





## SHORT TAKES

## ₹126cr heroin seized at IGI, 2 Africans held

**New Delhi:** In a major catch, heroin worth ₹126 crore has been seized from two South African men at the international airport here as they were trying to smuggle it into the country, according to an official statement on Monday. The two accused were intercepted on Saturday upon their arrival from Johannesburg via Doha. On detailed personal and baggage search of the passengers, off-white colour powder/granules, found to be heroin, weighing 8 kg was recovered from one passenger and 10 kg was recovered from another," said the statement issued by the customs department. Both of the accused were found to be part of a syndicate, it said. It stated that the off-white colour powder/granules, weighing 18 in total and estimated to be valued at ₹126 crore, were ingeniously concealed inside their checked-in trolley bags. Both the men have been arrested and a case of smuggling has been registered against them, a customs officer said.

## Bail granted to man accused of helping gangster

**New Delhi:** A Delhi court on Monday granted bail to a man, arrested for allegedly harbouring gangster Kuldeep Fajja who was later killed in an encounter after fleeing from police custody at the GTB hospital here in March this year. Additional sessions judge Sanjeev Kumar Malhotra admitted Yogender Dahiya to bail on furnishing of a personal bond of ₹50,000 with two sureties of the like amount. On March 25, Fajja had escaped from police custody when he was brought to the hospital for a medical examination. Three days later, he was killed in a police encounter at Dahiya's house in Rohini. While granting relief, the judge noted that Dahiya was not present at the hospital when the gangster was rescued and that it is unexplained whether he caused any obstruction when the police came to his home to apprehend Fajja.

## Man held from Punjab in Red Fort violence case

**New Delhi:** A man wanted in the Red Fort flag hoisting case was arrested from Punjab and sent to a three-day custody of Delhi Police by a court here on Monday. "Gurjot Singh was arrested from Amritsar in Punjab. A reward of ₹1 lakh was declared for his arrest. Singh, who was evading arrest for five months, was nabbed on Sunday by the Special Cell of Delhi Police. He was produced before Metropolitan Magistrate Anurag Thakur who remanded him in police custody. — PTI

## Pvt schools can levy annual, development fees for now

*SC refuses to stay HC order which quashed Delhi govt's direction to private unaided schools not to collect annual charges, development fees*

**PARMOD KUMAR**  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 28

The Supreme Court on Monday declined to stay Delhi High Court order quashing Delhi government's orders which had directed private unaided schools not to collect annual charges and development fees from students till resumption of physical classes in the schools.

A bench headed by Justice A.M. Khanwilkar, also comprising Justice Dinesh Maheshwari and Justice Aniruddha Bose, refused to entertain the Delhi government's plea against Delhi High Court's division bench order allowing private unaided recognised schools to collect annual and development charges from students for the period after the lockdown ended in the national cap-

ital last year.

Refusing to stay the high court order, the top court said that the matter is pending before a division bench in the high court and the government should raise its grievances there.

"We are not inclined to grant you the stay," the bench told senior advocate Vikas Singh, appearing for Delhi government, vehemently seeking the stay of the judgement saying, lakhs and lakhs of parents will be affected. "Please don't shut us out," he appealed.

The top court, however, said although it was dismissing the appeal of the Delhi government, this would not come in the adjudication of its plea by a division bench of the high court as nothing on merits have been recorded by it.

Considering the fact that

the division bench is hearing the matter on July 12. All the contentions remain open and can be raised before the division bench and the dismissal of the petition does not reflect upon merits of the case, the bench said.

On May 31, a single-judge bench of the high court had quashed the office orders of April and August 2020 issued by DoE of the Delhi government forbidding and postponing collection of annual charges and development fees.

The Delhi government then filed the intra-court appeal before a division bench of the high court which on June 7 issued notices on the plea but had refused to stay its single-judge order allowing private unaided schools to collect annual and development charges from students.

## SC condoles death of 77 lawyers due to Covid-19

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 28

The Supreme Court on Monday paid condolences to 77 lawyers, members of Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA), who lost their lives to Covid. Paying condolences to the family members of the 77 lawyers on his behalf and on behalf of other judges of the top court, Chief Justice N.V. Ramana said: "We pay our deepest condolences."

The court observed two-minute silence before starting its work. The top court resumed its sitting on Monday after nearly seven-week summer break.



A worker makes arrangement in a banquet hall after authorities eased Covid-induced restrictions in New Delhi on Monday. — PTI

## ■ HC vacation bench re-notifies cases to regular bench

## 'No interim stay on new IT rules implementation'

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 28

The Delhi High Court on Monday refused to give interim stay to the new Information Technology rules which seek to regulate digital news media, saying it was not in agreement with the petitioners on passing such an order at this stage.

A vacation bench of the Delhi High Court comprising Justices C Hari Shankar and Subramonium Prasad refused to grant an interim stay of the order of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting seeking compliance from digital media portal The Wire and

The Quint with the "Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules 2021", on the ground that a fresh notice has been issued to them to comply with the rules or else coercive action will be taken.

The bench opined that it would renotify the matter before the regular bench which had issued a notice in the main petition and had also refused to grant the interim relief. The Court also issued notice on a petition filed by fact-checking digital platform Alt News challenging the IT rules 2021.

The matter had earlier come up before a vacation

bench headed by Justice Anup Jairam Bhambhani on June 21 when he chose to recuse himself from the matter. Last week, the Centre sought a compliance report from digital platforms with regard to the new IT Rules.

"We are not in agreement with you. If you want, we will pass a reasoned detailed order or if you want, we can renotify it before the roster bench. You take instructions and let us know," the bench said. After taking instructions, senior advocate Nitya Ramakrishnan, representing the news portals, urged the court to list the matter on reopening of courts after vacations.

## HC to continue virtual hearings till July 23

**New Delhi, June 28:** The Delhi high court, on Monday, said it has decided to continue with the existing system of hearing urgent cases via video conference till July 23 amidst the threat of Delta Plus, a variant of concern of coronavirus.

The full court of the Delhi high court has resolved to adopt a policy of wait and watch and to act cautiously in view of the loss of precious lives of judicial officers, advocates, and court staff.

The order also said that all the pending routine or non-urgent matters listed in the high court between July 3 and July 23 shall be adjourned en-bloc to corresponding dates between August 21 and September 9.

A similar order was also passed by the high court with regard to the functioning of district courts here, stating that all the judicial officers shall take up urgent matters and final argument cases of their respective courts through video conferencing till July 23 while the order matters shall be adjourned by them.

The administrative order said the full court, while reviewing the existing arrangement of hearing of matters before the Delhi high court and district courts here, has observed that despite there being decline in the number of Covid-19 cases in the national capital, utmost precaution needs to be taken in view of the

predicted third wave and limited availability of vaccines.

The order also advised all the stakeholders to get themselves vaccinated at the earliest.

It said all the benches of the high court, registrars, and joint registrars (judicial) shall continue to take up urgent matters, as per existing arrangement, through video conferencing till July 23 and that the cases instituted in 2020 shall also be taken up as per roster from July 3.

On April 18, the high court had said that from April 19 onwards it will only take up "extremely urgent matters" filed this year. Similar orders were issued on April 23 and May 15. — PTI



A fitness enthusiast exercises in a gym that reopened after authorities eased Covid-induced restrictions in New Delhi on Monday. — PTI

## Man stabs parents for refusing to give money

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 28

A 25-year-old man allegedly stabbed his father to death and injured his mother on Monday in east Delhi's Kalyanpuri area after they refused to give him money, police said. The accused, Vishal, who is unemployed, has been arrested, they said.

At 6:33 am on Monday, information was received at Kalyanpuri police station regarding the argument between Vishal and his parents, Virender (55) and Manju (52). Virender worked with the Delhi Jal Board, the police said.

"Police reached the spot and found Virender and Manju lying in a pool of blood. Virender was found dead and Manju was rushed to the LBS Hospital and later shifted to the Safdarjung Hospital," Deputy Commissioner of Police (east) Priyanka Kashyap said. Both of them were stabbed by Vishal, who was arrested from the spot, she said.

During inquiry, it was found that Vishal was unemployed for the last seven to eight months. The family had arguments regularly as he demanded money from his parents, the DCP said.

A 32-year-old man was shot dead in northeast Delhi's Gokalpuri area, police said on Monday. The Police Control Room (PCR) received a call around 6 pm on Saturday regarding a firing in which one person was injured in Gokalpuri, a senior officer said.

Azeem, a resident of Bhagirathi Vihar, was sitting on pavement with his friends when two men came there, shot him in the chest and fled away, a senior police officer said.

Azeem, who worked in a shoe factory, was taken to hospital where he was declared brought dead, police said. A case under relevant sections has been registered at Gokalpuri police station. The accused have been identified, the officer said, adding that further details are awaited.

## 1 arrested for snatching CRPF jawan's mobile

**New Delhi, June 28:** A 22-year-old man was arrested for allegedly snatching a mobile phone from a CRPF constable here in Shahdara, police said on Monday.

Accused Abhishek Mann, a resident of Ghaziabad, was previously involved in three such incidents in the city's Anand Vihar and Welcome areas. He was out on bail since October 2020, they said.

Mann, who was riding a motorcycle, snatched the mobile phone of the CRPF jawan, identified as Constable Kiran Kumar, near Shahdara flyover. Meanwhile, assistant sub-inspector (ASI) Balbir noticed the incident while he was on patrolling duty. The ASI followed the snatcher on his two-wheeler, along with Kumar, and chased him for 250 metres, following which he apprehended Mann, said a senior police officer. — PTI

## Over 2 lakh vaccinated in Delhi, Covid cases on downward trend

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 28

Continuing the downward trend in the fresh coronavirus infection tally, as the national capital unlocks in a phased manner with gyms and yoga centres being opened, Delhi recorded only 59 cases on Monday, according to the health department.

The positivity rate stood at 0.10 per cent while the city witnessed two deaths due to the novel coronavirus. On Sunday, Delhi reported 89 cases with a positivity rate of 0.12 per cent and four deaths.

The total number of Covid-19 cases reported in Delhi since the beginning of the pandemic has reached 14,33,993. Of this, over 14.07 lakh patients have recovered so far and the death toll stands at 24,967.

Over two lakh Covid vaccine doses were administered in Delhi on Monday, according to the CoWIN portal—an online platform used for monitoring the delivery of jabs nationwide. This is the second time in the last three days that the number of daily vaccinations crossed the two-lakh mark.

According to the Centre's CoWIN portal, 2.02 lakh vac-



Vaccination drive organised at Tihar Jail residential complex in New Delhi on Monday. — PTI

cine doses were given on Monday while 2.07 lakh beneficiaries were inoculated on Saturday. Only 9,563 doses were administered in the national capital on Sunday as government vaccination centres remained closed.

Since the beginning of the inoculation drive in the national capital on January 16, more than 75 lakh vaccine doses have been given. Over 17 lakh people have received both doses of vaccine.

According to the Delhi government's vaccination bulletin, the city had 7.06 lakh vaccine doses with it till

Monday morning. On Sunday, AAP MLA Atishi said the Delhi government has informed the Centre that the city needs 45 lakh doses of Covid-19 vaccines in July to keep up the current vaccination rate of 1.5 lakh jabs daily.

"More than 45 lakh doses will be needed if the pace of vaccination increases," she said. According to Ms Atishi, 25 per cent of Delhi's population in the 18-44 age group has received at least one dose of vaccine. Ninety-two lakh people in this age group are eligible for vaccination in the city.

## No casualties in fire at AIIMS, minor blaze at Safdarjung Hosp

**New Delhi, June 28:** A fire broke out in a room adjacent to the operation theatre of Emergency Department in AIIMS here on Monday morning, Delhi Fire Service said. No one was injured, they said.

A call was received at 5.04 am about a blaze in the operation theatre (OT) of Emergency Department and seven fire tenders were rushed to AIIMS, Delhi Fire Service director Atul Garg said.

The fire was brought under control very quickly, he said, adding it broke out in the store room adjacent to the OT.

Another minor blaze was reported at Safdarjung hospital, fire officials said.

A call was received at 7.58 am about a fire near the canteen area of the hospital. Three fire tenders were rushed to the spot, said Garg.

The fire broke out in an underground cable. It was brought under control very quickly and no injuries were reported, he said. — PTI

## Kejriwal not allowed to hold press meets in Punjab, alleges AAP; Amarinder denies

**Chandigarh, June 28:** The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), on Monday, accused the Congress-led government in Punjab of denying its national convener, Arvind Kejriwal, permission to hold a press conference in the state, a charge denied by chief minister Amarinder Singh.

Delhi chief minister and AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal is to visit Chandigarh, on Tuesday, to make an announcement about providing "free electricity" if his party comes to power in Punjab following the 2022 Assembly elections. The AAP has planned to hold the press conference at Punjab Bhawan here.

Dismissing the accusation, Mr Singh asked why the state government would stop Mr Kejriwal from holding a press conference when he was allowed to hold a party programme a few days ago.

The Punjab chief minister was apparently referring to Mr Kejriwal's June 21 visit to Amritsar for inducting former Punjab inspector general of police Kunwar Vijay Pratap Singh into AAP.

## Free electricity in Punjab if AAP wins polls: Kejriwal

**BHASKAR HARI SHARMA**  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 28

Ahead of assembly elections in Punjab next year, Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal on Monday promised free electricity in that state if his Aam Aadmi Party wins the polls.

Meanwhile Mr Kejriwal also asked the Centre to give a befitting reply to terrorist activities in Jammu and Kashmir, a day after a special police officer (SPO), his wife and daughter were killed in Pulwama district.

A day ahead of his visit to Chandigarh, the AAP leader also claimed that women in Punjab are very unhappy with inflation.

"...In Delhi we provide 200 units of free electricity to every family. The women



Arvind Kejriwal

are very happy. Women in Punjab are also very unhappy with inflation. The AAP government will also provide free electricity in Punjab. See you tomorrow in Chandigarh," Kejriwal tweeted in Punjab.

Sharing the news of the killing of the SPO, his wife and daughter in Pulwama, Kejriwal expressed concern over terrorist activities in Jammu and Kashmir.

"Occurrence of some terrorist activities in recent days are a matter of very serious concern. The government should give a befitting reply to terrorism ensuring security of Jammu and Kashmir and the country," he said.

arrange his lunch too. Aam Aadmi Party just wants to do drama even if it means lying: Amarinder Singh," read a tweet by the Punjab chief minister's media advisor. — PTI

## 02 row: BJP stages dharna, demands Kejri's resignation

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 28

Demanding chief minister Arvind Kejriwal's resignation over his government "inflating" the city's oxygen need during the second wave of the pandemic, the Delhi BJP leaders held a protest at Jantar Mantar here on Monday.

Leading the protest along with MPs, MLAs, and office bearers of the party, Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta also said that Mr Kejriwal should be "arrested for criminal negligence."

"The interim report of a Supreme Court committee has said that the Kejriwal government raised a four-time higher demand for oxygen than actual consumption, which caused shortage in other states and led to the deaths of Covid patients. Kejriwal himself is responsible for this and should step down from his post," Mr Gupta said.



## SHORT TAKES

## Digvijay files plaint over 'tampered' chat

**Bhopal:** Congress veteran and former chief minister Digvijay Singh on Monday lodged a complaint with the cyber cell of the Madhya Pradesh police alleging that his chat in the Clubhouse app, leaked on June 12, was tampered with. The purported chat in which Mr Singh was heard saying that abrogation of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir was a wrong decision by the Centre and there should be a "relook" at it when the Congress returned to power at the Centre, had sparked an uproar in the country landing the Congress in an awkward situation. Talking to reporters, Mr Singh said he filed the complaint under the Information Technology (IT) Act seeking action against those who "edited, doctored, shared and distorted" my statement during a Clubhouse session with a motive to taint my image.

## BJP to grill Odisha govt on 'key issues'

**Bhubaneswar:** The Odisha state BJP unit on Monday charted out some "key issues" on which the party aims to grill the ruling Biju Janata Dal, apparently to reposition itself as the principal political adversary of the regional outfit. The party said the state had completely failed in handling Covid-19 situation and pucca houses under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana were being allotted purely on party considerations. "The state has completely failed in handling the Covid-19 crisis. It's inept and incompetent Covid management has led to massive infection and increase in the number of fatalities," the party state executive which met Monday morning said in a political resolution.

## CONVERSION IN HARYANA: SC NOT TO HEAR PETITION

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 28

The Supreme Court on Monday refused to entertain a petition seeking setting up of a special investigation team (SIT) to probe the alleged "forceful" conversion of the Hindus in Nuh district of Haryana. Dismissing the plea, Chief Justice N.V. Ramana, heading a three-judge bench also comprising Justice A.S. Bopanna and Justice Hrishikesh Roy, said, "This is not a matter for the Supreme Court to take." "Sorry, the plea is dismissed," the court said. The petitioners have alleged continuous erosion of life, personal liberty and religious rights of the Hindus in the area by a minority community having a dominating position in the area. Senior lawyer Vikas Singh, appearing for the petitioners, referred to a score of media reports and told the court that two of them had visited the area and also met people, including the family of 21-year-old Nikita Tomar who was shot dead outside her college in Ballabgarh in October last year. One of the murder accused, identified as Tausif, was trying to force the student to marry him. A fast-track court in Faridabad district had sentenced two men to life imprisonment in the murder case. "We do not think we can entertain this petition based on newspaper reports," the Chief Justice Ramana remarked.

## Rajnath: India ready to give a befitting reply if provoked

**New Delhi, June 28:** In a clear message to China from eastern Ladakh, defence minister Rajnath Singh on Monday said India is a peace-loving nation that never resorts to any kind of aggression but is always prepared to give a befitting reply if provoked or threatened. Addressing soldiers in a forward location on the second day of his visit to the region, Mr Singh said India wants to resolve disputes with the neighbouring nations through dialogue but asserted that the nation's safety and security will not be compromised at any cost. He also paid glowing tributes to the 20 soldiers killed



in the Galwan Valley clashes in June last year and said the country will never forget their sacrifices. Mr Singh's three-day visit to the region comes in the midst of a stalemate in resolving over a year-long standoff between Indian and Chinese troops in several friction points in eastern Ladakh though they withdrew troops and weapons from Pangong lake areas in February. The defence minister said India is a peace-loving country and does not threaten anyone but the country will not tolerate if anyone threatens it, seen as

a direct message to China. "We had to face a big challenge along the Northern border last year. But our armed forces displayed their courage and dedication to deal with it... Our Army has the capability to give a befitting reply to every challenge," he said. The defence minister said disputes can be resolved through dialogue if there is a clear intent for it. "We have always worked for world peace. We never attack anyone. Our objective has never been to achieve victory against anyone. India has neither attacked any country nor occupied an inch. Our intention is very clear," he said. —PTI

## Over 50% of Mumbai kids have Covid antibodies: Sero survey

BHAGWAN PARAB  
MUMBAI, JUNE 28

While a third possible Covid wave is expected to affect kids more, a paediatric survey carried out in Mumbai has brought some good news. A survey by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation has revealed that over 50 per cent of children up to 18 years in the city have developed antibodies against the coronavirus.

A total of 2,176 blood samples were tested in a paediatric sero-survey conducted by the civic-run BYL Nair Hospital and Kasturba Molecular Diagnostic Laboratory (KMDDL) between April and June. It showed that 51.18 per cent of children between 1 to 18 years in Mumbai have developed antibodies against coronavirus.

The survey has also disclosed that the proportion of the pediatric population having antibodies has increased compared to the earlier sero-survey.



Devotees, wearing face masks, pray at Kapaleeshwar temple that was reopened after further ease in Covid-19 lockdown restrictions in Chennai on Monday. —PTI

"There is a notable increase in the seropositivity in the pediatric population to Covid in this study as compared to earlier serosurvey conducted in March 2021, which showed a sero-positivity of 39.4 per cent in the age group of above 18 years. It indicates that a significant proportion of children accessing the health-care services were exposed to the virus during the second wave of Covid-19," said the survey findings. The BMC had directed to conduct the sero-survey of the paediatric population on the backdrop of warnings by medical experts that the possible third coronavirus wave is also expected to hit children disproportionately. A sero-survey involves testing the blood serum of a group of people and the findings are used to monitor trends in prevalence.

## 11 kids test +ve at children's home in Tezpur

**Tezpur, June 28:** Eleven kids at a children's home in Assam's Sonitpur district have tested positive for Covid-19, an official said on Monday.

Six staff members have also tested positive for the infection at the Tezpur facility. All the 17 people

have been shifted to Tezpur Medical College Hospital, where their condition is stable, the official said. The home, belonging to the Missionaries of Charity, has been declared as a containment zone, he said. Earlier, three children of

the same facility had tested positive for Covid-19, the district's joint director of health J. Ahmed said.

As many 259 children of Sonitpur district have been infected with Covid-19, one of whom succumbed to the disease, Mr Ahmed said. —PTI

## Covid lockdown in WB till July 15, some curbs eased

Didi rules out her govt's link to vaccine racket, kingpin

RAJIB CHOWDHURI  
KOLKATA, JUNE 28

Extending the Covid-19 lockdown till July 15 with an ease of curbs in West Bengal, chief minister Mamata Banerjee broke her silence on the fake vaccine scam on Monday and ruled out her government's link to the racket and it's kingpin, Debanjan Deb, in the wake of his viral photos with several Trinamul Congress leaders, including two state Cabinet ministers.

On the fresh relaxations, the West Bengal chief minister informed that the movement of public transport including intra-state (inter-district) government and private buses, inland waterways transport, trams, local taxis, cabs



and auto-rickshaws will be allowed with passengers not more than 50 per cent of seating capacity at a time.

Shops, bazars, haats selling vegetables, groceries, milk among other items can open from 6 am instead of 7 am till 12 pm while retail outlets in shopping complexes and restaurants and bars will remain open between 11 am and 8 pm, Ms Banerjee said. In addition, gyms can be run from 6-10 am and 4-8 pm with the salons and parlours in between 11 am and 8 pm.

In a veiled reference to the BJP, the TMC supremo blamed a "political

party of not following the restrictions and crowding places" for their activities. She warned that her government would initiate actions against it under the Disaster Management Act. She added that no decision was taken on July 21, the signature of the Martyrs' Day rally of her party.

Asked about the fake vaccine racket, Ms Banerjee who is also the state health minister said, "There is need to give publicity to the cheats who had so much audacity to forge everything. The government had no role in it. It was not involved. But I do not consider the culprit either as a human being or inhuman even. Such people are more dangerous than terrorists."

## BSP pulls out of UP district panchayat chiefs' elections

**Lucknow, June 28:** BSP president Mayawati on Monday said her party will not contest the zila panchayat chairpersons' elections so that it can focus on next year's Assembly polls, drawing accusations from the Congress that she is pulling out to help the ruling BJP.

She said people wanted the BSP to form the government next year — and it will go to the polls with the slogan that UP must be saved. Instead of con-

testing the zila parishad chairmen's elections, the party has decided to channelise its efforts on strengthening the organisation and expanding its base, Ms Mayawati told reporters.

At the same time, she said her party would have fought the zila chairpersons' elections if they were being held in a fair manner.

Polling for the district panchayat chiefs in UP will take place on July 3. About 3,000 recently

elected district panchayat members across UP will vote for these posts.

Ms Mayawati's decision prompted a sharp response from the Uttar Pradesh Congress.

"The statement by Mayawati that her party will not contest the zila panchayat chairmen's polls makes it clear that whenever she has to help the BJP, she pulls back from contesting the polls," UP Congress spokesman Ashok Singh tweeted in Hindi. —PTI

## Maha ready to vaccinate 15L daily: Uddhav

BHAGWAN PARAB  
MUMBAI, JUNE 28

The Maharashtra government is ready to vaccinate 15 lakh people per day against Covid-19, chief minister Uddhav Thackeray said on Monday.

A total of 3,11,59,607 people have been vaccinated so far against Covid-19 in Maharashtra. On June 26, the state set a new record by vaccinating more than 7 lakh people in a day.

Mr Thackeray virtually inaugurated a jumbo Covid Care Centre (CCC) in suburban Malad in Mumbai. Speaking on the occasion, he appealed people to be more careful in light of the anticipated third wave of the pandemic and the danger of the Delta Plus variant.

"The second wave of the pandemic is not ended yet. There is also a threat from the delta plus variant. Even though the daily number of Covid-19 cases is falling, people should continue to follow the Covid appropriate behaviour. We are ready to vaccinate 15 lakh people per day," he said.

Maharashtra on Sunday reported 6,727 fresh Covid cases and 101 deaths.

## Govt extends tenure of A-G Venugopal by another year

PARMOD KUMAR  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 28

The Centre on Monday extended by another year the term of attorney-general K. K. Venugopal



who will turn 90 on September 6. He will continue to serve as the attorney-general till June 30, 2022.

Being the oldest serving attorney-general of India, Mr Venugopal was appointed as A-G by the Modi government on July 1, 2017 for a three-year term.

On the expiry of his initial term last year Mr Venugopal was given one year extension which ends on Tuesday (June 30). In view of the fresh extension, he will continue to serve as the attorney-general for another year.

Mr Venugopal was appointed as the attorney-general after his predecessor, senior lawyer Mukul Rohatgi, had resigned as the attorney-general citing personal reasons.

Mr Venugopal has been a practicing lawyer for nearly six decades. He was additional solicitor-general once in late Prime Minister Morarji Desai's government.

He enrolled at the Bar in January 1954 in the then Mysore high court and thereafter in the Madras high court. He was designated as senior lawyer by the Supreme Court in 1972.

## Land transfer laws may be key issue in U'khand polls

Restricting transfer to non-Uttarakhandis gaining momentum

YOJNA GUSAI  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 28

**THE HASHTAG** #Uttarakhand Maange\_bhu\_Kanoon (in Hindi) has been trending on Twitter for the past few days while Uttarakhandis, living outside the state and also the country, have been feverishly re-tweeting and reacting on other the social media, rendering support to the demand

**THE TWO** main political parties in the state — the BJP and Congress — have been treading cautiously on this issue since the state was formed and successive governments, including the current ruling party BJP, cite the impact such a law will have on tourism, investment and revenue

parties in the state — the BJP and Congress — have been treading cautiously on this issue since the state was formed and successive governments, including the current ruling party BJP, cite the impact such a law will have on tourism, investment and revenue. Only Uttarakhand Kranti Dal, a regional outfit, has been consistent with this poll promise but has never been electorally strong.

It's not just the social media, which is being used to create awareness, even discussions in villages and towns, with the inclusion of prominent people and senior citizens of the state in this campaign, are being held to raise a collective voice for inclusion of this demand in the manifestos of political parties. Some prominent names of the state like Padma Bhushan awardee Anil Prakash Joshi and Padma Shri

awardee Yashodhar Mathpaland have supported the demand. "Mountains after mountains have been sold in the name of investment but has Uttarakhand or the locals really benefitted. Has migration from the state stopped because of these investments? How will Uttarakhand survive, if its ecology and culture is not saved," said Alok Nautiyal from Rudrapur, who is using his social media handles for the campaign. His views were echoed by Prakash Bahuguna from Bageshwar, Rekha Devshali, who goes by the name 'pahadi-naari' and the Twitter handle "Yuva Uttarakhand", who are actively engaged in the campaign.

"Land laws were one of the main demands during the movement but it remains unfulfilled," said Dev Singh Rawat, one of the participants of the Uttarakhand movement.



**Can Fin Homes Ltd.**  
Above Rewari Co-operative Bank Near Hanuman Mandir  
Sohna Road, Dharuhera- 123106 PH: 01274-242381 M.: 7625079165  
email: dharuhera@canfinhomes.com CIN: L85110KA1987PLC008699

# CAN FIN HOMES LTD.

## POSSESSION NOTICE

(for immovable property)  
[Rule 8(1)]

The undersigned being the Authorised Officer of Can Fin Homes Ltd. under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002 and in exercise of the powers under the said Act and Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, issued a demand notice on the below mentioned dates calling upon the following borrower(s)/co-borrowers/guarantors to repay the amount mentioned in the notice with further interest at contractual rates till date of realization within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The borrowers having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below, against each borrower, in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 on dates mentioned hereinafter.

S. No.	Name of borrowers and guarantors	Description of the property	Date of Demand Notice	Date of Possession	Amount Outstanding
1.	Mr. Vivek Kumar S/O Late Mr. Ramesh Chandra & Mrs. Bindya Yadav W/o Mr. Vivek Kumar and Guarantors Mr. Anand Kumar S/O Mr. Ram Sewak & Mr. Abhishek Barmwal S/o Mr. Sunil Kumar Barmwal	Flat No. M-1018, 10th Floor, Block - M5, Ashiana Angan, Alwar Bypass Road, Bhiwadi, Dist : Alwar (Rajasthan) 301019 measuring 1200 Sqft.	06.04.2021	24.06.2021	Rs. 38,43,702.00
2.	Mr. Rajesh S/O Mr. Paleram & Mrs. Sarita W/o Mr. Rajesh and Guarantors Mr. Vikas S/O Mr. Mahender Singh	Plot No. 153, Gali No 4, Behind Shiv Mandir, Krishna Colony, Gurugram. Plot measuring 28 Sq Yds and construction thereon, Bounded By: North: Road, South: Other Property, East: Plot No 154, West: Gali/Plot No 152	06.04.2021	24.06.2021	Rs. 14,34,016.00
3.	Mrs. Sunita W/O Mr. Mukesh & Mr. Mukesh S/o Mr. Ram Singh and Guarantors Mr. Gordan S/O Mr. Hamarayan	Flat No. E-398, Golden Heights, Village : Khajuri, Tehsil- Dharuhera Dist : Rewari (Haryana), Measuring 1128 Sqft, Bounded By: North: Flat No E 397, South: Flat No. E-403, East: Open Land, West: Road	06.04.2021	24.06.2021	Rs. 11,87,537.00

The borrower's attention is invited to provisions of sub-section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets. The borrowers in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of CFHL for the amount mentioned against each property along with further interest thereon till the date of realisation.

Date: 28.06.2021  
Place: Dharuhera

Sd/-  
Authorised Officer  
Can Fin Homes Ltd.

EXTENSION OF PERIODICITY OF SPECIAL TRAINS		
This is notified for the information of rail passengers that Railways have decided to extend the periodicity of the run of following Special Trains as under:-		
Train No. & Train Name	Frequency	Extended Up to
09601 Udaipur City - New Jalpaiguri Special Express	Saturday	03.07.2021 to 25.09.2021
09602 New Jalpaiguri - Udaipur City Special Express	Monday	05.07.2021 to 27.09.2021
04854 Jodhpur Jn - Varanasi Jn. Special Express	Monday, Thursday, Saturday	01.07.2021 to 30.09.2021
04853 Varanasi Jn. - Jodhpur Jn. Special Express	Monday, Wednesday, Saturday	30.06.2021 to 29.09.2021
04864 Jodhpur Jn - Varanasi Jn. Special Express	Tuesday, Friday, Sunday	29.06.2021 to 28.09.2021
04863 Varanasi Jn. - Jodhpur Jn. Special Express	Tuesday, Friday, Sunday	29.06.2021 to 01.10.2021
04866 Jodhpur Jn - Varanasi Jn. Special Express	Wednesday	30.06.2021 to 29.09.2021
04865 Varanasi Jn. - Jodhpur Jn. Special Express	Thursday	01.07.2021 to 30.09.2021
09717 Jaipur Jn. - Daulatpur Chowk Special Express	Tuesday, Friday, Sunday	29.06.2021 to 28.09.2021
09718 Daulatpur Chowk - Jaipur Jn. Special Express	Wednesday, Saturday, Monday	30.06.2021 to 29.09.2021
02458 Bikaner Jn. - Delhi Sarai Rohilla Special Express		
02457 Delhi Sarai Rohilla - Bikaner Jn. Special Express	Daily	30.06.2021 to 30.09.2021
04712 Sri Ganga Nagar - Haridwar Jn. Special Express	Daily	30.06.2021 to 30.09.2021
04711 Haridwar Jn. - Sri Ganga Nagar Special Express		
04731 Delhi Jn. - Bhatinda Jn. Special Express		
04732 Bhatinda Jn. - Delhi Jn. Special Express	Daily	30.06.2021 to 30.09.2021
02471 Sri Ganga Nagar - Delhi Jn. Spl. Exp.	Daily	30.06.2021 to 30.09.2021
02472 Delhi Jn. - Sri Ganga Nagar Special Express		
04888 Barmer - Rishikesh Special Express	Daily	30.06.2021 to 30.09.2021
04887 Rishikesh - Barmer Special Express	Daily	01.07.2021 to 01.10.2021
09611 Ajmer Jn. - Amritsar Jn. Special Express	Thursday, Saturday	01.07.2021 to 30.09.2021
09612 Amritsar Jn. - Ajmer Jn. Special Express	Tuesday, Thursday	
09613 Ajmer Jn. - Amritsar Jn. Special Express	Monday, Wednesday	30.06.2021 to 29.09.2021
09614 Amritsar Jn. - Ajmer Jn. Special Express	Friday, Sunday	02.07.2021 to 01.10.2021
08103 Tatanagar - Amritsar Jn. Special Express	Monday, Wednesday	30.06.2021 to 28.07.2021
08104 Amritsar Jn. - Tatanagar Special Express	Wednesday, Friday	02.07.2021 to 30.07.2021
02585 Santragachi Jn. - Anand Vihar (T) Spl. Express	Monday	05.07.2021 to 26.07.2021
02586 Anand Vihar (T) - Santragachi Jn. Spl. Express	Tuesday	06.07.2021 to 27.07.2021
02579 Anand Vihar (T) - Hatia Special Express	Sunday, Wednesday, Friday	30.06.2021 to 30.07.2021
02580 Hatia - Anand Vihar (T) Special Express	Monday, Thursday, Saturday	01.07.2021 to 31.07.2021
02583 Anand Vihar (T) - Hatia Special Express	Monday, Tuesday, Thursday	01.07.2021 to 29.07.2021
02584 Hatia - Anand Vihar (T) Special Express	Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday	02.07.2021 to 30.07.2021
For any kind of information such as detailed Time-Table and stations enroute etc., passengers are requested to contact RailMadad Helpline No. 139 or visit Indian Railways website https://enquiry.indianrail.gov.in or NTES App.		
All norms of the State and Central Government regarding COVID-19 including Social distancing, sanitization etc., may be following in the trains and at the Railway stations. All other precautions associated with COVID-19 should also be ensured.		
RailMadad Helpline No. 139		NORTHERN RAILWAY
Visit RailMadad website: www.railmadad.indianrailways.gov.in Download RailMadad App		Your Convenience - Our Concern Visit us at : www.nr.indianrailways.gov.in Please join us on
"SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE"		



SHORT TAKES

10 dead, 2 hurt as van falls into gorge

**Shimla:** Ten people died and two others were injured as a vehicle fell into a deep gorge in Himachal Pradesh's Sirmour district on Monday, an official said. A pick-up van carrying members of a marriage party fell into the gorge near Pashog in Shillai sub-division, Shillai sub-divisional magistrate Suresh Singha said. The spot is located on the border of Paonta Sahib and Shillai sub-divisions. The Shillai SDM told PTI from the spot that nine persons died on the spot while one injured died on his way to Paonta Sahib hospital. A total of 12 persons were in the vehicle, he added. The Paonta Sahib SDM Vivek Mahajan said he was passing through the area when he came to know about the accident after seeing ambulances. At this, he reached the Paonta Sahib hospital for ensuring better treatment of the injured and called senior doctors to the hospital for that. One of the two injured, referred to Paonta Sahib hospital, however, succumbed to his injuries on his way. — PTI

L-G offers prayers at Amarnath shrine

**Srinagar:** Jammu and Kashmir lieutenant-governor Manoj Sinha on Monday flew in lower Kashmir Himalayan to pay obeisance at the 13,000 feet (3882 m) high Amarnath cave-shrine. He said that he performed puja at the revered place of Hindu worship to “invoke divine blessings of Lord Shiva towards ensuring good health and happiness in everyone’s life.” He said he prayed to Shiva also to “bless us with strength to overcome the ongoing health crisis” in the country. Last week, Mr Sinha announced the cancellation of the Amarnath yatra for the second year in a row amid pandemic. Justifying the decision, he said that though the pilgrimage testifies to the tradition of the wonderful cultural syncretism of J&K, the yatra had to be cancelled considering the ongoing pandemic.

C’garh forest items on e-com portals

**Raipur:** The Bhopesh Baghel government’s move to market forest produce of Chhattisgarh after their value addition by the local women self-help groups, globally, through the e-commerce company has proved to be a hit with the orders placed with the firm by the customers outstripping the supply within a few hours. The e-commerce platform Amazon with which the Chhattisgarh state minor forest produce association has tied up for marketing 23 forest produce under the brand name “Chhattisgarh Herbals” has put out “currently unavailable board”, indicating that it has run out of stock within a few hours of the launch of the sale of the produce online on Monday.

2 more drones spotted in J&K

■ **Continued from Page 1** “Immediately after the drone activities were noticed, a high alert was sounded and Quick Reaction Teams engaged them (drones), following which both flew away.” He added: “As a result of the alertness and proactive approach of our jawans, a major threat was thwarted in the area. The security forces are on high alert and the search operation is in progress.” Army sources said its men fired 20-25 rounds at the drones before these “flew back under the cover of darkness”. The drones were suspected to be flying at a height of 1.2 km and were possibly powered by long range batteries. The sources added the security grid was on its toes as 14 drone stories had reportedly been launched from across the Line of Control and the international border with Pakistan lately. The areas where such activity was seen

Militants kill Kashmir SPO, wife

■ **Continued from Page 1** sources said. As the condition of the SPO’s daughter deteriorated, she was brought to Srinagar’s Sher-i-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences for specialised treatment, but she too died around 4 am on Monday, the hospital said.

Alleged forced conversions rock J&K

*Sikh leaders say silence of political and religious leaders hurting; slam police for ‘aiding accused’*

YUSUF JAMEEL  
SRINAGAR, JUNE 28

The J&K police has stepped up investigations into alleged manoeuvring in a recent case of an interfaith marriage which has caused considerable suspicion and mistrust between the majority Muslim and minority Sikh communities of the Valley. An 18-year-old Sikh girl from Srinagar’s Chhatti Patshahi, who, the community leaders suspect, was forcibly converted to Islam and then married to a Muslim man almost thrice of her age has been restored to her parents. But the Sikh leaders are wary of the police’s role in this case and a similar interfaith marriage reported earlier from the city’s Mehjoor Nagar. They are unhappy also at the

silence being maintained by Kashmir’s Muslim leadership and the civil society vis-à-vis such happenings. Official sources said that lieutenant-governor Manoj Sinha has asked senior police officers to hold a fast investigation into the incidents. The police officers — inspector-general of police Vijay Kumar and SSP Srinagar Sandeep Chaudhary — were present at a meeting a joint delegation of Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee (DSGMC) and members of several Sikh Gurdwara Management Committees of Kashmir had had with Sinha at Raj Bhavan here on Sunday to raise the issue. The delegation led by DSGMC president S. Manjinder Singh Sirsa. While the Sikh community leaders allege that these

■ **AN 18-YEAR-OLD** Sikh girl from Srinagar’s Chhatti Patshahi, Rainawari area, who, the community leaders suspect, was forcibly converted to Islam and then married to a Muslim man, has been restored to her parents

women were converted to Islam and married to Muslim men in a “suspicious manner”, some couples and their families have publicly claimed that these interfaith marriages were solemnised at the own sweet will of these Sikh women. The Sikh leaders said that in the latest incident the police made the parents of the girl sit at the outer gate of a court here while the judge was hearing the case. “Not only that, the police made the

parents of the girl married to a 50-year-old man who has already been through two divorces to sign some papers which caused suspicion not only in the couple but the entire community,” said a Sikh leader. Soon many Sikhs sat in dharna outside Srinagar’s district court complex at Moominabad, Batamalloo. He said that earlier hours before the Sikh girl from Mehjoor Nagar who also had married a Muslim youth was called to a women’s police station here to record her statement, two policewomen belonging to the Sikh community were sent home by their seniors, making the whole investigation process doubtful. “What has also hurt the Sikh community is the silence being maintained by Muslim political and

religious leaders on such dubious interfaith marriages and conversions. I have spoken to several Muslim leaders including Mirwaiz Umar Farooq over the past few days, requesting them to come forward and, at least, voice their concern on such happenings as these are only causing mistrust between the two communities,” said Jagmohan Singh Raina, chairman All-Parties Sikh Coordination Committee. Former chief minister Omar Abdullah tweeted, “Any move to drive a wedge between Sikhs & Muslims in Kashmir will cause irreparable harm to J&K. The two communities have supported each other through thick & thin, having withstood countless attempts to damage age-old relationships.”

Top commader of Lashkar arrested in J&K

Age CORRESPONDENT  
SRINAGAR, June 28

Two officers and a jawan of CRPF have been injured in a fierce gunfight with militants, raging in Malhoora area on the peripheries of J&K’s summer capital Srinagar since Monday afternoon. An earlier report had said that a suspected Lashkar-e-Tayyaba (LeT) cadre was killed in the clash but the officials did not confirm it. Earlier during the day on Monday, the J&K police had arrested what it claimed is a top commander of the LeT from a car after it was stopped at a makeshift checkpoint laid by it at Parimpora neighbourhood. It is believed that the LeT commander Nadeem Abrar, who the police said has been involved in several militancy related incidents, identified the place where the militants’ group currently engaged in the gunfight with the security forces was hiding.

Sign language expert of WCD ministry among held UP ATS arrests 3 more for role in ‘illegal conversions’

**Lucknow, June 28:** A sign language expert working in the Union ministry of child and family welfare was among the three more people arrested by the UP ATS on Monday for their alleged complicity in a religious conversion racket. Additional director-general (law and order) Prashant Kumar identified the arrested expert for the deaf-mute sign language as Maharashtra native Irfan Khwaja Khan. ADG Kumar identified the two other arrested accused as Haryana native Munnu Yadav alias Abdul Mannan, a convert, and Delhi resident Rahul Bhola, himself a deaf-mute man, helping Irfan in identifying gullible students for the illegal conversion. Mr Kumar said that Irfan, who works in the Ministry of Child Welfare, has good contacts among deaf people. With his expertise in sign language, he has been seeking to wean

their targets to Islam by poisoning their minds against other religions, including their own. The three new arrests followed the June 20 apprehension of New Delhi’s Jamia Nagar residents Mufti Qazi Jahangir Alam Qasmi and Mohammad Umar Gautam, who ran Islamic Dawah Centre, an outfit working on the ISI funding for conversion of deaf-mute students to Islam. The anti-terrorist squad of the UP police which made the arrests has busted the illegal conversion racket and investigation it further, prompting the Enforcement Directorate to initiate a probe into the racket involving foreign funding and money laundering. The two arrested from Jamia Nagar in New Delhi on June 20 were booked under various Sections of the UP Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Act, 2020 and IPC, Kumar

told reporters on Monday. During their interrogation, names of three more people came to the fore as involved in the illegal conversion racket and they were arrested on Monday, he added. The ATS also seized various incriminating material, including laptops, cheque books, mobile phones, ATM cards and other documents from the trio, the ADG added. Elaborating upon Irfan’s role in conversion racket, ADG Kumar said he would allure gullible students to join Islam and put them in touch with Jahangir Alam and Umar Gautam of the Islamic Dawah Centre which would issue them conversion certificates. Irfan had converted Munnu Yadav and Aditya Gupta to Islam using the same ploy, the ADG said. He said ATS is also ascertaining the exact number and details of UP natives who were persuaded by them to embrace Islam. — PTI

Indian firm develops drone defence dome

RAJIB CHOWDHURI  
KOLKATA, JUNE 28

At a time when J&K is facing drone attacks across the Line of Control, A Hyderabad-based firm has claimed to have designed and developed the country’s first indigenous unified, distributed and wide-area autonomous drone defence dome called Indrajaa. Indrajaa is capable of protecting a large area of 1000-2000 sq km per system against threats such as unmanned aerial vehicles, incoming weapons,

loitering munitions and low-radar cross section targets autonomously, the company said on Monday. Grene Robotics, which entered a partnership with defence PSU Bharat Electronics Limited in February this year to jointly develop first-of-its-kind autonomous air defence technology, said, “A u t o n o m o u s Defence/Weapon Systems is the 3rd revolution of the warfare and Indrajaa’s design principles are based on delivering such autonomy to the Defence Forces leveraging a combi-

nation of 9-10 modern technologies powered by artificial intelligence, cybersecurity and robotics that is capable of identifying, assessing, deciding, acting and evolving autonomously in real-time. Whether the threat is single or multiple or a combination of UAVs, Low-RCS, Loitering munitions and such, Indrajaa is capable of countering all such threats.” “I urge the defence leadership to take an integrated and comprehensive approach against all the UAVs, loiter ammunition

swarm drones and low RCS threats with indigenously developed autonomous defence systems. Conventional defences will be overwhelmed in a swarm attack scenario and an AI Enabled Autonomous Dome with its own ecosystem of sensors and processing is the way forward. The process of establishing a fully functional system is an evolutionary process and needs technology vision and user involvement,” Grene Robotics CEO (defence) Wing Commander M.V.N. Sai (Retd) said.

Gov is corrupt, says Didi

■ **Continued from Page 1** later. It is yet to bear any outcome.” However, Mr Dhankhar said on Monday evening at Raj Bhavan: “In her press conference, the CM made some allegations of a very severe nature in the public domain. These are most unfortunate. I never expected a leader of her stature and standing to create a sensation and engage in misinformation and misrepresentation.” He elaborated: “The entire world knows no one has been convicted in the hawala case. Your governor has not been chargesheeted. There is no such document. This is far from the facts. This is a plain and simple untruth. This is misinformation. I did not expect this from a seasoned politician. I have not taken any stay from the

court in the case because there was none.” The governor added that the CM attacked him minutes after talking to him over the phone. Mr Dhankhar said he conveyed his disagreement in a letter to the state government about some parts of his draft speech for the Assembly Budget Session on July 2. But Ms Banerjee called and told him that the draft was already approved by her Cabinet. The TMC chief’s high voltage charges came hours after Mr Dhankhar declared that he would order a high-level probe by the CAG into what he called misappropriation of “crores of money” by the Gorkhaland Territorial Administration (GTA), which is the government supervisory authority of Darjeeling.

Sidhu called to Delhi

■ **Continued from Page 1** a sitting CM of the party will only harm the interests of the Congress. Sources say the Congress high command wants to end the Punjab crisis as soon as possible. As the elections are near, the party should be seen as united instead of fighting each other. The

HC stays Char Dham yatra

■ **Continued from Page 1** “India has achieved another milestone in Covid-19 vaccination and has overtaken the USA in total number of Covid vaccine doses administered so far. The USA started vaccinating against Covid from December 14, 2020, whereas the drive was launched in India on 16th Jan 2021. Under the new policy of Covid vaccination, the Union government is procuring and supplying (free of cost) 75 per cent of the vaccines being produced by the vaccine manufacturers in the country to states and UTs.”

Govt gives ₹6.29Lcr stimulus

■ **Continued from Page 1** Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) has been announced. This is in addition to the ₹3 lakh crore announced under the scheme last year. “The new credit guarantee scheme will give loans to small borrowers through Micro Finance Institutions (MFIs) where the maximum loan to individuals will be ₹1.25 lakh at an interest rate below 2%, as prescribed by the RBI. Our focus will be new loans, stressed borrowers except NPAs to be covered and the loan duration of 3 years under the scheme,” she said.

After flak, Twitter drops wrong India map from its Web

**New Delhi, June 28:** After drawing flak over displaying a distorted map of India that showed Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh as separate country, Twitter has now removed the wrong map.



The glaring distortion, which appeared on the career section of Twitter website under the header “Tweep Life”, had triggered a heavy backlash from netizens on Monday as they demanded strict action against the microblogging platform that has flouted various rules on multiple occasions in the past. #TwitterBan was trending on Twitter with almost 17,000 tweets.

This is not the first time that Twitter has misrepresented India’s map. Earlier, it had shown Leh as part of China. The global map, which grossly misrepresented India’s boundaries, was removed on late Monday evening by Twitter following social media outrage.

Sources said the government is seriously looking into the matter. In this case, since the wrong depiction is on Twitter’s website, the case is not that of an ‘intermediary’ but of a publisher which is responsible for content. When something is clearly wrong it has to be tackled, or consequential action will follow, they said. Twitter — which has an estimated 1.75 crore users in India — has remained mum on the entire episode. Emails sent to the company did not elicit any response. The US digital giant has been at loggerheads with the Indian government

over the new social media rules. The government has confronted Twitter over deliberate defiance and failure to comply with the country’s new IT rules, despite repeated reminders. Notably, the microblogging platform has lost its legal shield as an intermediary in India, becoming liable for users posting any unlawful content. In October last year, Twitter came under heavy criticism and faced backlash after its geotagging feature displayed ‘Jammu & Kashmir, People’s Republic of China’ in a live broadcast from Leh’s Hall of Fame, a war memorial for fallen soldiers in the Union Territory of Ladakh. India had issued a stern warning to Twitter that time, making it clear that any disrespect of the country’s sovereignty and integrity is totally unacceptable. In November, Twitter again showed Leh as part of Jammu and Kashmir instead of the Union Territory of Ladakh, following which the Centre issued a notice to the US-based company for disrespecting the territorial integrity of India by showing an incorrect map. Twitter’s apparent heavyhandedness has come under government scrutiny, given that the platform has not complied with the new IT rules. — PTI

India successfully test-fires N-missile

AKSHAYA KUMAR  
SAHOO  
BHUBANESWAR, JUNE 28

India on Monday successfully test-fired new generation nuclear-capable Agni Prime, an advanced version of Agni-1 missile off the Odisha coast. The surface-to-surface short-range ballistic missile was fired at 10.55 am from the Abdul Kalam Island in Bhadrak district. Various telemetry and radar stations positioned along the eastern coast tracked and monitored the missile, DRDO official sources said. The nuclear-capable missile has been designed and developed by the DRDO. With a range of 1,000 km to 2,000 km, Agni-Prime can carry a payload of

1000 kg. The missile is lighter and much sleeker than Agni-1. Agni 1, 2, 3 and Prithvi are already in the arsenal of armed forces. All these missiles which have a strike range of over 3,000 km have given India an effective deterrence capability. On September 30, 2020, India had successfully test-fired an extended version of the surface-to-surface supersonic cruise missile BrahMos. The missile was tested from Chandipur integrated test range in Odisha’s Balasore district. BrahMos is capable of hitting targets at more than 400-km range. The source said that the airframe and booster of the missile have been developed indigenously.



THE ASIAN AGE

29 JUNE 2021

Jammu drone attacks carry ominous signals

Did India see its first terrorist attack through the use of drones, in the early hours last Sunday, when the technical area of Jammu airport — namely the Air Force Station — saw two explosions go off? The picture is not clear yet. Fortunately, the explosions caused only very minor damage. Fighter planes were parked at a different location, but even Indian Air Force helicopters, in hangars nearby, not were affected. This is a matter of relief.

Had a helicopter been damaged, the consequences by now are likely to have been kinetic, sparking anxieties and fears of a wider military conflagration. It is to be borne in mind that the Air Force Station is barely 14 kilometres from the India-Pakistan border. However, the presumption of drones cannot be ruled out and will remain the working hypothesis until the investigators have had time to examine the episode from every possible angle and rule out the possibility. At any rate, the presumed dropping of two improvised explosive devices from “an aerial platform” does raise the spectre of drones coming into play in the India-Pakistan dynamics even if investigations eventually discount the possibility that drones were indeed used in the Jammu explosions.

Had a helicopter been damaged, the consequences by now are likely to have been kinetic, sparking anxieties and fears of a wider military conflagration.

der using drones. From the Afghan theatre, the Americans were sending out military drones into the tribal areas of Pakistan to target fighters of extremist factions.

Drones from Pakistan are known to have airdropped cargos of arms and ammunition for use by terrorists inside J&K as well as in Punjab. But the Jammu incident suggests that the authors of the airdropping of explosives near high-value military targets are playing a game of brinkmanship, if they have the sanction of a government. In case the unloading of explosives from the air was done by terrorist elements, then the exercise puts at risk the tenuous calm that obtains in J&K. In that event the political processes under consideration in the Union Territory can potentially be derailed as the security grid is intensified manifold by the government and overt oppression of the populace once again becomes the norm. In that case, the military-to-military agreement of February 25 between the defence establishments of India and Pakistan, which had led to the sincere observance of ceasefire, is likely to come under serious strain.

The June 27 airdropping of explosive devices in Jammu could conceivably be a trial run, with better targeted attempts to follow. At any rate, India would do well to refine its tactics in neutralizing this new technique being used by terrorists or an unfriendly power. When attack drones come into play, putting more troops on the ground and the use of anti-aircraft guns are not the answer. The electromagnetic spectrum warriors will need to step up to neutralise the GPS fittings on the hostile drones. A new dimension in counter-terrorism measures, even warfare, is at hand.

Who spied on UK minister?

UK health secretary, Matt Hancock, had to go. Political authority needs legitimacy and his actions in an extramarital affair in which he was seen hugging an aide in his office were the very epitome of flagrant disregard of normal rules of morality as well as poor timing. In a democracy that prides itself on very old foundations even within a ceremonial monarchy, there can't be one rule for the suffering public and another for privileged rulers.

The real issue is who ordered the placing of spy cameras inside Whitehall, the seat of UK government. Was the camera, placed there by spy agencies like MI 5 or MI 6 without the authority of the bosses?

seat of UK government. Was the camera, which was hidden inside a smoke detector, placed there by spy agencies like MI 5 or MI 6 without the authority of the bosses? That brings us back to whether these spy games are being played without the knowledge of the leaders of a democratically elected government.

The thought that Big Brother may be watching everyone all the time, especially in CCTV camera-obsessed Britain which has one of the world's highest density in cameras placed in public places, gains greater currency in the light of l'affaire Hancock involving aide Gina Goldangelo. It is strange that UK authorities are probing how the footage from the CCTV device was leaked to The Sun rather than how a minister's office came to be spied upon like this. The acceptance at this level that secret taping is going on appears ludicrous and it is by no means restricted to the UK.

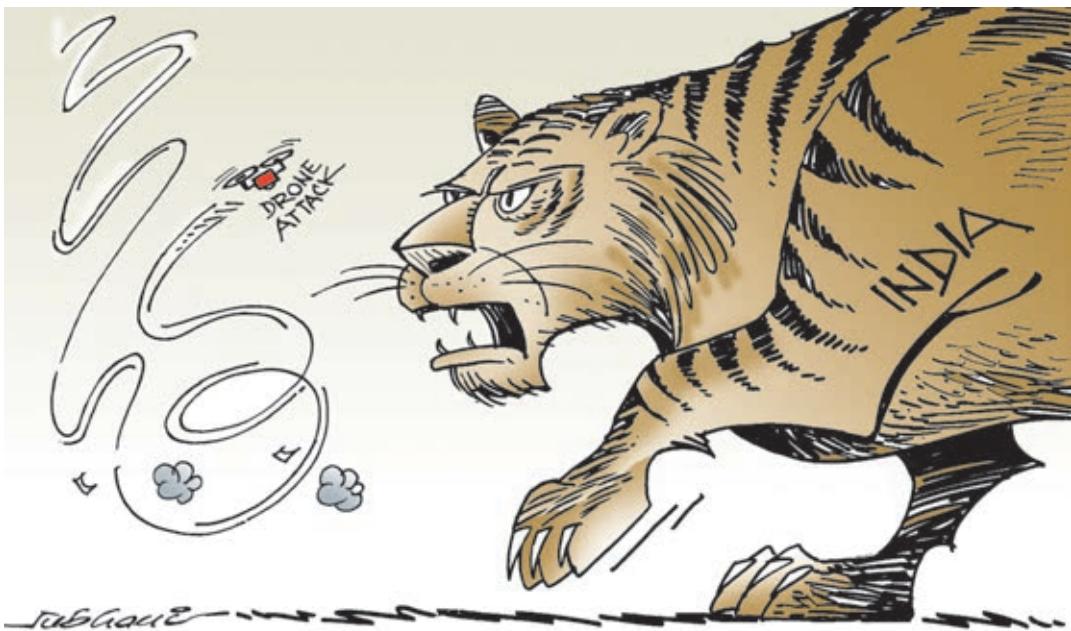
THE ASIAN AGE

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Subhani



After J&K olive branch, will Pak ties normalise?

K.C. Singh

Prime Minister Narendra Modi reaffirmed the absence of “dil ki doori” between his government and 14 Kashmiri mainstream leaders at his first meeting with them after August 2019, when his government had revoked Jammu and Kashmir's special status under Article 370 and downgraded and divided the state into two Union territories. Questions naturally arise about what lies behind this softening of the Modi government's approach, far removed from the demonising of traditional political parties over the past two years.

While the foreign policy of any democracy gets impacted by its domestic politics, it is more so with this Indian government. After Mr Modi's convincing re-election in 2019, the government decided to pursue its core agenda with vigour. The Jammu and Kashmir decision was taken in August 2019, followed in December by the Citizenship Amendment Act's passage, creating discriminatory, religion-based and nation-specific exceptions for refugees to gain Indian citizenship. In February 2020, US President Donald Trump visited India on a highly calibrated visit to massage his ego. To avoid appearing partisan, such visits are not usually scheduled when the incumbent faces re-election in nine months. Prime Minister Modi had in the preceding years personally cultivated relations with the rulers of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, besides of course the United States.

Thus, when implementing its majoritarian BJP agenda domestically, the government calculated that Pakistan's protests over J&K's rejig could be contained without too much diplomatic damage. Similarly, the friendly government of Bangladesh could be appeased to ensure that it ignored

the rhetoric of senior BJP leaders dubbing illegal immigrants as “pests”. The US under President Trump was also expected to downplay the issue, as he demonstrated by ignoring the communal incidents in New Delhi on the last day of his visit in February 2020.

However, the US as well as its Gulf allies Saudi Arabia and UAE had been closely watching developments in South Asia. The escalation of tensions after the Pulwama terror attack and India's airstrike on Balakot in Pakistan, followed by Pakistan's retaliatory strike and dogfight resulting in the capture of an IAF pilot, saw the behind-the-scenes role played by these three nations. The fact that the Indian pilot was handed back almost immediately, giving a filip to Mr Modi's popularity just two months before the Lok Sabha election, earned these three nations goodwill and possible leverage in India-Pakistan affairs. C-Voter polling data found that between January 1 and March 7 the net approval rating of the Modi government rose from 32 per cent to 62 per cent. While some of the bump came after the Budget, the real spike was after Balakot. The popularity of Rahul Gandhi fell from 23.3 per cent to 8.2 per cent, while that of Mr Modi rose from 32.4 per cent to 63.2 per cent.

However, the BJP's assessment about the international reaction to its domestic agenda getting easily manged came up against unforeseen factors. First, the outbreak of Covid-19, beginning soon after Mr Trump's India visit, distracted India and even affected India's image abroad after the poor handling of its second wave. Second, China protested strongly after the J&K changes, claiming that India could not alter the status quo unilaterally as China was a party to the dispute. Thus, India

should have been alert to Chinese mischief at the Line of Actual Control (LAC), especially as China had quickly managed to contain the epidemic. Instead of showing contrition for letting the virus escape and cause a global health and economic crisis, China chose to push its People's Liberation Army at multiple points in Eastern Ladakh up to its claim lines, upsetting the status quo. While it has agreed to a mutual withdrawal in the Pangong Tso and Kailash Hills sectors, its intrusions remain in Depsang Plains, Gogra and Hot Springs, etc.

The third unforeseen factor was the defeat of President Donald Trump in November 2020. After Joe Biden assumed the presidency, India realised that his Democratic Party's left wing had evangelistic interest in human rights and freedom of faith and expression. Ironically, two Indian-origin members of Congress, Pramila Jayapal and Ro Khanna, are among the strongest critics of the BJP majoritarian agenda, including its draconian Kashmir policy. President Biden too strongly advocated an alliance of democracies to counter the challenge from the strategic convergence of Russia and China. It was because of this that at the recent G-7 summit in Cornwall, four democracies were invited as “guests” — Australia, India, South Korea and South Africa.

Critics would say US foreign policy rests on pragmatic considerations, often ignoring its own advocated values of democracy and human rights. However, the times have changed, and Cold War arguments may now be inapplicable, particularly after Mr Trump's attempt at undermining US democracy itself. Moreover, China presents a different challenge from the one

The PM's session with the Kashmiri political leaders is a recognition that the government's Kashmir policy has yielded poor results at home and abroad.

the former Soviet Union held. It posits a hugely successful model resting on restricted political and personal freedoms in exchange for prosperity, material growth and economic security. To challenge its lure, liberal democracies are being compelled to argue the relevance of their own model. Thus, the US and other Western democracies cannot ignore the continued debasement of liberal democracy in Asia, and certainly in India as they look towards this country as a role model.

The PM's session with the Kashmiri political leaders is a recognition that the government's Kashmir policy has yielded poor results at home and abroad. The restoration of Article 370 seems unlikely as its revocation has been a core BJP demand and which has popular support. That leaves delimitation, elections and statehood. Views on their sequencing differ, but the road to statehood is clear. This clears the path for a calibrated resumption of normal relations with Pakistan. Pakistan's Prime Minister

Imran Khan in an interview has sought “civilised relations” with India. He also interestingly argues that even Pakistan doesn't want the Taliban to continue its onslaught in Afghanistan to depose the government as a civil war will only have more refugees streaming into an already economically challenged Pakistan. The national security advisers of India and Pakistan will both be at the coming Shanghai Cooperation Organisation meeting. Hopefully, the Indian government has realised that its Pakistan policy should be delinked from electoral considerations and strategically its Kashmir policy has only deepened Sino-Pakistan relations. If Pakistan too realises that terror is a dangerous instrument to wield against India as it begets global condemnation, besides singeing the user, the region might actually stand to gain.

The writer is a former secretary in the external affairs ministry. He tweets at @ambkcsingh.

LETTERS

PRICE OF PRIVILEGE

An integral part of our so-called VIP culture is stopping traffic on public thoroughfares for smooth passage of our “important people”. Security is the putative purpose, but it is also a privilege, even in a democracy. Who cares for a critical patient gasping for breath in an ambulance? That's just what happened when the President and his entourage blocked a road in Kanpur. A middle-aged woman suffering from Covid-related complications met an untimely end. Apologies from top cops and tweets from the President offer hardly any consolation.

Bhaskar Roy  
New Delhi

PANDORA'S BOX

THE ATTACK on the Indian Air Force base in Jammu has exposed the huge threat posed by armed drones. One wonders how the drones managed to fly into the IAF station, that is manned by observation posts, without being detected. The blasts in the technical area of the airbase took place within five minutes of each other and left two IAF personnel injured. The authorities have sounded a high alert across the state and security cover has been beefed up at airports and government installations. The drone attack is the first of its kind and poses a new challenge for the country. Have the developing events in Kashmir opened the Pandora's box again?

N.J. Ravi Chander  
Bengaluru

ORIGIN OF HUMANS

A SKULL discovered in northeast China has ended the scientists' search for the missing link in the journey of human evolution. It represents a newly discovered human species that they have named “Homo longi”, or the “Dragon Man”. The “Dragon Men” will now replace Neanderthals as our closest relatives. The Dragon Man was a hunter-gatherer, living entirely off the land. It had larger eye sockets than humans, thick brow ridges, a wider mouth and oversized teeth.

Chanchal Nandy  
Durgapur

Every Monday the best letter of the week wins ₹500. Email: asianage.letters@gmail.com.

Aakar Patel



As world keeps growing, India's sinking, going back to the past

Will four years ago, the Indian government would use the phrase “fastest growing economy”. Prime Minister Narendra Modi would repeat the phrase “one bright spot in the global economy” to describe the country, and used it last at 8 pm on Tuesday, November 8, 2016, when he gave us the demonetisation speech.

Since then, we have not heard much about the fastest growing bright spot. There is not much talk about the economy and has not been for the past four years. When it looked like India's economy had run into trouble, the boasting paused. Now that it is clear that India's economy has been ruined, we have stopped speaking about it entirely. Of course, just because the government does not speak about something does not mean that the problem does not exist. It does and we must try and understand what has happened to India.

According to the government data, our economic growth began braking sharply before January 2018. From here, for some reasons which we need

not speculate about today, we fell into a decline which we could not pull out of. For the four quarters of 2018 and for the next four quarters of 2019 and for the first quarter of 2020, we fell. This was before the Covid-19 pandemic and by the time the nationwide lockdown was announced, we had stopped growing completely.

The government did not tell us why our economy had imploded. The PM simply stopped speaking on the subject. On October 14, 2019, the Hindu published a piece written by Parakala Prabhakar, who is finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman's husband. Assessing the economy, he wrote: “There is anxiety all over about the economic slowdown in the country. While the government is still in denial mode, data flowing uninterruptedly into the public domain show that sector after sector is staring at a seriously challenging situation. Private consumption has contracted and is at an 18-quarter low of 3.1 per cent; rural consumption is in a deep southward dive and is double the rate of the urban slowdown; the credit offtake by micro and small

industries remains stagnant; net exports have shown little or no growth; GDP growth is at a six-year low with the first quarter of FY20 registering just five per cent; and unemployment is at a 45-year-high. The government, however, is yet to show any signs that it has come to grips with what ails the economy. Much less evidence is available to believe that it has a strategic vision to address the challenges.”

This was 20 months ago and before the pandemic, and before the recession of 2020 and before the second wave of Covid-19. I received a newsletter from a business daily this week which listed what the position was for the last financial year, which ended a few weeks ago in April. Consumer spending had contracted by nine per cent and investments contracted by more than 10 per cent. Manufacturing, services and construction lost value somewhere in the range of eight per cent. What happened in the last financial year was that we went back to the past. We slowed down, then we stopped growing and then we started going back. The rest of the world kept growing and left us behind.

The reason the average Indian is today poorer than the average Bangladeshi is to be found in the last 48 months. By April 2021, manufacturing, trade, transport and communications was down at the same level that it was in 2018. That is three years of growth lost. Construction has lost two years.

The output of core industries such as cement, refineries, steel is the same as it was in March 2017. That is four years India lost while the rest of the world produced more. The sales of passenger vehicles, including cars, have gone back to their 2016 levels. That's a loss of five years. This is not an anomaly. The auto sector has been hammered for many years now and it is clear that the middle class has stopped growing. Two-wheeler sales are today at the same point that they were 10 years ago. The sales of commercial vehicles, meaning the trucks that carry around goods, are today below where they were when Narendra Modi first became Prime Minister.

Is this some new data that I am referring to? No, this is publicly available and has been known to all who are part

of the sector. If some of us have not known that the situation is this grim, it is purely because it has not featured in a “Mann Ki Baat” yet.

If you don't acknowledge a problem, as Dr Manmohan Singh said about the economy in an interview last year, then you cannot begin to solve it. This is why we will not solve this problem. India's leader has too much pride to admit to us that he has failed us on the economy. His Cabinet of *chamchas* dare not say it either. His finance minister's husband must write an article in one of India's most reputable newspapers to bring to the notice of the world that we are sunk.

The impoverishing of Indians and the wrecking of our economy is happening at the same time when the concentration of our wealth is being skewed towards a few. The two richest men in Asia are not from China, whose economy is six times bigger than India's. They are two Gujarati men who represent the model of “growth” in India.

The writer is a columnist and a senior journalist



## SHORT TAKES

### 1 DEAD, 13 HURT IN TWO CHICAGO SHOOTINGS

**Chicago:** Two separate shootings left one person dead and at least 13 others injured on Sunday night in Chicago, police said.

A woman died, and four men and a teenager were wounded when an SUV drove by and shots were fired in the South Shore area just before 9 pm, news outlets reported. The group of six was standing outside when the gunfire erupted. The woman was shot six times and taken to a hospital where she was later pronounced dead, police said. The four men and a 15-year-old boy were taken to hospitals where their conditions were said to be stable.

About two hours later, a separate shooting in the Marquette Park area wounded eight people, Chicago fire officials said. A vehicle collision was also reported nearby in which two people were injured.

It was not immediately clear how the shooting and the crash may be related.

## UKRAINE, U.S. BEGIN BLACK SEA DRILLS

**Kiev:** Ukraine and the United States launched joint naval exercises in the Black Sea on Monday in a show of Western cooperation with Kiev as it faces off with Russia.

The drills come just days after the British navy's HMS Defender passed near Russian-annexed Crimea in the Black Sea, with Moscow saying it fired warning shots at the destroyer to ward it off.

The Sea Breeze drills — which have taken place 21 times since 1997 — will involve some 5,000 military personnel from more than 30 countries. The exercises will last two weeks and involve around 30 ships, including the missile destroyer USS Ross.

Ukrainian navy commander Oleksiy Neizhpapa said during an opening ceremony in Odessa that the exercises would send a “powerful message to maintain stability and peace in our region.” Russia said it fired warning shots last Wednesday at the HMS Defender after what it said was a violation of its territorial waters.

## U.S. NORTHWEST, CANADA RECORD HIGHEST TEMP.

**Ottawa:** Swathes of the United States and Canada endured record-setting heat on Sunday, forcing schools and Covid-19 testing centers to close and the postponement of an Olympic athletics qualifying event, with forecasters warning of worse to come.

The village of Lytton in British Columbia broke the record for Canada's all-time high, with a temperature of 46.6 degrees Celsius (116 Fahrenheit), said Environment Canada.

And in Eugene, Oregon, a temperature of 43.3 degrees Celsius (110 degrees Fahrenheit) forced organisers to postpone the final day of the US Olympic track and field trials, moving afternoon events to the evening.

On Sunday in Seattle, Washington state, the temperature hit 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit), a record that surprised residents not used to warmer climes.

## SWEDISH PM RESIGNS AFTER NO-TRUST VOTE

**Stockholm:** Sweden's Prime Minister Stefan Lofven resigned on Monday, one week after he lost a vote of no confidence, leaving it up to the speaker of parliament to begin the search for a replacement.

Lofven could have either called a snap election or resigned following the no-confidence vote last week.

He told a press conference that a snap election was “not what is best for Sweden”, pointing to the difficult situation the Covid-19 pandemic posed, coupled with the fact that the next general election — which would go ahead regardless — is a year away.

“With that starting point, I have requested the speaker to relieve me as prime minister,” Lofven said.

The Social Democrat leader — a master of consensus for some, a dull and visionless party man for others — had seven days after the confidence vote to contemplate his options and try and secure a parliamentary majority for a potential reforming of his government.

# Iraq slams air strikes by US

## Pro-Iran militias in Syria, Iraq hit; Pentagon terms attack as ‘retaliatory’

**Baghdad, June 28:** Iraq on Monday condemned overnight US air strikes against Iran-backed armed groups on the Syrian-Iraqi border that killed at least seven fighters and sparked calls for revenge from Iraqi armed factions.

The second such raid on pro-Iran targets since US President Joe Biden took office, described by the Pentagon as “retaliatory”, led to fears of a new escalation between Tehran and Washington and came despite faltering efforts to revive a key deal over Iran's nuclear programme.

Iraq's Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhemi condemned the attack as a “blatant and unacceptable violation of Iraqi sovereignty and Iraqi national security”.

“Iraq reiterates its refusal to be an arena for

settling scores,” Kadhemi added in a statement, urging all sides to avoid any further escalation.

The Hashed, an Iraqi paramilitary alliance that includes several Iranian proxies and has become the main power broker in Baghdad, said the strikes killed four of its fighters in the Qaim region, some 13 kilometres (eight miles) away from the border.

The fighters were stationed there to prevent jihadists from infiltrating Iraq, the group said in a statement, denying that they had taken part in any attacks against US interests or personnel.

“We reserve the legal right to respond to these attacks and hold the perpetrators accountable on Iraqi soil,” the Hashed said.

US defence spokesman John Kirby said in a statement that three military

● **THE SYRIAN Observatory for Human Rights, which relies on a network of sources inside Syria, said seven fighters had been killed in the strikes in the early hours of Monday morning local time.**

facilities used by Iran-backed militia had been hit overnight Sunday to Monday — two in Syria and one in Iraq.

Kirby said the targets had been used by “Iran-backed militias that are engaged in unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) attacks against US personnel and facilities in Iraq”.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, which relies on a network of sources inside Syria, said seven fighters had been killed in the strikes in the

early hours of Monday morning local time.

At least six more fighters were wounded and the targets included an arms depot near Albu Kamal, a Syrian town which lies where the border crosses the Euphrates river, the Britain-based monitor said.

Syria's state-run SANA news agency said one child had been killed in the raid but gave few details.

US interests in Iraq, where 2,500 American troops are deployed as part of an international coalition to fight the jihadist Islamic State group, have been targeted in more than 40 attacks this year.

The vast majority have been bombs against logistics convoys, but rocket fire and drones packed with explosive have also been used in the assaults

some of which were claimed by pro-Iran factions hoping to pressure Washington into withdrawing all its troops.

“Given the ongoing series of attacks by Iran-backed groups targeting US interests in Iraq, the president directed further military action to disrupt and deter such attacks,” Kirby said.

“Specifically, the US strikes targeted operational and weapons storage facilities at two locations in Syria and one location in Iraq, both of which lie close to the border between those countries,” he added.

Kataeb Hezbollah and Kataeb Sayyid al-Shuhada, two Iraqi armed factions with close ties to Tehran, were among the “several Iran-backed militia groups” that had used the facilities, Kirby said.

— AFP

# Current vax less effective against Beta variant: Study

**Boston, June 28:** A study of the spike protein of SARS-CoV-2, the virus which cause Covid-19, suggests that current vaccines may be less effective against the Beta variant first identified in South Africa.

Present on the surface of SARS-CoV-2, spike proteins enable the virus to attach to and enter our cells, and all current vaccines are directed against them. The study, published in the journal Science on June 24, used cryo-electron microscopy (cryo-EM) to compare the spike protein from the original virus found in China in 2019, with that of the Beta variant, and the Alpha variant first identified in the UK.

Cryo-Em is an imaging technique used to determine the biomolecular structures at near-atomic resolution. The findings led by researchers at Boston Children's Hospital in the US indicate that mutations in the Beta variant, also known as B.1.351, change the shape of the spike surface at certain locations. As a result, neutralising antibodies induced by current vaccines are less able to bind to the Beta virus, which may allow it to evade the immune system even when people are vaccinated.

“The mutations make antibodies stimulated by the current vaccine less effective,” said Bing Chen, from the division of Molecular Medicine at Boston Children's.

“The Beta variant is somewhat resistant to the current vaccines, and we think a booster with the new genetic sequence can be beneficial for protecting against this variant,” Chen added. The researchers also found that mutations in the Beta variant make the spike less effective in binding to ACE2 — suggesting that this variant is less transmissible than the Alpha variant.

— PTI

## UK DEFENCE MIN., TOP BRASS BEGIN SELF-ISOLATION

**London, June 28:** Britain's senior military commanders and the defence secretary are self isolating after the head of the armed forces tested positive for Covid.

Ben Wallace, secretary of defence, and the heads of the Navy, the Royal Air Force and Strategic Command were all ordered to isolate for a 10-day period last week, the *Telegraph* newspaper reported late on Sunday.

It added that the head of the Army, General Mark Carleton-Smith, also spent the weekend in self-isolation as he awaited the results of a Covid test.

They had all come into close contact with the Chief of the Defence Staff Nick Carter at a summit in Shrivenham in southern England on Thursday

— AFP

## ITALY BECOMES MASK-FREE, ‘LOW-RISK’ ZONE

**Rome, June 28:** All of Italy became a mask-free, “low-risk” zone for Coronavirus on Monday, marking a dramatic milestone for the first European country to be hit by the global pandemic in February 2020.

In a decree that took effect on Monday, the health ministry for the first time classified each of Italy's 20 regions as “white”, signifying low risk, under the country's colour-coded classification system that evaluates Covid-19 risk.

That means face masks will no longer be compulsory in outdoor areas.

— AFP

## Threatened scribes



Journalists protest outside the United Nations office in the occupied West Bank city of Ramallah on Monday, demanding protection following attacks by Palestinian security forces on their colleagues.

— AFP

# Iran yet to finalise on camera deal

**Tehran, June 28:** Iran has not made a decision yet about whether to extend an agreement with the UN atomic watchdog over access to surveillance footage at its nuclear sites, the country's foreign ministry said on Monday.

The remarks by Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh come after a three-month deal between Tehran and international nuclear inspectors to preserve video data at the country's atomic installations expired last

week, following a one-month extension. “No decision, either negative or positive has been made,” Khatibzadeh told reporters. “Neither the continuation of the deal nor the erasure (of data). We are in the previous position for the time being.”

Iran began limiting the access of UN atomic watchdog inspectors to its nuclear sites earlier this year, part of a pressure campaign on the West over its tattered 2015 nuclear deal with world

powers. Tehran was trying to push European powers to provide relief from oil and banking sanctions imposed three years ago when then-President Donald Trump withdrew America from the landmark accord. As part of that effort, Iran abandoned the accord's enrichment limits and is now enriching uranium to 60 per cent purity, its highest ever levels, although still short of weapons grade 90 per cent.

In order to limit diplo-

matic damage amid ongoing negotiations in Vienna to resurrect the nuclear deal, Iran and the International Atomic Energy Agency reached a last-minute February agreement over Tehran's newly imposed limits on inspections.

The move to erase the surveillance footage would steeply escalate tensions, complicating diplomatic efforts to find a path for America to lift sanctions and Iran to reimpose curbs on its nuclear program.

— AP

# Russia, China extend 20-yr-old friendship ties

**Moscow, June 28:** The leaders of Russia and China on Monday hailed increasingly close ties between their countries and announced the extension of a 20-year-old friendship treaty, a show of unity amid their tensions with the West.

Speaking in a video call with Chinese President Xi Jinping, Russian President Vladimir Putin said that the treaty signed

in July 2001 in Moscow helped take relations between Moscow and Beijing to an “unprecedented height” and would be extended for another five years. The Russian leader noted that the coordination of foreign policy efforts by Russia and China has played a “stabilising role in global affairs.”

Xi in his opening remarks emphasised the

importance of a “strategic cooperation” between Moscow and Beijing in defending their common interests on the global stage. He added that Russia and China have worked to uphold a “true multilateralism and global justice.”

Putin and Xi have developed strong personal ties to bolster a “strategic partnership” between the two former Communist rivals

as they vie with the West for influence and face soaring tensions in relations with the US and its allies. While Moscow and Beijing in the past rejected the possibility of forging a military alliance, Putin said last fall that such a prospect can't be ruled out entirely.

During Monday's call, Putin congratulated Xi on the 100th anniversary of the Communist Party of

China celebrated Thursday, saying that China is marking it with “new achievements in the country's social-economic development and on the international stage” and recalling Soviet support for the Chinese communists.

Moscow marked the CPC's centennial by sharing historic documents on Soviet-Chinese links with Beijing.

— AP

## GLOBAL INFLUENCE

### Communist Party of China seeks control over Chinese nationals who have moved abroad

# Ahead of centenary, China heralds CPC's impact

**Beijing, June 28:** China is marking the centenary of its ruling Communist Party this week by heralding what it says is its growing influence abroad, along with success in battling corruption at home.

Party officials on Monday heaped praise on President Xi Jinping, who has established himself as China's most powerful leader since Mao Zedong, and has eliminated any limits on his term in office. China has seen huge improvements in living standards over the past four decades, accompanied

by rising international economic and political heft. Yet, while many countries have benefited from that relationship, China is also seen eroding democracy and human rights in nations over which it holds economic sway.

“The Chinese Communist party's international influence, appeal and attraction have continually increased, placing it at the forefront of world politics,” Guo Yezhou, deputy head of the party's external liaison department told reporters at a news conference held at

the opening of a media centre for the centenary celebrations.

With 92 million members and a solid lock on power at home, the party has

sought to expand its control over Chinese who have moved abroad for

study, business or other reasons. That has created multiple sources of friction, particularly in Australia, where Chinese students are prominent on university campuses, as well as in the US, the UK and other Western democracies. Those nations are tightly interlocked with the Chinese economy, while standing at odds with Beijing's authoritarian political ideology and its policies toward Hong Kong, Xinjiang and Tibet.

Guo made no reference to such concerns, saying the party's outreach was a key

component of China's foreign policy. “This outpoints the party's strategic function,” Guo said. Xi has made fighting corruption — and ensuring political loyalty — a hallmark of his nine years in office. Nearly 800,000 officials have been investigated for malfeasance under Xi's rule, including 392 at or above provincial or ministerial level, said Xiao Pei, deputy head of the party's corruption watchdog body, the Central Commission for Disciplinary Inspection.

— AP



Pope Francis meets US Secretary of State Antony Blinken at the Vatican on Monday.

— AFP

## Blinken meets Pope as US bishops dare Biden

**Vatican City, June 28:** Pope Francis on Monday met US Secretary of State Antony Blinken in the pontiff's first face-to-face interaction with the new administration of President Joe Biden, who has been challenged by US bishops.

Blinken, on a tour of Europe, had a private audience with the Argentine pope after meeting with senior Vatican officials including Archbishop Paul Gallagher, who handles foreign relations.

Vatican spokesman

Matteo Bruni said the 40-minute meeting with the Pope took place in a “friendly atmosphere”, adding that the pontiff recalled his 2015 trip to the United States and expressed “his affection and attention to the people of the United States”.

Biden says he personally opposes abortion but, like most of his Democratic Party, supports the right to choose abortion guaranteed in a 1973 Supreme Court decision that remains deeply divisive in US politics.

— AFP



quick  
BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	52735.59	-0.36
Nifty 50	15814.70	-0.29
S&P 500*	4,281.34	0.01
Dollar (₹)	73.87	0.28
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.18	0.31
Euro (₹)	88.36	0.19
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	46,337▲116	0.25
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	75.08	-1.44
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.056	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.490	-0.046

\* As of 8:30 PM IST

Dr Reddy's Lab  
launches Covid  
drug 2-DG

Dr Reddy's Laboratories (DRL) has launched Covid drug 2-deoxy-D-glucose (2-DG), developed by the DRDO as an adjunct therapy to treat mild to severe coronavirus infections. Trials revealed the drug will reduce the patient's dependency of supplemental oxygen and ensures his faster recovery by over two days. The company will sell the drug under the brand name 2DG for a retail price of Rs 990 per sachet.

Emirates may  
resume flights to  
India from July 7



Dubai's flag carrier Emirates may resume its flights from India to Dubai from July 7, over two months after the UAE suspended its operations owing to the surge in coronavirus cases in India, the *Khaleej Times* reported. The airline is awaiting exact travel protocols and guidelines from the government regarding the resumption of the flight operations. The airline's website shows seats are available for booking from July 7.

Dodla Dairy up  
42% on debut,  
KIMS gains 22%

Hyderabad-based Dodla Dairy and Krishna Institute of Medical Sciences (KIMS) Hospitals listed on the bourses at premiums of 28.50 per cent and 22.3 per cent to the issue price. Dodla Dairy shares opened at Rs 550 against the IPO price of Rs 428 and touched a high of Rs 652, up 52.33 per cent, but closed at Rs 609.90, up 42.5 per cent. KIMS closed at Rs 996.95, gaining 20.84 per cent, against the IPO price of Rs 825.

Rohini Nilekani  
to retire from  
own foundation

Arghyam Foundation said Rohini Nilekani will retire from the foundation as chairperson and member of the board on Sept. 30 and will be succeeded by Sunita Nadhamuni, a member of the board and head of Digital LifeCare at Dell Giving and Social Innovation. Nilekani had set up Arghyam in 2001 as a vehicle for her personal philanthropy. Arghyam has been working exclusively on water sector issues since 2005.

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■ Paediatric care gets ₹23,220-cr funds  
Focus on health  
infra for children

FC BUREAU  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 28

Making a proactive move, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday provided Rs 23,220 crore of additional funding for setting up paediatric care/paediatric beds at hospitals to prepare healthcare infrastructure to deal with any emergency in the event of the next Covid wave affecting children.

Experts have warned that a third Covid wave in the country may affect children more than adults.

Announcing a set of measures for reviving the economy battered by the severe second Covid wave, Sitharaman also unveiled a Rs 50,000-crore credit guarantee scheme for setting up of medical or health infrastructure by private hospitals in cities other than eight metropolitan cities.

"We are now providing Rs 23,220 crore more, primarily focussing on children and paediatric care. This Rs 23,220 crore will be spent this financial year itself.

"It will also focus on funding of HR augmentation so that medical students, interns, nurses can also be brought in for helping in such emergencies, ICU beds will be made available, oxygen supply at central, district and sub-district level will be ensured and also making sure that equipments and medicines, tele-consultation and ambulance service... all of that will be taken care of with primary focus on children.

CENTRE TO PAY PF SHARE TILL MARCH

New Delhi, June 28: The government extended the Atmanirbhar Bharat Rozgar Yojana, which was launched in October last year to encourage employment generation, by nine months till March 31, 2022.

Under the ABR, the Government of India is crediting for a period of two years both the employees' share (12 per cent of wages) and employers' share (12 per cent of wages) of contribution payable for establishment strength up to 1,000 employees and giving a salary of up to Rs 15,000 a month. In case of establishment strength of more than 1,000 for all those with Rs 15,000 per month salary, only employee's share (12 per cent of wages) is credited by the government to the EPFO. The scheme is being implemented through the Employees Provident Fund Organisation.

—FC Bureau

GUARANTEE ON TRAVEL & TOURISM LOANS

New Delhi, June 28: Announcing free visas to 5 lakh tourists visiting India this fiscal, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Monday financial support would be provided to more than 11,000 registered tourist guides and travel & tourism stakeholders. She said the total financial implication of free visa

would be Rs 100 crore. The scheme would be applicable till March 31, 2022, or till 5 lakh visas are issued, whichever is earlier.

Sitharaman said loans will be provided with 100 per cent guarantee with a limit of Rs 10 lakh for travel & tourism stakeholders and Rs 1 lakh for registered tourist guides.

—FC Bureau

dren. So paediatric care is the emphasis," Sitharaman said at a press conference.

She said last year a Rs 15,000 crore emergency health systems project was implemented. Using that Rs 15,000 crore, there was a 25-fold increase in Covid-dedicated hospitals.

Besides, 7,929 Covid health centres and 9,954 Covid care centres were set

up, and oxygen supported beds increased by 7.5 times. There was also an increase in isolation beds and ICU beds by 42-fold and 45-fold, respectively.

"The Rs 15,000 crore which was used till March 2021 aiming at providing additional infrastructure and facilitating Covid care had good response," the minister said.

SAT STAYS SEBI  
ORDER ON  
FRANKLIN  
TEMPLETON

New Delhi, June 28: The Securities and Appellate Tribunal (SAT) on Monday stayed a Sebi order that had barred Franklin Templeton Asset Management (India) from launching new debt schemes for two years and had asked the fund house to refund a little over Rs 512 crore.

Terming the refund amount "excessive", SAT asked the asset management company to deposit a sum of Rs 250 crore in an escrow account within three weeks.

The appeal was filed against an order passed by the Sebi on June 7, which said Franklin Templeton violated certain provisions of mutual funds norms in relation to the management of the six debt schemes, which are now shut.

Through the order, Franklin Templeton was directed to refund investment management and advisory fees along with interest at the rate of 12 per cent per annum amounting to Rs 512.50 crore.

Further, the firm was prohibited from launching new debt schemes for a period of two years and penalty of Rs 5 crore was levied on it.

In its order on Monday, SAT noted that 21 debt schemes are still being managed by Franklin Templeton and no complaint of these schemes have come to the fore.

"The mere fact that the appellant (Franklin Templeton) have chosen to wind up six schemes does not mean that they should be debarred from launching any new debt schemes," it added.

—PTI

Indians invest nearly  
\$40 bn in crypto assets

SUVASHREE GHOSH &  
RONOJOY MAZUMDAR  
JUNE 28

The cryptocurrency aficionados' mantra that Bitcoin is equivalent to digital gold is winning converts among the world's biggest holders of the precious metal.

In India, where households own more than 25,000 tonnes of gold, investments in crypto grew from about \$200 million to nearly \$40 billion in the past year, according to Chainalysis. That's despite outright hostility toward the asset class from the central bank and a proposed trading ban.

Richi Sood, a 32-year-old entrepreneur is one of those who swerved from gold to crypto. Since December, she's put in just over Rs 10 lakh—some of it borrowed from her father—into Bitcoin, Dogecoin and Ether.

And she's been fortunate with her timing. She cashed out part of her position when Bitcoin smashed through \$50,000 in February and bought back in after the recent tumble, allowing her to fund the overseas expansion of her education startup Study Mate India.

"I'd rather put my money in crypto than gold," Ms Sood said. "Crypto is more transparent than gold or property and returns are more in a short period of time." She's part of a growing number of Indians—now totalling more than 15 million—buying and selling digital coins. That's catching up with the 23



million traders of these assets in the US and compares with just 2.3 million in the UK.

The growth in India is coming from the 18-35 year old cohort, says the co-founder of India's first cryptocurrency exchange, Latest World Gold Council data indicated Indian adults under age 34 have less appetite for gold than older consumers.

"They find it far easier to invest in crypto than gold because the process is very simple," said Sandeep Goenka, who co-founded ZebPay and spent years representing the industry in discussions with the government on regulation. "You go online, you can buy crypto, you don't have to verify it, unlike gold."

One of the biggest barriers preventing wider adoption is the regulatory uncertainty. Last year, the Supreme Court quashed a 2018 rule banning crypto trading by banking entities, resulting in a trading surge. However, authorities show no signs of embracing cryptocurrencies. The nation's central bank says it has "major concerns" about the asset

class and six months ago the Indian government proposed a ban on trading in digital coins—though it has been silent on the topic since.

"I am flying blind," said Ms Sood. "I have a risk-taking appetite, so I'm willing to take a risk of a ban." It's not the only country where regulators are cracking down. The UK's financial watchdog has just banned Binance Markets Ltd from doing any regulated business in the country.

The official hostility though means many bigger individual investors are reluctant to speak openly about their holdings. One banker

Bloomberg spoke to who invested more than \$1 million into crypto assets said with no clear income tax rules at present he was concerned about the possibility of retrospective tax raids if he was publicly known to be a big-ticket crypto investor.

He's already got contingency plans in place to move his trading to an offshore Singapore bank account if a ban was to be introduced.

To be sure, the value of Indian digital asset holdings remain a sliver of its gold market. Still, the growth is clear, especially in trading—the four biggest crypto exchanges saw daily trading jump to \$102 million from \$10.6 million a year ago, according to CoinGecko. The country's \$40 billion market significantly trails China's \$161 billion, according to Chainalysis.

—Bloomberg

Second wave impact milder: CEA

FC BUREAU  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 28

The impact of the Covid-19 second wave on the economy was much milder than the first wave because of its shorter duration and the resilience of Indian businesses to adapt to the situation, said India's chief economic adviser, Krishna-murthy V. Subramanian.

Speaking at a virtual conference organised by FTCCI on Monday, he said, "The second wave had impacted the economy in April and May. But it peaked very fast and also declined at the same pace. So it impacted the economy for a much shorter duration. Unlike the first wave when the national lockdown was imposed, restrictions were asynchronous during the second wave and have impacted only 30 per cent of the economy."

He also observed that the interstate movement of goods was never stopped during the second wave, which allowed companies to continue functioning.

Though he admitted that small companies were impacted by the pandemic more than larger companies, he said the macro-economic impact of sec-



K. V. Subramanian

ond-wave would not be large during the current financial year.

Stating the worst is over for the economy, the CEA said he is cautiously optimistic about the economic growth of the country for the next five to six months and highly optimistic about the growth in the subsequent years.

Subramanian defended the government's decision to boost the economy by increasing capital expenditure rather than revenue expenditure or freebies.

Explaining the rationale, he said every rupee spent by governments on "freebies" would add only Rs 0.98 to the country's economy as against Rs 4.50 when spent on capital expenditure.

Highlighting the reforms in labour, agriculture, financial markets, and production-linking incentives for exports, Dr Subramanian exuded con-

fidence that the Indian economy would be one of the top high-growth economies of the decade because of the reforms undertaken by the government.

Claiming the government's policy is on enabling and empowering the private sector, Subramanian said the government would meet its target of raising Rs 1.75 lakh crore through disinvestment of public sector companies.

"Remember that of Rs 1.75 lakh crore, a good part of it will be from LIC's IPO (initial public offering). The second is the privatisation of Bharat Petroleum (BPCL). And these two together can account for a large part of disinvestment target," he said.

He also rejected concerns about the government crowding out the borrowing space with a higher fiscal deficit. He called the crowding-out concept as an old and incomplete argument.

Dr Subramanian said the government is working with RBI to get Indian government bonds included on the global bond index, which would allow the government to raise money directly from foreign investors.

SKODA PRICES  
KUSHAQ SUV AT  
₹10.49 LAKH



MICHAEL GONSALVES  
PUNE, JUNE 28

Skoda, the Czech car maker, on Monday entered the mid-size SUV space by introducing the 'made-in-India for the world' model Kushaq with the starting price of Rs 10.49 lakh at pan India showroom.

The Kushaq is Skoda's determined effort to make a solid mark in the mid-size SUV space that is dominated by Hyundai Creta and Kia Seltos.

"The SUV market in India is growing and we are here for a long haul," Zac Hollis, brand director at Skoda Auto India told *FC*, adding that bookings for the Kushaq were coming strong. "The new Kushaq's design, uncluttered lines, quality and safety elements are strong to deliver numbers in the competitive market," he said, targeting 60,000 sales annually.

ALGORITHMS | RULE Machines are often the boss; hiring, rating and firing with no human oversight

How does it feel to be sacked by a bot?

SPENCER SOPER  
JUNE 28

Stephen Normandin spent almost four years racing around Phoenix delivering packages as a contract driver for Amazon.com Inc. Then one day, he received an automated email. The algorithms tracking him had decided he wasn't doing his job properly.

The 63-year-old Army veteran was stunned. He'd been fired by a machine.

Normandin says Amazon punished him for things beyond his control that prevented him from completing his deliveries, such as locked apartment complexes. He said he took the termination hard and,

priding himself on a strong work ethic, recalled that during his military career he helped cook for 250,000 Vietnamese refugees at Fort Chaffee in Arkansas.

"I'm an old-school kind of guy, and I give every job 110 per cent," he said. "This really upset me because we're talking about my reputation. They say I didn't do the job when I know damn well I did."

Normandin's experience is a twist on the decades-old prediction that robots will replace workers. At Amazon, machines are often the boss—hiring, rating and firing millions of people with little or no human oversight. Amazon became the



world's largest online retailer in part by outsourcing its sprawling operations to algorithms—sets of computer instructions designed to solve specific problems. For years, Amazon has used algorithms to manage the millions of third-party merchants on its online marketplace, drawing com-

plaints that sellers have been booted off after being falsely accused of selling counterfeit goods and jacking up prices.

Increasingly, the company is ceding its human-resources operation to machines as well, using software not only to manage workers in its warehouses but to oversee contract drivers, independent delivery companies and even the performance of its office workers. People familiar with the strategy say CEO Jeff Bezos believes machines make decisions more quickly and accurately than people, reducing costs and giving Amazon a competitive advantage.

Amazon started its gig-

style Flex delivery service in 2015, and the army of contract drivers quickly became a critical part of the company's delivery machine. Typically, Flex drivers handle packages that haven't been loaded on an Amazon van before the driver leaves. They ensure the packages are delivered the same day. They also handle a large number of same-day grocery deliveries from Amazon's Whole Foods Market chain. Flex drivers helped keep Amazon humming during the pandemic and were only too happy to earn about \$25 an hour shuttling packages.

But the moment they sign on, Flex drivers discover algorithms are mon-

itoring their every move. Did they get to the delivery station when they said they would? Did they complete their route in the prescribed window? Did they leave a package in full view of porch pirates instead of hidden behind a planter as requested? Amazon algorithms scan the gusher of incoming data for performance patterns and decide which drivers get more routes and which are deactivated. Human feedback is rare. Drivers occasionally receive automated emails, but mostly they're left to obsess about their ratings, which include four categories: Fantastic, Great, Fair or At Risk.

—Bloomberg



## SHORT TAKES

## BWF cancels India &amp; Hyderabad Open

**New Delhi:** The India Open Super 500 and Hyderabad Open Super 100 tournaments were on Monday cancelled by the Badminton World Federation (BWF), which announced a revamped international calendar to salvage the remaining season affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. The \$400,000 India Open, which was supposed to be one of the qualifiers for the Tokyo Olympics, was scheduled to be held from May 11 to 16 but was postponed in April due to rising Covid cases in the national capital. The \$1,00,000 Hyderabad Open was slated to be held from August 24 to 29. "A number of tournaments previously classified as postponed from Q1 and Q2 or originally slated for Q3 and Q4 of 2021 have subsequently been cancelled," BWF said in a statement. — *PTI*

## Lankans banned for bubble breach

**Colombo:** Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) on Monday suspended three players, including batsman Kusal Mendis and wicket-keeper Niroshan Dickwella, for breaching the bio-bubble during their ongoing tour of England and ordered their immediate return to the country. The two, along with opener Danushka Gunathilaka, were seen roaming the streets of Durham after the final T20 international on Sunday night, which Sri Lanka lost by a massive 89 runs. "Sri Lanka Cricket executive Committee has suspended Kusal Mendis, Danushka Gunathilaka & Niroshan Dickwella for breaching the bio-bubble and they will be immediately recalled to Sri Lanka," SLC secretary Mohan De Silva said. — *PTI*

## Deepika reclaims world no.1 ranking

**Paris:** Star Indian archer Deepika Kumari on Monday regained the number one position in global rankings following her hat-trick of gold medals at the World Cup Stage 3 here. The 27-year-old from Ranchi, who had achieved the top spot for the first time in 2012, on Sunday claimed gold medals in three recurve events — women's individual, team and mixed pair. "This is going to take Deepika to the number one spot in the world rankings on Monday," World Archery had tweeted on its official handle after Deepika's gold rush. — *PTI*

## SA level series against Windies

**St George's (Grenada):** South Africa turned the tables on the West Indies in the second match of their Twenty20 series, winning by 16 runs to level the five-match series at 1-1. Only 24 hours after losing the opening match by eight wickets, an unchanged South Africa lineup produced an improved but still imperfect bowling and fielding performance to restrict the West Indies to 150-9 in reply to their 166-7 on Sunday. — *PTI*

**Brief scores:** South Africa 166/7 (Reeza Hendricks 42, Temba Bavuma 46; Obed McCoy 3/25) bt West Indies 150/9 (Andre Fletcher 35, Fabian Allen 34; Kagiso Rabada 3/37).

## Shot putter Toor hits a purple patch

**Patiala:** Olympic-bound shot putter Tajinder Pal Singh Toor continued his impressive form as he produced yet another big throw while winning gold on the fourth and penultimate day of the National Inter-State Athletics Championships here on Monday. Toor, who booked an Olympic ticket on last Monday with a national record throw of 21.49m during the Indian Grand Prix 4 here, came up with a best effort of 21.10m to win the gold in the event. — *PTI*

## Live on TV

EURO

**Round of 16:** England vs Germany from 9.30 pm; Sweden vs Ukraine from 12.30 am (Wednesday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

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## THOR'S THUNDER

## Hazard strikes as Belgium knock Portugal out of Euro

<b>Belgium</b>	<b>1</b>
(Thorgan Hazard 42)	
<b>Portugal</b>	<b>0</b>

**Seville (Spain), June 28:** A rocket from Thorgan Hazard knocked reigning champions Portugal out of Euro 2020 on Sunday and earned Belgium a blockbuster quarter-final with Italy.

Hazard's swerving shot before half-time sealed a 1-0 win for Belgium and settled a scrappy contest in Seville that never really lived up to its billing as the stand-out tie of the last 16.

But it could prove a statement victory for Belgium, whose chief concern now will be the fitness of Kevin De Bruyne and Eden Hazard, who both hobbled off injured and will undergo scans on Monday.

De Bruyne suffered an ankle injury while coach Roberto Martinez said Hazard's problem was "more of a muscle feeling".

Cristiano Ronaldo tested Thibaut Courtois with a dipping free-kick in the first half but the 36-year-old neither broke the international goals record nor added to his five for the tournament.

Raphael Guerreiro went closest to a late equaliser when his shot came back off the post, one of 29 shots Portugal had, six of them on target.

But before the late rally, Belgium were the braver, more fluid team and Martinez hailed his side's fighting spirit to hold on.

"We showed our talent in the first half and in the second half we showed an aspect that wasn't there two or three years ago," said Martinez. "This is what a winning team needs."

For all the superstar names on the pitch, it was Eden Hazard's less heralded brother Thorgan who proved decisive, the Borussia Dortmund winger who Eden once



(from left) Belgium's Axel Witsel, Eden Hazard and Thorgan Hazard celebrate after scoring a goal against Portugal in the round of 16 match at the La Cartuja stadium in Seville, Spain on Sunday. — *UEFA*

said had even more talent than him.

"In these games if you have a chance you have to have a go," Thorgan said. "It went in, with a bit of luck and it was the goal that got us through. It's a dream for me."

Eden Hazard started in Belgium's front three again after playing 90 minutes against Finland on Monday. Portugal's Diogo Dalot came in at right-back for the injured Nelson Semedo.

Hazard skied an early shot over after a neat exchange with Romelu Lukaku while Diogo Jota skewed wide, slipped in down the left by the impressive Renato Sanches.

The closest Ronaldo came to an all-time record 110th international goal was a dipping free-kick from 30 yards which Courtois parried away. — *AFP*

## England, Germany to renew age-old rivalry

**London, June 28:** When you train on the Sir Bobby Charlton Pitch, it's hard to escape the burden of past glory. And when Gareth Southgate is your coach, it's even harder for the England players to escape the anguish that can come from playing Germany at a tournament. It was Southgate's penalty miss in a shootout against Germany that prevented England from reaching the 1996 European Championship final at the old Wembley Stadium.

There had already been the loss to Germany on penalties at the 1990 World

Cup. Twenty years later came more World Cup agony against Germany, laced with the injustice of a wrongly disallowed goal.

No wonder the renewal of the rivalry with Germany on Tuesday in the round of 16 at this year's Euro is rousing so many memories of past meetings in England. But it can seem to be a lop-sided rivalry.

There's little sense in Germany about righting any wrongs of the past, despite the still inconclusive debate over whether Geoff Hurst's decisive goal really did cross the

line before Charlton and Co. lifted the World Cup in 1966 at Wembley.

## SWEDISH CHALLENGE FOR UKRAINE

Andriy Shevchenko's Ukraine might be disappointed by the fact that they only reached the knockout phase of the Euro for the first time thanks to good fortune.

But ahead of Tuesday's last-16 game against Sweden, the 44-year-old coach may draw inspiration from a past encounter against the same opponents, the swansong of his career as a player. — *Agencies*

## CR7 proud of Portugal effort

**Lisbon, June 28:** Captain Cristiano Ronaldo said on Monday he was "proud" of holders Portugal's efforts despite bowing out of Euro 2020 after the weekend's 1-0 last 16 loss to Belgium.

"We did not get the result we wanted and we leave the competition sooner than expected," the 36-year-old Juventus star and five-time Ballon d'or winner admitted as his side failed to match their 2016 exploits.

"But we are proud of our showing. We did everything we could to retain the title of European champions and this group proved it could still give the Portuguese people much joy," the former Manchester United and Real Madrid attacker posted on social media after Sunday's loss.

"Congratulations to

Belgium and good luck to all the teams left in. As for us, we shall return stronger," vowed the veteran who at least could console himself with having matched the 109 international goals record of Iran's Ali Daei during the tournament.

Ronaldo scored five times during the competition to take his European Championship tally to a record 14, matching Daei's achievement with his goal in the 2-2 group game draw with world champions France.

Portugal coach Fernando Santos said his players were crying in the changing room after their "unfair" defeat.

"I think it's an unfair result but they scored and we didn't," said Santos after the game. — *AFP*

## ECUADOR HOLD BRAZIL TO ENTER COPA QUARTERS

**Goiania, Brazil, June 28:** An Ecuador side fighting to keep their Copa America hopes alive managed to hold a previously perfect Brazil — playing without a resting Neymar — to a 1-1 draw Sunday and reach the quarter-finals.

Seeking to extend a 10-match winning streak, Brazil came out pressuring in Goiania on the group's final match day. Coach Tite opted to rest Neymar, but the "Selecao" still dominated the first half.

A free kick in the 37th minute set up Eder Militao, who headed the ball at a sharp angle into the top right corner of the net, well clear of

COPA RESULTS	
<b>Brazil</b> (Eder Militao 37)	<b>1</b>
<b>Ecuador</b> (Angel Mena 53)	<b>1</b>
<b>Peru</b> (Andre Carrillo 48)	<b>1</b>
<b>Venezuela</b>	<b>0</b>

Ecuador keeper Hernan Galindez's outstretched arm.

## PERU WIN

Peru meanwhile defeated Venezuela 1-0 in the other Group B match to send the Covid-decimated "Vinotinto" team packing from the South American championships. — *AFP*

## SHOOTING | WORLD CUP



(from left) France's Mathilde Lamolle (silver medal), India's Rahi Sarnobat (gold) and Vitalina Batsarashkina of Russia (bronze) on the women's 25M Pistol podium at the ISSF Shooting World Cup in Osijek.

## Sarnobat clinches gold in 25m pistol

**Osijek, June 28:** Olympic-bound Rahi Sarnobat displayed sensational form to clinch the women's 25m pistol gold medal at the ISSF shooting World Cup here on Monday but teen sensation Manu Bhaker ended seventh in the same event.

Sarnobat's gold is India's first in the ongoing edition after the country secured one silver and two bronze medals earlier in the tournament.

The 30-year-old Sarnobat fired a final score of 39 after qualifying second with a total of 591. Her stupendous performance in the final included perfect scores in the third, fourth, fifth and the sixth series.

"After I got assurance about the gold, it was more about technicalities for me

in the last few series as I wanted to try out a few things so I was doing that," she said.

"This competition was absolutely not about performance or medal because I was trying out a few things which I am going to do in the Olympic Games and this is the final competition before that."

"It was more about trying out things and finalising every thing before the Olympics for the last time and that was just that," she added.

Nonetheless, winning a gold here has given Sarnobat the belief that her preparations are on the right track for the Tokyo Games.

"I have to keep working on this up to and after the Olympic as well." — *PTI*

## Olympic briefs

## Japan ups health controls

Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga pledged on Monday to strengthen health controls at airports after a Ugandan Olympic team member tested positive for Covid-19 at the town hosting their training camp, triggering concerns that the upcoming games will spread infections. A Ugandan team member, reportedly a coach, tested positive on Saturday at Tokyo's Narita airport and was quarantined there.

## USA Basketball reveal roster

Experience mattered to USA Basketball when putting together a roster for the Tokyo Olympics. The Americans formally revealed their roster on Monday, one that will be third-oldest U.S. men's team in Olympic history for the Tokyo Games. The 12-man list includes five players — Kevin Love, Kevin Durant, Jrue Holiday, Damian Lillard and Draymond Green — already in their 30s.

**We have officially intimidated the ICC that the T20 World Cup can be shifted to the United Arab Emirates. The details are being chalked out.**

— **SOURAV GANGULY**  
BCCI President



date of the tournament, Ganguly said: "We will be able to finalise itinerary details in some days. October 17 start hasn't yet been finalised."

Even an ICC spokesperson confirmed that the global body is yet to zero in on a final schedule.

The ICC, at the start of the month, had given BCCI a four-week window to decide and inform whether India could host

the marquee event considering the Covid-19 situation in the country.

This was after the pandemic forced the postponement of IPL, the second part of which is also being held in the UAE in September-October.

BCCI secretary Jay Shah, in a letter to all state units, said that the decision was taken keeping in mind that "safety of players and other stake-

holders is of paramount importance..."

"It was not an easy decision and we mulled over it for months, constantly keeping an eye on Covid situation all along."

"However with the second wave causing such devastation, the decision ultimately boiled down to the safety and well being of the players and organizers," Shah admitted.

"There is nothing more that we could have wanted than to host this prestigious tournament in India, but it was not to be."

It was a foregone conclusion that India will find it difficult to host a 16-country tournament across nine cities with so many layers of health security concerns being there. — *PTI*

## Greek tragedy: Tsitsipas bows out

**London, June 28:** Novak Djokovic overcame an early wobble before getting his bid for a sixth Wimbledon and record-equalling 20th Grand Slam title off to a winning start on Monday and then saw potential semi-final opponent Stefanos Tsitsipas crash out.

One year after the 2020 tournament was cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic, defending champion and world number one Djokovic claimed a 4-6, 6-1, 6-2, 6-2 win over Britain's 253rd-ranked Jack Draper.

Third seed Tsitsipas, however, beaten by Djokovic in the French Open final just two weeks ago, slumped to his third first round defeat in four visits to the tournament.

America's Frances Tiafoe, ranked 57, stunned the Greek star 6-4, 6-4, 6-3.

Djokovic, 34, struggled on the slippery Centre Court surface with the roof closed above it due to the rain which had



Frances Tiafoe of the US celebrates after defeating third seed Stefanos Tsitsipas on Day 1 of the Wimbledon on Monday. — *Twitter*

delayed play on outside courts for five hours.

Left-handed Draper, playing just his fifth match on the main tour, saved seven of seven break points in the opener

to stun the top seed.

But Djokovic soon snuffed out any danger of him becoming only the third defending champion to lose in the first round, by sweeping through the

## RESULTS

**Men's first round:** Novak Djokovic (SRB x1) bt Jack Draper (GBR) 4-6, 6-1, 6-2, 6-2; Frances Tiafoe (USA) bt Stefanos Tsitsipas (GRE x3) 6-4, 6-4, 6-3.

**Women's first round:** Sloane Stephens (USA) bt Petra Kvitova (CZE x10) 6-3, 6-4; Lauren Davis (USA) bt Jodie Burrage (GBR) 6-2, 6-1; Madison Keys (USA x23) bt Katie Swan (GBR) 6-3, 6-4; Lesley Kerkhove (NED) bt Svetlana Kuznetsova (RUS) 6-3, 6-3; Garbine Muguruza (ESP x11) bt Fiona Ferro (FRA) 6-0, 6-1; Ekaterina Alexandrova (RUS x32) bt Laura Siegemund (GER) 6-1, 6-3; Maria Camila Osorio (COL) bt Anna Kalinskaya (RUS) 1-6, 6-0, 6-4; Aryna Sabalenka (BLR x2) bt Monica Niculescu (ROM) 6-1, 6-4.

remainder of the tie.

He finished with an impressive 25 aces and 47 winners as his 19-year-old opponent, who grew up just six miles (9.5km) from the All England Club, wilt-

ed. "I probably had one of the best serving performances that I can recall on any surface," said Djokovic who fired 25 aces and 47 winners.

With the Australian and French Open titles under his belt, the Serb is bidding to become only the third man in history to claim a calendar Grand Slam.

His match was preceded by a standing ovation for Professor Sarah Gilbert, one of the key scientists behind the Oxford AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine who was a special guest in the Royal Box.

Tiafoe won a second-tier grass court Challenger event in Nottingham this month before making the quarter-finals at Queen's Club. He made that match hardness pay against Tsitsipas, playing only his 16th match on grass. It was the first time in 12 attempts that 23-year-old Tiafoe had beaten a player ranked in the top five.

— *AFP*