FRIDAY
25 JUNE
2021

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PEOPLE'S PARLIAMENT, ALWAYS IN SESSION

MCAFEE CREATOR FOUND DEAD IN SPANISH PRISON

P10

'DON'T PROJECT ME AS CHIEF MINISTER'

P4

DECODING REPRIEVE FOR YEDIYURAPPA

P7

'KOHLI LOST AS PEERS DID BADLY'

P12

WEATHER

Partly cloudy sky with light rain/thundershowers with gusty winds at few places towards afternoon/evening. The maximum and minimum temperatures would be around 38 and 28 degrees Celsius respectively.

RAINFALL: Nil

RELATIVE HUMIDITY
Max: 75% Min: 46%

TEMPERATURE
Max: 38.2°C (+1) Min: 28.3°C (0)

SUN RISES	SUN SETS
05:26 hrs	19:23 hrs
MOON RISES	MOON SETS
20:17 hrs	06:42 hrs

THUMBNAILS

Jan Adhikar Party activists put a motorcycle on fire during their protest against petrol and diesel price hike, in Patna on Thursday. (See P5)

Judge reserves order on Mamata's recusal plea: The Calcutta High Court on Thursday reserved its order on West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee's application seeking recusal of a judge from hearing her petition challenging the election of her BJP rival from Nandigram Suvendu Adhikari apprehending bias because of his links to the saffron party. Justice Chanda, whose recusal Banerjee has sought, reserved his judgment after hearing the submissions. (P4)

Four held in Delhi's Israel embassy blast case: The Delhi Police Special Cell has arrested four students from Ladakh in connection with the Israel embassy blast case in New Delhi, sources said on Thursday. According to sources, the students were arrested from Kargil and taken to Delhi on transit remand. A minor IED blast took place outside the Embassy of Israel in the heart of Lutyens' Delhi on January 29. (P2)

CBI books Gautam Thapar in Yes Bank case: The CBI on Thursday carried out searches at six locations after registering a fresh case of fraud of Rs 2,435 crore in Yes Bank and other consortium banks against former CG Power and Industrial Solutions chairman Gautam Thapar who is already under probe in several such cases.

J&K polls soon after delimitation: PM

During the first ever meeting with PM since 2019, all the 14 leaders demanded that Jammu and Kashmir's statehood be restored

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday told a group of leaders from Jammu and Kashmir that Assembly elections there will be held after the completion of the ongoing delimitation exercise, People's Conference leader Muzaffar Hussain Baig said after a crucial meeting to chalk out the future course of action in the union territory.

During the three-and-a-half-hour-long meeting, almost all the 14 leaders from Jammu and Kashmir demanded that its statehood, which was removed in August 2019, should be restored, he said.

According to official sources, the main focus of the meeting was to strengthen the democratic process and the Prime Minister said that the government was fully committed to it.

This is the first interaction between the central leadership and the mainstream parties since 5 August, 2019, when the Centre revoked Jammu and Kashmir's special status under Article 370 of the Constitution and bifurcated it into union territories, Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh.

Modi stressed that holding Assembly elections, just like the successful conduct of the District Development Council polls, is a priority and that the polls can happen soon after the delimitation exercise, the sources said, adding that by and large most participants expressed willingness for it.

The Prime Minister stressed that an atmosphere of safety and security needs to be ensured for all sections of society in Jammu and Kashmir and he wanted to remove '*Dilli ki Duri* as well as '*Dil Ki Duri*' (distance from Delhi as well as distance of heart), according to the sources.

"The meeting was very cordial and very positive, very dignified. We all agreed that we must work for the democracy."

The Prime Minister has assured that he will do everything to make Jammu and Kashmir a zone of peace rather than a zone of conflict," Baig told reporters after the meeting.

Baig said the government side conveyed that the Assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir will be held after the completion of the ongoing delimitation process.

"We were conveyed that the delimitation process will be completed first and thereafter a call will be taken on holding the Assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir," he said.

However, he said, no time frame has been given on holding the polls.

"Almost everyone at meeting raised the demand for restoration of statehood of Jammu and Kashmir," he said, adding the Prime Minister carefully listened to every issue raised by the political leaders.

The four former chief ministers of the erstwhile state who participated in the discussions were Farooq Abdullah and his son Omar Abdullah of the National Conference, Congress' Ghulam Nabi Azad and PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti.

Four former deputy chief ministers were in attendance too ~ Congress' Tara Chand, People's Conference leader Muzaffar Hussain Baig and BJP's Nirmal Singh and Kavinder Gupta.

CPI-M leader Mohammed Yusuf Tarigami, Jammu and Kashmir Apni Party (JKAP) chief Altaf Bukhari, Sajjad Lone of the People's Conference, J-K Congress head G A Mir, BJP's Ravinder Raina and Panthers Party leader Bhim Singh also formed part of the team.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah, National Security Advisor Ajit Doval and Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir Manoj Sinha, and Minister of State in PMO Jitendra Singh were in attendance too.

Today's dialogue came seven months after the District Development Council elections in J&K.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi during an all-party meeting with various political leaders from Jammu and Kashmir, in Delhi on Thursday. AGENCIES

> We are committed to ensure all round development of J&K. The future of Jammu and Kashmir was discussed and the delimitation exercise and peaceful elections are important milestones in restoring statehood as promised in Parliament
>
> **AMIT SHAH**
> UNION HOME MINISTER

> There is a loss of trust which needs to be restored immediately and for that, to begin with, the Centre should work for restoration of complete statehood. I conveyed to the prime minister that the statehood means reverting even the IAS and IPS cadres of J&K.
>
> **FAROOQ ABDULLAH**
> NATIONAL CONFERENCE PRESIDENT AND FORMER J&K CHIEF MINISTER

India logs 54K new Covid cases, 1,321 fatalities

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

India recorded 54,069 new Covid-19 cases and 1,321 deaths in the last 24 hours taking the country's total caseload to 3,00,82,778, according to data released by the Union Health and Family Welfare Ministry on Thursday.

India has now become the second country after the US to record more than three crore cases of Covid after it added one crore cases in the last 50 days.

The country has 6,27,057 active cases presently and has witnessed 3,91,981 deaths so far. According to the Union Health Ministry, a total of 68,885 people have been discharged in the last 24 hours, taking the total discharge to 2,90,63,740 till date. The Ministry said a total of 30,16,26,028 people have been vaccinated so far in the country, including 64,89,599 who were administered vaccines in the last 24 hours.

Delhi's positivity rate 0.14 pc: The number of fresh Covid-19 positive cases logged in the national capital today came down to 109 from yesterday's 111. According to the Delhi government's latest health bulletin, the fresh infections were detected following 77,382 tests. (SEE P2)

An elderly woman waits to receive Covid-19 vaccine dose, at a vaccination centre in Nadia in Bengal.

'Vaccine allocation to states done in transparent manner'

Allocation of Covid-19 vaccines to a state is done based on its population, caseload, utilisation efficiency and wastage factors, the Union Health Ministry on Thursday said and dismissed media reports alleging non-transparent distribution of the jabs.

The ministry said the allegations of non-transparent distribution of vaccines among states are "completely without any basis, and not fully informed".

The ministry said India's National Covid Vaccination Programme is built on scientific and epidemiological evidence, WHO guidelines and global best practices. PTI

FACT FILE

TOTAL CASES	3,00,82,778
ACTIVE CASES	6,27,057
NEW CASES	54,069
NEW RECOVERIES	68,885
TOTAL DEATHS	3,91,981

UNION HEALTH MINISTRY FIGURES AS OF 8.00 A.M. THURSDAY 24 JUNE 2021

K'taka HC grants relief to Twitter India MD in Ghaziabad assault case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BENGALURU/GHAZIABAD, 24 JUNE

In a relief to Twitter India head Manish Maheshwari, the Karnataka High Court on Thursday restrained Ghaziabad police, which has summoned him in connection with a probe related to the assault of an elderly Muslim man there, from initiating coercive action against him.

The single bench of Justice G Narender said the police can examine Maheshwari through virtual mode. "If the police desire to examine the petitioner (Maheshwari), they may do so through virtual mode," the court said.

"If the matter requires consideration, we list it on 29 June. In the meanwhile restraining the respondents from initiating any coercive action against the petitioner," the court said.

"It is case of petitioner that he has replied to notice under section 160 of CrPC to join through virtual mode. The respondent (Ghaziabad police) taking objection to the request has turned around and issued notice under section 41(A) virtually putting him in shoes of accused," it observed. Appearing on behalf of Maheshwari, advocate C V Nagesh said someone had posted a video on Twitter, alleging that a Muslim was forced to chant '*Jai Shri Ram*' and '*Vande Mataram*'. When he refused, his beard was cut.

Then a notice under section 161 of the CrPC was issued to Maheshwari by email and responding to it, he said he would be ready to appear virtually.

Soon the police issued a notice under section 41(A) asking him to appear in person within 24 hours to travel from Bengaluru to Ghaziabad, which was not possible for Maheshwhari, Nagesh told the court.

The Twitter India Managing Director, who lives in Bengaluru, was issued notice by the Ghaziabad Police on 21 June and asked to report at its Loni Border police station at 10.30 am on Thursday.

The court maintained that the petitioner is an employee of Twitter Communication India Private Limited handling marketing and sales and not a member of board of directors to be held responsible for the upload of the alleged video based on which the FIR was registered.

ISRO espionage case: CBI files FIR against 18 former cops

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, 24 JUNE

The CBI probing the conspiracy in the ISRO espionage case has filed an FIR naming 18 people, including former Kerala DGP Siby Mathews, former City Police Commissioner V R Rajeevan and former deputy director of IB R.B. Sreekumar, in the Thiruvananthapuram Chief Judicial Magistrate's Court.

The accused police personnel have been charged with conspiracy, framing of false evidence, and illegal custody.

The Supreme Court had ordered a CBI probe in April this year against cops who allegedly framed space scientist Nambi Narayanan in the ISRO espionage case on the basis of Justice D K Jain report, which had suggested that the spy case was a result of a conspiracy.

The CBI acquitted Narayanan in 1995 and since then, he has been fighting a legal battle against the then top police officials including retired DGP Siby Mathews, S Vijayan, and KK Joshua, who probed the case and implicated Narayanan.

The Supreme Court ordered compensation for Narayanan. The state government paid Rs.1.80 crore to Narayanan.

The ISRO spy case erupted in 1994 after Maldivian national Rasheeda was arrested for allegedly obtaining secret drawings of ISRO rocket engines to sell to Pakistan. Following this, Narayanan, then director of the cryogenic project at ISRO, then ISRO deputy director D Sasikumaran and Fousiya Hasan, a Maldivian friend of Rasheeda were also arrested by the Kerala police. SNS

Delta variant now reported in 85 countries globally: WHO

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
UNITED NATIONS, 24 JUNE

The Delta variant, the significantly more transmissible strain of Covid-19, is expected to become a dominant lineage if current trends continue, the WHO has warned after it was reported in 85 countries and continues to be detected in more places around the world.

The WHO said that globally, the variant Alpha has been reported in 170 countries, Beta in 119 countries, Gamma in 71 countries and Delta in 85 countries. Delta, now reported in 85 countries globally, continues to be reported in new countries across all WHO Regions, 11 of which were newly reported in the past two weeks.

WHO said the four current 'Variants of Concern' being monitored closely Alpha, Beta, Gamma and Delta - are widespread and have been detected in all WHO regions.

WHO noted that since the last detailed update on 8 June, new evidence has been published on the phenotypic characteristics of the Delta variant. A study from Singapore showed that infection with Delta variant was associated with higher odds of oxygen requirement, intensive care unit (ICU) admission, or death, it said.

'China disturbing peace along LAC'

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

India today squarely blamed China for seriously disturbing peace and tranquility along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), particularly in Eastern Ladakh, over the last one year.

"It is well recognised that it has been the Chinese actions over the last year, including amassing of a large number of troops close to border areas in the Western Sector and trying to unilaterally alter the status quo along the LAC, which have seriously disturbed peace and tranquility in the border areas," Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said at a media briefing.

He said these acts by the Chinese side were in violation of bilateral agreements, including the 1993 and 1996 agreements, that mandate that the two sides shall strictly respect and observe the LAC and that they would keep their military forces in the areas along the LAC to a minimum level.

The spokesperson said he had no information regarding the next meeting of the India-China Working Mechanism for Coordination and Consultations (WMCC) in border areas to discuss the disengagement process in Eastern Ladakh.

He was responding to the Chinese Foreign Ministry's statement yesterday that China's military deployment along the Western sector of the India-China border was a normal defence arrangement aimed at preventing and responding to encroachment and threats on China's border.

"For a long time, the Indian side has been increasing its deployment along the China-India border and encroaching on China's territory. This is the root cause of tension along the China-India border," Beijing had claimed.

The MEA spokesperson, Arindam Bagchi, was responding to Chinese Foreign Ministry's statement on Wednesday that China's military deployment along the Western sector of the India-China border was a 'normal defence arrangement'

After SC snub, Andhra Pradesh cancels X, XII exams

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD/NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

The Andhra Pradesh government has finally announced cancellation of class X and XII state board examinations in view of the Supreme Court's direction to declare internal assessment results of class XII by 31 July.

The decision came after the Supreme Court warned that it will hold the state government responsible if there is even a single fatality.

The state government under chief minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has been adamant about holding the exams, which were slated to be held in May when the second wave was at its peak. The state government refused to relent even after CBSE and ICSE boards cancelled their respective examinations which was also pointed out in the court. The state government was considering about holding the exams at the last week of July. It had said in the court that it was imperative to hold exams since there was no other real alternative to assessing students of class XII.

A Supreme Court bench comprising Justices A.M Khanwilkar and Dinesh Maheshwari told state government counsel Mahfooz A. Nazki that the court will not allow Class XII state board exams, unless the government satisfies them with measures taken against the spread of Covid.

"You say only 15 students will be seated in an examination room. Then you need 34,634 rooms. Do you have that (number of rooms)?" the bench said, asking Nazki whether the state government has come out with any concrete formula to ensure availability of so many examination rooms.

Pointing out that beyond 5 lakh students taking the exams, nearly 1 lakh people will be involved in the process, including invigilators and other staff, Justice Maheshwari sought clarification on Covid measures.

Justice Khanwilkar noted that there is uncertainty in connection with Delta variant of coronavirus and how will it roll out. "What if third wave begins in between the exams? he asked.

The bench added the pandemic situation is very uncertain, as it sought clarification on a contingency plan.

The decision came after the Supreme Court warned that it will hold the state government responsible if there is even a single fatality.

Declare internal assessment results by 31 July: top court to state boards

The Supreme Court on Thursday directed all state examinations boards to declare results of internal assessment of Class XII examination by 31 July, while making it clear that each board is free to formulate its own evaluation method for students and there can't be a "fit-all" scheme.

The apex court, which said it would not pass any direction for a uniform assessment scheme across the country for students whose board exams have been cancelled amid the Covid-19 pandemic, directed the state boards to ensure that schemes are formulated and notified at the earliest and not later than 10 days from Thursday. PTI

'Google & Jio's joint venture to be most affordable smartphone'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

Reliance Industries Chairman Mukesh Ambani on Thursday said Jio and Google have jointly developed a power-packed and affordable smartphone 'JioPhone Next', which will be available in the market from 10 September.

Speaking at RIL's annual general meeting, Ambani asserted that an ultra-affordable 4G smartphone is essential to make India '2G-mukt' (free of 2G).

The country still has nearly 300 million mobile users who are unable to escape from inefficient and exorbitant 2G services since most basic 4G smartphone remain unaffordable for users, he added. "I am pleased to announced that Google and Jio teams have jointly developed a truly breakthrough smartphone that we are calling JioPhone Next.

"JioPhone Next is powered by an optimised version of Andriod operating systemthat has been jointly developed by Jio and Googleespecially for the Indian market," he said.

JioPhone Next will be available from 10 September with cutting-edge features including voice assistant, language translation, automatic read-aloud of screen text, and smart camera with augmented reality filters, among others. "As you have come to expect from Jio, it is my promise that JioPhone Next will be, by far, the most affordable smartphone not just in India but globally," Ambani said.

More on Page 8

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National Highway-10 has become a haven for drug addicts. We will work to tame anti-social elements

BINOY TAMANG, LEADER, GORKHA JAN MUKTI MORCHA
AFTER MEETING HIS PARTY WORKERS IN TEESTA VALLEY IN DARJEELING

Capital adds 109 corona cases, 8 deaths; positivity rate 0.14%

With regular Covid vaccine supply, Delhi govt'll inoculate youths at rapid pace, says Atishi

SNS & PTI
NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

The number of fresh Covid-19 positive cases logged in the national capital today came down to 109 from yesterday's 111. According to the Delhi government's latest health bulletin, the fresh infections were detected following 77,382 tests.

Delhi's cumulative coronavirus caseload thus rose to 14,33,475, the health bulletin stated.

The city's Covid positivity rate dipped slightly to 0.14 per cent from yesterday's 0.15 per cent.

Delhi recorded 8 fresh Covid-linked fatalities which took its toll to 24,948, the bulletin said. The count of such fatalities was 7 yesterday.

The city's tally of active cases was 1,767 now, which was 1,797 yesterday. The Covid patients who were getting treatment under home isolation numbered 523.

According to the health bulletin, there were now 2,277 containment zones in Delhi. The bulletin claimed that only 1,111 hospital beds were now occupied out of 23,670 beds reserved for coronavirus patients in the city.

On 22 June, Delhi had recorded 8 fresh Covid deaths and 134 coronavirus cases with a positivity rate of 0.20 per cent.

On 21 June, the city had reported 89 coronavirus cases — the lowest this year so far — and 11 Covid-related deaths while the positivity rate had dipped to 0.16 per cent. This was the first time since 16 February, when 94 people were diagnosed with the Covid infection, that the number of single-day infections dropped below the 100-mark in the national capital.

Delhi had on 20 June reported 124 Covid cases and 7 coronavirus-linked deaths while the positivity rate was 0.17 per cent. On 19 June, it had recorded 7 deaths due to the infection and 135 cases while the positivity rate was 0.18 per cent.

The city had recorded 212 Covid cases and 25 deaths and a positivity rate of 0.27 per cent on 16 June. On 17 June, 158 cases with a positivity rate of 0.20 per cent and 10 deaths were reported. The cases had stood at 165 with a positivity rate of 0.22 per cent while the death count was 14 on 18 June, according to official figures.

Delhi was severely hit by a brutal second wave of the pandemic that swept the country claiming a staggering number of lives daily, with the shortage of oxygen, hospital beds, and essential medicines making the unprecedented crisis in the national capital apocalyptic.

Since April daily cases as well as death count in the city had been on upward spiral.

On 20 April, Delhi had reported 28,395 cases — the highest in the city since the beginning of the pandemic. On 22 April, the city's positivity rate was 36.2 per cent — the highest so far. The highest single-day count of Covid fatalities — 448 deaths — was reported on 3 May.

Despite a sharp fall in daily cases over the last few weeks, Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal has cautioned the people that the possibility of the third Covid wave is "quite real", even as he asserted that his government was making preparations on a "war-footing" to combat it.

The ongoing "unlockdown" and relaxations of restrictions in the city have again led to overcrowding in markets and other places, prompting doctors and experts to issue fresh warnings about possible hastening of the third coronavirus wave due to people's continued violations of Covid safety protocols.

Over 1.09 lakh Covid vaccine doses were administered yesterday, including over 90,000 to those in the 18-44 age group, AAP MLA Atishi said today. While issuing the Covid vaccination bulletin, she said that with regular supply of vaccines, the Delhi government will be able to inoculate its youth at a fast pace. "With the fresh stock, Delhi has around 20 days of Covaxin and nine days of Covishield available. Covaxin doses are being used to administer only second doses," she said. The national capital received over 68,000 doses of Covaxin and around 80,000 doses of Covishield yesterday.

4 students from Ladakh arrested in Delhi's Israel embassy blast case

PTI
NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

The Delhi Police Special Cell has arrested four students from Ladakh in connection with the blast near the Israel embassy in January this year, officials said on Thursday.

The students were arrested from Kargil and brought to Delhi on transit remand, they said.

The four students have been identified as Nazir Hussain (26), Zulfikar Ali Wazir (25), Aiaz Hussain (28) and Muzammil Hussain (25), the police said, adding that all of them are residents of Thang village in Ladakh's Kargil district. A minor IED blast took place outside the Embassy of Israel in the heart of Lutyens' Delhi on January 29. There were no casualties.

Some cars were damaged in the explosion that occurred about 150 metres away from the embassy on the Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Road.

In a joint operation with a central intelligence agency and the Kargil police, the Special Cell of the Delhi Police detained four persons from Kargil in connection with the conspiracy to plan and execute terror activities in the national capital, a statement quoting Delhi Police PRO Chinmoy Biswal said.

A minor IED blast took place outside the Embassy of Israel in the heart of Lutyens' Delhi on January 29.

"They have been taken on remand and brought to Delhi for questioning," he said.

The Delhi Police Special Cell, which was probing the incident, had registered a case of "conspiracy" behind the blast.

During its investigation, footage of over 100 CCTVs installed in and around the embassy were scanned by the police team, officials had earlier said. In one such footage, the Delhi Police Special Cell had spotted two men walking on the pavement before the blast, they had said.

Both the men with their faces covered were seen walking on the road and one of them wearing a jacket was spotted carrying a bag with him, the police had said.

The Ministry of Home Affairs had handed over the probe of the blast to the National Investigation Agency on February 2. Recently, the NIA announced a reward of Rs 10 lakh each for identification of two people captured on CCTV camera.

Stop traffic if depth of rainwater at any underpass exceeds 20 cm: PWD

PTI
NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

Ahead of the arrival of monsoon in the national capital, the Public Works Department of the Delhi government has issued an order, saying the traffic on the roads may be stopped if any underpass is flooded with over 20 centimetres of rainwater.

The order issued on Tuesday by engineer in chief of PWD also directed all the executive staff to pay special attention to drainage of rainwater from all vulnerable locations, particularly underpasses during the rainy season.

"If the depth of the rainwater below the underpasses increases more than 20 cms, the traffic from both the sides of it may be stopped with the help of the traffic police to avoid any accident," stated the order.

The order comes a year after images of vehicles stranded at waterlogged Minto bridge underpass in the heart of the city and the drowning of a delivery van driver had led to a public outcry amid a blame game between the ruling AAP and the BJP-controlled North municipal corporation.

The civic agencies in the national capital carry out desilting of drains to keep the city waterlogging-free during the monsoon season.

The Public Works Department (PWD) and the three Municipal Corporations in Delhi (MCDs) hoped that desilting of drains will be completed before the onset of monsoon by month-end.

A senior official of the Delhi government's PWD said desilting (removal of silt and garbage) from drains is "on track" and will be completed between June 20-25.

The order said it will be the responsibility of the executive engineers concerned to provide phone numbers of traffic police officials, and to sensitise the staff deployed at vulnerable points to immediately inform the traffic police to stop vehicular traffic.

Waterlogging on the roads, underpasses and flyovers of the city is a chronic problem during the rainy season causing hardships to the commuters and motorists every year.

With the roads and drains falling under the jurisdiction of different agencies, including the PWD and municipal corporations, the problem of waterlogging continues with one accusing the other for the civic mess.

The PWD order also directed officials to man vulnerable points and underpasses round the clock for any occurrence of waterlogging and pumping out water immediately.

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF ENGINEERING SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, SHIBPUR HOWRAH - 711103
(An Institute of National Importance under MHRD, Govt. of India)
Date: 23.06.2021
Advt. No. EE 1681
Applications are invited for one **(01) Project Associate & one (01) Senior Project Associate** post(s) for a MeitY, GoI funded NaMPET Phase-III multi-institutional consortium Project entitled **"Design and Development of WBG Device Based High Current Converters for Industry Applications"**. Eligible person(s) may visit the website (W. Code DRC-005/21-22) under "Employment" for details.
Dean (R&C)

BJP MLAs stage protest outside CM house against its 'illegal construction'

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

Protesting against the illegal construction at Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal's official residence on Flag Staff Road, all BJP legislators from Delhi today staged a demonstration outside the chief minister's residence.

DUAC had directed the PWD not to carry out any construction at the official residence of 6, Flag Staff Road citing safety of other buildings in the residence, but new buildings are being constructed there by demolishing the few old buildings without seeking necessary clearances from the DUAC, leader of the Opposition in Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri alleged while staging the demonstration.

Explaining the new accommodation as luxurious, expensive and illegal, all eight BJP legislators wanted to submit a memorandum to Kejriwal, but the CM refused to meet with the BJP legislators, claimed Bidhuri.

The BJP legislators alleged the official residence has already five bedrooms, one dining area, guest rooms, two offices and two lawns each to accommodate nearly 300 people in addition to another indoor hall.

Kejriwal has forgotten his poll promises that he would not take any luxury accommodation, not avail security or any VIP facilities, but the CM's decision to spend Rs 10 crore for his luxurious accommodation is shocking and shameful, the BJP legislators alleged while talking to the reporters at Delhi Vidhan Sabha before staging the demonstration. Delhi Government is struggling with funds to purchase vaccines, medicines and oxygen during the pandemic, the Safai karamcharis were not paid their wages but the chief minister has enough money to construct luxurious accommodation, the BJP legislators alleged.

'Mega plantation drive in city from tomorrow'

NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

The Delhi government will hold a 15-day "Van Mahotsav" from June 26, and cabinet ministers, MLAs, NGOs and resident welfare associations will participate in this mega tree-plantation campaign, Environment Minister Gopal Rai said on Thursday.

Rai will launch the campaign from Garhi Mandu on the banks of the Yamuna.

On June 27, the plantation drive will be held in all the 70 assembly constituencies in Delhi.

Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia will participate in this campaign on June 28, while Health Minister Satyendar Jain will lead the plantation drive at the Poonth Kalan Nursery, Nangloi, on June 30.

Delhi Assembly Speaker Ram Niwas Goyal will plant saplings at Garhi Mandu on July 2, while Transport Minister Kailash Gehlot will lead the campaign in Rajokri on July 5. PTI

Classified

TENDERS

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH BENGAL
Office of the Registrar
ACCREDITED BY NAAC WITH GRADE A
QUOTATION NOTICE
Sealed quotations are invited from the reputed vendors / suppliers for purchase of "Instruments / Items" under the sanctioned SERB project (EEQ/2020/000079) in the Department of Chemistry, University of North Bengal, Darjeeling, 734013, for the year 2021-22 within ten (10) days. For details, visit www.nbu.ac.in
Registrar (Officiating)
Advt.No.-01 /R-2021
Dated: 25.06.2021

CHANGE OF NAME

I, NITYANANDA Mistry through an Affidavit Dated 4.11.2003 in 1st Class Judicial Magistrate Court, Alipore, Kolkata have become Nityananda Mitra.

PUBLIC NOTIFICATIONS

PUBLIC NOTICE
Public are informed that my client Sh. Dharam Vir Singh, son of Sh. Bharat Singh and his wife Smt. Usha Rani, r/o RZ I-40, Old Som Bazar, Gali Mahavir Enclave, New Delhi have severed their all relations with his son namely Dr. Vineet Kumar Singh and his wife namely Shopha Sharma and their daughter namely Sanvi, r/o of RZD-51, Prem Niwas, Mahavir Enclave, Delhi and disowned/debarred them from their moveable and immovable properties due to their objectionable/offending behavior and my client shall not be responsible for their any illegal act.
Vibhor Anand
Advocate
Enl. D/3454/2016
52/8, Old Rajinder Nagar, New Delhi-60
Ph. 9599918722.

SITUATION VACANT

University of Delhi South Campus
DEPARTMENT OF PLANT MOLECULAR BIOLOGY
JOB ADVERTISEMENT
Applications are invited for the following posts in a BIRAC project entitled "Development of....viruses" ending on 27-07-2022. The positions are temporary and co-terminus with the project.
Research Associate (RA)
No. of posts= 1; Fellowship= Rs. 47,000+HRA per month as per BIRAC guidelines.
Essential qualifications: Candidate must be Ph.D. in Biological Sciences. Experience in molecular biology and plant tissue culture is desirable, as evidenced by publications in peer-reviewed journals.
Deadline for receiving applications: within 15 days of display of this advertisement.
Dr. Indranil Dasgupta
Room No. 310,
Department of Plant Molecular Biology,
University of Delhi South Campus,
Benito Juarez Road, New Delhi-110021.
(Contract person: Manoj Sharma; 07906355051)

DEPARTMENT OF BIOPHYSICS
UNIVERSITY OF DELHI SOUTH CAMPUS
NEW DELHI-110021
Applications are invited for the position of senior research fellow (one) in the DBT-funded project "Structure-Function studies on a membrane protein from Chikungunya Virus". The project is expected to terminate on 3-03-2022. Candidates with M/Sc. in any branch of Physical/Biological Sciences or equivalent with at least two years of Research experience and publications in reputed journals may apply through email along with curriculum vitae to the Co-Principal Investigator (details below). Fellowship amount (SRF): Rs. 35,000 + HRA per month. The appointment will be till the termination of the project.
Deadline for receiving applications: within 15 days of display of this advertisement.
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Principal Investigator
DT project
University of Delhi South Campus,
Benito Juarez Road,
New Delhi-110021.
Prof. Subhendu Ghosh
Co-Principal Investigator
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They came to learn later on that their vaccination certificate is not valid abroad. These students are now in a fix regarding their next course of action and their career is at stake

MAMATA BANERJEE
WEST BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER

Prepping my residence for Covid 3rd wave patients: U'khand CM

HC has reprimanded U'khand govt for its lack of preparedness for third corona wave

PTI
DEHRADUN, 24 JUNE

Uttarakhand Chief Minister Tirath Singh Rawat on Thursday said he is preparing his official residence for the treatment of coronavirus patients during the third wave.

"There is no lack of preparedness to tackle the third wave. There are more Covid dedicated hospitals now. Two 500-bed hospitals each were developed with the help of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) in Rishikesh and Haldwani in addition to the existing ones," he told reporters here.

Rawat said district magistrates (DMs) have been asked to keep one or two hotels ready to be converted into Covid care centres if the need arises.

"We will do anything to deal effectively with the third wave. I am also preparing the CM residence to accommodate Covid patients during the third wave," he stated.

The CM said no one had imagined that the second wave of the pandemic would be so strong.

"But we rose to the challenge and ramped up facilities across the state. I went to the Covid care centres and hospitals in all 13 districts of the state to examine the status of facilities and know about the problems faced by patients," he said.

The Uttarakhand High Court had on Wednesday reprimanded the state government for its alleged lack of preparedness in view of the third wave.

"Will the state government wake from its slumber when our children start dying in the third wave?" a division bench of the high court comprising Chief Justice R S Chauhan and Justice Alok Kumar Verma had asked.

Has declined govt job offer to son: Punjab Cong MLA

PTI
CHANDIGARH, 24 JUNE

Under fire from some party colleagues and the Opposition, Congress MLA Fatehjang Singh Bajwa on Thursday broke his silence, saying he has declined the government job offer for his son.

The Punjab cabinet last week had approved a proposal to appoint Bajwa's son Arjun Partap Singh Bajwa as an inspector in the Punjab Police and Ludhiana MLA Rakesh Pandey's son Bhisham Pandey as a naib tehsildar in the Revenue Department on the "compassionate" grounds.

Apart from the Opposition, several Congress leaders, including state party president Sunil Jakhar, had questioned the government decision.

Five ministers Sukhjinder Randhawa, Tript Rajinder Singh Bajwa, Razia Sultana, Charanjit Singh Channi and Sukhbinder Sarkaria--had also opposed the move in a cabinet meeting.

The Qadian legislator said his son Arjun Partap Singh Bajwa has set a "precedent" by giving up the job offer and slammed the Opposition and his party colleagues for criticising the government decision.

Talking to the media on Thursday, Bajwa said after the kind of "petty" politics was played over the issue, his family decided not to accept this job offer.

He said before the cabinet meeting that was held last week, he had requested Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh to withdraw the agenda of job offer as he did not want it for his son.

The MLA said he was also aware that some of the party colleagues had planned to object to the job offer in the cabinet meeting, apparently referring to the five ministers.

Bajwa said he gave a letter on giving up the job offer to Amarinder Singh, who showed it to the three-member committee formed to end factionalism in the state unit.

"Arjun has set a precedent by giving up the job offer," said Bajwa while asking Tript Rajinder Singh Bajwa, Sukhbinder Sarkaria and Sunil Jakhar to follow the same precedent.

He said Tript Rajinder Singh Bajwa's son is the Gurdaspur zila parishad chairman, Sarkaria's nephew is the chairman of the Amritsar zila parishad and Jakhar's nephew is the chief of the Punjab State Farmers' Commission.

He said Jakhar had even written to Congress president Sonia Gandhi about the job offer and had even called him up on this issue.

When asked why the CM brought the agenda in the cabinet meeting when he had already declined the job offer, Bajwa said it was only Amarinder Singh who could reply.

Bajwa also slammed Shiromani Akali Dal chief Sukhbir Singh Badal for criticising the state government's decision.

The MLA's son Arjun Partap Singh Bajwa said he thanked the CM for offering him the job but he was pained at the "petty" politics being played over this issue.

High-risk areas of 13 H'yana districts to mark 27 June as Polio Immunization Day

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 24 JUNE

Taking steps to keep up the Polio-free status of the state of Haryana since 2011, the Haryana health department will observe 27 June as Polio Sub-National Immunization Day (SNID) in the identified Polio high-risk areas of 13 districts in the state while adhering to the Covid-19 guidelines.

Sharing this information on Thursday, mission director, National Health Mission, Haryana, Prabhjot Singh said SNID will be held in the selected parts of the country from 27 June.

He said the department has ensured complete enlisting of the districts and detailed microplanning for 100 per cent coverage of these areas.

The Polio high-risk areas are those with high concentration of vulnerable populations residing in HRAs like urban slums, nomadic sites, construction sites, brick kilns, poultry farms, factories, sugarcane crushers, stone crushing zones, etc. Besides this, areas with low RI coverage, VPD outbreaks, Vaccine hesitancy, etc are also identified as high-risk areas.

Singh said the Polio high-risk areas are Ambala, Faridabad, Gurugram, Jhajjar, Karnal, Kurukshetra, Mewat, Palwal, Panchkula, Panipat, Rohtak, Sonipat, and Yamunanagar.

He said training of all the vaccinators will be done with focus on conducting safe campaign adopting Covid appropriate guidelines.

Meanwhile, Haryana government has extended the deadline to get Kharif crops insured under the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana till 31 July.

A government spokesperson said this scheme is voluntary for all farmers, so if the indebted farmers do not want to join this scheme, they can withdraw from this scheme by applying in writing to their concerned banks.

If the indebted farmer does not intimate their concerned bank for opting out of this scheme, then the bank will be authorised to insure the farmers' crops. He told that the farmer who does not have any loan can get his crop insured from the customer service centre or the representative of the insurance company as well.

If a farmer changes an already planned crop, he will have to inform the bank for the change of crop before the last date.

Gadkari dedicates projects worth ₹6,155 cr for HP

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 24 JUNE

Union minister for road, transport and highways Nitin Gadkari on Thursday laid foundation stones and inaugurated road projects worth Rs 6,155 crore and said 24 June will be written in golden letters in the annals of Himachal Pradesh.

After the virtual event, Gadkari stated that Himachal was indeed the most beautiful state of the country and roads were the prerequisite of overall development of any nation or state.

Roads were also important for the tourism promotion and Himachal, being a tourist state, better roads will go a long way in tourism promotion.

Within the next two years the travelling distance between Delhi to Kullu would be reduced to seven hours and this will give a big boost to tourism development in the state, Gadkari said.

He assured that all the roads, foundation stones of which were laid by him today will be completed within a stipulated time period.

"Road projects worth Rs 15,000 crore will be awarded to Himachal this year and DPR for construction of 40 kilometers left bank road project at Manali would be prepared at the earliest.

The Union government will provide all possible assistance to the state government for construction of alternative mode of transportation such as cable cars etc and for strengthening the road networks in the state," he added.

Addressing the event, chief minister Jai Ram Thakur said even the first CM of the state Dr Y S Parmar about 50 year ago had summed up the developmental priorities of the state in just three words "Road, Road and Road'.

"Today the state has about 40,000 kms road length but being a hilly state, a lot more needs to be done.

Roads and that too better roads are the foremost requirement for inviting and attracting the tourists to the state," he added.

Thakur thanked the Union minister for dedicating and laying foundation stones of road projects worth Rs 6155 crore for the state and stated that the present state government had succeeded in sanctioning 997 projects from Centre during the last 3 and a half years.

Union minister of state for road, transport and highways Gen VK Singh, Union minister of state for finance and corporate affairs Anurag Singh Thakur, also joined the event virtually among others.

Probe Cong, AAP hand in conspiracy to defame, destabilise Badal govt: SAD

SAD leaders Bikram Singh Majithia and Daljit Singh Cheema at a Press conference in Chandigarh on Thursday. SNS

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 24 JUNE

The Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) on Thursday demanded a probe into the role of the ruling Congress and main Opposition party Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in "sacrilege conspiracy" to "defame and destabilize" the previous Prakash Singh Badal government.

Addressing a Press conference, senior Akali leader Bikram Singh Majithia said the Special Investigation Team (SIT) investigating the Kotkapura police firing following protests over sacrilege should widen its scope and probe the hand of Congress and AAP in the matter.

Majithia also demanded that all the likely beneficiaries of the sacrilege conspiracy during the Akali regime be narco-tested to expose their hideous role. He also expressed "surprise over the brazenness with which the Congress high command has gone about issuing a deadline for the conclusion of the ongoing probe by a SIT.

" Whose orders is the SIT expected to obey? The Punjab and Haryana- High Court's or Congress high command? In fact the Congress leaders have let out the worst kept secret in the state that even the previous SIT actually obeyed not the honourable High Court but political masters in Chandigarh and Delhi," he said.

The SAD leader said this is in total defiance of the orders of the High Court that the SIT is not answerable even to the state government led by Captain Amarinder Singh.

"But the Congress has ordered the CM to get the SIT report completed within a month. That is a formal and shameless admission of what the people of Punjab already knew i.e., the Congress government used the previous SIT merely for rubber stamping a report actually prepared by political leaders like Sukhjinder Randhawa, Navjot SIdhu, Sunil Jakhar, aided and assisted by leaders of AAP as well as well as chiefs of some so called Panthic organisations who made nocturnal trips to CM's residence those days to approve the report The report was however presented for public consumption by Kunwar Partap Singh," the Akali leader said.

He said the Congress high command, their state unit and the state government have come to believe that only illegal arrests of Parkash Singh Badal and (SAD chief) Sukhbir Singh Badal can save their credibility which lies in rags. "But we dare them to defy the law on this and they will see what they will see," Majithia said.

The Akali leader said that Navjot Sidhu had openly admitted that Amarinder had told him about Congress party's design to purposely drag the probe till the last six months of their tenure in order to create hype and milk the issue in the elections

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AUDITED FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED ON 31.03.2021

REVENUE ACCOUNTS (Rs. In Lakhs)

Particulars	For the year ended 31.03.2021			For the year ended 31.03.2020		
	Fire	Marine	Misc	Fire	Marine	Misc
Premiums earned (Net)	73588	20292	1009818	67087	19745	1005612
Profit/ Loss on sale/redemption of Investments	5111	1243	66635	13685	3138	155443
Others , Exchange Gain(+)/Loss(-)	7671	2898	4811	6608	3216	-14369
Interest, Dividend & Rent – Gross	11314	2753	147517	11306	2592	128416
TOTAL (A)	**97684**	**27187**	**1228780**	**98686**	**28691**	**1275102**
Claims Incurred (Net)	39469	15625	997075	53368	19141	1045453
Commission	11444	2041	76667	11541	2128	68043
Operating Expenses related to Insurance Business	42434	6386	255461	37328	7278	299647
Premium Deficiency	0	0	30023	-3610	0	0
Expenses relating to investments	22	5	281	35	8	395
TOTAL (B)	**93369**	**24058**	**1359507**	**98662**	**28555**	**1413538**
Operating Profit/(Loss) C= (A - B)	**4315**	**3129**	**-130727**	**24**	**136**	**-138436**
APPROPRIATIONS						
Transfer to Shareholders' Account	4315	3129	-130727	24	136	-138436
Transfer to Catastrophe Reserve	0	0	0	0	0	0
Transfer to Other Reserves (to be specified)	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL (C)	**4315**	**3129**	**-130727**	**24**	**136**	**-138436**

PROFIT AND LOSS ACCOUNT (Rs. in Lakhs)

Particulars	For the year ended 31.03.2021	For the year ended 31.03.2020
OPERATING PROFIT/(LOSS)		
(a) Fire Insurance	4315	24
(b) Marine Insurance	3129	136
(c) Miscellaneous Insurance	-130727	-138436
INCOME FROM INVESTMENTS		
(a) Interest, Dividend & Rent – Gross	4449	1491
(b) Profit on sale of investments	2010	1805
Less: Loss on sale of investments	**0**	**0**
Other Income	2752	13976
TOTAL (A)	**-114071**	**-121003**
PROVISIONS (Other than taxation)		
(a) For diminution in the value of investments	6	-9
(b) For bad and doubtful debts / investments	2397	-4386
(c) Others (Amortisation Expenses)	134	39
OTHER EXPENSES		
(a) Expenses other than those related to Insurance Business		0
(b) Old/Irrecoverable balances written off	17	5
(c) (i) Others	34285	36864
(ii) NPA	105	292
(iii) Investments written off (Net)	44	21
(iv) CSR Expenditure	1068	87
(v) Interest on Income Tax /service tax paid	5	8
Prior period items (Net)	**-926**	**-4054**
TOTAL (B)	**37134**	**28867**
Profit Before Tax	**-151205**	**-149870**
Less:		
Provision for Taxation (Current Year)	**-883**	**0**
Taxation relating to earlier years	**-456**	**-2541**
Profit After Tax	**-152544**	**-152411**
APPROPRIATIONS		
(a) Interim dividends paid during the year	0	0
(b) Proposed final dividend	0	0
(c) Dividend distribution tax	0	0
(d) Transfer to General Reserves	-152544	-152411
(e) Transfer to Contingency Reserve for unexpired Risks	0	0
Balance of profit/ loss brought forward from last year	0	0
Balance carried forward to Balance Sheet	0	0

BALANCE SHEET (Rs. In Lakhs)

Particulars	As at 31.03.2021	As at 31.03.2020
A. SOURCES OF FUNDS		
Share Capital	342000	25000
Reserves and Surplus	-38652	113892
Fair Value Change Account-Policyholders	464133	223749
Fair Value Change Account-Shareholders	12781	2351
Borrowings	75000	75000
TOTAL	**855262**	**439992**
B. APPLICATION OF FUNDS		
INVESTMENTS :-		
Policy Holders	2334199	2045830
Share Holders	64279	21500
Loans	14358	14477
Fixed Assets (including CWP)	55334	59788
Current Assets :		
Cash and Bank Balances	404218	312268
Advances and Other Assets	551884	623130
Sub-Total (A)	**956102**	**935398**
Current Liabilities	1951399	2080331
Provisions	706755	675526
Sub-Total (B)	**2658154**	**2755857**
NET CURRENT ASSETS (A-B)	**-1702051**	**-1820459**
Miscellaneous Expenditure(to the extent not written off or adjusted)	89143	118856
Debit Balance in Profit & Loss Account	0	0
TOTAL	**855262**	**439992**

ANALYTICAL RATIOS

Particulars	For the year ended 31.03.2021	For the year ended 31.03.2020
Gross Direct Premium Growth Rate	-8.92	3.79
Gross Direct Premium to Networth ratio (times)	23.52	69.85
Growth rate of Net Worth	170.53	-93.00
Net Retention Ratio	83.60	76.75
Net Commission Ratio	8.19	7.44
Expense of Management to Gross Direct Premium Ratio (Incl. direct comm.)	31.79	31.44
Expense of Management to Net Written Premium Ratio (incl. direct comm.)	36.82	40.04
Net Incurred claims to Net Earned Premium	95.33	102.34
Combined Ratio	131.16	141.10
Technical Reserves to net premium ratio (times)	1.93	1.76
Underwriting balance ratio (times)	-0.34	-0.41
Operating Profit Ratio	-13.51	-15.24
Liquid Assets to liabilities ratio (times)	0.27	0.27
Net earning ratio	-13.86	-13.87
Return on net worth ratio	-281.42	-760.68
NPA Ratio		
Gross NPA Ratio-Policyholders'funds	2.17	2.27
Gross NPA Ratio-Shareholders'funds	0.06	0.02
Net NPA Ratio	2.23	2.29

Note:
1. The above Audited results have been reviewed by the Audit Committee and approved by the Board of Directors at their meeting held on 16.06.2021
2. This disclosure is made in accordance with and as per definitions given in IRDA Circular No. IRDA/F&I/CIR/F&A/12/01/2010 dt.28.01.2010
3. Analytical ratios are computed as per IRDA Master Circular dated 5th Oct' 2012 and corrigendum dated 3rd July 2013.
4. Previous year figures readjusted/regrouped wherever required.

For and on behalf of
The Oriental Insurance Company Ltd.

Place: New Delhi
Date: 16.06.2021

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We will do anything to deal effectively with the third wave. I am also preparing the CM residence to accommodate Covid patients during the third wave

TIRATH SINGH RAWAT
UTTARAKHAND CHIEF MINISTER

Don't project me as CM: Siddaramiah

Crack in K'taka Cong after ex-CM loyalists aired views in public

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU, 24 JUNE

Congress state president D K Shivakumar appears to have won the first round in his fight with senior leader Siddaramiah, forcing the latter to rein in his supporters from proclaiming him as the next chief minister.

Following Shivakumar's recent visit to New Delhi and his discussions with party's central leadership, Siddaramiah today asked his supporters to refrain from projecting him as the CM in the run up to the 2023 Assembly elections. It is learnt the development follows a word from the Congress high command.

The rivalry between former CM Siddaramiah and Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee president Shivakumar came to the fore with former's loyalists airing their views in public, albeit repeatedly. In fact, this also led to infighting within the party.

Zameer Ahmed, Congress MLA from Chamrajpet, and an old associate of the former CM from his JD-S days, for one, went on record to say Siddaramiah would be the party's next CM candidate. Before long other legislators and Siddaramiah supporters joined the chorus, leading to an unpleasant situation in the party.

In a bid to diffuse the situation, Siddaramiah, who headed the Congress government in the state in 2013-18, has now asked his supporters and MLAs alike, to refrain from projecting him as the next CM. Not surprising, therefore, to hear him asserting that while he never claimed that he would become the CM "I will still request MLAs not to make such statements."

The campaign in Siddaramiah's favour had annoyed Shivakumar, an aspirant for the top post himself, no end. He had even issued a directive to all party men to refrain from indulging in such exhibition of their loyalty.

Declaring that the MLAs were expressing their personal opinions about their favourites, he said it was not the time to indulge in such projections and added quickly that he was in no hurry to become the CM as "my agenda is to bring the party back to power and the Congress is still alive in Karnataka."

While Shivakumar would obviously heave a sigh of relief following Siddaramiah's statement, the game of one-upmanship between the two is no secret. This apart, former KPCC chief G Parameshawara had also come out strongly against the statements by the former CM's supporters, even chiding them.

Incidentally, Parameshawara was pipped to the post by Siddaramiah in 2013 and is confident today that he, too, has a chance to be at the helm, if the party wins the Assembly polls. To that extent Shivakumar apart, other leaders in the party, too, would welcome today's developments.

Gold smuggling: ED moves Kerala HC against appointment of judicial commission

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
T'PURAM, 24 JUNE

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Thursday moved Kerala High Court challenging the appointment of a judicial commission by the state government to carry out a probe against the Central agencies investigating the gold smuggling and related cases

The ED, in its petition stated the state government does not have the power to appoint a commission of inquiry in the case being probed by the Central agencies and has sought the annulment of the commission's appointment.

The judicial commission was appointed to sabotage the investigation by the Central agencies, the ED said in its petition.

Kerala Cabinet in March last decided to conduct a judicial probe against the ED over allegations by two key accused in the case that Central agency officials forced them to confess against CM Pinarayi Vijayan.

The Cabinet meeting also decided to appoint retired HC judge VK Mohanan as the commission's chairman.

Following this, the state government on 7 May issued a notification appointing former HC judge Justice VK Mohanan as chairman of the commission.

The commission started functioning from 11 June and the next day issued a notification stating those knowledgeable and able to give evidence should inform before 26 June.

India should aim to be among world's top 3 naval powers in 10-12 yrs: Singh

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KARWAR (KARNATAKA), 24 JUNE

Defence minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday said the naval base being developed here under "Project Seabird" should be Asia's biggest, and he would try to get budget allocation enhanced for it, if required.

He also said India should aim to be among one of the top three naval powers in the world in the next 10-12 years time.

"I had a curiosity before visiting Project Seabird to see and understand it...I'm happy seeing Karwar closely and can say that my confidence level has increased towards this naval base," Singh said.

Addressing the Indian Navy officers and sailors, he said, with the completion of the project, not only India's defence preparedness will be strengthened, but also the country's trade, economy and the humanitarian assistance that it provides will get more strength.

Singh, accompanied by Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral Karambir Singh, undertook an aerial survey of project area and sites, prior to arriving at INS Kadamba Helipad here. Stating that during the aerial survey, he could see its future, the defence minister said the future of this naval base is "very bright" and the credit for this has to go to the officers and sailors.

"I have also seen the country's first sealift facility, which will improve our maintenance compared to earlier...so I say this naval base is different from the rest," he said.

The minister is also scheduled to visit Kochi to review the progress of construction of the indigenous Aircraft Carrier (IAC) there.

Ayesha quizzed by Lakshadweep Police, let off

PTI
KOCHI, 24 JUNE

Filmmaker Ayesha Sulthana, facing allegations of sedition in Lakshadweep, was let off by the police on Thursday after interrogation.

Sulthana was interrogated by the Kavaratti police on Sunday, Wednesday and Thursday in connection with the case registered on the basis of a complaint filed by a BJP leader in the Islands.

Emerging from the police station after nearly a three hour-long interrogation, Sulthana said: "Everything is over. I'm told that I can go back to Kochi. I'll reach Kochi tomorrow or a day after."

The allegation is that the filmmaker, while participating in a debate telecast by a Malayalam news channel on 7 June, had said the Centre used biological weapons against the people of Lakshadweep.

She appeared before the police after the Kerala High Court granted her interim anticipatory bail for a week, while reserving orders on her advance bail plea.

Doval pitches for 'action plan' by SCO against LeT, JeM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

On the sidelines of the SCO NSA's meeting in Dushanbe on Thursday.

National Security Advisor Ajit Doval has pitched for an "action plan" against Pakistan-based terror groups Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) under the framework of eight-nation grouping SCO and called for expeditiously bringing the perpetrators of terror attacks to justice.

At an in-person meeting of top security officials of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in Tajikistan's capital Dushanbe on Wednesday, he also called for full implementation of the UN resolutions and targeted sanctions against UN-designated terrorist individuals and entities, official sources said. Doval also emphasised the adoption of international standards to counter terror financing and suggested having a memorandum of understanding between the SCO and anti-terror watchdog FATF.

Strongly condemning terrorism in all forms and manifestations, he said the perpetrators of terrorism including cross-border terror attacks should be expeditiously brought to justice. The NSA proposed an action plan againstLeT and JeM as part of the SCO framework, the sources said. In his remarks, Doval also pitched for monitoring of new technologies being used by terrorists including drones for smuggling of weapons and misuse of dark web, artificial intelligence, blockchain and social media.

On the sidelines of the meeting, Doval had an over two-hour-long meeting with Russian NSA Nikolai Patrushev.

The sources said they discussed contemporary developments of bilateral, regional and global significance.

At the meeting, Doval, referring to developments in Afghanistan, said that there is a need to preserve the gains made in the last two decades and give top priority to the welfare of the Afghan people.

He said India fully supports SCO Contact Group on Afghanistan and it should be more active. Doval said that though India became a member of the bloc in 2017, it has physical, spiritual, cultural and philosophical linkages for centuries with countries that make up the SCO.

The NSA also pitched for greater connectivity including through initiatives like Chahbahar, INSTC, regional air corridors and Ashgabat Agreement, adding connectivity leads to economic gains and trust.

TYING HOPE

Women tie threads around a banyan tree and offer prayers on the occasion of 'Vat Savitri Purnima' festival, in Ahmedabad, on Thursday. AGENCIES

Passport 'kendras' established in 489 LS constituencies: Jaishankar

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

The government has successfully established passport kendras in 489 Lok Sabha constituencies in the country so far and hopes to set up such kendras in the remaining 54 constituencies to further strengthen the outreach of the passport services, external affairs minister S Jaishankar said today.

Addressing a function on the occasion of the ''Passport Seva Divas'', he noted that the country presently has a network of 555 passport kendras, including 36 passport offices, 93 passport seva kendra (PSK) and 426 post office passport seva kendras (POPSK).

Jaishankar said the government has made every effort to simplify the passport rules and processes.

"However, as the process is dynamic, we should continue to look deeper and deliberate further on reducing the compliance burden on our citizens." He said the MEA has leveraged the use of technology and digital systems into its functioning, including, in delivering passport services. Jaishankar said the MEA, with its global outreach exercise, has integrated 174 Indian embassies and consulates abroad with the passport seva programme enabling a centralised passport issuance system for the citizens in India and diaspora abroad.

"We should complete the mission integration process on priority, including in new missions and posts abroad.''

He expressed his deep appreciation for the way passport offices continued to deliver passport services at a high standard during the pandemic period, especially during its second wave. He also conveyed his heartfelt condolences to the families of the passport personnel who lost the battle against the pandemic.

He also complimented the state police authorities for playing a significant role in the timely delivery of passports. The time taken for police verification has been coming down over the years, he noted.

Judge reserves order on Mamata's recusal petition

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, 24 JUNE

Justice Kaushik Chanda of Calcutta High Court today reserved the judgment on a plea by chief minister Mamata Banerjee that the judge assigned to hear her election petition recuse himself as he was an "active member" of BJP.

Miss Banerjee appeared before the court of Justice Chanda through video conferencing, as directed by him on 18 June.

Why didn't you mention the transfer issue during the hearing of the matter on 18 June after having prayed for the transfer of the case on 16 June, Justice Chanda asked chief minister's counsel, Avishek Manu Singhvi. The transfer petition was made as it was contended that before his elevation, Justice Chanda had connection with BJP which may bias his views in this matter as Suvendu Adhikari, the victorious BJP candidate of Nandigram is a party in the election petition.

The election petition by chief minister seeks Nandigram results be set aside and recounting held under jurisdiction of the court. Even as the transfer petition was before the acting Chief Justice, Rajesh Bindal, another petition was made to Justice Chanda yesterday seeking transfer of the matter from before him.

Addressing Singhvi about his BJP links, Justice Chanda said he had told a Division Bench of these connections when he was a counsel. Referring to his appearance in a case of Amit Shah holding a rally before Victoria House, Justice Chanda that BJP was not a significant political force in the state when he represented it.

Stating that BJP had won that case, Justice Chanda said that he was not even a convenor of the legal cell of the party he once represented in this matter. As for the ongoing matter, while Singhvi was a Congress leader, another counsel in this case, SN Mookherjee had BJP connection, Justice Chanda pointed out.

Two appeals cannot be heard simultaneously as one transfer petition is already before the acting Chief Justice who is yet to give his decision on it and another one is before me, Justice Chanda pointed out.

If you appeal to me then you must withdraw the transfer petition before the acting Chief Justice, he said.

Cabinet nod for 'Students' credit card' scheme

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, 24 JUNE

Students would be able to borrow upto Rs 10 lakh for educational purposes after state Cabinet today approved 'Students' credit card' scheme.

The scheme will be launched officially on 30 June and card will be given to students online.

This was promised in the TMC election manifesto.

Beginning with the Class X students, soft loan can be availed till the age of 40 which has to be repaid within 15 years while the government acts as guarantor.

Students residing in West Bengal for 10 years will be eligible for this benefit.

"We fulfill the promises that we make and so we have come up with the Students' Credit Card scheme. Students are our pride and the government will provide all help so that he/she can pursue higher education at any university across the country or abroad. They will not need to take any guarantor while applying for the loan as the government itself will be their guarantor. Again, students will get ample time to repay the loan," said chief minister Mamata Banerjee after the Cabinet meeting at Nabanna.

Miss Banerjee said students of classes X and XII, UG, PG, professional courses, diploma courses, doctorate and post doctorate courses and researchers can avail loans under the scheme.

Mamata writes to PM for early WHO approval to Covaxin

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, 24 JUNE

Chief minister Mamata Banerjee today wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeking his intervention for getting an early approval from WHO for Covaxin.

Terming the occasion as a student-centric day, Miss Banerjee said she has written to PM for an early approval for Covaxin from WHO as students are facing trouble in travelling abroad for educational purposes.

In a letter to Modi, she wrote that Covaxin is not approved by WHO and it is not possible to travel abroad as many countries are allowing only those people who are fully vaccinated with WHO-approved vaccines.

"Many students from all over the country travel abroad every year for higher studies and many of these students have got themselves vaccinated with Covaxin. They came to learn later on that their vaccination certificate is not valid abroad. The students are now in a fix regarding their next course of action and their career is at stake," she wrote.

This will also benefit people travelling abroad for job, education, business and any other purposes as well, she added.

The chief minister said that the state has administered more than 2 crore doses and has been receiving both Covishield and Covaxin.

Mamata salutes farmers' protest

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, 24 JUNE

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee saluted the farmers agitation against farm laws and said that it was a genuine issue after a state committee meeting at Nabanna today.

Miss Banerjee also lashed out at BJP for indicating Pakistan links in the farmers' agitation and said, "According to the BJP, all are terrorists and only they are nationalists and others are anti-national. They can neither supply vaccines nor keep a record of Covid deaths as bodies float in rivers in Uttar Pradesh. Such comments don't suit them."

Earlier in June, BKU president Rakesh Tikait met chief minister at Nabanna and discussed about the farmers protest across the nation.

Meanwhile, Bharatiya Kisan Union will send a delegation to West Bengal on 26 June.

They will meet Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar, said Purnendu Basu, president, Trinamul Congress Kisan and Khet Mazdoor Committee.

Basu said about 100 farmers will meet the Governor and handed over a letter addressed to the President urging to scrap the three "draconian" laws.

Earlier in June, BKU president Rakesh Tikait met chief minister at Nabanna and discussed about the farmers protest across the nation.

In December, Miss Banerjee called the agitating farmers at Singhu border and sent a delegation of three MPs to express solidarity with them.

TENDER

JAMMU & KASHMIR POLICE HEADQUARTERS
Phone/Fax No.:- 0194-2443031/2443032 (Sgr), 0191-2459029/2459255 (Jmu)
Website :- www.jkpolice.gov.in, E-mail :- phqjk@jkpolice.gov.in

TENDER EXTENSION NOTICE

Due to administrative reasons, date for tender submission and online opening of technical bids in respect of **PHQ J&K** NIT No. **34 of 2020 dated 18.08.2020** floated for purchasing Total Containment Vessel (TCV) is rescheduled as per following details :-

I). Last date for tender submission - 13.07.2021
II). Date of Online opening of technical bids - 15.07.2021

Other terms and conditions of the tender shall remain unchanged.

Sd/- (Rajinder Kumar Gupta) - JKPS,
AIG (Provision/Transport),
For Director General of Police, J&K Srinagar.

No: DIPK-3464/21
Dated: 24.06.2021

The way Maha govt spreads lies with confidence everyday, it has baffled me. We should learn to possess this confidence and not the lying trait from this govt

MAHARASHTRA BJP LEADER DEVENDRA FADNAVIS

CRITICISING STATE GOVT OVER MARATHA, OBC RESERVATIONS, COVID SITUATION AND THE SACHIN WAZE CASE

THUMBNAILS

Devotees carry pitchers filled with holy water during the 'Jal Yatra' procession in Ahmedabad on Thursday. IANS

5 jump off moving train: Panicked over boarding the wrong train, five people jumped off a moving train in Jhansi district which killed one of them while four others were injured, officials said on Thursday.The deceased, Ajay Kumar from Gorakhpur, died on the spot after coming under the train. PTI

Abducted women rescued: Police on Thursday said th- ey have rescued two wom- en from Khatauli town, Muzaffarnagar , who were allegedly lured and converted to Islam by men who then married them. The two men Monu Khan and Rehman Khan have absconded, police said. PTI

Patient bitten by rat, dies: A 24-year-old patient, who was bitten by a rat near his eye at a civic-run hospital in suburban Ghatkopar, has died at the medical facility, BMC officials said on Thursday. The hospital management had confirm- ed the rat bite incident, but said injuries were sup- erficial and the patient's eye was not affected. PTI

I-T raids in Raipur: The Income Tax Department has unearthed the transactions of more than one hundred crore rupees through a hawala racket in Chhattisgarh capital Raipur. The sleuths condu- cted a raid on the offices of a Raurkela based firm Scan Group of Companies on 21 June. SNS

Bihar Assembly: No entry for non-vaccinated MLAs

Speaker says vaccination is mandatory not only for legislators but also for their families

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
PATNA, 24 JUNE

The Bihar legislators unwilling to take vaccines may not have the opportunity to attend the upcoming monsoon session of the state Assembly. In a move aimed at ensuring wide vaccination coverage, state Assembly Speaker Vijay Kumar Sinha has asked all the legislators to get the vaccines soon so as to attend the assembly session and raise the issues of the people of their respective constituencies.

"We appeal to the legislators to get themselves vaccinated soon or it won't be possible for us to allow them to attend the House sessions," the Speaker said today.

He said the vaccination was mandatory not only for the legislators but also for their family members. He also announced to honour those legislators whose constituencies report 80 percent vaccination.

He said the MLAs were the watchdogs of the society and if they join the vaccination drive, more people would be encouraged to get the vaccines which in turn would boost up country' fight against the virus.

According to Sinha, around 80 per cent of the legislators have got the vaccines so far but he wants all of them to get vaccinated. He said the legislators staying away from vaccination drives were creating confusions in the society. Vaccination percentage in Bihar has crossed little over 15% since the drive started in mid-January. According to the health department, a total of 1.49 crore people have taken vaccines in Bihar so far. Of them, 1.26 crore have taken the first dose of the vaccine whereas 22.51 lakh have taken the second dose.

The maximum number of 46.57 lakh people covered under the vaccination falls in the 18-44 age-groups, followed by vaccination of 44.02 lakh people above 60 years and 43.24 lakh people in 45-59 age-group.

Villagers in the state are reluctant to get vaccines for various reasons.

They fear that taking the vaccines may leave them infertile and disable, cause life-threatening reactions and even deaths. Angry villagers have been chasing the health teams, roughing them and also assaulting them for coming to their village for vaccination. The state government has pressed into service more than 700 mobile vaccination vans and also holding vaccination camps in the local schools to vaccinate the villagers without facing any problems.

According to the Health Department, a total of 1.49 crore people have taken vaccines in Bihar so far. Of them, 1.26 crore have taken the first dose whereas 22.51 lakh have taken the second

'Cong members should work to address vaccine hesitancy'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

Congress President Sonia Gandhi on Thursday said the party must play an active role in ensuring full Covid vaccination coverage and address vaccine hesitancy wherever evident.

She also said that the country needs to prepare for the possible third wave and take proactive measures so that children are spared this calamity.

Addressing a meeting of party general secretaries and in-charges of AICC in various states, she called upon party leaders and workers to continue to put pressure on the union government to ensure that the daily rate of vaccination trebles so that 75 per cent of the population gets fully vaccinated by end of this year. Her comments come in the wake of the BJP accusing the Congress of aiding vaccine hesitancy.

"On the pandemic, let me say that it is absolutely essential that our party plays an active role in ensuring full vaccination coverage. At the national level, the daily rate of vaccination has to treble so that 75 per cent of our population gets fully vaccinated by end of this year," she said. "No doubt, this is dependent entirely on the adequacy of vaccine supply.We must continue to put pressure on the Centre which has, at our Party's insistence, finally taken on the responsibility for this. At the same time, we have to ensure that registration takes place, that vaccine hesitancy wherever evident is overcome and vaccine wastage is minimised," she said.

Quoting experts, she said they are talking of a possible third wave in a few months from now and some have pointed to the vulnerability of children in the coming months. Talking about the white paper on Covid management brought out by the Congress, she said it is being translated in other languages.

Rahul denies calling all Modis thief in 2019

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi arrives at a magistrate's court for the criminal defamation case over the 'Modi surname' remark, in Surat on Thursday.

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
AHMEDABAD, 24 JUNE

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Thursday denied making any comment about people with Modi surnames being thief.

Appearing before a magisterial court in Surat this morning, the Congress leader said that he did not make any derogatory remarks attributed to him.

A BJP MLA from Surat, Purnesh Modi has filed a criminal defamation suit against Rahul Gandhi for his alleged remarks during an election rally at Kolar in Karnataka in April 2019.

As Chief Judicial Magistrate (CJM) A N Dave asked him about saying that Prime Minister Narendra Modi gave Rs 30 crore to an industrialist, Gandhi replied that as a political leader he keeps on raising many issues like corruption and unemployment.

He has a right to raise such issues, Rahul Gandhi told the Chief Judicial Magistrate in Surat. To many other questions, Rahul Gandhi replied with a cryptic "I don't know".

The next hearing of the case has been scheduled on 12 July. The BJP legislator has also moved the Gujarat HC to call Kolar district collector and a videographer to testify as witnesses in the case.

Legislator Purnesh Modi filed a complaint against Gandhi in April 2019 under the Indian Penal Code Sections 499 and 500, that deal with defamation. A week back, CJM Dave directed Gandhi to remain present on 24 June to record his statement in the case.

Meanwhile, Gandhi accused PM on Thursday of distracting the present with theatrics and "toying" with the future of the country.

His reaction came after Modi interacted with the participants of Toycathon-2021 through video-conferencing and said the world wants to understand India's capabilities, art, culture and society.

"Today, MSME sector employers are themselves facing unemployment. PM is distracting India's present with theatrics and 'toying' with the future," Gandhi wrote on *Twitter*.

Farmers to protest on 26 June at Delhi's border

NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

A large number of farmers, including from Uttar Pradesh, is expected to join protesters at Delhi's border points on 26 June to mark seven months of their agitation against the three agri laws enacted last year, the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) said on Thursday. Farmers at the Singhu, Tikri and Ghazipur border points are gearing up for June 26 and they will observe it as 'Save Agriculture, Save Democracy Day', it said in a statement.

"Preparations are underway for marking June 26 as 'Save Agriculture, Save Democracy Day' all over the country," said the umbrella body of 40 farmer unions which is spearheading the stir.

Farmers have been camping at Delhi's borders since November demanding that the legislations be rolled back and a new law made to guarantee minimum support price for crops. "A large convoy of protestors has left Ganganagar in Rajasthan today for the Shahjahanpur border, led by Grameen Kisan Mazdoor Samiti (GKS).

Similarly, farmers from Bagpat and Saharanpur are expected at Ghazipur border, led by Tikait," the statement said. On June 26, farmers led by unions across the country will hold demonstrations against the laws, it said. Farmers at different protest sites celebrated the birth anniversary of 15th-century saint Kabir Das. "Communal harmony is a hallmark of this movement, and Kabir's birth anniversary was celebrated with great respect today," the SKM statement said. PTI

Centre's policies led to rise in inflation: CPM

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

The CPI (M) today said that Modi government's policies had resulted in rising inflation and price rise of essential commodities when people were fighting Covid. An editorial in CPI (M) journal *People's Democracy* said that "household consumption levels have touched a new low and rising hunger is seeing growing queues outside free food centres."

The main cause for inflation is the ever increasing prices of diesel and petrol. Since 4 May, the prices have been hiked 24 times and in June, 12 times so far. Now petrol is selling at Rs 100 or more per litre in seven states and union territories, including metropolitan cities like Mumbai, Hyderabad and Bengaluru.

These hikes in prices are mainly due to the huge burden of central excise duties and other taxes on petroleum products. These taxes constitute 55 to 58 per cent of the price of petrol and diesel, the party said.

As a result, there has been a whopping 138 per cent increase in revenue from petroleum products since 2014-15. The spiralling prices of petrol and diesel have had a cascading effect on prices of essential commodities by driving up transportation costs, the party said.

The increase in the wholesale price index in May 2021 was nearly 13 per cent (12.94) which is the highest in 11 years. The consumer price index rose by 6.3 per cent during the same period. The prices of food items like rice, edible oils, pulses, vegetables, and eggs have sky-rocketed. Edible oil saw the worst increase of upto 60 per cent. Farmers are badly hit by the increasing cost of diesel used for their pump-sets and tractors, the party said.

MEA: India desires normal ties with Pak

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

India today reiterated its desire for normal relations with Pakistan but made it clear that the onus for creating a "conducive atmosphere" in this regard was entirely on Islamabad.

"As far as our bilateral relations with Pakistan are concerned, our stand is well known. We desire normal relations with all our neighbours, including Pakistan."

"Pakistan must work towards creating a conducive atmosphere, including by taking credible, verifiable and irreversible action to not allow any territory under its control to be used for cross-border terrorism against India in any manner," Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said at a media briefing. On Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi's comments about India's role in Afghanistan, he said it was for the Afghan people to decide their partners and the size of the partnership.

Gorkha body talks statehood with Guv

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
DARJEELING, 24 JUNE

Amid the hullabaloo over some BJP leaders' demand for a separate state or Union Territory for the entire north Bengal region, the National Gorkhaland Committee (NGC) today met Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar here and took up the issue of statehood in the proposed area of Gorkhaland.

The NGC is a pan-India body consisting of eminent personalities and working for the Gorkhaland statehood demand. A delegation of the group met Mr Dhankhar at the Governor's House here.

"We have no objection to the demand for a state/UT for north Bengal, but the people's aspirations here is that of a separate state of Gorkhaland. We have asked the Governor to take up this demand with the government," NGC member Pravakar Dewan said.

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF ENGINEERING SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, SHIBPUR HOWRAH - 711103

(An Institute of National Importance under MHRD, Govt. of India)

Date: 23.06.2021

Advt. No. EE 1682

Applications are invited for one **(01) Junior Research Fellow (JRF)** post for a MeitY, GoI funded NaMPET Phase-III multi-institutional consortium Project entitled **"MEMS for Electric Machines and Drives (MEMS Machines)".** Eligible person(s) may visit the website (W. Code DRC-006/21-22) under "Employment" for details.

Dean (R&C)

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF ENGINEERING SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, SHIBPUR HOWRAH - 711103

(An Institute of National Importance under MHRD, Govt. of India)

Date: 23.06.2021

Advt. No. EE 1680

Applications are invited for **one (01) Research Associate (RA)** post for a MeitY, GoI funded NaMPET Phase-III multi-institutional consortium Project entitled **"Design and Development of Magnetic Core Power Inductor (HF-Mag)".** Eligible person(s) may visit the website (W. Code DRC-004/21-22) under "Employment" for details.

Dean (R&C)

SEARCH FOR KIDNAPPED

JYOTI

General public is hereby informed that a girl (depicted in the photo), **Namely:** Jyoti **D/o** Ram Parshad **R/o** H. No. U-81, Gali No. 03, Janta Colony, Welcome, Delhi was kidnapped since 08.06.2014 from her house. In this regard a case vide FIR No. 324/14 u/s 363 IPC dated 09.06.2014 has been registered at Police Station Welcome, Delhi. Her physical description is as under:-

Age : About 15 Years, **Height:** 4'2",**Complexion :** Shallow, **Face**: Round, **Built:** Thin, **Wearing :** Firoji colour suit-salwar and silver colour sandal in feet.

Any person having any information/Clue about this kidnapped girl, may inform SHO, Welcome, Delhi. at E-mail Id – **cic@cbi.gov.in** or Website: **http://cbi.nic.in**

Phone:
011-24368638, 24368641
Fax No. 011-24368639
DP/830/NE/2021

SHO
P.S. Welcome, Delhi
North-East Distt., Delhi
Ph. No. 011-22828277, 22826808

TEMPORARY CANCELLATION / DIVERSION / PARTIAL CANCELLATION / RE-SCHEDULING / REGULATION / SKIPPING OF STOPPAGE OF TRAINS DUE TO TRAFFIC BLOCK

It is notified for the information of passengers that Ambala Division of Northern Railway will undertake the Non-Interlocking work of Sirhind Station for commissioning of Electronic Interlocking in connection with Pilkhani - Sanehwal Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor (DFCCIL) work. To execute this work Ambala Division will take suitable traffic blocks of different durations upto 30.06.2021. During this period following trains will be cancelled/diverted/partially cancelled/re-scheduled/ regulated & stoppage of some trains at Sirhind station will be skipped on dates shown against each:-

CANCELLATION OF TRAINS

Train No.	Train Name	Date of Cancellation (from originating station)
05252	Jalandhar City - Darbhanga Jn. Special Express	on 27.06.2021
05251	Darbhanga Jn. - Jalandhar City Special Express	on 26.06.2021
02238	Jammu Tawi - Varanasi Jn Special Express	on 27, 28, 29 & 30.06.2021
02237	Varanasi Jn. - Jammu Tawi Special Express	on 26, 27, 28 & 29.06.2021
04132	Udhampur - Prayagraj Jn. Special Express	on 27 & 30.06.2021
04131	Prayagraj Jn. - Udhampur Special Express	on 26 & 29.06.2021
02054/53	Amritsar Jn. - Haridwar Jn. - Amritsar Jn Special Express	on 26, 27, 28, 29 & 30.06.2021
05212	Amritsar Jn. - Darbhanga Jn. Special Express	on 26, 28 & 30.06.2021
05211	Darbhanga Jn. - Amritsar Jn. Special Express	on 26 & 28.06.2021
02920	Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra - Dr Ambedkar Nagar Special Express	on 27 & 30.06.2021
02919	Dr Ambedkar Nagar - Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra Special Express	on 25 & 28.06.2021
04650	Amritsar Jn. - Jaynagar Jn. Saryu Yamuna Special Express	on 26, 28 & 30.06.2021
04649	Jaynagar Jn. - Amritsar Jn. Saryu Yamuna Special Express	on 25, 27 & 29.06.2021
04674	Amritsar Jn. - Jaynagar Jn. Shaheed Special Express	on 25, 27 & 29.06.2021
04673	Jaynagar Jn. - Amritsar Jn. Shaheed Special Express	on 26, 28 & 30.06.2021
02380	Amritsar Jn. - Sealdah Jaliawala Bagh Special Express	on 27.06.2021
02379	Sealdah - Amritsar Jn. Jaliawala Bagh Special Express	on 25.06.2021
02026	Amritsar Jn. - Nagpur Special Express	on 28.06.2021
02025	Nagpur - Amritsar Jn. Special Express	on 26.06.2021
04672	Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra - Bandra Terminus Swaraj Special Exp.	on 26, 29 & 30.06.2021
04671	Bandra Terminus - Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra Swaraj Special Exp.	on 25, 27 & 28.06.2021
04675	Gandhidham Jn. - Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra Special Express	on 26.06.2021
04678	Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra - Hapa Special Express	on 28.06.2021
04677	Hapa - Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra Special Express	on 29.06.2021
04679	Jamnagar - Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra Special Express	on 30.06.2021
04680	Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra - Jamnagar Special Express	on 27.06.2021
02356	Jammu Tawi - Patna Jn. Special Express	on 27 & 30.06.2021
02355	Patna Jn. - Jammu Tawi Special Express	on 26 & 29.06.2021
02422/21	Jammu Tawi - Ajmer Jn. - Jammu Tawi Special Express	on 26, 27, 28, 29 & 30.06.2021
04652	Amritsar Jn. - Jaynagar Jn. Special Express	on 25, 27 & 30.06.2021
04651	Jaynagar Jn. - Amritsar Jn. Special Express	on 25, 27, 29.06.2021 & 02.07.2021
04654	Amritsar Jn. - New Jalpaiguri Superfast Special Express	on 30.06.2021
04653	New Jalpaiguri - Amritsar Jn. Superfast Special Express	on 25.06.2021
02318	Amritsar Jn. - Kolkata Special Express	on 29.06.2021
02317	Kolkata - Amritsar Jn. Special Express	on 27.06.2021
02358	Amritsar Jn. - Kolkata Special Express	on 28.06.2021 & 01.07.2021
02357	Kolkata - Amritsar Jn. Special Express	on 26 & 29.06.2021
05098	Jammu Tawi - Bhagalpur Special Express	on 29.06.2021
04145	Kanpur Central - Amritsar Jn. Special Express	on 28.06.2021
04146	Amritsar Jn. - Kanpur Central Special Express	on 29.06.2021
04646	Jammu Tawi - Jaisalmer Special Express	on 26, 28 & 29.06.2021
04645	Jaisalmer - Jammu Tawi Special Express	on 26, 28, 30.06.2021 & 01.07.2021
04662	Jammu Tawi - Barmer Special Express	on 25 & 27.06.2021
04661	Barmer - Jammu Tawi Special Express	on 25, 27 & 29.06.2021
01078	Jammu Tawi - Pune Jn. Special Express	on 26, 27, 28 & 29.06.2021
01077	Pune Jn. - Jammu Tawi Special Express	on 25, 26, 27 & 28.06.2021
03006	Amritsar Jn. - Howrah Jn. Special Express	on 26, 27, 28, 29 & 30.06.2021
03005	Howrah Jn. - Amritsar Jn. Special Express	on 25, 26, 27, 28 & 29.06.2021
02332	Jammu Tawi - Howrah Jn. Special Express	on 27 & 28.06.2021
02331	Howrah Jn. - Jammu Tawi Special Express	on 25 & 26.06.2021
04553	Delhi Jn. - Daulatpur Chowk Special Express	25.06.2021 to 01.07.2021
04554	Daulatpur Chowk - Delhi Jn. Special Express	up to 30.06.2021
02445	New Delhi - Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra Special Express	25 to 29.06.2021
02446	Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra - New Delhi Special Express	26 to 30.06.2021
02588	Jammu Tawi - Gorakhpur Special Express	on 26.06.2021

DIVERSION OF TRAINS

Train No. & Train Name	Diverted Route	Date of passing (from originating station)
02426/02425 Jammu Tawi - New Delhi - Jammu Tawi Spl. Exp.	Via Gill-Dhuri Jn. - Jakhal Jn.	on 26, 27, 28, 29 & 30.06.2021
02408 Amritsar Jn. - New Jalpaiguri Special Express	Via Sanehwal - Chandigarh	on 25.06.2021
04652 Amritsar Jn. - Jaynagar Special Express	Via Gill-Dhuri Jn.-Rajpura Jn.	on 25.06.2021
02920 Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra - Dr. Ambedkar Nagar Special Express	Via Sanehwal - Chandigarh	on 25.06.2021
00464 Amritsar Jn. - Howrah Jn. Special Express	Via Gill-Dhuri Jn.-Rajpura Jn.	on 25.06.2021
02278 Jammu Tawi - Tirupati Special Express	Via Gill-Dhuri Jn.-Rajpura Jn.	on 25.06.2021
02326 Nangal Dam - Kolkata Special Express	Via Morinda-Chandigarh	on 26.06.2021
03151 Kolkata - Jammu Tawi Special Express	Via Gill-Dhuri Jn.-Rajpura Jn.	on 26 & 28.06.2021
03152 Jammu Tawi - Kolkata Special Express	Via Rajpura Jn.-Dhuri Jn.-Gill	
05655 Kamakhya - Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra Spl. Exp.	Via Gill-Dhuri Jn.-Rajpura Jn.	on 27.06.2021
05656 Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra - Kamakhya Spl. Exp.	Via Rajpura Jn.-Dhuri Jn.-Gill	on 30.06.2021
08103 Tatanagar Jn. - Amritsar Jn. Special Express	Via Chandigarh-Sanehwal	on 28.06.2021
08104 Amritsar Jn. - Tatanagar Jn. Special Express	Via Sanehwal - Chandigarh	on 25.06.2021
02587 Gorakhpur - Jammu Tawi Special Express	Via Chandigarh-Sanehwal	on 28.06.2021
04141 Prayagraj Jn. - Udhampur Special Express	Via Chandigarh-Sanehwal	on 28.06.2021
04142 Udhampur - Prayagraj Jn. Special Express	Via Sanehwal - Chandigarh	on 29.06.2021

PARTIAL CANCELLATION OF TRAINS

Train No. & Name	Short Terminate at/ Short Originate from	Partially Cancelled between Stations	Date of cancellation (from the Originating Station)
03308 Firozpur Cantt Jn. - Dhanbad Jn. Special Express	from Saharanpur	Firozpur Cantt Jn. - Saharanpur	on 26, 27, 28, 29 & 30.06.2021
03307 Dhanbad Jn. - Firozpur Cantt. Jn. Special Express	at Saharanpur	Saharanpur - Firozpur Cantt. Jn.	on 25, 26, 27 & 28.06.2021
08238 Amritsar Jn - Korba Special Express	from Hazrat Nizamuddin	Amritsar Jn. - Hazrat Nizamuddin	on 27.06.2021
08237 Korba - Amritsar Jn. Special Express	at Hazrat Nizamuddin	Hazrat Nizamuddin - Amritsar Jn.	on 25.06.2021
04502/04501 Una Himachal - Saharanpur - Una Himachal Special Express	from / at Ambala Cantt.	Una Himachal - Ambala Cantt. - Una Himachal	from 25.06.2021 to 30.06.2021
02904 Amritsar Jn. - Mumbai Central Special Express	from Ambala Cantt.	Amritsar Jn. - Ambala Cantt.	on 26, 27, 28, 29 & 30.06.2021
02903 Mumbai Central - Amritsar Jn. Special Express	at Ambala Cantt.	Ambala Cantt. - Amritsar Jn.	on 25, 26, 27 & 28.06.2021

RESCHEDULING OF TRAINS

Train No. & Train Name	Rescheduled Time
04502 Una Himachal - Saharanpur Special Express	Train will be Rescheduled to depart from Una Himachal at 15:00 hrs. instead of 13:30 hrs. (90 minutes late) on 25.06.2021

REGULATION OF TRAIN

Train No. & Train Name	Regulation of Trains
04672 Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra - Bandra Terminus Swaraj Special Express	Train will be Regulated for 45 minutes at Khanna Station on 25.06.2021

SKIPPING OF STOPPAGE AT SIRHIND STATION

Train No. & Train Name	Date(s)
08238 Amritsar Jn - Korba Special Express	on 25.06.2021
03308 Firozpur Cantt Jn - Dhanbad Jn Special Express	on 25.06.2021
04662 Jammu Tawi - Barmer Special Express	on 25.06.2021
01078 Jammu Tawi - Pune Jn Special Express	on 25.06.2021

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Opposition moves

The meeting of non-Congress Opposition leaders and sympathetic civil society figures at Nationalist Congress Party leader Sharad Pawar's residence in the Capital on Monday under the aegis of the avowedly non-party political Rashtra Manch launched by former Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha is unlikely to amount to much. Unless, that is, there is clarity on key issues in the attempt to forge a viable alternative to the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party. If that clarity is forthcoming, though, this could be the beginning of the most serious challenge to its political dominance faced by the BJP in over a decade. The first issue which requires thrashing out by the Opposition is: What is the role of the Congress Party in this matrix? The Communists, for example, who hounded their own leadership for decades from the 1940s for suggesting that working with Jawaharlal Nehru may be a good idea, are today a strong votary of involving the family concern which rules over the rump of India's oldest political party in any effort to take on the BJP. Many regional parties represented at the meeting and for whom both the Congress and BJP are opponents at the state level, however, feel the Congress has singularly failed to provide leadership or take the initiative in forging Opposition unity. The Rashtra Manch meeting could to that extent be seen as a not-so-subtle hint to the Congress to either get in or stay out. (The irony of the situation would not be lost on Mr Manish Tiwari of the Congress who played a vital role in setting up the Rashtra Manch.) Then there is the question of who will bring in the vote for an Opposition bloc. It is all very well to ideate on issues of national concern which the Rashtra Manch was purportedly conceived to do though those with longer memories would definitely hear echoes of VP Singh's Jan Morcha in this proposition. But whether or not the Rashtra Manch converts itself into a political outfit for the 2024 General Election, it is the regional satraps who will have to deliver the Lok Sabha seats. On paper, Chief Ministers Pinarayi Vijayan, YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, K Chandrashekar Rao, Naveen Patnaik, Mamata Banerjee, MK Stalin, Uddhav Thackeray and Arvind Kejriwal form a formidable group. Add Capt. Amarinder Singh and Ashok Gehlot (both Congress veterans) to the mix, and one can see why Monday's meeting has got the political temperature in New Delhi soaring. That Mr Pawar, one of the most experienced leaders in the country, hosted the meeting has given the gathering considerable political heft. On the other hand, election strategist Mr Prashant Kishor, who met Mr Pawar twice in the run-up to Monday's meet, does not have any political stature to speak of; what he does have in abundance is election-management competence, ambition, and good working relationships with Ms Banerjee, Capt. Singh, Mr Stalin, Mr Reddy and Mr Rahul Gandhi among others. That may be just what is required for the diminished politics of the day.

On the back foot

Pakistan's Prime Minister has stoutly refused to host US bases for action inside Afghanistan, saying it would again be targeted for revenge by terrorists if civil war ensued. Imran Khan suggests the country is averse to taking geopolitical risks after US boots on the ground begin the scheduled outward march In September. He has posed a remarkably pertinent query ~ "If the US, with the most powerful military machine in history, couldn't win the war from inside Afghanistan after 20 years, how would America do it from bases in our country?" This is fairly logical. "We simply cannot afford this." He has reaffirmed, however, that Pakistan is ready to be a partner for peace in Afghanistan with the US. But as US troops withdraw, "we will avoid risking further conflict." Mr Khan said that Pakistan and the US had the same interest in "that long-suffering country" ~ a political settlement, stability, economic development and the denial of any haven for terrorists. "We oppose any military takeover of Afghanistan, which will lead only to decades of civil war, as the Taliban cannot win over the whole of the country, and yet must be included in any government for it to succeed," he said. He admitted that in the past, Pakistan had made a mistake by choosing between warring Afghan parties, but added that the country had learned from that experience. There is, therefore, little or no scope for power games. "We have no favourites and will work with any government that enjoys the confidence of the Afghan people. History proves that Afghanistan can never be controlled from the outside." The critical task of controlling fractious Afghanistan is likely to become still more complex when the country is left to its own devices, post the pullout of US forces. Highlighting how Pakistan has suffered from the wars in Afghanistan, Mr Khan said: "More than 70,000 Pakistanis have been killed. While the US provided $20 billion in aid, losses to the Pakistani economy have exceeded $150 billion. Tourism and investment dried up. After joining the US effort, Pakistan was targeted as a collaborator, leading to terrorism against our country from the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan and other groups. US drone attacks, which I warned against, didn't win the war, but they did create hatred for Americans, swelling the ranks of terrorist groups against both our countries." While suspicions will persist that Mr Khan may be upping the ante, he has on the face of it advanced a pragmatic assessment of geostrategy. "We want a negotiated peace, not civil war. We need stability and an end to terrorism aimed at both our countries. We support an agreement that preserves the development gains made in Afghanistan in the past two decades," he has said. If the powerful military establishment that dominates Pakistan shares this view, India and other countries in the region might feel reassured. The real concern, as ever, is how Pakistan's Army and ISI conduct themselves; for India has already voiced fears that an Afghanistan under the Taliban could be used to stage terrorist attacks on other countries.

Eye on microfinance ~ I

Microfinance was once applauded as the world's most powerful tool for eliminating poverty. The initial microfinance boom brought many benefits. But it is now widely reported that the effects of microfinance loans on poverty, health and other social outcomes have been 'small and inconsistent'

The beleaguered microfinance sector in India now seems to be on the active radar of regulators and there is hope that his flailing sector will get sturdier wings. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has released a consultative document on uniform regulation for companies engaged in microfinance business. The document aims at harmonising the regulatory frameworks for various regulated lenders in the microfinance space

The key proposals include a common definition of microfinance loans for all regulated entities, capping the outflow on account of repayment of loan obligations of a household to a percentage of the household income, a Board-approved policy for household income assessment and no pre-payment penalty or requirement of collateral along with greater flexibility of repayment frequency for all microfinance loans.

The proposals also include alignment of pricing guidelines for NBFC-MFIs with guidelines for NBFCs, introduction of a standard simplified fact sheet on pricing of microfinance loans for better transparency, and display of minimum and maximum and average interest rates charged on microfinance loans on the websites of regulated entities,

Microfinance programmes are small-scale special purpose vehicles for poor and underprivileged persons who normally fail to meet the eligibility norms of formal financial systems. These were supposed to provide the poor with the capital they need to start small businesses. They are more popularly called microcredit programmes.

Many of the self-employed entrepreneurs are women, who make a living with tailoring, weaving, snack vending, noodle-making and setting up their own sewing workshop or vegetable stall. Informal credit could not provide adequate working capital for these small businesses, and the lack of financing often prevented them from growing and becoming sustainable. Low-wage workers primarily take out micro-loans to pay off other unpaid debt, meet vital needs such as food, medicine or school costs or fund their children's weddings. It is less common to use loans for business and agricultural purposes.

The cost to borrowers will inevitably reflect the risk of lending because many borrowers don't have credit histories; thus, risk is assumed to be relatively high and is priced accordingly. Giving poor people small loans without collateral, albeit at higher interest rates than on conventional loans, was meant to spur entrepreneurship and allow people to bootstrap their way out of poverty. Most borrowers are women with no steady work. They buy consumer goods on hire purchase, and take loans for coming-of-age ceremonies or to cover family illnesses. Some borrow to send their husbands or sons abroad for work. If the job fails to work out, the man returns and the woman is saddled with debt.

The apparent winning card for MFIs, however, was their use of social collateral as opposed to the physical kind; women rarely had land or other assets to put up. They offer better terms than informal lenders. It has been found that with appropriate, accessible, and fairly priced financial services, people can build their savings, cover the costs of unexpected emergencies, and invest in their families' health, housing, and education.

Microfinance was once applauded as the world's most powerful tool for eliminating poverty. The initial microfinance boom brought many benefits. An obvious one was a decline in the use of loan sharks. The interest rates charged by formal lenders are lower though some microcredit outfits are purely commercial operations. Up until the late 2000s, microfinance was hailed as a financial magic bullet by many. It hasn't quite turned out that way. That is the theory, but evidence is rare and mixed. Microfinance is not a magic bullet but it does provide a tangible and calculable boost to poor communities in their efforts to escape the cycle of poverty. It is now widely reported that the effects of microfinance loans on poverty, health and other social outcomes have been "small and inconsistent".

MOIN QAZI
The writer is the author of Village Diary of a Heretic Banker. He can be reached at moinqazi123@gmail.com

There are doubts on whether microfinance truly helps the poor or drives them further into poverty with aggressive client recruiting and high-interest lending. Experts are questioning the myth that the poor can easily take a ladder out of poverty with some credit; or that microcredit can be financially self-sustaining. The reality is far more complex.

Microfinance is now on a slippery slope, moving from good to bad. It is facing trouble because the purity of its mission has been diluted. When it started, microfinance was a financial tool being used for social good. Now it has increasingly become a social tool used as a way to generate money, which is why it has lost a lot of its original sheen. This is one reason why microfinance often runs into heavy weather and hits periodic roadblocks and default crises.

There is huge difference between the rhetoric of ending poverty and the actual services offered in villages and slums. Where interest caps have been introduced, micro-loan providers required up-front fees from customers structured as percentages of the loans, ensuring that effective interest rates remained higher than the cap. An absence of credit bureaus allowed borrowers to seek funds from several platforms at the same time, creating a "borrow from Peter to pay Paul" scenario. There are now adequate organised Credit Reference Bureaus but they have also has been faulted for occasion in a country like India where there are multiple ways available to ingenious operators for manipulating records. Low-income households, in particular the rural poor, are exposed to unsteady flows of money. The reasons are many, including seasonal unemployment related to the agricultural labour cycle, sickness or death in the family, or weather shocks, among many others. Given the variability and vulnerability of their income, they value formal microfinance because it is more reliable, even if it is often less flexible than other tools to manage their cash flow. Banks offer cheaper credit but are mired in thickets of red tape.

Microcredit is primarily targeted at women, meaning that the worries of daily income for household needs and debt repayment fall overwhelmingly on female shoulders. When liability levels become unsustainable, many are forced to seek out debt bondage ~ labour as a means of paying off microfinance loans ~ in hazardous occupations. The fact is that microloans do help some people ~ but they also carry severe risks. Those who are financially illiterate or unfortunate are at considerable risk of sinking into a spiral of debt when this kind of lending goes wrong. Complementary elements like microinsurance and remittances both protect vulnerable families from health shocks and enable bread-winners to send cash quickly wherever it's needed.

Microcredit, the flagship product of microfinance companies sector has shifted from a not-for-profit approach to a neoliberal model dominated by commercial banks. While previously loans were tightly regulated in terms of amounts, interest rates and collateral, and often underwritten by states when necessary, now lending has expanded to allow more unstable borrowers to take part without state protection or relief in times of crisis.

Microcredit has been a victim of three forces: overhyped rhetoric, imprudent lending, and the profit-focused nature of capitalism. Thus, microcredit requires a delicate and ongoing balancing act between undesirable extremes. It's no wonder then that accusations fly when balance is lost. MFIs have placed their clients in debt peonage by bombarding them with loans.

Microfinance champions argue their effectiveness by sharing moving stories of microentrepreneurs. However, it is generally unclear (a) how these stories were selected; (b) how representative they are of the results as a whole, and (c) the extent to which creative framing and emphasis might play a role in emphasizing the positive aspects of the story while glossing over the negative.

The evidence of impact should normally be systematically collected (with as little opportunity for editorial slant as possible) and representative of overall results (which generally means collecting information on a large number of people rather than on a few). A single study ~ no matter how persuasive and rigorous ~ is not necessarily evidence that microfinance can create similar effects in the future. Many MFIs work on many different types of projects, in many different areas. It is important to consider whether any encouraging results might be (a) a simple fluke or (b) applicable only to the most successful programmes, not to MFI activities as a whole.

Microfinance needs a relook and must undergo soul searching. It is very important to think outside of the borrowing box, as microfinance will have to move beyond its traditional roots. Recent evidence suggests that relatively simple tweaks to microcredit products ~ including flexible repayment periods, grace periods, individual-liability contracts and the use of technology – may change their impact on both clients and institutions. Microfinance businesses should be consistent in applying best practices in evaluating repayment capacity, offering transparent terms and conditions and using credit bureau information to avoid overstretching clients with debts.

To enable the poor to work their way out of poverty, they need to be enabled to move up the steps of the financial ladder through graduated credit. Loans should be made available in staggered doses, with every new tranche disbursed on the basis of the satisfactory repayment behaviour of the clients. This will also ensure that vulnerable groups do not get into a debt trap and make credit dispensation more efficient and qualitative.

(To Be Concluded)

A MEMBER OF THE ANN ASIA NEWS NETWORK

ASIAN VOICES

Maternity protection

Imagine you are Sovann. You are raising your daughter alone. When the Covid-19 pandemic begins, your pay as a domestic worker is cut in half. Despite people's judgement and serious safety risks, you decide to work at night as a tuk-tuk driver to cover rent and daily expenses. You are still waiting for the National Social Security Fund (NSSF) to offer some support to workers like yourself. Until then, you work hard and bring your eight-year old daughter with you in your tuk-tuk because no one is at home to take care of her. Even though I am a full-time working mother of two small children like Saovann, it is hard for me to imagine her situation and put myself in her shoes and those of most Cambodian working mothers in the informal sector. Unlike them, I have the privilege of having access to paid childcare as part of basic employment benefits. I cannot imagine such daily struggle and many would say I should count my blessings. My blessings? Is paid childcare God given or is it a right that all working mothers like Sovann and I should have?

Many women workers in Cambodia can relate to elements of Sovann's story. Like her, these women take their role as mothers and caretakers seriously. Like her, they work hard to provide for their children and often for other family members. However, because of their informal labour status, they cannot access maternity protection benefits, such as childcare, that may support them during pregnancy and maternity. Approximately 90 per cent of women in the labour force in Cambodia are in this position, making them vulnerable to joblessness, debt, poverty, work-related injuries, and sickness, which reduce their ability to care for themselves and their children. We cannot overstate the

The Phnom Penh Post
CAMBODIA'S NEWSPAPER OF RECORD

importance of maternity protection. As a fundamental labour right, it guarantees the security and health of women and their children and is key to achieving gender equality and underpinning economic growth. The Covid-19 pandemic has increased the vulnerabilities of informal women workers in ASEAN to surges in unemployment, domestic violence, unintended pregnancies, and financial insecurity while taking on more responsibilities to care for the sick and to educate their children due to school closures. For this reason, maternity protection is more critical than ever.

While progress has been made to extend social protection in Cambodia, informal women workers continue to be left outside the system. At present, the Labour Law in Cambodia only provides maternity protection benefits to women workers who have formalised work arrangements and contracts and have met the eligibility requirements for contributory social insurance or social assistance. Unfortunately, most informal women workers cannot meet these requirements, as they work in informal working arrangements, and work too irregularly to afford to make regular contributions to social insurance. The problem is rooted in gaps in national legislation and social norms and attitudes about the role of women in Cambodian society. Like in other countries in the region, Cambodian women in their prime reproductive years (ages 25-34) are overrepresented among the poor because they are expected to perform more domestic chores and care work than men, leaving less time to work and earn. Businesses, meanwhile, still have a long way to go to create changes and working environments that empower and protect women and acknowledge the economic value they offer.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR editor@thestatesman.com

Backs to the wall

SIR, During the last one and a half months, India has witnessed skyrocketing prices of petrol, diesel and edible oils.The nation is already reeling under corona pandemic. Millions have lost their lives, lost their jobs, lost their dearest ones, seen children getting orphaned, and loss of earning members of the family. Many middle-class families are struggling to get two square meals a day with the future uncertain.

To add fuel to the fire, the Central government is daily increasing the price of petrol and diesel with total disregard to price in the international market. Even when crude oil prices were at a record low in the international market, the government did not pass the benefit to the people.

Though some states have reduced the tax to reduce the burden on the common man, many including West Bengal have not yet reduced taxes. That is why opposition parties are not raising a hue and cry on this matter.

But our state government is not allowing the transport system to increase fares. How can a bus run with the same fare it used to charge from passengers with a litre of diesel now costing more than Rs. 91? This is leading to fewer buses, minibuses and taxis on the road, adding to problems of people. Thus the transport industry is getting sick.

Prices of essential commodities are rising due to exorbitant price of petrol and diesel. I think sufferings of the people do not have any impact on politicians as they get free homes, free air and road travel sponsored by taxpayers along with huge salary and perks. Further, getting elected once makes them eligible for lifetime pension which is unthinkable for the common man. The pandemic has taught people to fight with their backs to the wall. These hikes have increased suffering. If this continues, people will no longer remain mute spectators.

Yours, etc., Purushottam Chatterjee,
Kolkata, 22 June.

TWO FRONTS

SIR, This refers to Harsha Kakar's article "India must not always be on the back foot" (22 June). The bonhomie between China and Pakistan and their animosity for India has reached such levels that we must remain thoroughly prepared for a two-front conflict in the event of a confrontation with any one of them.

India needs to do two things. Its defense budget must get hiked and at the same time it must remain active in the Quad to keep the lone superpower in good humour because it will really be tough for India to counter a Sino-Pak joint offensive alone, General Kakar is spot on when he says India must not trust its enemies. Russia's growing friendship with China to counter the USA globally indicates that India is not likely to get any help from its former all-weather ally. What then is the reason to stick with the SCO?

Yours, etc,, Aranya Sanyal,
Siliguri; 22 June.

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Education sector faces critical challenges

SANSKRUTI SAMAL

What started out as a health crisis has resulted in major economic, social and political crises. Sadly, for all the developing countries, this crisis is going to drag them back in time. The UNDP's recent report reveals that human development conditions today are equivalent to the levels of deprivation last seen during the 1980s. Adding to this assessment, the ILO report titled: "*Covid-19 and the world of work*" indicates that in India alone more than 400 million people are at the risk of sliding back into poverty. Although the virus has spared no nation, class or caste, the impact will be much higher on the most vulnerable sections of society.

We are now left to contemplate about the effects of this pandemic on school-going kids. In an already fragmented society, the divide has become more apparent in terms of rising inequities. The policy brief of the UN, "*Education during Covid-19 and beyond*" throws light on these inequities. The pandemic will impact over 1.6 billion students in over 190 countries, and the closing down of schools physically has affected over 94 per cent of the world's school-going children. However, the ability to respond to such a drastic change is lesser in lower and lower-middle income countries, where up to 99 per cent of children are going to be adversely impacted.

Moreover, impact studies are yet to reveal the effect of the pandemic in increasing gender barriers to obtaining education. With millions being pushed into poverty, Unesco estimates that some 23.8 million youth/children will drop out of school next year alone due to increasing economic difficulties. This will have a higher impact on female students who will be pushed further towards child marriage, early pregnancy, increased domestic responsibilities and the threat of gender-based violence.

In India especially, the gender gap is quite appalling. According to the 2011 census only 65 per cent of females were literate, in comparison to 82 per cent males. Moreover, when it comes to giving quality education, parents are more likely to send their sons to private educational institutions, with better learning opportunities, rather than their daughters, who are more likely to end up in government schools. Undoubtedly, this pandemic further deepened the gender barrier which existed earlier. A recent study reveals that compared to 38 per cent of boys, 67 per cent of girls were engaged in household work and childcare facilities.

Additionally, the impact of closure of schools has spillover effects which extend beyond education. One such spillover relates to nutrition. For millions of children across the globe, school-based nutrition programs are their primary source of nutrition. As per the World Food Programme's current data, approximately 282 million children are missing out on meals as a result of the closure of schools. This is therefore a major setback in achieving the second Sustainable Development Goal, which aims at eradicating global hunger by 2030.

India's mid-day meal programme is the world's largest school feeding exercise that caters to over 100 million school-going children. Data collated by the World Food Programme reveals that as of June 2020, only 18 States and Union Territories were continuing the mid-day meal programme despite the lockdown. However, there was no uniformity in the policies and the response was scattered, considering local circumstances. There are multiple media reports revealing failure in implementation of the scheme, with the disparity in implementation varying between urban and rural areas.

On 28 May, the Union government decided to directly transfer Rs.1200 crore as a one-time payment towards the nutritional needs of beneficiaries of the mid-day meal scheme. However, considering the number of beneficiaries, every student was eligible only for Rs. 100. Several experts have raised concerns at the amount being so negligible that it will hardly have an impact.

Another major spillover effect of the closure of schools relates to access to female sanitary hygiene products. The National Family Health Survey (2015-2016) disclosed that of 336 million menstruating women in India, only 36 per cent have access to sanitary napkins. Much of this access was through schools, under the central "Kishori Shakti Yojana" scheme. But with schools shut, millions of adolescent girls will undergo their first, and subsequent, menstruation without any access to sanitary hygiene products.

To respond to the drastic challenges brought in by Covid-19, schools have opted for remedial measures such as conducting virtual online classes to ensure minimal learning loss. But the truth remains that 70 per cent of rural India still does not have access to the internet. Even in urban areas internet penetration is not equal across different neighborhoods in the same city.

Taking this divide into account, on 18 September 2020, the Delhi High Court progressively held that the Right to Education Act, 2009 should be flexibly interpreted to deal with changes in society and other unforeseeable circumstances such as natural calamities and the outbreak of diseases. The High Court therefore directed private unaided schools and government schools like Kendriya Vidyalayas to supply gadgets as well as internet packages to students belonging to the EWS category so as to ensure equitable access to education. Similarly, the Patna High Court had taken sou moto cognizance of the condition of children due to non-availability of mid-day meals following the shutting of schools/anganwadi centres due to Covid-19. The Court on 19 September 2020 passed multiple directions to ensure that the benefits of Mid-Day Meal Schemes and the Sarwa Shiksha Scheme reached all children.

While a declaration of rights by Courts will certainly set the groundwork for their realization, until robust policies are established and their implementation made a priority, these rights will never become a reality. Although schools are reopening partially again, the brunt of accepting the probable dangers of physical classrooms is on students of lower income groups who do not have access to digital goods. With children yet to be covered under the vaccination policy, it must be made mandatory to follow Covid hygiene in educational institutions.

Furthermore, health insurance can be extended to safeguard the health of students attending classes physically. In areas where digital learning cannot be ensured through internet facilities, distance learning solutions based on radio and television programmes must be strengthened. Collaborative efforts can be undertaken with community workers to ensure that books, nutrition (in the form of dry ration) and sanitary hygiene products are still accessible.

An undeniable truth which awaits us all is the economic impact of the pandemic; education programmes therefore must be designed to render vocational and technical education to students to prepare social capital which can help the economy rebound. But the government must make drastic policy changes as well as formulate measures for implementation to ameliorate the various disruptive impacts. While richer countries have invested nearly 10 per cent of their GDP on mitigating efforts, emerging economies have limited their spending at around 3 per cent.

But, with richer countries cutting back direct aid programmes, huge challenges lie before policy makers to ensure that the social gains made so far are not lost to the pandemic. Undoubtedly, it is a critical mission to recover the loss to education over a year and it must be taken up with a holistic approach.

The writer is a Law Researcher, Supreme Court of India.

Decoding reprieve for Yeddiyurappa

TYAGRAJ SHARMA

The three-day visit of BJP's national general secretary, Arun Singh, to Bengaluru to sort out the disquiet in the party under chief minister B S Yediyurappa last week proved a damp squib at least for the Lingayat leader's detractors.

Singh asserted that "there are no differences in the party and we are united. A commendable work is being done under Chief Minister Yediyurappa's leadership." This was no different from what he had said before the visit, and he confirmed that the Chief Minister would complete his tenure.

Yediyurappa's critics including MLAs Arvind Ballad, B Yatnal and H Vishwanath, found little support from Singh with the latter even declining to meet some of them. Yatnal, the CM's staunch detractor took to social media to say he had not sought an appointment with the Central observer.

For the Chief Minister, the visit was a welcome development. Despite his age being a constraining factor, his upbeat mood was evident from the state government's advertisements in some local English dailies during Singh' s visit. These detailed steps taken by the government to control the Covid-19 pandemic besides claiming that it had attracted investment proposals worth Rs 17,000 crore in April and May this year. The Covid control efforts of the government were also acknowledged publicly by the central observer.

Significantly, one of the advertisements summed up Yediyurappa's mood, using as it did a quote from American author, Louis L'Amour. "There will come a time when you believe everything is finished. That will be the beginning."

The government went on to claim that "while many windows had closed around the world, the pandemic threw open doors of a new beginning, a new way of life in Karnataka too, when it was dark enough." The messages were seen as an attempt to undermine critics who were claiming that at 78, the chief minister had become too old to govern effectively.

Singh's visit, incidentally, did not go down too well with the CM's detractors as they took objection to his remark in New Delhi earlier that "Yediyurappa would complete his term." According to them, this was not required from an observer who appeared to have made up his mind even before visiting the state capital for discussions with them and other MLAs.

The deliberations of the three days clearly indicated that those against the CM were not able to convince the party observer. So much so that at the conclusion of the state core committee meeting, the observer said "the party would take action against those who are working against it," while adding that there were "only two or three people who are damaging the party and they would be warned." This reportedly is the gist of his report to the party president.

The observer may also have been peeved that his request to legislators to refrain from airing their grievance in public and, instead, to talk to state party leaders, was ignored. H Vishwanath, an aspirant for a ministerial berth, in Yedyurappa's cabinet told newsmen that the ageing chief minister's faculties were not as sharp as before and, therefore , it was time for the party's central leadership to appoint another Lingayat in his place.

In addition, the legislator charged the Yedyurappa government with encouraging corruption citing a tender for a major irrigation project, involving an expenditure of over Rs 21,000 crore. He also alleged that the interference of Yediyurappa's family in the affairs of the government had become too common

This was unacceptable, he said, because it was to protest against such interference that he had left the JDS despite being its state president. Vishwanath was one of the 17 MLAs who toppled the JDS-Congress coalition government by switching over to the BJP.

Current developments apart, the state BJP does realise that while for now its ageing CM has got the much-needed respite, several factors account for his continuation at the helm, starting with the Covid pandemic. The party high command does not want to disturb the present arrangement as it would like him to tackle the pandemic on priority.

The BJP is also aware that, for the present, there is no immediate replacement available for the Lingayat chief minister. Even though there are several aspirants, the TINA factor hangs heavily in Yediyurappa's favour. The high command is conscious of the clout that Yediyurappa wields within his community and its powerful seers, with the latter even going public recently by voicing their support for him as the chief minister.

Last week, a dozen Lingayat seers, under the aegis of Shri Shadkshara Bruhanmatha spoke out in favour of Yediyurappa, saying it was because of him that the BJP had managed to get a foothold in Karnataka. They cited the example of former Tamil Nadu chief minister M Karunanidhi, who had functioned while wheelchair bound, to say that associating age with performance "is nothing but an insult to a leader who has been relentlessly working for the party."

Further, the powerful Akhila Bharata Veerashaiva Mahasabha President, Shamanur Shivashankarappa, a Congress MLA to boot, came out in support of Yediyurappa and his continuation as CM.

It is, therefore, apparent that the central leadership of the party had few options in the matter. It is precisely for this reason that the comments of a senior minister in the Karnataka government assume importance. He told this writer that the party's leadership would do well to prepare in advance about Yediyurappa's future, and do so without antagonising his powerful Lingayat community, the BJP's major vote bank. This decision could not be postponed indefinitely as the party has to prepare for assembly elections in two years' time.

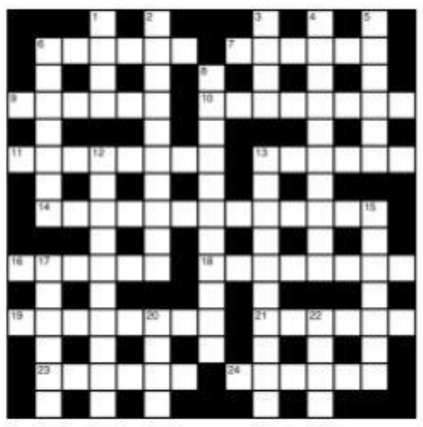
Another issue of importance which may have helped Yediyurappa is that after the party's defeat in West Bengal, the BJP is facing discored in various other states. As such, the party would not like to rock the boat in Karnataka now.

Under the circumstances, Yediyurappa can thank his stars for the breathing space he has got, with the party's high command believing firmly that this is not the right time for any action. More so as Karnataka is a key to the BJP's ambitions in the south.

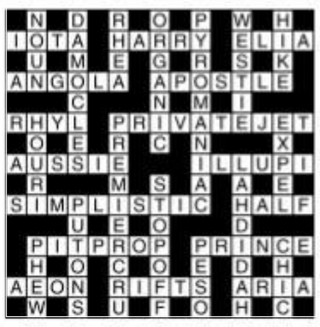
The writer is The Statesman's Bengaluru-based Special Representative.

CROSSWORD

NO 28953



YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION



ACROSS

6 Problem in perceiving my work is awful at the outset (6)
7 Very revolutionary beat associated with a piece of music (6)
9 Recalled idea from internet when fixing British Library logo (6)
10 Where one might discuss food, including nightcaps? (4,4)
11 Cabin trunk, perhaps, taken round ship by English men? (5,3)
13 Enthusiastic cry drawing attention about skill (6)
14 Crew has torn up outrageous legal document (6,7)
16 Contracted disease from meat when hosted by soldier? Not here (6)
18 Greek character prodding a breeding dog? That's uncalled-for (1,3,4)
19 Article covered in blood brought on board by ship-builder mostly something to be avoided (2-2,4)
21 Give way about a source of ore (4,2)
23 French are blocking the current proposition (6)
24 British former Prime Minister missing last engagement (6)

DOWN

1 Bird in current left to the end (4)
2 Pet: I will occupy identical place around front of couch (7,3)
3 Furniture item as yet unfinished (4)
4 Water filling everything in ranch? It's nothing to worry about (5,5)
5 Reward solver in a stroke (3-3)
6 Millions enthralled by me and my historic site (7)
8 Patriotic song at each show's going wild (5,3,3)
12 Range of notes on fashion line implying something not the right size (5,5)
13 Marine creature runs, sheltering in trim beach after storm (6,4)
15 Touching performance in a hat (7)
17 Drunken bum getting cut, swallowing litre (6)
20 Very worried after a force skips attack (4)
22 Nothing set up about European ban (4)

NOTE: Figures in parentheses denote the number of letters in the words required. (By arrangement with **The Independent, London**)

100 YEARS AGO

OCCASIONAL NOTE

The result of the British miners' ballot is now announced, and it is a disappointment, completely failing to realise the hopeful anticipations suggested by the news hitherto received as to the progress of the voting. Evidently Yorkshire and Nottingham have proved no less obdurate than South Wales and other districts. The final result shows 432,511 against the owners' terms and 183,827 in their favour. The total adverse vote exceeds two-thirds of the aggregate, and this satisfies the requirement as to a "two-thirds majority." It was announced by Mr. Hodges last Saturday after a meeting of the Miners' Executive, that, in view of the result of the ballot, the coal stoppage will continue; and, although further negotiations were thought probable in view of the expiry of the Government's offer, the prospect of any change for the better in the position was quite indefinite. Indeed the deadlock was made worse by the decision of the Miners' Executive to appeal to other trade unions affected by wage disputes to make common cause with them. According to Mr. Hodges this would imply a general strike "if the other unions were agreeable." Considering how the other unions have been made to suffer through the action of the Miners' Federation, which has shown the smallest consideration either for labour or public interests in pursuing its own ends, the appeal of the miners' leaders makes a large demand upon them.

NEWS ITEMS

EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS IN BOMBAY

Speaking before the Deccan Sabha last evening with Sir Hormasji Wadya in the chair, the Hon. Mr. Paranjpye, Education Minister, mentioned some of the schemes he had under his consideration for the educational advancement of the Presidency since he accepted office. The principle of a two-thirds educational grant to municipalities desirous of making primary education free and compulsory, had been accepted. In this connection he made it clear that he would be rather more considerate to proposals which include compulsion both for boys and girls. He was also investigating the possibilities of a double shift scheme of primary education up to the third standard which was expected to enable the Government to increase the number of pupils in municipal areas by nearly one hundred per cent.

TERRITORIAL FORCE FOR INDIA

Allahabad, June 24
Particulars are published here of a scheme for the establishment of a new Territorial Force in this country which it is said has been practically approved. There will be six provincial units, two in the Punjab and one each in Bombay, Madras, Bengal and the United Provinces, and these will be raised on the militia system and will be affiliated to a unit of the Regular Army. The minimum age of a recruit in the University Corps is to be reduced to seventeen, but it will remain at eighteen in the case of other units. All recruits will have to be under 31 years of age. It is stated that lengthy consultations with non-official Indians have been held in order to frame the scheme.

OUTRAGES NEAR LONDON

A new sensational development in the Sinn Fein campaign started in the neighbourhood of London at midnight last night, consisting of attacks on signal boxes and signalmen. A Scotland Yard statement describes nine outrages, in the course of which some railwaymen were fired on, gagged, bound, and removed from the signal boxes, which were set on fire. One signalman was wounded in the face. Shots were exchanged between the police and a party of motorists. Nine arrests were made. All young Irishmen. The statement adds that the Irish Self-Determination League is known to be in correspondence with the heads of the Irish Republican Army, who are directing crime in Ireland.

MADRAS BOY'S DARING THEFT

Madras, June 24
The police are investigating a case of theft of currency notes valued at Rs 12,454 odd from the National Bank of India, in which a boy aged fifteen is implicated. The boy it is alleged, went to the bank yesterday evening on the pretext of seeing his brother. He stood near the counter watching the gumasta of Mr. Tarachand Gansham Chand, dubash of Messrs. Shaw Wallace and Co., who had left two bundles of currency notes on the counter to be deposited to the credit of his employer. While the clerk was counting one of the bundles of notes the boy, it is alleged, picked up the other bundle and walked away, but he had not gone far when he was arrested and handed over to the police.

epaper.thestatesman.com

Food inflation is likely to moderate on account of the twin impact of opening up of economic activities and good monsoon.

K V SUBRAMANIAN
CHIEF ECONOMIC ADVISER

THUMBNAILS

Telecom PLI applicants: Global electronics manufacturing companies Foxconn, Flex, Jabil Circuit, Sanmina SCI are among 29 companies that have registered under the Rs 12,195-crore production linked incentive scheme for the telecom sector, according to an official source. Another source said that Foxconn and its subsidiary Rising Stars Mobile have registered for the scheme separately with the project management agency of the scheme, Small Industries Development Bank of India (Sidbi). PTI

NBFC dividend: The Reserve Bank on Thursday issued guidelines on distribution of dividends by non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) in order to infuse greater transparency and uniformity in the practice. The guidelines shall be effective for declaration of dividend from the profits of the financial year ending 31 March 2022 and onwards. PTI

CarDekho expansion: Leading retail auction model for pre-owned cars, CarDekho Gaadi, has launched operations in Kolkata. Foray in the eastern region is a part of the company`s expansion plan of launching Gaadi operations across the whole country within FY'22. CarDekho Gaadi already operates in 74 cities covering 13 states. It has aggressive expansion plans and targets to cover the entire eastern region in the next 6 months, said a Press release. SNS

Motovolt Mobility: Promoters of Kolkata based e-cycle brand Motovolt have said they remain bullish on prospects of e-mobility in the country despite sluggish sales due to Covid-19 disruptions, and aim at pumping in Rs 70 crore in phases to ride the growth story. Motovolt Mobility, promoted by Himadri Chemicals promoters in their personal capacity, said that the company expects sales of e-cycles will grow to 12 per cent of the total cycle market in 2025 from below one per cent now. PTI

BharatBenz buses: Addressing Covid safety concerns of the public during travel, Daimler India Commercial Vehicles (DICV) has introduced "BSafe" features for its BharatBenz bus fleet to help ensure safe public transport. The buses will come equipped with a range of features that help prevent the spread of infection, including hands-free doors, sanitisers and temperature sensors, said a release. SNS

Vivo phone: Smartphone maker Vivo has announced the launch of Vivo Y1s 3GB storage variant in the country. An addition to Vivo`s youthful Y series, the stylish Y1s is priced at Rs 9,490 for 3GB RAM + 32GB ROM which is expandable up to 256 GB, according to a company statement. SNS

RIL to conclude Aramco deal this year

Al-Rumayyan, chairman of Saudi Aramco and Governor of Public Investment Fund, will join the board of Reliance Industries Ltd

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 24 JUNE

Saudi Aramco chairman and head of the Kingdom's cash-rich wealth fund PIF, Yasir Othman Al-Rumayyan, will join the board of Reliance Industries Ltd as a precursor to a $15-billion deal that is now expected to conclude this year.

RIL chairman and Asia's richest man Mukesh Ambani told shareholders that a deal to sell a 20 per cent stake in the company's oil-to-chemical unit to Saudi Aramco was expected to conclude this year.

Harvard educated Al-Rumayyan, 51, will replace Yogendra P Trivedi, 92, who has expressed a desire to retire, Ambani said.

"Despite several challenges due to Covid-19, we have made substantial progress in the past in our discussions (with Saudi Aramco)," he said. "I expect our partnership to be formalised in an expeditious manner during this year."

RIL had inked an initial pact to sell a fifth of the unit that houses its oil refineries, petrochemical plants and fuel retailing business in August 2019, but the outbreak of global pandemic delayed the deal.

Ambani said RIL is looking forward to "welcoming Saudi Aramco as a strategic partner in our O2C business".

In 2019, he had announced a $75 billion valuation for the O2C business. Today, he did not put any value.

He, however, announced the appointment of Al-Rumayyan, chairman of Saudi Aramco and the Governor of the Public Investment Fund (PIF), as an independent director on the RIL board.

Besides bringing his vast financial experience, the induction of Al-Rumayyan, who also sits on the board of SoftBank Group Corp and Uber Technologies, will bring down the average age of the board of directors of Reliance.

Over the past years, the oil-to-telecom conglomerate has segregated businesses into separate verticals ~ Jio Platforms houses the company's digital and telecom unit, retail is a separate unit, and oil refining and petrochemical segments have been carved into the O2C vertical to attract strategic partnerships.

In the last year, PIF has invested billions of dollars in RIL ventures.

In June last year, PIF bought a 2.32 per cent stake in RIL's digital unit Jio Platforms for Rs 11,367 crore. Five months later, it picked up a 2.04 per cent stake in RIL's retail venture for Rs 9,555 crore. PIF has also invested Rs 3,779 crore in an infrastructure investment trust (InvIT) ~ Digital Fibre Infrastructure Trust (DFIT) ~ that holds RIL's fibre-optic assets.

"I am sure that we will immensely benefit from his rich experience of running one of the world's largest companies, and also one of the largest sovereign wealth funds in the world," Ambani said. "His joining our board is also the beginning of the internationalisation of Reliance. You will hear more about our international plans in the times to come."

An accounting graduate from King Faisal University, Saudi Arabia, who went on to do a general management programme at Harvard Business School, Al-Rumayyan is the head of PIF since May 2019. He was appointed chairman of the board of Saudi Aramco in September 2019.

Al-Rumayyan's experience encompasses over 25 years working in some of Saudi Arabia's key financial institutions.

He began his career at the Saudi Hollandi Bank, where he occupied key positions in various departments. He is a member of the Council of Economic and Development Affairs, and also serves as an advisor to the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers, the chairman of the Decision Support Center, and a board member of the Saudi Industrial Development Fund.

With a stake, Aramco would not just have a share in one of the world's best refineries and the largest integrated petrochemical complex, but also access to one of the fastest-growing markets ~ a ready-made market for 5 lakh barrels per day of its Arabian crude and a potentially bigger downstream role in future.

AMBANI AT AGM

ON ARAMCO DEAL

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ON AL-RUMAYYAN'S APPOINTMENT

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MUKESH AMBANI
CHAIRMAN, RIL

RIL lines up ₹75K cr for new energy biz

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 24 JUNE

Reliance Industries Ltd today announced a Rs 75,000 crore investment in new energy business over the next three years as the operator of the world's largest oil refinery pivots towards a greener and cleaner version.

Reliance will build solar manufacturing units, a battery factory for energy storage, a fuel cell-making plant and an electrolyzer unit to produce green hydrogen as a part of the business, chairman Mukesh Ambani said at the company's annual general meeting with shareholders today.

It will also set up 100 gigawatts (GW) of solar power generation capacity by 2030 and invest in setting up a carbon fibre plant.

The company, which earns about 60 per cent of revenue from its hydrocarbon-fuelled energy operations, had last year set a target of becoming a net-zero carbon company by 2035 ~ a shorter time frame compared to the 2050 cutoff self-imposed by many of its global peers, including BP Plc and Royal Dutch Shell Plc.

This comes as energy giants around the world come under pressure to move towards a low-carbon future to help improve the environment.

Last year, "I had announced our 15-year commitment to become net carbon zero by 2035. Today I am happy to present to you our ambitious strategy and roadmap for implementing this vision," Ambani said. "The age of fossil fuels, which powered economic growth globally for nearly three centuries, cannot continue much longer."

The three-year plan includes building "four Giga factories".

S&P cuts FY'22 GDP growth forecast to 9.5%

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

S&P Global Ratings today cut India's growth forecast for the current fiscal to 9.5 per cent, from 11 per cent earlier, and warned of risk to the outlook from further waves of Covid pandemic.

The agency lowered the growth outlook, saying that a severe second Covid-19 outbreak in April and May led to lockdowns imposed by states and sharp contraction in economic activity.

We forecast growth of 9.5 per cent this fiscal year from our March forecast of 11 per cent, S&P said.

Stating that permanent damage to private and public sector balance sheets will constrain growth over the next couple of years, it projected India's growth at 7.8 per cent in the next fiscal ending 31 March 2023.

Further pandemic waves are a risk to the outlook given that only about 15 per cent of the population have received at least one vaccine dose so far, although vaccine supplies are expected to ramp up, S&P said.

Indian economy contracted by 7.3 per cent in fiscal 2020-21 as the country battled the first wave of Covid, as against a 4 per cent growth in fiscal 2019-20.

GDP growth in the current fiscal was estimated to be in double digits initially, but a severe second wave of pandemic has led to various agencies cut growth projections.

Earlier this month, the Reserve Bank of India too cut India's growth forecast to 9.5 per cent for this fiscal, from 10.5 per cent estimated earlier.

It said manufacturing and exports were less severely affected compared with 2020, but services were acutely disrupted. Consumption indicators such as vehicle sales fell sharply in May 2021 and consumer confidence remains downbeat.

The economy has turned a corner now. New Covid-19 cases have been falling consistently and mobility is recovering. We expect this recovery to be less steep compared with the bounce in late 2020 and early 2021, it said.

S&P said households are running down saving buffers to support consumption and a desire to rebuild saving could hold back spending even as the economy reopens.

Monetary and fiscal policies will remain accommodative but new stimulus will not be forthcoming, it added.

S&P said RBI has no room to cut interest rates with inflation above 6 per cent the upper end of the central bank target range.

Also, fiscal policy is constrained by limited policy space, particularly because the Budget for fiscal 2022 (ending 31 March 2022), which was decided before the second Covid-19 wave, had already targeted a large general government deficit of 9.5 per cent of GDP.

S&P joins a host of global and domestic agencies which have cut India's growth estimates for the current financial year.

The agency lowered the growth outlook, saying that a severe second Covid-19 outbreak in April and May led to lockdowns imposed by states and sharp contraction in economic activity.

SAT stays Sebi's penalties on Cairn

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

The Securities Appellant Tribunal (SAT) has stayed the penalties imposed by markets regulator Sebi on Cairn India and others for making a misleading announcement regarding buyback of shares in 2014. While staying the penalties, the tribunal also directed Cairn India, which was merged with Vedanta Limited in 2017, and others involved in the case to deposit Rs 2.5 crore with Sebi within three weeks.

If the amount is deposited, no further recovery will be made from them during the pendency of the appeal, the tribunal said in an order dated 22 June.

In May, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) imposed a penalty of Rs 5.25 crore on Cairn India for making a misleading announcement regarding the buyback of shares in 2014. Further, the regulator imposed a fine of Rs 15 lakh each on P Elango, who was the CEO and director of Cairn India, along with Aman Mehta and Neerja Sharma, who were directors of the company at the time of violation.

According to the Sebi order, the buyback announcement made by the appellants in January 2014 was misleading without any intent to fulfil it and that it was designed to influence the decision of the investors and induce them to trade in the shares of the company.

Cairn India and others have been negligent and should have monitored the trading made by its broker, as per the Sebi order.

India presses OPEC for 'affordable' oil price

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

With domestic retail fuel prices jumping to record high on rising international oil rates, India today pressed oil cartel OPEC for "affordable" oil price within a "reasonable band" and that the producers should phase out production cuts.

OPEC nations such as Saudi Arabia have traditionally been India's principal oil source. But, OPEC and its allies, called OPEC+, ignoring its call for easing supply curbs had led to the world's third-biggest oil importer tap newer sources to diversify its crude oil imports.

As a result, OPEC's share in India's oil imports has dropped to about 60 per cent in May from 74 per cent in the previous month.

India's petroleum minister Dharmendra Pradhan in virtual dialogue with OPEC secretary general Mohammad Sanusi Barkindo reiterated concerns over oil prices, which have shot up above $75 per barrel ~ the highest since April 2019. The spike has led to retail petrol and diesel prices climbing to a record high. Petrol is above the Rs 100 per litre mark in 9 states and UTs, while diesel is being sold at over Rs 100 a litre in Rajasthan and Odisha.

"Minister Pradhan highlighted the importance of affordable and regular supplies of energy to drive economic and social progress, noting that his country is a major consumer and importer of oil," a statement issued by OPEC after the meeting said.

Later, a statement from the oil ministry said: "Pradhan flagged concerns over the increasing crude oil prices and its impact on consumers as well as on smart economic recovery. He emphasised that high crude prices are adding significant inflationary pressure on India".

Both sides discussed recent oil market developments, trends in oil demand recoveries, economic growth forecasts and overcoming energy challenges, among other issues of mutual interest.

"Pradhan reiterated his request of phasing out production cuts and also emphasised that crude prices should remain within a reasonable band, which will be in the collective interests of both consumers and producers," the ministry statement said.

SBI launches healthcare business loan

NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

To provide enhanced support to the healthcare sector amid the pandemic, State Bank of India (SBI) has launched the Aarogyam healthcare business loan.

Under this new product, entire healthcare ecosystem such as hospitals, nursing homes, diagnostic centres, pathology labs, manufacturers, suppliers, importers, logistic firms engaged in critical healthcare supply can avail of loans up to Rs 100 crore (as per the geographic location) repayable in 10 years, State Bank said in a statement.

The Aarogyam loan can be availed either as term loan to support expansion/modernisation or as working capital facilities such as cash credit, bank guarantee/letter of credit, it said. PTI

IT shares lift equity benchmarks

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 24 JUNE

Equity indices regained footing today after a day's pause as robust buying in IT counters more than made up for a fall in market major Reliance Industries. A rebounding rupee and positive global cues further bolstered sentiment, traders said.

The 30-share BSE Sensex ended 392.92 points or 0.75 per cent higher at 52,699 points. Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty surged 103.50 points or 0.66 per cent to 15,790.45 points.

Technology shares led the rally, a day after the government liberalised guidelines for voice-based BPOs to cement India's position as a preferred global outsourcing hub.

Infosys topped the Sensex gainers' chart with a leap of 3.75 per cent, followed by TCS, Tech Mahindra, HCL Tech, Asian Paints, L&T and Nestle India.

On the other hand, Reliance Industries was the top drag on the index, slumping 2.35 per cent, after its chairman Mukesh Ambani announced massive capex plans in green energy and other sectors at its annual general meeting.

Bharti Airtel, PowerGrid, SBI, HDFC and Dr Reddy's were among the other laggards, shedding up to 0.99 per cent.

"Supported by positive global equities and strong buying interest in IT stocks, the domestic market sparked a rally today. Total FDI inflow in April rose by 38 per cent year-on-year, led by a 60 per cent YoY rise in equity inflow reassuring continued liquidity support in the Indian market.

"Global investors have digested the comments from Fed officials and are looking ahead to key data releases like US jobless claims and Bank of England's decision on interest rates," said Vinod Nair, head of research at Geojit Financial Services.

Deepak Jasani, head of retail research, HDFC Securities, said the benchmark equity indices rose on the monthly F&O expiry day led by buying in IT stocks.

"Volumes on the NSE were the lowest on an F&O expiry day in six months, suggesting light positions being carried in the F&O segment awaiting higher volatility," he added.

BSE IT, teck, bankex, metal, capital goods and finance indices ended up to 2.92 per cent higher, while energy, oil and gas, power, utilities and telecom indices fell as much as 2.15 per cent.

SENSEX JUMPS 393 PTS

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- Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty surged 103.50 points or 0.66 per cent to 15,790.45 points.
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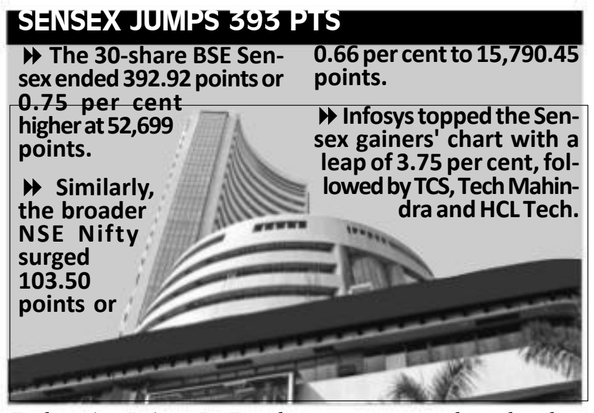


States' revenues may cross pre-pandemic level

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 24 JUNE

High tax buoyancy, led primarily by fuel taxes, and increase in grants from the Centre under the Finance Commission package will help revenue growth of states cross the pre-pandemic level in the current fiscal, provided there is no third Covid wave, according to a report.

Given the higher prices of fuels, revenue from this segment is set to grow by 50 per cent to 30 per cent in the current financial year from 20 per cent it clipped last fiscal, even though the overall volume will fall, Crisil said in a report today.

The tax on fuels constitute 10 per cent of the revenues of states.

Revenue of the top 10 states had plunged by 600 basis points (bps) last fiscal, but is set to exceed the pre-pandemic level this financial year, driven by higher tax buoyancy, rise in sales tax collections from petroleum products coupled with increase in grants following 15th Finance Commission recommendations, it said.

The assessment is based on projections for 10 large states ~ Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Telangana, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, and Kerala ~ which account for almost 70 per cent of the aggregate gross state domestic product.

The key revenue components of the states are Central taxes (25 per cent), state GST (21 per cent,) Central grants (17 per cent), sales tax from petrol and alcohol (13 per cent). Non-tax revenues, excise duty, stamp duty and others make up the rest.

It can be noted that despite petrol crossing the Rs 100 mark in many states and also diesel in some places, the Centre and the states have not lowered the taxes on these fuels. In fact, almost 65 per cent of the retail prices of these fuels are made up of VAT as petroleum products are not under the GST.

Aggregate goods and services tax (GST) collections, which account for a fifth of the states' revenues, have recovered well in the fourth quarter of financial year 2020-21 as economic activity sprung back. The momentum continues this fiscal, with April and May collections averaging Rs 0.93 lakh crore (April being the highest ever at Rs 1.41 lakh crore), marking an 11 per cent growth over fiscal 2020 so far, it said.

While the second wave of the pandemic may moderate GST collections in June and July, Crisil said it expects a recovery in GST mop-up to the pre-pandemic levels by August.

Another factor that will provide a fillip to the states' revenues is sales tax. The price of crude has jumped to $70 a barrel from $60 on an average in fiscal 2020, leading to higher petrol and diesel prices.

That combined with the Rs 10-13 per litre increase in Central excise duty imposed last year will increase the taxable value of fuel for levy of sales tax, which accounts for 10 per cent of states' revenues, the report said.

Most of these 10 states had hiked sales tax on fuel sales by 6-7 per cent or Rs 1.5-1.8 a litre last fiscal.

In addition to own taxes, the states have a share of the central taxes, which forms a quarter of their overall revenues. While the proportions are determined by the Finance Commission, the overall kitty is linked with GDP growth. This kitty, which declined 9 per cent last fiscal, should recover to pre-pandemic levels with a growth of 9-10 per cent this fiscal, in line with the Union Budget.

CRISIL FORECAST FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2021-22

- High tax buoyancy, led primarily by fuel taxes, and increase in grants from the Centre under the Finance Commission package will help revenue growth of states cross the pre-pandemic level in the current fiscal, provided there is no third Covid wave.
- The assessment is based on projections for 10 large states ~ Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Telangana, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, and Kerala ~ which account for almost 70 per cent of the aggregate gross state domestic product.

Petrol price up by 26 paise, diesel by 27 paise

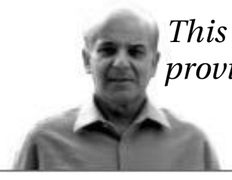
NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

Petrol price in Chennai neared the Rs 99-a-litre mark today after fuel prices were increased again on firming international oil rates.

The price of petrol was hiked by 26 paise per litre and that of diesel by 27 paise a litre, according to a price notification of state-owned fuel retailers. The increase took rates across the country to fresh highs. In Delhi, petrol hit an all-time high of Rs 97.76 a litre, while diesel is now priced at Rs 88.30 per litre.

Fuel prices differ from state to state depending on the incidence of local taxes such as value-added tax (VAT) and freight charges. PTI

epaper.thestatesman.com



This incident in the capital of the most populous province of Punjab should be an eye-opener.

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION OF PAKISTAN SHEHBAZ SHARIF
CONDEMNING THE BLAST IN JOHAR TOWN, LAHORE

HK's last pro-democracy paper sells out final edition

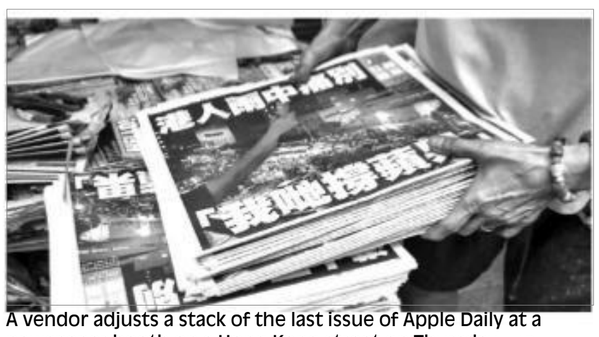
Across the densely populated metropolis, people lined up early in the morning to buy the paper

ASSOCIATED PRESS
HONG KONG, 24 JUNE

The final edition of Hong Kong's last remaining pro-democracy paper sold out in hours Thursday, as readers scooped up all 1 million copies of the Apple Daily, whose closure was yet another sign of China's tightening grip on the semi-autonomous city.

Across the densely populated metropolis, people lined up early in the morning to buy the paper, which in recent years has become an increasingly outspoken critic of Chinese and Hong Kong authorities' efforts to limit the freedoms found here but not in mainland China. The paper was gone from newsstands by 8:30 am.

The newspaper said it was forced to cease operations after police froze $2.3 million of its assets, searched its office and arrested five top editors and executives last week, accusing them of foreign collusion to endanger national security.



A vendor adjusts a stack of the last issue of Apple Daily at a newspaper booth on a Hong Kong street on Thursday. AP

"This is our last day, and last edition, does this reflect the reality that Hong Kong has started to lose its press freedom and freedom of speech? an Apple Daily graphic designer, Dickson Ng, asked in comments to The Associated Press. Why does it have to end up like this?" The paper printed 1 million copies for its last edition up from the usual 80,000. On the front page was splashed an image of an employee in the office waving at supporters surrounding the building, with the headline Hong Kongers bid a painful farewell in the rain, We support Apple Daily.'

While pro-democracy media outlets still exist online, it was the only print newspaper of its kind left in the city.

The pressure on the paper reflects a broader crackdown on Hong Kong's civil liberties, ramped up after massive anti-government protests in 2019 unsettled authorities. In response, they imposed a sweeping national security law used in the arrests of the newspaper employees and revamped Hong Kong's election laws to keep opposition voices out of the legislature.

The result is that dissenting voices have been almost completely silenced in the city long known as an oasis of freedoms on mainland China's doorstep. The increasing restrictions have come despite China's promise to protect Hong Kong's civil liberties for 50 years after the city's 1997 handover from Britain.

The closure of Apple Daily raises the spectre that other media outlets though none as outspoken will become even more cautious, such as the more than 100-year-old English-language South China Morning Post.

The paper, while identified with the political and business mainstream, has thus far continued to report on controversial issues in Hong Kong and on mainland China, even after its owner, internet business titan Jack Ma, dropped from sight last year after publicly criticising Chinese government policies.

Apple Daily's closure marks a dark day for press freedom in Hong Kong, said Thomas Kellogg, executive director of the Georgetown Centre for Asian Law.

Without Apple Daily, Hong Kong is less free than it was a week ago. Apple Daily was an important voice, and it seems unlikely that any other media outlet will be able to fill its shoes, given growing restrictions on free speech and freedom of the press, he said.

Taiwan's Cabinet agency responsible for China issues also lamented the paper's closure as a heavy blow to media freedom in Hong Kong. The island is a self-governing democracy that split from mainland China in 1949 but that Beijing continues to claim as its territory.

Lahore car bomb blast: Two arrested

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LAHORE, 24 JUNE

Pakistani security agencies on Thursday arrested two suspects involved in the car bomb blast outside the house of the 2008 Mumbai terror attack mastermind and chief of the banned Jamat-ud-Dawa (JuD) Hafiz Saeed, an official said.

The Crime Investigation Department (CTD) has arrested two suspects, one of them a Christian, who had a connection with the sale and purchase of the car used for the blast, a CTD official said.

The official did not disclose the identity of the suspects. However, the Associated Press named one of the arrested as David Peter.

Intelligence agencies have arrested a man from Lahore airport on the suspicion of his involvement in the blast.

Quoting police sources, the report said the man was asked to get off a Karachi-bound flight a few minutes before departure. He was taken to an undisclosed location for further investigation, the report said.

"We are getting a lead from the arrested persons to the main culprits," the CTD official said, adding that different teams have been formed to probe the matter.

The arrests came after the security agencies conducted raids across different cities of Punjab in connection with the blast.

An FIR has been registered against unknown terrorists under terrorism and other charges, said police.

Three persons were killed and 21 others injured when the powerful car bomb exploded outside Saeed's residence at the Board of Revenue (BOR) Housing Society in Johar Town on Wednesday morning, resulting in serious injuries to some police officers guarding his house.

Thai protesters rally against government

BANGKOK, 24 JUNE

Pro-democracy protesters took to the streets of Thailand's capital on Thursday, marking the anniversary of the overthrow of the country's absolute monarchy by renewing their demands that the government step down, the constitution be amended and the monarchy become more accountable.

The protesters defied a ban on large gatherings instituted to fight a coronavirus surge that shows little sign of abating.

It was their first large protest after a hiatus of about three months caused by the pandemic and the jailing of protest leaders, who have since been released on bail.

The government of Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha is facing widespread criticism that it botched pandemic recovery plans by failing to secure adequate vaccine supplies. On 24 June, 1932, a group of progressive army officers and civil servants proclaimed constitutional rule and the transition to parliamentary democracy. AP

Targeted combatants, not civilians in Tigray: Ethiopia

ASSOCIATED PRESS
ADDIS ABABA, 24 JUNE

Ethiopia's military on Thursday confirmed it was responsible for a deadly airstrike on a busy marketplace in the country's Tigray region that locals say killed dozens of civilians, but the military insisted that only combatants were targeted.

Bodies were still being pulled from the rubble and dozens of survivors were still arriving at regional hospitals with shrapnel and blunt trauma wounds two days after the airstrike, a doctor in the regional capital, Mekele, told The Associated Press. The doctor, like others, spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of retaliation.

A military spokesman, Col. Getnet Adane, told journalists that fighters supporting the Tigray region's former leaders had assembled to celebrate Martyrs' Day on Tuesday when the airstrike occurred.

The Ethiopian air force uses the latest technology, so it conducted a precision strike that was successful, he said. He didn't comment when reached for further details.

The airstrike in the village of Togoga killed at least 51 people and left 33 missing and more than 100 wounded, a regional health official told the AP. Children were among the victims, health workers said, adding that Ethiopian forces blocked some medical teams from responding and shot at a Red Cross ambulance trying to reach the scene.

There are a lot of people injured, but they didn't get medical service and help because of the blockage of the road by the military, said Dr. Kinfe Redae.

Wounded people were still being evacuated from the scene on Thursday, the International Committee of the Red Cross said, calling the transport of seriously injured to an operating center in Mekele a matter of life and death.

Russia in showdown with UN, West over aid to Syria

ASSOCIATED PRESS
UNITED NATIONS, 24 JUNE

Russia previewed a showdown with the United Nations, United States and Western nations Wednesday over the delivery of humanitarian aid to rebel-held northwest Syria from Turkey, rejecting their warnings that closing the only border crossing will leave more than 1 million people without desperately needed food and cause people to die because they lack medicine.

Stressing the importance of strengthening Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity, Russia's UN Ambassador

Vassily Nebenzia insisted that aid can and should be delivered across conflict lines in Syria, and accused the UN and the West of doing nothing to promote such deliveries during the past year.

Unless Western nations both in words and deeds prove their commitment to this goal, he warned that there is no point in speaking about renewing the mandate for the one remaining border crossing from Turkey to northwest Idlib which expires on July 10.

We still have some time before the 'D-Day'. Hopefully it will not be wasted, Nebenzia said.

US Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield, who visited the Turkish border crossing at Bab Al-Hawa in early June, said the United States is willing to work to expand aid to Syrians across borders and conflict lines.

But right now, without cross-border access, more Syrians will die, thousands of children will be denied food and be permanently stunted in growth and cognitive development, and millions of people will have reduced access to clean water, medical supplies and COVID-19 vaccines, she said.

There is no Plan B," Thomas-Greenfield stressed. The Plan B is to continue to push for the extension of the mandate. Plan B means that we have failed, and hopefully we don't fail.

So, I'm going to work on this every single day until it's accomplished," she said.

Former Philippine President Benigno Aquino dies at 61

ASSOCIATED PRESS
MANILA, 24 JUNE

Former Philippine President Benigno Aquino III, the son of pro-democracy icons who helped topple dictator Ferdinand Marcos and had troublesome ties with China, died Tuesday, a cousin and public officials said. He was 61.

Former Sen Bam Aquino said he was heartbroken by the death of his cousin. He gave his all for the Filipino, he did not leave anything, he said.

Details of his death were not immediately made public by members of his family, who were seen rushing to a metropolitan Manila hospital in the morning.

But one of his former Cabinet official, Rogelio Singson, said Aquino had been undergoing dialysis and was preparing for a kidney transplant.

Aquino, who served as president from 2010 to 2016, was the heir to a political legacy of a family that has been regarded as a bulwark against authoritarianism in the Philippines. After his presidency, Aquino stayed away from politics and the public eye.

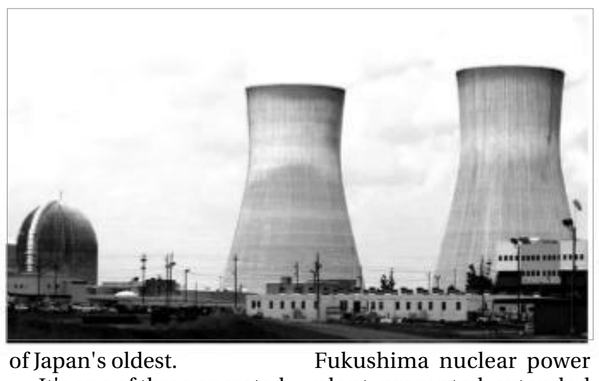
Aging Japanese nuclear reactor restarted after a decade

ASSOCIATED PRESS
TOKYO, 24 JUNE

A more than 40-year-old nuclear reactor in central Japan which suffered a deadly accident has resumed operation after being taken offline for a decade after the March 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster, as Japan pushes to meet its carbon emissions reduction goal.

Kansai Electric Power Co. said the Mihama No. 3 reactor in Fukui prefecture went back online on Wednesday after workers removed control rods inside the reactor.

The reactor, which started operation in 1976, is one



of Japan's oldest.

It's one of three operated by Kansai Electric that were granted extensions to operate beyond their initial 40-year life, and is the first of the three to resume operation since meltdowns at the Fukushima nuclear power plant prompted extended safety checks and tougher standards at all Japanese reactors.

Some residents of Fukui and nearby areas filed a request for an injunction with Osaka District Court on Monday because of concerns about the aging Mihama No. 3 reactor.

The reactor had an accident in 2004 in which hot water and steam leaked from a ruptured pipe in its turbine building, killing five workers and injuring six others.

Kansai Electric also plans to restart the two other aging reactors, Takahama No. 1 and No. 2, also in Fukui, that received operating extensions.

Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, who pledged last October that Japan will achieve carbon neutrality by 2050, recently the raised 2030 target for reducing carbon emissions from 2013 levels to 46% from the previous 26%. Japan is one of the world's top carbon emitters.

A revision of Japan's current energy plan, set in 2018, is expected around July.

The 2050 carbon emissions neutrality target will require drastic changes and likely prompt calls for the restart of more nuclear plants and possible construction of new reactors.

Mihama No. 3 is the first unit over 40 years old to resume operations under the post-Fukushima regulatory framework, which has made it a lightning rod for anti-nuclear opponents.

Palestinian Authority critic dies during arrest

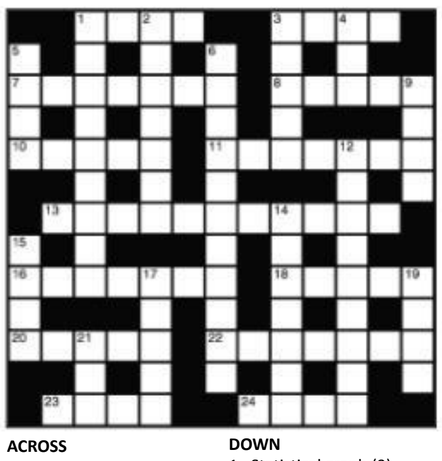
JERUSALEM, 24 JUNE

An outspoken critic of the Palestinian Authority who had intended to run in parliamentary elections before they were cancelled earlier this year died during his arrest by PA forces early Thursday, officials said.

In a brief statement, the Hebron governorate said his health deteriorated when Palestinian forces went to arrest him early on Thursday. It said Nizar Banat was taken to a hospital where he was later pronounced dead. AP

LEISURE

10 MINUTE CROSSWORD



ACROSS
1 Inheritor (4)
3 Man or boy (4)
7 Bank employee (7)
8 Garret (5)
10 Game fish (5)
11 Party-giver (7)
13 Very steep (11)
16 Amusing (7)
18 Fairly (5)
20 Broadcasting (2,3)
22 Pull a face (7)
23 Manage (4)
24 Headland (4)

DOWN
1 Statistical graph (9)
2 Very foolish (7)
3 Wherewithal (5)
4 Auction item (3)
5 Rabbit's tail (4)
6 Group of islands (11)
9 Barrel (4)
12 Make clear (9)
14 Mexican spirit (7)
15 Resound (4)
17 Arc (5)
19 Fencing sword (4)
21 Fuss (3)

SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Board, 4 Hello (Bordello), 8 Mulligatawny, 10 Ogre, 11 Required, 13 Zenith, 14 Stroll, 17 Ethereal, 19 Pass, 21 Ground stroke, 22 Whist, 23 Crypt.

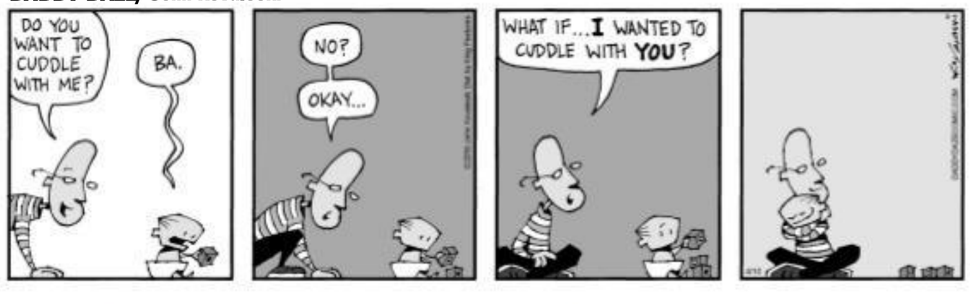
DOWN
1 Bamboozled, 2 Aileron, 3 Drip, 5 Evaluate, 6 Liner, 7 Layer, 9 Adolescent, 12 Stirrups, 15 Oratory, 16 Bawdy, 18 Harsh, 20 Otic.

By arrangement with The Independent
Figures in parentheses denote the number of letters in the words required

BEETLE BAILEY/Mort Walker

RED EYE/Bill Yates & Mel Casson

DADDY DAZE/John Kovaleski



NEED TO KNOW

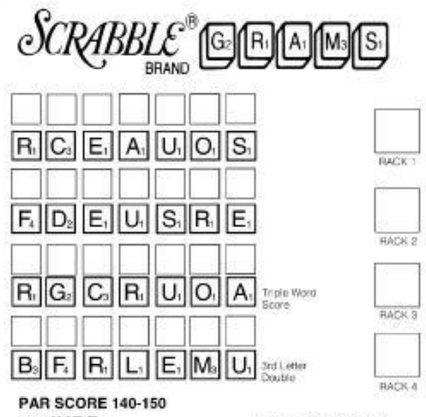
HOSPITALS
- AIIMS 26588500, 26588900
- Moolchand Medcity (formerly Hospital) 42000000 & 24-hour Chemist Shop 42000447
- Vidyasagar Institute for Mental Health and Neuro-Sciences 26924300, 26924304
- Batra Hospital & Medical Research Centre 29051280, 29958747
- Deen Dayal Upadhyay 25496320, 25494403
- Guru Tegh Bahadur 22586262, 22585007

RAILWAY INQUIRY
General Inquiry 139
- Toll Free Nos. 1800112511
- SMS Inquiry Nos. 57886, 54959, 5676747

ROADWAYS INQUIRY
- ISBT (General Inquiry): 23868836, 23865181
- Haryana Roadways 23861262
- Himachal Roadways 23717473, 23325320
- Punjab Roadways 23867842, 23860626
- Rajasthan Roadways 23864470
- U.P. Roadways 23868709

FLIGHT INQUIRY
- AIR INDIA Flight Inquiry and Reservation 18001801407
- INDIGO AIRLINES New Delhi City Office 43513185, Call Centre 09910383838, 18001803838, Reservation 43513186; Indigo Airlines Airport 011-25671580; Terminal I-B 25671576, Palam Road 25671579, 18001803838
- JET AIRWAYS Flight Inquiry and Reservation 39841111
- EMIRATES Flight Inquiry and Reservation 33773377
- Air Canada Flight Inquiry 25656421/25656431 Reservation 41528181
- Air France Flight Inquiry and Reservation 23466262 (City) 25652294 (Airport)
- Kuwait Airways Flight Inquiry and Reservation 23354373

SCRABBLE® BRAND GRAMS



PAR SCORE 140-150
by JUDD
FOUR RACK TOTAL
TIME LIMIT: 20 MIN

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION BY JUDD

RACK 1	75
RACK 2	64
RACK 3	32
RACK 4	8
JUDD'S TOTAL	179

PAR SCORE 115-125

Directions Make a 2 to 7 letter word from the letters in each row. Add points of each word, using scoring directions at right, 7-letter words get 50-point bonus. "Blanks" used as any letter have no point value. All Judd's words are in The Official Scrabble Players Dictionary(Merriam-Webster) and OSW Official Scrabble Words(Chambers). Judd's solution tomorrow. 10-25-12

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SUDOKU

Conceptis SudoKu — By Dave Green

	5		2		9			
				5	1			3
		2				6		
1	8							5
	9						3	
3							7	8
		7				2		
9			6	2				
			9		4		1	

Difficulty Level ★★★ 3/06

©2014 Conceptis Puzzles, Dist. by King Features Syndicate, Inc.

Answer to previous puzzle

7	4	6	5	9	8	3	1	2
9	8	3	6	2	1	7	5	4
5	1	2	7	3	4	6	8	9
8	3	1	9	7	6	4	2	5
4	6	9	2	8	5	1	7	3
2	5	7	4	1	3	9	6	8
3	2	8	1	4	7	5	9	6
6	7	4	8	5	9	2	3	1
1	9	5	3	6	2	8	4	7

answer to previous puzzle

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that no row, no column and no 3x3 box contains the same number. The difficulty level increases through the week.

epaper.thestatesman.com

We cannot continue without dialogue. We have to talk, including about our disagreements. It's the only way to resolve them.

FRENCH PRESIDENT EMMANUEL MACRON
SPEAKING ON WAYS TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH RUSSIA AT EU SUMMIT

WEATHER

CITY	MAX(°C)	MIN(°C)	
SINGAPORE	32	26	R
HONG KONG	26	25	H
TOKYO	26	20	CL
LONDON	21	14	H
DUBAI	41	30	S
SAN FRANCISCO	19	13	H
NEW YORK	25	16	S
MOSCOW	35	22	S

S= sunny, CL= clear, H=hazy, R= rainy...

THUMBNAILS

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, left, and German Minister of Foreign Affairs Heiko Maas, right, speak together as they walk through the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe following a ceremony for the launch of a U.S.-Germany Dialogue on Holocaust Issues in Berlin. AGENCIES

Miami-area condo collapses: The sea-view side of a beachfront condo tower collapsed in the Miami-area town of Surfside early Thursday morning, killing at least one, trapping residents in rubble and twisted metal and sending a cloud of debris throughout the neighbourhood. One person has died in the collapse. AP

Man killed by police serving warrant: A man was shot and killed by at least one deputy in South Carolina on Wednesday as officers were trying to arrest him for serious charges, the Greenville County sheriff said. The man was hiding from deputies and federal marshals and attacked them when he was found inside the home north of Greenville, Sheriff Hobart Lewis said. AP

USA allows some H-1B visa seekers to re-submit their applications

Technology companies depend on it to hire employees each year from countries like India & China

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
WASHINGTON, 24 JUNE

Some foreign guest workers in the US will be able to re-submit their applications for the H1-B visa, the most sought-after non-immigrant visa among Indian IT professionals, if their petition was solely rejected because it was based on the initial registration period, according to a federal agency.

According to the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), such re-submission of applications is for those whose applications have been rejected or administratively closed solely because the requested start date was after 1 Oct, 2020.

The H-1B visa allows US companies to employ foreign workers in speciality occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise. Technology companies depend on it to hire tens of thousands of employees each year from countries like India and China.

If your FY 2021 petition was rejected or administratively closed solely because your petition was based on a registration submitted during the initial registration period, but you requested a start date after 1 Oct, 2020, you may re-submit that previously filed petition, with all applicable fees, USCIS said on Wednesday.

Such petitions must be re-submitted before 1 Oct, 2021. If properly resubmitted, we will consider the petition to have been filed on the original receipt date, the USCIS said.

In 2020, USCIS implemented an electronic registration process for the H-1B cap. Prospective petitioners seeking to file H-1B cap-subject petitions, including for beneficiaries eligible for the advanced degree exemption, must first electronically register and pay the USD 10 H-1B registration fee for each beneficiary. The electronic registration process has streamlined processing by reducing paperwork and data exchange and provided overall cost savings to employers seeking to file H-1B cap-subject petitions, it said.

According to USCIS, for fiscal 2021, the number of petitions filed during the initial filing period was below the number projected as needed to reach the numerical allocations.

This discrepancy was likely related to multiple factors, including the economic, political, and public health uncertainty created by the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as the fact that FY 2021 was the first year that we implemented the electronic registration process.

Therefore, in August 2020, we selected additional registrations that were held in reserve. The filing period for registrations selected in August ended on November 16, 2020, it said.

Some petitioners indicated a start date after October 1, 2020. We rejected or administratively closed those petitions because they were based on registrations submitted during the initial registration period but indicated a start date after October 1, 2020. Upon reconsideration, we no longer believe that the regulations required us to reject or administratively close those petitions, the USCIS said.

The move comes days after the powerful US Chambers of Commerce launched a massive campaign to address the acute shortage of skilled and professional workforce in U.S.

The demand to increase the H-1B quota, which currently is at 65,000 and another 20,000 for those who have higher studies from the US, is part of the America Works campaign launched by the US Chambers of Commerce early this month.

As we stand on the cusp of what could be a great American resurgence, a worker shortage is holding back job creators across the country, US Chamber of Commerce president and CEO Suzanne Clark said. "We must arm workers with the skills they need, we must remove barriers that are keeping too many Americans on the sidelines, and we must recruit the very best from around the world to help fill high-demand jobs," Clark said.

John McAfee found dead in Spanish prison

ASSOCIATED PRESS
MADRID, 24 JUNE

John McAfee, the creator of McAfee antivirus software, was found dead in his jail cell near Barcelona in an apparent suicide Wednesday, hours after a Spanish court approved his extradition to the United States to face tax charges punishable by decades in prison, authorities said.

The eccentric cryptocurrency promoter and tax opponent whose history of legal troubles spanned from Tennessee to Central America to the Caribbean was discovered at the Brians 2 penitentiary in northeastern Spain.

Security personnel tried to revive him, but the jail's medical team finally certified his death, a statement from the regional Catalan government said.

"A judicial delegation has arrived to investigate the causes of death," it said, adding that everything points to death by suicide. The statement didn't identify McAfee by name but said the dead man was a 75-year-old US citizen awaiting extradition to his country. A Catalan government official familiar with the case who was not authorized to be named in media reports said that it was McAfee.

Spain's National Court on Monday ruled in favour of extraditing McAfee, 75, who had argued in a hearing earlier this month that the charges against him by prosecutors in Tennessee were politically motivated and that he would spend the rest of his life in prison if returned to the US.

The court's ruling was made public on Wednesday and was open for appeal, with any final extradition order also needing to get approval from the Spanish Cabinet.

McAfee was arrested last October at Barcelona's international airport and had been in jail since then awaiting the outcome of extradition proceedings.

Russia says it may fire on intruding warships

ASSOCIATED PRESS
MOSCOW, 24 JUNE

Russia will be ready to fire to hit intruding warships, a senior diplomat warned Thursday in the wake of a Black Sea incident in which a British destroyer sailed near Crimea in an area that Russia claims as its territorial waters.

Russia said one of its warships fired warning shots and a warplane dropped bombs in the path of British destroyer *Defender* on Wednesday to drive it away from the area near Sevastopol, but Britain denied that account and insisted its ship wasn't fired upon.

The incident marked the first time since the Cold War that Moscow acknowledged using live ammunition to deter a NATO warship, underlining the rising threat of military collisions amid Russia-West tensions.

Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said Thursday that the inviolability of the Russian borders is an absolute imperative, adding that it will be protected by all means, diplomatic, political and military if needed.

He gibed that the British navy should rename its destroyer from Defender to Aggressor and warned that those who try to test our strength are taking high risks.

Asked what Russia would do to prevent such intrusions in the future, Ryabkov told reporters it would stand ready to fire on targets if warnings don't work.

We may appeal to reason and demand to respect international law, Ryabkov said in remarks carried by Russian news agencies. If it doesn't help, we may drop bombs and not just in the path but right on target if colleagues don't get it otherwise."

Russian President Vladimir Putin's spokesman deplored what he described as a "deliberate and well-prepared provocation by Britain and seconded the tough warning.

If unacceptable provocative actions are repeated, if those actions go too far, no options to legitimately protect the borders of the Russian Federation could be excluded, the spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, said in a call with reporters.

On Wednesday, the Russian Defense Ministry said a patrol ship fired warning shots after the HMS Defender had ignored a notice against intrusion and sailed 3 kilometres into Russia's territorial waters near Sevastopol, the main Russian naval base in Crimea. It said a Russian Su-24 bomber also dropped four bombs ahead of the vessel to persuade the Defender to change course. Minutes later, the Defender left Russian waters, the ministry said.

MOON FIGURINE

The moon rises in view of a statue of William Penn atop City Hall in Philadelphia. AGENCIES

Single dose of Pfizer, AstraZeneca Covid vaccine offers 60 per cent protection: *Lancet* study

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LONDON, 24 JUNE

A single dose of Pfizer or AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine offers around 60 per cent protection against infection from SARS-CoV-2 in adults aged 65 years and above, according to a study published in The Lancet Infectious Diseases.

To obtain real-world data on the effectiveness of these vaccines in care homes, the researchers from the University College London (UCL) in the UK used data from the VIVALDI study.

That research investigated SARS-CoV-2 transmission, infection outcomes, and immunity in residents and staff in long-term care facilities in England for adults aged 65 years and older since June 2020.

This analysis included long-term care facility residents undergoing routine asymptomatic SARS-CoV-2 testing between 8 Dec, 2020 the date the first vaccine was administered in the study cohort and March 15, 2021 using national testing data linked within the Covid-19 Datastore.

This study was completed before the emergence of the Delta variant of SARS-CoV-2 now dominating in the UK.

The researchers estimated the reduced risk of PCR-positive infection at 0-6 days, 7-13 days, 14-20 days, 21-27 days, 28-34 days, 35-48 days, and 49 days and beyond after vaccination. This was compared with unvaccinated residents, adjusting for age, sex, previous infection, local SARS-CoV-2 incidence, long-term care facility bed capacity, and clustering by long-term care facility.

The analysis included 10,412 care home residents aged 65 years and older from 310 facilities, with a median age of 86 years, of whom 70 per cent were female and 1,155 residents (11 per cent) had evidence of previous SARS-CoV-2 infection.

A total of 9,160 (88 per cent) residents received at least one vaccine dose during the study period, of whom 6,138 (67 per cent) received AstraZeneca and 3,022 (33 per cent) received Pfizer.

Between December 8, 2020, and March 15, this year, there were 36,352 PCR tests carried out, with 1,335 PCR-positive infections detected -- 713 in unvaccinated residents and 612 in vaccinated residents.

The risk of infection was 56 per cent lower in vaccinated residents after 28 to 34 days, and 62 per cent lower at 35-48 days.

Harris to visit US-Mexico border area

WASHINGTON, 24 JUNE

Vice President Kamala Harris will make her first visit on Friday to the US-Mexico border since taking office, following criticism from members of both parties for failing to go earlier despite her role leading the Biden administration's response to a steep increase in migration.

Harris will visit the El Paso area, accompanied by Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas, according to a statement from Harris senior adviser Symone Sanders. Harris has faced months of criticism from Republicans, and even some frustration from those in her own party, for not visiting the area.

She was tasked earlier this year by President Joe Biden with taking on the root causes of migration. AP

Biden targets law-breaking gun dealers in anti-crime plan

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON, 24 JUNE

President Joe Biden announced new efforts Wednesday to stem a rising national tide of violent crime, declaring the federal government is taking on the bad actors doing bad things to our communities.

But questions persist about how effective the efforts can be in what could be a turbulent summer.

Crime rates have risen after plummeting during the initial months of the coronavirus pandemic, creating economic hardship and anxiety. Biden's plan focuses on providing money to cities that need more police, offering community support and most of all cracking down on gun violence and those supplying illegal firearms.

These merchants of death are breaking the law for profit, Biden said. If you willfully sell a gun to someone who's prohibited, my message to you is this: We'll find you and we'll seek your license to sell guns. We'll make sure you can't sell death and mayhem on our streets.

But there are also tricky politics at play, and Biden's plan shows how few options the Democratic president has on the issue.

The steps he outlined are aimed at going hard after gun dealers who break federal law and establishing strike forces in several cities to help stop weapons trafficking. He also said he would seek more money for the agency that tracks the nation's guns.

But the rest of his new strategy boils down mostly to suggestions for beleaguered localities. He's encouraging cities to invest some of their Covid-19 relief funds into policing and pushing alternative crime reduction steps such as increased community support and summer jobs for teenagers often both targets and perpetrators of violence.

But it's voluntary. The president has been clear that he is opposed to the defund the police movement, which has been effectively used against other Democrats to cast them as anti-law enforcement.

This is not a time to turn our backs on law enforcement," said Biden, who noted that "crime historically rises during the summer, and as we emerge from this pandemic the traditional summer spike may be even more pronounced than it usually would be.

Japan emperor 'worried' about Olympics amid pandemic

ASSOCIATED PRESS
TOKYO, 24 JUNE

Japan's Emperor Naruhito is extremely worried that the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics could accelerate the spread of the coronavirus, the head of the Imperial Palace said Thursday with the games opening in one month.

The games will bring thousands of foreign athletes, officials, sponsors and journalists to Japan during a pandemic, despite caution raised by experts about the risk of infections and the public's persistent calls for cancellation or further postponement.

Yasuhiko Nishimura, grand steward of the Imperial Household Agency, told a news conference that the Emperor has voiced concerns.

His majesty is extremely worried about the current situation of the Covid-19 infections, Nishimura said. While there are voices of unease among the public, I believe (the emperor) is concerned that holding the Olympics and Paralympics... may lead to the expansion of the infections.

The delayed games open July 23, and the Paralympics begin a month later.

Nishimura also urged the organisers to take every possible anti-virus measures so as not to cause the spread of the infections at the Olympics and Paralympics, where the emperor serves the Honorary Patron. The emperor is the symbol of the state with no political power. But like his father, Naruhito has gained broad popularity and his words are highly respected.

Falling short: Why the White House will miss its vax target

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON, 24 JUNE

Standing in the State Dining Room on 4 May, President Joe Biden laid out a lofty goal to vaccinate 70% of American adults by Independence Day, saying the US would need to overcome doubters and laziness to do it.

This is your choice, he told Amercians. "It's life and death. As for the ambition of his 70% goal, Biden added: I'd like to get it at 100%, but I think realistically we can get to that place between now and July Fourth." He won't.

With the July Fourth holiday approaching, the White House acknowledged this week that Biden will fall shy of his 70% goal and an associated aim of fully vaccinating 165 million adults in the same time frame. The missed milestones are notable in a White House that from the outset has been organized around a strategy of underpromising and overdelivering for the American public.

White House officials, while acknowledging they are set to fall short, insist they're unconcerned. We don't see it exactly like something went wrong, press secretary Jen Psaki said earlier this week, stressing that Americans' lives are still better off than they were when Biden announced the goal.

As of Wednesday, 65.6% of Americans age 18 and older had received at least one shot, according to the Centers for Disease Prevention and Control. The figure is expected to be over 67% by July 4.

A half-dozen officials involved in the vaccination campaign, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss the missed target candidly, pointed to a combination of factors, including: the lessened sense of urgency that followed early success in the vaccination campaign; a decision to reach higher than a play-it-safe lower goal; and unexpectedly strong recalcitrance among some Americans toward getting a shot.

Nonetheless, the White House says it's not letting up on its vaccination efforts. Biden will be in North Carolina on Thursday urging Americans to roll up their sleeves as part of a nationwide month of action to drive up the vaccination rate before the holiday. The White House is continuing to roll out increasingly localized programs to encourage specific communities to get vaccinated.

A drop-off in vaccination rates was always expected by the White House, but not as sharp as has proved to be the case. The scale of American reluctance to get vaccinated remains a source of global curiosity, particularly as many nations are still scrambling for doses to protect their most vulnerable populations.

When the 70% goal was first announced by Biden seven weeks ago, on average more than 800,000 Americans were getting their first vaccine dose each day down from a high of nearly 2 million per day in early April. Now that figure is below 300,000. Paradoxically, officials believe the strong response to the early vaccination campaign has served to reduce motivation to get a shot for some. One of the most potent motivators for people to get vaccinated was the high rate of Covid cases and deaths. Now that those figures have dropped to levels not seen since the onset of the pandemic, officials say it's become harder to convince Americans of the urgency to get a shot particularly for younger populations that already knew they were at low risk of serious complications from the virus.

Separately, two officials involved in the crafting of the 70% goal said officials knew 65% would have been a safer bet, but they said the White House wanted to reach for a figure closer to experts' projections of what would be needed for herd immunity to bring down cases and deaths. Aiming for the higher target, the officials said, was seen as adding to the urgency of the campaign and probably increased the vaccination rate above where it would have been with a more modest goal.

Other officials said the White House, which has always cast the vaccination campaign as hard, nevertheless failed to grasp the resistance of some Americans to getting a shot when it set the 70% goal.

epaper.thestatesman.com

Manipuri masterclass

Iconic danseuse Darshana Jhaveri reminisced about her seven decade-journey in the form

TAPATI CHOWDHURIE

As part of the silver jubilee celebrations of Nandanik Movement Arts, its artistic director Poushali Chatterjee undertook a series of Khonthang Discourses with eminent artists.

The first session featured Darshana Jhaveri. Born in 1940, she is a leading exponent of the Manipuri dance form and youngest of the four Jhaveri sisters. On Chatterjee's request, she recounted the seven decades of her journey in Manipuri under the watchful eyes of her teacher, Guru Bipin Singh. The 1940s, she said, was an age of revivalism. "The atmosphere was pure because of Mahatma Gandhi, who inspired us. And the presence of Rabindranath Tagore caused a surge in every sphere of artistic endeavour including dance. Girls from the upper class took to dance, and many Gujarati boys too went to Santiniketan and learnt Manipuri and Kathakali."

In 1943, Singh went to Bombay. He was with Madam Menaka in Khandala from 1938 to 1943 where he had a chance to see all the other forms of Indian classical dance and was much influenced by them. Once in Bombay, he met Kanahailal Mishra of Bharatitya Vidya Bhavan for whom he directed the Manipuri dance portions of the drama *Chaula Devi* where Naina Jhaveri was invited to play the lead role. Ranjana Jhaveri was also invited to take part in it. After that there was no looking back for the Jhaveri sisters.

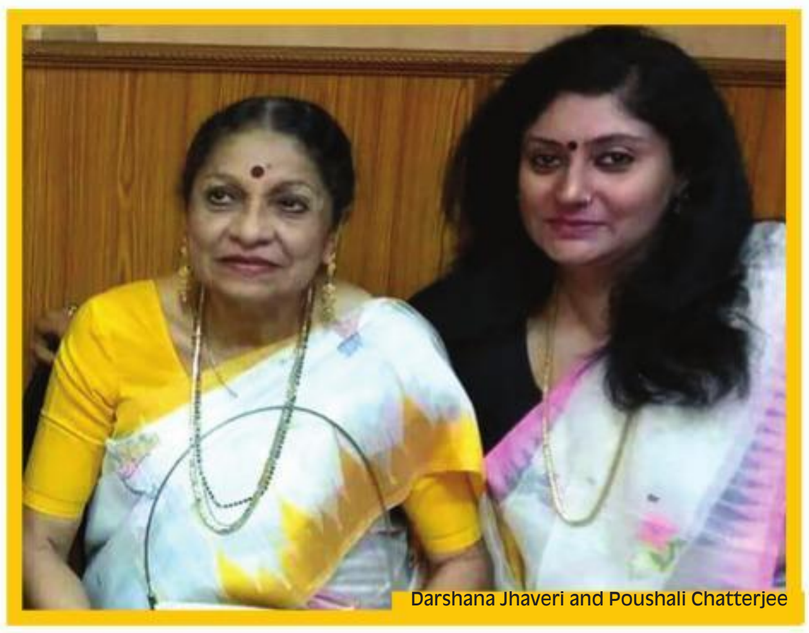
Singh composed and choreographed dance dramas like *Mira Bai*, *Amrapalli* and others in Gujarati. The Jhaveri sisters were indeed lucky because Singh came to their house to teach them the parts. It was during that time that both Darshana and her sister, Suverna started learning Manipuri from him.

Darshana Jhaveri recalled that in the 1940s she took the lead role in *Amrapalli* where the main character was a little girl. In 1951, Singh launched his production *Usha and Aniruddha*, for which he took inspiration from *Raas leela*, *Thang ta* and other prevalent forms of dance that exist in Manipur. *Rajnartaki* was produced in 1954. During the 1950s, he taught the five *Bhangi parengs* to the sisters that are basic to Manipuri dance.

Prior to that, in 1949, Naina and Ranjana Jhaveri were sent to Manipur to imbibe its spirit. They stayed with Ojha Amubi Singh and there they learnt that dance was a part of life. They also had short stints of learning from Ojha Amudan Sharma and Ojha Atomba Singh. In 1956, they again went to Manipur and learnt the five *Bhangi parengs*.

Guru Bipin Singh took the whole Jhaveri family to Manipur to dedicate their dance to Govind *ji* in his temple. In Darshana Jhaveri's words, "We performed at Roop Mahal theatre in Imphal and then, we danced for people in the villages of Cachar where they prostrated before Guru *ji* in reverence. It was an extremely satisfying experience. We are blessed."

Chatterjee asked her mentor Jhaveri about the styles of Manipuri she learnt from other gurus to imbibe the spirit of the dance form. She replied, "We have learnt *Raas leela* and *Nata sankirtana* and got a first-hand experience of *Bhakti Raas* from other gurus. Our interests were so aroused that four or five hours of continuous work did not tire us."


Darshana Jhaveri and Poushali Chatterjee

The Jhaveri sisters, from the left Nayana, Ranjana, Suverna and Darshana, with Guru Bipin Singh

Since 1960, Jhaveri has been visiting Manipur with Guru Bipin Singh. He encouraged her to learn pung cholom, kartal cholom and natapala from Meitei Tomba Singh. Ojha Amuyaima Singh also taught her to play pung, the Manipuri drum, as well as to perform traditional dances. From Sutradhari Kshetritombi Devi, she learnt *Raas leela*. Kumar Maibi taught her *Lai haroaba*, which is about creation and the concept of cosmology.

With Guru Bipin Singh, Jhaveri actively took part in lecture-demonstrations and seminars. She traced the passage of the form from temples to the proscenium stage. Chatterjee asked her what motivated Singh to research extensively on Manipuri dance. "His thirst for knowledge," Jhaveri said, "and research was phenomenal. His fiery passion for dance and music was displayed time again. At the age of 18 when he was in Khandala with Madam Menaka for five years, he became an avid reader of the *Shashtras* in her well-equipped library.

"After moving to Bombay, Guru *ji* visited Imphal umpteen times to collect both music and dance, pung and *Sankirtana* compositions. We sat with him and studied *Vaishnavite shashtras* under scholars, which is the root of Manipur's Gaudiya Vaishnavism, ushered into the state by King Bhagyachandra. We also studied about the *Lai haroaba* tradition, *Thang ta*, *Raas leela*, *Nata sankirtana*, pung cholom and kartal cholom. In 1958, we invited Sutradhari Ksetritombi Devi and Meitei Tomba Singh.

"We recorded music and I always carried my tape recorder to Manipur. Guru *ji* invited different gurus and I recorded their *taal prabandhas*. We correlated the oral tradition and the *shastras*. Manipuri has everything in its own terminology and the gurus in Manipur were storehouses of knowledge. We found all that we needed to know from Krishna Rasa Sangeeta Sangraha. The *taal* system of Manipuri dance is a combination of 10 *taals*."

Jhaveri said that Manipuri dance has eight *jathis* unlike the prevalent five *jathis* in other classical systems. Her Guru *ji* reconstructed the basic movements into a systematic training course, realising the need for a well-structured syllabus. Not only was Guru Bipin Singh widely read with a vast knowledge of dance, he had a penchant for buying books, no matter what the language was. A frequent visitor to Sanskrit Pushtak Bhandar, he was once bent upon buying a book that cost Rs 300, which was a lot of money in the 1950s. "He was even willing to go without food to help me buy it," said Jhaveri with a laugh.

Till now, Jhaveri has co-authored these books – *Manipuri Nartan* in Hindi and Bengali, *Manipuri Tal Prakash* in Manipuri, *Tal System* in English, and *Shastriya Manipuri Nartan* in Hindi and Bengali. She contributed articles and helped considerably with editing the Marg Publications on Manipuri dance in 1961 and 1990. She has also written the introduction for books edited by Guru Bipin Singh like *Vaishnava Sangeet Shastra Part I and II* (Hindi and Bengali), *Panchamsar Sanhita* (Hindi and Bengali), *Manipuri Nartane Tal-o-Alankar* (Bengali) and *Manipuri Geet-Malika* (Bengali).

The writer is a senior dance critic

Darshana Jhaveri

SNIPPETS

Live-action treatment

Disney is working on a live-action remake of *Snow White*.

According to *Deadline*, *West Side Story* star Rachel Zegler will portray the titular princess. Production is expected to begin in 2022 with Marc Webb, the filmmaker behind *500 Days of Summer* and *The Amazing Spider-Man*, directing.

"Zegler's extraordinary vocal abilities are just the beginning of her gifts. Her strength, intelligence and optimism will become an integral part of rediscovering the joy in this classic Disney fairytale," Webb told the publication.

The animated film *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* came out in 1938. Based on the Brothers Grimm's 1812 German fairytale, the movie was Disney's first animated feature-length release.

In 1950, *Cinderella* became the studio's second commercially successful animated feature film and its first live-action movie, *Treasure Island*, was released that same year. Disney has released a string of live-action remakes of its own animated classics in recent years. *Beauty and the Beast*, *Dumbo*, and *Aladdin* have all received the live-action treatment. Recently, the live-action film *Cruella*, starring Emma Stone as the title character, acted as a prequel for the 1961 *One Hundred and One Dalmatians*.

Zegler will appear in the lead role of Maria in Steven Spielberg's *West Side Story*, scheduled for release on 10 December 2021 in the United States and United Kingdom. Ansel Elgort will portray Tony.

–The independent

MUSIC AS A WAY OF LIFE

Sarod maestro Arnab Bhattacharya's signature style has made him a talent to reckon with

ANIT MUKERJEA

'If music be the food of love, play on" – the opening lines from William Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, stand universally true. When it comes to Hindustani classical music, the lute-shaped sarod creates a magical spell for listeners when strummed by legendary maestros.

Deemed as the most prominent instrument in Indian classical music, the sarod is known for its base and the gravity of its sound in contrast to the dulcet tunes of the sitar. The sarod is noted for its effortless gliding between notes, conjuring *meend*, a vital part of traditional Indian music. Eminent sarod masters like Amjad Ali Khan, Ali Akbar Khan, Buddhadev Das Gupta, Radhika Mohan Maitra and Tejendra Narayan Majumdar have carved a niche for themselves as dedicated virtuosi.

Speaking of contemporaries, 39-year-old Arnab Bhattacharya has been playing sarod since he was four. He was introduced to the stringed instrument by his father Swapan Kumar Bhattacharya. But it was under the guidance of Das Gupta that Bhattacharya honed his skills in evolving a distinct, individual style that led him to compose original scores based on *ragas* invented by him. He reveres his guru Das Gupta for familiarising him with Ali Akbar Khan's spiritually profound renditions. He was moved by their tremendous dedication and indulgence while performing.

Bhattacharya has composed 30 pieces in a span of two years, the most notable being *Silent Memory*, *Tandav* and *Howrah Mail*. He gave background music to many documentaries, acclaimed in India and abroad. One of them was for *The Great Indian Painter*, based on the life of artist Hemendranath Majumdar. His musical innovation in *Bhorer Kolkata*, an advertisement highlighting the city's rich heritage, was striking.

Bhattacharya is inspired by the Senia-Shahjahanpur *gharana*. He is blessed with a unique ability to seamlessly weave intricate, ornamental notes and reach incredible crescendos, all while maintaining the techniques of different *ragas*.

Last year, he received huge global recognition for his debut short film, *Life After Death*, the storyline of which was woven around graphics and music. The story is set against the Covid-19 pandemic that continues to take innumerable lives all over the globe. A husband is returning home to his pregnant wife. During the journey, he witnesses people being infected with Covid and dying. The film, however, ends on an optimistic note.

According to Bhattacharya, the film conveys the promise of a new life with the birth of the baby. The background music by him, which was a blend of Eastern and Western disciplines, fitted with the story perfectly. It received an award from Denmark for best graphic concept. Other accolades arrived from Berlin, South Africa and Portugal for the best music in a short film.

Bhattacharya has received the Sarod Sunder from Odisha in 2005 and Sarod Nayak in 2007 among other international awards. He was at the height of success when he became the founder member of bands Spectrum and The Soul Mates. For his other band, The Arnab Bhattacharya Quartet, which has performed in Europe, Bangladesh and Central Asia, he has worked towards integrating Indian classical music with jazz and blues. Bhattacharya popularised sarod internationally, performing a fusion of different *gharanas*, yet keeping intact their individual styles. As a music composer, he also contributes to a western band called Aroy, creating numbers that are sublime syntheses of oriental and occidental music.

"I could relate to the sarod both emotionally and spiritually, which triggered my musical creativity. Its tonal qualities have endeared to me and became my life's musical partner," Bhattacharya said. During his sojourn in Madrid, he performed for the first time at the age of 14 with a group of young Spanish musicians. He was completely alien to the city's language and culture but their shared passion for music created an instant rapport.

When asked whether fusion music can bridge the gap between continents, Bhattacharya said, "Music, to me, has a global appeal, which encourages a healthy blend of the very distinct components of the East and West, coming to a counterpoint and creating the desired musical resonance for listeners.

"World famous violinist Yehudi Menuhin and conductor André Previn demonstrated their prowess with sitar maestro Ravi Shankar. Zakir Hussain and other stalwarts interacted with their European counterparts to make philharmonic orchestras more impactful with the addition of Indian classical instruments to Western classical music. It only enhances the vital essence of both styles."

Menhuin in his book, *Unfinished Journey*, marvels at how Hindustani classical exponents play extempore, while their Western counterparts heavily rely on musical notations for orchestrations. "Indian musicians through their intensive, daily *rewaj* (practice) are able to conceptualise and visualise the *ragas* that musically describe nature, seasons and life by capturing their underlying nuances. Notation is not required to achieve that as those are driven by feelings which come naturally and not by memorising," Bhattacharya said.

Bhattacharya has started an audio-visual programme exploring a theoretical module for beginners, which is an introduction on notations for understanding different *ragas*. At present, he is working on an album called *Altogether*, based on world music in collaboration with 16 eminent musicians across the globe. It is expected to be released in November.

Denoting courage

Actor Neeraj Kabi feels the word *sherni* (tigress) defines an attitude and should not therefore be seen as gender specific.

"*Sherni* for me is an attitude. It is not gender biased. So, I would call even a male a *sherni* or a lady a *sherni*," Kabi told *IANS*. The Vidya Balan-starrer *Sherni* dropped digitally recently and Kabi is part of the cast.

"*Sherni* is an attitude of courage and the power to walk alone without falling or looking back, and without stopping… come what may. So, for me any man or woman having this quality is a *sherni*," he said.

In the film, Vidya Balan essays the role of an upright forest officer on the lookout for a "man-eating" tigress. Kabi plays a senior official, who is part of the lackadaisical system.

The film, directed by Amit Masurkar, also features Sharat Saxena, Vijay Raaz, Brijendra Kala, Sampa Mandal, Mukul Chadda and Ila Arun.

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GO AS YOU LIKE

Transgender runner CeCe Telfer (in photo, left) will not be allowed to compete in the women's 400m hurdles at US Olympic trials because Telfer has not met the conditions World Athletics established for certain women's events. Telfer competed for the men's team at Division II Franklin Pierce, but took time off, then came back to compete for the women's team.

THUMBNAILS

England win: England eased to an eight-wicket win over Sri Lanka to open their Twenty20 series in Cardiff. Jos Buttler's unbeaten 68 led the way at Sophia Gardens as England reached their target of 130 with 17 balls to spare on Wednesday.

ICC shifts Europe qualifiers: The International Cricket Council (ICC) on Thursday shifted the women's T20 World Cup Europe Qualifier and the U19 men's World Cup Europe Qualifier from Scotland to Spain due to COVID-19 restrictions at the original venue. The first event to be relocated from Scotland to Spain is the Europe Qualifier to the 2023 women's T20 World Cup in South Africa.

Murray to compete at Olympics: Two-time Olympic champion Andy Murray will lead the British tennis team at the Tokyo Olympic Games, Team Britain announced on Thursday. Murray defended his men's singles title at the 2016 Rio Olympic Games, becoming the first men's tennis player to win two Olympic gold medals in the singles event. Besides competing in the singles, Murray, who received a wild card for the Olympics, will also compete in doubles, partnering Joe Salisbury, reports Xinhua.

Finnish midfielder Kauko signs for ATKMB: Indian Super League side ATK Mohun Bagan on Thursday announced the signing of Finland midfielder Joni Kauko, days after his national team was eliminated from the ongoing European Championships. The addition will give the ISL side a big boost ahead of their AFC Cup group D campaign, starting in August. "Kauko will be seen playing in a green-and-maroon jersey in the next season. ATK MB made an agreement with him on Thursday," the club said in a statement.

Doping corruption in weightlifting: A culture of alleged corruption among international weightlifting officials was detailed on Thursday in an investigative report of covered-up doping cases for athletes who won Olympic and world titles. Three of the sport's longtime leaders were charged with a range of complicity and tampering offenses under the World Anti-Doping Code.

Mirza and Mattek-Sands crash out: Sania Mirza and her doubles partner Bethanie Mattek-Sands lost their first round match in straight sets at the Viking International Eastbourne. The unseeded Indo-American pair lost 3-6, 4-6 to Christina Mchale and Sabrina Santamaria of the USA in a match that lasted one hour and 18 minutes late on Wednesday night. The 34-year-old winner of six Grand Slams in doubles will pair up with Mattek-Sands in the women's doubles event of Wimbledon, starting on 28 June.

Need people with right mindset, says Kohli

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
SOUTHAMPTON, 24 JUNE

India skipper Virat Kohli *(in photo)* has indicated an overhauling of his Test team after the stunning loss to New Zealand in the World Test Championship final here, saying that the "right people who have the right mindset to perform" will be brought in following a reassessment.

After his side had lost the WTC final by eight wickets here last night with the batting proving a major let-down, the Indian captain, without mentioning any names, expressed his displeasure at some players for not showing enough "intent" to score runs.

Cheteshwar Pujara managed 8 off 54 balls in the first innings and took 35 balls for his first run. He then scored just 15 runs off 80 balls in the second essay. In the end, New Zealand chased down a 139-run target without much trouble.

"We will continue to reassess and continue to have conversations around the things required to strengthen our side and not follow certain patterns," Kohli said at the post-match virtual Press conference.

"We will not wait for a year or so and have to plan ahead. If you see our white-ball team now, we have great depth and guys are ready and confident. The same thing needs to be done with Test cricket. You have to reassess and understand what dynamics work for the team and how we can be fearless. Bring in the right people who have the right mindset to perform," the skipper added.

"I think evolving with the game and improving yourself with the game are very important and when you have been a top side for few years in a row, you don't want suddenly to drop your standards. We will certainly take those decisions and have those conversations in the near future," the skipper said.

"We definitely need to work out better plans on understanding how to score runs. We have to stay in sync with the momentum of the game and not let the game drift away too much. I don't think there are any technical difficulties as such," he said, adding: "It's more down to game awareness and being braver in putting bowlers under pressure and not allowing them to bowl in similar areas for longer periods unless it is absolutely overcast and the ball is swinging all over the place like it happened on day one. "Rishabh Pant's aggressive approach had not yielded results but his attempts to charge down the track against pace bowlers and missing swinging deliveries fuelled questions but Kohli said: "Rishabh's definitely going to be an expressive player whenever he gets an opportunity...he assesses it really well and when things don't come off, you can say there's an error in judgment, which is acceptable in sport."

Iterating the views of head coach Ravi Shastri, Kohli said that the best Test team in the world should be decided by a best-of-three finals series and not a one-off game like it had been in the the tournament's inaugural edition.

"I'm not in absolute agreement with deciding the best Test side in the world over the course of one game, to be very honest," Kohli said, adding: "If it is a Test series, it has to be a test of character over three Tests, which team have the ability to come back into the series or totally blow away the other team. It can't just be pressure applied over two days of good cricket and then you suddenly are not a good Test side anymore. I don't believe in that."

It's Ashwin!

Off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin finished the 2019-21 World Test Championship cycle as the leading wicket-taker with 71 scalps to his credit. The 34-year-old Tamil Nadu player achieved the feat during the WTC final against New Zealand, which was his 14th Test in the cycle. His 71st victim was New Zealand opener Devon Conway. Ashwin picked up two wickets each in the first (2/28) and the second innings (2/17) in the final. He ended up with four five-wicket hauls in the WTC with seven for 145 as his best in an innings. He also scored 324 runs with a century to boot.

Williamson expresses relief

SOUTHAMPTON, 24 JUNE

New Zealand captain Kane Williamson expressed both relief and satisfaction after his team defeated India by eight wickets in the inaugural World Test Championship final on Wednesday after losing successive one-day finals. Australia thrashed the New Zealanders at the Melbourne Cricket Ground in 2015 after they had finally qualified for a final after losing six semis. Two years ago, they lost to England in an agonising finish at Lord's because they had hit fewer boundaries after the teams were tied after both 50 overs and the subsequent super over. On Wednesday, New Zealand finally triumphed in a global final with Williamson unbeaten on 52 after a painstaking 49 in the first innings on a pitch which favoured the bowlers throughout with two days lost to rain. "It's certainly a slightly different feeling being on the right side of the result," Williamson told a Press conference.

"The first semi-final was one-sided, the second one was pretty interesting. It was the first official world Test championship, that's a really good feeling. Both teams knew coming into the last day there were three possible results -- win, lose or draw and we saw that things could happen quickly."

An unbeaten winning partnership of 96 was finally compiled under bright sunlight by Williamson and New Zealand's highest Test run-scorer Ross Taylor (47 not out) who fought hard after openers Tom Latham and Devon Conway fell in quick succession to off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin.

Archery WC: Atanu, Deepika assure medal for India

AGENCIES
PARIS, 24 JUNE

Star archery couple Atanu Das and Deepika Kumari assured India its first medal from the ongoing World Cup Stage 3 by entering the final of the mixed pair event with a comeback 5-3 win over Spain here on Thursday.

Atanu and Deepika, who are India's best medal hope in the upcoming Tokyo Olympics, were at their best to make their first final together where they will face the Netherlands in the summit clash on Sunday.

World number three Deepika is also in the hunt for a second medal, having advanced to the individual semi-final for the second successive time this year.

The duo, who were ranked fifth in the qualification to get a first round bye, faced some stiff competition in the opening round from Spanish pair of Daniel Castro and Ines De Velasco, who had three perfect 10s with two closest to the centre (X) from four arrows to take the opening set 38-36.

But the Indian pair upped its tempo with consistent shooting (9-9-9-10) to bring the match on an even keel with a slender one-point win in the second set.

Dutee, Hima among top athletes to participate in Inter-State C'ships for one last try at Oly berths

AGENCIES
PATIALA, 24 JUNE

A host of top Indian track and field athletes, including the likes of star sprinters Dutee Chand and Hima Das, will make one last attempt to book their Olympic berths in the National Inter-State Championships beginning here on Friday.

Graded as 'B' category event by World Athletics, the five-day event offers some of the top athletes the chance to either breach qualifying standards for an automatic Olympic berth or garner valuable ranking points to make it to the Games.

The championship, which is being held under strict COVID-19 protocols, was earlier scheduled to be held in Bengaluru but shifted to the NIS campus here in view of the possible logistical issues as the elite athletes who are based here will not to travel to the Karnataka capital due to the pandemic.

Two Olympic-bound athletes, star javelin thrower Neeraj Singh, who is currently on a training-cum-competition tour of Europe, and 3000m steeplechaser Avinash Sable will not take part in the event.

Dutee missed the automatic qualification mark of 11.15 seconds by two-hundreths of a second during the Indian Grand Prix 4 here on Monday, though she broke her own national record. She will be looking to do better and book an automatic berth though she is on the verge of making it to the Tokyo Olympics on the basis of world rankings.

Hima, who has had a lower injury problem for a long time, ran her personal best of 20.88 seconds in 200m at the IGP 4 but missed the automatic qualification mark of 22.80 seconds. She has to breach the qualifying standard if she wants to book a Tokyo ticket as her world ranking may not be good enough for an Olympic berth.

Hima is also a part of the 4x100m relay quartet along with Dutee, Archana Suseendran and S Dhanalakshmi, who are looking to book a Tokyo Games berth.

They broke the national record during the IGP-4 but their timing of 43.37 seconds was not enough to place them in the top 16 in the Road to Tokyo list.

To do that, they have to run at least below 43.05 seconds -- the timing of the 16th place team in the list -- and wait till the deadline of June 29. The Indians are currently in 20th spot.

Similarly, the men's 4x400m relay squad of Muhammed Anas Yahiya, Amoj Jacob, Arokia Rajiv and Noah Nirmal Tom will aim to improve its time from 3:02.61s clocked during the IGP-4 to 3:02.56s or even better it to lift itself from the present ranking of 16 to be sure of a Tokyo ticket.

For relay events, the top 16 teams in the Road to Tokyo rankings on June 29 midnight will run in the Olympics. Teams from Sri Lanka and Maldives are also taking part in the men's 4x400m and women's 4x100m relay events to give it an international status and meet a stipulated rule for Olympic qualifications.

Other Sri Lankans are also lining up in individual events in their last bid to earn themselves a place in the Tokyo Games. Nadeesha Ramanayake (women's 400m) and Nimali Waliwarsha (women's 800m) are among the prominent names from the island nation.

Delta variant reported during Euro 2020

ASSOCIATED PRESS
COPENHAGEN, 24 JUNE

Danish health officials have urged soccer fans who attended the European Championship game between Denmark and Belgium on 17 June to be checked for the coronavirus after they found at least three people who later tested positive for the delta variant.

Danish health minister Magnus Heunicke wrote on Twitter on Wednesday that about 4,000 people sat near those who tested positive. Denmark has reported 247 infections of the variant since 2 April.

Busquets proves key

In Seville, After helping Spain avoid elimination at the European Championship, Sergio Busquets *(in photo)* had to pause for a moment while talking about his time away from the squad because of the coronavirus. The Spain captain teared up recalling the doubts that went through his mind after being told he had to go into isolation only days before the tournament was to begin. Spain were glad Busquets did make it back, just in time to lead the team to victory over Slovakia on Wednesday.

The Barcelona midfielder was voted the Man of the Match in the 5-0 win that sent Spain to the round of 16 after opening with disappointing draws against Sweden and Poland. The result allowed Spain to finish second in Group E, setting up a meeting against Croatia in Copenhagen on Monday.

Ronaldo strikes

In Budapest, Cristiano Ronaldo's goals are adding up fast, and they are taking Portugal deeper into yet another tournament. Ronaldo scored off two penalties on Wednesday to help the defending champions secure a 2-2 draw with France and give the team a spot in the round of 16 at the European Championship. They also increased his total with the national team to 109 goals, tied for the all-time men's record with former Iran striker Ali Daei. The Portugal great's Euro 2020-leading fourth and fifth goals also extended his overall tournament record to 14.

Poland out

In St Petersburg, Robert Lewandowski had just headed the ball off the crossbar twice in as many seconds when it landed back at his feet. Standing right in front of Sweden's goal, surely the World Player of the Year couldn't fail to score again? Incredibly, he could. Desperate to make amends for possibly the most embarrassing misses of his career, the Poland striker then scored twice in a wild, end-to-end match at the European Championship on Wednesday, but it still wasn't enough. Viktor Claesson, not Lewandowski, had the final say at Saint Petersburg Stadium with a goal in the fourth minute of stoppage time to give Sweden a 3-2 victory and first place in Group E.

For Sweden, it's a trip to Glasgow for a last-16 match against Ukraine on Tuesday. For Poland and Lewandowski, it's another early exit from a major soccer tournament.

Goretzka shines

In Munich, the second-half subs saved Germany's day at the European Championship. Leon Goretzka scored in the 84th minute after Timo Werner's shot was blocked following a run through the defense from Jamal Musiala. That gave the Germans a 2-2 draw with Hungary on Wednesday, enough for them to finish in second place in the group. A loss would have sent the Hungarians into the next round and sent Germany home early for the second straight major tournament.

Brazil win after referee's accidental error

ASSOCIATED PRESS
SAO PAULO, 24 JUNE

Brazil beat Colombia 2-1 in a tense Copa America match on Wednesday that featured three extraordinary goals. Colombia opened the scoring in the 10th minute after Juan Cuadrado crossed from the right and found Luis Daz all alone in the middle of Brazil's penalty box. The striker shot a powerful volley to the right side of goalkeeper Weverton and scored possibly the best goal of the tournament.

Colombia then started defending against a Brazil team that barely stopped surrounding their penalty box. It appeared as if Colombia would be able to hold out, until Argentine referee Nestor Pitana's *(in photo)* knee came into play.

Pitana accidentally blocked a pass by Neymar about 10 metres in front of the Colombian area in the 78th minute. Colombian defenders momentarily stopped, but Brazil substitute Lucas Paquet just moved the ball to left-back Renan Lodi and his cross found Roberto Firmino, whose angled header beat Colombian goalkeeper David Ospina.

The Colombians initially refused to restart the match but Pitana, the referee of the 2018 World Cup final, confirmed Brazil's goal. Brazil kept pressuring in the final minutes and found their reward in added time. Neymar took a corner and Casemiro netted the winner.

"They came at us once and then stopped," Casemiro said after the match. "It was our attack against their defence. Colombia are a strong team but, as the coach requires, we are very strong mentally."

On Tuesday, Ecuador and Peru drew 2-2 at the Olimpico stadium in Goinia. The Ecuadorians opened the scoring with an own goal by Renato Tapia in the 23rd and got their second via Ayrton Preciado in the first-half stoppage time.

Peru pulled level in the second half with goals by Gianluca Lapadula in the 49th and Andr Carrillo in the 54th. Both teams retained their chances of advancing to the knockout stage. Brazil lead the group with nine points after three matches.

Marijne expects women's hockey team to reach quarters at Tokyo Oly

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

Indian women's hockey team chief coach Sjoerd Marijne *(in photo)* expects his wards to reach the quarterfinals of the upcoming Tokyo Olympics and says anything less than that would be a big let down.

The team will be competing in its second consecutive Olympics in Tokyo having qualified for the Games after a hiatus of 36 years for the Rio Games. India's best-ever finish at the Summer Games was a fourth place finish in the 1980 Moscow Games and Marijne believes the current team has the potential to match it if the players play according to their strength. "The expectations in India are very high. If you are realistic, only two countries are lower ranked than us and that's Japan and South Africa. So, I don't know from where these expectations are based on.

"I think probably because we did good in the past in the last four years, but still we have to be realistic. We are focusing on reaching the quarterfinals and that's realistic and from there anything can happen," Marijne said at a virtual media conference.

The Dutch coach said if they fail to reach the quarterfinals, it would be a big disappointment for the players, who have made a lot of sacrifices to realise their dreams in these difficult times. "...but for me the most important is our performances and I know this is easier. I just want to see that this team reaches its potential and my job is to help the team reach its potential.

"If we play every pool match to our potential and fail to reach quarters I am still happy. But I think playing by potential will help us reaching the quarterfinals and even more," he said.

Fitness-wise we are no less than any European team: Rani

KOLKATA, 24 JUNE

Olympic champions are not created overnight and Indian women hockey team has taken long strides in that direction by following a well-defined process, skipper Rani Rampal *(in photo)* assured on Thursday and avowed that her balanced side is good enough to challenge the best during the Tokyo Games.

The Indian women team competed at the 2016 Olympics after a gap of 36 years but was eliminated at the Group Stage itself with four losses and a draw against Japan. Rani said they are a much better bunch now.

"No team becomes Olympic champions overnight. They definitely started from somewhere. We, also, are part of the process. Coaching and the staff are working well for this mission," Rani said during a virtual news conference.

"Earlier people felt that we were no match to the European teams. If you see our team over the period of last four-five years, fitness-wise we are no less than any other team."

Placed in a tough Pool A, the Indian team will begin its Olympic campaign against world's top side the Netherlands on July 24 before taking on Germany (ranked 3rd), Great Britain (5th) and Ireland (9th), who are all ranked higher than the 10th placed India.

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