

SHORT TAKES

Youth stabbed to death, minor among 4 nabbed

New Delhi: Four people including a minor were nabbed for allegedly stabbing a 19-year-old man to death following a quarrel between them in south Delhi's Ambedkar Nagar area, police said on Wednesday. The deceased identified as Kunal is a resident of Madangir, was unemployed, they said. The accused were identified as Sohli (18), Gaurav and Roop (18). One knife has been recovered from the possession of accused Gaurav. During investigation it has revealed that the two knives were ordered online through flipkart by the accused persons. According to police, the incident took place on Tuesday night at Bhumiya Chowk in south Delhi's Madangir area where a quarrel broke out between Kunal and Gaurav following which the victim was stabbed by Gaurav and his associates. The injured victim was taken to Max hospital by his brother but was declared brought dead by the doctor on duty, a senior police officer said. Deputy Commissioner of Police (South) Atul Kumar Thakur said "We have registered a case of murder at Ambedkar Nagar police station and have apprehended all accused in connection with the incident. It has been revealed that allegedly both accused Gaurav and deceased Kunal liked the same girl and due to this, there was enmity between both."

Cops, Google maps help divyang boy reunite with family

Noida: A 16-year-old differently-abled boy who had left home in a village in Sambhal district three months ago and landed in a Noida shelter home was on Wednesday reunited with his family, officials said. The reunion was made possible following a counselling session at the shelter home and efforts of the Noida Police's Anti-Human Trafficking Unit (AHTU), who traced the boy's remote village using Google maps, they said. Three months ago, the boy stated that he had left his home in Manni Kheda village of Aligarh district without informing his parents and wandered his way to reach Noida, a police spokesperson said. "He landed here at Sai Kripa Shelter Home and during a counselling session recently was asked about his family. The differently-abled boy somehow managed to tell the names of his mother, father and village to the counsellor," the spokesperson said. "After this, the AHTU in-charge inspector Devendra and his team got to work and even used Google maps to locate the village mentioned by the boy. The boy had said the village was in Sambhal district," the official said. However, the task was still not complete. To ensure that the child actually belonged to Manni Kheda village, the AHTU team contacted the local Nakhasa police station in Sambhal and through them reached out to the village headman. "When the information was shared with the headman, he confirmed that a boy of the same name as this one lived in the village but had gone missing three months ago," the police spokesperson said. — PTI

'AAP govt trying to paralyse BJP-led municipal bodies'

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 2

The BJP on Wednesday accused the Delhi government of trying to paralyse the party-led municipal corporations in the city by using means such as stopping release of funds, reducing financial allocation or shutting Covid vaccination centres run by them.

In a joint press conference Delhi BJP chief Adesh Gupta, Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri and BJP MP Meenakshi Lekhi also alleged that the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government in Delhi was crippling the civic bodies financially.

The three municipal corporations of Delhi (MCDs) are the South Delhi Municipal Corporation, the North Delhi Municipal Corporation and the East Delhi Municipal Corporation.

The Delhi government after "colluding with private health care facilities" has shut all Covid vaccination centres run by the MCDs, Bidhuri alleged.

"The MCDs were running 200 vaccination centres and over 10 lakh people were vaccinated there. But the government after

Civic bodies in crisis due to 'corruption' in BJP: Sisodia

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 2

Delhi deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia on Wednesday alleged that the municipal corporations in the city were facing an "unprecedented crisis" and reduced to a pitiable condition due to the "corruption and failures" of the ruling BJP. In an online briefing, Sisodia attacked the BJP-led civic bodies, and said

colluding with private hospitals, shut all the MCD-run vaccination centres and now people are forced to pay for vaccine at private hospitals," he said. "Had the Delhi government provided us with vaccines in time, people would have got vaccinated for free at our MCD-run vaccination centres and would not have to go to private hospitals and pay for it," Bidhuri added.

The BJP leaders also accused the AAP of holding "political grudges" against the three civic bodies. "While in the past seven years the budget of the Delhi government has

increased from ₹37,450 crore to ₹69,000 crore, the funds allocated to the MCDs by the Delhi government last year decreased from ₹6,828 crore to ₹6,172 crore. This is a reduction of ₹656 crore within a year," Gupta said.

On the alleged fall in financial allocations to MCDs, he said, "Not only this, where earlier as per the third Delhi finance commission, the Delhi government was giving 16.50 per cent share of the tax to civic bodies. Now, as per the fifth Delhi finance commission, MCD's share has been reduced to 12.50 per cent only."

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Satyender Jain visits multiple health infra projects sites

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 2

Delhi health minister Satyender Jain on Wednesday visited sites of multiple health infrastructure projects to take stock of the situation.

In a series of tweets, he shared details about the status of the projects, including one related to Covid-19 care. He also shared picture of the sites.

"Visited the new under-construction building of Acharya Shree Bhikshu Hospital with the PWD team. Instructed to escalate the 270 beds of the new building to 400 beds. These 400 beds will be made fully dedicated to Covid treatment in the coming time," he said.

In another tweet, he shared details about a project at Madipur and said efforts were being made to complete its construction by 2022.

"In view of re-modelling Delhi's health infrastructure, a new hospital at Madipur is being constructed by the Delhi Govt. Visited the construction site. The work is going at a good pace," he tweeted.

The health minister visited the new under-construction building of Guru Gobind Singh Hospital. "The PWD team here is working in full swing to complete this project. This will augment the current hospital bed capacity to 572 beds. Sharing a glimpse of the new building," he added.

Jain also shared details from his visit to the site of the new hospital being constructed at Jwalapuri by the Delhi government.

BJP urges L-G to conduct plantation audit

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 2

Delhi BJP spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor has urged Delhi Lt. Governor Anil Bajjal to direct the environment & forest department to observe plantation audit during the mass plantation programme announced by environment minister Gopal Rai.

"When we travel in Delhi we only see peepal trees which grow themselves but don't find good planted trees as claimed anywhere on roads or in parks," Kapoor said, adding that this programmes is new source of pilferage of government money.

get medicinal plants for free from government-run nurseries which will help them increase their immunity, especially during the coronavirus pandemic," he said.



Juhi Chawla

Man sings Juhi Chawla's songs, interrupts court hearing on 5G plea

SANJAY KAW
NEW DELHI, JUNE 2

Three hit songs of actor Juhi Chawla's movies made their way in the proceedings before the Delhi High Court on Wednesday when a man started singing them during the virtual hearing relating to the Bollywood star's petition against the 5G wireless network.

As soon as the actor herself joined the virtual proceedings from South Africa, someone started humming 'Ghoonghat ki aad se Dilbar ka,' a popular song of the actor's 1993 movie 'Hum Hain Rahi Pyar Ke.'

As the "courtroom" singer was not identified, Justice J R Midha said, "Please mute", while lawyer Deepak Khosla, appearing for the actor, said, "I hope this is not being dropped by

some respondent."

The court was hearing the issue of court fees to be submitted by the plaintiff, while it was interrupted again by someone singing another Bollywood song. In the second instance, the man started singing 'Lal Lal Honthon Pe' from Juhi's 1995 film, 'Naajayaz.' Thereafter, he left the virtual hearing and rejoined a third time to sing 'Meri Banno Ki Aayegi Baraat' from the actor's 1993 release, 'Aaina'.

At the outset, the man was heard saying "where is Juhi Ma'am I can't see her". When the judge asked the court master to mute the concerned person, he said "you want to mute me. Oh really!" Initially, he had joined the hearing with the name of Azaan. Thereafter, he changed the name to

Manisha Koirala and then to Janvi.

The bizarre act resulted in the periodic interruption of the hearing. It resumed after the man was removed from the session. The court has taken the matter seriously and issued a contempt notice. The court also directed the Police to search for the person and take legal

action against him.

The actor had posted about the virtual hearing on social media. She had written, "Hum...tum aur 5G! If you do think this concerns you in anyway, feel free to join our first virtual hearing conducted at Delhi High Court, to be held on 2nd June, 10.45 AM onwards Link in my bio (sic)."

On Monday, the actor approached the court against the setting up of the 5G wireless networks in the country, as it would impact citizens, animals, flora and fauna. Her suit said if the 5G network plan comes into effect, no person, animal, bird, insect and plant on earth will be able to avoid exposure, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, to levels of RF radiation that are 10x to 100x times greater than what exists today.

Vaccination for 18-44 age group suspended for 10th day

Delhi govt urges Centre to supply jabs for 18+ group

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 2

Of the 8,17,000 Covid-19 vaccine doses given to Delhi for the 18-44 age group, 8,15,000 have been used, AAP MLA Atishi said on Wednesday, while urging the Centre to send vaccines for Delhiites at the earliest.

It has been 10 days since the city government stopped administering vaccines to beneficiaries in the 18-44 age group. The Centre has said it would provide vaccine doses for the said age group on June 10.

"The unavailability of vaccines is a matter of concern for the youngsters of the city, also because all those who got vaccinated in May are now eligible for the second dose.... Since there is no vaccine available for them at any government-run vaccination centre, the only option for them is to go to a private hospital," Atishi said.

"Many people are getting themselves vaccinated at private hospitals out of choice and that too for exorbitant prices. I would appeal to the Centre to provide us with vaccines for the youngsters at the earliest so that we can vaccinate the population of Delhi at a high speed," she said.

A total of 50,382 people aged above 45 years were vaccinated against the viral disease in the national capital on Monday. Of them, 33,488 received the first dose and 16,894 the second dose, the Kalkaji MLA said.

Delhi received 50 lakh vaccine doses for those aged above 45 years, of which almost 46 lakh doses have been used till date, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader said.

The city currently has a

'Why start vaccination centres with pomp if jabs not available'

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 2

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday said if the AAP government could not ensure that people get both the doses of Covaxin within the stipulated time, then it should not have started so many vaccination centres with "much pomp and splendour".

Justice Rekha Palli issued notice to the Delhi government and sought its stand on whether it can provide the second dose of Covaxin to those who got the first jab, before expiry of the incubation period of six weeks between the two doses.

"Why did you (Delhi government) start it (vaccination) if you were not sure you can provide the second dose also? You should have stopped. Maharashtra stopped when it found it cannot provide the second dose,"

This is the third consecutive day that the positivity rate was recorded at below one per cent in the national capital. For the last three days, the death toll in a single day had remained below 100. The fresh cases recorded on Wednesday are the lowest since March 17, when 536 people had tested positive for the virus.

Delhi reported 623 Covid-19 cases on Tuesday, the lowest in two-and-a-half months, and 62 more deaths, while the positivity rate was below one per cent. The city reported 648 Covid-19 cases and 86 more fatalities on Monday, while the positivity rate

the Delhi High Court said.

You (Delhi government) opened so many vaccination centres everywhere with so much pomp and splendour, and now you say you don't know when the second dose stock would be available," the court said while hearing the petitions. The court listed the matter for further hearing on June 4.

The petitioner also sought direction to the Delhi government to commence and carry out administration of second doses of Covaxin to the eligible persons of age group of 18 or above within the recommended interval of four to six weeks from the administration of first dose as per the recommendation of Covid Working Group.

The petitioner told the court that his petition arose out of the reports published in various newspapers dated May 30

that the Delhi government had suspended the vaccination drive since May 24 for the persons falling in the age group of 18-44 years due to unavailability of vaccines.

According to the recommendations of the Covid Working Group of National Expert Group on Vaccine Administration for Covid-19 (NEGVAC), two doses of the vaccines have to be administered to the individuals and the time gap prescribed between the first and the second dosage for Covishield vaccine initially was four to six weeks which was increased to six to eight weeks in March, and recently on May 13, it has been increased to 12-16 weeks.

At the same time, the recommendation for Covaxin's second dose has been the same throughout this period at four to six weeks from the first dose.

was 0.99 per cent. On Sunday, 946 new cases and 78 more deaths were reported in the national capital.

As the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic spread across the country, Delhi began witnessing a rise in the number of daily cases and deaths from April 19. It reported the highest single-day spike of 448 deaths on May 3. However, there is a declining trend in the number of cases and deaths over the last several days. According to the health bulletin, 1,287 people have recovered from the infection in the last 24 hours.

Cops to deploy 4 quick reaction teams to help Covid patients

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 2

The Delhi Police will deploy at least four well-equipped Quick Reaction Teams in southwest district for facilitating medical assistance and oxygen support to Covid patients, officials said on Wednesday.

The community policing initiative has been started under the Yuva scheme of the Delhi Police, they said.

Deputy commissioner of police (Southwest) Ingit Pratap Singh said, "We have selected 30 Yuva trainees and started their training for first aid, CPR, disaster management, operation of oxygen concentrators through our NGO partners and hospitals."

After completing the training, these volunteers equipped with oxygen concentrators will be deployed in QRT (Quick Reaction Team) vans and Delhi Police staff will respond to emergency calls for providing first aid support to Covid patients, he said.

"We all have seen the disaster situation and overcrowded health infrastructure, and unavailability of essential medical interventions and oxygen support. Due to this, we have lost many lives," he said.

"As per the instruction of the Commissioner of Delhi Police, we all are preparing to fight any unforeseen circumstances," Singh added.

The Yuva initiative aims to connect with youth by upgrading their skills as per their competencies. It helps them to get gainful employment under the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojna of the Ministry of Skill Development.

▶ **VOLUNTEERS EQUIPPED** with oxygen concentrators will be deployed in QRT vans and Delhi Police staff will respond to emergency calls for first aid support



A Covid-19 patient receives treatment inside CWG covid care centre in New Delhi on Wednesday. — PTI

Post-Covid inflammatory syndrome rises among kids

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 2

Even as coronavirus cases in Delhi have begun to decline, the national capital is witnessing a surge of another disease affecting children. According to several doctors, the disease, called multi-organ inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C), has escalated due to post-Covid complications.

▶ **ACCORDING TO doctors, the disease, called multi-organ inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C), has escalated due to post-Covid complications**

Ganga Ram Hospital has set up a dedicated ward for such children.

Dr. Dhiren Gupta, Covid Specialist, and Paediatric Pulmonologist, and Intensivist, Senior consultant at Sir Ganga Ram

Hospital said that almost 70% of MIS-C patients require ICU bed. Dr Gupta said the hospital has been witnessing at least 10 cases in 24 hours. Cases of MIS-C have been seen in children during the recovery phase or after two to four weeks of acute Covid. "Last year, we also had MIS-C cases but this time the cases are much higher. At Ganga Ram, we have seen as many as 10 cases in 24 hours," he said.

Juhi's suit against 5G 'defective', filed for media publicity, says HC

New Delhi, June 2: The Delhi High Court on Wednesday termed as defective the suit of actress-environmentalist Juhi Chawla against setting up of 5G wireless networks in the country and said it was filed for media publicity.

The court also questioned Chawla for filing the suit without giving any representation to the government on her concerns related to the technology.

Justice J.R. Midha said the plaintiffs, Chawla and two others, were required to first approach the government for their rights and if denied,

they should come to the court. The court, which reserved order on the suit after hearing the arguments of various parties, also asked as to why as many as 33 parties have been added to the plaintiff and said it is not permitted under the law. It is not the sweet will of the plaintiff to join as many parties and cause of action. Please see the memo of parties. Tell me how you have joined them. Every party cannot be arrayed in the suit, the judge said. The court further said, "It is a defective plaint. This suit has been filed only for media publicity and nothing

more than that. It is very shocking. Did you approach the government with a representation? If yes, is there any denial?, the court asked to which the plaintiffs' counsel replied in negative.

The suit, filed by Chawla, social worker Veeresh Malik and Teena Vachani, said that if the telecom industry's plans for 5G come to fruition, no person, animal, bird, insect and plant on earth will be able to avoid exposure, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, to levels of RF radiation that are 10x to 100x times greater than what exists today.

— PTI

SHORT TAKES

PLEA TO REMOVE, CREMATE BODIES FLOATING IN GANGA

PARMOD KUMAR
NEW DELHI, JUNE 2

The Youth Bar Association of India on Wednesday moved the Supreme Court has for an immediate removal of the human bodies floating in the Ganga and other rivers and give them dignified cremation or burial as per the rituals, claiming that these were the bodies of the Covid victims whose families did not have the resources for their disposal. The petitioner — Youth Bar Association of India — has sought directions to the Centre and Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Bihar, and West Bengal to issue guidelines or formulate a standard operating procedure (SOP) for proper disposal of the bodies. The plea filed through advocate Manju Jaitley says floating of corpses in the river would cause environmental hazards besides violation of the guidelines of the National Mission for Clean Ganga. It has sought directions to the chief secretaries of the four states and the DMs to ensure no corpse is allowed to be thrown in the river on any ground and stern action be taken against the culprits.

VILLAGERS ATTACK HEALTH STAFF IN PALGHAR, 2 HELD

Thane: Villagers attacked a team of health workers who were going around villages to spread awareness about coronavirus among tribals in Maharashtra's Palghar district, the police said on Wednesday. The police has arrested two persons involved in the attack, while a manhunt has been launched to nab seven others, Palghar police PRO Sachin Navadkar said. The incident took place on Monday, when a team of five personnel from Durvesh primary health centre went to Ganje village for a Covid-19 awareness programme. The accused stopped the team, including doctors, from entering the village and beat them up, he said, adding that the villagers also vandalised the team's jeep. An offence under relevant sections of the IPC, Disaster Management Act and Epidemic Act has been registered against the accused. — PTI

Rahul urges people to speak up ■ Priyanka highlights flaws in distribution

Cong calls for free vaccines for all

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 2

The Congress on Wednesday urged the citizens of the country to speak up for free universal vaccination. The party took to social media to highlight its position. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi tweeted in hindi, "Vaccine is the strongest protection against Covid pandemic. You should also raise your voice to provide free vaccination to everybody and to wake the government up."

He also started the

#Speak Up and attached a video with his tweet to underscore the shortage of vaccines and how faulty policies of the center are responsible for the "slow pace" of vaccination in the country.

Meanwhile, Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi highlighted the flaws in vaccine distribution. She tweeted, "We are one of the biggest vaccine manufacturers in the world. Yet only 3.4% of our population is fully vaccinated. Who is responsible for India's confused and dithering vaccination

Vaccine is the strongest protection... You should also raise your voice to provide free vaccination to everybody and to wake the govt up.

— Rahul Gandhi, Cong leader

program? #SpeakUpForFreeUniversalVaccination." She also attached a video

along with her tweet. In her Facebook post she wrote, "Experts believe that to defeat coronavirus, vaccination is the key and the countries which have vaccinated its people have seen less impact of the second wave, but in our country it was 320 per cent more than the first wave." She further added that the citizens are asking why the situation has come to this that the state governments have to go for global tender and compete for different rates for the same vaccine. How the government is claiming to vac-

nate every Indian by the end of this year and what is the plan to vaccinate those who are deprived of digital connectivity?"

Party leader and Rajasthan chief minister Ashok Gehlot also said free universal vaccination is the right of every Indian. "All previous Central governments have been taking this programme forward. Now when the nation is grappling with an unprecedented health crisis, to deny vaccination to all is totally unjust," Mr Gehlot tweeted.



People, ignoring social distancing guidelines, visit the Jambhali Naka market after ease in Covid-19 lockdown restrictions in Thane on Wednesday. — PTI

Make your village 'corona free', win ₹50L: Maha starts contest

BHAGWAN PARAB
MUMBAI, JUNE 2

In order to curb the spread of coronavirus in rural areas, the Maharashtra government on Wednesday launched "Corona-Mukta Gaon" (corona-free village) competition, which will reward the successful villages with handsome cash prizes. The scheme has been inspired by the feat of five villages in the state, which have managed to eradicate the virus from their jurisdiction. The competition shall be held in all the six revenue divisions of the state with

top three villages in each division getting cash prizes worth ₹50 lakh, ₹25 lakh, and ₹15 lakh. In addition to this, these winning villages shall also be provided additional funds of ₹50 lakh, ₹25 lakh, and ₹15 lakh each, as incentives for various development works. "The corona-free village competition has been launched with an aim to encourage the efforts to chase the virus away from the rural areas and make the entire state free of coronavirus at the earliest," said state rural development minister Hasan Mushrif.

The competition has been announced on the backdrop of CM Uddhav Thackeray's appeal to people in rural areas to strive hard for making their villages corona-free. In his address, he had also praised the efforts of villages, which have attained Covid-free status in the state. Rural areas in Maharashtra have been hit hard by the second coronavirus wave than the urban parts of the state. More Covid-19 cases have been recorded as villages compared to cities, prompting the state machinery to concentrate more on rural areas.

Over 1L new Covid cases, 3,207 deaths in last 24 hrs

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 2

India on Wednesday recorded nearly 1.33 lakh fresh cases of Covid-19 and 3,207 fatalities in the last 24 hours.

This is the sixth day when less than 2 lakh daily new cases have been reported. With 17.94 lakh active cases, the viral caseload in India is below 20 lakh for two successive days now.

As per the Union health ministry, daily recoveries in the country continue to outnumber the daily new cases for the 20th consecutive day as 2.31 lakh people got discharged from medical supervision. The recovery rate has now climbed to 92.48 per cent and the daily positivity rate is 6.57 per cent — less than 10 per cent for the last nine days.

With a target to vaccinate the entire population by December this year, the Centre is moving fast on foreign vaccine approvals. It is learnt that the government has agreed to grant Pfizer and Moderna "partial" indemnity against legal proceedings and these two companies will soon apply for Emergency Use Authorisation of their vaccines.

Mob assaults doc, nurses after death of corona patient

Hospital ransacked ■ 24 held in Assam

MANOJ ANAND
GUWAHATI, JUNE 2

In what has created anger in the medical fraternity as well as civil society of the state, a mob brutally assaulted Seuj Kumar Senapati, a young doctor, and other staff of a Covid care centre at Udali in central Assam's Hojai district.

The assault, recorded on a mobile phone showing the young doctor being kicked and thrashed with brooms and utensils by the mob on Tuesday afternoon, went viral and triggered a sharp protest from doctors and others. Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma who was in New Delhi in his angry reaction to the incident said, "Twenty-four culprits involved in this barbaric attack have been arrested and a chargesheet will be filed at the earliest. I am personally monitoring this investigation and I promise that justice will be served."

The incident took place after Giasuddin, a Covid patient from Udali area, died at the hospital on Tuesday.

According to a letter issued by the Hojai unit of Indian Medical Association (IMA) to the deputy

I am personally monitoring this investigation and I promise that justice will be served.

— Himanta Biswa Sarma, Assam CM

commissioner of the district, the patient was admitted on Tuesday at 11 am and died three hours later at 2 pm.

The letter said that the mob damaged the building and also ransacked instruments at the centre besides "brutally assaulting" the doctor.

The IMA unit said that unless all the culprits involved in the attack are arrested by 7 am on Wednesday, all doctors of Hojai would boycott all out-patient duty (OPD) services.

It also asked the government to provide all hospitals and Covid centres with security cover, CCTV cameras and round the clock electricity.

"Instructions have been given to Hojai superintendent of police to arrest all persons involved in the assault," the special director general of police G.P. Singh said.

Odisha's former minister Routray dies of Covid-19

AGE CORRESPONDENT
BHUBANESWAR, JUNE 2

Senior Biju Janata Dal (BJD) leader and former minister Bijayashree Routray passed away on Tuesday evening while undergoing treatment at a private hospital in Bhubaneswar. He was 67.

Routray was undergoing treatment at the private hospital for post-Covid complications. He breathed his last at 5.30 pm.

He was first elected to the Odisha Legislative Assembly in 1990. He was elected from Basudevpur



constituency on a Janata Dal ticket. Later, he won twice on the Janata Dal ticket and four times on the Biju Janata Dal ticket. Chief minister Naveen Patnaik described him as a very popular leader. He spoke to Routray's son and family members and conveyed his condolence. Assembly Speaker S.N. Patro said he and Routray had been with Biju Patnaik since 1990. "He was one of my close friends," he said.

C'garh to hold 'exam from home'

MP, Gujarat, U'khand cancel Class 12 exams, others to take call soon

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY
with agency inputs
BHOPAL, JUNE 2

Following the Centre's decision to cancel Class 12 CBSE board exams in view of the Covid-19 pandemic, several states, including Gujarat, MP and Uttarakhand, called off their board exams on Wednesday while few others said they will take a call soon.

Maharashtra, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and UP are among the states which said they are soon going to announce a final decision in this regard.

Chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan took to Twitter to announce his government's decision not to hold this year's Class 12 board exam in the state.

"The Class 12 board examinations (conducted by MP Board of Secondary Education) for the year 2020-21 have been cancelled. The life of students is precious for us. We can take care of their career later," he said. Mr Chouhan said the option to take the examina-

tion would be available to the students after the pandemic.

The Chhattisgarh government, however, on Tuesday set in the process of holding the "exam from home" for the Class 12 board examinations in the state.

The students have been asked to collect their question papers and blank answers from the designated centres "in person" from June 1 to June 5 and submit their answer papers within five days of receiving the question and blank answer papers.

If any student has contracted Covid, then the kin of the student can collect the question and blank answer papers from the Centre on his or her behalf by producing necessary documents to prove their identity.

The answer papers written by the students needed to be submitted "in person" at the designated Centres from June 6 to June 10, failing which the particular student would be declared absentee in the examination, a spokesman of the Chhattisgarh government said.

MP honeytrap case: SIT fails to record Kamal's statement

Indore, June 2: A Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing the "honeytrap" case in Madhya Pradesh on Wednesday could not record a statement of state Congress president Kamal Nath as he was not available in Bhopal, an official said.

The honeytrap scandal, which came to light in 2019, was an organised racket wherein a gang used to lure rich and high-placed people

using young women and later blackmail them threatening to release objectionable content such as intimate videos and screenshots of social media chats. The young women were brought to Bhopal through trafficking, police had said.

Mr Nath had claimed in an online press conference on May 21 that he possessed a pen drive/CD of the honeytrap case. — PTI

NORTHERN RAILWAY				
Invitation of Tenders through E-Procurement System				
Deputy Chief Materials Manager, Northern Railway, New Delhi-110055, for and on behalf of the President of India, invites e-tenders through e-procurement system for supply of the following items:-				
S.No.	Tender No.	Brief Description	Qty.	Closing Date
1	82211773	Inj. Purified Anti Rabies Vaccine	10665	15.06.2021
2	82212475	Inj. Panitumumab 100 mg	158	15.06.2021
3	82212405	Inj. Trastuzumab 440	200	15.06.2021
4	82211859A	Inj. Bevacizumab 100 mg	200	18.06.2021
5	82212422	Inj. Nimolozumab(Biomab) 200 mg	100	18.06.2021
6	82210083	Inj. Pembrolizumab 100 mg	114	22.06.2021
7	82211024	Inj. Nivolumab 100 mg	275	22.06.2021
8	82210398	Tab. Osimertinib 80 mg	900	22.06.2021
9	82211026	Inj. Pertuzumab 420 mg	40	18.06.2021
10	82211027	Inj. Cetuximab 100 mg	530	18.06.2021
11	82212397C	Inj. Denosumab 120 mg	243	18.06.2021
Note: 1. Vendors may visit the IREPS website i.e. www.ireps.gov.in for details. 2. No Manual offer will be entertained.				
Tender Notice No. : 2/AM/2021-22/NRCH				1194/21
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE				

NORTHERN RAILWAY

TENDER NOTICE

Tender notice No. 219-S/1/TMC/06/2021-22 Dated: 01.06.2021

Chief Engineer/TMC, Northern Railway, Headquarters office, Baroda House, New Delhi-110001, for and on behalf of the President of India, invites 04 No tenders through E-Procurement system for supply of the following items:

S.	E-Tender No.	Description of item	Qty.	Due date Time
1.	A11P90TMC2021	SEAL SET, HYD ACCUMULATOR, UNLOADER VALVE & BROOM MOTOR FOR TRACK MACHINES.	04 Items	25.06.2021 at 11:30 hours
2.	A25P90TMC2021	TRANSMISSION OIL FOR TRACK MACHINES	2730 Ltrs.	25.06.2021 at 11:30 hours
3.	A26P90TMC2021	TUNGSTEN CARBIDE TAMPING TOOL FOR MFI	03 Sets	25.06.2021 at 11:30 hours
4.	A27P90TMC2021	VARIABLE DISPLACEMENT DRIVE PUMP	03 Nos.	25.06.2021 at 11:30 hours

Note:- 1. The complete information of above E-Procurement tenders are available on website "www.ireps.gov.in". The firms, who desire to participate against E-Tenders, are advised to electronically register themselves on the above website for which they would be required to have a class-III digital certificate from certifying agencies authorized under IT Act 2000, by Govt. of India. Manual offers against E-Tenders will not be accepted.

1192/21

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

Identification for Information of Unknown Vehicle Involved in Road Accident	
General Public is hereby informed that a person aged 70 years/male was injured in a road traffic accident involving an unknown vehicle on 05.11.2020 between 06:30-07:30 PM near gurudwara main GTK Road, Libaspur, Samaypur Badli Area Delhi. A case to this effect is registered at PS: SP Badli Vide FIR No. 746/20 DT: 06.11.2020. Search of Unknown offending vehicle is being made.	
All out efforts have been made to identify the unknown offending vehicle involved in the accident but in vain.	
If any person is having any clue/information, Regarding the offending vehicle please inform the undersigned.	
Website : http://cbi.nic.in e-mail : cbi@cbi.gov.in Fax : 011-24368639 Ph : 011-24368638, 24368641 DP/1048/ON/2021	SHO P.S., Samaypur Badli, Delhi Ph: 011-21710052 21710073/8118858473

Haryana is celebrating World Cycle Day

3rd June 2021

"Let's adopt the cycling habit, Better for health, makes us fit It Saves earth & reduces pollution Cycling is best for every generation"

-Manohar Lal, Chief Minister, Haryana

Sanitization | Mask | Social Distancing

Information, Public Relations & Languages Department, Haryana

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SHORT TAKES

5 dead, 5 hurt in MP as vehicle overturns

Gwalior: Five persons, including three children, were killed and as many were injured when a loading vehicle laden with wheat overturned in Jourasi Ghati area of Madhya Pradesh's Gwalior on Wednesday, the police said. In incident took place in the early hours of the day, when Nayagaon residents Govinddas Sahu and Lakhan Singh were travelling with their families to Gwalior from Narwar town in Shivpuri district, said Jairaj Kubler, additional superintendent of police rural. The victims were travelling in the loading vehicle carrying wheat, when it suddenly overturned while negotiating a turn in Jourasi Ghati, the official said. Four persons were killed on the spot, while another victim succumbed to the injuries at a hospital, he said. — *PTI*

Army, police bust recruitment racket

Pune: In a joint operation, the Army and the Pune police busted a fraudulent recruitment module, in which aspirants were promised jobs in various government services like the railways, banking, and Territorial Army, defence authorities said. Two persons have been apprehended in this connection from Solapur district in Maharashtra, and the duo appears to be part of a "bigger racket". "A fraudulent recruitment module involving the issuance of recruitment documents and circulation of results of prospective candidates through fake websites, for their selection into various government services like railways, banking, and Territorial Army, etc, being run from Pune, has been busted jointly by Army and police authorities," a defence release said. — *PTI*

3-day meeting of RSS begins today

New Delhi: Preparations for another Covid wave, post-poll violence in West Bengal and prevailing situation in the country are the issues expected to be discussed in a three-day 'get together' of top RSS functionaries starting from Thursday that will be chaired by Sangh head Mohan Bhagwat, sources said. The meeting assumes importance as it is being held days after RSS general secretary Dattatreya Hosabale met Sangh workers from politically-crucial Uttar Pradesh earlier this week. "Bhagwatji, Dattaji, all the five joint general secretaries and Suresh Bhaiyyaji Joshi will be in Delhi and hold a series of meetings to deliberate on various relevant and prevailing issues faced by the country," a source said. — *PTI*

SC slams Centre's vaccination policy

■ **Continued from Page 1**
courts lacking jurisdiction in conducting a judicial review of policies." "Our Constitution does not envisage courts to be silent spectators when constitutional rights of citizens are infringed by executive policies. Judicial review and soliciting constitutional justification for policies formulated by the executive is an essential function, which the courts are entrusted to perform," the court said in its 32-page order. Flagging several other flaws in its vaccine policy — including shortage of vaccine doses and problems faced by rural people in accessing vaccines — the court also directed the Centre to give an outline for "how and when the Central government seeks to vaccinate the remaining population in phases 1, 2 and 3" and the "steps being taken by the Central government to ensure drug availability for mucormycosis (black fungus)." The court has fixed June 30, 2021, for further hearing of the suo motu matter.

Naveen writes to CMs

■ **Continued from Page 1**
our citizens are vaccinated at the earliest," he said. The CM also stressed that execution of the vaccination programme has to be decentralised and states allowed the flexibility to determine their own mechanisms to ensure universal vaccination. Citing an example, he said many hilly areas cannot access the Internet and therefore online registration has to be flexible. Besides, vulnerable tribes can be given priority for immunisation. "I suggest that all state governments come to a consensus on the issue for early resolution of this problem, we should act fast before any third wave comes and creates further havoc," he said. The CM's letter to his fellow CMs in other states marks a clear departure from his earlier stand on vaccine procurement. In a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on April 16, the CM asked the Centre to make Covid-19 vaccines available in the open market for citizens willing to buy them. This would help state governments streamline their focus on the vulnerable sections of society, he had then contended.

New IT rules not applicable to search engine, claims Google

New Delhi, June 2: US-based Google LLC has contended that India's new IT rules for digital media are not applicable to its search engine, and urged the Delhi high court on Wednesday to set aside its single judge order which applied them on the company while dealing with an issue related to removal of offending content from the internet. The single judge's decision had come while dealing with a matter in which a woman's photographs were uploaded on a pornographic website by some miscreants and despite court orders the content could not be removed in entirety from the World Wide Web and "errant parties merrily continued" to re-post and redirect it to

other sites.

A bench of Chief Justice D.N. Patel and Justice Jyoti Singh issued notice to the Centre, Delhi government, Internet Service Providers Association of India, Facebook, the pornographic site and the woman, on whose plea the single judge's ruling had come, and sought their responses to Google's plea by July 25.

The court said it was not going to issue any interim order at this stage after Google told the bench that it was an intermediary, but not a social media intermediary, and sought protection against any coercive action for non-compliance of the template or guidelines laid down by the single judge.

The global technology giant had also sought



removal of the observation by the single judge that it was a social media intermediary.

Google contended that the single judge, in his April 20 judgement, "mischaracterised" its search engine as a 'social media intermediary' or 'significant social media intermediary' as provided under the new rules.

"The single judge has misinterpreted and misapplied the New Rules 2021 to the appellant's search

engine. Additionally, the single judge has conflated various sections of the IT Act and separate rules prescribed thereunder, and has passed template orders combining all such offences and provisions, which is bad in law," it has said in its appeal against the April 20 judgement.

According to the template framed by the single judge, when such matters related to offending content come before a court and it is satisfied that an immediate redressal was required at the interim stage, it may issue a direction to the website where the objectionable material is hosted to remove the same forthwith and maximum within 24 hours of receiving the judicial order.

— *PTI*

Didi's nephew meets son of Mukul, raises eyebrows

RAJIB CHOWDHURI
KOLKATA, JUNE 2

West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee's nephew Abhishek Banerjee on Wednesday evening met senior BJP leader Mukul Roy's son Shubhrangshu and enquired about his ailing mother Krishna, who has been admitted at Apollo Gleneagles Hospital in Kolkata after getting infected with Covid-19. Mukul, BJP's national vice-president who is staying at home following his recovery from the infection, was not present when the Trinamul Congress MP from Diamond Harbour visited at the hospital.

Mr Banerjee's calculated move, which the TMC insiders termed a "cour-



Abhishek Banerjee

tesy visit", has however raised eyebrows about Mukul's son within the BJP. Not wasting time, state BJP president Dilip Ghosh also visited the hospital and met Shubhrangshu.

It can be recalled that a couple of days back when the political slugfest was on between the ruling TMC and BJP, Shubhrangshu took to social media and without naming any party showed

his support towards the ruling Trinamul Congress, appealing not to criticise a 'government' which has come to power with people's verdict.

Only four days ago, the former Bijpur MLA of two times posted on Facebook, "Self-introspection is necessary before criticising a government that has come to power with a mandate." Shubhrangshu, who defected as an MLA from the TMC to the BJP, contested the Assembly Election this time but lost unlike his father.

It is pertinent to mention that during the poll campaigns the TMC Supremo Mamata Banerjee had time and again claimed that Mukul Roy is better than Suwendu Adhikari.

Goons surround UP police jeep, forcibly release wanted criminal

Kanpur, June 2: Eight people allegedly surrounded a police jeep and forcibly took away a wanted history-sheeter while he was being taken to Naubasta police station here on Wednesday, an official said. The criminal identified as Manoj Singh (33), having a long criminal history, was wanted in a case of murderous assault.

Kanpur's additional commissioner of police Akash Kulhari said Singh had gone to a private guest house situated at Hamirpur road in Naubasta area to attend a birthday party of a city office bearer belonging to the ruling BJP.

On a tip-off, Naubasta police team reached the spot and arrested the criminal who was immediately taken to a police jeep, Kulhari added.

Before the police party could leave, as many as eight persons arrived there and took Singh away from police custody and escaped from the scene.

The identities of all eight miscreants have been established with the help of video footage, the ACP said, while adding that a case under relevant sections of IPC is being registered with the Naubasta police. Police teams have been formed to make early arrests of those who took the wanted criminal from police custody and stopped police from discharging their duties. — *PTI*



A man sits on an elevated stand after floods due to heavy rain in Fatehpur. Several parts of Rajasthan recorded rainfall Wednesday due to an active western disturbance, keeping the mercury below the 40 Celsius-mark in most regions of the state.

— *PTI*

Over 5L engaged in mining, steel sectors face livelihood threat

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO
BHUBANESWAR, JUNE 2

As many as five lakh people, directly and indirectly engaged in mining and steel industries sectors in Odisha, hangs in balance as majorities of the industries now starve for raw material.

The acute shortage of iron ore, the key raw material, now threatens to leave many of the industries unviable. The country's leading industry bodies like Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) and Odisha Sponge Iron Manufacturers Association (OSIMA), have requested the state government for immediate intervention in the matter to protect the steel

ODISHA CRISIS

manufacturers so as to protect the jobs of employees and co-workers.

Odisha has 83 steel and sponge iron industries which along with mining royalties contribute nearly ₹30,000 crore to the state exchequer.

Knowing the economic value of the mining and steel industries, the Union government had announced these two sectors as emergency commercial activity during the ongoing Covid pandemic.

"Currently, the installed plants in the state need about 81.40 million tonnes per annum (MTPA) of high-grade iron ore after

deducting supply from captive mines, which has become impossible to source because of rampant inter-state export of iron ore outside the state, making it very challenging for Odisha based end-use plants to secure ore availability at reasonable prices," the OSIMA in its letter to the Odisha steel and mines principal secretary said.

The body said the mindless interstate export of iron ore has led to a substantial surge in the price of the mineral within a year, hitting the viability of several industries.

Once the steel industries become unviable, the fate of nearly five lakh people directly or indirectly employed in them will face the threat of job loss.

2 child marriages foiled in Maha

Pune, June 2: In separate incidents, two child marriages were foiled in Pune district of Maharashtra, officials said on Wednesday.

The operations were jointly carried out by the Women and Child Development Department and Pune rural police, they said.

In the first incident, a team of officials, comprising Alephata police and others, reached a marriage hall in Belhe village of Junnar tehsil and persuaded the parents of a 17-year-old girl not to marry her off.

The team also slapped a fine of Rs 5,000 on the marriage hall owner, the officials said.

The second incident also occurred in Junnar on Sunday.

Based on a tip-off, a team of officials and Junnar police foiled the attempt of a minor girl's marriage.

— *PTI*

BJP leader shot dead by militants in J&K

YUSUF JAMEEL
SRINAGAR, JUNE 2

Unidentified gunmen killed a local leader of the BJP and shot and wounded the daughter of his friend in Tral area of Jammu and Kashmir's southern Pulwama district late Wednesday night.

The police blamed the incident on separatist militants and said that it along with central security forces has launched a search operation in the area to capture the assailants dead or alive.

The police sources said that three gunmen targeted BJP leader Rakesh

Pandit inside the house of his friend and neighbour Mushtaq Ahmad whose daughter identified as Asifa Mushtaq was critically injured in the firing incident.

Pandit, a municipal councillor and resident of the Tral Payeen, was for being a protected person putting up at a secured accommodation in capital Srinagar and had been provided with two personal security officers by the police, the official said. But he chose to visit Tral without informing the police authorities and even did not take his PSOs along, they added.

Army Chief reviews LoC truce

■ **Continued from Page 1**
recruitment of youth into terrorist ranks. He was accompanied by Northern Command GOC-in-C Lt. Gen. Y.K. Joshi and 15 "Chinar" Corps commander Lt. Gen. D.P. Pandey.

Gen. Naravane expressed appreciation to the jawans and commanders relentlessly battling the dual challenges of Pakistan-abetted terror and the global pandemic. He was briefed by Lt. Gen. Pandey on the overall situation at the LoC and the hinterland at the Badami Bagh headquarters of 15 Corps in Srinagar.

Gen. Naravane held a separate meeting with J&K lieutenant-governor Manoj Sinha at Raj

Bhavan and is due to interact with civil officials and some others for a broader assessment of the overall security scenario.

A defence spokesman said the Army Chief was briefed by commanders in details on the measures to "identify and target" the OGWs' network "involved in radicalisation and recruitment of youth into terrorist ranks".

As already reported by this newspaper, the number of Kashmiri separatists' OGWs and sympathisers is swelling day after day, causing a serious concern among the security forces, who are combating a 31-year-old insurgency in J&K. In the past six months, the J&K police arrested several hundred

OGWs of various militant outfits and a couple of dozen more are at present under their surveillance.

A J&K government spokesman said the Army Chief and the lieutenant-governor at their Raj Bhavan meeting discussed the "recent internal security developments and prevailing security scenario" in the UT and "several internal and external security-related issues and their effective management". Mr Sinha, the spokesman said, stressed on the need to maintain close synergy between the Army and other security forces to meet the security challenges. Lt. Gen. Joshi and Lt. Gen. Pandey were present at the meeting.

5 days after youth's suicide, J&K teachers get due wages

■ **Continued from Page 1**
Mohammad Yunus Malik for allegedly sitting on files. The authorities had, however, cited "deficiency of documents and verification" as reason for not releasing the salaries of these teachers. Officials had privately also said that the salary of Shoa'b's father Bashir Ahmed Mir was stopped apparently over his alleged past links with separatists because of which the police had not given him the mandatory clean chit.

Bashir Ahmed Mir told local news agency KNO that though the school

education department has released his salary, it is being disbursed under the 6th Pay Commission, whereas he is entitled to get it as per the 7th Pay Commission. "If I'm not getting my rightful salary as per the 7th pay commission, I will not accept it," Mr Mir said.

He further said that he was released from police custody in 1998 after which he was recruited as Rehbar-e-Taleem teacher in the school education department. "After my appointment, the crime investigation department (CID) in its verification

had said that the person (Mir) has been silent since his release in 1998 and is busy with his profession", he claimed, adding that in March 2019 his salary was withheld by the then director of school education Kashmir, giving the cases pending in high court as reason for it.

"However, I had got a clean chit from CID and police," he said and added, "Last week my son ended his life after he couldn't pay the examination fee for his masters' degree and seeing the miserable financial condition we have been going through."

Rajasthan: Man kills infant son, wife, drags her body on street

Kota (Rajasthan), June 2: A man hacked his wife to death and then dragged her body on the street here, police said on Wednesday, adding that their infant son, who was injured in the attack, died at a hospital later.

In the incident that took place on Tuesday night in the Bhatapara area, the accused was identified as Sunil Valmiki (40) alias Pintu, they said.

Earlier deputy superintendent of police (DSP) and circle officer (CO) Ram Kalyan told PTI that Valmiki surrendered at Rampura police station and confessed to the crime, leaving his wife's body on the street.

Later, in a contradictory statement, station house officer (SHO) Hansraj Meena said he moved towards the station to confess but ran away.

"The accused did not surrender but absconded from the spot after (committing) the crime efforts are underway to nab him," Mr Meena said.

According to police, on Tuesday afternoon, the accused picked his wife Seema (35) and their nine-month-old son from her brother's house. Their elder son, aged nine years, stayed back with his uncle and grandmother.

The couple had an argument in the evening, the DSP said,

adding the man attacked his wife with an axe.

The accused then dragged her body for 70 to 80 metres on the street, triggering panic among the people, the officer said. The infant son died during treatment at a hospital on Wednesday morning.

However, it was not clear how the infant suffered injuries, police said, adding the bodies of the woman and the child were sent for postmortem.

The man, a daily wage, was booked under relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code.

Seema and Sunil got married around 15 years ago and had two sons. — *PTI*

THE ASIAN AGE

3 JUNE 2021

Targeting ex-chief secy to hit bureaucracy's morale

The way the Narendra Modi government is going about evidently trying to punish the recently retired chief secretary of West Bengal, Alapan Bandyopadhyay, is unlikely to fill the civil service with confidence or motivation.

Across the Union government bureaucracy, especially at senior levels where policies are grappled with, the Delhi Durbar under the present PM is widely thought to be hamstrung by signs of cliquishness, leaving the energetic and the hard-working demoralised. The Bandopadhyay episode could deepen faultlines caused by favouritism.

Policymaking and policy implementation are apt to be a casualty in such a setting since civil servants hesitate to offer frank and unbiased assessments in the process of policy formulation for fear of falling foul of the regime and eventually be singled out for unwarranted disciplinary action on false pretexts. The example of Mr Bandyopadhyay has every potential to exacerbate such anxieties. This is bad for India. Because only a favoured few were consulted, major policy missteps such as demonetisation ensued.

It is irrelevant how the Bandyopadhyay affair ends. What is pertinent is that the episode is malodorous. Its ramifications extend to weakening the structures of governance...

Senior levels of the civil service and retired top civil servants appear to have been flabbergasted by the treatment being meted out to the former West Bengal chief secretary. It seems hardly believable that the topmost civil servant of a state should be sought to be punished for being 15 minutes late for a meeting called by the PM. This was the so-called PM-CM meeting to review the impact of the cyclone Yaas which was full of BJP leaders who had no place in such a discussion. To make matters more absurd, Mr Bandyopadhyay is being proceeded against under the Disaster Management Act.

In a major newspaper article, a former cabinet secretary has noted that the chief secretary was to retire from service on May 31, but at the state government's request was granted an extension as chief secretary. However, only four days later, he was asked to report for work in New Delhi on the day he was to superannuate. This is after the Kalaikunda incident, giving scope for the conjecture that the Centre's action has a political trigger and an upright civil servant finds himself caught in the crossfire.

The retired senior official has indicated that the move against Mr Bandyopadhyay was peremptory in nature as Mr Bandyopadhyay had not been cleared for "deputation" by the state. Nor had the Centre requested his services on deputation. Besides, he had not been empanelled for the post of secretary in GOI. In the event, the relevant rule that the Centre prevails over a state — when there is a difference over the release of an officer on deputation — does not apply in this particular case.

It is not unlikely that the ayatollahs of rule-making in New Delhi were only too aware of this aspect and therefore chose to summon the former chief secretary under the National Disaster Management Act to receive his punishment. (It is telling that the yoga teacher-entrepreneur Ramdev does not attract the penal provisions of NDMA for trudging the medical effort against Covid.)

In the final analysis it is irrelevant how the Bandyopadhyay affair ends. What is pertinent is that the episode is malodorous. Its ramifications extend to weakening the structures of governance and administration in India, besides casting in prejudice the valuable principles of Centre-state relations on which our federalism rests.

Testing time for students

The cancellation of the CBSE and CISCE Class 12 board exams was, perhaps, the easier decision to make. It will resonate with the primary stakeholders who are students as anxiety levels were the highest among them and their parents amid the deadly second wave of Covid-19 pandemic. A spate of cancellations of state board exams is bound to follow though only four states among all states and UTs had expressed their opposition to the proposal to hold the exams. The decision to cancel emanated from the Prime Minister who, well aware of the nervousness in youth, may have lent an empathetic ear to the students' cause.

Simpler it may have been to choose cancellation over conduct of exams but the hard part begins only now as acceptable objective criteria have to be defined in the onerous task of judging students on merit for university. The future of over one crore Class 12 students in various streams, including 14 lakh in CBSE, is at a crossroads (about 1.43 crore students appeared for different school leaving exams in 2020). While performance in internal school assessments during Class 12 or Plus-2 may be used to determine the tabulation of marks, it might be altogether fairer if a student's performances from classes 9 to 12 were to be collated and weightage given to that too. Fixing the evaluation procedure is going to be an unenviable task.

The elite institutions in engineering and medical have their own entrance tests to determine admissions, but arts and science colleges have traditionally depended on marks in school finals. A common universities entrance test might be worth considering but there too the question remains of timing an objective test amid the pandemic whose third wave is expected later in the year. The intricate task of finding a level playing field is not going to be achieved without inviting complications. Beyond that lies a greater threat to a whole generation of students who have to put up with less than satisfactory Zoom education as opposed to the congeniality of real-world learning in classrooms among peers.

THE ASIAN AGE

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Dilip Cherian
Dilli Ka Babu



Too much PMO! Ex-babus chide Modi on vaccine policy, state ties

In the context of the second Covid surge, a group of 116 former civil servants has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi accusing the government of not addressing the crucial issues at stake.

What makes this "open letter" significant is that the signatories include former Cabinet Secretary K.M. Chandrasekhar, former foreign secretary and national security adviser Shiv Shankar Menon, former health secretary K. Sujatha Rao, former adviser to the Prime Minister T.K.A. Nair, former chief information commissioner Wajahat Habibullah and former Delhi lieutenant governor Najeeb Jung, among others.

Now unfettered by civil service regulations and free to speak their mind, these former babus, who call themselves the Constitutional Conduct Group, have alleged that the Centre has botched the efforts to tackle the spread of the pandemic and urged Mr Modi to take urgent action, including centralising procurement and supply of vaccines which should be administered

free and universally to all Indians. They have also expressed concern about the "steady erosion of the Cabinet system of governance" (too much PMO!) and deteriorating ties with the states.

Of course, there is nothing new in the missive. The ordinary citizens, Opposition parties, and even the judiciary in several states have been raising these same issues. The "coalition" of the willing that Mr Modi seemed to have created since his ascent to power in 2014 is now beginning to crack. The government had managed the narrative adroitly so far, but in the face of the Covid pandemic, it now seems unable to contain the growing dissent in the country over its pandemic policy.

KHEMKA SETS OFF CENTRE-HARYANA TUSSELE ON POSTINGS

The unrelenting Ashok Khemka has struck again. The Haryana cadre IAS officer and whistleblower has brought to light blatant violations of the civil service rules by the Haryana government. It appears that the state

government has been appointing IPS, IAS and IRS officers to IAS cadre posts such as principal secretary without the Centre's sanction.

Sources say that Mr Khemka had made a representation to Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba in December last year, but it has taken a while for the department of personnel and training (DoPT) to sit up and finally take notice.

The department has now called for a detailed report from the Khattar sarkar on the status of these postings. It has advised the state administration to stick to the IAS cadre rules and not appoint other all-India cadre officers to IAS cadre posts of principal secretaries and certainly not for a period beyond three months, without the department's prior approval. Some may recall that a similar situation had arisen in Nagaland where the government was appointing state service officers to IAS cadre posts.

Mr Khemka, the officer who flagged the issue, should be satisfied with the Centre's response since it is such a

rare thing!

EXTENSION RAJ

The Modi sarkar has given a year's extension for Intelligence Bureau chief Arvind Kumar and RAW chief S.K. Goel in the interest of "continuity". Both are IPS officers. Interestingly, these extensions come after the setback to plans when both senior IPS officers, Rakesh Asthana and Y.C. Modi, were left out of the race to become the CBI chief. This, only after the Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana objected to their names, citing a Supreme Court ruling which states that only officers who have more than six months left for retirement could be considered.

But the government lost no time in quickly approving extended terms, in the case of IB and RAW chiefs. Note, it is only an extension and not a new appointment. Insiders say that the extension to the two officers was given after relaxing the existing rules.

Similarly, there is buzz that the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) chief Pramod Chandra Mody is hoping

for another extension. This, after two extensions, one of six months and another of three months already!

Of course, it will be argued that it is the PM's prerogative to retain trusted officers in supra-sensitive posts such as the IB and RAW chiefs. It also doesn't hurt a bit, if you are also close to the national security advisor Ajit Doval.

Questions will, of course, be asked about the problems such extensions create within the next in line. While the line of succession at IB is not really affected much by Mr Kumar's extended term, but in the case of Goel, the extension will ensure that at least two senior RAW officers will retire before his extended term ends.

While this practice allows the favourites to continue for a bit longer, it does kill the hopes of officers hoping to retire at the top of their service. But that's the subject for another day... keep watching this space.

Share a babu experience! Follow [dilipthecherian](https://twitter.com/dilipthecherian) on Twitter.com. Let's multiply the effect.

Subhani



Protect vulnerable to heal fractures, revive economy



Patralekha Chatterjee

Dev 360

India's prisoners offer a telling insight into the state of the country's economy. In Uttar Pradesh, the country's most populous state, 21 jail inmates have recently written to the authorities saying they don't want parole. Their reason: staying in prisons is "safer and healthier" during the Covid-19 pandemic. They know that in the world outside, there won't be free food nor regular health checkups and they will have to struggle for a living.

The signs of economic distress are everywhere. Even as the Centre and state governments continue to weigh in on the grim maths between lives and livelihoods, it is becoming obvious that social protection for our vulnerable makes for a compelling moral argument as well as an economic and social one.

Without it, neither the pandemic-battered economy nor the fractured will gain normality any time soon.

India has begun to take baby steps to emerge from the lockdowns that were triggered by the sharp spike in coronavirus cases in the "second wave".

Currently, there are flickers of promise: the daily infections are falling in many places though Covid-19 deaths still remain high at around 3,000 every day. Worryingly, the virus continues to course through the countryside.

This week, manufacturing and construction work was allowed to resume in Delhi and some other areas, but with many roads remaining barricaded, transporting material is not easy and there is an acute shortage of labourers. Many have gone back home.

This time around, there was transport so there have been no long marches down national highways like last year, after the first nationwide lockdown. But clearly, many

labourers who come to big cities in search of livelihoods have little faith in their employers or the State to look after them during lockdowns.

"In the past year, we have not put in solid social protection mechanisms for migrant workers or those working in the informal sector. There is the odd relief scheme for limited periods or cash transfer through Jan Dhan, but these have limited reach," says Amit Basole, associate professor of economics at Azim Premji University, one of the key authors of a study, "The State of Working India 2021: One year of Covid-19", brought out by the university.

In the absence of a real social protection mechanism in the cities, people have gone back to their villages. This should surprise no one. Neither should it come as a surprise that this will impact attempts to unlock the economy.

"Overnight, we may not be able to formalise all informal workers, but we need to definitely start putting in place a more solid social protection mechanism as a matter of immediate priority," Prof. Basole stresses.

Why is not this a bigger issue? Perhaps the heart-breaking images of deaths, often without dignity, have something to do with it.

"The huge health crisis and graphic images of the dead have overshadowed the severe economic crisis across the country. Not only has the informal sector been rendered more precarious, many who earlier had salaried jobs are now being forced into odd jobs and errands to do to survive as a result of the pandemic, lockdowns and various other restrictions," says Prof. Basole.

He speaks movingly about a school bus driver he knows who is trying to make a living ferrying vegetable from wholesale markets to retail shops.

"But this is not a stable way of earning a living. Admittedly this is only anecdotal, but it's not difficult to imagine many more such cases may be there."

The report says mobility restrictions, such as those caused by lockdowns, predictably lead to income losses due to decreased economic activity. "We find that a 10 per cent decline in mobility was associated with a 7.5 per cent decline in income. This number is useful to keep in mind when estimating the impact of future lockdowns," it cautions.

Predictably, the poor who lack cushions have been the worst-hit. Nearly half of formal salaried workers moved into informal work, either as self-employed (30 per cent), casual wage (10 per cent) or informal salaried (nine per cent) workers, between late 2019 and late 2020.

Women have been affected more and households have tried to cope by cutting back on food intake, selling assets, and borrowing informally from friends, relatives, and moneylenders.

Government relief measures have helped, but exclusions were also common. In a recent commentary, "The Covid-19 Crisis and People's Right to Food", development economists Jean Dreze and Anmol Somanchi note that relief measures helped, but they were patchy.

"A large majority of the population had access to PDS in 2020 (with enhanced monthly rations for eight months), and this played a critical role in averting the worst. But it's possible some of the supplementary rations got diverted, initially at least, and significant minority of poor households had no access to PDS at all for lack of a ration card. Other relief

As Dreze and Somanchi put it: 'The Covid-19 crisis brings out once again that India needs a more reliable and comprehensive social security system'

measures such as NREGA and cash transfers also had a patchy coverage."

Given the unpredictable trajectory of the virus, it's hard to forecast when lockdowns may be reimposed. All the more reason to invest in a solid social protection mechanism to minimise the damage due to disruption.

"The State of Working India 2021" suggests some urgent policy measures. These include extending free rations under PDS beyond June, at least till the end of 2021, cash transfer of ₹5,000 for three months to as many vulnerable households as can be reached with the existing digital infrastructure, including but not limited to Jan Dhan accounts, expansion of MGNREGA entitlement to 150 days, revising programme wages upwards to state minimum wages, expanding the programme budget to at least ₹1.75 lakh crores, launching a pilot urban employment programme in the worst-hit districts, possibly focused on women workers, increasing the Central contribution in old-age pensions, automatically enrolling all MGNREGA workers who do construction work, as registered workers under the Building and Other Construction Workers (BoCW) Act so that they can access social security benefits and a Covid hardship allowance for Anganwadi/Asha workers of ₹5,000 per month for six months.

All these measures together will cost money — approximately ₹5.5 lakh crores of additional spending and bring the total fiscal outlay on Covid relief to around 4.5 per cent of GDP over two years.

But what will be the cost of not having this large fiscal stimulus, given the magnitude of the distress?

As Dreze and Somanchi put it: "The Covid-19 crisis brings out once again that India needs a more reliable and comprehensive social security system."

The writer focuses on development issues in India and emerging economies. She can be reached at patralekha.chatterjee@gmail.com.

LETTERS

NOT MERITOCRATIC

The postponement of the 12th standard CBSE exams has yet again proved the inefficiency of the government. It also undermined the hard work and hopes of lakhs. They will now be given grades as per internal assessments by the schools. This will hamper the prospects of the sharpest minds. The question is, if the central government can successfully hold the Assembly elections in five states, then why can't it handle the exams?

Navneet Seth
Dhuri, Punjab

FAIR AND BOLD MOVE

THE CENTRE'S decision to scrap the Class XII CBSE and CISCE board examinations this year brings the curtains down on weeks of uncertainty that had students and parents on edge. It cited the concern over the health and safety of the students as the primary reason for cancelling the exams. The Prime Minister directed officials to ensure that the results are prepared under the well-defined criteria in a fair and time-bound manner. The move to cancel the board exams came even though all states and Union Territories — barring Delhi and Maharashtra — had given written consent for conducting the pen-and-paper mode tests.

N.J. Ravi Chander
Bengaluru

IMAGE-BUILDING

THE GIRL complaining to Narendra Modi in a video about the burden of homework is certainly cute. But the cuteness quotient cannot be the basis to dictate policy. Only merits of the argument should matter. Virtual classrooms for six-year-olds should be reduced to the minimum and a four-hour routine is not in the best interests of the child. Homework should be avoided for all primary classes. I could be wrong but the entire episode seems very much like a PR exercise designed to refurbish the image of the PM. Perhaps he wants to defect the opprobrium he has garnered from all, including wealthy and middle class parents, for spoiling the chances of their children to secure a bright future.

Anthony Henriques
Mumbai

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

SHORT TAKES

THIRD GIANT PANDA CUB BORN IN MALAYSIA

Kuala Lumpur, June 2: A giant panda loaned to Malaysia from China has given birth to a rare third cub during its stay in the Southeast Asian country, wildlife officials said Wednesday. The cub was born Monday at Kuala Lumpur zoo to Liang Liang, who has been on loan to Malaysia since 2014 along with a male panda, Xing Xing, said the country's wildlife department.

Officials have been unable to get a close look at the new cub, and do not yet know its sex as it is being closely cared for by its mother. The first cub, Nuan Nuan, was born in August 2015 and was sent to China in 2017 as part of Beijing's agreement with Malaysia over cubs born in captivity.

COUP: MALI SUSPENDED FROM AFRICAN UNION

Nairobi, June 2: The African Union announced it was suspending Mali with immediate effect and threatened the impoverished country with sanctions, after a second military coup in nine months.

The putsch has sparked deep concerns over stability in the volatile Sahel region and warnings of economic penalties from across the international community.

The AU "decides... to immediately suspend the Republic of Mali from participation in all activities of the African Union, its Organs and institutions, until normal constitutional order has been restored in the country", the body's Peace and Security Council said in a statement late Tuesday.

INDONESIA HALTS SALVAGE OF SUNKEN SUB

Jakarta, June 2: Indonesia has called off its bid to salvage a military submarine that sank off the coast of Bali, killing all 53 crew aboard, the navy said Wednesday.

The KRI Nanggala 402 disappeared in April while it was scheduled to take part in live torpedo training exercises.

An underwater rescue vehicle later spotted the German-built sub lying on the sea floor more than 800 metres (2,600 feet) deep, broken in several parts and confirming there was no hope of finding survivors. Chinese salvage ships were sent to help with efforts to haul up the vessel.

But Indonesia's military said Wednesday that it was ending the operation after a meeting with Chinese naval counterparts.

FOREIGN PLOT: JORDAN REFERS 2 TO SECURITY COURT

Amman, June 2: Jordan has referred the cases of two former senior officials accused of taking part in a foreign plot linked to the half-brother of King Abdullah II to a national security court, the official *Petra* news agency reported.

Bassem Awadallah, a former Cabinet minister and one-time head of the royal court, and Sharif Hassan bin Zaid, a member of the royal family, were swept up in a wave of arrests in April.

Prince Hamzah, a former crown prince, was placed under a form of house arrest. The government accused them of being part of a foreign plot to undermine the stability of the country, which is a close Western ally.

TWO RUSSIANS DO SPACEWALK AT INT'L STATION

Moscow, June 2: Two Russian cosmonauts ventured out of the International Space Station Wednesday on a spacewalk to prepare for the arrival of a new Russian module.

It's the first spacewalk for both Oleg Novitsky and Pyotr Dubrov, who arrived at the space station in April, and it's expected to last about 6 1/2 hours. The two needed to get the space station ready for the undocking and disposal of the Pirs docking compartment, which will be replaced later this year by the new Nauka (Science) multipurpose laboratory module. They have already replaced a fluid flow regulator and also need to replace biological and material science samples on the exterior of the Russian modules. The two team up with NASA astronauts Mark Vande Hei, Shane Kimbrough and Megan McArthur; Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency astronaut Akihiko Hoshide; and European Space Agency astronaut Thomas Pesquet.

APPOINT ENVOY FOR MYANMAR, INDONESIA URGES ASEAN

Jakarta, June 2: Indonesia's foreign minister on Wednesday urged the Association of Southeast Asia Nations to immediately appoint a special envoy on Myanmar in response to its military coup, and reiterated a call for the safety of civilians as the ruling junta cracks down on opposition.

After holding talks with EU foreign affairs chief Josep Borrell in Jakarta, Retno Marsudi said Indonesia is continuing to communicate with the Asean chair and other member countries following their demand for an immediate end to killings and the release of political detainees in Myanmar.

Asean leaders met in April in Jakarta with Myanmar's coup leader, Senior Gen Min Aung Hlaing. They also agreed that a dialogue between parties in Myanmar should immediately start, with the help of the Asean envoy.

The special envoy appointment must be completed immediately, Marsudi said. The safety and well being of the Myanmar people must continue to be a priority." An Indonesian diplomat familiar with the Myanmar issue said Wednesday that Brunei, which currently holds Asean's rotating chairmanship, will send Second Foreign Minister Erywan Yusof to meet the junta on Saturday.

The diplomat said the visit is aimed at seeking Myanmar's approval of the Asean envoy. — AP



Isaac Herzog

ISSAC HERZOG ELECTED PREZ OF ISRAEL

Jerusalem, June 2: Isaac Herzog, a veteran politician and the scion of a prominent Israeli family, has been elected president, a largely ceremonial role.

An anonymous vote was held on Tuesday among the 120 members of the Knesset, or parliament. Herzog, 60, is a former head of Israel's Labor Party and opposition leader who unsuccessfully ran against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in the 2013 parliamentary elections. He will succeed Reuven Rivlin, who is set to leave office next month.

Herzog is scion of a prominent Zionist family. His father, Chaim Herzog, was Israel's ambassador to the United Nations before being elected president. His uncle, Abba Eban, was Israel's first foreign minister and ambassador to the United Nations and United States.

His grandfather was the country's first chief rabbi.

— AP

B.1.617 variant superspreader: UNHCR

Agency warns of vax crunch in the Asia-Pacific region, including for asylum-seekers

United Nations, June 2: The highly-infectious Covid-19 variant first detected in India "threatens" to rapidly spread in the sub-region, including among refugees, the UN refugee agency has said as it warned of vaccine shortages in the Asia-Pacific region, including for asylum-seekers. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) spokesperson Andrej Mahecic, at a press briefing in Geneva on Tuesday, said that the fragile health systems in many countries in the Asia and Pacific region have struggled to cope with the recent surge of coronavirus cases.

"We are particularly worried about the situation in the Asia and Pacific region, which in the past two months has experienced the largest increase in the number of cases globally," he said. Over this period, there have been some 38 million recorded Covid-19 cases and more than half a million deaths, the UNHCR spokesperson said.

"The lack of hospital beds, oxygen supplies, limited Intensive Care Unit (ICU) capacities and scarce health facilities and services have worsened outcomes for those infected with Covid-19, particularly in India and Nepal.

The highly infectious variant of the virus which first emerged in India threatens to rapidly spread in the sub-region, including among refugee populations," Mahecic said. The B.1.617 Covid-19 variant, first detected in India, is divided in three lineages — B.1.617.1, B.1.617.2 and B.1.617.3.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has said that only B.1.617.2 is now a "variant of concern," observing that lower rates of transmission have been observed for the other two lineages, making them no longer variants of concern.

The B.1.617.2 is now labelled variant Delta and has been reported in 62 countries as of June 1. With Covid-19 raging in many parts of the world, the UNHCR warned of shortages of vaccines in the Asia-Pacific region, including for refugees and asylum-seekers.

UNHCR spokesperson Mahecic said: "We urge an immediate and stronger support for the COV-AX initiative, a worldwide effort aimed at achieving equitable access to Covid-19 vaccines.

— PTI

Nepal: Bench to be formed June 6

Kathmandu, June 2: A new Constitutional Bench of Nepal's Supreme Court will be formed on June 6 to hear a bunch of petitions challenging the dissolution of the House of Representatives, the Chief Justice announced on Wednesday after differences among justices delayed the crucial hearing.

Chief Justice Cholendra Shumsher Rana's announcement came as justices Deepak Kumar Karki and Anand Mohan Bhattarai on Wednesday opted out of the five-member Constitutional Bench, presided over by the Chief Justice and hearing the House dissolution case.

The two justices opted out after justices Tej Bahadur KC and Bam

— PTI



Movie-goers watch Danish Oscar-winning movie "Druk" (Another Round) featuring Danish actor Mads Mikkelsen (on screen) at a temporary open air cinema in Berlin's Kulturforum (Culture Forum) area, as restrictions were eased amid the novel Covid-19 pandemic.

— AFP

Penury hits 100 mn workers: UN

Geneva, June 2: The pandemic has pushed over 100 million more workers into poverty, the UN said Wednesday, after working hours plummeted and access to good quality jobs evaporated. In a report, the UN's International Labour Organisation (ILO) cautioned that the labour market crisis created by the pandemic was far from over, with employment not expected to bounce back to pre-pandemic levels until 2023 at the earliest.

The ILO's annual World Employment and Social Outlook report indicated that the planet would be 75 million jobs short at the end of this year compared to if the pandemic had not occurred. And it would still count 23 million fewer jobs by the end of next year. Covid-19 "has not just been a public health crisis, it's also been an employment and human crisis," ILO chief Guy Ryder said.

"Without a deliberate effort to accelerate the creation of decent jobs, and support the most vulnerable members of society and the recovery of the hardest-hit economic sectors, the lingering effects of the pandemic could be with us for years in the form of lost human and economic potential, and higher poverty and inequality." The report showed that global unemployment was expected to stand at 205 million people in 2022 — far higher than the 187 million in 2019.

But the situation is worse than official unemployment figures indicate. Employment and Social Outlook report indicated that the planet would be 75 million jobs short at the end of this year compared to if the pandemic had not occurred. And it would still count 23 million fewer jobs by the end of next year. Covid-19 "has not just been a public health crisis, it's also been an employment and human crisis," ILO chief Guy Ryder said.

— PTI

Ensure passengers have -ve report, S'pore tells airlines

Singapore, June 2: The authorities here have told airlines to ensure that those coming to Singapore have a valid negative coronavirus test report before boarding a flight.

The measure applies on Singapore citizens and permanent residents (PRs) too, a Channel News Asia report said.

Previously only long-term pass holders and short-term pass visitors

entering Singapore were required to present a negative COVID-19 polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test report.

The new directions have come after the Ministry of Health announced last week that Singaporeans and PRs are now required to present a report of the test, taken within 72 hours before departing for Singapore.

"Airlines must not allow

a passenger to board the flight to Singapore if that passenger fails to produce the result of the required PCR test or if the result of that PCR test is positive. They will be responsible to carry a person who is denied entry into Singapore back to the point of departure, said Margaret Tan, Security Director at the Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore.

44% US troops back from Kabul

Washington, June 2: The US Central Command has said that an estimated 30 to 44 per cent of American troops have been withdrawn from Afghanistan until last month, inching closer to achieve President Joe Biden's ambitious target of 100 per cent removal of its military from the war-torn country by September 11 this year. The US has also officially handed over six facilities to Afghanistan's Ministry of Defence, the US Central Command (CENTCOM) said in an update on the withdrawal of American forces from Afghanistan till May 31.

"US Central Command estimates that we have completed between 30-44 per cent of the entire retrograde process," it said on Tuesday.

President Biden in April announced that all

11 September 2021: President Joe Biden's ambitious target of 100 per cent removal of United States military personnel from Afghanistan — the war-torn country. About 2,400 US soldiers have been killed.

06 facilities have been officially handed over to Afghanistan's Ministry of Defence by the United States, the US Central Command said in an update on the withdrawal of American forces from Afghanistan till May 31.

American troops would be withdrawn from Afghanistan by September 11 this year; thus bringing to end the country's longest war, spanning across two decades. Since the President's decision, the Department of Defence has retrograded the equivalent of approximately 300

C-17 loads of material out of Afghanistan and have turned nearly 13,000 pieces of equipment to the Defence Logistics Agency for disposition, CENTCOM said.

The United States and the Taliban signed a landmark deal in Doha on February 29, 2020 to bring

lasting peace in war-torn Afghanistan and allow United States troops to return home from America's longest war.

Under the US-Taliban pact, the US has agreed to withdraw all its soldiers from Afghanistan in 14 months. There are currently 2,500 American troops left in Afghanistan, the lowest level of American forces in the war-torn country since 2001. Since the US-led invasion that ousted the Taliban after the September 11, 2001 attacks, America has spent more than \$1 trillion in fighting and rebuilding in Afghanistan.

About 2,400 US soldiers have been killed, along with tens of thousands of Afghan troops, Taliban insurgents and Afghan civilians.

— PTI

As many as 300 Black

RACIAL | VIOLENCE

Last June, former President Donald Trump was greeted by protests during his visit

Biden marks Tulsa Race Massacre in graphic speech

Tulsa, June 2: An emotional President Joe Biden marked the 100th anniversary of the massacre that destroyed a thriving Black community in Tulsa, declaring Tuesday that he had "come to fill the silence" about one of the nation's darkest — and long suppressed — moments of racial violence. "Some injustices are so heinous, so horrific, so grievous, they cannot be buried, no matter how hard people try," Biden said.

"Only with truth can come healing."

Biden's commemoration of the deaths of hundreds of Black people killed by a white mob a century ago came amid the current national reckoning on racial justice.

"Just because history is silent, it does not mean that it did not take place," Biden said. He said that "hell was unleashed, literal hell was unleashed." And now, he said, the nation must come to grips with the following sin of denial.

"We can't just choose what we want to know, and not what we should know,"

said Biden. "I come here to help fill the silence, because in silence wounds deepen."

After Biden left, there was a spontaneous singing by some audience members of a famous civil rights march song, "Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around." The events on Tuesday stood in stark contrast to then-President Donald Trump's trip to Tulsa last June, which was greeted by protests.

Or the former president's decision, one year ago, to clear Lafayette Square near the White

House of demonstrators who gathered to protest the death of George Floyd, a Black man, under the knee of a white Minneapolis police officer.

In 1921 — on May 31 and June 1 — a white mob, including some people hastily deputized by authorities, looted and burned Tulsa's Greenwood district, which was referred to as Black Wall Street.

On Tuesday, the president, joined by top Black advisers, met privately with three surviving members of the Greenwood

community who lived through the violence, the White House said. Viola "Mother" Fletcher, Hughes "Uncle Red" Van Ellis and Lessie "Mother Randle" Benningfield Randle are all of the ages of 101 and 107.

Biden said their experience had been "a story seen in the mirror dimly." "But no longer," the president told the survivors. "Now your story will be known in full view."

Outside, Latasha Sanders, 33, of Tulsa, brought her five children and a nephew in hopes of

spotting Biden.

"It's been 100 years, and this is the first we've heard from any US president," she said. "I brought my kids here today just so they could be a part of history and not just hear about it, and so they can teach generations to come."

John Ondieck, another Tulsa in the crowd following Biden's speech on cellphones, said he was encouraged that "There aren't just Black people here. That tells me there's an awakening going on in this country."

As many as 300 Black

Tulsans were killed, and thousands of survivors were forced for a time into internment camps overseen by the National Guard. Burned bricks and a fragment of a church basement are about all that survive today of the more than 30-block historically Black district.

Several hundred people milled around Greenwood Avenue in front of the historic Vernon African Methodist Episcopal Church awaiting Biden's arrival at the nearby Greenwood Cultural Centre.

— AP

quick
BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	51,849.48	-0.16
Nifty 50	15,576.20	0.01
S&P 500*	4,209.71	0.18
Dollar (₹)	73.08	-0.23
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.36	0.01
Euro (₹)	89.01	0.18
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	48,772▼116	0.23
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	71.15	1.28
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.005	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.593	-0.022

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Assocham seeks wage support, interest subsidy

Assocham asked the government to extend relief measures such as regulatory easing, wage support, and interest subsidy for the MSMEs. As the states are in the process of easing lockdowns, the trade and industry would need support to pick up their business thread again, it said. It has suggested that the surplus funds of ESIC should be used for providing wage support measures/stimulus packages for the employees.

Ruchi Soya enters nutraceuticals; to sell 10 products



Ruchi Soya Industries said it has made a foray into the nutraceuticals and wellness segment and initially will launch 10 products under the brand 'Patanjali' and 'Nutrela'. Ruchi Soya aims to have a range of products across various categories in the next one year, it said. To start with, the firm is launching 10 products, including vitamin B12, iron complex, vitamin D, vitamin C and zinc complex, daily energy and weight gain, among others.

SMS alerts for IPO process via UPI only from next yr

Markets regulator Sebi gave time till January 1, 2022 for implementation of guidelines pertaining to SMS alerts under the UPI system for shares applied and allotted during an initial public offering. Earlier, the deadline for putting in place automated web portal with respect to IPOs through UPI system has also been extended to October 1. The framework was to come into force from May 1.

Rossari Biotech to acquire Unitop Chem for ₹420 cr

Speciality chemicals manufacturer Rossari Biotech announced the acquisition of Unitop Chemicals, a supplier of surfactants, emulsifiers, and specialty chemicals, for Rs 421 crore. Rossari will buy 100 per cent equity capital of Unitop, with 65 per cent shares acquired upon closure of the transaction, and the balance 35 per cent over the next two years. The total consideration for 100% stake is Rs 421 crore.

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■ States will have to change rent laws
Union Cabinet clears Model Tenancy Act

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, JUNE 2

The Union Cabinet has on Wednesday approved the much-awaited Model Tenancy Act, which is expected to give a fillip to rental housing and property markets across the country.

The Act, the government said, will help overhaul the legal framework on rental housing, enable creation of adequate rental housing stock and enable institutionalisation of rental housing.

The states and Union territories can now adopt the law through fresh legislation or by amending existing rental laws.

As per the Act, the states can set up rent authorities in cities, and landlords and tenants will have to be present before the authority to get rent agreements registered. The Act will also enable setting up of rent courts or tribunals to address rent-related disputes. These courts will have to pass an order within 60 days of receiving a complaint.

Further, the Act has several provisions to safeguard the interests of both tenants and landlords. Tenants will be liable to pay double the rent for two months and four times the rent in the consequent months if they stay after expiry of the rental agreement.

Landlords can approach the rent court asking for eviction, if the tenants fail to pay the rent for two months in a row. Unless mentioned in the

UNLOCKING VACANT PROPERTIES

▶ Tenants will be liable to pay double the rent for two months and four times the rent in the consequent months if they overstay in a property

▶ Landlords can approach the rent court asking for eviction, if the tenants fail to pay the rent for two months

▶ Landlords cannot ask for more than two months of rent as security deposit

▶ Landlords will have to give three months' notice to the tenant before raising the rent



rent agreement, the landlord cannot hike the rent during the agreement period. The landlord will have to give three months' notice to the tenant before increasing the rent. Further, the landlord will be responsible for the structural maintenance of the property.

Landlords in states that adopt the policy will not be able to ask for more than two months of rent as security deposit.

The Act also stipulates that the tenant cannot sublet the whole or part of the accommodation without the landlord's permission.

Similarly, landlords need to give a written notice 24 hours in advance to visit the premises. They cannot make a visit before 7 am and after 8 pm.

Naredco president Niranjan Hiranandani said the new law "would make things easier for all stakeholders tenants, landlords

and investors to transact in rental housing."

The model Act will facilitate unlocking of vacant houses for rental housing. "It is expected to give a fillip to private participation in rental housing as a business model for addressing the huge housing shortage," Hiranandani said.

The new act would bring in over 11 million vacant urban houses into the rental market and help address the country's massive housing shortage, said Pankaj Bhansali, COO, Equo Guarantees, a surety solutions provider.

Samantak Das, chief economist and head-research & REIS, JLL, a global property consultant, said, "The Model Tenancy Act is going to give a guiding framework to all states to make their respective tenancy Acts contemporary. Current Acts will give way to the new ones where uniformity will prevail."

BYJU'S, GOOGLE IN TIEUP TO OFFER SCIENCE, MATHS IN SCHOOLS

New Delhi, June 2: Education technology firm Byju's on Wednesday announced a partnership with tech giant Google to offer a learning solution' for schools.

With this, the simplicity, flexibility and security of Google Workspace for Education and Byju's content pedagogy come together on the 'Vidyartha' platform to aid effective learning at school, according to a statement.

This integration of Google Workspace for Education with Byju's would offer a collaborative and personalised digital platform for classroom organisation, available for free to participating educational institutions, the statement added.

"With a commitment to digital education, Google Workspace for Education will combine Byju's unparalleled pedagogy to empower educators in their journey towards digital transformation," the statement said.

Built on the Vidyartha platform, this partnership will provide direct access to Byju's math and science pedagogy and visually rich learning solutions, including chapter-wise slides, readymade assignments, data banks, summary docs, handouts, tests, among others.

The acceptance of online learning in the last one year has led to the swift digitisation of the education system, Byju's noted. —PTI

Mercedes to sell cars directly to customers

MICHAEL GONSALVES
PUNE, JUNE 2

Mercedes-Benz, India's biggest luxury car maker, on Wednesday announced it will completely revamp its sales model in the country and sell its new cars directly to customers.

Through a new 'Direct To Customer' model, which the company terms as the 'Retail of the Future', the Pune-based German car-maker said it will start selling its cars directly to customers from the October-December quarter.

The dealers will remain an integral part but will not be involved in transactions with the customer or buy stock from Mercedes-Benz.

In this new circular sales model, customers will contact dealerships (now called franchise partners) to buy a Mercedes car. But the dealer's responsibility will rest on providing a suitable brand experience to the customer through showcasing Mercedes-Benz cars, offering sales consulting and test drives.

The dealer will facilitate the sale of the car as well but Mercedes-Benz India will own all the stock of its manufactured/ imported models. Customers will be invoiced directly by Mercedes-Benz and there will be no financial transactions with the dealer.

For customers, it means transparent prices, and an end to bargaining for a better price, Mercedes-Benz said, as the cars will be now sold directly to customers by the company itself.

The industry's first new retail service will be



implemented in India from Q4 2021 onwards, Mercedes-Benz said.

The Indian arm of the German carmaker will now own the entire stock of cars, sell them via appointed dealers, invoice the new cars to its customers directly, process the order and fulfill them, and offer one price and purchasing experience for customers.

The dealer, on the other hand, will handle establishing and maintaining customer contacts, developing the market, and facilitating the sale of Mercedes-Benz cars.

"A key reason for introducing 'Retail of the Future' is to create an enhanced luxury buying experience for our customers," Martin Schwenk, MD & CEO, at Mercedes-Benz India, said.

He said it also will deliver a win-win solution for both customers and our dealers, underscoring our clear vision for a future which is sustainable, empowering, and digital.

The changes to the 'Retail of the Future' strategy for the customer include one price directly offered by Mercedes-Benz, cars will be invoiced

directly by Mercedes-Benz India and not by the dealers, and a much-simplified purchase process that is hassle-free.

For the dealers, the new retail model will help them reduce inventory costs and allow them to cater to the specific needs of its customers with a single centralised system that gives access to a larger pool of stock cars.

Mercedes-Benz India will be responsible for centrally managing the selling price of all new cars, owning and managing the entire stock of new cars, and processing and fulfilling the order, reducing delivery time.

Schwenk said dealers will continue as brand representatives, maintaining their connection with customers and strive to offer the best customer experience in the market.

The dealers will continue to cater to after-sales service, remain brand representatives in the market, will be responsible for developing customer relationships, will continue to manage operational handling of customer interactions, and will continue local retail marketing activities.

MPC begins meet, likely to hold rates

FALAKNAAZ SYED
MUMBAI, JUNE 2

With the second phase of the Covid-19 pandemic impacting consumption and growth, the monetary policy committee (MPC) of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is likely to maintain status quo on policy rates, continue with an accommodative policy stance and ensure adequate liquidity in the system in an effort to stimulate growth. The MPC, which is the rate-setting panel, began its three-day deliberations on Wednesday and would announce its decision on Friday.

The MPC has kept key policy rates unchanged in the last five bi-monthly policy meets.

The RBI's annual report 2020-2021, released last week, has already made it clear that "the conduct of monetary policy in 2021-22 would be guided by evolving macroeconomic conditions, with a bias to remain supportive of

growth till it gains traction on a durable basis while ensuring that inflation remains within the target".

The report added that the central bank would ensure that the system-level liquidity remains comfortable during 2021-22, is aligned with the stance of monetary policy, and monetary transmission continues unimpeded while maintaining financial stability. In the assessment of the RBI, the evolving CPI inflation trajectory is likely to be subjected to both upside and downside pressures. The food inflation path will critically depend on the temporal and spatial progress of the south-west monsoon in 2021.

While the country's GDP growth has sequentially improved, the near-term outlook for the economy remains clouded with extreme uncertainty and downside risks. Since the previous monetary policy review in April 2021, most of the states have

announced stringent lockdowns, reflected by a jump in Oxford's Stringency Index for India from 58 at the start of April to 74 during the month of May.

These restrictions have severely impacted business activities with the contact-intensive sector facing the highest strain while mobility dropped significantly compared with Q3 and Q4 of FY21.

M. Govinda Rao, chief economic advisor of Brickwork Ratings, said, "The better-than-expected GDP numbers provide much-needed comfort to the MPC on the growth outlook. However, with the imposition of partial lockdown-like restrictions to contain the virus spread in several parts of the country, the downside risk on growth recovery has intensified. Hence, the RBI is likely to continue with its accommodative monetary policy stance in the decision of the MPC meeting to be announced on June 4 2021."

Biden targets tax break on property capital gains

DAVID KOCINIENSKI &
CALEB MELBY
JUNE 2

President Joe Biden is pushing to close a tax break that helped his predecessor amass a fortune.

The Democrat has proposed narrowing a tax code provision that allows real estate investors to avoid capital gains taxes when they sell property, as long as they use the gains to buy more. Former president Donald Trump's most valuable investment, which traces back to his \$95 million purchase of a west-side Manhattan development site, has benefitted from the rule.

In 2005, when Trump's partners agreed to sell the site for \$1.8 billion—a deal Trump resisted—his cut was about \$500 million. Because the partners then used the capital gains from the sale to purchase two office towers, they and Trump didn't owe any tax on their gains. Today, Trump's stake in the buildings is worth about \$1.2 billion before accounting for debt. Biden's plan would

eliminate that kind of manoeuvre for Trump and thousands of others with real estate investments.

The so-called 1031 like-kind exchange rule, named after a section of the tax code, was created a century ago to aid family farmers. It has evolved into a beloved tool of property moguls, *Fortune* 500 companies and real estate trusts that can use it to create a daisy-chain of tax avoidance.

It works like this: An investor buys a building for \$4 million and sells it later for \$10 million. By redeploying the proceeds into a new property within six months, she can defer paying taxes on her gains. She can repeat that process indefinitely. When coupled with another tax break that wipes out all capital gains at death, the 1031 provision can enable real estate investors to forgo capital gains taxes entirely, enabling family dynasties to pass on riches to heirs virtually tax-free. Some wealth managers call the strategy "swap 'til you drop." —Bloomberg

MERCHANDISE EXPORTS JUMP IN MAY



SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, JUNE 2

Despite the second wave of infections, merchandise exports grew both yearly and sequentially in May. With imports declining sequentially, the trade deficit shrunk to an eight-month low of \$6.32 billion in May.

Merchandise exports in May 2021 stood at \$32.21 billion—67.39 per cent higher than the low base of \$19.24 billion in the lock-down-hit May 2020. The exports were also 7.93 per cent higher than \$29.85 billion in the pre-pandemic May 2019. Most importantly, exports continued to grow sequentially by 6.6 per cent compared to \$30.21 billion in April 2021, despite the second wave.

In the case of imports of \$38.53 billion, there has been an increase of 68.54 per cent over \$22.86 billion in May 2020, but a decline of 17.47 per cent over \$46.68 billion in May 2019. Imports were also 15 per cent down sequentially compared to \$45.45 billion in April 2021.

This helped India cut its trade deficit to \$6.32 billion compared with \$15.24 billion in April 2021 and \$16.84 billion in May 2019. However, the trade deficit was higher than \$3.62 billion in the lock-down hit May 2020.

"The merchandise trade deficit shrunk to an eight-month low \$6.3 billion in May 2021 from \$15.2 billion in April 2021 as the state-wise restrictions widened, curbing domestic demand for both gold and oil. A predominant 63 per cent of the decline in the trade deficit in May 2021 relative to April 2021 was on account of the collapse in gold imports, with the balance led by a narrower oil deficit," said Aditi Nayar of Ibra.

FENDING OFF | THE VIRUS

Ginger, garlic, turmeric demand up globally

‘Halo’ crops reap pandemic profits

LIBBY GEORGE, SABRINA VALLE & NIGEL HUNT
JUNE 2

In a flowing cream hijab, Karima M. Imam walks through her fields in scrubland in northern Nigeria as workers harvest a gnarled brown root that has turned gold since Covid struck: ginger.

"If I had the capital, I'd plant more. People are looking for ginger now, and there is not enough," she said at her five hectare farm on the outskirts of Kaduna.

As the pandemic rages, people around the world have sought to guard against illness by turning to so-called halo foods. While scientists have dismissed many claims on social media about how superfoods can fend off



the virus, their positive role as part of a healthy diet is widely acknowledged.

As demand for halo foods surges, prices for ginger in Nigeria and acai berries in Brazil have leapt while exports of Indian turmeric and Chinese garlic have jumped in the past year.

"The demand for ginger is high because they are using it as medicine," Imam said, adding that during the lockdown she

boiled ginger with turmeric and garlic to take as a remedy.

Increasingly health conscious consumers have given an already buoyant global spice market a further boost during the pandemic, heightening investor interest in the sector.

Singapore's Olam International completed the purchase of major US spice manufacturer Olde Thompson last month while Norway's Orkla took a controlling stake in Indian spice exporter Eastern Condiments in March.

In Nigeria, a 50 kg bag of ginger, which can help the body ward off germs and is used as a cold remedy, now sells for 15,000 naira (\$39), up from 4,000 to 6,000 naira two years ago.

Thanks to the ginger

rush, Imam has been able to start building a new house in nearby Millennium City, with a small warehouse attached so she can store and sell fresh ginger.

Prices began rising last year but since January they have taken off due to pandemic-related demand, said Florence Edwards, national president of the Ginger Growers, Processors and Marketers Association of Nigeria.

She said there had been demand from all over the world, citing India, China and Europe among popular markets.

There has also been a surge in demand for acai, a fruit rich in antioxidants hyped as a superfood. The state of Para in Brazil is the world's largest producing region. —Reuters

SHORT TAKES

Will miss Marin at Games: Sindhu

New Delhi: Star Indian shuttler P. V. Sindhu on Wednesday wished Spain's Carolina Marin a speedy recovery after she was forced out of the Tokyo Games due to a freak knee injury and said she will miss the reigning Olympic champion at the quadrennial event. Marin suffered a torn anterior cruciate ligament in her left knee during training and pulled out of the showpiece event on Tuesday. "So sorry to hear about your injury. Hoping that you will recover soon and come back stronger," Sindhu, who had settled for the silver medal at Rio Games after losing to Marin in the final, said in a video message posted on twitter. "I will miss you at the Olympic Games but hope we compete against each other soon, so come back fast and recover soon. Lots of love," Sindhu said. — PTI

Pak departure to England delayed

Islamabad: The Pakistan cricket team's departure to England has been pushed back by two days after the Pakistan Super League final was rescheduled for June 24 in Abu Dhabi. The PSL was earlier scheduled to end on June 20 and the national team was due to leave for England on June 23 to play three ODIs and three Twenty20s. However, with the PSL final pushed back by four days, the national team will leave for England on June 25. The first ODI is scheduled for July 8 in Cardiff. Abu Dhabi will host the remaining 20 games of the PSL after Pakistan's premier domestic twenty20 league was postponed in March when several players and support staff tested positive for Covid-19. — AP

Task cut out for Ind against Qatar

Doha: Their preparation was far from ideal but India would take inspiration from the draw against Asian champions Qatar in 2019 when they face the same opponents in the second-leg match of the joint World Cup and Asian Cup qualifiers, here on Thursday. India had held mighty Qatar 0-0 in September 2019 here, a result considered as one of the best for the side in recent times. But India are playing their home match here as the Qatari capital was chosen as the centralised venue for all the remaining Group 'E' matches after the qualifiers were halted last year due to the Covid-19 pandemic. India's performance, however, has gone south since then while Qatar, the group toppers, have come into Thursday match on a high. — PTI

Ancelotti back as Real Madrid coach

Madrid: Carlo Ancelotti has rejoined Real Madrid as coach for the next three seasons, the Spanish club said on Tuesday. "Hello Madrid!" the 61-year-old Italian who succeeds Zinedine Zidane posted on Twitter. Ancelotti, who won the Champions League for Real Madrid during his first spell at the club between 2013 and 2015, will sign his contract and be presented to the media on Wednesday, the club said in a statement. It took less than a week for Real Madrid to turn the page on Zidane criticising the lack of confidence shown in him by the club hierarchy. Instead, Ancelotti is about to be reunited with the club president Florentino Perez who ruthlessly ousted the coach in 2015, just one year after he led the club to a 10th Champions League title. — AFP

Booker leaves Lakers in lurch

Los Angeles: Devin Booker scored 30 points as the Phoenix Suns left LeBron James and the depleted Los Angeles Lakers facing elimination from the NBA playoffs on Tuesday with a crushing 115-85 victory. Phoenix took full advantage of the injury absence of the Lakers' Anthony Davis to dominate the defending NBA champions from early in the first quarter before romping to a win. — AFP

NADAL MODE ON

Rafael, Djokovic start off with a winning note in French Open

Paris, June 2: Novak Djokovic and Rafael Nadal began their bids for Grand Slam history with comfortable wins on Tuesday. World No.1 Djokovic kicked off his bid for a 19th Grand Slam title with a 6-2, 6-4, 6-2 win over Tennyson Sandgren inside an empty stadium. Nadal, the 13-time champion and chasing a record-setting 21st major, defeated Alexei Popyrin of Australia 6-3, 6-2, 7-6 (7/3). The Spaniard now has 101 wins against just two losses at the tournament. Djokovic saw off world number 66 Sandgren in straight sets for his fourth win in four meetings with the American.

Top seed Djokovic, the champion in Paris in 2016, is attempting to become the first man in more than 50 years to win all four Slams multiple times.

The Serb fired 33 winners and broke serve five times as he set up a clash with Pablo Cuevas of Uruguay for a place in the last 32. Nadal, meanwhile, has now won 26 sets in a row at the tournament.

NAVARRO LOSES MATCH AFTER CANCER RECOVERY

A "proud" Carla Suarez Navarro came close to winning her first match back after recovering from cancer at the French Open on Tuesday, but bowed out in the first round with defeat by Sloane Stephens. The Spaniard was told in September 2020 that she was suffering with Hodgkin's lymphoma. But almost nine months later, Suarez Navarro is back after recovering following eight chemotherapy and 15 radiotherapy sessions. The 32-year-old served for the match against 2018 runner-up Stephens but lost 3-6, 7-6 (7/4), 6-4. — AFP

OTHER RESULTS

Men's singles second round: Alexander Zverev (GER x6) bt Roman Safiullin (RUS) 7-6 (7/4), 6-3, 7-6 (7/1); Henri Laaksonen (SUI) bt Roberto Bautista Agut (ESP x11) 6-3, 2-6, 6-3, 6-2; Casper Ruud (NOR x15) bt Kamil Majchrzak (POL) 6-3, 6-2, 6-4; John Isner (USA x31) bt Filip Krajinovic (SRB) 7-6 (8/6), 6-1, 7-6 (7/5); Reilly Opelka (USA x32) bt Jaume Munar (ESP) 6-3, 6-2, 3-6, 7-5. **Women's singles second round:** Elena Vesnina (RUS) bt Petra Kvitova (CZE x11) — walkover; Daria Kasatkina (RUS) bt Belinda Bencic (SUI x10) 6-2, 6-2; Polona Herczeg (SLO) bt Caroline Garcia (FRA) 7-5, 6-4; Ana Bogdan (ROM) bt Naomi Osaka (JPN x2) — walkover; Victoria Azarenka (BLR x15) bt Clara Tauson (DEN) 7-5, 6-4.



Rafael Nadal of Spain returns the ball to Alexei Popyrin of Australia during their men's singles match at the French Open tennis tournament in Paris on Tuesday. Nadal won in straight sets at 6-3, 6-2, 7-6 (7/3). — AFP

Questions won't stop for Osaka

Paris, June 2: Unfortunately for Naomi Osaka, the questions will keep coming. There's nowhere to run and certainly no place to hide when you're a superstar travelling the world and playing on the biggest stages in tennis.

Some of the questions may be repetitive. Some may even be a bit negative, though for the most part those in the tennis media tend to treat top players with kid gloves.

Regardless, it's part of her job to answer them. That's not going to change, even with Osaka's withdrawal from the French Open after refusing to appear at the news conferences every other top player accepts as part of the job.

Only now she'll have even more questions to answer.

That's not entirely Osaka's fault, though she did herself no favors by the clumsy way she handled her mini media revolt in Paris. She blew off her first post-match news conference, after declaring earlier in a posting online that she didn't want to



Naomi Osaka reacts to losing a point in this file photo.

hear the same questions over and over and saying that reporters tend to kick players while they are down.

In other words, she didn't want to answer questions about why she didn't play better on clay.

Osaka rebounded a bit in a second statement announcing her withdrawal, and that's where it gets tricky. She revealed she had suffered long periods of depression after winning the U.S. Open in 2018 and that she suffers great anxiety when faced

with having to answer questions from journalists at news conferences.

We all can and should be sympathetic to that. Depression and anxiety can be devastating and debilitating, as anyone who has suffered from them or dealt with a family member who has them knows so well.

Nobody should begrudge Osaka's decision to withdraw from a major championship because she's having trouble coping with those issues. Indeed, we should all support her

efforts to improve her mental health.

But let's make this clear: this isn't a media problem. It isn't a news conference problem.

Frankly, until Osaka said she would not show up for her news conference and then blew off tournament organisers who wondered why, no one even knew there was a problem.

There's nothing inherently wrong with a system that requires athletes who are paid millions of dollars to perform to be asked about their play afterward. There's also nothing wrong with reporters asking an occasional question that may not fit the positive narrative Osaka wants when writing about the newest star in tennis.

It's part of the reason why tournaments like the French Open sell out expensive seats every year. It's a lot of the reason Forbes said Osaka made \$37 million in 2019, most of it in endorsements from companies that expect Osaka to generate lots of press for their products. — AP

Virat charged up for WTC battle

Mumbai, June 2: India captain Virat Kohli is not too concerned about the limited preparation time that his team will get for the World Test Championship final against New Zealand as he believes that it has the requisite understanding of conditions from its past experience of playing in England.

India take on New Zealand in the marquee game at Southampton from June 18. Currently, New Zealand are engaged in a two-Test series against England, while India would be in quarantine after landing there, including three days of hotel quarantine.

"...look, in the past we have landed in places three days prior even in a proper schedule and have had a hell of a series and hell of competition, so it is all in the head," Kohli said in the pre-departure press conference.

Virat insisted that it was also about the mindset.

"...it is not the first time we are playing in England, we all know what the conditions are like," he said. "And even if you are used to the conditions, if you don't enter the field in the right frame of mind, you are going to nick that first ball or you are going to find it tough to pick wickets," added the superstar.

According to Kohli, his side would not have any issues even if it gets just four practice sessions.

We don't have any issues even with four practice sessions heading into the WTC final, because we are absolutely sure of what we can do as a team and we all have played in England.

— VIRAT KOHLI
India cricket team captain

"...we don't have any issues even with four practice sessions heading into the game, because we are absolutely sure of what we can do as a team and we all have played in England.

"Whether it is with the Indian team or India A as well, for the likes of (Mohammed) Siraj...so we are not bothered by that at all and we just want to get there and make the most of the opportunity at hand," he added.

Kohli echoed coach Ravi Shastri's thoughts about the World Test Championship final holding a lot of value.

"All of us take a lot of pride in playing Test cricket, and the way we have progressed as a side is an example of what Test cricket means to us. So, for all of us as a unit, those who have been part of the Test side for many years, this is like an accumulation of all the hard work," he said.

— PTI

DOMESTIC PLAYERS PITCH FOR CENTRAL CONTRACTS

New Delhi, June 2: As the BCCI works out a compensation package and a formula to distribute it for the Covid-19 hit domestic cricketers, voices demanding central contracts for such players are getting louder with seasoned names like Jaydev Unadkat, Sheldon Jackson and Harpreet Singh Bhatia leading the chorus.

Last month, former India player and domestic veteran Rohan Gavaskar had also called for state associations to introduce contracts for players over and above their match fees, just like it is for the national team.

Majority of domestic players don't get to play IPL, don't have job security and rely heavily on match fees, which took a beating last season with Ranji Trophy being cancelled due to the pandemic.

Saurashtra captain and India player Jaydev Unadkat doesn't need the security of a contract but he feels it should be introduced for the top 30 cricketers of the state.

"Talks over central contracts were happening even before the pandemic. Even cricketers at the age group level should be compensated for the lack of cricket, it will keep them motivated and then hand contracts to senior players," Unadkat said.

— PTI

Conway hits ton to bolster Kiwis

London, June 2: New Zealand's Devon Conway joined a select group of cricketers on Wednesday by marking his Test debut with a splendid hundred (136 off 240 balls) at Lord's to lead New Zealand to 246 for 3 against England at the end of first Day's play.

The South Africa-born opener found himself thrust into the action straight away after New Zealand captain Kane Williamson won the toss and batted in the first of a two-match series against England.

But while star batsman Williamson and the experienced Ross Taylor both fell cheaply, the 29-year-old Conway pressed on to a 163-ball century, reaching the landmark with a flamboyant whipped legside four, his 11th boundary off England debutant fast bowler Ollie Robinson.

Only five other batsmen had previously scored a Test debut hundred at

Lord's, with Conway the first New Zealand international to achieve the feat.

New Zealand had the better of the morning session to be 85-1 at lunch after Williamson won the toss.

But James Anderson, equalling retired former captain Alastair Cook's England record of 161 Test appearances, struck in the first over after the interval to remove star batsman Williamson for 13 as the runs dried up.

And fast bowler Robinson, who'd earlier dismissed Tom Latham, then had the 37-year-old Taylor lbw for 14.

Latham and Conway made a steady start against England new-ball greats Anderson and Stuart Broad after Black Caps skipper Williamson won the toss.

Brief scores (Day 1): New Zealand 246/3 in 86 overs (Devon Conway 136 batting; O. Robinson 2/50) vs England.

AUSSIE PLAYERS TO RAISE FUNDS FOR COVID-HIT INDIA

Sydney, June 2: Top Australian cricketers including star pacer Pat Cummins will participate in a 12-hour gaming live stream on Thursday to raise money for UNICEF Australia's India Covid Appeal.

The brainchild of pacer Josh Lalor, the initiative will let fans watch the likes of Cummins, spinner Nathan Lyon and the pace duo of Mitchell Starc and Josh Hazlewood on a live stream when they talk about cricket and showcase their gaming skills in a bid to raise AUD 100,000. The fundraiser will begin at 1:30 pm IST and will also see participation from Moises Henriques, women cricketer Alyssa Healy and South African Rilee Rossouw among others.

"Being a cricketer from Australia, we have a unique relationship with Indian people," Lalor told cricket.com.au.

— PTI

Croatia, Armenia play 1-1 stalemate

Paris, June 2: World Cup runners-up Croatia were held to a 1-1 draw by Armenia on Tuesday in their first warm-up match for Euro 2020.

Inter Milan winger Ivan Perisic opened the scoring for the home side in the 24th minute, with coach Zlatko Dalic's team up against England, the Czech Republic and Scotland at the Euros.

But Armenia made the most of a rare sortie into Croatia territory when Wbeymar Angulo equalised in the 72nd minute.

Lazio striker Vedat Muriqi hit all four goals, including one penalty, as Kosovo outclassed San Marino 4-1.

Kosovo's neighbours North Macedonia came

close to claiming the scalp of Slovenia after Napoli midfielder Elif Elmas scored the opening goal.

But home hearts were broken as Domen Crnigoj snatched an equaliser for Slovenia in the seventh minute of injury time.

North Macedonia are drawn with Austria, the Netherlands and Ukraine at the June 11-July 11 Euros.

Slovakia, in Group 'E' alongside Poland, Spain and Sweden, were held to a 1-1 draw by Bulgaria.

In the only game pitching two Euro-bound sides against each other, the Poles played out a 1-1 draw against Russia, in Group 'B' with Belgium, Denmark and Finland. — Agencies



Croatia's Duje Caleta-Car (left) and Armenia's Tigran Barseghyan fight for the ball during a friendly match at Velika Gorica on Tuesday. — AFP

Veda recalls Covid trauma in family

New Delhi, June 2: "Completely destroyed" after losing her mother and sister to Covid-19 recently, Indian women's team cricketer Veda Krishnamurthy says she is slowly learning to tune herself out of that grief and stressed on the importance of mental health assistance in crisis situations.

Nine members of Krishnamurthy's family battled the disease and her mother and sister passed away within two weeks of each other last month in Karnataka. "I'm a big believer in

what destiny holds for you, but I really hoped that my sister would come back home. When she didn't, I was completely destroyed. All of us were broken to pieces," Krishnamurthy told ESPNcricinfo.

"...I still had to put up a brave face for the rest of the family. What I had to do in those testing couple of weeks was learn to tune myself out of my grief. But it keeps coming back to haunt you," she said. The middle-order batter said she was the only one in the family not to contract the virus and



Veda Krishnamurthy

ended up coordinating all the medical needs at that time. It was then that she realised how difficult it would have been for several other people to access basic care. "Going through my Twitter feed

at the time, I felt a lot of people were struggling with something as basic as getting a doctor to instruct them on what they should be doing — whether that was isolating at home or something else," she recalled.

Speaking about the mental aspect of dealing with a health crisis and the ensuing tragedy of such a magnitude, Krishnamurthy said her mother and sister also suffered from anxiety while battling the illness.

"Mental strength is important. My oldest sister, Vatsala, had panic

attacks before she passed away from Covid," the 28-year-old said.

Krishnamurthy also revealed that she has dealt with mental health issues of her own in the past and called for a structured support system for those in need.

"A lot of people who are playing cricket currently know what mental health is, but it is also important to accept that if the system is not doing anything to offer you mental-health assistance, you can and must find the support for yourself if you can afford it," she added. — PTI