global order, and they said they're worried about how fast the Chinese are developing nuclear missiles.

In a summit statement, the leaders said that China's goals and "assertive behaviour present systemic challenges to the rules-based international order and to areas relevant to alliance security."

While the 30 heads of state and government avoided calling China a rival, they expressed concern about what they said were its "coercive policies," the opaque ways it is modernising its armed forces and its use of disinformation.

They called on Beijing to uphold its international commitments and to act responsibly in the international system.

The statement comes as President Joe Biden has stepped up his effort to rally allies to speak in a more unified voice about China's human rights record, its trade practices and its military's increasingly assertive behaviour that has unnerved U.S. Allies in the Pacific.

135 Indian peacekeepers receive UN medals for 'outstanding performance'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

United Nations, June 14: About 135 Indian peacekeepers deployed with the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) have been honoured with UN medals for their outstanding performance.

India is among the largest troop contributing countries to UN peacekeeping missions.

Take a bow, people of #India! Some 135 of your peacekeeping troops, based in #SouthSudan and serving with #UNMISS, have received @UN medals for their outstanding performance in Jonglei State and the Greater Pibor Administrative Area, the UN Mission in South Sudan tweeted Monday.

About 135 Indian and 103 Sri Lankan peacekeepers serving in the mission were awarded for their service.

My heartfelt congratulations to all these officers for their contributions towards the fulfilment of the UNMISS mandate in this challenging environment," UNMISS Force Commander Lieutenant



General Shailesh Tinaikar said, according to a news article released by the mission.

The article said the Indian troops are stationed in "Bor, Pibor and at a temporary operating base in Akobo and have engaged in a variety of activities, including civil-military cooperation such as a veterinary camp."

In carrying out their duties, the Indian peacekeepers have also dealt with the "often-violent reality in a volatile part of South Sudan, often

plagued by inter-communal violence. Flooding and the resulting displacement of thousands of people have further complicated matters," the UNMISS news article said.

Sector East Commander Brigadier General Deepak Kumar Baniya voiced admiration for the military personnels' desire to achieve peace. The price of peace is sometimes very high, he said.

Tinaikar also lauded the Sri Lankan aviation unit for their courage and service.

Pak, India agree to share ownership of Basmati rice

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Islamabad, June 14: In a rare agreement between two arch-rivals India and Pakistan, which have a history of long-time rivalry with disputes on every front from sea to land, exporters from both sides of the border have mutually agreed to share the ownership of the region's prized Basmati rice, a solution considered the most workable to reach the European markets.

There has to be a joint ownership, which is a logical solution to the dispute, said Faizan Ali Ghouri, a Pakistani rice exporter.

The fight between India and Pakistan over the claim of the origin of Basmati rice has a long history, as this variety is produced largely on both sides of the border.

India has filed a claim in the European Union (EU) seeking a geographical indication (GI) tag



for Basmati rice. Pakistan, on the other hand, has opposed India's claim and has filed a request for a protected GI tag.

There is no logic in both countries' claim for the sole exclusivity of Basmati rice. Although its origin is Pakistani Punjab, it is grown

in both sides of the border. Therefore, a joint ownership is the only viable solution to the long-standing dispute, said Ghouri.

The EU buyers also prefer joint ownership of the rice variety as they want to keep both New Delhi and Islamabad on board in terms

of commodity exports, he added.

Ghouri's views were seconded by Ashok Sethi, the director of Punjab Rice Millers Export Association in India, who also suggested that both the countries should jointly protect the Basmati heritage.

India and Pakistan are the only two countries which produce Basmati in the world. Both should jointly work together to save the heritage and protect the GI regime of the rice, said Sethi.

It is pertinent to mention that EU had recognised Basmati as a joint product of India and Pakistan in 2006.

Both Pakistan and India make good money from their respective exports of Basmati rice. Pakistan annually earns \$2.2 billion, while India makes about \$6.8 billion from Basmati exports.

Both countries export Basmati rice. India, in its application to the EU, has never stated that it is the

only Basmati producer in the world, insisted Vijay Sethi, a New Delhi-based exporter.

While both sides still have their own historical details on the origin of Basmati, it is rare to see two arch-rivals, who are not ready to come to the table for talks until their demands are met, come down to a mutual agreement.

Pakistan demands India to reverse its August 5, 2019 decision that changed the special status of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir and bifurcated it into two Union Territories by abrogating Articles 370 and 35A, as a benchmark to make way for dialogue and address other issues between the two countries.

India, on the other hand, demands Pakistan to stop cross-border terrorism and take decisive action against terror elements, which it claims, enjoy the support of the establishment.

business

of the day quote

Space is a major constraint in urban areas today which makes it imperative to utilize what we have optimally. This is where our partnership will prove to be a gamechanger at a time when the concept of modular houses is picking up pace in India

SANCHIT GAURAV |
FOUNDER & CEO, HOUSEJOY

We are delighted to elevate Amit as the Global CEO of SWSL. His rich experience in the EPC space across geographies coupled with his expertise in building long-term partnerships will be invaluable

KHURSHED DARUVALA |
CHAIRMAN, STERLING AND WILSON SOLAR

After 500 days of dodging #COVID19 I tested +VE on June 10th My initial reaction was of shock & dismay - Why me? I was careful & #vaccinated. Hospitalized with high fever I took the cocktail #Regeneron therapy within the early window period & it has made a dramatic difference

SANGITA REDDY |
JOINT MD, APOLLO HOSPITALS

SHORT TAKES

'Fiscal position to be better'

Mumbai: If there is no third wave of the pandemic, the fiscal position of the Centre and the states will be much better than budgeted for FY22 and the states may garner ₹60,000 crore more in tax collections at ₹8.27 lakh crore this fiscal year than they have budgeted, a report said. The report by SBI Research Monday bases its optimism on GST collection so far this fiscal, which has been the best ever.

Sebi penalises Franklin Templeton

New Delhi: Sebi Monday imposed a penalty totalling ₹15 crore on senior officials of Franklin Templeton AMC and its trustee for violating regulatory norms in the case of winding up of six debt schemes in 2020. However, a spokesperson of Franklin Templeton said they disagree with the findings in Sebi's order and intend to file an appeal with the Securities Appellate Tribunal. A fine of ₹3 crore has been levied on Franklin Templeton Trustee Services Pvt Ltd and ₹2 crore each on Franklin Asset Management (India) Pvt Ltd President Sanjay Sapre and its CIO Santosh Kamat, according to the Sebi order.

ADQ in talks to infuse \$400-500mn

New Delhi: ADQ, formerly known as Abu Dhabi Developmental Holding Company, is in advanced stages of discussions to pump in about USD 400-500 million (around ₹3,000 crore to ₹3,660 crore) in e-commerce major Flipkart, according to sources. The transaction could value Flipkart between USD 35-40 billion, sources close to the development said.

'Performance set to improve'

New Delhi: The performance of thermal power plants is set to improve "meaningfully" and the excess capacity could decline over FY 2022-24, India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra) on Monday said. The operating performance of thermal power plants could improve meaningfully, given the change in the incremental demand supply equation after a decade, an Ind-Ra statement said.



Authoritarianism and majoritarianism have taken over the GST Council... It's most unfortunate
AMIT MITRA | FINANCE MINISTER, WEST BENGAL

INOX LEISURE RAISES ₹300CR

Multiplex major Inox Leisure Monday said it has successfully completed fundraising of approximately ₹300 crore through Qualified Institutions Placement (QIP). The QIP, which opened for subscription on June 8 and closed on June 11, was over-subscribed by more than 5 times



UN TRADE FORUM 2021

'World has to decouple trade policy, green goals'



AGENCIES

New Delhi, June 14: Hoping that the developed countries will not use the inter-play of trade and climate challenge "too much", Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal Monday said the world should decouple trade policy and its green goals.

He also hoped that credit rating agencies and bodies like the IMF "which kind of dictate" the financial architecture of the world do not land up being unfairly harsh on the developing and less-developed countries as this is a time to become compassionate, more liberal and supportive to these nations.

"I think a little longer rope needs to be given even to earlier agreements or earlier commitments so that these countries (developing and less developed) have space to bring their economies back on track," Goyal said at the UN Trade Forum 2021.

Let the trade policy look for more inclusive growth all over the world and all the countries need to work towards climate justice and sustainable lifestyle.

"We do hope that the developed world will not use the inter-play of trade and climate challenge too much because I think trade should allow all countries to prosper.

"It should not create trade barriers which will ultimately become a hindrance to taking prosperity to the poorer, lesser developed countries," he said.

Goyal added: "I do believe that we have to decouple trade policy and our green goals".

I think a little longer rope needs to be given even to earlier agreements or earlier commitments so that these countries (developing and less developed) have space to bring their economies back on track

PIYUSH GOYAL |
COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY MINISTER

Rather, he said, the UN and the other multilateral agencies like the UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) should focus on getting the world together to fulfil their commitments around climate change.

The minister added that there should be differentiated responsibilities when it comes to the developing world or the less-developed countries, as they have to fulfil their commitments which they made in Paris particularly relating to capital, and technology.

Further, Goyal said the world should learn lesson from the 2008 economic crisis and the developed world should not land up in "over adventurism" in terms of fiscal proliferation.

Talking about healthcare, he said that under the Ayushman Bharat scheme, 500 million people have access to medical facilities free of charge and "we are going to expand it to 100 per cent coverage so that every citizen in India and every resident gets access to healthcare".

The government is investing in upgrading healthcare facilities and expanding them, he added.

Sunak drawn into in-law Murthy Amazon tax dispute



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, June 14: Cloutail India Pvt Ltd - the online retailing joint venture of Infosys co-founder NR Narayana Murthy's firm and Amazon.Com - faced a 5.5 million pounds demand, including interest and penalties, from tax authorities after it paid "meagre" taxes over the past four years, a media report said on Monday.

Amazon reportedly developed independent sellers such as Cloutail, as 'special merchant' which enjoyed over 35 per cent of total sales on the platform until 2019.

While Murthy's Catamaran Ventures indirectly holds 76 per cent in Cloutail and Amazon the remaining 24 per cent, the firm's two top posts - chief executive and finance director - were with the US retailer. Cloutail's holding company, Prione is also run by a former Amazon manager, the report in "The Guardian" newspaper said.

It said that it is not known precisely what the tax dispute is about and the company said that it was contesting the bill, adding that since the "matter is sub judice, we are unable to comment any further".

The office of UK Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak, who is son-in-law of Murthy, was forced to comment. The revelations come just days after Sunak led the G7 finance ministers' charge to agree to a global deal designed to make tech companies pay more tax.

Adani Group stocks tumble

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, June 14: Shares of Adani Group companies witnessed a massive drubbing in morning trade Monday, tumbling up to 25 per cent, amid reports that the National Securities Depository Ltd (NSDL) has frozen certain FPIs accounts that have holding in some of these firms.

Billionaire Gautam Adani's group Monday said accounts of three Mauritius-based funds that own the port-to-energy conglomerate's stocks were not frozen and any reports suggesting the contrary were "blatantly erroneous and misleading".

Shares of Adani group companies plunged Monday after reports that the National Securities Depository Ltd (NSDL) froze the accounts of the three foreign funds that are among the top stakeholders in the firms. While Adani group said all the accounts of its top shareholder funds were active, NSDL in an email to the group also confirmed their 'active' status.

Adani Enterprises closed the day 6.26 per cent lower at ₹1,501.25 and Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone tumbled 8.36 per cent to close at ₹768.70 on the BSE. During the morning trade, Adani Enterprises had tanked 24.99 per



MASSIVE DRUBBING

SHARES OF ADANI GROUP COMPANIES PLUNGED MONDAY AFTER REPORTS THAT THE NATIONAL SECURITIES DEPOSITORY LTD (NSDL) FROZE THE ACCOUNTS OF THE THREE FOREIGN FUNDS THAT ARE AMONG THE TOP STAKEHOLDERS IN THE FIRMS

Billionaire Gautam Adani's group Monday said accounts of three Mauritius-based funds were not frozen and any reports suggesting the contrary were "blatantly erroneous and misleading"

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cent to ₹1,201.10, while Adani Ports dived 18.75 per cent to ₹681.50.

Among others, Adani Green Energy dipped 4.13 per cent to close at ₹1,175.95, Adani Total Gas fell 5 per cent to ₹1,544.55, Adani Transmission declined 5 per cent

to ₹1,517.25 and Adani Power slumped 4.99 per cent to ₹140.90. All these stocks hit their respective lower circuit limits during the trade.

According to media reports, the National Securities Depository Ltd

BIZ BUZZ

Nuvoco launches Concreto CorroSafe



Bhubaneswar: Nuvoco Vistas Corp. Ltd., a cement manufacturing company, launches Concreto CorroSafe - a corrosion-resistant concrete that extends the life of buildings. Initially the product will be available in Bhubaneswar, Mumbai, Goa and

Vizag and later on it will be rolled out in other parts of the country as well. The advanced concrete mix design is reinforced with corrosion-resistant admixtures that act as inhibitors towards water seepage and rusting, protecting the lifespan of the structures. It is specially designed to increase the density and durability of the concrete mix. With a strong and durable finish, ConcretoCorroSafe is especially suitable for construction in moisture-density areas, industrial buildings, coastal buildings, as well as marine constructions like jetty and dolphin structures. As a strong foundation material, it is recommended for pile, pile caps, or any other substructures. The sturdy and dense concrete is also ideal for load-bearing constructions, such as bridges and metro stations.

OnePlus Nord CE 5G unveiled

Bhubaneswar: Global technology brand OnePlus has revealed a new addition to the OnePlus Nord product line: OnePlus Nord CE 5G (Core Edition). The newest member of the Nord smartphone portfolio is built on the core aspects of the Nord experience,

delivering powerful features at an even lighter price - all packed into a beautiful design. Nord CE combines best-in-class hardware features, including a versatile 64 MP triple camera system, a 90 Hz fluid AMOLED display, a powerful Snapdragon 750G 5G processor, and improved Warp Charge 30T Plus, along with OnePlus's signature fast and smooth OxygenOS 11, to deliver a fantastic everyday user experience. "The OnePlus Nord CE 5G is the next step in our commitment to sharing great technology with the world," said Pete Lau, Founder and CEO of OnePlus.



OnePlus Nord CE 5G
30 Minutes to Nord
Pre-Orders start 12PM, 11 June
Starting ₹22,999

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, June 14: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Monday proposed a uniform regulatory framework for the microfinance sector, wherein MFIs can provide collateral-free loans to households at board-determined interest rates. Microfinance is a form of financial service which provides small loans and other financial services to poor and low-income households.

The key proposals of 'Consultative Document on Regulation of Microfinance' include a common definition of microfinance loans for all regulated entities, capping the outflow on



account of repayment of loan obligations of a household to a percentage of the household income, and a board approved policy for household income assessment.

It also suggests no requirement of collateral, and greater flexibility of repayment frequency for all microfinance loans.

As per the consultative paper

released by the RBI on Monday, a microfinance loan would mean collateral-free lending to households with annual income of ₹1.25 lakh in rural areas and ₹2 lakh at urban and semi-urban centres.

The entities engaged in micro-finance lending will be required to display board-approved minimum, maximum and average interest rates charged on loans. They will also be required to disclose pricing related information in a standard simplified fact-sheet.

There will be no-prepayment penalty said the consultative paper on which the RBI has invited comments from the stakeholders by July 31.

Less affluent most sceptical about economic outlook: Study

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, June 14: Consumer anxiety is at the highest levels since the outbreak of coronavirus pandemic in India with the less affluent most sceptical about economic outlook while a majority of consumers think their income in the next six months will be lower than the pre-Covid levels, says a latest study.

As per the Covid-19 consumer sentiment research by global management consulting firm Boston Consulting group (BCG) conducted between May 23 and May 28, 2021, covering around 4,000 respondents across metros, tier I, II, III, IV and rural India, 51 per cent of consumers expected their spends over the next six months to be lower. In the last round of survey con-

ducted from July 20 to August 2, 2020, the figure stood at 40 per cent.

As many as 83 per cent of the respondents agreed that coronavirus posed a high level of threat to their jobs or businesses, while another 86 per cent felt that there would be an economic recession due to the pandemic.

In terms of income outlook, 58 per cent of the respondents expected a decline in income in the next six months, the study said adding the decline in income sentiment is the steepest among less affluent/small towns.

It found that 76 per cent of respondents in the 'struggler/next billion' category expected income lower than the pre-Covid level, while the same was also true for 60 per cent in the 'aspirer' segment. However, only 49 per cent 'afflu-



ent/elite' expected decline in income in the next six months.

The less affluent were also the most skeptical about economic outlook, although health concerns were prevalent across consumer profiles. The impact of the pandemic on daily lifestyles were felt

The pandemic has resulted in the unabated growth in adoption and engagement of social commerce and healthier food choices, while sustaining at new highs the adoption and engagement of digital commerce, entertainment and education

more in urban/affluent India, the study said. Consumer spending sentiment for essentials, health, at-home entertainment has remained stable or showed minor decline. On the other hand, the expected cutbacks on travel, out of home entertainment and vehicle

purchases are high, it added.

Commenting on the findings, BCG India Managing Director and Partner Nimisha Jain said, "There is an impending sense of uncertainty, however, we have observed certain positive messages too." The spending sentiment has not been impacted similarly across categories. Essentials, health, in-home entertainment continue to be winners. Some of the discretionary categories, however, have been negatively impacted, she added.

The pandemic has also resulted in the unabated growth in adoption and engagement of social commerce and healthier food choices, while sustaining at new highs the adoption and engagement of digital commerce, entertainment and education, BCG said.

