

IN BRIEF

Youth arrested with heroin worth ₹30L

New Delhi: A 25-year-old interstate drug supplier has been arrested by the Delhi police. The accused has been identified as Shambhu Singhoniya, a resident of Panchkula in Haryana, the police said. The police arrested the accused on a tip-off and a total of 303 grams of fine quality heroin worth over ₹30 lakh hidden in a tetra pack of juice have been recovered from him, it added. According to the police, the accused bought the drugs from an African national residing in the Nangloi area of the city and used to supply it in Haryana, Punjab, and Himachal Pradesh. The accused used to camouflage the drugs by hiding it in a tetra pack of juice and other articles like clothes in his traveling bag, the police said. The police said that Shambhu has studied upto Class 2 and after that he started working as a rag picker and gradually started doing drugs. He was also arrested in February this year in Shimla. The accused has been booked under Section 21 of the NDPS Act. Further investigation is underway and efforts are being made to trace the main source and supply, the police said.

Grenade found inside drain

New Delhi: A grenade was found by a sanitation worker on Thursday while he was cleaning a drain under a walkway in southwest Delhi's Sagarpur area, police said. After receiving information, the police rushed to the spot and found an old corroded grenade with its pin intact. The district ballistic team safely placed it away from the crowded area in an open space, a senior police officer said. The area around the grenade was buttressed using makeshift sandbags and police guards were stationed at the spot, the officer said. The officer said the NSG has been urged to ascertain the make and model of grenade. "The ballistic expert of the district could make out that it is 'HE 36' but rest of the details are not visible," DCP (south-west) Ingit Pratap Singh said.

City hospitals readies to tackle 3rd wave

New Delhi: As the upcoming third wave of the coronavirus pandemic is said to be more critical for children, Ujala Cygnus Group of Hospitals has strengthened their fight against COVID by adding 200 adult ICU beds and 100 pediatric ICU beds in their free-of-cost 1000 oxygen beds facility at Burari. This 1000-oxygen bedded Burari hospital was started in collaboration with the Delhi Government and Doctors for You on 1st May 2021, when the national capital was engulfed in the second wave. Commenting on their preparedness, Dr. Shuchin Bajaj, Founder Director, Ujala Cygnus Group of Hospitals said, "In the second wave, we had seen the peak and we ran out of beds, oxygen and ICU facilities.

MAXIMUM TEMPERATURE RISES TO 41.8° C

New Delhi: The national capital's fourth "heat wave day" of this month on Thursday saw the mercury soaring to 41.8 degrees Celsius, five notches above the normal, according to the weather department. The city had reeled under heat wave on July 1 (43.1 degrees Celsius), July 2 (41.3 degrees Celsius) and July 7 (42.6 degrees Celsius) also. For the plains, a heat wave is declared when the maximum temperature is more than 40 degrees Celsius and at least 4.5 notches above the normal. The minimum temperature at the Safdarjung Observatory, which provides representative data for Delhi, settled at 30.6 degrees Celsius. The relative humidity was recorded at 40 per cent. The India meteorological department predicted thunderstorm with light to moderate rain accompanied with winds of speed 20-40 kmph in and around South Delhi, Haryana's Gohana and Rohtak, UP's Rampur, Chandausi, Sahaswan, and Rajasthan's Nagar later in the evening. It has also forecast thunderstorm with rain on Friday and the maximum and minimum temperatures hovering around 40 degrees Celsius and 29 degrees Celsius respectively. — PTT

■ **Twitter-govt standoff:** All those who live and work in India will have to abide by rules of the country, says Vaishnaw

Law of land supreme, says new IT minister

New Delhi, July 8: All those who live and work in India will have to abide by the rules of the country, newly sworn-in information and technology Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said on Thursday on Twitter's standoff with the central government over new IT rules.

Information technology minister Ashwini Vaishnaw underlined the law of the land is supreme and that Twitter will have to fall in line and comply with new social media and intermediary guidelines.

Mr Vaishnaw was talking to reporters after meeting BJP general secretary (Organisation) B.L. Santhosh at the party office here.

On a question that Twitter was not adhering to IT rules, he said whosoever lives and works in



Ashwini Vaishnaw

Information technology minister Ashwini Vaishnaw underlined the law of the land is supreme and that Twitter will have to fall in line and comply with new social media and intermediary guidelines

India will have to abide by the rules of the country.

US-based company Twitter has been in the eye of a storm over its alleged failure to comply with the new IT rules in India, which mandates,

among other requirements, the appointment of three key personnel — chief compliance officer, nodal officer and grievance officer by social media platforms with over 50 lakh users. All the three

personnel have to be residents in India. While the rules came into effect on May 26, Twitter is yet to adhere to the social media guidelines, despite repeated reminders from the government.

Mr Vaishnaw, a Rajya Sabha member from Odisha, on Wednesday took oath as the Cabinet minister and was given the charge of Railways along with the Information and technol-

ogy ministry.

He replaced senior BJP leader Ravi Shankar Prasad in the IT Ministry.

Mr Vaishnaw said he was thankful to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for giving him the responsibility.

He said his focus will be on improving the life of the last man standing in the queue.

In past, Vaishnaw, while speaking in the Rajya Sabha, had raised the issue of resignation of Karnataka-based Rashmi Samant from the position of Oxford Student Union president in the UK, alleging that she was cyber bullied. Samant, the first Indian woman to be elected the president of Oxford Student Union (SU), was forced to resign amid controversy over some of her past social media posts earlier this year. — PTT

Chadha welcomes SC dismissing FB India V-P's plea

New Delhi, July 8: The Delhi High Court on Thursday dismissed the plea of Facebook India Vice President and MD Ajit Mohan for failing to appear before it as a witness in connection with last year's northeast Delhi riots. — PTT



Raghuvaran Chadha



Manish Maheshwari

Bengaluru, July 8: Twitter India managing director Manish Maheshwari on Thursday sought the quashing of a notice issued by the Uttar Pradesh police seeking his physical presence in connection with a case registered for uploading and circulating a "communal sensitive" video on the platform.

Appearing on behalf of Maheshwari before the single bench of Justice G. Narendar in the Karnataka High Court, his counsel C.V. Nagesh contended that the notice under Section 41-A of the CrPC was issued "without jurisdiction, without the sanction of law."

He claimed that the first notice was issued on June

17 under Section 160 of the CrPC.

The legal obligation under Section 160 of the CrPC is based upon a person who resides at a place which is located within the territorial jurisdiction of the police station where the crime is registered, the counsel argued.

After the notice under Section 160 was issued,

Maheshwari told the investigators that he did not know anything about the issue, Nagesh said.

He added that even if Maheshwari appeared before them in person, the reply would be the same.

"The IO (investigating officer) was not satisfied because there was a hidden agenda. Then what he (IO) did is, he invoked the powers under Section 41-A of the CrPC, which is not right", he alleged.

"Law does not empower him (the IO) to do so. It is an act which has been done without the sanction of law," the counsel argued. The Twitter MD resides in Bengaluru, and his office is located in the city, Nagesh pointed out. — PTT

Delhi sees 93 Covid cases, 3 deaths in 24 hours

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JULY 8

The national capital recorded 93 fresh Covid cases, and three deaths due to the disease on Thursday, according to data shared by the health department here.

The positivity rate stood at 0.12 per cent, same figures as on Wednesday.

The three new fatalities have pushed the death toll in the city to 25,008, according to the latest bulletin.

On Tuesday, Delhi had reported 79 cases and four deaths. And, on Wednesday, 93 cases and four deaths were recorded, according to official figures.

On February 16, ninety-four people were diagnosed Covid positive while the daily tally was 96 on January 27, according to official figures.

Meanwhile, Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal inaugurated another genome-sequencing laboratory at the Institute of Liver and Biliary Sciences (ILBS) here on Thursday and said it will help detect new variants of the coronavirus and ascertain their severity.

"Keeping in view the need of the future, a second genome-sequencing laboratory was inaugurated at ILBS today. These labs will help us identify new virus strains and ascertain their severity. People of Delhi will benefit a lot from this technology in the times of coronavirus," the CM tweeted in Hindi.

Mr Kejriwal had on Wednesday launched the first genome-sequencing laboratory in the national capital at the LNJP Hospital. The genome-sequencing laboratory at the state-run Lok Nayak Jai Prakash Narayan (LNJP) Hospital will be able to sequence five to seven samples a day, with a turnaround time of about four to five days, a statement had said.

Centre, Delhi seem to have adopted 'my way or highway' approach: SC

New Delhi, July 8: Long and repeated battles between the Centre and the Delhi government came under scanner of the Supreme Court which on Thursday said both of them seemed to have adopted my way or the high way approach making governance and needing collaboration difficult.

The observations on the continuing face off between the two governments came in a judgement by which the top court held that the Delhi Legislative Assembly and its committee have the power to compel attendance of members and outsiders.

It also dismissed the plea of Facebook India vice-president and MD Ajit Mohan and others challenging the summons

issued by the house for failing to appear before it as witness in connection with the north-east Delhi riots last year.

No governance model requiring such collaboration can work if either of the two sides take a 'my way or the high way' approach - which both seem to have adopted, said a bench comprising justices S K Kaul, Dinesh Maheshwari and Hrishikesh Roy.

The power tussle between Centre and the Delhi government has been going on since 2014 and a five-judge Constitution bench headed by the then CJI Dipak Misra in July 2018 had ruled that the Lieutenant Governor has no independent power to take decisions and is bound by the elected

government's advice.

In today's judgement, the top court advised the Centre and the Delhi government on collaborative governance and asked the AAP government to recognize the constitutional scheme of division of powers.

Simultaneously, it said that the Centre is required to work in tandem with a different political dispensation.

The political dispensation which is in power in the State has to recognize the constitutional scheme of division of powers in Delhi which circumscribes their ability to work only within those powers. When they got elected, they knew what they were getting elected for not what they thought should be the division of powers. — PTT

Photos of Muslim women were displayed on App for auction Police files FIR after 'Sulli Deals' app misuses Muslim women's pics

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JULY 8

A case has been registered by the Cyber Cell of the Delhi Police after it received a complaint about an unidentified group uploading photos of Muslim women on an app, police said on Thursday.

The Delhi Commission for Women had issued a notice to the Delhi Police and sought a detailed action taken report in the matter.

Delhi Police PRO, Chinmoy Biswal, said, "Acting on a complaint received on the National Cybercrime Reporting Portal regarding 'Sulli Deals' mobile application, a case under section 354-A of the Indian Penal Code has been registered on Wednesday and investigation taken up."

He said notices have been sent to 'GitHub' app to share the relevant details.

The notice issued to deputy commissioner of police, Cyber Cell, Delhi

Delhi Police PRO, Chinmoy Biswal, said, "Acting on a complaint received on the National Cybercrime Reporting Portal regarding 'Sulli Deals' mobile application, a case under section 354-A of the Indian Penal Code has been registered on Wednesday and investigation taken up."

Police had said, "The Delhi Commission for Women has taken suo-moto cognisance on media report of uploading pictures of many girls on internet using a platform namely 'GitHub'."

"It has been reported that photos of hundreds of Muslim women and girls were uploaded by an unidentified group on an app using GitHub by the

name of 'Sulli Deals' on Sunday, July 4. Reportedly, Sulli is a derogatory term used to refer to Muslim women."

According to media reports, the app came to light when people started sharing their pictures with the term 'Sulli deal of the day' on Twitter; the panel had said.

"Subsequently, many women had to leave social media platforms after their images got circulated. This is a very serious matter and constitutes cyber crime," the DCW had said.

The National Commission for Women Thursday wrote to the Delhi police chief seeking a probe into a now-defunct website allegedly uploading pictures of many Muslim women and putting them on "auction".

The commission has asked for a detailed action taken report within 10 days, it said.

NCW chairperson Rekha Sharma has requested Delhi Police



Youth Congress workers during a protest against fuel price hike of Petrol, Diesel and LPG at Raisena Road in New Delhi on Thursday. — G.N. JHA

After petrol, CNG price up in Delhi

New Delhi, July 8: After petrol, the price of CNG and piped cooking gas in the national capital and its adjoining towns was increased on Thursday in line with rising costs.

Indraprastha Gas Ltd — the firm that retails CNG to automobiles and piped gas to household kitchens in the national capital region — raised CNG price by 90 paise per kg and cooking gas by ₹1.25 per standard cubic metre.

"CNG retail price in Delhi stands revised from ₹43.40/kg to ₹44.30/kg w.e.f 6 am on 8th July 2021," IGL said in a tweet.

In the adjoining Noida, Greater Noida and Ghaziabad, CNG price has been hiked to ₹49.98 per kg from ₹49.08.

Rates differ from state to state due to local taxes. Piped natural gas (PNG) rate in Delhi was increased by ₹1.25 per scm to Rs 29.66 per scm and to ₹29.61 in Noida, Greater Noida and Ghaziabad.

"CNG would offer 68% savings as compared to petrol & 50% savings as compared to diesel on running cost at revised prices in Delhi," IGL said.

The hike in CNG and PNG prices came amid an unrelenting surge in the retail selling price of petrol and diesel.

Petrol price on Thursday was hiked by 35 paise per litre and diesel by 9 paise, according to a price notification of state-owned fuel retailers.

This took fuel prices across the country to fresh highs.

Petrol price rose to ₹100.56 a litre in Delhi while diesel rates climbed to ₹89.62 per litre.

Petrol has crossed the ₹100-a-litre mark in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Jammu and Kashmir, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Bihar, Punjab, Ladakh, Sikkim, Puducherry and Delhi.

Diesel, the most used fuel in the country, is above that level in some places in Rajasthan, Odisha and Madhya Pradesh.

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

SHORT TAKES

Jaishankar to visit Georgia July 9-10

New Delhi: External affairs minister S. Jaishankar will pay a two-day visit to Georgia beginning Friday during which he will hold talks with his counterpart there on various aspects of bilateral relations as well as exchange views on issues of regional and global interest. This will be the first visit of an Indian external affairs minister to independent Georgia, the MEA said in a statement. Jaishankar will visit Georgia on July 9-10 at the invitation of the Vice Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Georgia David Zalkaliani, the MEA said. During the visit, Jaishankar will have a bilateral meeting with his counterpart covering various aspects of bilateral relations as well as exchange views on issues of regional and global interest, it said. Mr Jaishankar will be handing over the Holy Relic of St. Queen Ketevan of Georgia to the government and people of Georgia. — PTI

Yogi discusses 'population' policy

Lucknow: Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath on Thursday took part in a presentation on a proposed population policy, amid a state law commission exercise on the same issue. The law commission is examining the possibility of enacting legislation to help control population growth, studying "incentives and disincentives". A state government release said Adityanath reviewed a presentation on the proposed Uttar Pradesh Population Policy 2021-30. At the meeting, he said it is necessary to control the population growth rate for the state's development and to ensure better facilities for everyone. Mr Adityanath said special attention should be given in the proposed policy to make people aware of the issue. They should be told that a small family is the basis of prosperity, the statement quoted him as saying. With a reduced population density, people will have a better environment, he said. — PTI

50 tourists at a time in Kemptay falls

New Tehri: Only 50 tourists will be allowed to bathe at Mussoorie's famous Kemptay falls with a maximum permissible time of 30 minutes. The district administration has taken the decision in view of the COVID-19 pandemic, District Magistrate Iva Ashish Shrivastava said. "There will be a time limit of 30 minutes for each bather, she said, adding an air horn will be used to signal the exit time. The came a day after viral videos showed a large number of tourists bathing at the falls without wearing masks or maintaining social distancing norms. — PTI

NARAVANE MEETS ITALIAN DefMin AND ARMY CHIEF

New Delhi: Chief of Army Staff Gen. M.M. Naravane on Thursday met his Italian counterpart Lt. Gen. Pietro Serino and defence minister Lorenzo Guerini in Rome and held extensive talks focusing on strengthening bilateral defence cooperation, including military-to-military engagement. The Chief of Army Staff arrived in Rome on Wednesday on a two-day visit on the second leg of his two-nation tour of the UK and Italy. "General M.M. Naravane #COAS interacted with Lieutenant General Pietro Serino, Chief of Italian Army and discussed aspects of joint military cooperation," the Army tweeted. The Chief of Army Staff is also scheduled to inaugurate an Indian Army memorial in the Italian town of Cassino. The memorial has been built to pay homage to Indian soldiers who lost their lives during World War II. Ways to further intensify defence cooperation had figured prominently at a virtual summit between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and then Italian PM Giuseppe Conte in November last year. The two leaders had underscored the need to further expand defence engagement through greater two-way collaboration and technology cooperation, including co-development and co-production of military hardware. — PTI



Farmers protest against fuel price hikes

Demand rates to be halved ■ Protesters bring their bikes, cars, tractors, sit on roadsides

New Delhi, July 8: Farmers agitating against the new agriculture laws on Thursday came together to raise their voices against the recent price hike of petrol, diesel and cooking oil, demanding that the rates be halved with immediate effect. Called by the Samyukt Kisan Morcha, the two-hour-long protest from 10 am to 12 noon, saw farmers in different parts of the country gather on the sides of national and state highways along with their vehicles, in an attempt to draw the government's attention towards their plight following the fuel price hike.

Today, farmers protested for two hours against the high fuel prices. We want them to be halved immediately. Protestors brought their motorcycles, cars, tractors and other vehicles and held sit-in protests, said farmer leader Lakhbir Singh. He added that the demonstrations were held peace-



BKU leader Rakesh Tikait and actress and model Sonia Mann carry LPG cylinders during a protest against fuel price hike at Ghazipur border, New Delhi, on Thursday. — PTI

fully. While petrol on Wednesday crossed ₹100/litre in Delhi and several other cities, diesel is currently priced at ₹89.59/litre.

Another farmer leader Avtar Singh Mehma said

protests were held not just at the Delhi borders where the farmers' protest against the three farm laws is underway, but across several state and national highways in the country.

However, it was ensured that the protests did not block traffic on these roads. Protestors brought their motorcycles, cars, tractors and other vehicles and sat on roadsides. Housewives also came

out in large numbers to participate in the agitation with empty gas cylinders, Mehma said.

While it was too soon to zero in on the number of protestors, demonstrations were held at thousands of places in the country, he said.

Mehma said his native district of Ferozabad in Punjab saw protests at 25 different places.

The government is made by the people, so it is important that it listens to them. The government should take charge of the fuel prices in its own hands instead of leaving it to the corporations, he said.

As part of the agitation on Thursday, farmers also observed horn baja diwas during which they honked their vehicles for five minutes to draw the attention of the government, which, according to them, has not been listening to them despite their continued agitation for over seven months. — PTI

Virbhadrha had special place in the hearts of Himachalis

DHARMENDRA JOSHI
SHIMLA, JULY 8

Last month Virbhadrha Singh's family cut a cake to celebrate his 87th birthday at the family's ancestral home, Holly Lodge, but the veteran Congress leader could not be a part of the gathering as he was undergoing treatment for post-Covid complications at a hospital here.

Singh breathed his last at the Indira Gandhi Medical College (IGMC) at 3.40 am on Thursday after prolonged illness.

He had a heart attack on Monday. He was put on ventilator support on Wednesday after he had trouble breathing. Singh had tested positive for Covid-19 on June 11 for the second time in two months.

A six-time chief minister of the state, Singh held a special place in the hearts of the people of the state. He was known to take a stand contrary to that of his party on some occasions. Like in the case of the Ram Temple when he openly supported its construction at the same spot in Ayodhya where the Babri mosque stood.

In April 2019, right before the last Lok Sabha elections, Singh spoke to PTI about this during an interview at his residence.

"Land for Ram Temple can be given even in



Family members and supporters carry the mortal remains of former Himachal Pradesh chief minister Virbhadrha Singh in Shimla on Thursday. — PTI

Himachal Pradesh, but it should be built on the same spot in Ayodhya," he had said.

Virbhadrha Singh was born on June 23, 1934 in Sarahan to late Raja Sir Padam Singh of Bushahr state.

He was educated at Bishop Cotton School in Shimla and St. Stephen's College in Delhi.

Singh was just 28 when he became an MP for the first time. Twenty years later, he became the chief minister of Himachal Pradesh in 1983 at the age of 48.

He held the office of the chief minister from April 1983 to March 1990, December 1993 to March 1998, March 2003 to December 2007 and then from December 2012 to December 2017.

A nine-time MLA and five-time MP, Virbhadrha Singh remained active in state and central poli-

tics throughout his life. He was representing the Arki Assembly Constituency in Solan district since December 2017.

The veteran Congress leader also served as Union deputy minister, tourism and civil aviation, minister of state for industries, Union minister of steel and Union minister of micro, small & medium enterprises (MSME).

He was re-elected to the 13th Vidhan Sabha in December 2017 from the Arki constituency.

He was also elected to the third Lok Sabha in 1962; re-elected to the fourth Lok Sabha in 1967 from

Mahasu Constituency, fifth Lok Sabha in 1971, seventh Lok Sabha in 1980 and the 15th Lok Sabha (5th term) in May 2009 from the Mandi parliamentary constituency. — PTI

Singh one of Cong's tallest stalwarts: Sonia Gandhi

New Delhi, July 8: Former Himachal Pradesh chief minister Virbhadrha Singh was one of the Congress' tallest stalwarts, party president Sonia Gandhi said on Thursday while condoling the death of the veteran leader.

Expressing her deepest condolences, Mrs Gandhi said the veteran Congressperson leaves behind a legacy of nearly six decades of service to the people of Himachal Pradesh and the nation.

A six-time chief minister and former Union minister, he had the

opportunity of working with many stalwarts through different generations, she said.

"Popular for his affable and grounded nature, he remained close to people brought about far reaching positive changes through his administrative acumen," she said in her condolence message.

"He was one of the tallest stalwarts of the Congress Party and remained a dedicated Congressperson throughout," she said.

The Congress chief underlined that Singh's contribution to the party, as indeed to the

state and the country will be valued and cherished forever.

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi will visit Shimla on July 9 to pay his respects to the former chief minister at 12.30 am at State Congress headquarters, Rajiv Bhawan.

Rahul took to Twitter and wrote, "Virbhadrha Singh ji was a stalwart in the true sense. His commitment to serving the people and to the Congress party remained exemplary till the very end. My condolences to his family and friends. We will miss him." — PTI

■ NCP leaders terms laundering case against him politically-motivated

ED grills Khadse for 9 hrs in land grab case

SONU SHRIVASTAVA
MUMBAI, JULY 8

Former Maharashtra minister Eknath Khadse was grilled by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Thursday for close to nine hours in connection with a case pertaining to a 2016 land deal at Bhosari area in Pune. The ED allowed Mr Khadse to leave the office after the interrogation.

Mr Khadse reached the ED office in South Mumbai at 11 am along with his lawyer and left

the office around 8 pm. His son-in-law Girish Chaudhary was arrested by the ED on Wednesday in connection with an alleged money laundering linked to a land deal in Pune's Bhosari.

While leaving the federal agency's office, Mr Khadse did not speak to the media. However, his lawyer Mohan P. Tekavde told the reporters that Mr Khadse had answered all the questions of the ED and also handed over some documents related to the case to the federal



Eknath Khadse

■ WHILE LEAVING the federal agency's office, Khadse did not speak to the media. However, his lawyer Mohan P. Tekavde said that Mr Khadse had answered all the questions of the ED and also handed over some documents related to the case to the federal agency

agency. The ED wants some more documents in the case, which will be given to the investigating agency in the next 10 days, he said.

"Whenever it is needed, we will appear before the

ED for the probe," Mr Tekavde said.

While entering the ED's office on Thursday morning, Mr Khadse told the reporters that ED has summoned him and in compliance with that sum-

mon, he is going to cooperate with the Central probe agency. "Maharashtra has been watching what is happening. Everyone knows this is politically motivated (case). The inquiry has already been done five times. It is being done again now. How many times do they want to conduct the inquiry?" he asked.

The senior NCP leader said that the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) has already completed its probe into this case.

■ 'Someone wants to run agenda through Twitter', says Tewari
Knives out in Punjab Cong again

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JULY 8

Knives are out in the Congress once again after Lok Sabha MP Manish Tewari hit out at the disgruntled legislator Navjot Singh Sidhu amid the ongoing crisis in Punjab and repeated barbs against the state government on Twitter by Mr Sidhu.

Mr Tewari said, "There is no problem in the state, there are some issues due to the stepmotherly treatment of the Central government. However, if someone wants to take on his person-

al agenda through Twitter or any other medium then the leaders at the AICC should take it seriously".

Mr Sidhu even after meeting senior leaders Rahul and Priyanka Gandhi has been continuously taking on Amarinder Singh's government on the power issue. Even before that Mr Sidhu had opened a front against the Punjab CM.

Mr Tewari asserted that since 1966, when Punjab came into existence as a state and till 2017, no party has got 77 Assembly seats out of 117 strength of the Legislative Assembly. The



Manish Tewari Navjot Singh Sidhu

Congress has won 3 Assembly bypolls, 8 Lok Sabha seats out of 13 seats in Punjab, he pointed out.

"Congress has also secured victory in more than 90 per cent of the local bodies. If you ask any MP whom they had called for their campaign, they would

say that the Captain. The Punjab government is doing well but only a few people have their own agenda," he added.

"Congress is united and will contest polls strongly. But if someone has an agenda and wants to run it through Twitter or another medium then I think Congress high command should take it seriously," Mr Tewari said.

Several other leaders from Punjab have complained about the "out of turn" utterances of Mr Sidhu these include Lok Sabha MP Ravneet Singh Bittu.

SEARCH FOR MISSING PERSON



General public is here by informed that this boy **Namely: Ranveer Singh, S/o Sukha Singh, R/o H. No. 68, Gali No. 2, Phase-4, Shiv Vihar, Karawal Nagar, Delhi, Age: about 70 years, Height: 5'3", Complexion: Shallow, Face: Long, Built: Medium, Wearing: White Kurta, Yellow Colour Checkered Lungi and Black Shoes in Feet, has been missing since**

23.06.2020 from his house in the area of P.S. Karawal Nagar, Delhi. In this regard a DD No. 69-A, dated 24.02.2021 has been lodged at P.S. Karawal Nagar, Delhi.

Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out information about this person but no clue has come to light so far. If any one having any information or clue about this person kindly inform to the following.

E-Mail: cic@cbi.gov.in Website: <http://cbi.nic.in> Fax: 011-24368639 Ph: 011-24368638, 24368641

SHO P.S. Karawal Nagar Delhi Ph. 011-22932396, 8750870728 DP/866/NE/2021

NORTHERN RAILWAY

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

No. 63-Med-Lab Invest-DLI-2021 Dated:- 08.07.2021
The Chief Medical Superintendent on behalf of the President of India invites Expression of interest for U. Units DSA, FDB, DEE, MTC, DKZ, GGN Lookup dispensary, SMQL, ROK, GZB Arya Nagar, TKD, P.Bagh, ANVR, PNP, SNP, Bhoo GZB & SSB under Jurisdiction of Divisional Hospital Delhi from reputed Labs for undertaking the Pathological & radiological investigations etc. for the Railway beneficiaries at various Health Units under Divl. Hospital, N.Rly, Delhi from NABL/Non NABL Labs at CGHS rates or in case CGHS rates for a particular investigation is not available then AIIMS rate or any other government hospital rate shall be applicable. In case no government rate is available then reasonable rate as per mutual agreement between railway and the center shall be applicable for a period of two years from the date of award of work on monthly payment basis. Centre should mention percentage of discount of rate, if any, on application form. The interested labs should be fully equipped with modern machines. The institute should have valid license from X-ray regulatory authorities & should be registered under PNDD Act. The institute / Labs should also have qualified Radiologist & Pathologist working. The application form terms & conditions may be obtained from the office of the Chief Medical Superintendent, S.P. Mukherjee Marg, near Novelty Cinema, Delhi - 110006 from 08.07.2021 to 09.08.2021 up to 13:00 Hrs on any working day. The last date of submission of the application is 09.08.2021 up to 15:30 hrs in the office of the Chief Medical Superintendent S.P. Mukherjee Marg near Novelty Cinema, Delhi - 110006. The EO and the details of the investigation are also available on the Northern Railway website www.nr.indianrailways.gov.in which can be downloaded.

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE 1521/2021

NORTHERN RAILWAY

E-TENDER NOTICE

The Asst. Executive Signal & Telecom Engineer/Const./Northern Railway, New Delhi for and on behalf of the President of India invites open e-tender for the following work:-

1.	Name of work & Place	Outdoor Signalling work in connection with Provision of Loop line with Telecom accessories and shifting of LC-41 at MOZ station iow doubling work of MOZ-TPZ in Delhi Division of Northern Railway
2.	Completion period	03 (Three) Months from the date of issue of LOA
3.	Approx. Cost	Rs. 54,32,974.58
4.	Earnest Money amount	NIL
5.	Date of Opening of tender	Tender will be opened on 03.08.2021 at 11.30 hrs.
6.	Sale/availability of tender document on Rly. Website	Tender documents will be available on IREPS web site i.e. www.ireps.gov.in from 20.07.2021

No.:570-Sig-PS-Tender-116 Dated: 08.07.2021 1519/2021
Serving Customers with a Smile

SHORT TAKES

Power demand in India at all-time high

New Delhi: Power demand in the country touched an all-time high and crossed the 200 GW mark Wednesday amid many states witnessing high temperatures due to delayed monsoon, and easing of coronavirus-related restrictions. According to the latest power ministry data, peak power demand or the highest supply in a day touched an all time high of 200.57 GW on Wednesday. On Tuesday, power demand was at a record high of 197.07 GW. Experts opined that high temperatures in many states due to delayed monsoon and easing of restrictions that were in place to curb coronavirus infections have led to a surge in power demand these days. Last month, peak power demand met or the highest supply in a day witnessed a growth of over 16 per cent at 191.51 GW (recorded on June 30) compared to 164.98 GW recorded in June 2020. The peak power demand was 182.45 GW in June 2019. — *PTI*

Decision on Kanwar yatra soon: Dhami

Dehradun: Uttarakhand chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami has said a decision on the Kanwar yatra will be taken in a day or two. Kanwar Yatra was suspended last year due to the Covid-19 pandemic. "As you are aware Covid has upset everything. Our effort at the moment is to somehow begin the Char Dham Yatra. A decision on Kanwar Yatra is likely in a day or two," Dhami told reporters in Haridwar on Wednesday. The chief minister, who took over on Sunday, last visited Haridwar on Wednesday to perform a puja and take the blessings of saints and seers. An inter-state coordination meeting of police officials here recently suggested that the Kanwar Yatra should remain suspended for the time being in view of a possible third wave of Covid-19. — *PTI*

'Wren & Martin's' precis-writing rules should be adopted'

■ **Continued from Page 1**
it to be completed "within a reasonable time".

This is intrinsically, the court said, linked to administering justice without delays.

The court also noted that the US Supreme Court is more restrictive in its time frame. "The norms and the traditions take care of the requirement of restrictive time frames to address submissions," the post-script said while referring to restrictive practices in European and US Supreme Court.

Pointing out that delays in judicial proceedings has been the bane of our country, the court said that it is "the litigants who bear the costs of our complex and prolonged adjudicatory process".

The court said that it is time to shed its image of being a "court of interim proceedings where final proceedings conclude after ages, only for another round to start in civil proceedings of execution."

Noting that at present Supreme Court has 67,898 pending matters, the bench said, "Our concern is, if this is how the proceedings will go on in the future, it will be very difficult to deal with the post-Covid period, which is likely to see a surge in the number of cases pending adjudication."

Justice Kaul in his post-script said, "We are conscious of equal responsibility" and it is the "need of the hour to write clear and short judgments which the litigant can understand." Referring to a well-known English grammar book of yesteryears, Justice Kaul said, "The Wren & Martin principles of precis-writing must be adopted."

In a poser how this can be achieved, the court said that the practice of lawyers citing precedents going back to judgments of Privy Council or earlier years of the Supreme Court should make way for lawyers taking out all judgments on a particular point of view and submit it to the court in a "nice spiral binding". "There may be times when the complexity of matters gives rise to complex opinions. But we find that judgments are becoming more complex and verbose only on account of the large number of precedents cited and the necessity to deal with them and not merely refer to them, as is done in other countries," Justice Kaul said in his postscript. He further said that if the proposition of law is not doubted by the court, it does not need a precedent unless asked for.

Jyotiraditya: From political wilderness to Modi Cabinet

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY BHOPAL, JULY 8

It has been a fabulous journey for BJP leader Jyotiraditya Scindia in the last 26 months which saw him through the political wilderness to turn a kingmaker in Madhya Pradesh and then become a member in the Union Cabinet on Wednesday. The scion of the Gwalior royal family has stepped into the shoes of his father late Madhavrao Scindia when became civil aviation minister at the Centre, the portfolio the latter had held nearly three decades ago in the P.V. Narasimha Rao government.

"The post that had made 'Dada' (brother) (meaning late Madhavrao Scindia) fly, is now held by Jyotiraditya. Our warm wishes to Mr Scindia for becoming a member of the



Jyotiraditya Scindia

▶ **BARELY TWO** years ago, Mr Scindia faced the threat of going to political wilderness when he suffered a shocking defeat in Guna in 2019

▶ **IN FACT**, the loss for Mr Scindia in Guna was the first for the Scindia dynasty, which once ruled Gwalior state in pre-Independent India

Narendra Modi Cabinet as civil aviation minister. This is an opportunity (for Mr Scindia) to take dreams of brother Madhavrao Scindia to new heights," Yasodhara Raje Scindia, a minister in the Shivraj Singh Chouhan government and aunt of junior Scindia, tweeted in Hindi on Thursday.

Barely two years ago, Mr Scindia faced the threat of going to political wilderness when he suffered a shocking defeat in Guna in 2019 LS elections as a Congress candidate.

In fact, the loss for Mr Scindia in Guna, repre-

sented by him since 2002, was the first for the Scindia dynasty, which once ruled Gwalior state in pre-Independent Central India.

Mr Scindia who had propelled Congress to power in the 2018 Assembly elections in Madhya Pradesh after a gap of 15 years by being the face of the party then, had faced marginalisation in the grand old party, threatening his political career.

His claim for the post of chief minister was ignored by the party high command that had chosen Kamal Nath over him for

the coveted office then.

Mr Scindia's demand for giving him the mantle of Congress in MP had also gone unheeded by the party.

He smelt a conspiracy to deny him Rajya Sabha ticket by Congress in March 2020 to "choke him to death politically".

This had led him to resign from the party in March 2020 bringing down the 15-month-old Kamal Nath government and paving way for BJP to return to power in the state. He along with loyalists, including 22 Congress MLAs, later joined BJP, to begin his second innings in politics. He was sent to Rajya Sabha in March 2020 by BJP.

His writ ran in BJP as he ensured that 14 BJP MLAs, his loyalists, were inducted in the state ministry and some of his other loyalists were accommodated in the organisation.

Assam: Murder accused killed while trying to flee, say cops

MANOJ ANAND GUWAHATI, JULY 8

In yet another incident of alleged attempt of fleeing from police custody, Assam police Wednesday night shot dead one person accused of murdering a home guard constable in Chirang district.

Police said that Abdul Khaleque was arrested on charges of murdering Wahed Ali, a home guard posted at Bijni police station, on Tuesday evening.

Chirang SP Gaurav Upadhyay told reporters, "When we took the accused to the spot where he had allegedly thrown the murder weapon, he

snatched the pistol of sub-divisional police officer Bijni and fled towards jungle and pointed the weapon at the police team."

Pointing out that in self-defence and to recover the snatched weapon the police team was compelled to open fire, he said.

Meanwhile a drug mafia in Dibrugarh, who too tried to escape from the police custody, was shot at and sustained injuries on Wednesday.

It is significant that incidents of police opening fire at alleged criminals while trying to flee from custody have increased in Assam in the recent weeks.

Covid pandemic far from over: PM

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JULY 8

Expressing his concern over the sight of crowded places with people not following Covid-19 norms, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Thursday that there should be no space for carelessness or complacency and that a single mistake would have far-reaching impact and may weaken the fight against the pandemic.

Interacting with members of the council of ministers a day after he reshuffled and expanded it, he said India's fight against the pandemic is underway with full vigour with steady vaccination drive and high testing,

while sounding a note of caution against any complacency.

"PM said that with the Covid infection numbers being fewer than what they were in the recent months, people may want to venture out. However, everyone must remember that the threat of Covid-19 is far from over. Many other nations are seeing surges in infections. The virus is also mutating," a source said.

He told ministers that the aim should not be to instill fear but to request people to keep taking all possible precautions so that the nation is able to move beyond this pandemic in the times to come.

He also asked ministers



Narendra Modi

to reach office on time and channelise all their energy into their ministerial work, saying their focus should be on helping the most deprived people.

He said the new ministers can meet their predecessors and learn from their experience, sources said.

Fresh Covid-19 cases saw an increase on Thursday with 45,892 more people testing positive in the last

New MP governor takes oath

AGE CORRESPONDENT BHOPAL, JULY 8

Tribal leader of BJP in Gujarat and former minister Mangubhai Chaganbhai Patel was here on Thursday took oath as the 30th governor of Madhya Pradesh. Madhya Pradesh high court chief justice Mohammad Rafiq administered him the oath at a simple function at Raj Bhavan here.

Uttar Pradesh governor Anandiben Patel, who held the additional charge of governor of MP since June last year, was present on the occasion.

Chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan and leader of Opposition Kamal Nath were also present.

Six-time MLA Patel (77), a native of Navsari in south Gujarat, was a minister in the BJP government in Gujarat.

1st Zika virus case reported in Kerala

Thiruvananthapuram, July 8: In the first case of Zika virus in Kerala, a 24-year-old pregnant woman has been diagnosed with the mosquito transmitted disease, health minister Veena George said. There are 13 other suspected cases of the virus from Thiruvananthapuram, she said, adding the government was awaiting confirmation from the National Institute of Virology at Pune. Of the 19 samples sent from Thiruvananthapuram, 13 health workers, including doctors, are suspected to be positive for Zika. — *PTI*

15 jammers to be installed in areas along Pak border

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JULY 8

The Union Home Ministry has in an important move, which has serious security implications, decided to immediately release additional funds for installing at least "15 high-frequency jammers" along the India-Pakistan border that will block frequency and signals of Pakistani mobile towers.

Sources claimed that at least ₹100 crore will be released immediately and if required the ministry will provide more funds for this security drive in the border areas.

The decision, sources added, was taken at a high-level meeting chaired by Home Secretary Ajai Bhalla to review prevailing security situation in Jammu and Kashmir, particularly in view of the recent drone attacks on defence installations.

The meeting was also attended by Intelligence Bureau Director Arvind Kumar and J&K police chief Dilbagh Singh.

The location of these 15 high-frequency jammers is being kept a secret as it could warn Pakistani agencies which may then try and shift the location of their mobile towers.

Senior security and Intelligence officials expressed concern over the location of the Pakistani mobile towers close to the Indian border as their frequency could be accessed by residents

● **SECURITY IN J&K** is at all-time high presently in wake of the spate of drone attacks on defence installations in the Jammu and Kaluchak regions

living close to Indo-Pak border.

Realising the seriousness of the issue, the Home Secretary immediately ordered release of additional funds of at least ₹100 crore for installing jammers at 15 different locations in the border region.

If required the Home Ministry would immediately sanction additional funds but will not allow frequency of Pakistani mobile towers to be accessed in India as this is being seen as a major security hazard.

Security in J&K is at all-time high presently in wake of the spate of drone attacks on defence installations in the Jammu and Kaluchak regions.

During the meeting J&K Police chief gave a detailed presentation on the recent drone attacks.

Some top NIA officials also shared details of the investigations conducted so far and they confirmed that at least 1.5 kg of high quality RDX and Nitrate was used in the IED dropped at the Jammu Air Force station. It is also suspected that the drone after dropping the IED went back to Pakistani territory.

Violence mars filing UP block panchayat polls

Lucknow, July 8: Nominations for the posts of the block panchayat head were filed in all 75 Uttar Pradesh districts amid reports of clashes and allegations of snatching of papers at several places. The Samajwadi Party and the Congress have accused BJP workers indulging in violence.

According to a report from Bahraich, supporters of a candidate for Balha block clashed with police when allegedly stopped from entering the nomination room and pelted them with stones, resulting in an injury to a policeman.

A case has been registered and some people have been taken into custody, SDM Ram Asrey Verma said, adding that police resorted to a lathicharge to control the situation. Sitapur district magistrate Vishal Bharadwaj said one person sustained injury after some people allegedly

opened fire during the filing of the papers in Kasmanda block.

The injured was referred to a Lucknow hospital while four people were arrested in this connection, the DM said.

In the Shahpur area of Chargawan block, some people allegedly attacked the BJP-backed candidate and her supporters, prompting police to resort to a lathicharge to control the situation.

A video also surfaced on social media, in which a SP-backed candidate's papers are seen snatched and torn in Ambiyapur block of Badaun in the presence of police, according to reports.

Additional DGP Prashant Kumar said reports of wrongdoings in the filing of nomination papers have been received from 14 places.

Meanwhile, reports of clashes also surfaced from Kannauj, Etah and Gorakhpur. — *PTI*

New mantris take charge, Cabinet announces ₹23,123cr Covid fund

■ **Continued from Page 1**
Northeast in the last seven years in all spheres of life under the leadership of PM Modi is incredible and he as a new minister will try to complete all the pending projects in the region within the stipulated time frame. He also thanked the former DoNER minister Dr Jitendra Singh, present at the takeover, for his stellar role in the overall development of the north-eastern region.

In the culture ministry, Meenakshi Lekhi and Arjun Ram Meghwal also took charge as ministers of state. Ms Lekhi along with Raj Kumar Ranjan Singh also took charge as MoS in the ministry of external affairs. The ministry, headed by foreign minister Dr S. Jaishankar, now has three MoS, the third one being V. Muraleedharan.

Former MoS finance Anurag Thakur, the new Union minister for information and broadcasting and youth affairs, sports, along with the new Union health minister and Mr Tomar, briefed the media about the decisions taken by the new Cabinet.

Riots: SC rejects FB plea against panel summons

■ **Continued from Page 1**
Hrishikesh Roy said, "The Assembly admittedly does not have any power to legislate on aspects of law and order and police... As such, any representative of the petitioners (Ajit Mohan/Facebook) would have the right to not answer questions directly covered by these two fields (law and order and police)."

Pronouncing the judgment, Justice Kaul, however, held, "In the larger context, the concept of peace and harmony goes much beyond law and order and police, more so in view of on-the-ground governance

being in the hands of the Delhi government," and added that the committee has the "right to seek information on any matter related to peace and harmony without encroaching (the) domain of the central laws."

"Social media platforms have the power and potential to influence people across the border. Debates on these platforms, like Facebook, have the potential to polarise the society and less informed individuals may not verify the information and take it as gospel of truth," the court said, commenting on the role of social media.

THE ASIAN AGE

9 JULY 2021

Modi tries to change the optics as polls lie ahead

Prime Minister Narendra Modi shuffled his pack of ministers in so extensive a fashion on Wednesday that the exercise does not fit under the common-place rubric of a “cabinet reshuffle”. The extensive changes, not seen in years, seemed a thoroughly pre-meditated affair.

The PM’s consultations with the ruling party’s organisational leadership, as well as consequential colleagues such as home minister Amit Shah, on likely changes to be made to the Union council of ministers, had been on for many weeks. Looking at the wide-ranging changes made, the confabulations indicate that political considerations linked to elections were the paramount criteria.

The thrusting of a thoroughly deserving Ashwini Vaishnaw, a former IAS officer with a distinguished quality higher education and experience as a senior corporate professional as well as entrepreneur, into the Union cabinet although he joined the BJP only two years ago, can only be called a happy happenstance.

Not too much by way of political messaging need be read into this. For the sake of the country, this minister entrusted with key portfolios, will perform well. But we should be cautioned that there is no direct correlation between high-grade education and success as a minister even in the case of those with experience of administration, as is the case with Mr Vaishnaw.

The PM has placed emphasis on OBC, dalit and tribal communities in states, especially UP, Gujarat and Bihar, and noticeably lessened representation of the so-called upper castes

If Mr Vaishnaw’s case is a fluke, the case of urban affairs minister Hardeep Singh Puri is one of deserved promotion to cabinet status. Mr Puri is energetic, articulate, and politically combative principally with those that the PM likes to combat with — namely, ear-marked Opposition leaders. He has taken on the Central Vista project, of which the PM is deeply enamoured, with a rare passion at the risk of flying in the face of the con-

sidered view of a wide array of professional experts. That has evidently stood him in good stead in addition to his other qualities.

No tears are expected to be shed for those who were shown the door, though the shunting out of a few high-profile individuals such as Ravishankar Prasad and Prakash Javadekar, besides Harsh Vardhan, appears intriguing. Equally intriguing to some is the continuation of some in the cabinet committee on security (ministers of home, defence, finance and foreign affairs).

It is perhaps fair to say that in so centralised a government as the one which Mr Modi presides over, all except the most routine decisions are taken at the apex level. From that angle, ministers are generally chosen — or dropped — for considerations relating to social constituencies and likely electoral value in future polls.

Important state elections are due in early 2022 and 2023 and the Lok Sabha poll in 2024. There is not much time left to refurbish with the help of caste or regional groupings.

Thus, the PM has placed additional emphasis on OBC, dalit and tribal communities in different states, especially UP, Gujarat and Bihar, and noticeably lessened the representation of individuals of the so-called upper castes. This in part may explain the cases of Mr Prasad and Mr Javadekar.

Before the pandemic, the Modi dispensation had bent its energy in unproductive, ideological directions through issues such as CAA and triple talaq, raising the storm in Kashmir, and mishandling key economic decision. With polls looming, the changes in the Union council of ministers at least serves as new optics.

A dream run for Mithali

Not without good reason was she nicknamed “Lady Tendulkar”. The batswoman of the Indian women’s cricket team Mitahli Raj has displayed a similar appetite for scoring. She has even beaten the master batsman for defying age at the batting crease by playing on into her 39th year and outscoring the batswomen of the world in accumulating 10,337 international runs across the three formats and overtaking England’s Charlotte Edwards. Making her international debut in 1999 at the tender age of 16 much like Sachin who she idolised, Mithali has stayed the course while overcoming the vicissitudes and not without suffering the personality politics that sport invariably wallows in.

Once accused of putting self before team and slow scoring not in tune with collective priorities while being dropped down the batting order in WT20Is from her regular opener’s slot, Mithali announced her retirement from the shortest format but went on to conquer peaks in Tests and ODIs. Her brushes with the current coach and team mates may have marked a sordid chapter in the history of women’s cricket in India, which for long has been the ultimate amateur sport to play which cricketers of the fairer sex have had to make several sacrifices. To her credit, she made up with everyone and even today captains the Test and ODI teams to try and fulfil the highest team ambitions.

An opening “batter”, to use the preferred unisex modern day term they borrowed from baseball, Mithali has an orthodox style and prefers to play in the classic V while showing a penchant for quick scoring by using her skills and power to play to the inside. It is only lately that women cricketers of India have received due recognition in decent match fees, annual contracts and training and travel commensurate with their efforts though their overall treatment may be far below what true gender equality might entail. BCCI taking over the women’s game has invested it with resources but one would hope that Mithali and her cricketing colleagues would get greater opportunities to follow their passion.

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Faizan Mustafa



The ‘recusal’ in Mamata’s case: Can a judge be truly impartial?

Justice Kausik Chanda of the Calcutta high court, in his 13-page order, finally recused himself from hearing the election petition of West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee against the BJP’s Suvennu Adhikari, who was declared the winner in the prestigious Nandigram constituency. The basic argument was that the judge’s relationship with the BJP was “comprehensive and inextricably intertwined, personal, professional, ideological and a long standing continuous one”. He headed the BJP’s legal cell prior to his appointment as additional solicitor general in 2015.

What is bias? Whose perspective of bias matters? Whether a judge in spite of his close association with a political party can still be impartial, particularly against a chief minister who opposed his confirmation as a judge, were some of the vital questions involved in this case.

Justice Chanda initially had not agreed to recuse himself, saying that doing so would mean giving in to a media trial. But now he has finally decided to recuse in order to save the judiciary, as he says a national con-

troversy had been deliberately created and the people involved in this case belong to the highest echelon of state politics. He also said that a “trial before this bench will be a tool to aggrandise themselves”. Using extremely strong words, he went on to say that “it would be contrary to the interest of justice if such an unwarranted squabble continues along with the trial of the case, and such attempts should be thwarted at the Threshold”. However, by imposing a ₹5 lakh fine on Ms Banerjee, the act of recusal has lost some of its grace, though some of the tweets against the judge were condemnable. Similarly, going to the Chief Justice for transferring case to another bench was in really bad taste.

The impartiality of a judge is the first principle of a fair judicial process. Though it is difficult to define impartiality in exact and precise terms, every judge must keep in mind what American judge Learned Hand had once said: “What do I mean by impartiality? I mean you must not introduce yourself, your own preconceived notions about what is right.”

Recusal of a judge is sought when there are doubts on his impartiality.

In fact, it is the foremost duty of a judge to remove every sense of injustice and the possibility of appearance of bias not only from the minds of the parties but even the public at large, or at least well-informed observers of the judicial process.

A judge should ideally recuse from a proceeding in which his impartiality “might reasonably be questioned”. To begin with initially, as was held in Sir Nicholas Bacon (1563), a judge was expected to recuse if he had a “direct pecuniary interest” in the matter before him. In the United States, in 1792 itself, recusal principles based on British common law were given statutory recognition.

Subsequently, the recusal law was further broadened with the “automatic disqualification” becoming the rule. It was termed as the “bright line rule” and covered clear-cut cases of bias. In case of appearance of bias, arguments should be made, and this was called the “rule of reason or per se rule”.

Bias sways judgments as it is a particular influential power leading inclination of mind in a particular direction. Lord Esher in Allinson vs General Council of Medical

Education Registration (1894) had observed that the question was not that the judge was in fact biased. Lord Hewart famously observed in *Rex vs Sussex (1924)* that a reasonable suspicion of bias was enough to exclude a judge.

Whose perspective of bias should really matter? The Supreme Court, in the Ranjit Thakur case (1987), observed that “as to the tests of likelihood of bias, what is relevant is the reasonableness of apprehension in the mind of the party. The proper approach for the judge is not to look at his own mind and ask himself, however honestly, “am I biased”; but to look to the mind of party before him”. Though Justice Chanda did raise this question in Para 16 of his order, in Para 17 he said the “appearance of impartiality should not be viewed from the perspective of a common man”. Justice Chanda said it was for the court to decide that on the given facts, whether a well-informed, reasonable man would perceive bias. He explicitly observed: “The past association of a judge with a political party by itself cannot form apprehension of bias.” He even refused to attach any weight to the argument that Mamata Banerjee had

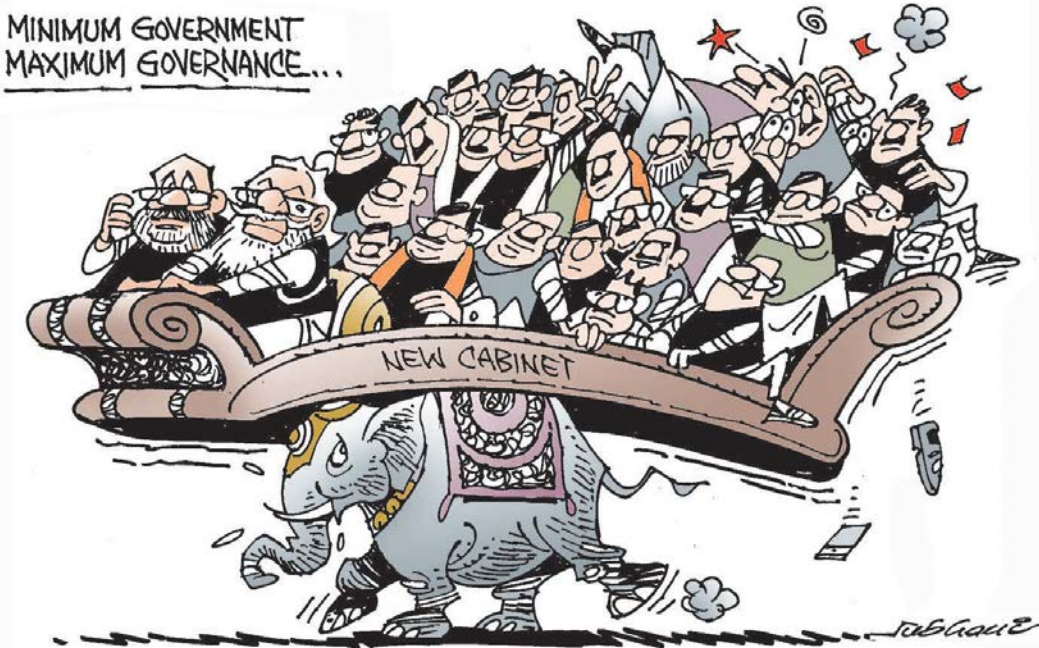
opposed his confirmation as a permanent judge.

Two Supreme Court judges, Justices Indira Banerjee and Aniruddha Bose, had on their own recently recused themselves from the Narada case. Former Supreme Court judge Arun Mishra’s refusal to recuse from the Constitution Bench in the Indore Development Authority case (2019), where his own judgment was under review, was a bad precedent.

All human beings are entitled to see themselves as fair and unbiased. But in the judicial process, judges don’t have that privilege as it’s not their assessment that matters, but it’s for others to evaluate their fairness and impartiality. The guarantee of due process is violated if people think the judge being a fallible human being in this particular matter may not hold his balance. Justice Chanda therefore deserves appreciation as propriety, not legality, was the real question, as justice is after all rooted in people’s confidence.

The writer is an expert in constitutional law and vice-chancellor of Nalsar University of Law, Hyderabad

Subhani



Loans, not relief: A raw deal for the urban poor



Karan Thapar

As I See It

I am rarely surprised when people in government say silly things. It happens all over the world with a frequency that’s quite frightening. Indeed, I sometimes wonder if it’s a necessary qualification for the high office they hold? But a recent op-ed by our own chief economic adviser, arguing that government-backed loans are a better way of helping the urban poor than an employment guarantee scheme, is in a class of its own. Krishnamurthy Subramanian’s article stands out for two reasons — the convoluted logic of his arguments as well as the moral ambivalence of his conclusion.

The CEA’s article begins by arguing that an urban version of MGNREGA, the rural employment guarantee scheme, would be the wrong way of helping the urban poor devastated by the second wave of Covid-19. First, he claims, there are “large inefficiencies that stem in normal times from the permanent entitlement” that an MGNREGA-style scheme creates. He doesn’t say what these are but still insists they are “hard to unwind”. And because an urban job guarantee “would suffer the same fate” he’s against it.

Second, he argues, urban skill levels vary and, therefore, a “one wage for all will not work as (it does) with rural MGNREGA”. This is his second reason for ruling it out. Third, he says, “an urban-job guarantee programme would... increase migration into urban areas”. This is because the urban wage level would have to be higher than a rural one. That, he believes, is the magnet which would attract rural hordes to our cities.

Frankly, these are spurious arguments. For a

start, the “inefficiencies” are neither specified nor explained. I wonder why? Then, the claim that because skills vary wages must also differ begs the question why. That isn’t the case in rural India, where MGNREGA pays landowners the same as landless labour. More tellingly, in Western democracies, the unemployment benefit is the same whether you’re an out-of-work CEO or a factory floor technician. So why should it have to be different in urban India? And the claim that an urban MGNREGA would increase migration is, at best, only one reason why rural-to-urban migration happens and, arguably, by no means the most important.

However, despite the deficiencies in his argument, this blithe dismissal of the idea of an urban MGNREGA opens the way for the CEA to claim a better way of helping the urban poor is a government-backed loan scheme run by micro-finance institutions. This is because MFIs have “about two crore borrowers” from “urban and semi-urban areas”. Therefore, he concludes, “MFIs have a large reach to the urban poor”. Because the urban poor are migrants from other states, an entitlement-based scheme’s reach would be less. But he simply asserts this. He provides no proof.

Now comes the morally ambivalent bit of the CEA’s logic. “When a loan is given by (an) MFI and fully guaranteed by the government, this scheme serves as a quasi-cash transfer targeted to the genuinely distressed”. Why? Because he has assumed that it won’t or doesn’t have to be returned. “This category of borrowers will avail

the loan and default on it”. He’s also assuming that the government or the MFI concerned will accept that outcome and not take strenuous measures to recover the money. Again, why? Because, as far as the MFI is concerned, the loan is guaranteed by the government.

So, now, what does this amount to? This is where my moral concerns are writ large.

First, the CEA has assumed that the urban poor will seek loans to alleviate their distress even though they can see no credible possibility of repaying them. A few, no doubt, may but the majority — particularly the very poor — are unlikely to add to their burdens when they are already down on their knees. Instead, as migrants from rural India, they would probably opt to go home. Has he forgotten the tens of millions who did just that last year? Perhaps his eyes were averted? Or perhaps he did not want to see? After all, you can pretend to be blind even when your eyes are wide open.

Second — and this is truly inexplicable — he’s cheerfully assumed that if the urban poor do incur debt they’ll feel no obligation to repay it. This is why he says such loans “work effectively as a quasi-cash transfer to the genuinely distressed”. But on what basis does he make that assumption? Grameen Bank — and let’s not forget our own MFIs — succeeded because the poor honour their debts. It’s the rich who don’t. Think of Vijay Mallya, Nirav Modi and Mehul Choksi.

Third, an employment

guarantee scheme is a right, like the dole is in the West. It’s guaranteed by the law and upheld by Article 21 of the Constitution which confers the right to a decent life. A loan, on the other hand, is given at someone’s discretion after evaluating the borrower’s capacity to repay. You also have to request for one and it could be refused. It’s not a right. Yet the CEA believes the latter is superior.

Fourth, as Jayati Ghosh points out, the CEA wants the poor to take on debt they can’t repay instead of the government taking on debts it can. And he calls this welfare!

The truth — but that’s not something the CEA is likely to admit to — is very different. It’s almost entirely to do with the cost the government is prepared to bear to help the urban poor. An urban MGNREGA would cost a substantial amount. Guaranteeing a loan is incomparably cheaper. But that’s not all. The government will only have to pay when and if a default happens. So, the impact on the fiscal deficit could be next year or even the year after. By then, with luck, the economy could be growing faster and the deficit easier to manage.

There’s also something else the CEA won’t acknowledge. This is a mean-spirited, low-hearted and unkind way of treating your fellow citizens. Boris Johnson and Rishi Sunak would have been kicked out of office if this is how they had responded to urban unemployment in Britain. If Mr Subramanian had the guts, he would have said that we can’t afford an urban MGNREGA which is why we’re not implementing one. Because that’s the truth.

Alas, he has chosen to behave like Marie Antoinette. She offered cake when there was no bread. He’s offering loans to people who can’t afford debt!

The writer is a television commentator and anchor

LETTERS

POWER OF YOUTH

Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s big-bang expansion of his cabinet has infuriated some while pleasantly surprising others. The 53 ministries will be handled by 30 cabinet ministers and two ministers of state with independent charge. Former CM of Assam Sarbananda Sonowal and the architect of the BJP government in Madhya Pradesh, Jyotiraditya Scindia, getting Cabinet rank was on the cards. The silver lining is that this is the youngest-ever Modi team.

N.J. Ravi Chander
Bengaluru

SUNSET AT SW19

IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN the last time the world has seen the legendary Roger Federer at the Centre Court of his favourite Grand Slam tournament. Days from his 40th birthday, Federer, an eight-time champion on the grass, looked second best to Poland’s 24-year-old Hubert Hurkacz who was playing a quarter-final match at a major for the first time in his career. In less than two hours, he lost in straight sets to Hurkacz, the last set to love. Though he got a standing ovation on his way out for giving the world 22 years of beautiful Wimbledon memories, this abrupt ending is shocking and, perhaps, simply unbearable.

Sankar Paul
Chakdaha, West Bengal

SOFT TARGET

THIS REFERS TO the news, “Wife of late Union minister found murdered, 2 arrested” (July 8, 2021). Former Supreme Court lawyer Kitty Kumaramangalam’s murder is as tragic as it is horrific. If such an incident happens to the wife of a former minister, what of the safety of the ordinary people? When old, sick people are left alone, they become soft targets for miscreants. Many such incidents are happening. This problem is less frequent in the case of joint families.

Sugata Tripathi
Kolkata

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

SHORT TAKES

EXILED TURKISH
SCRIBE ATTACKED
OUTSIDE HOME

Ankara, July 8: A Turkish journalist, who is critical of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's government and has been living in exile in Germany, was injured after being attacked outside his home by three men who reportedly warned him to stop writing.

Erk Acarer, a columnist for Turkey's independent *Birgun* newspaper, said in a video posted on Twitter that the attack occurred late Wednesday in the courtyard of his home outside Berlin.

He sustained some swelling on his head and was kept at a hospital for several hours for observation.

4TH RAJAPAKSA
SIBLING JOINS
LANKAN GOVT

Colombo, July 8: Basil Rajapaksa, the youngest of the four Rajapaksa siblings, was sworn in as Sri Lanka's Finance Minister on Thursday, marking the further consolidation of political power by the powerful clan in the island nation.

Basil, 70, became the fourth Rajapaksa brother after President Gotabaya, 72, Prime Minister Mahinda, 75, and Agricultural Minister Chamal, 78, to enter the Cabinet.

He took the oath before President Gotabaya. With the entry of Basil in the Cabinet, there are as many as seven family members in the top echelons of the government.

The Finance Ministry until Thursday morning was under PM Mahinda Rajapaksa. Mahinda has now been given a new portfolio of economic policy and plan implementation.

BELARUS GOVT
BLOCKS TOP
MEDIA OUTLET

Kyiv (Ukraine), July 8: The Belarusian authorities on Thursday blocked the website of a leading online media outlet and detained several of its journalists, the latest move in a sweeping crackdown on dissent and independent media in the ex-Soviet nation.

Belarus' Information Ministry said it has blocked *Nasha Niva's* website after the Prosecutor General's office had accused it of posting unspecified unlawful information.

The Belarusian Association of Journalists (BAJ) said that the authorities conducted searches at *Nasha Niva's* offices, detained its chief editor Yavor Martynovich and editor Andrey Skurko and searched their apartments. Another four *Nasha Niva* journalists couldn't be reached.

SAUDI PRINCE
MEETS BLINKEN IN
LOW-KEY US VISIT

Washington, July 8: Saudi Arabia's deputy defence minister met Wednesday with Secretary of State Antony Blinken on a low-key visit to Washington focused partly on Yemen as the United States takes a greater distance with its ally.

Khalid bin Salman — the younger brother of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, who US intelligence says ordered the murder of US-based journalist Jamal Khashoggi — was the highest-ranking visitor from the kingdom to visit Washington since President Joe Biden took office.

The State Department said the prince met senior State Department officials Victoria Nuland and Derek Chollet and that Blinken participated in only part of the meeting — similar to Prince Khalid's reception a day earlier.

BHANDARI UK
EXTRADITION
HEARING IN FEB.

London, July 8: A UK court presiding over the extradition case of Sanjay Bhandari, an accused arms dealer wanted in India on money laundering and tax evasion charges, on Thursday set the trial date in the case for February 2022.

District Judge Michael Snow heard that the case involves two extradition requests from the Indian authorities for Bhandari, the first related to money laundering and the second to tax evasion.

The 59-year-old, who was present in the dock at Westminster Magistrates' Court in London for the case management hearing, spoke only to confirm his name and to say that he does not consent to being extradited to India.

He will remain on conditional bail until the extradition hearing next year, with some relaxed bail conditions agreed by the court on Thursday.

Fire after blast at major Dubai port

Police find blaze occurred on a cargo ship at dockside 14 after visiting the incident site

Dubai, July 8: An explosion inside a container on a ship docked at the Dubai port caused a massive fire on the vessel and shook the gleaming commercial hub of the UAE, authorities said on Thursday.

The blast occurred in the container aboard the vessel, preparing to dock away from the Jebel Ali Port's main shipping line at around midnight on Wednesday. There were no reported deaths or injuries and the fire is under control, authorities said.

There were 14 sailors aboard the ship, who were

evacuated safely. "A fire has been reported to have broken out in a container within a ship anchored in Jebel Ali Port. A Dubai Civil Defence team is working to put out the blaze," Dubai Media Office said in a tweet on their official account. Director-General of Dubai Civil Defence Major General Rashid Thani Al Matrooshi said the Jebel Ali Port fire has been brought fully under control and the cooling process is underway. Teams took 40 minutes to control the blaze.

The blaze sent up giant

orange flames on the vessel at the Jebel Ali Port, the ninth-largest port in the world and the biggest in the region. The blast was heard across parts of Dubai, with residents hearing a loud explosion, according to witnesses.

Panicked residents filmed from their high-rises as a fiery ball illuminated the night sky. Residents from Marina, JVC, and Emirates Hills said that they heard a loud explosion that shook their doors and windows. The Dubai Media Office posted a video of firefighters putting out the

● **THE BLAST** occurred in the container aboard the vessel, preparing to dock away from the Jebel Ali Port's main shipping line at around midnight on Wednesday.

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blaze at the port.

Lt General Abdullah Khalifa Al Marri, Commander-in-Chief at Dubai

Police went to the fire site and said the fire occurred on a cargo ship at dockside 14, *Gulf News* reported.

"The ship was carrying 130 containers. Three containers contained flammable materials. There were no explosives inside it or radioactive materials" Lt Gen Al Marri said.

An investigation is ongoing to determine the reason behind the fire. Jebel Ali Port Authorities said they took all necessary measures to ensure the normal movement of ships in the port. Operated by the Dubai-based DP World, the port can berth some of the world's largest ships. The port is not only a critical global cargo hub

but a lifeline for Dubai and surrounding emirates. DP World describes Jebel Ali Port as a "gateway hub" and a "vital link in the global trade network" that connects eastern and western markets.

The company did not immediately issue any public statement on the blast. Port Jebel Ali was constructed in the late 1970s to supplement the facilities at Port Rashid. Dubai is the region's trade, business and tourism hub. The city is also one of the safest cities in the world.

— PTI

Taliban surround
city, Kabul sends
in commandos

Herat, July 8: Plumes of smoke billowed over a provincial Afghan capital Thursday as fighting raged between the Taliban and government forces for a second straight day.

The government flew hundreds of commandos into Qala-i-Naw, in the northwestern province of Badghis, the first provincial capital to face an all-out assault by the Taliban since the United States stepped up its troop withdrawal.

With the US pullout "90 percent complete", according to the Pentagon, the insurgents have launched a blistering campaign to capture new territory, and fears are mounting that Afghan forces will be stretched without vital American air support.

Video obtained by AFP showed thick smoke billowing over the city, and the sound of gunfire could be heard. Badghis health official Abdul Latif Rostaee said at least 10 civilians had been taken to hospital since the fighting erupted.

"The Taliban have resumed their attacks from several directions with light and heavy weapons," Badghis Governor Hessesamuddin Shams said on Thursday.

"Our security forces are bravely fighting them and the enemy is being pushed back. They are fleeing. We will give a hard blow to the enemy," On Wednesday, the Taliban briefly seized the police headquarters and the local office of the country's spy

BORIS: MOST UK
TROOPS OUT OF
AFGHANISTAN

London, July 8: Prime Minister Boris Johnson confirmed Thursday that most British troops have left Afghanistan, almost 20 years after the UK and other Western countries sent troops into the country to engage in what they described as a "war on terror."

Johnson stressed that the threat posed by al-Qaida to the UK has substantially diminished, but he sidestepped questions about whether the hasty military exodus by the country and its Nato allies risks undoing the work of nearly two decades or leaves Afghanistan vulnerable to the Taliban, which has made rapid advances in many northern districts.

He declined to give details about the troop withdrawal, citing security reasons. But he said that "all British troops in Afghanistan are now returning home".

— AP

agency, but were later pushed back.

Qala-i-Naw resident Aziz Tawakoli said Taliban fighters were still roaming the city, however.

"You can see them going up and down the streets on their motorcycles," he said.

— AFP

Zuma turns himself
in for prison term

Nkandla (South Africa), July 8: Former South African president Jacob Zuma turned himself over to police early Thursday to begin serving a 15-month prison term.

Just minutes before the midnight deadline for police to arrest him, Zuma left his Nkandla home in a convoy of vehicles. Zuma decided to hand himself over to authorities to obey the order from the country's highest court, the Constitutional Court, that he should serve a prison term for contempt of court.

President Zuma has decided to comply with the incarceration order. He is on his way to hand himself into a Correctional Services Facility in KZN (KwaZulu-Natal province)," said a tweet posted by the Zuma Foundation.

Soon after the South African police confirmed

that Zuma was in their custody.

Zuma's decision to obey the Constitutional Court order comes after a week of rising tensions over his prison sentence.

Zuma was sentenced to 15 months in prison for contempt because he defied a court order for him to testify before a judicial commission investigating widespread allegations of corruption during his time as the country's president, from 2009 to 2018.

"The Constitutional Court ordered that if Zuma did not voluntarily hand himself over to the police then the police should arrest the country's former president by the end of the day Wednesday.

In a last-minute plea to avoid going to prison, Zuma's lawyers had written to the acting chief justice requesting that his arrest be suspended.

— AP

Israeli Army demolishes Palestinian's house



An Israeli army unit demolishes the house of Palestinian American Muntasser Shalaby, accused of being involved in a deadly attack on Israelis in May, using controlled explosions in the West Bank village of Turmus Ayya, north of Ramallah, on Thursday.

— AP/PTI

New Covid-19 drug target found

Washington, July 8: Scientists have identified a novel target for a drug that can treat the SARS-CoV-2 virus, which causes Covid-19, and also help tackle a future Coronavirus pandemic. The researchers at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine in the US noted that scientists should prepare for a possible next coronavirus pandemic.

"God forbid we need this, but we will be ready," said Karla Satchell, professor of microbiology-immunology at Feinberg School of Medicine. The team previously mapped the structure of a virus protein called nsp16, which is present in all Coronaviruses. The latest study, published in the journal *Science Signaling*, provides critical information that could aid drug development against future Coronaviruses as well as SARS-CoV-2.

OMAN SUSPENDS FLIGHTS FROM 24
COUNTRIES, INCLUDING INDIA, PAK

Oman suspends flights from 24 countries, including India, Pakistan

Dubai, Jul 8
Oman on Thursday indefinitely suspended passengers flights from 24 countries, including India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, as part of the Gulf nation's efforts to arrest the spread of the coronavirus.

The flights have been suspended until further notice, the sultanate's official Twitter account for countering COVID-19 announced.

The decision was taken

as part of the country's measures to contain the coronavirus pandemic, it said.

The other countries on the list include the UK, Tunisia, Lebanon, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Brunei, Singapore, Indonesia, the Philippines, Ethiopia, Sudan, Tanzania, South Africa, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Guinea, Colombia, Argentina and Brazil.

The ban on arrivals from some of these countries has already been in place since April 24.

"There is great need for new approaches to drug discovery to combat the SARS-CoV-2/Covid-19 pandemic and infections from

future Coronaviruses," Satchell said. The idea behind the future drug would be that it works early in the infection.

"If somebody around you gets the Coronavirus, you would run to the drug-store to get your medication and take it for three or four days. If you were sick, you wouldn't get as sick," Satchell explained. The researchers mapped three new protein structures in three-dimensional views and discovered a secret identifier in the machinery that helps the virus hide from the immune system.

They found a Coronavirus-specific pocket in the protein, nsp16, that binds the virus-genomic fragment held in place by a metal ion. The fragment is used by the Coronavirus as the template for all the viral building blocks. There is potential to make a drug to fit this unique pocket that would block function of this protein from the Coronavirus, the researchers said.

— PTI

36 U.S. STATES
FILE LAWSUIT
AGAINST GOOGLE

Washington, July 8: As many as 36 US states and Washington DC have filed a lawsuit against Google, alleging that the search engine giant's control over its Android app store violates antitrust laws.

The lawsuit alleges that through a series of exclusionary contracts and other anticompetitive conduct in the Google Play Store, Google has deprived Android device users of robust competition that could lead to greater choice and innovation, as well as significantly lower prices for mobile apps.

New York Attorney General James and the coalition co-led by the attorneys general of Utah, North Carolina, and Tennessee also accuse Google of requiring app developers selling in-app digital content through apps purchased via Google's Play Store to use Google Billing as a middleman, forcing app consumers to pay Google's commission up to 30 per cent indefinitely.

Google has served as the gatekeeper of the internet for many years, but, more recently, it has also become the gatekeeper of our digital devices resulting in all of us paying more for the software we use every day, James alleged.

Once again, we are seeing Google use its dominance to illegally quash competition and profit to the tune of billions.

— PTI

FACIAL | RECOGNITION

China introduced rules to stop worsening eyesight, online addiction

Midnight patrol to root out underage gamers

Beijing, July 8: Chinese tech giant Tencent has rolled out a facial recognition "midnight patrol" function to root out children who are masquerading as adults to get around a government curfew on underage gamers.

China bans people under 18 from playing online games between 10pm and 8am, part of a raft of rules introduced to weed out the

excesses of gaming culture among the youth, from worsening eyesight to online addiction.

But many young players have navigated the restrictions by using gaming accounts registered by adults.

Online gaming giant Tencent said this week moved to close those loopholes by implementing facial verification checks on anyone

● **THE NEW** functions will initially be used on around 60 mobile games, including the massively popular "Honour of Kings" multiplayer battle game, which boasts over 100 million daily users.

playing with an adult ID after the curfew.

Tencent also said it would start requiring users to pass a facial recognition test when changing safety settings designed to let parents limit their chil-

dren's game usage, as "some children have stolen their parents' phones" to modify the settings in order to play games.

"Kids, put your phones away and go to sleep," the company said in a social

media post Tuesday.

The new functions will initially be used on around 60 mobile games, including the massively popular "Honour of Kings" multiplayer battle game, which boasts over 100 million daily users.

Chinese regulators have scrambled to keep up with the country's voracious appetite for video games, especially those played on

mobile phones, which have been blamed for social ills including online addiction and near-sightedness in children.

Since 2018 the government has introduced a host of new rules, including harsher restrictions on virtual depictions of violence as well as a quota on the number of online games approved each year.

— AFP

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	52568.94	-0.92
Nifty 50	15727.90	-0.96
S&P 500*	4,328.41	-0.68
Dollar (₹)	74.71	-0.10
Pound Sterling (₹)	102.96	0.07
Euro (₹)	88.41	-0.16
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	46,981.9	0.01
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	73.95	0.71
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.124	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.271	-0.050

Sanofi, GSK get nod for phase 3 trial of vaccine

Sanofi and GSK have received approval for their phase 3 clinical study in India to assess the safety, efficacy and immunogenicity of their adjuvanted recombinant-protein Covid-19 vaccine candidate. The randomised, double-blind study will include over 35,000 volunteers across sites in the US, Asia, Africa, and Latam. "India is participating in Sanofi Pasteur's pivotal Phase 3 study," its country head Annapurna Das said.

Mercedes clocks 65% growth in retail sales in H1



Mercedes-Benz reported a 65 per cent growth in its retail sales in India at 4,857 units in the first half (H1) of 2021 driven by new launches and strong demand for top-end cars. The firm had sold 2,948 units in the first half of 2020. "Our H1 2021 sales growth is in line with the market sentiments and strongly underlines a continuing high customer demand for models," Martin Schwenk, MD and CEO at Mercedes-Benz India, said.

Amazon prime day sale on July 26 and 27

Amazon India said its annual prime day sale will be held on July 26 and 27, with new launches from top brands and small and medium businesses. There will be over 300 new product launches from top brands such as Samsung, Xiaomi, boAt, Intel, Wipro, Bajaj, Eureka Forbes, Adidas and more. Over a million artisans from Karigar and 680,000 women entrepreneurs from Amazon Saheli will be at Amazon Launchpad.

CIL to buy Russian rope shovels for over ₹1,640 crore

State-owned CIL said it has inked a pact for purchase of 11 Russian rope shovels for nearly Rs 1,642 crore. Electric rope shovels are needed in opencast mines for loading material. "In an ongoing process of modernising its ageing heavy earth moving machinery fleet, Coal India Ltd (CIL) on Wednesday closed a deal valued at nearly Rs 1,462 crore for purchase of 11 20-cubic metre electric rope shovels," the PSU said.

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Global benchmark to cease this year Banks told to shift from Libor by Dec.

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, JULY 8

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Thursday asked banks and financial institutions to stop entering into Libor-linked contracts "as soon as practicable" and latest by December 31, 2021. This is because the London Interbank Offered Rate (Libor), which is the global benchmark for borrowing, is expected to cease at the end of 2021. India's exposure in the form of borrowings, bonds, FCNR deposits and derivative contracts through Libor is estimated to be around \$331 billion, according to the RBI November Monthly Bulletin. "Banks and financial institutions are encouraged to cease entering into new financial contracts that reference Libor as a benchmark and instead use any widely accepted alternative reference rate (ARR), as soon as practicable and in any case by December 31, 2021," the RBI said in a statement.



In 2012, Libor was found to have been manipulated by individuals at various financial institutions. The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), UK, in a press statement on March 5, 2021 announced that all Libor settings will either cease to be provided by any administrator or no longer be representative. The FCA said it will stop publishing one-week and two-month US Dollar Libor after December 31, 2021, while rates for the remaining tenors will be discontinued after June 30, 2023.

In its advisory, the RBI asked banks and financial institutions to incorporate robust fallback clauses in

all financial contracts that reference Libor and the maturity of which is after the announced cessation date of the Libor settings. It also asked banks to cease using the Mumbai Interbank Forward Outright Rate (Mifor), a benchmark which references the Libor, as soon as practicable and in any event by December 31, 2021. "In this context, Financial Benchmarks India Pvt Ltd (FBIL) has started publishing daily adjusted Mifor rates from June 15, 2021 and modified Mifor rates from June 30, 2021 which can be used for legacy contracts and fresh contracts, respectively," it said.

Car, SUV, two-wheeler sales jump in June

MICHAEL GONSALVES PUNE, JULY 8

All categories of vehicle retails in June rose on a year-on-year basis with two-wheelers rising by 17 per cent, three-wheelers, by 22 per cent, passenger vehicles, by 43 per cent, tractors, by 14 per cent

and commercial vehicles up by a massive 236 per cent—on a very low base due to non-availability of BS-6 vehicles,—the Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations, or Fada said on Thursday. It attributed the improvement in monthly sales to 'reopening of

most states, except the ones in the south, and high pent-up demand." Fada said total vehicle sales last month rose 22.62 per cent year-on-year on a low base. When compared to June 2019, which was a regular pre-Covid month, retail sales are still down by 28.32 per cent.

Discretionary spend picks up in June

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, JULY 8

With the easing of lockdowns in June, signs of a faster recovery are visible across some of the discretionary items compared to last year. During the localised lock-downs in April and May, the consumer purchases were largely restricted to essential products. However, lifting of restrictions in many of the markets and relatively less uncertainty have led to recovery in discretionary spending in June compared to the same month last year. Brokerage Emkay Global Financial Services expects companies in the discretionary segment, including alcohol & beverages, paints and quick service restaurants, to post year-on-year growth in the June quarter. "Steady demand in April and a strong recovery in June, partly led by pent-up demand and inventory

stocking, should have reduced the lockdown impact during May," it said in a report. Similarly, among consumer durables, cooling products saw the recovery starting in June, with the last 15 days seeing a healthy rebound as heat waves continued in North India, the report said. Jewellery and automobiles also saw demand pick-up. Kalyan Jewellers says though only 80 per cent showrooms were open in April, revenue for the month was similar to pre-Covid April 2019. "We have witnessed encouraging recovery trends in customer footfalls and revenue in our showrooms that have reopened...Our revenues in June 2021 were significantly higher than in the prior year, adjusted for store operational days," said Kalyan Jewellers. The automobile dealers federation (Fada) also reported high automobile sales in June.

MUTUAL FUND AUM AT ₹34 L CR

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, JULY 8

The mutual fund industry's average assets under management (AUM) rose to a new-all time high of over Rs 34.10 lakh crore compared to Rs 32.99 lakh crore in May, with major equity-oriented and hybrid schemes receiving healthy inflows in June, data released by the Association of Mutual Funds in India showed. Equity-oriented schemes received inflows of Rs 5,988 crore, lower than Rs 10,083 crore in May, while hybrid schemes received inflows of Rs 12,361 crore. "With a net inflow of Rs 5,988.17 crore in June, equity-oriented mutual funds witnessed net inflows for the fourth consecutive month. While it is lower than the net inflow of Rs 10,082.98 crore witnessed in May, with the net inflows in March, April, May and now in June, clearly investors are gaining their conviction back on the equity markets," said Himanshu Srivastava, associate director at Morningstar India.

LIC to have CEO & MD, but no chairman

New Delhi, July 8: The Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) will now have the post of chief executive officer and managing director instead of the chairman position, with the government making changes to the rules ahead of the insurer's initial public offering this fiscal.

The changes have been made by the Department of Financial Services under the finance ministry by amending Life Insurance Corporation of India (Employees) Pension (Amendment) Rules. Besides, some other rules under LIC Act, 1956, have been amended.

"Chief Executive and Managing Director means the Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director appointed by the Central Government under section 4 of the Act (LIC Act 1956)," according to a gazette notification issued on July 7.

To facilitate the listing of the insurance behemoth, the government has already approved raising its authorised share capital to Rs 25,000 crore.

Besides, the Department of Economic Affairs recently amended the Securities Contracts (Regulation) Rules.

Companies that have a market capitalisation of more than Rs 1 lakh crore at the time of listing can now sell just five per cent of their shares. —PTI

Zomato's ₹9,375-cr IPO priced in ₹72-₹76 band

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, JULY 8

Restaurant aggregator and food delivery firm Zomato's founders announced a Rs 9,375- crore initial public offering of equity shares in price band of Rs 72 to Rs 76 per share of Re 1 face value.

The mega public issue, one of the largest IPO by a private company, opens on July 14 and will close on July 16.

The public issue comprises fresh shares worth Rs 9,000 crore and an offer for sale of shares worth Rs 375 crore by private equity investor Info Edge. The company proposes to use the net proceeds



towards funding organic and inorganic growth initiatives and for general corporate purposes, Zomato said in the red herring prospectus.

"We need to continue to invest in three core areas for the growth of our business, which include customer and user acquisition, delivery infra-

structure, and technology infrastructure," it said. Post-listing Zomato will be valued at over Rs 63,000 crore at the upper price band and will become one of top 100 listed corporates in the country. The public offer will allocate 75 per cent shares on offer to qualified institutional buyers, 15 per cent to non-institutional buyers and 10 per cent to retail investors. Zomato's business got hit during the first Covid-wave bringing down its FY21 total income to Rs 2,118.42 crore against Rs 2,742.37 crore in FY20, but its losses fell from Rs 2,385.6 crore in FY20 to Rs 815.12 crore in FY21.

TCS Q1 profit zooms 28.5%

Mumbai, July 8: The country's largest software firm, TCS, on Thursday reported a 28.5 per cent jump in June quarter net profit at Rs 9,008 crore, and called out the domestic business as a drag, which restricted its overall growth because of the second wave of Covid-19.

The company, a cash cow for the over \$100 billion Tata Group, said the June quarter results were a tale of two contrasting trends of healthy growth in core markets like the US and segments like banking, and the domestic business being a drag.

It, however, added that even in India, which has traditionally been an insignificant market for the firm, activity is showing some signs of

improvement, and exuded confidence of meeting the overall double-digit revenue growth estimate for FY22 announced earlier.

The second wave dented revenues by as much as Rs 350 crore as businesses like passport issuances and tests-focused TCS iON remained impacted, its chief executive and managing director Rajesh Gopinathan told reporters.

"The results is the story of two markets. We have the core markets which are going very strong. And we have primarily the India market that has been significantly impacted," he said, adding that nobody had anticipated such an impact from the India market, which faced a second wave during the quarter.

As compared to the performance in the preceding March quarter, revenues from India were down 14 per cent to Rs 2,085 crore. As a share of the overall revenue pie, India's contribution slipped by a percentage point to 4.6 per cent for the three months to June compared to the preceding March quarter. The company's overall revenue stood at Rs 45,411 crore, up 18.5 per cent as compared to the year-ago period and 3.9 per cent higher than the March quarter.

It reported a total contract value of new deal signings at \$8.1 billion which was widely spread across sectors and sizes. The momentum is also very good, Gopinathan said. —PTI

Hong Kong realtor to demolish luxury towers

SHAWNA KWAN JULY 8

New World Development Company will demolish two towers at Hong Kong's most popular housing development area in decades and compensate buyers after finding unexpected defects, in a major setback for the real estate firm. The developer will pull

down and rebuild the existing floors of Towers 1 and 8 at its Pavilia Farm III project near Tai Wai station after it found the concrete strength in some areas did not meet design requirements, the Hong Kong-based company said in a statement.

Shares of New World fell as much as 4.8 per cent Thursday in Hong Kong. The demolition is a

reversal of fortunes for New World, led by tycoon Adrian Cheng, just as property prices in the city are hovering near an all-time high set in mid-2019. The real estate company led the new residential market recently with the project, which was so popular that 88 buyers vied for one apartment—making it the most in-demand development in the city

since 1997. The reconstruction will delay the date of occupancy by nine months and the developer plans to compensate the affected 846 buyers in the buildings with as much as HK\$1.15 million (\$148,030) for a home worth HK\$15 million (nearly Rs 11 crore), the company said in a statement. —Bloomberg

Jeep-maker Stellantis to spend \$36 bn on EVs

GIULIO PIOVACCARI & BEN KLAYMAN MILAN/DETROIT, JULY 8

Stellantis, the world's No. 4 automaker, said on Thursday it plans to invest more than 30 billion euros (\$35.54 billion) through 2025 on electrifying its vehicle lineup.

The company, which was formed in January from the merger of Italian-American automaker Fiat Chrysler and France's PSA, said its strategy will be supported by five battery plants in Europe and

North America as it gears up to compete with electric vehicle (EV) leader Tesla and other automakers globally.

"This transformation period is a wonderful opportunity to reset the clock and start a new race," Stellantis chief executive Carlos Tavares said on a webcast. "The group is at full speed on its electrification journey."

Stellantis said at its "EV Day 2021" that it is targeting more than 70 per cent of sales in Europe and over 40 per cent in the

United States to be low-emission vehicles - either battery or hybrid electric - by 2030. It aims to make the total cost of owning an EV equal to that of a petrol-powered model by 2026.

It said all 14 of its vehicle brands - including Peugeot, Jeep, Ram, Fiat and Opel—will offer fully electrified vehicles. Another focus will be electrifying its commercial vehicle lineup, and rolling out hydrogen fuel-cell medium vans by the end of 2021.

Stellantis said on Thursday that one of the

five battery plants will be at its engine facility in Termoli, Italy, joining previously announced factories in Germany and France. The automaker has also said it will put one in the United States.

Stellantis said it is targeting cutting battery pack costs by more than 40 per cent from 2020 to 2024 and by more than an additional 20 per cent by 2030. It plans to use two battery chemistries by 2024—a high energy-density option and a nickel cobalt-free alternative. —Reuters

HEALTH | & WEALTH

More than 200 million have gone back to earning less than minimum wage, or \$5, a day

India supercharged its economy 30 years ago. Covid unravelled it in months

VRISHTI BENIWAL, ERIC MARTIN, DHWANI PANDYA & SHRUTI SRIVASTAVA JULY 8

Thirty years ago, on a summer evening in late July, India liberalised its Soviet-style economy in a transformation that eventually pulled about 300 million out of poverty, fuelling one of the biggest wealth creations in history.

Then came a calamitous coronavirus surge. Years, and perhaps decades, of progress have been unwound in months, as many Indians who had clawed their way out of poverty face grim job prospects and carry heavy debt loads wracked during the pandemic. The devastation has highlighted just how much poor health care and infrastructure –

often neglected in the boom after liberalisation—are holding back the nation and its people.

More than 200 million have gone back to earning less than minimum wage, or \$5, a day, the Bengaluru-based Azim Premji University calculates. The middle class, the engine of the consumer economy, shrank by 32 million in 2020, according to the Pew Research Institute. That means India will be regressing on vital fronts just as its global importance is growing.

"We're talking about a decade of lost opportunities and setback," said Arvind Subramanian, a fellow at Brown University and a former chief economic advisor to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's administration. "Unless there are some big reforms and fundamental changes

in the way economic policy is done, you're not going to be anywhere close to what we saw in the boom years. A lot needs to happen in order to get back to the 7 per cent, 8 per cent growth that we desperately need."

Modi had pledged to turn India into a \$5 trillion economy by 2025, but the pandemic is set to push that back by years. The IMF expects India to grow 6.9 per cent in the next fiscal year, lower than the more than 8 per cent needed long term to reach Modi's ambitious target and create jobs for the millions entering the work force.

Jim O'Neill, chairman of Chatham House in London - who coined the term Brics to describe the emerging markets of Brazil, Russia, India and China while serving as a



top Goldman Sachs Group Inc economist-is these days cautious on India, largely because the government hasn't made many of the long-term structural changes he believes are needed for it to reach its full potential.

When still at Goldman Sachs, O'Neill says he presented a paper to Modi in 2013, before he became prime minister, recommending 10 things that

would allow the Indian economy to be 40 times larger by 2050. The list included making substantial improvements to areas like infrastructure, education, introducing better public-private partnerships in areas like health-care, further liberalising financial markets and working on environmental issues. Modi hasn't fully pursued these ideas, O'Neill said.

Once the fastest-growing major economy, India saw its biggest ever contraction last year - shrinking more than 7 per cent.

Overall Indian wealth - or the value of financial and real assets owned by households minus debts - fell by \$594 billion, or 4.4 per cent, in 2020, according to Credit Suisse Group AG.

Thirty years ago, India was forced by the IMF to remake its economy

through liberalisation. In the boom that followed, growth crossed 8 per cent. Technology giants like Infosys were born and start-ups mushroomed. A new middle class emerged that watched Netflix and shopped online on Amazon. India became the world's biggest supplier of generic medicines and an Indian exchange now handles the world's highest number of derivatives contracts.

Yet there were signs that India wasn't hitting its full potential. Average GDP growth of 6.2 per cent over 30 years has been lower than China's 9.2 per cent and even lagged Vietnam's 6.7 per cent. For years, Indians have been living shorter lives and are now earning less than people in Bangladesh.

Vast inequities developed. Researchers have

found wealthier people in urban areas and from upper castes were taller in India, a sign of development favouring advantaged groups. The percentage of women joining the workforce fell from 30.3 per cent in 1991 to about 21 per cent in 2019, according to data from the ILO. The government spent less than 2 per cent of GDP on healthcare before the pandemic.

"Had the healthcare system not been so neglected for so long, India would have been prepared to face the Covid-19 crisis," said Jean Dreze, the Belgian-born Indian economist and a lecturer at Delhi University. "Had India built a more robust social security system, the humanitarian toll of the crisis would not have been so catastrophic."

—Bloomberg

SHORT TAKES

India look to turn it around in T20s

Northampton: India skipper Harmanpreet Kaur would be aiming to overcome her prolonged form slump and provide a much-needed boost to the struggling batting line-up in the opening T20 International against formidable hosts England here on Friday. England lead the multi-format series 6-4 after a drawn Test and a 2-1 score-line in ODIs. Barring Mithali Raj's remarkable consistency in ODIs, the Indian batting was a disappointment and it is something that the team would want to correct in the three T20s. India's top two performers in ODIs — Mithali and Jhulan Goswami — will be seeing the action from the sidelines. Harmanpreet, who has not scored a fifty in the shortest format since November 2018, will have to lead from the front. — *PTI*

SAG rescheduled due to Covid surge

Bangkok: The Southeast Asian Games, which were due to take place in Vietnam this year, have been postponed because of the pandemic and will most likely be held in 2022, a member of the organising council said on Thursday. The regional Olympics were scheduled to be held in Hanoi and 11 other locations from November 21 to December 2. But Vietnam is struggling to contain a new coronavirus outbreak, and many Southeast Asian Games events were planned in provinces hard-hit by the fresh wave of infections. "Definitely, the 31st SEA games will not (be hosted) this year as scheduled in November," said Varin Tansuphasiri, Games Council member and deputy secretary of the Thai Olympic Committee. "Vietnam wants to postpone it until next year, 2022." — *AFP*

India stars hottest properties in WBBL

Sydney: Indian players, led by teen sensation Shafali Verma, have emerged as the hottest overseas property for the Women's Big Bash League, considering they will already be in Australia before the event kicks off on October 14. The tournament schedule was announced on Thursday. Sydney Sixers are close to formalising a deal with Shafali and left-arm spinner Radha Yadav. According to *cricket.com.au*, Smriti Mandhana Harmanpreet Kaur, Deepti Sharma, Jemimah Rodrigues and Poonam Yadav could also be in demand for their services in WBBL. "(Shafali Verma) is on everyone's list, no doubt," Sydney Sixers list manager and former Australia captain Lisa Stalhekar told reporters on Thursday. — *PTI*

Hyderabad FC rope in Ogbeche

Hyderabad: Adding experience to their attack ahead of the upcoming Indian Super League season, Hyderabad FC have completed the signing of Nigerian World Cupper Bartholomew Ogbeche, the club announced on Thursday. The 36-year-old striker, who won the ISL double of the League Winner's Shield and the ISL Trophy with Mumbai City last season, has signed a one-year deal till the end of the 2021-22 campaign. "I am thrilled to have signed for Hyderabad FC. One could easily see from the outside that he (coach) has a clear idea about his style of play and what he wants from his players which is an admirable attribute that I find in him. I'm very excited to be playing under him," said Ogbeche after completing formalities. — *PTI*

ATK Mohun Bagan rope in Boumous

Kolkata: In a big boost to their attack, ATK Mohun Bagan on Thursday announced the signing of French-Moroccan star midfielder Hugo Boumous ahead of the upcoming Indian Super League season. The 25-year-old, who played a key role in Mumbai City FC winning the title last season, will join the likes of Liston Colaco and Joni Kauko in the midfield. — *PTI*

DANE & DUSTED

Kane's rebound ousts Denmark as England roar into final

England	2
<i>(Simon Kjær 39-og, Harry Kane 104)</i>	
Denmark	1
<i>(Mikkel Damsgaard 30)</i>	

London, July 8: England fed off the energy of a passionate Wembley crowd to beat Denmark 2-1 in the Euro 2020 semi-finals on Wednesday and now stand just 90 minutes away from ending their 55-year trophy drought.

Gareth Southgate's men will face Italy on Sunday infused with belief they can win a first major international tournament since the 1966 World Cup. For Euro 92 champions Denmark, defeat spells the end of a fairytale run to the last four after the trauma of witnessing star man Christian Eriksen collapse in their first match.

England emerged on a cool evening at Wembley after the crowd of almost 65,000 had whipped themselves into a frenzy with rousing renditions of "Sweet Caroline" and "Football's Coming Home".

But Denmark ripped up the home script on the half-hour when Mikkel Damsgaard punished Luke Shaw for a foul on Andreas Christensen, smashing a free-kick past the despairing dive of Jordan Pickford.

That was the first goal England had conceded in the entire tournament.

The crowd went flat but England were level within 10 minutes when Simon Kjær could only bundle the ball into his own net after a searching cross from Bukayo Saka.

Neither side could find a goal in the second period despite intense pressure from the home side as normal time drew to a close.

The volume in the stadium increased in extra time as England put Denmark under intense pressure and they finally got their reward when Raheem Sterling was fouled in the box by Joakim Maehle.

Harry Kane's penalty



(from left) England's Declan Rice, Phil Foden, Harry Maguire and Harry Kane celebrate after defeating Denmark 2-1 in the Euro semifinal in London on Wednesday. — *UEFA*

was saved by Kasper Schmeichel but he converted the rebound to give England the advantage and they held Denmark at bay to seal the win.

The final whistle sparked scenes of delirium in the stands and on the pitch as the players parted with the crowd.

"It was a top performance — we had to dig in deep after the first goal we conceded in the tournament, and we regrouped well and showed a good team spirit to come back and win the game," Sterling told *ITV*.

Despite the celebrations at Wembley, Sterling insisted the focus would almost immediately shift to the final against Italy.

"It's another step in the right direction," he added. "But once we're back in the dressing room it's over and we've got to focus on the weekend now. It's step-by-step and that's all we can do."

Italy, who failed even to qualify for the 2018 World Cup, lie in wait for England at Wembley this weekend. — *AFP*

We learned from World Cup heartbreak: Harry

London, July 8: England captain Harry Kane said his side's experience of losing a World Cup semi-final three years ago helped pull them through a nerve-wracking clash with Denmark to reach the Euro final for the first time.

Kane scored the winning goal in extra time after his penalty had been saved by Kasper Schmeichel to spark wild scenes of celebration in front of 64,950 fans at Wembley.

"We said all along, we can talk about how we've learned from 2018 but it's about doing it on the pitch," said Kane. "We stayed calm, there was no panic."

"These games are about character, digging in and belief. This will just give us more belief going into

Sunday now."

England will face Italy in Sunday's final with another huge home crowd on their side at Wembley.

"It's going to be an amazing occasion for sure. As the game gets closer the excitement and nerves will kick in," added Kane.

"It's going to be a special day, but we need to make sure we are on the winning side."

The winning penalty came about in controversial circumstances as Raheem Sterling went down in the box under minimal contact from Joakim Maehle.

"I thought it was a penalty," said Kane. "I thought I should've had a penalty in the second half as well. It probably evened itself out over the game."

CAPTION KJAER SORRY FOR DENMARK EXIT

Denmark captain Simon Kjær said he was disappointed their unforgettable Euro 2020 run came to a halt in the semi-finals.

"It's been a fantastic adventure. I'm sorry that it's now finished but that's how it is," Kjær told Danish public television station *DR1*.

"The support we've received goes beyond anything we hoped for. I'm proud but I'm also disappointed that we're not going all the way to the final."

The loss marked the end of a remarkable tournament for Denmark, who went through the trauma of Christian Eriksen's cardiac arrest in their opening game. — *AFP*

It's Pliskova vs Barty in final

London, July 8: Karolina Pliskova of the Czech Republic will play Australia's Ashleigh Barty in Saturday's Wimbledon final after both players reached the championship match for the first time on Thursday.

Pliskova had never been beyond the fourth round at Wimbledon but showed great resilience in coming from behind to beat second seed Aryna Sabalenka 5-7, 6-4, 6-4.

It was a rare feat by Pliskova as in the previous 33 semi-finals only two players had reached the final after losing the first set.

For the 29-year-old eighth seed it is her second Grand Slam final — she lost the 2016 US Open — and she is the first Czech finalist since Petra Kvitová won her second title in 2014.

Barty had never progressed further than the fourth round at Wimbledon despite having form on grass as she was junior champion in 2011.

However, she took the first set with just the one break of serve and then showed real determination to turn around a 1-4 deficit and force the tie-break where she had six match points.

Kerber saved three but it was only delaying the inevitable and soon it was Barty who raised her arms in celebration and placed her racquet over her head as the moment sank in. "It's incredible, it was as close to as good a tennis match that I have ever played," said Barty who fired eight aces and 38 winners. "It was a hell of a match from the first ball." — *AFP*

Results: Women (SF): Ashleigh Barty (AUS x1) bt Angelique Kerber (GER x25) 6-3, 7-6 (7/3); Karolina Pliskova (CZE x8) bt Aryna Sabalenka (BLR x2) 5-7, 6-4, 6-4.



Ashleigh Barty of Australia plays a shot against Germany's Angelique Kerber in the Wimbledon semifinal on Thursday. — *AP*

NAOMI CALLS FOR ATHLETES' PROTECTION

New York, July 8: Naomi Osaka says former first lady Michelle Obama and sports stars Novak Djokovic, Michael Phelps and Stephen Curry were among those who reached out to offer support after she withdrew from the French Open to take a mental health break.

In an essay that appears in *Time* magazine's Olympic issue, Osaka wrote that she hopes "we can enact measures to protect athletes, especially the fragile ones."

"There can be moments for any of us where we are dealing with issues behind the scenes. Each of us as humans are going through something on some level." — *AP*

Will not rush into retirement: Fed

London, July 8: Roger Federer crashed out of Wimbledon in the quarter-finals at the hands of Poland's Hubert Hurkacz on Wednesday, but insisted he will not be rushed into retirement even with his 40th birthday just five weeks away.

"I don't know. I really don't know. I've got to regroup," said Federer when asked if his Wimbledon career was over.

"With everything that comes after Wimbledon, we were always going to sit down and talk about it because clearly now Wimbledon is over. I got to take a few days.

"Just see, Okay, what do I need to do to get in better



Roger Federer

shape so I can be more competitive." Federer is now without a Slam since the 2018 Australian Open but he had two match points to beat Novak Djokovic in the epic 2019 Wimbledon final.

"Clearly there's still a lot of things missing in my game that maybe 10, 15, 20 years ago were very simple and very normal for me to do," he added.

Federer had only played eight matches this year before Wimbledon as he recovered from two knee surgeries in 2020.

"Of course I would like to play it again, but at my age you're just never sure what's around the corner," added Federer.

"I will take my time, not feel rushed by you guys or anybody else. I got to take my time, take the right decision, the one decision I want to take and where I feel most comfortable.

"The team and me were actually very happy I made it as far as the quarters here. That's how it goes. I'll be fine. I have perspective about it, so it's all good."

Former Wimbledon champion Boris Becker, however, has his doubts Federer will play Wimbledon again. — *AFP*

Rijiju passes the baton to Thakur

New Delhi, July 8: Anurag Thakur on Thursday took charge as the country's 17th sports minister, succeeding Kiren Rijiju and promised to do everything possible to make India a sporting powerhouse.

The 46-year-old former Cricket Board President was given responsibility of sports and youth affairs along with the Information and Broadcasting ministry after he took oath as a cabinet minister on Wednesday.

He comes into office at a time when the nation's athletes are in the final stage of their preparations for the Olympic Games from July 23.

"I am grateful to the Hon'ble Prime Minister who gave me a new responsibility involving youth and sports. It is his belief, his love for sports and his ever-growing initiative which is taking Indian sports forward," he told reporters after taking charge.

"Whatever good work that has been done so far under Kiren ji (Rijiju) will continue. I would like to take everyone along and work for betterment of Indian sports," he said.

Thakur is the first cabinet minister since Mani Shankar Iyer (2006-2008) to get the sports ministry's responsibility.

Thakur said his vision as a sports minister is to fulfil Prime Minister Narendra Modi's dream of turning



Anurag Thakur

India into a sporting nation.

JOURNEY WILL CONTINUE: KIREN

Outgoing Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju on Thursday said the journey to make India a great sporting nation will continue after Thakur replaced him in the position.

"We tried everything to make India a great sporting nation. The journey will continue, it is a change of responsibilities," he told reporters at a farewell function organised by the Sports Authority of India (SAI) here on Thursday.

"The time which I had in the sports and youth affairs ministry has been extremely favourable as well as full of events and activities. The journey of making India a great sporting nation will continue and will be fulfilled." — *PTI*

Games briefs

Sindhu, Sai get easy draws

Rio Games silver medallist and reigning world champion PV Sindhu and B. Sai Praneeth have been handed easy draws for the Tokyo Olympics beginning July 23. While Sindhu has been seeded sixth and drawn in Group J of women's singles, Praneeth was seeded 13th in Group D of men's singles competition. World no 10 men's doubles pair of Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy will be competing in Group A. Sindhu will face Hong Kong's world number 34 Cheung Ngan Yi and Israel's Ksenia Polikarpova, ranked 58th, in the league stages.

India denied early check in

The first batch of India's Olympic-bound athletes will depart for Tokyo on July 17, IOA President Narinder Batra revealed on Thursday while expressing disappointment at the Games organisers' refusal to allow them to check in earlier than that. IOA wanted the first batch of athletes and officials to leave on July 14 and serve three days of mandatory quarantine on reaching Tokyo. But in a letter to Kate Yoneyama, Regional Manager of TOCOG, Batra wrote with the necessary approvals still pending, IOA was left with no other option but to send the first batch on July 17.

Fiji official tests positive

An official due to travel to Tokyo with the Fiji Olympic team has been withdrawn after testing positive for Covid-19.

The Fiji Association of Sports and National Olympic Committee confirmed the positive test Thursday but did not say what role the official held.

In accordance with guidelines set out in the Tokyo Games Playbook, the Fiji team has been in isolation for 96 hours before its departure for Japan and team members were tested 72 hours before leaving.

The Fiji contingent, including athletes, officials and staff from the Oceania National Olympic Committee, is due to leave for Tokyo just before midnight Thursday.

Momota 'only +ve' about Games debut

Tokyo, July 8: Japanese badminton star Kento Momota said Thursday he feared he might never play at an Olympics after a catalogue of career mishaps, but is feeling "positive" about the Tokyo Games.

World number one Momota was banned from Japan's Rio Games team in 2016 for illegal gambling, and was almost forced to retire last year after a serious car crash.

But the unprecedented postponement of the Tokyo Games because of the coronavirus pandemic gave him time to recover, and he is aiming for gold when he finally makes his Olympic debut later this month.

"When the Games were postponed by a year and then it was on the news that they might be cancelled, I thought a lot about how I might not be able to play at the Olympics," Momota said on Thursday.

"But a lot of people have worked hard to put the competition on, and I've just tried to block out the noise and put everything into the things I can control." Momota added that his

physical fitness has improved "little by little", and that he "feels really good" going into the tournament.

"I'm not thinking negative thoughts — I'm only thinking positive thoughts," he said.

Momota was unstoppable in 2019, winning a record-breaking 11 titles including the World Championships, Asia Championships and All England Open.

But he said his "spirit was almost broken" after a January 2020 car crash — hours after he won the Malaysia Masters — which killed the driver of the vehicle taking him to the airport.

Momota underwent surgery on a fractured eye socket after suffering double vision in training, and admitted he feared his career was over.

"I think the area where I've really grown is mentally," he said.

"I've had to deal with a lot of difficulties, and the fact that I've worked hard to get here gives me confidence going into the competition." — *AFP*