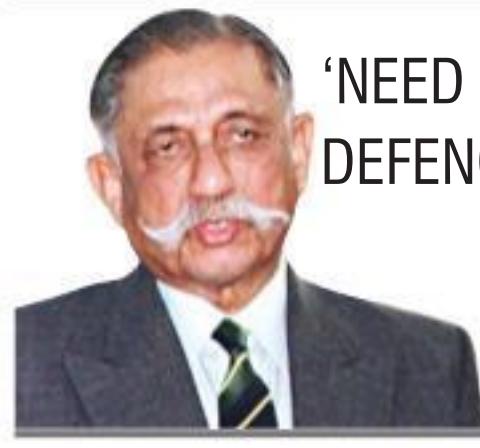




PEOPLE'S PARLIAMENT, ALWAYS IN SESSION



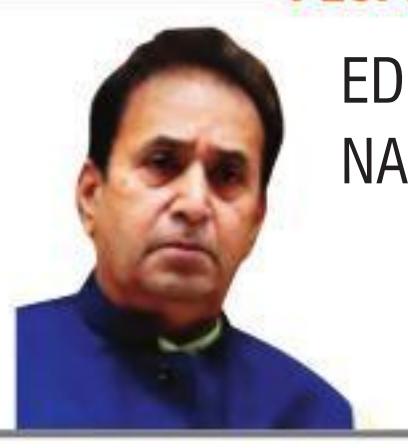
'NEED TO BALANCE DEFENCE BUDGETS'

P7



KERALA HC GRANTS ANTICIPATORY BAIL TO AYESHA SULTHANA

P4



ED RAIDS DESHMUKH'S NAGPUR PREMISES

P5



VERSTAPPEN STRIVES FOR WIN AT STYRIAN GP

P12

## WEATHER

Partly cloudy sky with possibility of very light rain/thundershowers. The maximum and minimum temperatures would be around 39 and 27 degrees Celsius respectively.

RAINFALL: Nil

RELATIVE HUMIDITY

Max: 77% Min: 33%

TEMPERATURE

Max: 40.1°C (+3) Min: 25.1°C (-3)

SUN RISES

05:26 hrs SUN SETS

MOON RISES

21:14 hrs MOON SETS

07:50 hrs

## THUMBNAILS



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh waves during a visit to the INS Vikrant, an indigenous aircraft carrier (IAAC), in Kochi on Friday.

(SEE P4)

**FATF retains Pak in 'grey list':** The Financial Action Task Force on Friday retained Pakistan on its 'grey list' for failing to check money laundering, leading to terror financing, and asked Islamabad to investigate and prosecute senior leaders and commanders of UN-designated terror groups, including Hafiz Saeed and Masood Azhar. The global body asked Pakistan to address its strategically-important deficiencies.

P11

**Govt extends I-T compliance deadlines:** The government on Friday extended deadlines for various income tax compliances and also exempted from tax the amount given by an employer to employees for Covid-19 treatment. Also, ex-gratia payments received from employers in case of Covid deaths would be exempted.

P8

**Kolkata Police form SIT to probe vaccine scam:** The Kolkata Police on Friday constituted a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe the fake vaccination drive conducted in the city by a man allegedly masquerading as an IAS officer, a senior officer of the force said. Debanjan Deb, a 28-year-old man who held several camps where around 2000 people were suspected to have been inoculated, was arrested earlier this week after his drive was busted.

P5

## Twitter briefly blocks IT minister Prasad's account

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 25 JUNE

Amidst its strained relations with the Indian government, Twitter on Friday briefly blocked IT Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad from accessing his account over alleged violation of the US copyright law – a move that was immediately slammed by him as being arbitrary and against IT rules.

This is the first instance of a Twitter account of a Union Minister getting blocked. While the exact nature of the violation of the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) was not immediately known, Prasad could not access his account '@rsprasad' on Friday morn-

**Friends! Something highly peculiar happened today. Twitter denied access to my account for almost an hour on the alleged ground that there was a violation of the Digital Millennium Copyright Act of the USA and subsequently they allowed me to access the account"**

RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD  
IT MINISTER  
ON RIVAL SOCIAL MEDIA  
PLATFORM KOO

ing even though the Twitter account of the minister was visible for public viewing.

The access was unlocked about an hour later with a warning that the account may be locked again or sus-

pended in case of any additional notices against the account.

Lashing out at Twitter, Prasad – in a series of posts on Koo – said it was apparent that his statements calling out the "high handedness and arbitrary actions" of Twitter had ruffled feathers.

The temporary locking of the IT Minister's account comes at a time when the US-based digital giant has been engaged in a tussle with the Indian government over the new social media rules.

The government has slammed Twitter for deliberate defiance and failure to comply with the country's new IT rules, which has led to the microblogging platform losing its legal shield as an inter-

mediary in India and becoming liable for users posting any unlawful content.

"It is apparent that my statements calling out the high handedness and arbitrary actions of Twitter, particularly sharing the clips of my interviews to TV channels and its powerful impact, have clearly ruffled its feathers," the minister said. He added "because if Twitter does comply, it would be unable to arbitrarily deny access to an individual's account which does not suit their agenda".

The chairman of the parliamentary panel on IT, Shashi Tharoor, said the same thing happened with him and the standing committee will be seeking an explanation from the social media firm.

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, 25 JUNE

India and China today resolved to maintain dialogue and communication through diplomatic and military mechanisms to reach a mutually acceptable solution for complete disengagement from all friction points in Eastern Ladakh so as to ensure full restoration of peace and tranquility and enable progress in bilateral relations.

They also agreed that in the interim, the two sides will continue to ensure stability on the ground and prevent any untoward incident.

The 22nd meeting of the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination (WMCC) on India-China bor-

**The two sides also agreed to hold the twelfth round of the Senior Commanders' meeting at an early date after Friday's WMCC meeting**

along the LAC in Eastern Ladakh keeping in view the deal reached between the two foreign ministers in September 2020.

The two sides also agreed to hold the twelfth round of the Senior Commanders' meeting at an early date to achieve the objective of complete disengagement from all the friction points along the LAC in the Western Sector in accordance with the existing bilateral agreements and protocols.

Meanwhile, China on Friday operationalised its first fully electrified bullet train in the remote Himalayan region of Tibet, connecting the provincial capital Lhasa and Nyingchi, a strategically located Tibetan border town close to Arunachal Pradesh.

**Narada case: SC asks HC to hear Mamata, Moloy pleas de novo**

**The top court annulled the High Court's 9 June order refusing to accept replies of the Bengal government, Mamata Banerjee and the law minister**

NEW DELHI, 25 JUNE

The Supreme Court on Friday annulled the Calcutta High Court's 9 June order refusing to take on record the reply-affidavits of West Bengal government, state chief minister Mamata Banerjee and state Law Minister Moloy Ghatak on their role on the day of arrest of four Trinamul Congress leaders on 17 May by CBI in Narada scam case.

A vacation bench of justices Vineet Saran and Dinesh Maheshwari asked the high court to decide de-novo the fresh pleas, to be filed by Banerjee, Ghatak and the state government on 28 June, before proceeding with the main petition of the CBI seeking transfer of the scam case to the high court itself.

We are of the opinion that the petitioners (State, CM and Law Minister) ought to have given an application to take their respective affidavits on record especially when the submissions of the parties were going on and had progressed substantially.

At this stage, suggestion was made by this court that the matter could be remanded back to the High Court to be decided afresh. On the basis of the reasons given in the application which is filed by the petitioners. Counsel of the parties have graciously agreed, the bench said in its order. PTI

## Billionaires and tax havens as Pirates of the Caribbean

RAJA MURTHY

**T**he Indian government's recent effort to extradite bank fraudsters and billionaire ascenders from Antigua and England is only the tip of a titanic iceberg involving tax havens and corruption. The London-based Tax Justice Network estimates secret offshore wealth worldwide to be a stunning \$32 trillion.

Governments lose about \$500 billion in tax revenue annually through offshore bank accounts, according to the advocacy group.

British overseas territories like Jersey and Cayman Islands help hide ill-gotten wealth of corporate fraudsters, besides laundering black money through trusts and

shell companies. Hedge funds then covert this stashed loot into more billions of dollars through global stock market manipulation.

Besides, exposes in the Panama Papers (11.4 million documents) and Paradise Papers (13.4 million documents), forensic audit of leading companies and "billionaires" reveal interesting truths.

The modern version of the merry rogue Jack Sparrow and his cinematic Pirates of the Caribbean do their looting and pillaging by offering financial services in tax havens to those suffering the world's worst disease: bottomless greed. "Financial services" is a prominent industry in Caribbean tax havens, apart from tourism.

These touristy tax havens

are countries or regions with secretive banking practices and without or with minimal taxes – no corporate tax, property tax, income tax, inheritance tax. Prominent tax havens include Cayman Islands, British Virgin Islands, Jersey, Bermuda, Channel Islands, the Bahamas, Panama, Dominica, Isle of Man, Nevis, Anguilla, Costa Rica, Belize, Barbados, Mauritius and Luxembourg.

The infamous banking secrecy of Switzerland is matched by countries like England, USA, Singapore and Germany with strict tax compliance rules for their citizens but a different tax-loose system for foreigners who can hold assets with secrecy. Hypocritical governments attract dirty money and dodgy "billion-

aires". Tellingly, some of the biggest corporate and political crooks seek refuge in UK.

Clean corporate governance advocacy groups say major US multinationals have about \$1.6 trillion parked offshore. Pfizer, IBM, Walmart, General Electric, Microsoft, Exxon Mobil, Chevron are among companies earning more than \$4.2 trillion profits globally but which use tax havens to lower tax rates to

about 25.9 per cent from the US statutory rate of 35 percent.

Apple had Ireland as tax haven, while Goldman Sachs and Nike used Bermuda.

"These havens affect far more than tax," Nicholas Shaxson wrote in an International Monetary Fund paper.

"They provide an escape route from financial regulations, disclosure, criminal liability and more. Because the main corporate users of tax havens are large financial institutions and multinationals, the system tilts the playing field against small and medium enterprises, boosting monopolization and danger of financial instability in emerging market economies."

Shaxson, who authored the book *Treasure Islands* on tax havens and John Chris-

tensen, a former economic advisor to the British tax haven Jersey, argued that tax havens are a curse to their own people – a "paradox of poverty in the midst of plenty" as in oil-rich Gulf states.

Cost of living is very high in most tax havens where governmental revenue is mostly through one-time license fees and heavy taxes on imported goods.

Tax haven Bahamas has approximately 3,90,000 citizens mostly living in capital Nassau where a townhouse costs \$300,000 and \$3 million for a single-family residence.

Residents pay \$300 monthly for electricity and water in a small apartment, taxi fares average \$60 (Rs 4,450) per hour, a bread loaf \$6 (Rs 445).

A meal for two costs \$300

(Rs 22,220) in Dune restaurant at Nassau's Ocean Club, the Four Seasons resort made famous in the 2006 James Bond film *Casino Royale*.

Measures like the Common Reporting Standard (CRS) in 2014 from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development helped reduce tax haven villainy.

By July 2019, about 90 countries shared information on 47 million accounts worth about \$5 trillion; bank deposits in tax havens reduced by 20 to 25 per cent.

The CRS has loopholes, say experts, as crooks can claim citizenship in tax havens and escape banking transparency laws. But in a "paradox of hell in paradise" crooked billionaires live in daily dread of being caught.

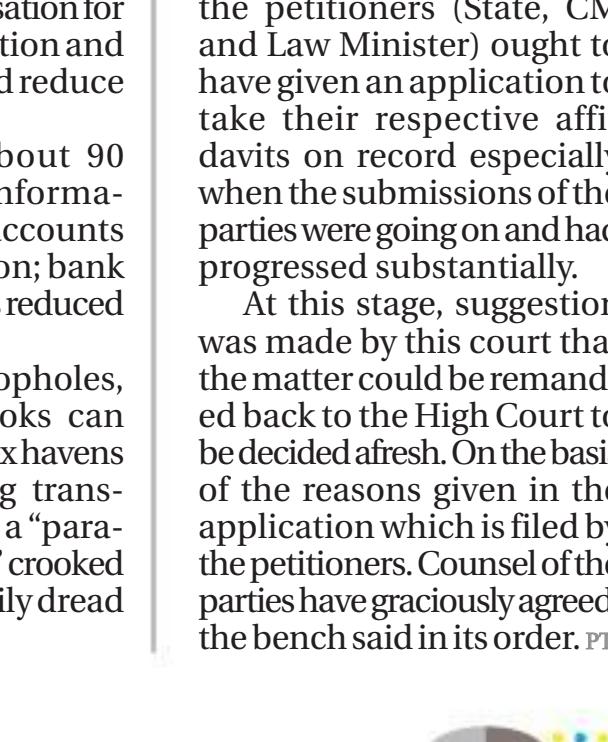


(Rs 22,220) in Dune restaurant at Nassau's Ocean Club, the Four Seasons resort made famous in the 2006 James Bond film *Casino Royale*.

Measures like the Common Reporting Standard (CRS) in 2014 from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development helped reduce tax haven villainy.

By July 2019, about 90 countries shared information on 47 million accounts worth about \$5 trillion; bank deposits in tax havens reduced by 20 to 25 per cent.

The CRS has loopholes, say experts, as crooks can claim citizenship in tax havens and escape banking transparency laws. But in a "paradox of hell in paradise" crooked billionaires live in daily dread of being caught.



# BJP's cooked up a 'bogus' O2 exaggeration report: Sisodia

Kejriwal says his 'crime' was his 'sleepless' bid to arrange for oxygen for Covid-hit Delhi people

SNS & PTI  
NEW DELHI, 25 JUNE

**S**lamming the BJP-led Centre, Delhi deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia today claimed there was no report approved by the Supreme Court-appointed Oxygen Audit Committee about Delhi "exaggerating" its oxygen requirement by four times during the devastating second coronavirus wave barely a couple of months ago.

During an online press briefing, Sisodia accused the BJP of flying and alleged that the "bogus" and "misleading" report has been "cooked up" at its office and submitted by the BJP-led central government in the apex court.

Sisodia hit back after BJP spokesman Sambit Patra, citing the apex court-appointed oxygen audit panel's report, slammed the AAP-led Delhi government, terming it to be a "heinous crime".

"The real truth about this report is that it does not exist. This alleged report which is being used by BJP leaders to senselessly slam CM Arvind Kejriwal does not exist. It is bogus and misleading. The Bharatiya Janata Party is lying and shirking accountability," Sisodia charged.

The Supreme Court had appointed an Oxygen Audit Committee in view of the oxygen crisis during the second Covid wave, he said.

"Upon speaking to



members of this Oxygen Audit Committee, the truth came out. Members of this committee have informed the Delhi government that no such report has been approved, signed or released.

"When no such report has been approved by the Oxygen Audit Committee, then which report is being used by the BJP to yet again malign the Delhi government? Where has this report come from?" the deputy CM asked.

By doing this, he said, the BJP was not abusing CM Kejriwal, but "those who lost their family members due to oxygen shortage" when the coronavirus infections tally was at its peak.

He accused the Centre of mismanagement "which led to the O2 crisis".

"People were crying to arrange an oxygen cylinder for their family members, doctors requesting for

more oxygen, hospitals demanding oxygen and facing huge crisis, attendants of patients, hospitals etc who went to court to complain against this crisis—are they all lying? Were these people lying when they said there is a dearth of oxygen, because of which they lost their loved ones?" Sisodia asked.

Accusing the BJP of lying, he said the saffron party's "lies have been unrelenting and limitless". "I request PM Modi to take stock of his party, the BJP's lies have become perpetual and heinous. The BJP is no more Bhartiya Janata Party, but in fact, Bhartiya Jhagdaal Party because all they do is fight. There is nothing else that BJP does other than fighting with states," he alleged.

Delhi BJP leaders, including MP Gautam Gambhir and former minister Kapil Mishra, have slammed the Delhi government over the issue and demanded an apology over what they call is its 'criminal negligence'

ernment over the issue and demanded an apology over what they call is its "criminal negligence".

Blasting the BJP for "constantly shirking responsibility and lying", Sisodia said the BJP has "cooked up the false report".

"We all saw the Covid peak in the month of April. The responsibility to manage oxygen supply was fully on the central government. The central government completely messed up the oxygen management system because of which many families had to suffer.

"Our doctors, hospitals and people clamoured for more oxygen but instead of taking responsibility for botching up the oxygen crisis, the BJP government invented this alleged report full of lies," Sisodia alleged.

While challenging the BJP to present such a report, he called it "absolutely shameful and despicable" that BJP leaders, sitting at their party

headquarters, "cooked up some misleading facts and fabricated an alleged report to shift accountability from themselves".

"The BJP should be ashamed of itself for spouting flagrant lies. If there is a report signed by the Oxygen Audit Committee, then all these BJP leaders and Union ministers should tell us who all have signed and where is the stamp of approval by the committee. Which members have approved this report? We demand these answers from BJP leaders," the deputy CM said.

Delhi was hit severely by a brutal second wave of the Covid pandemic in April and May, which claimed a massive number of lives daily, with a severe shortage in oxygen supply at various city hospitals making the crisis apocalyptic.

Going after the BJP dispensation over this controversy, CM Kejriwal said his only "crime" was that he "fought for the breath of two crore people".

He also said those who lost their loved ones due to the shortage of oxygen should not be called "liars". In a Twitter post in Hindi, Kejriwal said: "My crime—I fought for the breath of my two crore people. When you were doing an election rally, I was awake all night arranging for oxygen. I fought, pleaded to get oxygen for people. People have lost their loved ones due to lack of oxygen. Don't call them liars, they are feeling so bad."



PTI  
NEW DELHI, 25 JUNE

him and his ministers," the BJP leader said.

The Centre supplied more oxygen to Delhi than its actual requirement but due to the mismanagement by the city government, there were instances when some places reported only 48 hours' oxygen left in stock, while somewhere else, it was just for 48 minutes, he claimed.

"This led to a panic situation, causing unavoidable deaths," Gupta said.

Delhi Pradesh Congress Committee president Anil Chaudhury also targeted the chief minister.

"It is clear from the 'Oxygen Audit Committee report' that due to Kejriwal, the supply of 12 other states in the country was affected. The lack of storage and tankers in Delhi and the fault of some private hospitals led to the oxygen crisis. People died because of Kejriwal. Killer chief minister leave the chair," he said in a tweet in Hindi.

Former Delhi minister Dr Narendra Nath and ex-MLA Adarsh Shastri said that in light of the "shocking" findings, "an FIR should be filed and the Delhi government dismissed for giving out misleading information to create an oxygen scare, and total mismanagement of the pandemic".

They said even though the

Capital

## BJP, Cong demand Kejri's resignation over 'inflated' oxygen requirement



Delhi government got four times more oxygen than its actual requirement, patients died due to non-availability of the life saving gas.

Delhi's high demand also deprived other states of the much-needed oxygen supply which could have saved many lives had they received enough stock of the gas, Nath and Shastri added.

Earlier in the day, Sisodia claimed the members of the Supreme Court-appointed Oxygen Audit Committee have neither signed nor approved any such report and accused the BJP of "drafting the misleading and bogus report at its headquarters".

The sub-group constituted by the Supreme Court to audit oxygen consumption in Delhi hospitals during the second wave of COVID-19 said that the city government made exaggerated claims on April 30 for allocation of 700 MT of medical grade oxygen using a wrong formula.

The five-member panel headed by AIIMS director Randeep Guleria said that in its fourth meeting on May 13, it was discussed that the actual oxygen consumption claimed (1,140 MT) was about four times higher than the formula for bed capacity requirement of 289 MT.

## Classified

### PUBLIC NOTIFICATIONS



**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
The general public is hereby informed that with effect from 23-06-2021, Sh. Rajiv Jain, r/o 129, Jain Colony, Veer Nagar, Delhi-110007, has resigned from the partnership firm M/s The Body Makers, having his office at H. No. 4, Floor Basement, Block GP, Pitampura, Delhi-110034. Sh. Rajiv Jain shall not assume any liability or responsibility on behalf of M/s The Body Makers and his association, in any form whatsoever, with M/s The Body Makers and its other partner, Sh. Deepak Seth has ceased. For and on behalf of Rajiv Jain.

Akshay Bhandari  
Advocate  
N-144, LGF, GK I,  
Delhi-110048.  
Mb.  
981162781/9354558323

## The Statesman

### KOLKATA

Statesman House,  
4, Chowringhee Square  
Kolkata-700 001  
Tel: (033) 22127070-76,  
(033) 41071700  
Fax: (033) 2212-6181 / 7107-1780  
Email: thestatesman@vsnl.com  
statesmandisplay@gmail.com  
thestatesmansclassified@gmail.com

### DELHI

Statesman House,  
148, Barakhamba Road,  
New Delhi-110 001  
Tel: (011) 2331 5911  
Hitendra Rathore  
hitendra.statesman@gmail.com  
Mob: 9212192123, Tel: 011-43043793  
Ishan House (2nd floor)  
A-90, Sector II, NOIDA,  
UP 201 301  
Tel: (0120) 4171421  
Email:  
delhi.statesman@gmail.com  
delhi.statesman@gmail.com

### BHUBANESWAR

Plot 3A, Zone B, Sector A, Mancheswar Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751 010. Tel: (0674) 2588060/61/62/2586371, Telex: 0674-2588061  
Email:  
bhubaneswar@thestatesmangroup.com  
statesmanbb@gmail.com

### SILIGURI

Spencer Plaza, 18/19, 1st Floor  
Burdwan Road  
Above Vishal Mega Mart  
Siliguri-734005, West Bengal  
Ph: 9832082429  
Email:  
sil\_statesman@yahoo.co.in

### SHIMLA

Cabin No. 305, P. C. Chambers  
Near Jodha Niwas  
The Mall Shimla-171001, H.P.  
Tel: 0177-2815000  
Email:  
delhi.statesman@gmail.com  
shimla@thestatesmangroup.com

**CHANGE OF NAME**

I, SIKHA spouse of No. 648650R-Ex. SGT Gopal Chandra Mondal, resident of Jaffarpur Panchanan Pathagar, P.O.: Nona Chandan Pukur, Dist. 24 Pgs.(N) have changed my name & D.O.B. from Sikha (D.O.B. 25.7.1963) to Sikha Mondal (D.O.B. 17.4.1961) vide Affidavit Dt. 18.6.2021 before 1st Class (JM) Court at Barrackpore, W.B.

**TENDERS**

I, SHYAMALI spouse of JC8232K Ex. Hon. Capt. Sankar Kumar Bhattacharya resident of 31, Gopal Bhattacharjee Lane, P.O.: Ichapur, Nawabganj, Dist. 24 Pgs.(N), W.B. have changed my name & date of birth from Shyamali (D.O.B. 10.2.1952) to Shyamali Bhattacharya (D.O.B. 17.1.1952) vide Affidavit Dt. 17.6.2021 1st Class (JM) Court at Barrackpore.

## Delhi adds 115 virus cases, 4 deaths

SNS  
NEW DELHI, 25 JUNE

Delhi today reported 115 fresh positive cases of Covid-19—six more than the figure yesterday—following 77,477 tests, with the city's cumulative caseload thus rising to 14,33,590, according to the latest health bulletin issued by the Delhi government.

The positivity rate stood at 0.15 per cent, which was 0.14 per cent yesterday.

The highly contagious, deadly coronavirus claimed four more lives in the national capital, which took its toll to 24,952, the health bulletin said. Eight fatalities were

reported to have been caused by the coronavirus infection yesterday. The city now had 1,680 active Covid cases while those patients undergoing treatment in home isolation numbered 503. The number of Covid patients who recovered over the last 24 hours in the city was stated to be 198, the bulletin stated.

The total number of containment zones in the national capital stood at 2,048, the bulletin pointed out.

Of the total 23,692 hospital beds meant for coronavirus patients in the city, as many as 22,648 beds remained vacant, according to the bulletin.

### 'Delhi administered record 1.56 lakh vaccine doses on Thursday'

NEW DELHI, 25 JUNE

The national capital administered a record 1.56 lakh vaccine doses on Thursday, of which 1,28,900 went to beneficiaries in the 18-44 age group, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) MLA Atishi said here. The total count of doses administered was 1,56,636, the AAP leader said on Friday, announcing the daily vaccination bulletin.

## DRUG ABUSE IS A ONE-WAY TICKET TO HELL

DON'T EVEN TRY ONCE

Drug abuse causes only pain and destruction to drug addicts and their families. A casual introduction to drugs becomes serious addiction, causing loss of productivity, unemployability and reduced quality of life.

### Damaging Effects of Drug Abuse

Infectious Diseases

HIV/AIDS

Loss of Health

Anxiety & Depression

Loss of Studies/Job/Income

Tendency towards crime

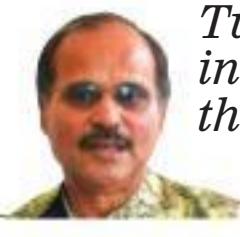
Ruin of family and life

**CHOOSE LIFE STAY AWAY FROM DRUGS**

Email to CP, Delhi at: cp.snsravastava@delhipolice.gov.in | Write to CP, Delhi at P.O. Box No. 171, GPO, New Delhi

FOR IMMEDIATE POLICE HELP CALL 112

TO SHARE INFORMATION CALL 1090



*Two years ago, they (BJP) had promised that any Indian citizen can reside in the Union territory. Did that happen? Brahmins are scared to return to the Valley*

ON THE PM'S MEETING WITH KASHMIRI POLITICAL LEADERS, ASSERTING THAT HE HAS NO FAITH IN THE BJP GOVERNMENT

SENIOR CONGRESS LEADER ADHIR CHOWDHURY

The Statesman  
NEW DELHI, SATURDAY 26 JUNE 2021

03

# HP Gov, Army chief discuss border issues

Dattatreya, Gen Naravane discuss development of Himachal areas on border with China

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
SHIMLA, 25 JUNE

The Chief of Army Staff, General MM Naravane, today discussed with Himachal Pradesh Governor Bandaru Dattatreya the border and other issues pertaining to development in HP areas alongside the international border with China.

The meeting between Naravane and Dattatreya was held at Raj Bhawan in Shimla. They had detailed discussions on various issues related to the development of border areas of the state, a statement issued by the HP Raj Bhawan stated.

"During the discussion with Naravane, Dattatreya stressed on infrastructure development in border areas of the state with China," the statement said.

The Governor said that the Army has an important role in the development of roads, helipads and other infrastructure.

He youths from villages adjoining the border were migrating towards the cities for employment opportu-



Chief of Army Staff General MM Naravane with Himachal Pradesh Governor Bandaru Dattatreya at Raj Bhawan in Shimla on Friday.

nities, which was a matter of great concern and "we need to explore possibilities of self-employment and employment at the local level", he said.

Dattatreya stated that the youths from almost every household of the lower belt

of Himachal were serving in the Indian Army and the number of ex-servicemen in the state was also quite high.

He also raised the issue of Walker hospital at Shimla with the Chief of Army Staff.

Gen Naravane said he had also served in ARTRAC in Shimla and considered Himachal as his old home and was always delighted to visit this place. "Indian Army is capable of giving a befitting reply to every nefarious attempt of the enemy," he said. As far as the border with China was concerned, talks were going on and there was nothing to worry about. The army was on full alert and adequate man and machinery had been deployed on the Indian side, he said.

Gen Naravane also said that a plan has been prepared by the Army for construction of roads in the border areas during the next five to ten years, which would help in development of these areas and migration of youth could also be checked.

He said that there was a lot of enthusiasm among

the youths for the Army and that a large number of them are willing to join it.

"Efforts are on to give representation to every district of the country in the Army," he said while assuring that efforts will be made to start Walker hospital in Shimla at the earliest.

The Army chief also expressed concern over narco-terrorism in the border areas and said that the local administration was doing better in this direction.

Women officers were already working in the Army and now recruitment has also been started up to the core of military police and the response was encouraging, he added.

Significantly, Dattatreya has called for taking precautionary measures in Lahaul-Spiti and Kinnaur districts, which share boundaries with China.

He has raised concern over sightings of the Chinese helicopters at the border in Lahaul Spiti district and the infrastructure development by China alongside the border there as well as in Kinnaur district.



"The film is trying to portray his life. What exactly happened to him is still under investigation. You cannot jump to the story of the man's life which was 'exceptional'."

The high court had earlier sought to know whether 'Nyay: The Justice', purportedly based on late Bollywood actor Sushant Singh Rajput's, in cinema halls and on OTT platforms, saying there is no "unholy interest" in the story of the man's life which was "exceptional".

A vacation bench of justices Anup Jairam Bhamhani and Jasmeet Singh said there is nothing to do with the film's reputation by production of movies about his life based on what is available in public domain.

Rajput's father Krishna Kishore had challenged a single judge's order refusing to stay on the film or to restrain anyone from using his son's name or likeness in movies.

The high court said there was no written script or story which has been used by the film maker and refused to pass any interim order on the appeal by Sushant's father.

"There is nothing that they (makers) have or they could have had used except what is available in the public domain. There is no unholy interest in the life story because the man's life was an exceptional life which is a plausible theme for a movie and they have made a movie, the court said. The high court issued notice and sought response from the movie's director Dilip Gulati and producers Sarla Saraogi and Rahul Sharma and others while posting the matter for hearing on July 14.

The bench noted the submission of senior advocate Chander Lal that the film has been released on website and a mobile app on June 11 as scheduled.

Senior advocate Harish Salve, representing Rajput's father, argued that the producer and the director of the film have commercially exploited life story of the actor who allegedly committed suicide at his Mumbai home last year.

The court said it did not find merit in the plaintiff's contention to restrain on the strength of his right to fair trial relating to the unnatural death of his son, saying no foundation is set up to demonstrate how the films would impair the trial.

It had termed as misconceived plea that the content of the film is defamatory and will damage his and his son's reputation. The suit has claimed that in case a "movie, web-series, book or any other content of similar nature is allowed to be published or broadcasted, it would affect the right of the victim and deceased for a free and fair trial as it may cause prejudice to them".

## Shoe godown fire: Forensic team collects samples

PTI  
NEW DELHI, 25 JUNE

A forensic team on Friday collected charred human remains from a two-storey building in west Delhi's Udyog Vihar where a massive fire broke out four days ago, police said.

Six workers of a shoe godown located in the building are still missing. The search operation will continue till all areas of the building have been scanned, they said.

Police also said they are conducting raids to nab the godown's owner, Pankaj Garg, who has been on the run since the day of the incident.

The fire broke out in the building, where shoes were assembled and packed for sale, on Monday and 35 fire tenders and around 140 fire-fighters were pressed into service to douse the blaze.

In the current scenario, our forensic experts are involved in searching the body/skeletal remains at this scene of the fire," she said.

Crime scene examination in-charge, FSL Sanjeev Gupta said, "One set of human remains has been collected from the second floor of the building by Forensic Science Laboratory experts. No identification is possible. The remains have been sent to a mortuary for preliminary autopsy, pending further investigation."

The search operation inside the building will continue till all areas have been scanned,

he said.

Director of Forensic Science Laboratory, Rohini, Deepa Verma said, "Two forensic teams have been deployed at this site for finding and collecting biological evidence. We have been informed that six people were trapped in the fire and they are still missing."

The sub-divisional magistrate (SDM) of Punjabi Bagh held a meeting on Thursday to discuss the further course of action to search for the missing workers, officials said.

The SDM sought suggestions from the concerned departments, especially the National Disaster Response Force, the Delhi Fire Service, the municipal corporation and the Delhi State Industrial and Infrastructure Development Corporation and police, regarding the extraction of the bodies, they said.

During the meeting, the civic authorities said the building may collapse at any time as cracks have appeared in its beams. They suggested that stepwise demolition be carried out, the officials said.

They further suggested that the building should be demolished gradually and the debris lifted from the site simultaneously.

Police had said on Monday that four godown workers were rescued safely from the building.

## Israel Embassy blast case: Four students from Ladakh sent to 10-day police remand

PTI  
NEW DELHI, 25 JUNE

Four students, who were arrested from Ladakh in connection with a blast near the Israel Embassy here in January, were sent to 10-day police remand by a magistrate court, officials said on Friday.

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

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.

The four students have been identified as Nazir Hussain (26), Zulfikar Ali Wazir (25), Aiaz Hussain (28) and Muzaamil Hussain (25), the police said, adding that all of them are residents of Thang village in Ladakh's Kargil district.

"They were presented before a magistrate court on Thursday which sent them to police remand for 10 days," a senior police officer said.

They had come to Delhi in November last year and were preparing for competitive examinations, he said.

All four of them were in

Delhi on the day of the incident and their phones were found to be switched off, police said.

During interrogation, the suspects have been questioned about their period of stay in Delhi and why their phones were found to be switched during the time of the incident, police said.

The police are likely to conduct searches at the locations where the students stayed in Delhi, including Mukherjee Nagar area where they had been staying for a brief period while preparing for competitive exams, they said.

Further investigation into the case is underway.

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

The Delhi Police Special Cell, which was probing the incident, had registered a case of "conspiracy" behind the blast. The Ministry of Home Affairs had handed over the probe of the blast to the National Investigation Agency on February 2.

## Shopkeeper shot dead in Delhi

PTI  
NEW DELHI, 25 JUNE

A 36-year-old man was shot dead allegedly by a group of men inside his shop in west Delhi's Raghbir Nagar area on Friday, police said.

The victim has been identified as Vinod Bhati, a resident of Raghbir Nagar.

His house and shop are located in the same building. He was out on bail in a murder case registered in 2018 at Khayala police station, they said.

Around 12 noon, some men came on two motorcycles, entered Bhati's shop and shot him.

He was alone in his shop at the time of the incident, a senior police officer said.

The assailants fled the spot soon after shooting him, he said.

Bhati was rushed to the Balaji Action Hospital where he was declared brought by doctors, the officer said.

Footage of CCTV cameras is being scanned to ascertain the sequence of events and establish the identity of the assailants, he said.

We are taking all necessary COVID-19 Precautionary Measures.

**SUMMER WEDDING COLLECTION**

**raymond**

Linen, Cotton & Woollen Formal, Casual & Party Wears

By Economy Sales: 921776425

Latest Range of Designs & Colors

GIFT PACKS AVAILABLE

upto 60% off

BLAZER • SUIT • SHIRT • TROUSER • JACKET

raymond PARK AVENUE ColorPlus parx

- PUNCHKUAN ROAD, Garwal Bhawan, (Near Jhandewalan, Gole Chak.)
- WAZIPUR A-5, Near Richi Rich Banquet (Opp. Shalimar Bagh)
- JANAKPUR B-1/2, Main Najafgarh Road, Opp. Metro Pillar 543
- NOIDA, Nirula's Sec-2, Near Metro Station, Sec-15, Noida, UP
- LAJPAT NAGAR, 49, Main Ring Road, Adj. Haldi Ram, Near Moolchand Crossing

7 DAYS OPEN

## Dattatreya calls for better edu, health facilities in tribal areas

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
SHIMLA, 25 JUNE

Himachal Pradesh Governor Bandaru Dattatreya on Friday emphasized on providing quality education and health facilities in the tribal areas and said special efforts should be made to start schemes to provide jobs to the youth in these areas.

He also stressed in encouraging the tribal produce during a meeting with the senior officials of the tribal development and forest department regarding the various issues of the tribal districts of the state at Raj Bhavan today.

The allotment of Patta of



meeting. The problems of migratory shepherds and their solutions including problems of pastures, theft

and problems of right of way were also discussed.

He expressed satisfaction over the vaccination of all

above 18 plus in Lahaul Spiti district.

He stated that special attention should be given to the requirements of health and education in the tribal areas.

The specialists should be deployed in the health centers at least at the district level so that the people of these areas did not have to move towards other places for treatment, he added.

He stressed on improvement and modernization of health infrastructure and said that the new technology for education and services of such agencies could be hired to enhance quality education.

Banquet and Hoteliers officials, who too have requested that in the next phase of the unlock process, at least 50 or more people should be allowed to participate in the marriage programmes, the statement said.

With the number of COVID-19 cases decreasing over the last few weeks, Delhi has been seeing a phased unlock process, under which factories, markets and salons among other services have been allowed to resume operations gradually.

have allowed wedding functions in hotels, banquets and public places.

"At present, there is a ban on marriage ceremonies in public places in Delhi. The DDMA has allowed marriages only at home or in

court. Due to this, the employment of about five lakh businessmen related to Delhi's banquet, hotel, textile, sweets, jewellery, tent, catering, photograph, make-up etc has come to a standstill," the CTI said.

It added that a lot of people who deal with wedding-related businesses had taken advance bookings from the

clients, which they have had to return.

According to Goyal, marriages under Hindu customs would not be able to take place for four months after 'devshayani ekadashi' (July). "Now that there are few wedding 'muhurats' left, so the CTI has written the letter to DDMA demanding that at least 50 or more people in Delhi should be allowed for wedding functions in hotels, banquets and public places," the statement said.

The CTI also met Delhi

## Allow marriages in hotels, banquets: CTI to Delhi govt

PTI  
NEW DELHI, 25 JUNE

The Chamber of Trade and Industry (CTI) on Friday urged the Delhi government to allow marriage functions to be held in hotels and banquets during the next phase of unlock process, saying the business related to matrimonial programmes was suffering huge losses.

In a letter to the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA), the trade body demanded that at least 50 or more people in Delhi should

be allowed for wedding functions in hotels, banquets and public places.

"Due to this, the business related to matrimonial programmes is in great loss," the CTI said.

It added that a lot of people who deal with wedding-related businesses had taken advance bookings from the

clients, which they have had to return.

According to Goyal, marriages under Hindu customs would not be able to take place for four months after 'devshayani ekadashi' (July). "Now that there are few wedding 'muhurats' left, so the CTI has written the letter to DDMA demanding that at least 50 or more people in Delhi should be allowed for wedding functions in hotels, banquets and public places," the statement said.

The CTI also met Delhi

This notice is for prepaid subscribers of Vodafone Idea (Vi™) in all service areas. With effect from 26<sup>th</sup> June 2021, the existing SUK base plan and existing Plan Voucher (PV) 46 are being discontinued. Two new Plan Vouchers (PV) i.e. PV 128 and PV 46 have been introduced (detailed tariff available at [www.myvi.in](http://www.myvi.in)). Prepaid customers buying a New SIM and existing customers post completion of their current paid service validity, shall now be on the basic tariff plan of 2.5p/sec for all local and STD voice calls, 2.5p/sec for Local + National video calls, 0



Health workers rest during a break from duty, at a cremation ground in Guwahati on Friday. **IANS**

**Imam castrated :** An Imam in a village in Muzaffarnagar was castrated and beaten to death by his first wife for planning another marriage, police said on Friday. The incident took place in Shikarpur village on Thursday when Hazra injured Maulvi Vakil Ahmad, Imam at a mosque in Bhora Khurd Village. **PTI**

**Owaisi supports reconstruction of Osmania hospital:** The announcement by AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi that his party will not oppose the demolition of the century old heritage building of Osmania medical college and hospital has met with strong objection from heritage activists and the descendants of the 7th Nizam Mir Osman Ali Khan who want it to be restored. **SNS**

# 'India's first IAC will be commissioned in 2022'

Rajnath calls project India's pride and a shining example of Atmanirbhar Bharat

**SNS & PTI**

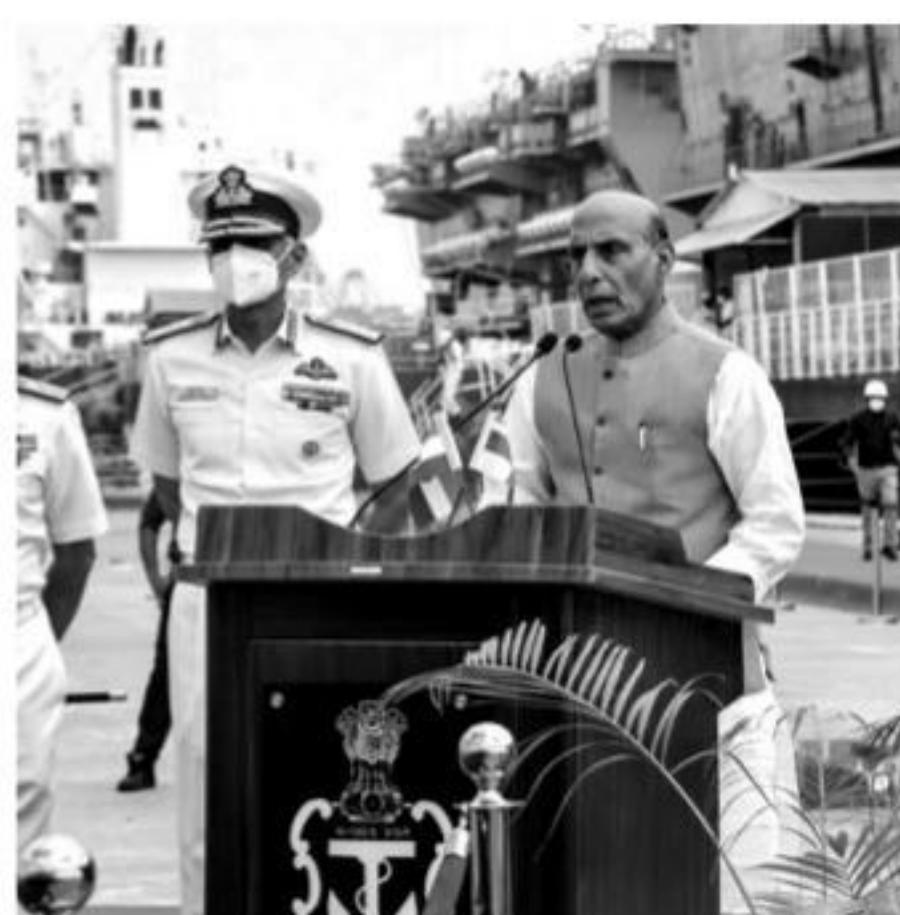
NEW DELHI/KOCHI, 25 JUNE

India's first Indigenous Aircraft Carrier (IAC) will be commissioned next year and its combat capability, reach and versatility will add formidable capabilities in the country's defence, defence minister Rajnath Singh said on Friday.

In a statement to the media after visiting the IAC at Ernakulam wharf of Cochin port to review its construction progress, Singh described it as India's pride and a shining example of Atmanirbhar Bharat.

The project was originally approved by the NDA government and has made significant progress in recent past despite Covid. "Commissioning of the IAC next year will be a befitting tribute to 75 years of India's independence," Singh said in the statement read out to the media.

"The combat capability, reach and versatility of the aircraft carrier will add formidable capabilities in the defence of our country and help secure India's interests in the maritime domain," the defence minister said. Singh, who reviewed Project Seabird at Karwar, which will



Defence minister Rajnath Singh during a visit to the INS Vikrant, an indigenous aircraft carrier, in Kochi, Friday.

be the largest naval base of the Indian Navy in future, and will provide the facilities and infrastructure to support the Navy's operations in the Indian Ocean Region and beyond, said the government is fully committed to a strong navy and these two projects are examples of our unwavering focus.

"Our impetus to modernisation, harnessing India's

indigenous industry and know-how, is a key priority. Forty-two of the 44 warships on order being built at Indian shipyards is a testimony to this," he said. He said the IAC boasts of nearly 75 percent indigenous content, from design, to steel used in construction, to key weapons and sensors.

The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) has also recent-

ly accorded approval for RFP of Project 75-I under the Strategic Partnership model, which will give further fillip to indigenous development of niche manufacturing technologies, the Minister said.

"These measures will help enhance the Indian Navy's operational reach and prowess to protect India's maritime interests," he said.

Rajnath Singh said the Indian Navy remains poised and combat ready to tackle any challenge.

"Navy's proactive forward deployment during the Galwan standoff signalled our intent that we seek peace but are ready for any eventuality," the minister added. He said the Navy has also made significant contributions in the fight against Covid, bringing back Indian citizens from overseas during Op Samudra Setu-I, and much needed Liquid Medical Oxygen during Samudra Setu-II, despite dangers of Covid spread onboard warships. SAR efforts by the Navy during Cyclone Tauktae showcased the spirit of daring and courage among our men and women in whites, he said. The IAC would be commissioned as INS Vikrant in the first half of 2022, which would be India's most potent sea-based asset.

Like other South Indian states, Karnataka too will reject national parties in 2023 polls & choose a regional party,

**JDS LEADER H D KUMARASWAMY**

SLAMMING THE STATE GOVT FOR CORRUPTION, MISHANDLING OF COVID

**i**ndia

Dark days of Emergency could never be forgotten: PM

**STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE**

NEW DELHI, 25 JUNE

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday slammed the Congress party saying the country would never forget the dark days of Emergency imposed by then Central govt

overnment led by it at the Centre in 1975. Dark days of Emergency could never be forgotten, PM tweeted.

He charged the Congress with systematic destruction of institutions, by the then Indira Gandhi-led government at the Centre. The period

from 1975 to 1977 witnessed a systematic destruction of institutions. Let us pledge to do everything possible to strengthen India's democratic spirit, and live up to the values enshrined in our Constitution," Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted.

## Fake IAS officer duped people of lakhs of rupees: Kolkata police

**PTI**  
KOLKATA, 25 JUNE

Arrested fake IAS officer Debanjan Deb has been impersonating as a joint commissioner of the Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC). He fell into his own trap," the officer said.

He hired a vehicle, recruited men and rented an office in Kasba area of the city, the cop said after initial probe.

In the process, he came in contact with a few contractors and sub-contractors of the KMC and allegedly cheated two persons.

One of them filed a police complaint alleging that Deb had taken Rs 10 lakh from him promising him to get a tender of the KMC.

The Kolkata Police on Friday constituted a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe the fake vaccination drive. Deb held two camps in the city where thousands of people were suspected to have been inoculated.

The police arrested Deb on Wednesday for allegedly posing as an IAS officer and organising a COVID-19 vaccination camp in Kasba area, where actor and Trinamool Congress MP Mimi Chakraborty had also got her jab. Chakraborty, who was invited to attend the camp, said she became suspicious about the vaccination process as she did not receive the customary SMS that is sent to people after they are administered a dose, and informed the police.

"At the camp held in a college, 72 people have been inoculated. We are trying to find out how many were vaccinated in Kasba," the officer said.

## Actor Mithun's hearing adjourned till next Wednesday

**STATEMAN NEWS SERVICE**

KOLKATA, 25 JUNE

Actor Mithun Chakraborty right now not be arrested, state counsel said in the court today and further said that the investigating officer of Maniktala police station will again call him Monday virtually for further interrogation. Considering this statement from

public prosecutor Swasato Gopal Mukherjee, Justice Kausik Chanda adjourned the case till next Wednesday.

Mahesh Jethmalani and Ayan Bhattacharya appearing for Chakraborty in election meeting their client only use film dialogue, not in real scene.

On hearing the Mithun's dialogue *Marbo ekhane lash porbe swashane*,

Justice with smiling face adjourned the case.

Earlier, actor and BJP leader Chakraborty was questioned by the police in a controversy over performing one of his dialogues during the Bengal election campaign.

The 71-year-old actor, who was among the BJP's star campaigners in the April-May election, was ques-

tioned virtually by the Kolkata Police in connection with a case filed against him over what he said on 7 March after joining the party.

An FIR alleged that the speech played a role in inciting post-poll violence in Bengal after the 2 May verdict that gave TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee's party a landslide victory.

"But slowly, when people started approaching him for help in Covid-19 related needs,

## Kerala HC grants anticipatory bail to Ayesha Sulthana

**SNS**

KOCHI, 25 JUNE

The Kerala High Court on Friday granted anticipatory bail to Lakshadweep filmmaker Ayesha Sulthana in a sedition case registered against her by the Kavaratti police.

A case was registered on June 9 under section 124-A (sedition) and 153-B (hate speech) of IPC on the basis of a petition lodged by a political leader hailing from Kavaratti.

Granting bail, Justice Ashok Menon said there was no apparent indication in her statement, which amounts to imputations or assertions prejudicial to the national interest, nor does it propagate any class of persons against another group of persons.

The court said in the event of her arrest, she shall be released on bail on execution of bond for Rs 50,000 with two solvent sureties each for like amount to the satisfaction of the officer arresting her.

Following the registration of the FIR in Lakshadweep, Sulthana had approached the Kerala High Court seeking anticipatory bail.

The court had directed her to comply with the notice given by Kavaratti police to appear before them for interrogation on June 20 in connection with the case.

The court had ordered that she be granted interim anticipatory bail if she is arrested.

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

When the anticipatory bail plea came up, her counsel had submitted that Sulthana had clarified her remarks later and tendered an apology for making the statement.

Sulthana submitted that she never realised that usage of the word bio-weapon is an offence and the remark was made not intending to create hatred in the minds of the people.

She said she was ready to appear before police for questioning but sought protection from arrest. Opposing her anticipatory bail plea, Lakshadweep administration had said Sulthana promoted separatism and communalism even in the minds of school children by making such a statement.

## President Kovind reaches Kanpur on three-day visit

**PTI**

KANPUR (UP), 25 JUNE

President Ram Nath Kovind arrived in Kanpur late Friday evening aboard his special presidential train and was received by Uttar Pradesh Governor Anandiben Patel and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath in a grand welcome ceremony.

The president is on a three-day visit to his birthplace. He boarded the special train from the Safdarjung railway station in Delhi to Dehradun to attend the passing-out parade of the Indian Military Academy (IMA) cadets.

Records show that the country's first president, Rajendra Prasad, often undertook train journeys, the Rashtrapati Bhavan had said.

The Railways said that the service of the Presidential Saloon, which was in use since the Independence, had been discontinued on the instructions of the President.

"This saved the exchequer crores of rupees annually utilized in the making and maintenance of the saloon. Post-Covid as the country enters into resurgence and a rebuilding mode, the Indian Railways had requested the President to travel by the people's transport," the Northern Railways said in a statement.

He will take part in various programmes scheduled in Paraunk village on Sunday, the statement added.

On June 28, the president will board the train from the Kanpur Central railway station to reach Lucknow for a two-day visit.

The president interacted with his close and old acquaintances at Jhunjhunwala stations, where the special train made stop-overs, Kanpur Dehat, Superintendent of Police Keshav Kumar Choudhary said.

He received a grand welcome at these stations, he added.

It said a special train service was run for his excellency to travel from Delhi to his native village.

"This move will be a great morale booster for the railwaymen who have diligently given their services throughout the difficult pandemic times. This will also help to encourage and build confidence among the people to use the trains to travel for business, tourism and other purposes to different parts of the country," the statement issued on Friday said.

Railway Minister Goyal, who was present at the station to see off Kovind, thanked him for using the railways for his journey and expressed that post-pandemic, the vast rail network will help the country to regain its economic glory very soon.

On June 29, Kovind will return to New Delhi on a special flight.

The last time a president trav-



elled by train was in 2006 when A P J Abdul Kalam boarded a special train from Delhi to Dehradun to attend the passing-out parade of the Indian Military Academy (IMA) cadets.

Records show that the country's first president, Rajendra Prasad, often undertook train journeys, the Rashtrapati Bhavan had said.

The Railways said that the service of the Presidential Saloon, which was in use since the Independence, had been discontinued on the instructions of the President.

"This saved the exchequer crores of rupees annually utilized in the making and maintenance of the saloon. Post-Covid as the country enters into resurgence and a rebuilding mode, the Indian Railways had requested the President to travel by the people's transport," the Northern Railways said in a statement.

He will take part in various programmes scheduled in Paraunk village on Sunday, the statement added.

On June 28, the president will board the train from the Kanpur Central railway station to reach Lucknow for a two-day visit.

The president interacted with his close and old acquaintances at Jhunjhunwala stations, where the special train made stop-overs, Kanpur Dehat, Superintendent of Police Keshav Kumar Choudhary said.

He received a grand welcome at these stations, he added.

It said a special train service was run for his excellency to travel from Delhi to his native village.

"This move will be a great morale booster for the railwaymen who have diligently given their services throughout the difficult pandemic times. This will also help to encourage and build confidence among the people to use the trains to travel for business, tourism and other purposes to different parts of the country," the statement issued on Friday said.

Railway Minister Goyal, who was present at the station to see off Kovind, thanked him for using the railways for his journey and expressed that post-pandemic, the vast rail network will help the country to regain its economic glory very soon.

On June 29, Kovind will return to New Delhi on a special flight.

The last time a president trav-

elled by train was in 2006 when A P J Abdul Kalam boarded a special train from Delhi to Dehradun to attend the passing-out parade of the Indian Military Academy (IMA) cadets.

Records show that the country's first president, Rajendra Prasad, often undertook train journeys, the Rashtrapati Bhavan had said.

The Railways said that the service of the Presidential Saloon, which was in use since the Independence, had been discontinued on the instructions of the President.

"This saved the exchequer crores of rupees annually utilized in the making and maintenance of the saloon. Post-Covid as the country enters into resurgence and a rebuilding mode, the Indian Railways had requested the President to travel by the people's transport," the Northern Railways said in a statement.

He will take part in various programmes scheduled in Paraunk village on Sunday, the statement added.

On June 28, the president will board the train from the Kanpur Central railway station to reach Lucknow for a two-day visit.

The president interacted with his close and old acquaintances at Jhunjhunwala stations, where the special train made stop-overs, Kanpur Dehat, Superintendent of Police Keshav Kumar Choudhary said.

He received a grand welcome at these stations, he added.

It said a special train service was run for his excellency to travel from Delhi to his native village.

"This move will be a great morale booster for the railwaymen who have diligently given their services throughout the difficult pandemic times. This will also help to encourage and build confidence among the people to use the trains to travel for business, tourism and other purposes to different parts of the country," the statement issued on Friday said.

Railway Minister Goyal, who was present at the station to see off Kovind, thanked him for using the railways for his journey and expressed that post-pandemic, the vast rail network will help the country to regain its economic glory very soon.

On June 29, Kovind will return to New Delhi on a special flight.

The last time a president trav-

elled by train was in 2006 when A P J Abdul Kalam boarded a special train from Delhi to Dehradun to attend the passing-out parade of the Indian Military Academy (IMA) cadets.

Records show that the country's first president, Rajendra Prasad, often undertook train journeys, the Rashtrapati Bhavan had said.

The Railways said that the service of the Presidential Saloon, which was in use since the Independence, had been discontinued on the instructions of the President.

"This saved the exchequer crores of rupees annually utilized in the making and maintenance of the saloon



*The horse pulls the cart. A state must conduct elections. Only such elections will be free and fair. Why does the govt want the cart in front and the horse behind? It is bizarre*

SENIOR CONGRESS LEADER P CHIDAMBARAM

SLAMMING GOVT FOR INSISTING ON POLLS IN J&K BEFORE GRANTING STATEHOOD

The Statesman

NEW DELHI, SATURDAY 26 JUNE 2021

05

## THUMBNAILS



Vaccination administered for homeless people at a shelter home near Nigambodh Ghat, in the Capital on Friday.

# ED raids Deshmukh's home

Case lodged under anti-money laundering law against Deshmukh & others

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 25 JUNE

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Friday conducted searches at the premises of former Maharashtra home minister Anil Deshmukh in Nagpur and his associates in Mumbai as part of a money laundering probe against the politician on Rs 100 crore bribery charges, officials said.

They said the raids are being carried out under provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) and the locations include Deshmukh's residence at GPO Chowk in Nagpur and that of his personal secretary Sanjeev Palande and personal assistant Kundan Shinde in Mumbai. Deshmukh (71), sources said, is in Mumbai and the agency is expected to question him there.

Palande was brought by the sleuths to the Enforcement Directorate office in Ballard Estate area of Maharashtra's capital city for questioning around noon, they said.

The central probe agency



Security personnel stand guard at the residence of former Maharashtra home minister Anil Deshmukh in Nagpur on Friday.

had registered a criminal case under the anti-money laundering law against Deshmukh and others last month after studying a CBI FIR.

The ED case came about after the CBI first carried out a preliminary enquiry followed by filing a regular case on the orders of the Bombay High Court that asked it to

look into the allegations of bribery made against Deshmukh by former Mumbai Police Commissioner Param Bir Singh.

Officials said the search teams are looking for additional evidence that can be important for their probe.

The teams are trying to gather evidence and record statements to substantiate the

claims made by about 10 bar owners to the ED that they paid about Rs 4 crore "bribe" in cash that was allegedly handed over to the former home minister.

Official sources said these claims have been recorded by the agency under the PMLA and it is trying to corroborate it with additional evidence. The agency's probe is focused

on the allegation that illicit funds were generated in the transfer, posting of police personnel in Maharashtra and if illegal extortion was done by the cops as claimed by Singh in his complaint.

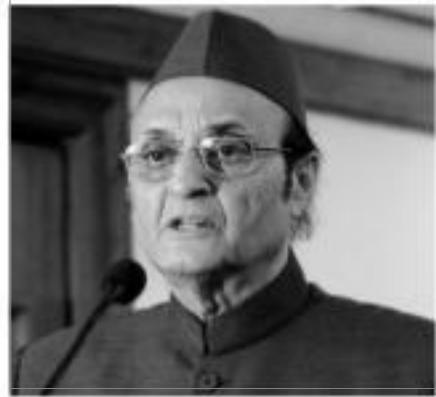
The ED has powers to attach assets of the accused during the investigation stage and later file charge sheets against them before a PMLA court for trial.

Singh was shunted out from the post after the role of policeman Sachin Waze surfaced during investigation of the explosive-laden SUV that was found parked near industrialist Mukesh Ambani's house in Mumbai. In his letter to chief minister Uddhav Thackeray after he was removed from the Police Commissioner's post, Singh had alleged that Deshmukh had asked Waze to extort over Rs 100 crore a month from bars and restaurants of Mumbai.

The CBI booked Deshmukh and others under IPC sections related to criminal conspiracy and section of Prevention of Corruption Act for "attempt to obtain undue advantage for improper and dishonest performance of public duty".

## 'Centre must restore J-K statehood before polls'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 25 JUNE



'Baba ka Dhaba' owner discharged: Delhi eatery 'Baba ka Dhaba' owner Kanta Prasad has returned home after being discharged from the Safdarjung hospital, police said on Friday. Prasad said that he was getting calls from various people asking him to apologise to YouTuber Gaurav Wasan. He felt depressed and attempted suicide. PTI

Militant killed in encounter: A militant was killed while another, Sahil Ramzan Dar, a resident of Shopian, surrendered, during an encounter with security forces in Shopian district of Jammu and Kashmir on Friday, police said. The identity and group affiliation of the slain militant are being ascertained. PTI

Describing Prime Minister Narendra Modi's meeting with top political leaders from Jammu and Kashmir as a "very positive step", veteran Congress leader and former J&K governor Karan Singh said statehood must be restored before holding assembly polls there and asserted that such a move would go a long way in helping to "heal the wounds" of the people.

Singh, the son of Maharashtra Hari Singh who signed the terms of Kashmir's accession in 1947, said his personal opinion is that the revocation of special status under Article 370 seems "irreversible" but asserted that the matter was before the Supreme Court and the top court must decide.

Singh, in an interview with PTI, also demanded that the

Centre must provide a "financial-cum-developmental package" to the people whose livelihoods were badly affected during the last two years following the Centre's move to bifurcate Jammu and Kashmir into two Union Territories and revoke its special status.

Modi had told political leaders from Jammu and Kashmir that the Centre's priority is to strengthen grassroots democracy there for which delimitation has to happen quickly for polls to be held.

Centre must provide a "financial-cum-developmental package" to the people whose livelihoods were badly affected during the last two years following the Centre's move to bifurcate Jammu and Kashmir into two Union Territories and revoke its special status.

In January 2021, a similar harsh reply to a complainant had sparked another controversy. A relative of an 86-year-old complainant woman had then requested Josephine to shift the hearing to a nearby place so that the ailing complainant can attend it. However, Josephine reportedly asked harshly why an 86-year-old was made to file the complaint.

Opposition parties, including the Congress and BJP, had demanded the resignation of MC Josephine from the post, stating that she is insensitive to the issues related to women's grievances and harassment.

It has been reported that the ruling CPI-M which nominated her to the post in 2017, was unhappy with Josephine and moreover with people in the state feeling outraged over

many recent dowry deaths, Josephine's actions brought embarrassment to the party. There has been widespread criticism in the CPI-M secretariat against Josephine for tarnishing the women-friendly image of the party and it is learnt the CPI-M has directed her to quit the post. Josephine had sparked controversy and made insensitive remarks earlier too.

In January 2021, a similar harsh reply to a complainant had sparked another controversy. A relative of an 86-year-old complainant woman had then requested Josephine to shift the hearing to a nearby place so that the ailing complainant can attend it. However, Josephine reportedly asked harshly why an 86-year-old was made to file the complaint.

Mahila Congress workers took out a protest march in front of the AKG centre where the state secretariat was proceeding this morning. Protesters were arrested and removed by police.

In that, she was seen snubbing the complainant for not approaching the police first. "Then, you suffer" was her immediate reply.

The chairperson further said: "If you want to get back the dowry and compensation, hire a good lawyer and

file a case in the family court.

If you want, a petition could be filed with the women's commission as well. But there's no use as your husband is abroad," Josephine told the complainant.

Opposition parties, including the Congress and BJP, had demanded the resignation of MC Josephine from the post, stating that she is insensitive to the issues related to women's grievances and harassment.

It has been reported that the

ruling CPI-M which

nominated her to the post in 2017,

was unhappy with Josephine

and moreover with people in

the state feeling outraged over

the recent dowry deaths,

Josephine's actions brought

embarrassment to the party.

There has been widespread

criticism in the CPI-M

secretariat against Josephine

for tarnishing the women-

friendly image of the party

and it is learnt the CPI-M

has directed her to quit the

post. Josephine had sparked

controversy and made insen-

sitive remarks earlier too.

In January 2021, a similar

harsh reply to a complainant

had sparked another controver-

sy. A relative of an 86-year-

old complainant woman had

then requested Josephine to

shift the hearing to a nearby

place so that the ailing com-

plainant can attend it. Howev-

er, Josephine reportedly

asked harshly why an 86-year-

old was made to file the com-

plaint.

Opposition parties, including

the Congress and BJP, had

demanded the resignation of

MC Josephine from the post,

stating that she is insensitive

to the issues related to women's

grievances and harassment.

It has been reported that the

ruling CPI-M which

nominated her to the post in

2017, was unhappy with Josephine

and moreover with people in

the state feeling outraged over

the recent dowry deaths,

Josephine's actions brought

embarrassment to the party.

There has been widespread

criticism in the CPI-M

secretariat against Josephine

for tarnishing the women-

friendly image of the party

and it is learnt the CPI-M

has directed her to quit the

post. Josephine had sparked

controversy and made insen-

sitive remarks earlier too.

In January 2021, a similar

harsh reply to a complainant

had sparked another controver-

sy. A relative of an 86-year-

old complainant woman had

then requested Josephine to

shift the hearing to a nearby

place so that the ailing com-

plainant can attend it. Howev-

er, Josephine reportedly

asked harshly why an 86-year-

old was made to file the com-

plaint.

Opposition parties, including

the Congress and BJP, had

demanded the resignation of

MC Josephine from the post,

stating that she is insensitive

to the issues related to women's

grievances and harassment.

It has been reported that the

ruling CPI-M which

nominated her to the post in

2017, was unhappy with Josephine

and moreover with people in

the state feeling outraged over

the recent dowry deaths,

Josephine's actions brought

embarrassment to the party.

There has been widespread

criticism in the CPI-M

secretariat against Josephine

for tarnishing the women-

friendly image of the party

and it is learnt the CPI-M

has directed her to quit the

post. Josephine had sparked

controversy and made insen-

sitive remarks earlier too.

In January 2021, a similar

harsh reply to a complainant

had sparked another controver-

sy. A relative of an 86-year-

## New reality

Eight mainstream political parties from the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir represented by 14 leaders, the Union Home minister and the Prime Minister of India were all in one room. But nobody was greatly concerned, perhaps understandably so, about addressing the elephant in the corner looming large over the interaction in the Capital on Thursday. And that is a good thing. For it is precisely because all parties, for their own reasons, essentially seemed to skirt the issue of the reading down of Article 370 of the Constitution save the usual suspects making a few pro forma noises for the media that there is cause for hope in the Valley. There is a level of maturity in the approach of the greater autonomy seeking Jammu and Kashmir parties in accepting that the restoration of Article 370 ~ while it may be devoutly wished for by them ~ is a non-starter regardless of the political dispensation in New Delhi, and this must be appreciated. Yes, they may raise the issue to a higher pitch when it suits them politically, and certainly they would never admit to this new reality in public.

Nonetheless, an acceptance even in private of the fait accompli regarding the abrogation of the temporary Constitutional arrangement which was Article 370 is a huge step for those who have spent their entire political lives swearing to uphold it. Naturally, the messaging by these regional leaders to their cadres and to the public would be on the lines of 'we will live to fight another day' or, indeed, that the matter is sub-judge, a fact the Prime Minister reminded them of. Here is where the Centre too needs to exhibit a level of political maturity by ignoring even marginally incendiary public postures for the greater good of both the residents of Jammu and Kashmir and for its complete integration into the Indian mainstream. In this context, the Prime Minister's reiteration of his government's commitment to fostering grassroots democracy in the UT for which he sought the cooperation of all parties in first completing the delimitation exercise for Assembly seats, and the eventual restoration of full statehood, is welcome. The next step must be to set a firm timeline for both these endeavours. The Home Minister is thought to have been unequivocal at the meeting that holding the Assembly election would have to be the precursor to any move to restore statehood to Jammu and Kashmir. While some political parties argued in favour of reversing the order, Mr Amit Shah's view will likely prevail. But the "constructive engagement" with all political parties ought not to end with Thursday's interaction. Overcoming the trust deficit between Jammu and Kashmir and the Union government, which all participants agreed was essential, needs constant work. Continuing to talk to each other would be a good beginning, setting up a permanent mechanism to do so would be even better.

## Apple Daily, RIP

The world has one newspaper less. The theoretical concept of democracy has suffered a crude battering with Apple Daily, the pro-democracy paper in Hong Kong, announcing its closure. Freedom of the media has been jolted to its foundations with Thursday's publication of the last edition, pretty obviously under pressure from mainland China. Britain, which handed over the protectorate to China in 1997, would have baulked at the denouement suffered by the publication. The tabloid's offices were raided last week over allegations that several reports had breached a controversial national security law. This was, at best, a subjective reflection. Aside from the closure, police detained the chief editor and five other executives, and company-linked assets were frozen. In retrospect, the ugly events and the brutal severity that have shaped Hong Kong's narrative for several years had almost inevitably led to the closure of Apple Daily. By that token, the unfortunate development was not wholly unexpected. Despite the consistent efforts to suppress democracy, the paper had become a vociferous critic of the Hong Kong and Chinese leadership, helmed respectively by the likes of chief executive Carrie Lam and Xi Jinping further afield. Echoing the people's sentiment generally, UK's Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said the closure was a "chilling blow to freedom of expression in Hong Kong". The digital version of the 26-year-old paper will no longer be updated after midnight. An announcement by publisher Next Digital has thanked readers for their "loyal support" as well as its journalists, staff and advertisers. The tabloid has long been a beacon of media freedom in the Chinese-speaking world, and is widely supported by political dissidents in Hong Kong. Chinese officials have repeatedly said media freedoms in Hong Kong are respected but are not absolute. In the event and if the closure of Apple Daily is any indication, respect for freedom of the media is not part of Beijing's architecture. Apple Daily upheld its editorial independence and refused to kowtow to dictators from the mainland.

The staff waved at those who had gathered outside to bid farewell to the paper. As night fell, supporters of the publication gathered outside its office, and lit their phone flashlights as a show of solidarity. They were also heard chanting "add oil," an expression that was used during the mass protests in 2019. Those inside returned the gesture, waving to those below. The gestures were symbolic, but ineffectual. The founder of Apple Daily, Jimmy Lai, who has long been a critic of the Chinese Communist Party, is already in jail on a string of charges. A week ago, some 500 police officers raided the publication's newsroom, saying its reports undermined the government, a criminal offence. Over the past 26 years, Apple Daily had evolved into one of Hong Kong's loudest pro-democracy voices ~ one of few that dared to challenge China. That voice has been silenced.

# Eye on microfinance ~ II

There has been a growing awareness among microfinance institutions that credit is certainly not transformative. Although certain people will be able to use microfinance to alter their future and build their businesses, that is not the case with the majority who receive a loan. Most are going to use it to smooth out their consumption



The biggest problem with microfinance is that people who get these small loans usually start or expand a very simple business. The most common business using microfinance is retail selling groceries, where there are often too many players creating fierce competition, and where people don't really earn enough money to get out of poverty. They basically compete with each other and drive everyone into the ground.

Not only are borrowers often innumerate, illiterate and unfamiliar with interest rate calculations, but they frequently have little or no awareness of local demand for goods and services. Consequently, they often fail to establish successful income-generating ventures and therefore cannot repay their loans.

There has been a lot of rethinking in the microfinance fraternity. One major premise that has been discredited is that capital is not the only important financial need people have. This seems clear and obvious now, and microfinance organizations are expanding the range of their credit offerings.

While we must still consider the risks and ethical dilemmas as we continue to aggressively push microcredit, the power of an entire range of microfinance services to help us achieve a more equitable world is becoming increasingly clear.

There has been a growing awareness among microfinance institutions that credit is certainly not transformative. Although certain people will be able to use microfinance to alter their future and build their businesses, that is not the case with the majority who receive a loan. Most are going to use it to smooth out their consumption.

Credit can be both an opportunity and a risk for low-income families. It is necessary to open doors, but it can also be a barrier.

A person can dig oneself into a lot of debt, preventing the ability to move up financially. Loans can be malignant. Some people shouldn't take on debt. Some businesses are too risky. And the temptation is always present to take these costly loans and scrimp on groceries. When they miss loan payments because a lingering illness keeps them away from their business, they get into the regular default cycle. That's acute over-indebtedness.

Should there be bailouts for unscrupulous debtors who invested unwisely or selfishly, as well as for debtors who genuinely tried to use their loans sensibly but now cannot make repayments, either because of the economic downturn, or because they had no choice in taking on such debt, such as by having to pay for essential medical care? Some form of debt forgiveness and write-offs is sometimes necessary. An alternative (or additional) option would be a moratorium on interest repayments ~ giving borrowers a certain period in which they only have to repay their initial loan, allowing MFIs to recoup their money even if not making a profit ~ as well as a much longer delayed period for repayments. One wouldn't like to resurrect the "deserving poor" versus "undeserving poor" trope, but if the reasons for the individual debt aren't going to be factored into potential write-offs, then the situation could get messy. Blanket, no-questions-asked write-offs are hardly useful for solving problems of financial illiteracy.

Access to small loans for tiny businesses by itself won't miraculously enable the poor to take them to a new level. It will not build a steady business because a

lot of them face several barriers. A modest cash injection cannot generate a stable income, or create a profitable cycle of trade and income particularly when the daily struggle of most of these people has to do with making a living, feeding their families, educating their children and staying off ill health.

The notion that microfinance has the potential to spark sustained economic growth is misplaced. The direct evidence of microfinance's impact is less than overwhelming. In several cases, these financial activities can

damage the prospects of poor people. Microloans do create opportunities for people to utilise "lumps" of money for augmenting incomes and mitigating vulnerability, but that doesn't necessarily mean investing in businesses could lead to sustained revenue growth. Not all microloans produce beneficial results, especially for those engaged in low-return activities in saturated markets that are poorly developed and which are prone to regular environmental and economic shocks.

Poor households are not well served by simple loans in isolation. Minimalist microfinance provides a bandage where a major operation is needed, and at worst, it deepens the wounds. While the bulk of microfinance portfolios may be commercially sustainable and attractive to conventional investors, reaching the still-excluded will continue to require innovation and experimentation. More than micro-loans, what the poor need are investments in health, education and the development of sustainable farm and non-farm related productive activities.

Marguerite Robinson, an author and consultant of microfinance, puts it succinctly: "Credit is a powerful tool that is used effectively when it is made available to the creditworthy among the economically active poor participating in at least a partial cash economy ~ people with the ability to use loans and the willingness to repay them. But other tools are required for the very poor who have prior needs, such as food, shelter, medicine, skills training and employment."

The present model of microfinance practices ~ minimalist

microfinance in which credit is the only intervention ~ is unlike the classic avatar that shows dollops of genuine good. Socially embedded institutions provide clients with information and handholding, but most microfinance clients have no training, education, or role models in business, and therefore are unlikely to cultivate successful microenterprises on their own. They need a comprehensive suite of financial tools that work in concert to grow savings, mitigate risk, fund investment and move money.

Many microenterprises fail due to lack of local demand, fierce competition, or inadequate technical skills of entrepreneurs. Microfinance actually best serves those who have higher skill levels and better market networks. Its loans, then, are hardly a tool of resilience, especially when widespread shocks threaten not only borrowers but the industry itself.

The hard truism is that microfinance has been saddled with misplaced expectations, and we have lost a sense of its more modest, even though critical, potential. It is actually only one instrument in a broader development toolbox, but in certain conditions, it happens to be the most powerful. It can make the poor a little more resilient, but it is not the answer on its own. It all has to do with how we are using it and how we are defining the outcomes.

(Concluded)

A MEMBER OF THE **ANN**  
ASIA NEWS NETWORK

## Asian Voices

### Witch-hunt begins?

Old habits are said to die hard. Some SLPP leaders have reverted to their old ways even before the government has completed one year in office. They do not seem to learn from their past blunders that cost them dear politically; they are busy settling personal scores with one another, the way they did towards the latter part of the previous Rajapaksa government, whose leaders committed political hara-kiri by trifling with some UPFA seniors and even trying to smoke them out. SLPP General Secretary Sagara Kariyawasam is openly clashing with some Cabinet ministers. He has audaciously demanded Energy Minister Udaya Gammanpila's resignation over the fuel price increases. Minister of Industries Wimal Weerawansa's wings are being clipped, to all intents and purposes; his ministry has been stripped of Lanka Phosphate Ltd. (LPL). The government has sought to justify its action by claiming that the institutions involved in fertiliser production should be under the Agriculture Ministry.

Now that LPL has been placed under the Agriculture Ministry, one can only hope that it will not face the same fate as the so-called peripheral forests, whose management the government craftily removed from the purview of the Forest Department and placed under the District and Divisional Secretaries, on the pretext of helping the people engaged in traditional agriculture. This move enabled the SLPP henchmen to encroach on forests, pretending to be farmers.

The Auditor General and others on a mission to protect vital state assets should keep a watchful eye on LPL, which is said to be making profits at present; Agriculture Minister Mahindananda Aluthgamage must be held accountable if LPL backslides. It

**The Island**  
Online

is no secret that various racketeers have been eyeing this state-owned venture for a long time; there are some government cronies among them. They must be licking their chops. The sky is the limit for these elements, as evident from the manner in which the government reduced import duty on sugar to help one of its financiers make a killing at the expense of the state coffers, which suffered colossal losses amounting to billions of rupees, as a result. MONLAR (Movement for Land and Agricultural Reform), which is at the forefront of protecting farmers' rights, has warned of a sinister move to divest LPL in the long run. This warning should be taken seriously. The Opposition is not playing its cards well where the government's political woes are concerned. The SJB leaders do not seem to have read Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*, which says, among other things, "Never interrupt your enemy when he is making a mistake." They seem to be convinced otherwise; they have resorted to offensive action while their political enemies are clashing, and in so doing, they have only prompted the SLPP dissenters to make common cause. They have undertaken to move a no-faith motion against Minister Gammanpila, and unwittingly provided the government with a fresh rallying point.



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

editor@thestatesman.com

## The quintessential democrat

SIR, This is to compliment Jaydev Jana for the excellent article, "Gandhi and Democracy" (21 June).

There is no denying the fact that Gandhiji was a thorough democrat and a man of the people... He observed: "Individual freedom can have the fullest play only under a regime of unadulterated ahimsa."

According to him, the science of war is responsible for the various forms of dictatorship but the science of non-violence alone can lead one to pure democracy.

Democracy normally works when all countrymen take part in it and work from below. Gandhiji did not like the Western system of polity; he was dead against the mechanical outlook of Western political thinkers.

He maintained that India should not imitate Western political institutions with all their horrors of urban living, with their cut-throat competitive skirmishes and the uprooting of people from their environment.

To Gandhiji, western

democracy was nothing but "democratic oligarchy". Modern western industrialism, according to him, creates insatiable hunger for material goods. Voluntary limitation of wants and self-sufficiency of villages are essential for preservation of democracy.

As a matter of fact, modern Western democracy is based on a negation of the social nature of man and the true nature of human society.

According to him democratic institutions should

express and represent the living together of people rather than the abstracted individual.

Mahatma Gandhi looked upon the Western democratic system as a huge fraud. It has no ethical approach to man's spiritual advancement. It relies too much on the numerical strength of votes and voters."

The spirit of democracy, the true democratic ideal, according to him, are wholly absent in the Western system.

A democratic institution with four or five members, sincerely and selflessly representing the community as a whole, he opined, is much more democratic than one consisting of millions of members lacking a representative outlook.

Yours, etc., Narayan Chandra Ghosh, Madanpur, 23 June.

## RAISING FUNDS

SIR, The Government of India has expressed its inability before the Supreme Court to compensate the 400,000-odd bereaved families of Covid victims for want of funds. It has recently decided to pay some five million Central Government employees and another 6.5

## LAWYERS' WOES

SIR, Apropos your report 'Private sector employees seek to avail special train' (23 June), I would like to say that the order dated 15 May of the Government of West Bengal announcing lockdown-like restrictions in the state, the courts were and are supposed to remain operative.

But it's a matter of pity that learned advocates, especially junior advocates of different Courts, have been facing severe difficulty in performing their duties.

Similarly, thousands of employees of private establishments associated with telecom services, health care, electronic media and private security services have been facing enormous trouble in reaching their workplaces. They are not allowed to board the suburban staff specials trains.

No one bothers to listen to their pain and as a result thousands of them have lost their jobs. The State Government must pay heed to their needs.

Yours, etc., Ayan Basu, Advocate, High Court, Calcutta, 23 June.



million pensioners additional Dearness Allowance / Relief from 1 July @ 11 per cent but has withheld payment of arrears due from 1 January 2020. In other words, the arrears @ 4 per cent from January 2020 till 30 June 2021, and 3 per cent from July 2020 till 30 June 2021 have gone to the Consolidated Fund of India.

Even at a conservative estimate, it would amount to some Rs 15,000 crore assuming that serving employees are on an average drawing Rs 20,000 per month as Basic Pay and pensioners half that amount. This amount alone can give relief of about Rs 3 lakh each to the bereaved families of Covid victims. To mobilize further amounts, in this contractor regime ~ when even votes are garnered not by approaching voters during election but by engaging contractors ~ I think suitable qualified contractors may be engaged to raise money to provide relief to anyone who needs it.

Yours, etc., B Mondal, Kolkata, 23 June.

## Need to balance defence budgets'

**A**s rounds of disengagement talks between India and China continue with no apparent resolution and as China builds up its defence systems along the Line of Actual Control, former Chief of the Indian Army, **GENERAL SHANKAR ROYCHOWDHWARY** speaks to Soumyadip Mullick on how India needs to strengthen its manufacturing capabilities to take on China economically, while improving ties with neighbours such as Afghanistan and Bangladesh.

**Q. The India-China disengagement talks continue but even after several rounds there is no concrete solution. Can this impasse ever be ended since it is also costing us a lot in terms of the economy?**

A. This problem will never be solved. We must accept that border talks between India and China have been going on for about 20 years at least. We have had border clashes during this time. The first clash took place in 1962. When we take on China, we ought to remember that its strategic partner is Pakistan which puts us in a position of having to take on both these countries simultaneously.

**Q. What precisely are the ways to tackle China or at least mount pressure without going into a direct confrontation?**

A. Firstly, we need to economically compete with China which is difficult for us since our economy is in a bad shape. Unless we can turn our economy around and stop making India the dumping ground for Chinese products, this will never work. Secondly, this time, India managed to put behind the ghosts of 1962. We need to continue to maintain our position and a military front in Ladakh.

**Q. Do you feel a military approach is the need of the hour since diplomatic talks are proving to be futile?**

A. There definitely needs to be a military component but basically, it has to be through diplomatic talks and economic strategies. No country

would want continuous tension and conflict.

**Q. What should be our military strategy at present, especially in Ladakh to cope with the prevailing situation there?**

A. We need to maintain our military front in Ladakh. Presently, the centre of conflict in Ladakh is the Pangong Tso Lake. Our forces are re-equipping themselves with new weapons and what may be termed as an "inland navy". We are manufacturing inland water transport vessels that carry our troops through these water routes.

**Q. China recently said its military deployment in the Western sector along the border is a normal defensive arrangement. How rational is the claim?**

A. We clashed with China in the Galwan valley for the second time after 1962 and we held our ground there. Now, we are meeting China in the middle of Ladakh - the absolute centre. We need to maintain our positions here and build up strength which includes weapons and airpower.

**Q. Coming to weapons, what would you say are the present defence requirements of the Indian Army to counter a two-pronged attack from China and Pakistan?**

A. We need to spend the necessary resources to avail of modern age weapons and shape the defence budget accordingly. This is where 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' comes into play though it isn't anything new but a catchy phrase for what we knew as import substitution. We need to manufacture our weapons and adopt advanced technology as per our needs. The private sector here can play a crucial role but the government needs to ensure it doesn't turn into just a profit-oriented one. Their resources need to be tapped into.

**Q. The claim of tight defence budgets is not unheard of in India. Is it at all possible to match up to China in terms of technology and firepower in a short period?**

A. We need to balance our defence budgets. In our country,



defence can never get a lion's share of the budget so we must depend on Make in India to ensure whatever is spent comes back to the country. We have immense resources for manufacturing but we need to figure out ways to put them to the best use.

**Q. China has reportedly built upon their defence systems in Hotan and Nyingchi airbases along the Line of Actual Control. Do you feel it's an aggressive stance amid peace talks? This makes the efforts going into disengagement talks look redundant.**

A. We can't prevent China from deploying defence systems in Hotan airbase. It's their territory. In response, we can only build up

defences on our side to counter any possible attacks. For this, we too need advanced weapons. The DRDO has large resources which must be put into wise use. We already have the best troops in the world. They must be used efficiently.

**Q. We have heard before that the 1962 war was more of a political debacle than a military one. Is the prevailing conflict and impasse a sign of another political debacle?**

A. Our country has a new government but I believe whichever government comes to power should learn to take a firm stand in matters, such as border disputes. In 1962, we were too keen on peace. Peace is good since without it there is no development.

People don't want tension throughout. But in dealing with China, I reiterate that we must keep in mind we are also tackling simultaneous threats from Pakistan. This factor ought to be taken into consideration by every government.

**Q. Any scope of India and China ever sharing a sound bilateral relationship by ironing out the existing creases? If not, then what can our country do to corner China strategically?**

A. Which country does India have a bilateral relationship with? I fail to understand. It is high time we realise the importance of exploiting all opportunities, such as strengthening ties with Afghanistan and Bangladesh. We must put into use a combination of prudent diplomatic and economic relations.

**Q. How vulnerable is the North East as long as the border dispute continues between India and China? Should the government be concerned about the eastern part of the border where there has been infrastructure development on the Chinese side?**

A. The North-East is part of the same border. China considers Arunachal Pradesh as part of Southern Tibet. This has been their long-standing claim without any apparent alterations. These things need to be taken into consideration by the ruling governments when we are dealing with China.

**Q. Recently a BJP MP has stoked controversy with a demand for North Bengal, claiming it should become a Union Territory (UT), supposedly for better security purposes. Will making North Bengal a UT give any strategic advantage to the Indian government in terms of security?**

A. North Bengal in itself is of great strategic value. However, strictly speaking from a security point of view, the country must first ensure we have non-confrontational politics within our borders which is becoming rare. It is only after we have been able to secure that, we can manage exterior threats by building upon our defences in air, water and land.

### OCCASIONAL NOTE

The possession of the Rhine has been a disputed point among the nations for many centuries, and during the past hundred years it has formed a bone of contention between the French and the Germans. It now appears, from certain geological researches which have been carried out at and near Cromer on the Norfolk coast by Mr. Reid Moir, that the Rhine really belongs to Great Britain - to England, in fact. We have long admired the facility with which the geologist can reconstruct a plesiosaurus, a megatherium, or some other prehistoric horror, from a fossil considerably smaller than the jawbone of an ass. Mr. Moir carries this process still further, and, on the strength of a remarkable series of large flint implements discovered on the foreshore of Cromer, has reconstructed for us the entire landscape of the Norfolk valley in which Cromer reposed uncounted ages ago. He suggests that in those days there was no North Sea, and that the gigantic river beside which the flint artificers worked, played, and hunted, was simply an extension of the Rhine. This fact, if it is a fact, remote as it is, and it is probably extremely remote, may conceivably be found useful at the almost equally remote period when the French are invited to restore the left bank of the Rhine to their Teutonic rivals.

### NEWS ITEMS

### IMPROVING ASSAM'S COMMUNICATIONS

Tezpur, Je 25  
His Excellency Sir William Marrs arrived at Tezpur yesterday afternoon and motored to the Deputy Commissioner's kachery, where a joint address of welcome was presented by the Tezpur Municipality and the Local Board. In his reply the Governor said he was glad to hear that they laid stress on the necessity for cooperation between the people and their representatives and the officers of the Government. Such cooperation underlay the whole conception of the Reforms Scheme, and the necessity for it was never more marked than at present, when a mischievous agitation was on foot which must lead to the subversion of the law and settled Government under which alone was possible the epoch of progress and enlightenment for which they hoped.

### REPATRIATED TEA GARDEN COOLIES

Gorakhpur, Je 25  
Mr. C.F. Andrews came to Gorakhpur from Benares by the night train on Thursday and held a consultation on his arrival early on Friday morning with the local leaders. In the course of the day he saw both non-cooperators and cooperators and discussed with them Swami Darshananda's statement in the press with regard to the returned labourers from Assam, which some of those present characterised as a gross misrepresentation of the facts. Mr. Andrews received later in the day a statement from Srijit Bindabahini Prasad Verma, who was President of the District Congress Committee at the time of the exodus, and is now the Secretary. The total number received at Gorakhpur railway station and cared for by the local workers was 6,211.

### UPPER BURMA MURDER APPEALS

Rangoon, Je 25  
The Judicial Commissioner for Upper Burma has passed orders on the appeals of Moya and two others, who were sentenced by the Sessions Judge at Sagaya to transportation for life for complicity in the murder of Captain Crump in August last. The appeal of Po Mya, the actual murderer, who was sentenced to death was dismissed by the same court in January of this year. The Judicial Commissioner considered it unnecessary to pass to severe a sentence as transportation for life, and reduced it to ten years' rigorous imprisonment for each. He also commuted to ten years' transportation, the sentence passed on the actual murderer.

### TATA POWER WORKS SCHEME AT MULSHI

The details of the agreement between the Government and the Tata Company with regard to the proposed power works in Thenila Mula valley, near Mulshi, have now been settled. After signature the agreement will be published. The question of compensation for the land to be acquired has also been settled on the same lines as in the Andhra valley case. As regards the resettlement of the people, they have so far refused to consider the offer of land in exchange, but it will be several years before their own lands are actually submerged and in the interval they may change their minds. If suitable land is found it will be offered to the people as an alternative to money compensation.

## Nepal's equidistance policy unrealistic

LOK RAJ BARAL

immediate issues, Nepali politicians take opportunistic approaches that suit their immediate interests.

Second, Nepal's foreign policy as of today is based on ad hoc arrangements, often punctuated by hyper populism, not dictated by principles. Prime Minister KP Oli, who came to power on the crest of 'populist nationalism' after the Modi government imposed an unannounced blockade in 2015, has taken a U-turn following the alleged Chinese advice to compromise with his party detractors for retaining the unity of the Communist Party of Nepal. As Oli didn't like to secede from his combined role of prime minister and party president, he is believed to have changed the partner (China) for India for no plausible reason but to get the southern neighbour's support for rescuing him from the developing crises in the country.

His failure to manage his own party and the crisis of governance that has prevented him from delivering has added to his troubles. Oli's new religious proclivities and his other efforts to be closer to the present Indian establishment might be beneficial for the short run, but they would not address the issues affecting bilateral relations. Taking a cue from such developments, some senior former diplomats of India have cautioned the Modi government against putting all their eggs into the Oli basket as other forces opposed to him would be equally important for bilateral interests.

Third, Nepal's foreign policy today is an abandoned area as policy has been hijacked by the priority accorded to the selection of party workers to fill up diplomatic posts. Since communication is the desirable qualification for such posts, most new ambassadors appointed by Prime Minister Oli are not only novices but also lack minimum standards and knowledge of diplomacy. Language, respectability, acceptance of persons and confidence are the qualities of a diplomat. If an ambassador does not possess these qualities, how can we expect good performances in diplomatic assignments?

Diplomatic assignment in India is particularly challenging both diplomatically and personally. The stature of a diplomat is judged by his ability to communicate to as many constituencies as possible. And the recognition of his ability and the trust put in him matters a lot. My short tenure as ambassador in New Delhi has contributed to my knowledge of Nepal-India relations. The ambassador in India is not only a diplomatic representative in the classical sense of diplomacy, but he has many other roles to play. His personal contacts and the respect he commands in South Block and from other persons and institutions enables the ambassador to communicate, persuade and convince. The first thing needed to earn trust and confidence in Nepal's ambassador is his image as a friend of India who promotes his country's interests

without being prejudiced against Indian concerns.

Thus, diplomatic performance is part of the successful communication of foreign policy objectives and strategies needed to achieve them. Nepal's foreign policy suffers from ambivalence, ad hoc actions and lack of short- and long-term policies relating to the bilateral, regional and multinational aspects of relations. Internationally, Nepal is virtually isolated and ignored due to both domestic political bickering and lack of direction and vision. It is well demonstrated by the way Prime Minister Oli used the president to communicate with foreign heads of state for addressing the Covid-19 pandemic. Even Nepal's northern neighbour China seems to be irked by the Oli government's mishandling of the Covid vaccine deal.

Nepal has no stable policy based on well-defined objectives and strategies for achieving them. First, issues are taken to the street for mobilising public opinion which is fed by nationalist-populism and emotion. Thus, the sustained efforts needed to resolve problems fall prey to the immediate interest of leaders. KP Oli cashed in on India's suggestion to make an inclusive constitution that could accommodate the demands of Madhesia. Oli immediately turned into a thoroughbred nationalist and cajoled the Nepali people in the 2017 elections. Oli seems to be playing the Hindu card

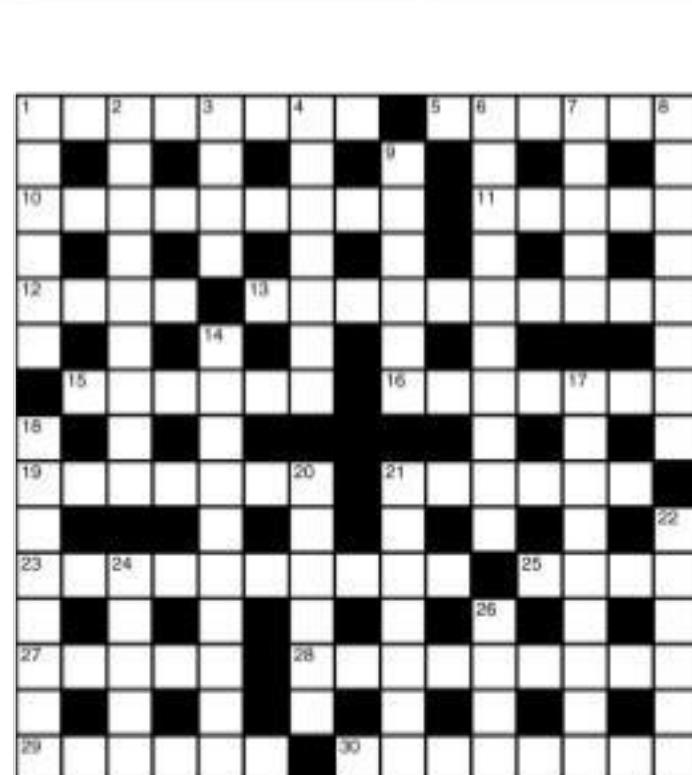
for electoral purposes. Some politicians and religious gurus were inducted by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government to persuade Nepali leaders to not include secularism in the new constitution.

This mission failed with Nepal adopting secularism, though a dubious version of it. Now Oli sends signals of his religious views that do not conflict with the BJP agenda taking him closer to the Indian objective. This has prompted the five former prime ministers of Nepal to raise the bogey of foreign interference, though they themselves play the same tune as played by Oli when they are in power.

Finally, the conventional approach to foreign affairs continues to influence Nepali politicians and rulers. So no reasonable pragmatic thinking based on the contours of geo-political realities guide the rulers. Nepal's relations with India demand a deeper and objective understanding to turn them into a cooperative relationship as the ties with India cannot be equated with those with any other country. The policy of equidistance between India and China, which is often repeated by no other persons than some foreign ministers of the country themselves, is not only unrealistic but also absurd. It is unfortunate that political leaders have failed to understand such a deep, wide-ranging relationship because they are always guided by immediate interests of their own rather than those of the country.

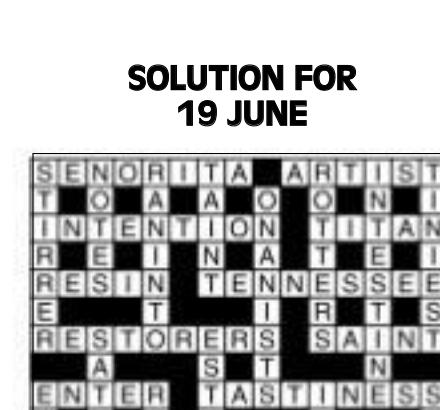
The writer is a former Nepalese Ambassador to India. The Kathmandu Post/ANN

### CROSSWORD



YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

SOLUTION FOR 19 JUNE



### ACROSS

- 1 All but the two of us will reject hot drink (4-4)
- 5 Where students will be affected: United States! (6)
- 10 Spain excluded from distribution of air miles, Libya likewise (9)
- 11 Queen of Hollywood, one providing light entertainment? (5)
- 12 Bird nesting in northern Europe (4)
- 13 Climbing out of bed after hot coarting with a new lady at last (2,3,3,2)
- 15 Relaxed about extra secure borders (2,4)
- 16 Anne Boleyn's deprived of any special honour (7)
- 19 Arsenal's no 1 policy: to keep current manager ultimately in Emirates? (7)
- 21 Cornwall's paradise for the country (6)

### DOWN

- 23 Endless confusion in European part of the world, here in the UK? (4,6)
- 25 In communication, 'secure language' (4)
- 27 Record company describes Simpson as an icon (5)
- 28/17 Sporting event having would-be scorer? (6,3,9)
- 29 He investigates lush type, heartless criminal (6)
- 30 Obsessive behaviour, say, to replace leader of country (8)
- 31 Old part of England being captivated by introduction of Windows 10 (6)
- 32 Al Martini composed something for The Office (9)
- 33 Ban EU travel until, finally, non-existent (4)
- 4 Good press extremely desirable for wine (4)

NO 28954

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



We are adding self-defense training to our onboarding process which will be mandatory for all women delivery partners to attend.

DEEPIINDER GOYAL  
ZOMATO FOUNDER

## THUMBNAILS

**MP manganese ore reserves:** State-owned MOIL on Friday said it has signed a pact with the Madhya Pradesh government and the Madhya Pradesh State Mining Corporation Ltd (MPSMCL) to explore the options of manganese ore mining in four districts of the state. The four districts of Madhya Pradesh are Balaghat, Jabalpur, Jhabua, and Chhindwara. MOIL said in a statement, MOIL has signed a tripartite MoU with the Government of MP and MPSMCL to explore the possibilities of manganese ore mining. PTI

**Sebi bans Equity Mania:** Sebi has barred Equity Mania Financial Advisory and its sole proprietor Ankit Goel from the securities markets for two years and asked them to refund the money collected from providing unauthorised investment tips to investors. The regulator noted that Equity Mania Financial Advisory and Goel have carried out investment advisory activities without obtaining a certificate of registration from the regulator. PTI

Govt exempts tax on Covid treatment

NEW DELHI, 25 JUNE

The government on Friday extended deadlines for various income tax compliances and said the amount paid by an employer to employees for Covid treatment would be tax exempt. Also, ex-gratia payment received from employer by family members in case of death of an employee due to Covid would be exempt. The income tax department, in a statement, said the payment deadline for Vivad Se Vishwas direct tax dispute resolution scheme has been extended by two months till 31 August.

Taxpayers can make payments till 31 Oct with additional amount of interest. The deadline for employers to furnish TDS certificate has also been extended. PTI

## PNB Housing Finance shareholders approve appointments, reappointments of directors

## PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, 25 JUNE

PNB Housing Finance shareholders have passed with requisite majority the resolutions regarding appointment of Hardayal Prasad as managing director and CEO and re-appointments of others on the company's board.

Among various passed resolutions were re-appointments of independent directors (IDs) Chandrasekaran Ramakrishnan and Niles S Vikamsey -- whose re-induction was red flagged by a proxy advisory firm earlier this month. The extraordinary general meeting of the company that took place on Tuesday (June 22) was called to seek shareholders' approval for allotting preference shares to US based Carlyle group led investment of Rs 4,000 crore in the company.

As the Rs 4,000 crore Carlyle deal has mired into a controversy and the matter has now reached the Securities Appellate Tribunal (SAT), the company has been restrained to announce the voting results about the preference issue pending disposal of the matter next month. The deal was announced on 31 May, subject to shareholders' and other regulatory approvals.

"The resolutions pursuant to item number 3 to 10 of EGM notice dated 31 May, 2021 have been passed with requisite majority," PNB Housing Finance said.

The item numbers 3 to 10 (resolutions) involved appointment of Prasad, Neeraj Madan Vyas as non-executive non-independent director, Sudarshan Sen as independent director, Kapil Modi as non-executive nominee director and Gita Nayyar as

independent director, as well as re-appointments of Vikamsey and Chandrasekaran -- all of which were passed with more than 99 per cent votes cast in favour of the resolutions. Prasad, a veteran banker with a long stint with SBI before joining PNB Housing Finance, was appointed for a period of three years with effect from 10 August, 2020 up to 9 August, 2023.

Further, the company said the results for item number 1 of EGM (related to preference shares issuance) will be declared as per order dated 21 June, 2021 of Securities Appellate Tribunal. Also, the results of the item number 2 of the EGM is related to item number 1 and in the spirit of order of SAT, the company will declare the results of item number 2 along with item number 1, PNB Housing Finance said.

## 'Clean tech next hypergrowth opportunity for Reliance'

## PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, 25 JUNE

Reliance Industries Ltd's focus on the next hypergrowth opportunities in clean tech and its path to decarbonisation has the potential to spur re-rating, raises clarity on investment cycles and reduces investor worry, brokerages said.

RIL Chairman Mukesh Ambani at the company's 'Green AGM' committed Rs 75,000 crore over the next three years to set up an integrated Green Energy Giga Complex across 5,000 acres in Jamnagar, Gujarat which will contain four giga factories. The complex, which would be one of the world's largest renewable manufacturing facilities, would have an integrated solar photovoltaic module factory, an energy storage battery factory, electrolyser manufacturing for

hydrogen production, and manufacturing of fuel cells so that hydrogen can be used in transportation.

Apart from the four gigafactories, RIL would invest in carbon fibre manufacturing, green fertilisers and green chemicals to support the hydrogen and solar ecosystem. RIL's all three core businesses oil-to-chemical (O2C), retail, and digital services -- have become self-sustaining and cash-generating.

Jefferies said unlike the three previous AGMs where the consumer businesses dominated, this year's annual general meeting (AGM) focused on RIL's renewable energy transition plan.

"The plan is essential in our view given that a significant portion of its conventional energy assets will approach end of life over the next two decades," it said.

## ONGC reports ₹6,734 cr net profit in Q4



## PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, 25 JUNE

State-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) reported a net profit of Rs 6,734 crore in the March quarter on the back of higher oil prices and exceptional income.

The firm had reported a net loss of Rs 3,214.41 crore in the January-March 2020 period, according to a company press statement.

In an investor call, ONGC Chairman and Managing Director Subhash Kumar said the company realised \$58.05 for every barrel of crude oil

produced and sold in January-March as compared to \$49.01 a barrel realisation a year back. Also, the company reversed impairment losses, recording an exceptional gain of Rs 2,613 crore in the quarter. This follows a reassessment of crude oil and natural gas prices, which have rebounded from lows hit last year. Based on the assessment, the company has recorded a net impairment reversal of Rs 2,613 crore for the January-March quarter and Rs 1,375 crore for the year to March 31, 2021, he said.

"The increase in net profit

in Q4 is mainly due to higher crude oil prices which were partly offset by historic low gas prices," he said.

Domestic gas price under the administered pricing mechanism - which are revised once every six months - was \$1.79 per million British thermal unit in the January-March quarter, down from \$3.23 a year back. Kumar said the disruption caused by the pandemic led to ONGC producing 3.5 per cent less crude oil in the year at 22.53 million tonnes.

For the current year, the company is targeting 22.56 million tonnes of crude oil production, almost unchanged from the previous year, he said.

"The shortfall in natural gas production is primarily due to less offtake by customers due to Covid-19 pandemic. This has resulted in a production shortfall of condensate and value-added products (VAP) as well," Kumar explained.

## Ashok Leyland reports over six-fold increase in PAT at ₹377 crore

## PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, 25 JUNE

Hinduja group flagship Ashok Leyland has posted more than a six-fold increase in consolidated profit after tax (PAT) at Rs 377 crore for the fourth quarter ended 31 March, 2021. The commercial vehicle major had reported a consolidated net profit of Rs 58 crore in the January-March quarter of 2019-20.

Consolidated revenues during the fourth quarter of the last fiscal stood at Rs 8,142 crore, as compared to Rs 5,088 crore in the same period a year ago. Ashok Leyland said in a late-night statement on Thursday.

For the entire 2020-21 fiscal, the company's consoli-

dated loss after tax stood at Rs 70 crore. The company had reported a PAT of Rs 460 crore in FY20. Full year consolidated revenue stood at Rs 19,454 crore, as against Rs 21,951 crore in 2019-20.

The challenges in the market due to Covid-19 impacted the volume and performance of the company and industry in the first half of FY 2020-21; however, the company and the industry saw healthy sequential recovery in the second half of FY 2020-21, post the gradual removal of the lockdown, the company said.

"We have seen recovery in the fourth quarter of FY 2021 and the overall performance has been better," Ashok Leyland MD & CEO Vipin Sondhi said.

# Sensex hits all-time high amidst firm global trend

Tata Steel was the top performer in the Sensex pack, rallying 4.65 percent

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MUMBAI, 25 JUNE



The BSE Sensex overcame a choppy start to finish at a fresh lifetime high on Friday, propelled by bank and metal stocks amid a bullish trend in overseas markets.

Global equities marched higher after US senators agreed on a bipartisan infrastructure deal, with investors wagering on more stimulus measures in the coming months.

Extending gains for the second session, the 30-share BSE benchmark closed 226.04 points or 0.43 per cent higher at record 52,925.04.

Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty advanced 69.90 points or 0.44 per cent to 15,860.35, less than 10 points shy of its all-time closing peak.

Tata Steel was the top performer in the Sensex pack, rallying 4.65 per cent, followed by Axis Bank, SBI, ICICI Bank, Maruti, Bajaj Finserv and L&T.

Index heavyweight Reliance Industries was the biggest loser for the second straight

day, tumbling 2.28 per cent.

NTPC, HUL, Titan, Asian Paints and Bajaj Auto were among the other laggards, dropping up to 1.69 per cent.

During the week, the Sensex advanced 580.59 points or 1.10 per cent, while the Nifty surged 177 points or 1.12 per cent.

"Domestic equities rose in today's session mirroring an upbeat mood in the global markets after US President Joe Biden embraced Senate infrastructure deal to help stimulate the economy. The overall mood in Wall Street was lifted since the US jobless claims ticked down as the

economy heals.

"On the domestic front, recovery was seen in banks and metal stocks following its consolidation during the past few days," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

Ajit Mishra, VP - Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said

benchmarks are hovering near record highs largely led by a gradual pickup in economic activities as states start unlocking, the expectation of better earnings and ramp-up of vaccination.

"On the flip side, the possibility of the third wave of Covid can impact market sen-

timents. We remain cautiously optimistic on the markets and suggest aligning the positions accordingly," he added.

Sector-wise, BSE metal, bankex, telecom, finance, capital goods, healthcare and industrials indices climbed as much as 2.79 per cent, while energy, oil and gas, utilities and FMCG closed with losses.

In the broader markets, the BSE midcap and smallcap indices rallied up to 1.03 per cent. Elsewhere in Asia, bourses in Shanghai, Hong Kong, Seoul and Tokyo ended with gains. Equities in Europe were trading on a mixed note in mid-session deals.

Meanwhile, international oil benchmark Brent crude was trading 0.44 per cent lower at \$75.23 per barrel.

The rupee weakened by 2 paise to end at 74.20 against the US dollar on Friday as elevated crude oil prices weighed on forex market sentiment.

Foreign institutional investors were net sellers in the capital market on Thursday as they offloaded shares worth Rs 2,890.94 crore, as per exchange data.

## Renewable energy sector gets \$70 billion investment in 7 years: Singh

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 25 JUNE

organised on the sidelines of the Ministerial Thematic Forums week (June 21-25) for the UN High Level Dialogue on Energy to be convened on September 20 this year.

India has been designated a Global Champion for Energy Transition, one of the five themes at the dialogue.

Singh said, "During the past seven years, over \$70 billion investment has been made in renewable energy across the country in the past seven years. This assumes significance in view of India's ambitious target of having 175 gigawatts of renewable energy by 2022."

Singh was addressing at an event on 'Accelerating Citizen Centric Energy Transition' yesterday evening, organised by The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy. It was conducted in collaboration with the Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations and the Council on Energy, Environment and Water.

The virtual event was

investments."

The minister also talked about the establishment of dedicated project development cells (PDC) and foreign direct investment (FDI) cells in all ministries for handling and facilitating domestic and foreign investors.

Adequate measures and safeguards have also been undertaken to address the concerns of businesses and investors arising out of the Covid-19 pandemic, Singh added. He launched a booklet on 'The India Story', a compilation of Indian initiatives that are shaping India's energy transition.

The minister said 'The India Story' booklet captures the essence of some of the flagships that have accelerated energy transition.

"These will continue to power our ambitious renewable energy programmes, with the end goal of ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all, while always keeping the citizen at the center of this transition," he added.

He also launched a website ([www.energytransition.in](http://www.energytransition.in)), which will act as a repository of energy transition related knowledge resources from around the world.

## 'Covid-19 to worsen indebtedness of states despite economic rebound'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 25 JUNE



S&P Global Ratings on Friday said the Covid pandemic could worsen structural deficits and indebtedness of states, despite a likely rebound in the economy over the next 12-24 months. S&P estimates revenues of states to increase by an average of 17 per cent annually over fiscals 2021-2023.

"The Covid-19 pandemic could worsen structural deficits and indebtedness of Indian state governments. India's stronger growth than peer countries has been a key factor underpinning the sustainability of states' fiscal performance," S&P said in a report titled 'Public Finance System Overview: Indian States'.

S&P Global Ratings had cut India's growth forecast for the current fiscal to 9.5 percent

from 11 per cent earlier. The agency lowered the growth outlook saying that a severe second Covid-19 outbreak in April and May led sharp contraction for states' fiscal framework and performance. A significant risk for the fiscal framework and performance of Indian states will be the Rs 3 trillion power sector reforms announced in FY2021-22 budget presented by the central government.

The agency believes the extraordinary support from the central government and the Reserve Bank of India will remain a key pillar for states' fiscal framework and performance. "A significant risk for the fiscal framework and performance of Indian states will be the Rs 3 trillion power sector reforms announced in FY2021-22 budget presented by the central government.

Upfront disclosure of the intention to delist the target company at the time of making an open offer by the acquirer concerned is among the key proposals, which are also aimed at balancing the interests of all investors in the process.

In a discussion paper, Sebi said the proposed framework should be made available only in the case of open offers under the Takeover Regulations for an incoming acquirer that is seeking to

## Sebi moots new framework for delisting cos post open offer by acquirers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 25 JUNE

Sebi on Friday proposed a new framework for delisting of equity shares of a company following an open offer as part of efforts to make merger and acquisition transactions for listed companies more rational.

Upfront disclosure of the intention to delist the target company at the time of making an open offer by the acquirer concerned is among the key proposals, which are also aimed at balancing the interests of all investors in the process.

In a discussion paper, Sebi said the proposed framework should be made available only in the case of open offers under the Takeover Regulations for an incoming acquirer that is seeking to

acquire sole or joint control of the target company.

A sub-group of Sebi's Primary Market Advisory Committee (PMAC) has made various recommendations regarding the delisting process for a company post an acquirer's open offer amid certain issues with respect to existing norms.

The recommendations of the sub-group mainly relate to the disclosure of intent to attempt delisting upfront,

delisting price and takeover price, shareholder and stock exchange approval and delisting attempt after the open offer, Sebi said.

If an open offer is triggered by an acquirer buying more than 49 per cent from a large exiting shareholder and/or through a fresh issue of shares (preferential allotment) by the listed company, then the acquirer's total shareholding might go up

# Odisha logs lowest daily Covid count in last 73 days

Test positivity rate declines below 5 per cent

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
BHUBANESWAR, 25 JUNE

**O**disha on Friday logged 2,912 fresh Covid cases, in a decline of 20 percent in the last 24 hours.

Forty fresh fatalities were also reported in the last 24 hours, pushing the state's death toll to 3,801, according to the Odisha COVID dashboard portal.

As many as 1,675 new cases were reported in quarantine centres, while the remaining 1,237 new infections were detected during contact tracing. The test positivity rate (TPR) on Friday slumped to 4.19 percent from 5.30 percent recorded yesterday, thus underlining the fact that over little over 4 people tested positive out of 100 samples in the last 24 hours.

Khordha district, of which the capital Bhubaneswar is a part, registered the highest 401 cases followed by Cuttack (382), Jajpur (292), Balasore (220), Mayurbhanj (174), Puri

**First Delta plus variant case in Odisha**

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
BHUBANESWAR, 25 JUNE

Odisha reported the first case of infectious Delta plus variant of SARS-COV-2 from Deogarh district.

But Deogarh district collector and Chief district medical officer said no such sample for testing had been sent to any laboratory. It may be possible that the person infected with the variant is living somewhere else and has given his address or nativity

(161), Nayagarh (140), Bhadrak (136), Jagatsinghpur (131) and Angul (119).

The highest fatalities at nine were reported from Khordha district, five each from Bargarh, Cuttack and Nayagarh districts, three from Angul. Two deaths were reported from Balasore, Bhadrak, Bolangir, Boudh, Puri and Sundargarh, one from Ganjam. Odisha now has 33,156

as Deogarh, said collector S M Samal.

The CDMO, Dr Manoj Upadhyaya concurred with the collector and said we have no information of any source of location of the person or his whereabouts.

People belonging to Deogarh are working in different places. There is no doubt that it is a case of one such person. Still we will try and trace the whereabouts of him and whether he had come to the district in recent days, said the

active cases. The state tested 69,480 samples on Thursday.

The recovery rate currently stands at 95.85 percent.

Meanwhile, the state government cancelled COVID-19 vaccination from state-produced stock in accordance with the revised guidelines issued by the centre.

The Additional Chief Secretary, Health, P K Mahapatra,

CDMO. At Bhubaneswar, the Director of Medical Education and Training, Prof C B K Mohanty said "Details of the person infected with Delta plus variant of COVID-19 are being investigated along the travel history. Contact tracing of the infected person would be carried out thoroughly."

The initial report of the person infected with the variant led to panic in Deogarh prompting the district authorities to issue clarifications.

tra wrote to the district collectors and municipal commissioners asking them to stop supply of vaccines to private hospitals and withdraw the available stock.

In another COVID-related development, the State government constituted technical sub-committees to study the rate of infection and severity of COVID-19 among the vaccinated people.

With the state achieving success in malaria eradication initiative, Odisha's Model

# Odisha malaria eradication model rated best by WHO

90 per cent infections reduction in three years

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
BHUBANESWAR, 25 JUNE

Odisha has recorded a 90 percent drop in malaria positive cases besides rapid reduction in positivity rate. The World Health Organization (WHO) has recognized the Odisha Model as a best practice in World Malaria Report of 2020, said senior officials of the state health and family welfare department on Friday.

"There has been a 90 percent reduction in the number of positive cases over the last three years from 2016.

The reduction rate of malaria infection in Odisha between 2018 and 2019 has been 40 percent against the national average of 17 percent during the same period. It has been made possible by sustained and well-orchestrated endeavour of health personnel", said Director Public Health Niranjan Mishra.

In a bid to eradicate malaria, the Odisha government had launched Durgama



**World Health Organization**

has been documented by WHO as a Best Practice. The WHO recognition has brought glory to the state in the malarial control initiative, he said.

There were around 4.4 lakh malaria positive cases and 77 deaths in 2016 which got reduced to 39,556 positive cases and 9 deaths in 2019. Similarly there was a reduction in positivity rate during the year 2020 with 09 deaths. The annual parasite index (API) was less than one in eight districts in 2016. With improvement in the situation, the API index became less than one in 23 districts.

The malaria prone area has been reduced to 31 community health center (CHC) areas out of the total 374 CHC areas. Still there is the need for proactive surveillance and preventive activities, said Chief Secretary Suresh Chandra Mahapatra, while reviewing the malaria situation on Friday.

Ancillary Malaria Nirakarma (DAMaN) and the successful implementation of the programme had yielded success. A total number of 16,088 malaria eradication camps were held in different parts of the state in between 2018-2020.

Around 2.8 crore of population were protected with distribution of 1.57 crore long-lasting insecticidal mosquito nets (LLIN) received from the central ministry. At least 48,455 ASHAs were trained and engaged in diagnosis and management of malarial cases. Special eradication projects were run in four OMBADC districts namely Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Sundargarh and Jajpur.

The malaria prone area has been reduced to 31 community health center (CHC) areas out of the total 374 CHC areas. Still there is the need for proactive surveillance and preventive activities, said Chief Secretary Suresh Chandra Mahapatra, while reviewing the malaria situation on Friday.

Man held for impregnating visually impaired girl

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
BALASORE, 25 JUNE

The Balasore Industrial police arrested a 50-year-old man on charges of exploiting a 19-year-old visually impaired girl and impregnating her.

The accused has been identified as Rabinarayan Singh. According to the IIC of Industrial police station Minati Biswal since the accused happened to be the distant relative of the victim he used to visit her house frequently. He had established a physical relationship with her with the assurance of marriage.

The girl was six months pregnant.

The parents of the victim lodged an FIR.

## Water from Deo irrigation project after 29 years

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
BARIPADA, 25 JUNE

The farmers of Hatibari along with its adjoining villages in Karanjia Sub-division of Mayurbhanj district and of some villages in Keonjhar district were excited as water from the multi-purpose Deo Irrigation project was released on trial basis for the first time today after 29 years.

The foundation stone for the project project in Hatibari was laid in June 1992 and was estimated to cost Rs 52 cr. Costs went up to Rs 900 crore as it got delayed due to land and compensation related issues.

The district administration has released water for the first time from the right canal of the project. Release of water on the left canal will follow, said Mayurbhanj Collector Vineet Bhardwaj.

## Record breaking Matric results in Odisha

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
BHUBANESWAR, 25 JUNE



The girls outshone boys in this year's 10th standard annual Board of Secondary Education (BSE) or matric examination, the results of which were announced on Friday.

There was a record 97.89 percent of students who passed the examination based on the special evaluation and assessment method as examination was cancelled due to the pandemic.

The students were awarded marks based on their performances in the Class IX and pre-board examinations and/or Class 9 marks.

While as many as 5,74,125 regular students from 8,934 schools across the State had filled the form and a total of 5,62,010 students have passed. Last year the examination was concluded before the enforcement of Covid-induced lockdown and 78.76% pass

## Less than 10 per cent post vaccine Covid cases required hospitalization: RMRC

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
BHUBANESWAR, 25 JUNE

A initial study of fully vaccinated people in Odisha contracting coronavirus a fortnight after receiving the second dose showed that less than 10 per cent of such patients required hospitalization.

Of the 274 cases, 83.2% of the fully vaccinated people were found to be symptomatic but not such critical condition emerged for them. Only 9.9 per cent of patients required hospitalization and one death had occurred, according to a study by Regional Medical Research Center (RMRC)-Bhubaneswar.

"We recorded the vaccine breakthrough cases of Covaxin and Covishield through passive and voluntary reporting at various healthcare facilities of Odisha,"

stated the study.

It is anticipated that even with administration of effective authorized vaccines, breakthrough cases are expected to happen, till the immunity reaches sufficient levels among the population to further decrease transmission.

There was no significant difference between the antibody level in terms of gender, occupation, hospitalisation, and symptom status.

The most common symptoms found were fever (88.5%) followed by cough (77.6%) and sore throat (59.6%). Comorbidities such as diabetes, hypertension, hypothyroidism and asthma were present in about 64 (23.3%) of fully vaccinated people, the study said.

Although several studies have demonstrated that

SARS-CoV-2 infection in the vaccinated individuals present clinically mild symptoms, it is critical to determine whether severe symptoms can arise in others despite vaccination, as development of variants is a continuous process, the study pointed out.

In the present study, we attempted to record the breakthrough cases reported through passive and voluntary reporting at various healthcare facilities from different districts of Odisha, their clinical presentation, requirement of hospitalization post infection and antibody titer against spike antigen, RMRC officials stated.

Such studies will continue as it will also show the efficacy of vaccines, creation of anti-bodies and for how long the anti-bodies remain.

## Enhanced 122mm caliber rocket testfired

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
BALASORE, 25 JUNE

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) successfully testfired enhanced range versions of indigenously developed 122mm Caliber Rocket from a Multi-Barrel Rocket Launcher (MBRL) on Friday at the Integrated Test Range (ITR), Chandipur off the coast of Odisha.

Four enhanced range versions of 122mm rockets were test fired with full instrumentation and they met the mission objectives. These rockets have been developed for Army applications and can destroy targets up to 40 km, said a release issued by the DRDO.

All the flight articles were tracked by range instruments, including Telemetry, Radar and Electro Optical Tracking System deployed by ITR and Proofand Experimental Estab-



lishment (PXE).

The rocket systems have been developed jointly by Pune-based Armament Research and Development Establishment (ARDE) and High Energy Materials Research Laboratory (HEMLR) with manufacturing support from M/s Economic Explosives Limited, Nagpur.

This enhanced rocket system would replace the existing 122mm Grad rockets.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh congratulated DRDO and the industry on the successful launch of 122mm Caliber Rocket.

Secretary, Department of Defence R&D and Chairman DRDO Dr G Satheesh Reddy commended the efforts of the teams involved in successful trials.

## Bhubaneswar wins India Smart City Awards contest

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
BHUBANESWAR, 25 JUNE

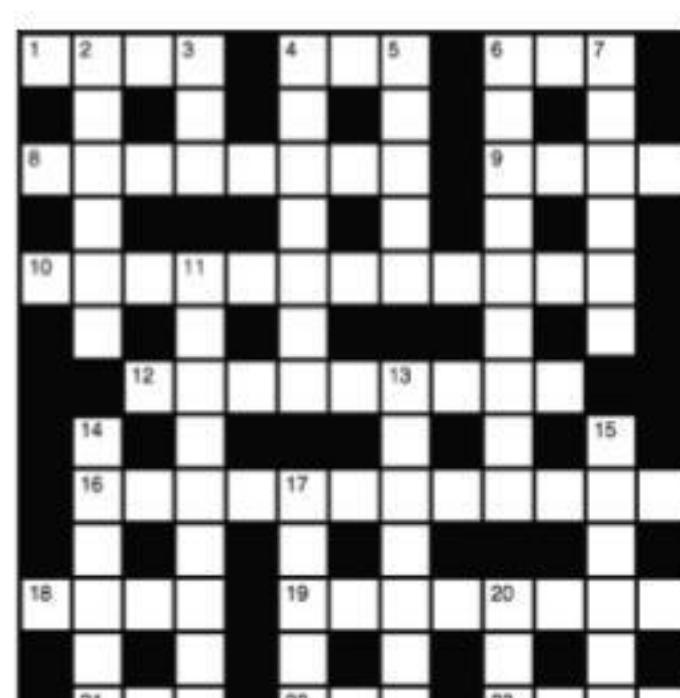


Bhubaneswar, Odisha's largest urban conglomerate and the capital city, on Friday bagged two more awards in the India Smart City Awards Contest (IASC) by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) during the Sixth Anniversary Celebration of Smart City Mission, AMRUT and PMAY (Urban).

The awards, referred to as IASC-2020 in official parlance, were declared this afternoon by MoHUA in New Delhi in which all 100 Smart Cities participated.

### LEISURE

#### 10 MINUTE CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1 Stiff brim (4)
- 2 Call forth (6)
- 3 Beast of burden (3)
- 4 Eternal (7)
- 5 Languid (8)
- 6 Assistant (8)
- 7 Hand part (6,6)
- 8 Large ape (5-4)
- 9 Prone (9)
- 10 The best (6,2,4)
- 11 Sound system (2-2)
- 12 Marsupial (8)
- 13 Granny (3)
- 14 Owning (3)
- 15 Quarry (4)
- 16 Comical, 17 Quite, 18 Meant, 19 Curved, 20 Epée, 21 Ado.
- 22 Grimace, 23 Cope, 24 Cape, 25 Archipelago, 26 Asado.

DOWN

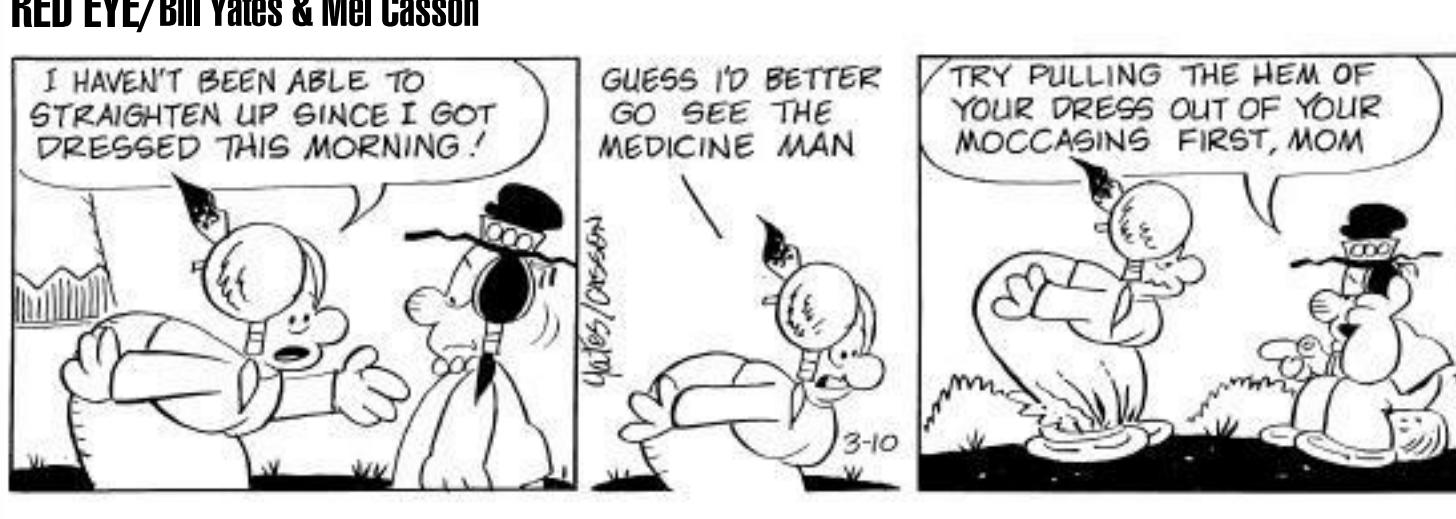
- 1 Call forth (6)
- 2 Equipment (3)
- 3 Be in debt (3)
- 4 Eternal (7)
- 5 Japanese food (5)
- 6 Large ape (5-4)
- 7 Last (6)
- 8 Large (5)
- 9 Entourage (9)
- 10 Allot (6)
- 11 Have a brief light sleep (6)
- 12 Precipitous, 13 Histogram, 14 Tequila, 15 Echo, 16 Curve, 17 Epée, 18 Meant, 19 Curved, 20 Epée, 21 Ado.
- 22 Grimace, 23 Cope, 24 Cape, 25 Archipelago, 26 Asado.

SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD

#### BEETLE BAILEY/Mort Walker



#### RED EYE/Bill Yates & Mel Casson



#### DADDY DAZE/John Kovaleski



## YouTube classes flop due to low internet penetration, affordability of smart phones

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KORAPUT, 25 JUNE

Text books have not reached

school children in several parts of rural Koraput. Internet connectivity is not available. The students are deprived of the online classes introduced by the government since last year and continue to be deprived even as the government has switched to lessons on YouTube.

Students like Payal Majhi of Machkund said that for the lack of internet facility they had to go to their school to use WiFi of their school's broadband.

But several others in different villages do not have the option that Payal has at Machkund.

People have approached the district collector to intervene and ensure net connectivity for the YouTube classes.

Last year, the state government admitted that large sec-

tion of children were deprived of online classes due to internet and android phone related issues. But nothing was done to resolve the problem.

This year again YouTube lessons have been introduced while the same problems of accessibility to internet and

affordability to own smart phone remains.

The situation is the same in several parts of the state. A report from Dhenkanal said that several students were unable to avail the lessons on YouTube.

The Dhenkanal district education officer Nibedita Panigrahi said on an average 29 percent of students are responding online class [ both primary and elementary], 39 percent of class IX while 44 percent class X students are attending. She admitted most of the parents do



*There's almost no idea more un-American than the notion that any one person could choose the American President. The presidency belongs to the American people*

**FORMER VICE PRESIDENT MIKE PENCE**

DEFENDING HIS ROLE IN CERTIFYING THE RESULTS OF THE 2020 ELECTION

## WEATHER

CITY	MAX (°C)	MIN (°C)
SINGAPORE	31	26 R
HONG KONG	31	28 H
TOKYO	28	19 CL
LONDON	28	14 S
DUBAI	38	30 S
SAN FRANCISCO	19	12 H
NEW YORK	22	18 R
MOSCOW	26	16 R

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

## THUMBNAILS



President Joe Biden greets members of the audience after speaking during a visit to a mobile Covid-19 vaccination unit at the Green Road Community Center at Raleigh on Thursday.

## Biden extols bipartisan infrastructure deal as a good start

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
WASHINGTON, 25 JUNE

President Joe Biden has announced a hard-earned bipartisan agreement on a pared-down infrastructure plan that would make a start on his top legislative priority and validate his efforts to reach across the political aisle. But he openly acknowledged on Thursday that Democrats will likely have to tackle much of the rest on their own.

The Bill's price tag at \$973 billion over five years, or \$1.2 trillion over eight years, is a scaled-back but still significant piece of Biden's broader proposals. It includes more than a half-trillion dollars in new spending and could open the door to the President's more sweeping \$4 trillion proposals for child care and what the White House calls human infrastructure later on.

That's not the way to show you're serious about getting a bipartisan outcome, McConnell said.

And there is plenty of skepticism on Biden's own left flank. Democratic Sen. Richard Blumenthal of Connecticut said the bipartisan agreement is way too small, paltry, pathetic. I need a clear, iron-clad assurance that there will be a really adequate robust package that will follow.

The President stressed that neither side got everything they wanted in this deal; that's what it means to compromise, and said that other White House priorities would be taken on separately in a congressional budget process known as reconciliation, which allows for majority passage without the need for Republican votes.

He insisted that the two items would be done in tandem and that he would not sign the bipartisan deal without the other, bigger piece. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and progressive members of Congress declared they would hold to the same approach.

There ain't going to be a bipartisan Bill without a reconciliation Bill, Pelosi said.

Claiming a major victory five months into his presidency, Biden said, This reminds me of the days when

The investments include \$109 billion on roads and highways and \$15 billion on electric vehicle infrastructure and transit systems as part of \$312 billion in transportation spending. There's \$65 billion toward broadband and expenditures on drinking water systems and \$47 billion in resiliency efforts to tackle climate change.

The EU is concerned that Putin is turning increasingly authoritarian and wants to distance himself from the West. Both EU and NATO military alliances are struggling to bring Russia to the table. Joe Biden's meeting with Putin this month was a rare exception.

We have to deal with Russia, but being very cautious about the real intentions of Putin's regime, Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda told at an EU summit in Brussels. So far, we don't see any radical change in the pattern of behavior of Russia.

In a statement EU leaders said only that they will explore formats and conditionalities of dialogue with Russia. There was no mention of any high-level meetings or plans for a summit with Putin.

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
BRUSSELS, 25 JUNE

## EU members bordering Russia reject plan to meet with Putin

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
BRUSSELS, 25 JUNE

European Union countries bordering Russia rejected a Franco-German plan to resume official meetings with Russian President Vladimir Putin, with one leader likening the move to an attempt to talk a bear out of stealing honey.

In a statement EU leaders said only that they will explore formats and conditionalities of dialogue with Russia. There was no mention of any high-level meetings or plans for a summit with Putin.

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
MINNEAPOLIS, 25 JUNE

Former Minneapolis police Officer Derek Chauvin learns his sentence Friday for murder in George Floyd's death, closing a chapter in a case that sparked global outrage and a reckoning on racial disparities in America.

Chauvin, 45, faces decades in prison, with several legal experts predicting a sentence of 20 to 25 years.

Though Chauvin is widely expected to appeal, he also still faces trial on federal civil rights charges, along with three other fired officers.

The concrete barricades, razor wire and National Guard patrols that shrouded the county courthouse for Chauvin's three-week trial are gone, and so is most of the tension in the city as it awaits a verdict in April.

Still, there's a recognition that Chauvin's sentencing will be another major step forward for a city that has been on edge since Floyd's death.

Between the incident, the video, the riots, the trial is the pinnacle of it, Mike Brandt, a local defense attorney who has closely followed Chauvin's case, said.

AP

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
WASHINGTON, 25 JUNE

Kamala Harris faces perhaps the most politically challenging moment of her vice presidency on Friday when she heads to the US southern border as part of her role leading the Biden administration's response to a steep increase in migration.

While in El Paso, Texas, she will tour a Customs and Border Patrol processing center, hold a conversation with advocates from faith-based

organizations as well as shelter and legal service providers and deliver remarks.

The vice president has faced months of criticism from members of both parties for declining to make the trip thus far and for her muddled explanations as to why.

Republicans have seized on the absence of both Harris and President Joe Biden from the border to paint the administration as weak on border security, seeking to revive a potent political weapon against Democrats in time for the

2022 midterm elections.

With former President Donald Trump visiting the area less than a week after Harris, Republicans will be watching

the vice president's visit closely for fodder for further attacks. While various administration officials have made multiple visits to the border, the absence of Biden and Harris has left some Democrats worried that damage already has been done.

The administration is making Democrats look weak, said Texas Democratic Rep. Henry Cuellar in an interview with The Associated Press. I've heard, from Democrats and Republicans in my area, what the heck is going

on with this administration?

Cuellar's district spans from south of San Antonio to the US-Mexico border, and last year he won reelection by the slimmest margin of his nearly two-decade-long career. While he says he's not worried about his own reelection fight, he adds, I worry about my colleagues. Cuellar's comments reflect a broader concern among some Democrats and immigration activists that the Biden administration has ceded the border security debate to Republicans.

AP

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
WASHINGTON, 25 JUNE

be dependent on their parent's visas. A significantly large number of these parents are in a decades-long wait for a Green Card.

A Green Card, known officially as a Permanent Resident Card, is a document issued to immigrants to the US as evidence that the bearer has been granted the privilege of residing permanently in the US.

The young Indians, led by Dip Patel, a clinical pharmacist in Illinois, surprised many of the congressmen and senators, who greeted them at the Capitol last week, as they were probably the first batch of lobbyists at the US Congress,

after the recent lifting of social distancing restrictions by the Center for Diseases Control and Prevention (CDC).

Patel, 25, is founder of Improve The Dream, a youth-led organization bringing awareness for children who face

ageing out and self-deportation, was joined by Pareen Mhatre, 21, a senior at the University of Iowa majoring in Biomedical Engineering and minoring in Business Administration; Naga Raghu Sreenivasan, 21, a senior at the University

of California, Davis majoring in Computer Science.

Lakshmi Parvathinathan, 18, a sophomore at Drexel University majoring in Biological Sciences; Sarvani Kunapareddy, 21, a rising freshman at the University

of Illinois at

AP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
WASHINGTON, 25 JUNE

A group of Indian youngsters from across America, facing imminent prospects of deportation, has met senior Biden administration officials at the White House and influential lawmakers, appealing them to let us stay in the US.

There are 2,00,000 such young Americans, who have spent their entire childhood and teenage in the US, who are facing the prospects of imminent deportation to the country of their origin as they have either attained the age of 21 or about to reach that age, after which they can no longer

AP

FACING DEPORTATION, Indian youngsters across America reach out to White House

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
WASHINGTON, 25 JUNE

be dependent on their parent's visas. A significantly large number of these parents are in a decades-long wait for a Green Card.

A Green Card, known officially as a Permanent Resident Card, is a document issued to immigrants to the US as evidence that the bearer has been granted the privilege of residing permanently in the US.

The young Indians, led by Dip Patel, a clinical pharmacist in Illinois, surprised many of the congressmen and senators, who greeted them at the Capitol last week, as they were probably the first batch of lobbyists at the US Congress,

after the recent lifting of social distancing restrictions by the Center for Diseases Control and Prevention (CDC).

Patel, 25, is founder of Improve The Dream, a youth-led organization bringing awareness for children who face

ageing out and self-deportation, was joined by Pareen Mhatre, 21, a senior at the University of Iowa majoring in Biomedical Engineering and minoring in Business Administration; Naga Raghu Sreenivasan, 21, a senior at the University

of California, Davis majoring in Computer Science.

Lakshmi Parvathinathan, 18, a sophomore at Drexel University majoring in Biological Sciences; Sarvani Kunapareddy, 21, a rising freshman at the University

of Illinois at

AP

AP

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
WASHINGON, 25 JUNE

There's almost no idea more un-American than the notion that any one person could choose the American President. The presidency belongs to the American people

AP

FORMER VICE PRESIDENT MIKE PENCE

DEFENDING HIS ROLE IN CERTIFYING THE RESULTS OF THE 2020 ELECTION

## Florida building collapse: 159 people still unaccounted for

Death toll in the building collapse rises to four, firefighters working overnight to rescue people

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
SURFSIDE (FL), 25 JUNE

About 160 people were still unaccounted for Friday a day after an oceanside condominium building collapsed into a pile of rubble, and searchers combing through a twisted, shifting pile of concrete and metal feared the death toll of at least four could go much higher.

With scores of firefighters working overnight to reach any possible survivors both from under and atop the remains of the building, hopes rested on how quickly crews using dogs and microphones to sift through the wreckage could complete their grim, yet delicate task. Every time we hear a sound, we concentrate on those areas, said Assistant Miami-Dade Fire Chief Raide Jadallah. Three more bodies were removed overnight, and Miami-Dade Police Director Freddy Ramirez said authorities were working with the

medical examiner's office to identify the victims. Eleven injuries were reported, with four people treated at hospitals.

Miami-Dade Mayor Daniel Levine Cava said rescuers were at extreme risk going through the rubble. Debris is falling on them as they do their work. We have structural engineers on site to ensure that they will not be injured, but they are proceeding because they are so motivated and they are taking extra ordinary risk on the site every day, she said.

With searchers using saws and jackhammers to look for pockets large enough to hold a person, Levine Cava said there was still hope of finding people alive. The missing at what was left of the 12-story Champlain Towers South included people from around the world: A beloved retired Miami-area teacher and his wife. Orthodox Jews from Russia. Israelis. The sister of Paraguay's first lady. Others from South America.

State Sen. Jason Pizzo of Miami Beach told the Miami Herald he watched as tactical teams of six worked early Friday to sift through the debris. He said he saw one body taken in a yellow body bag and another that was marked. They were taken to a homicide unit tent that was set up on the beach. Many people remained at the reunification center set up near the collapse site early Friday morning, awaiting results of DNA swabs that could help identify victims. Officials said no cause for the collapse has

been determined. Video of the collapse showed the center of the building appearing to tumble down first and a section nearest to the ocean teetering and coming down seconds later, as a huge dust cloud swallowed the neighbourhood.

About half the building's roughly 130 units were affected, and rescuers pulled at least 35 people from the wreckage in the first hours after the collapse. But with 159 still unaccounted for, work could go on for days. Television video early Fri-

day showed crews still fighting flares of fires on the rubble piles. Intermittent rain over South Florida is also hampering the search.

Jadallah said that while listening devices placed on and in the wreckage had picked up no voices, they had detected possible banging noises, giving rescuers hope some are alive. Rescuers were tunneling into the wreckage from below, going through the building's underground parking garage. Personal belongings were evidence of shattered lives amid the wreckage of the Champlain, which was built in 1981 in Surfside, a small suburb north of Miami Beach. A children's bunk bed perched precariously on a top floor, bent but intact and apparently inches from falling into the rubble. A comforter lay on the edge of a lower floor. Televisions. Computers. Chairs.

Israeli media said the country's consul general, Maor Elbaz, believes that 20 citizens of that country are missing. Israeli media said the country's consul general, Maor Elbaz, believes that 20 citizens of that country are missing.

## UK health minister admits virus rules breach with embrace

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
LONDON, 25 JUNE

Britain's health minister apologized on Friday for breaching national restrictions after a newspaper ran pictures of him embracing a woman with whom he allegedly had an affair.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock, who has led the country's response to the pandemic, is the latest in a string of government officials to be accused of breaching restrictions imposed on the rest of the population to curb the spread of Covid-19.

The tabloid Sun newspaper ran images appearing to show the married Hancock and a senior aide embracing

in an office at the Department of Health. It said the closed circuit television images were taken on 6 May, 11 days before lockdown rules were eased to allow hugs and other physical contact.

Hancock said in a statement, I accept that I breached the social distancing guidance in these circumstances. I have let people down and am very sorry, he said. I remain focused on working to get the country out of this pandemic, and would be grateful for privacy for my family on this personal matter.

PM Boris Johnson stood by Hancock, but the main opposition Labour Party said he should be fired for breaking social distancing and, potentially, government hiring rules.

If Matt Hancock has been secretly having a relationship with an adviser in his office who he personally appointed to a taxpayer-funded role it is a blatant abuse of power and a clear conflict of interest, said Labour chairwoman Anneliese Dodds.

His position is hopelessly untenable. Boris Johnson should sack him. Johnson spokesman Jamie Davies said the prime minister had full confidence in Hancock.

The PM has accepted the health secretary's apology and considers the matter closed, he said. He and the rest of the government remain focused on continuing to tackle the pandemic.

## EU greenlights major funding plan for refugees in Turkey

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
BRUSSELS, 25 JUNE

European Union leaders greenlighted plans on Friday to give Turkey another 3 billion euros (USD 3.6 billion) over the next few years to provide fresh assistance to Syrian refugees on its territory and to help the country boost border controls.



We will continue to consult with our allies to convince, to talk, to share information and insights.

ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER NAFTALI BENNETT  
ON PREVENTING IRAN FROM ACHIEVING NUCLEAR WEAPONS

The Statesman  
NEW DELHI, SATURDAY 26 JUNE 2021

11

## THUMBNAILS



A Hindu devotee has his nasal swab sample collected by a medical worker to be checked for coronavirus before he takes part in the upcoming Yadnya Kasada festival, at Luhur Poten Temple, near Mount Bromo, Probolinggo, Indonesia, on Friday. AP

**Indonesian cleric jailed for fake Covid status:** An Indonesian court has sentenced a controversial cleric to four years in jail for not supporting the government's efforts to handle the Covid-19 pandemic and lying on his positive status. IANS

**China's migrating elephants head further south:** The herd of 14 wandering wild Asian elephants in southwest China's Yunnan province has headed further south towards Eshan county, authorities said. They travelled 23 km south between 6 pm on Wednesday and the same time on Thursday. IANS

**Transport services connecting Dhaka suspended:** The Bangladesh government has suspended transportation services linking capital Dhaka to the other parts of the country in a further effort to contain the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic. All trains to and from the capital city have been suspended from 12 am on Wednesday. IANS

**Attack on troops on UN mission in Mali:** Fifteen UN peacekeepers were injured when a temporary operational base in Mali was targeted with a vehicle bomb, the UN mission in Mali, MINUSMA, said on Friday. The incident occurred near the village of Ichagara in the region of Gao. Their evacuation is underway. AP

**Fire kills 18 at China martial arts school**

BEIJING, 25 JUNE

At least 18 people, mostly children, were killed and 16 others injured when a deadly fire ripped through a boarding martial arts school in China's Henan province in the early hours of Friday.

The children, aged between seven and 16, were asleep on the first floor when the blaze broke out at the Zhenxing Martial Arts Centre.

A total of 34 students were enrolled at the boarding school in Shuangqiu county's Zhecheng county.

Four people were severely injured and 12 sustained minor wounds in the fire.

An eyewitness said he heard the children screaming for help. AP

# Taliban gains drive Afghanistan govt to arm local volunteers

Recently, the Taliban have made quick gains in Afghanistan's north, overrunning multiple districts

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
KOH DAMAN, 25 JUNE

**F**or two days the fighting was blistering. Rockets and heavy machine gun fire pounded Imam Sahib, a key district on Afghanistan's northern border with Tajikistan.

When the explosions died down and Syed Akram finally emerged from his home earlier this week, three of his neighbour's children had been killed, and a tank was burning on a nearby street corner. Several shops and a petrol station were still smouldering. In the streets, the Taliban were in control.

There were maybe 300 of them, he said. That had been plenty to overwhelm the government troops defending the town, who had numbered fewer than 100. Akram saw several bodies of Afghanistan's minority ethnic groups, who aided the US-led invasion that drove the Taliban from power nearly 20 years ago and have been part of the ruling leadership since.

With the recent gains, Tal-

iban now control the main border crossing with Tajikistan, a main trade route. They also hold the strategic district of Doshi, critical because the one road linking Kabul to northern Afghanistan runs through it.

As a result, a worried government this week launched what it called National Mobilization, arming local volunteers. Observers say the move only respects militias that will be loyal to local commanders or powerful Kabul-allied warlords, who wrecked the Afghan capital during the inter-factional fighting of the 1990s and killed thousands of civilians.

New recruits in the security forces get 12,000 Afgha-

nis a month, about \$152, with higher ranks getting the equivalent of about \$380. As the districts fell, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani swept through his Defense and Interior Ministries, appointing new senior leadership, including reinstating Bismillah Khan as defense minister. Khan was previously

removed for corruption, and his militias have been criticised for summary killings. They were also deeply involved in the brutal civil war that led to the Taliban's takeover in 1996. Officials and observers say many across the country have allegiance to neither side and are deeply disillusioned by corruption.

Pakistan stays in 'grey list', told to target senior terror leaders

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
WASHINGTON, 25 JUNE

US to keep about 650 troops in Afghanistan after withdrawal

security, as a temporary move until a more formal Turkey-led security operation is in place, the officials said Thursday. Overall, officials said the US expects to have American and coalition military command, its leadership and most troops out by July Fourth, or shortly after that, meeting an aspirational deadline that commanders developed months ago.

The officials were not authorized to discuss details of the withdrawal and spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity.

FATF president Marcus Pleyer said the decision has been taken at the conclusion of the virtual plenary of the Paris-based organisation.

Addressing a virtual press conference, Pleyer said the Pakistan government has failed to check risk of money laundering, leading to corruption and terror financing.

Pakistan will continue to remain on "increased monitoring list", the FATF president said. "Increased monitoring list" is also known as the 'grey list'.

Noting that Pakistan has now completed 26 of the 27 action items given to it in 2018, Pleyer said the FATF has asked Pakistan to take action against UN designated terrorists.

"The FATF encourages Pakistan to continue to make progress to address as soon as possible the one remaining

item by demonstrating that Terror Financing (TF) investigations and prosecutions target senior leaders and commanders of UN designated terrorist groups," an FATF statement said.

The US designated terrorists based in Pakistan include Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) chief Azhar, Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) founder Saeed Lakhvi.

Azhar, Saeed and Lakhvi are most wanted terrorists in India for their involvement in numerous terrorist acts, including 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks and bombing of a CRPF bus in Jammu and

Kashmir's Pulwama district in 2019.

The FATF said Pakistan should continue to work to address its strategically-important deficiencies by enhancing international cooperation by amending its anti-money laundering law and demonstrating that assistance is being sought from foreign countries in implementing UNSC Resolution 1373 designations.

Pakistan should also be demonstrating that supervisors are conducting both on-site and off-site supervision commensurate with specific risks associated with Designated Non-Financial Businesses and Professions (DNFBPs).

Pakistan has also been asked to ensure that proportionate and dissuasive sanctions are applied consistently to all legal persons for non-compliance with beneficial ownership requirements, demonstrating an increase in money laundering investigations and prosecutions.

## Israel brings back mask rules as Covid-19 variant spreads

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
JERUSALEM, 25 JUNE

Israel, a world leader in vaccinations, is once again requiring people to wear masks in indoor public spaces amid a coronavirus outbreak driven by the arrival of a new variant.

Israel rolled out one of the most successful vaccination campaigns in the world, inoculating some 85% of its adult population.

In recent months, nearly all restrictions were lifted as the number of active cases plummeted.

But there has been a spike in recent days after weeks in which the number of new daily cases was in the single or low double digits.

Dr Nachman Ash, who is leading the coronavirus response, said 227 new cases were confirmed on Thursday.

according to Israeli media.

The Health Ministry said masks must be worn indoors in public places starting mid-day Friday.

The outbreak appears to be driven by the arrival of the highly contagious delta variant, which spreads rapidly among unvaccinated individuals, including children.

Vaccinated Israelis have reportedly been infected, but generally appear to have only minor symptoms.

Earlier this week, the government postponed the planned reopening of the country to vaccinated tourists until the beginning of August.

It was originally set for July 1, and vaccinated tour groups have been permitted since May. Israel has reported 6,429 deaths since the start of the pandemic, in a population of 9.3 million.

Iran's top leader receives its home-made corona vaccine

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
TEHRAN, 25 JUNE

Iran's supreme leader has received the first coronavirus vaccine developed by the Islamic Republic, state TV reported Friday.

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said that he was not interested in taking foreign-made vaccines, because it is better to "wait for the Iranian vaccine because we have to be proud of this national honour."

In January, Khamenei banned imports of the American and Britain vaccines, a reflection of mistrust toward the West. Iranian pharmaceutical company Shifaferd made the COVIRAN Barekat vaccine based on deactivated virus, and the first study of the safety and effectiveness began in late December.

The emergency authorisation was approved last week after the country, which is the worst-hit nation in the Middle East, faced problems importing enough vaccines.

Iran has not published data about efficacy of the vaccine, but claims that people who get the home made jab have about 85% immunity to the deadly virus.

Iranian officials said the death toll from Covid-19 rose by 115 over the day into Friday, putting the country's

total at 83,588 since the pandemic broke out last year.

Health Ministry spokeswoman Sima Sadat Lari said 10,820 new confirmed cases were registered over the same period, bringing that total to 3,150,949.

At least 1,397 people remained hospitalized with the virus, she added.

Lari said that 3,219 of the patients are in serious condition, and that 2,809,595 have recovered so far. Iran remains among the hardest-hit countries in the world.

Iran has also said it is working on a vaccine with cooperation from a foreign country. Iranian authorities said that another vaccine, produced jointly by Iran and Cuba, will join the country's vaccine package in coming days.

RAGING FIRE



the industrial development of Xinjiang," said a Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Zhao Lijian.

The United States doesn't care at all about the Xinjiang people," Zhao said.

Their real plots and sinister intentions are to mess up Xinjiang to contain China.

Chinese officials reject accusations of forced labor and

Hoshine is one of the

biggest global suppliers of polysilicon, a material used to make solar panels.

Zhao said Beijing will take all necessary measures to protect its companies but gave no details.

Chinese spokespersons have made similar comments in response to earlier US trade sanctions, usually followed by no official action.

The US customs agency said an investigation found evidence that workers in the Xinjiang polysilicon industry were intimidated and threatened and their movement restricted.

Direct imports from Hoshine into the United States over the past 2 1/2 years totaled about \$6 million while finished goods that include material from the company were about \$150 million, according to the US government.

Angry demonstrators set fires, block the streets of the city centre and clash with riot police following the death of Nizar Banat, an outspoken critic of the Palestinian Authority, in the West Bank city of Ramallah, on Thursday.

Angry demonstrators set fires, block the streets of the city centre and clash with riot police following the death of Nizar Banat, an outspoken critic of the Palestinian Authority, in the West Bank city of Ramallah, on Thursday.

Angry demonstrators set fires, block the streets of the city centre and clash with riot police following the death of Nizar Banat, an outspoken critic of the Palestinian Authority, in the West Bank city of Ramallah, on Thursday.

Angry demonstrators set fires, block the streets of the city centre and clash with riot police following the death of Nizar Banat, an outspoken critic of the Palestinian Authority, in the West Bank city of Ramallah, on Thursday.

Angry demonstrators set fires, block the streets of the city centre and clash with riot police following the death of Nizar Banat, an outspoken critic of the Palestinian Authority, in the West Bank city of Ramallah, on Thursday.

Angry demonstrators set fires, block the streets of the city centre and clash with riot police following the death of Nizar Banat, an outspoken critic of the Palestinian Authority, in the West Bank city of Ramallah, on Thursday.

Angry demonstrators set fires, block the streets of the city centre and clash with riot police following the death of Nizar Banat, an outspoken critic of the Palestinian Authority, in the West Bank city of Ramallah, on Thursday.

Angry demonstrators set fires, block the streets of the city centre and clash with riot police following the death of Nizar Banat, an outspoken critic of the Palestinian Authority, in the West Bank city of Ramallah, on Thursday.

Angry demonstrators set fires, block the streets of the city centre and clash with riot police following the death of Nizar Banat, an outspoken critic of the Palestinian Authority, in the West Bank city of Ramallah, on Thursday.

Angry demonstrators set fires, block the streets of the city centre and clash with riot police following the death of Nizar Banat, an outspoken critic of the Palestinian Authority, in the West Bank city of Ramallah, on Thursday.

Angry demonstrators set fires, block the streets of the city centre and clash with riot police following the death of Nizar Banat, an outspoken critic of the Palestinian Authority, in the West Bank city of Ramallah, on Thursday.

Angry demonstrators set fires, block the streets of the city centre and clash with riot police following the death of Nizar Banat, an outspoken critic of the Palestinian Authority, in the West Bank city of Ramallah, on Thursday.

Angry demonstrators set fires, block the streets of the city centre and clash with riot police following the death of Nizar Banat, an outspoken critic of the Palestinian Authority, in the West Bank city of Ramallah, on Thursday.

Angry demonstrators set fires, block the streets of the city centre and clash with riot police following the death of Nizar Banat, an outspoken critic of the Palestinian Authority, in the West Bank city of Ramallah, on Thursday.

Angry demonstrators set fires, block the streets of the city centre and clash with riot police following the death of Nizar Banat, an outspoken critic of the Palestinian Authority, in the West Bank city of Ramallah, on Thursday.

Angry demonstrators set fires, block the streets of the city centre and clash with riot police following the death of Nizar Banat, an outspoken critic of the Palestinian Authority, in the West Bank city of Ramallah, on Thursday.

Angry demonstrators set fires, block the streets of the city centre and clash with riot police following the death of Nizar Banat, an outspoken critic of the Palestinian Authority, in the West Bank city of Ramallah, on Thursday.

Angry demonstrators set fires, block the streets of the city centre and clash with riot police following the death of Nizar Banat, an outspoken critic of the Palestinian Authority, in the West Bank city of Ramallah, on Thursday.

Angry demonstrators set fires, block the streets of the city centre and clash with riot police following the death of Nizar Banat, an outspoken critic of the Palestinian Authority, in the West Bank city of Ramallah, on Thursday.

Angry demonstrators set fires, block the streets of the city centre and clash with riot police following the death of Nizar Banat, an outspoken critic of the Palestinian Authority, in the West Bank city of Ramallah, on Thursday.

Angry demonstrators set fires, block the streets of the city centre and clash with riot police following the death of Nizar Banat, an outspoken critic of the Palestinian Authority, in the West Bank city of Ramallah, on Thursday.

Angry demonstrators set fires, block the streets of the city centre and clash with riot police following the death of Nizar Banat, an outspoken critic of the Palestinian Authority, in the West Bank city of Ramallah, on Thursday.

Angry demonstrators set fires, block the streets of the city centre and clash with riot police following the death of Nizar Banat, an outspoken critic of the Palestinian Authority, in the West Bank city of Ramallah, on Thursday.

Angry demonstrators set fires, block the streets of the city centre and clash with riot police following the death of Nizar Banat, an outspoken critic of the Palestinian Authority, in the West Bank city of Ramallah, on Thursday.

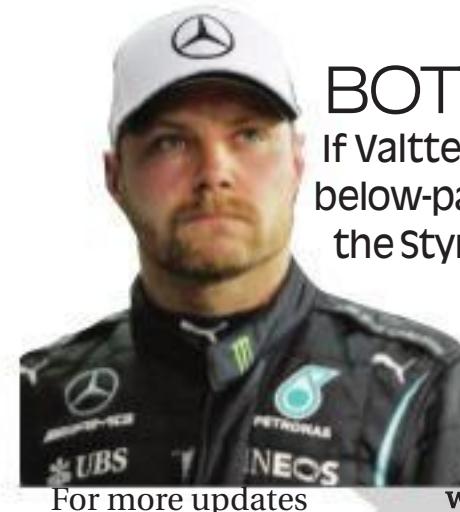
Angry demonstrators set fires, block the streets of the city centre and clash with riot police following the death of Nizar Banat, an outspoken critic of the Palestinian Authority, in the West Bank city of Ramallah, on Thursday.

Angry demonstrators set fires, block the streets of the city centre and clash with riot police following the death of Nizar Banat, an outspoken critic of the Palestinian Authority, in the West Bank city of Ramallah, on Thursday.

Angry demonstrators set fires, block the streets of the city centre and clash with riot police following the death of Nizar Banat, an outspoken critic of the Palestinian Authority, in the West Bank city of Ramallah, on Thursday.

Angry demonstrators set fires, block the streets of the city centre and clash with riot police following the death of Nizar Banat, an outspoken critic of the Palestinian Authority, in the West Bank city of Ramallah, on Thursday.

Angry demonstrators set fires, block the streets of the city centre and clash with riot police following the death of Nizar Banat, an outspoken critic of the Palestinian Authority, in the West Bank city of Ramallah, on Thursday.



## BOTTAS' HOPE

If Valtteri Bottas (photo, left) wants to turn around his below-par season while his future at Mercedes is in doubt, the Styrian Grand Prix on Sunday might be a good starting point. The Finnish driver has failed to land a top-two finish in the first seven races of 2021, his worst start to a Formula One season since joining Mercedes in 2017.

For more updates

www.thestatesman.com

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI/TOKYO, 25 JUNE

India's Olympic-bound athletes, who are training abroad right now and scheduled to reach Tokyo directly from their current bases, will not face the stricter restrictions that have been put in place for those travelling from the country, Deputy Chef de Mission Prem Verma said on Friday.

While the Indian contingent will be allowed to train during their three-day-on-arrival quarantine, they won't be allowed to meet athletes from other countries during the hard quarantine.

"Indian athletes preparing for the Games overseas and reaching Tokyo directly would not face the restrictions applicable to those who have been residing in India for 14 days before departure," Verma was quoted as saying by the Sports

Authority of India in a statement. This is likely to benefit the shooters, who are currently training in Croatia and Italy, top wrestlers like Vinesh Phogat and Bajrang Punia, tennis star Sania Mirza and javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra among others.

Verma also said Tokyo Olympics Organising Committee has increased the list of accredited laboratories for COVID-19 tests to a number of cities across the country.

Verma told the athletes and support staff that a number of issues raised by the IOA have been addressed by the Tokyo OC to India's satisfaction.

He said there would no restriction on training of Indians, but they cannot meet athletes from other countries for the first three days.

India is clubbed with



Afghanistan, Nepal, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, in group I countries with serious COVID-19 situation.

The Indian contingent departing from New Delhi will have to upload its health status for each of the seven days prior to departure on the Organising Committee health app along with negative RT-PCR reports from approved labs, 96 and 72 hours prior to the journey.

Apart from this, the Tokyo-bound contingent will also undergo sensitisation workshops on three modules titled "Life in Tokyo, Playing Clean

and From India with Pride."

Life in Tokyo explains the preparations for travel in the fortnight before departure, the formalities to be completed before travel, including vaccination, and anti-bodies test reports.

## Hashimoto: 'No spectators' still possible

Ano-spectator games remains an option for the Tokyo Olympics, which open officially in just four weeks, the president of the Tokyo Olympic organizing committee said Friday.

The admission by Seiko Hashimoto comes only four days after she announced on Monday that up to 10,000 local fans would be allowed into venues with numbers not to exceed 50% of venue capacity regardless of indoor or outdoor events.

Organizers put off the decision on local fans for several months, and fans from abroad were banned months ago. The move to allow fans went against many medical experts who have said the safest Olympics would be with no fans due to coronavirus.

What I feel is that no spectators should remain an option for us as we look into things, Hashimoto said at a news conference.

The situation is changing from time to time so that is why we need to remain flexible and prompt in responding to any change. A no-spectator games is one of our options.

Organizers seemed to back down slightly on fans after a COVID-19 panel for the Tokyo Metropolitan Government reported on Thursday that "there's a sign of resurgence of infections in Tokyo.

The panel said infections

grew by 11% in the last week based on the seven-day average with more of the contagious Delta variant cases being detected. Organizers say they will take another look at fans after the current quasi-state of emergency ends on July 11.

Olympic Minister Tamayo Marukawa delivered another wake-up call on Friday when she confirmed that a member of the Ugandan team who tested positive for the coronavirus upon entry to Japan last week was infected with the Delta variant.

Despite extensive testing before and upon entry, cases like this seem certain to happen with 11,000 Olympic athletes and 4,400 Paralympic athletes entering Tokyo, along with tens of thousands of added staff, coaches, judges, and IOC and sports federations officials.



**Amul Milk. Always Fresh.**

180 days shelf life  
No need to boil  
Anytime, anywhere

₹68\*/1L  
500mL: ₹36\*, 200mL: ₹15\*

## 'Restrictions on Olympic-bound departing from India not applicable on those training abroad'

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI/TOKYO, 25 JUNE

While the Indian contingent will be allowed to train during their three-day-on-arrival quarantine, they won't be allowed to meet athletes from other countries during the hard quarantine.

"Indian athletes preparing for the Games overseas and reaching Tokyo directly would not face the restrictions applicable to those who have been residing in India for 14 days before departure," Verma was quoted as saying by the Sports

Ministry.

India is clubbed with

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 25 JUNE

The Indian cricket team will play two intra-squad games at the Riverside ground in Durham before the five-match Test series against England as Virat Kohli's men are unlikely to get any warm-up first-class games against county sides.

India captain Virat Kohli had expressed his displeasure at not being given any first-class games before the England series, starting in Nottingham on August 4.

"Due to COVID-19 protocols, they will play two intra-squad four-day matches before the first Test in August," an ECB spokesperson said on Friday.

While it is understood that BCCI had requested ECB for a few practice games, the



COVID-19 situation won't allow any such plan to go ahead.

Asked if there is any chance of a game against county sides, the spokesperson said, "No".

In England, cricketers from various counties are regularly being tested for COVID but are not being kept in any bubble.

The Indian team, once it assembles in London on July 14 and moves to Durham, will be once again in a bubble.

The domestic cricketers of England not being in a bubble is an issue for sure. That's why the games in Durham will be intra-squad ones," a BCCI official said on conditions of anonymity.

India are currently travel-

ling with 24 players -- 20 in the official squad and four reserves -- which will allow them to play intra-squad games.

However, legends like Sunil Gavaskar have questioned the amount of preparedness that a simulated match can give the team. The touring teams, in the past, have played multiple first-class games against county sides.

In simulated matches, a player can bat again if he gets out quickly unlike a proper first-class match.

## Selectors not allowed'

Chairman of national selectors of England not being in a bubble is an issue for sure. That's why the games in Durham will be intra-squad ones," a BCCI official said on conditions of anonymity.

It is understood that India

being among the Red List countries, there are no direct flights to the United Kingdom.

Anyone travelling from India either needs to travel by a charter flight like the team or first fly to a country which is not in UK's Red List, quarantine there and then take a connecting flight to England.

"Yes, Debu (Debasish Mohanty) and Abbey (Kuruvilla) are going to Sri Lanka where the white-ball squad will play six games. They are in quarantine at the Mumbai hotel along with rest of the team. But no selector is travelling to UK," a BCCI source informed.

It is also understood in the year of a T20 World Cup, it is more important to check out the younger crop of players in Sri Lanka rather than the tried and tested automatic choices who are in the UK for the traditional format.

## Djokovic, Federer could meet in Wimbledon final; Halep out

WIMBLEDON, 25 JUNE



Novak Djokovic and Roger Federer were placed on opposite sides of the Wimbledon bracket in Friday's draw, meaning they only could meet in the final which would be a rematch of their epic 2019 title show-down.

The top-seeded Djokovic will have a lot at stake when play begins at the All England Club on Monday, a year after the grass-court tournament was canceled because of the pandemic.

He seeks a 20th major title, which would tie the men's record shared by Federer and Rafael Nadal; he can move closer to a calendar-year Grand Slam after winning the Australian Open in February and the French Open this month; he will be trying to win his third consecutive trophy, and sixth overall, at Wimbledon.

Two years ago, Djokovic

edged Federer in a fifth-set tiebreaker after saving two championship points in the final.

The 2019 women's champion, Simona Halep (in photo), pulled out of Wimbledon just before the draw, citing an injured left calf that also forced her to sit out Roland Garros. That means two of the top three players in the WTA rankings are missing from the field; No. 2 Naomi Osaka withdrew last week.

Two of the top five men are out, too: No. 3 Nadal and No. 5 Dominic Thiem.

The potential women's

quarterfinals based on seedings are No. 1 Ash Barty vs. No. 5 Bianca Andreescu, and No. 3 Elina Svitolina vs. No. 6 Serena Williams in the top half; No. 2 Aryna Sabalenka vs. No. 7 Iga Swiatek, and No. 4 Sofia Kenin vs. No. 8 Karolina Pliskova in the bottom half.

The possible men's quarterfinals are Djokovic vs. No. 5 Andrey Rublev, and No. 3 Stefanos Tsitsipas vs. No. 8 Robert Bautista Agut in the top half; No. 2 Daniil Medvedev vs. No. 6 Federer, and No. 4 Alexander Zverev vs. No. 7 Matteo Berrettini in the bottom half.

Among the noteworthy first-round men's matchups are Djokovic against wildcard entry Jack Draper, a 19-year-old from England who was the Wimbledon boys' runner-up in 2018; two-time champion Andy Murray against No. 24 seed Nikoloz Basilashvili; and No. 21 Ugo Humbert against Nick Kyrgios.

AP

## Shooting WC: Bronze for Indian women's 10m air pistol team

OSIJEK (CROATIA), 25 JUNE

The Indian trio of Manu Bhaker, Yashaswini Singh Deswal and Rahi Sarnobat claimed the bronze medal in the 10m air pistol women's team event of the ISSF Shooting World Cup here on Friday.

They defeated the Hungarian team of Veronika Major, Miriam Jako and Sara Rahel Fabian 16-12 in the bronze medal match. The Indians had qualified third with a score of 573.

Earlier, in the 10m air rifle events, the men's trio of Ashwary Pratap Singh Tomar, Deepak Kumar and Divyansh Singh Panwar lost the bronze medal match, while the women shooters failed to get past the qualifying round.

Tomar, Kumar and Panwar lost 14-16 to the Serbian team of Milenko Sebic, Milutin Stevanovic and Lazar Kovacevic in the third-place match.

The Hungarians did come back strongly to make it 14-12, but the Indian women held their nerves admirably to get over the line.

PTI

## Verstappen strives for season-best 4th win

SPIELBERG (AUSTRIA), 25 JUNE



Dutch fans who travelled to the race in Austria those years.

From the seven races so far, Red Bull has won four. Verstappen also triumphed in Monza and Monaco, and his teammate, Sergio Perez, won in Azerbaijan, where leader Verstappen seemed heading for victory until a fire blew out five laps from the finish.

The remaining three races were Hamilton's.

The defending champion revealed on Thursday he has started talks with Mercedes about extending his stay with the team beyond this season.

He joined the team eight years ago.

Hamilton, who trails Verstappen by 12 points in the standings, won the Styrian GP in 2020, and teammate Valtteri Bottas won the Austrian GP the following week.

Repeating that feat seems a tough ask for Mercedes.

"We know how strong they are," Hamilton said about Red Bull.

AP

## Uruguay, Paraguay qualify for Copa America knockout round

AGENCIES  
SAO PAULO, 25 JUNE

goal in the 40th minute. Edinson Cavani doubled the Uruguayan lead from short range in the 79th minute at the Arena Pantanal in Cuiaba. It was the veteran striker's first goal for Uruguay since November.

Paraguay beat Chile with a header by Braian Samudio in the 33rd minute and a goal from the spot by Miguel Almirón in the 58th at the Man Garrincha stadium in Brasília.

Uruguay and Paraguay will clash on Monday in a match that will decide which team faces defending champions and favorites Brazil in the quarterfinals.

If they draw or Uruguay wins, Chile will face the host. A Paraguayan victory means Uruguay will take that spot.

## Germany preparing for 'next games' despite mixed Euro 2020

AGENCIES  
MUNICH, 25 JUNE

Wednesday after Leon Goretzka scored a late equalizer in a 2-2 draw against Hungary. It didn't look likely until Lw took an all-or-nothing gamble to avoid another first-round exit at a major competition.

With less than 10 minutes remaining, Lw sent on 18-year-old Jamal Musiala and another attacker in Kevin Volland.

We had to simply get the ball into the penalty area and we had to get as many people in there as possible, Lw said.

With full force and all our strength, somehow fighting for every meter forward. Musiala, making his first appearance at Euro 2020, provided the key when he eluded three Hungarian defenders in the buildup to Goretzka's goal a deflected shot past goalkeeper Peter Gulacsi in the 84th minute.

Lw knew how the Hungarians would play defensively and hoping to break on counter-attacks but still his team had

no answers. Germany was vulnerable in defense and showed little in attack. Again.

Germany had also struggled in its opening game against France, a 1-0 loss, when the French always looked more likely to score.

It was one of the hardest games altogether, said Lw, who won the World Cup title in 2014 but saw his team eliminated from the group stage in 2018. But we expected it to be like that.

Hungary's defense had already impressed despite a 3-0 loss to Portugal, when the visitors only made the breakthrough late, and in a 1-1 draw with World Cup champion France.

Lw knew how the Hungarians would play defensively and hoping to break on counter-attacks but still his team had

last forever, and Austria coach Franco Foda is plotting to be the one to stop it.

The Italians have become one of the favorites at the European Championship after winning all three of their games in the group stage, scoring seven goals and conceding none. Those three victories at Euro 2020 extended the team's unbeaten streak under coach Roberto Mancini to 30 games matching the previous record set in the 1930s.

Initially it seemed to be an insurmountable and impossible challenge for us, because they haven't lost for an eternity, Foda said.

But sooner or later even Mancini's team will lose.

Austria, which has reached the round of 16 at the tournament for the first time, will get its chance on Saturday at

AP