

THE ASIAN AGE

NEW DELHI FRIDAY 4 JUNE 2021

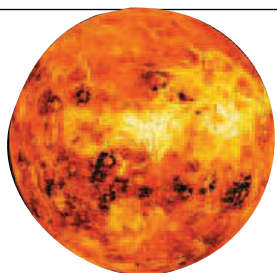


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Modi thanks US vice-prez for sending India vaccines as Kamala Harris calls him

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2 new Nasa missions to Venus in a bid to study how it became an inferno

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FIR filed against Tiger and Disha for breaking Covid lockdown rules



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Serbia's Novak Djokovic celebrates after defeating Uruguay's Pablo Cuevas in their 2nd round match on Day 5 of the French Open at Roland Garros in Paris on Thursday.

— AP

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Kerala stays on top in Niti's SDG Index; Himachal, TN follow

New Delhi: Kerala has retained the top rank in Niti Aayog's SDG India Index 2020-21, while Bihar has been adjudged as the worst performer, as per a report released on Thursday. The Index for Sustainable Development Goals evaluates progress of states and union territories on social, economic and environmental parameters. Kerala retained its rank as the top state with a score of 75. Himachal Pradesh and Tamil Nadu are second.

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Monsoon arrives in Kerala 2 days late

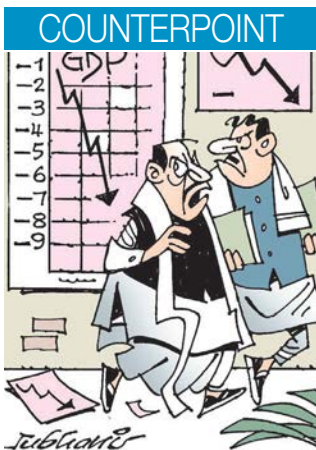
New Delhi: The southwest monsoon hit the coast of Kerala on Thursday, two days behind its schedule, the India Meteorological Department said. According to the latest forecast, Kerala, Mahe and Lakshadweep will receive heavy rainfall till June 5.

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4 killed as blast hits minibus in Kabul

Kabul: At least four people were killed and four others injured Thursday when a minibus was hit by an explosion in Kabul, according to police, in the latest attack on commuters in the Afghan capital. No group has claimed responsibility for the attack.

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These economists are anti-nationals, they ar showing negativity!

WEATHER

Max: 36°C
Min: 27°C
RH: 41%
Rain: 10%

Forecast: Partly cloudy

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Dakshinayana
Tithi: Kartika Bahula Ashtami till 5.12 pm
Star: Pubba till 1.43 pm
Varjyam: 8.32 pm to 10.03 pm

Durmuhurtam: 8.50 am to 9.34 am; 10.49 pm to 11.41 pm

Rahukalam: 3 pm to 4.30 pm

SUNSET TODAY 5.23 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 7.16 AM
MOONRISE TOMORROW 2.21 PM
MOONSET TODAY 2.00 AM

WEST BENGAL

Ex-CS sends a 'strong' reply to govt: 'Acted on CM orders'

RAJIB CHOWDHURI
KOLKATA, JUNE 3

Defending himself before the Centre, former West Bengal chief secretary Alapan Bandyopadhyay on Thursday evening sent a "strong" reply to the showcause notice slapped on him by the Union home ministry under the Disaster Management Act for his absence at the review meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the Kalaikunda Air Force Station on the devastation caused by Cyclone Yaas on May 28.

The retired IAS officer of the 1987 batch stated with logic in his reply that he had accompanied chief minister Mamata Banerjee on her "instruction" to meet the PM, according to sources. Mr Bandyopadhyay also pointed out that he came out with the CM on her "instruction" after submitting a report to the PM and obtaining his permission, sources revealed.

He further argued that he did not violate any protocol since he was the state chief secretary then and it was his "duty to abide by the orders of the CM", the sources claimed.

Mr Bandyopadhyay's response on the final day of the three-day deadline came a day after the Trinamul Congress chief described the controversy on his tenure as a "closed chapter", while declaring her government's "full support" to him over the MHA's showcause notice hours before his retirement on May 31.

In its notice, the MHA had found fault with the state's top bureaucrat for "arriving 15 minutes late" at the venue and "leaving immediately".

"...by this act of abstaining himself from the review meeting taken

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'India in talks with pharma giants and G-7, G-20, Quad, Brics'

Govt seals deal with Bio-E for 30 crore jabs

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 3

While it continues to negotiate with Pfizer and Moderna for the supply of Covid-19 vaccines in India, the Centre has also signed a deal for 30 crore vaccines with Hyderabad-based Biological-E that is making India's second indigenous vaccine after Covaxin.

"The vaccine by Biological-E is currently undergoing Phase 3 clinical trials after showing promising results in Phase 1 and 2 clinical trials. The vaccine being developed by Biological-E is an RBD protein sub-unit vaccine and is likely to be available in the next few months. These 30 crore doses will be manufactured and stockpiled by Biological-E from August to December 2021. For this, the Union ministry of health would be making an advance payment of ₹1,500 crore to Biological-E," Union

Fix 'objective criteria' for Class 12 marks, SC tells CBSE, ISC board

PARMOD KUMAR
NEW DELHI, JUNE 3

The Supreme Court on Thursday gave two weeks' time to the CBSE and the Council for Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE) to decide on an "objective criteria" for awarding marks to Class 12 students, whose board examinations this year were cancelled on June 1 in view of the intensity of the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic.

"We are happy to note that the government has taken the decision to cancel the Class 12 board exams, but we want that the objective criteria fixed for assessment of marks be placed before us", said Justice A.M. Khanwilkar, who was heading a bench that also



Vinod Dua

cumstances when they were made, can at best be termed as expression of disapprobation of actions of the government and its functionaries so that prevailing situation could be addressed quickly and efficiently."

The statements by Mr Dua in his programme, the court said, were "certainly not made with the intent to incite people or showed tendency to create disorder or disturbance of public peace by resort to violence" and petitioner was well "within the permissible limits laid down in the decision of this court in Kedar Nath Singh."

Noting certain factual discrepancies in the date of things that had happened prior and after the lockdown was declared in March 2020, the court concluded that Mr Dua's programme was not intended to incite people or create disharmony and was within the professional limits.

"We are, therefore, of the firm view that the prosecution of the petitioner for the offences punishable under Sections 124A and

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COVID WATCH

1.34L
ACTIVE CASES IN INDIA IN 24 HOURS

2,887
DEATHS IN A DAY

PAGE 2

Gautam Gambhir's foundation guilty of hoarding Fabiflu, says drugs controller

health ministry said in a statement on Thursday.

Health ministry officials said the arrangement with Biological-E is part of the wider endeavour of the Centre to encourage indigenous vaccine manufacturers by providing support in Research and Development (R&D) as well as financial support. The Biological-E Covid

The court said that it will entertain objections to the criteria for awarding marks and it will also consider issues relating to the Class 12 examinations that are held by the state boards involving over one crore students, after resolving the evaluation criteria of the CBSE and CISCE

included Justice Dinesh Maheshwar. "As requested by the attorney general and the counsel for the CISCE, a request has been made to defer the matter for two weeks to place on record the objective criteria to assess the students since the decision to cancel exams has been taken. List after two weeks," the court ordered.

The court also said that it will not give any further

vaccine candidate has been supported by the Centre from preclinical stage to Phase-3 studies during which the department of biotechnology has provided grant-in-aid of over Rs 100 crore and also partnered with it to conduct studies through its Research Institute Translational Health Science Technology Institute (THSTI), Faridabad.

Officials said the government is supporting development of five-six Covid-19 vaccine candidates. Some of these are now closer to getting a license for use in public health systems.

The Centre, which is hoping to meet its ambitious target of immunising the entire population by December 2021, said that it is in talks with major pharma firms to source and locally manufacture Covid-19 vaccines. Foreign secretary Harsh V. Shringla said that

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Army Chief Gen. M.M. Naravane reviews the security situation along the Line of Control in Kashmir on Thursday. He said the longevity of the LoC ceasefire with Pakistan would depend on the latter's actions, but declared there would be "no slackening" of preparedness as terror infrastructure across the border was intact.

PTI

Army Chief hints troops cut possible in Kashmir

YUSUF JAMEEL
SRINAGAR, JUNE 3

Army Chief Gen. M.M. Naravane said Thursday the onus for sustaining the ceasefire along the Line of Control and other sectors in Jammu and Kashmir lies with Pakistan. However, he did not rule out the possibility of a reduction in the number of troops for active deployment in J&K if the situation on the ground permitted it.

Gen. Naravane said: "There've been decades of mistrust between Pakistan and India and the situation can't change overnight. If they continue to observe ceasefire, stop and desist from pushing terrorists across India, then these steps will incrementally build up trust. The onus is entirely on Pakistan."

Gen. Naravane, speaking to a hand-picked group of reporters here before

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More forces go to Himachal as China ramps up its infra

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 3

After intelligence inputs that China was planning to open another front against India, this time on the Himachal Pradesh border, alert Indian security forces have gone in for a massive mobilisation of troops to tackle any potential Chinese threat in the near future. Top security sources in New Delhi claimed they had specific intelligence inputs, including satellite images and visual footage, that the People's Liberation Army (PLA) had begun massive construction activity, close to Samdo border area in Himachal Pradesh's Lahaul Spiti region.

Officials said the PLA was constructing roads and settlements, including permanent concrete structures, very close to the border. In fact, in some areas, China had even settled people from other regions in these

newly constructed villages near the border in the Himachal sector. Some of these newly constructed buildings are being used to use PLA troops too.

While Chinese soldiers have not made any attempt so far to transgress into Indian territory, security had been beefed up all along the border.

Senior security officials said the Army and ITBP had intensified patrols in the Himachal sector. "If Chinese forces try any misadventure or cross over into Indian territory as they did in Ladakh, they will be dealt with severely", a senior ITP official said.

Choksi says he was kidnapped, denied bail by Dominica court

New Delhi, June 3: Antigua and Barbuda prefers that fugitive diamondaire Mehul Choksi be repatriated from Dominica to India directly, the Cabinet of the Caribbean island country decided in a meeting, local media reported.

The Cabinet minutes published by a media outlet show that the "Choksi matter" was one of the agenda items discussed on Wednesday where it was held that Mr Choksi is now a "problem" of Dominica and if he comes back to Antigua and Barbuda the "problem reverts" to it.

The meeting chaired by Prime Minister Gaston

Browne and attended by all his ministers physically and virtually decided that law enforcement officials will continue to gather intelligence in the circumstances of Mr Choksi's "departure" from Antigua, but "the preference of the Cabinet of Antigua and Barbuda is for Choksi to be repatriated to India from Dominica," the Cabinet minutes said.

Meanwhile, a Dominica magistrate has denied bail to Mr Choksi, who was arrested on May 23 for alleged illegal entry to the Caribbean island country. Mr Choksi had mysteriously gone missing on

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US President Joe Biden and First Lady Jill Biden take a bike ride at Rehoboth Beach, Delaware, on Thursday. The Bidens are spending a few days at Rehoboth Beach to celebrate the First Lady's 70th birthday.

AP

Bibi's rivals seek quick vote to end his 12-yr rule

Opp. leader Yair Lapid and key partner Naftali Bennett claim Knesset majority for 8-party coalition

Tel Aviv, June 3: Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's opponents pushed Thursday for a quick parliament vote to formally end his lengthy rule, hoping to head off any last-minute attempts to derail their newly announced coalition government.

The latest political maneuvering began just hours after opposition leader Yair Lapid and his main coalition partner, Naftali Bennett, declared they had reached a deal to

form a new government and muster a majority in the 120-member Knesset, or Parliament.

The coalition consists of eight parties from across the political spectrum with little in common except the shared goal of toppling Netanyahu after a record-setting 12 years in power. The alliance includes hardliners previously allied with Netanyahu, as well as center-left parties and even an Arab faction — a first in Israeli politics.

Mr Netanyahu lashed out at his foes on Thursday, signaling that he will continue to exert pressure on former allies who joined the coalition. "All members of Knesset who were elected with right-wing votes need to oppose this dangerous leftist government," he wrote on Twitter.

The drama riveted Israelis at a time when tumult has not been in short supply: four inconclusive elections in two years followed by an 11-

day war in the Gaza Strip last month that was accompanied by mob violence between Jews and Arabs in cities across the country. The country also is emerging from the coronavirus crisis that caused deep economic damage and exposed tensions between the secular majority and the ultra-Orthodox minority.

Yet the political debate ahs focused squarely on Netanyahu, who is facing corruption charges — and whether he should stay or

go. "We never had a coalition like this," said Hillel Bar Sadeh at a coffee shop in Jerusalem. "We like to have a new spirit, we like to have some unity."

The owner of the coffee shop, Yosi Zarifi, said he trusts that Netanyahu will return to power — and distrusts the coalition.

"Everybody is clear that this trick will not last, there won't be any glue (to keep it together) here," he said.

AP

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IN BRIEF

Gangster arrested after encounter

New Delhi: The accused was on parole in a murder case due to the covid pandemic. He had jumped the parole. Despite being out on parole, the accused threatened a businessman for extortion. He brutally attacked him on April 22 with a knife and ran away from the spot. He is previously involved in 16 criminal cases. The police arrested him on a complaint by the businessman who the accused had attacked with a knife in an attempt to extort money from him. On a tip-off that the gangster, Aman, would be coming to meet his family members in Mangolpuri, the police laid a trap near the Mangolpuri fly-over. Around midnight the accused reached the spot on a motorcycle. But when the police flagged down him, instead of stopping he whipped out his pistol and fired at the security personnel hitting one of them on the bullet proof jacket. The police personnel fired at him in defence which hit his leg. Thereafter, the policemen overpowered and arrested him. A 32 bore pistol with five cartridges was recovered from him.

Woman stabbed by neighbour in Rohini

New Delhi: A 28-year-old woman got injured late Thursday evening after her neighbour allegedly stabbed her multiple times outside her house in Rohini Sector-II area, police said. The incident took place on Thursday around 8.30 pm. Police said that the suspect, identified as Naresh alias Raju, has been apprehended. A case is being filed at Shahbad Dairy police station. The motive behind the incident is yet to be ascertained, police said. According to CCTV footage of the incident, the accused can be seen stabbing the woman multiple times. The victim was taken to Safdarjung Hospital and her condition is stated to be critical. The accused called the woman outside her house and stabbed her. The woman's family said she filed a complaint against her neighbour some time back, however, police said they are checking it.

City lawyer sends legal notice to IMA

New Delhi: A Delhi-based lawyer on Thursday had sent a legal notice to Indian Medical Association (IMA) office-bearers claiming that they are not acting in conformity with the rules and are indulged in proselytizing activities and are also promoting commercial products of private companies in exchange for rupees. Advocate Vishnu Sharma had sent the notice to IMA President DR. Johnrose Austin Jayala and Hon Secretary Drm Jayesh M. Lele. Mr Sharma in the letter stated that several private players had paid 'crores of rupees' to the IMA in exchange for the association's 'stamp of approval', which these brands often use to market their products of the companies.

3 ARRESTED WITH 100 KG CANNABIS WORTH ₹10 LAKH

Noida: Three alleged drug traffickers have been arrested after 100 kg of cannabis estimated worth ₹10 lakh was recovered from their possession in Uttar Pradesh's Noida, police said on Thursday. The accused were in a car on a service road in Phase 3 police station area when they were arrested during a police check on Wednesday night, additional DCP (Central Noida) Ankur Aggarwal said. "The Gautam Buddh Nagar police had earlier arrested some drug peddlers and interrogated them to reach the people who supplied them with drugs. Similarly, four drug traffickers, including two women, were recently arrested after 10 kg cannabis was recovered from them," Aggarwal said. "During interrogation, these four people had told police about their suppliers after which police tracked down these three accused, who have now been arrested and 100 kg of cannabis worth ₹10 lakh seized from their possession," he said. Those held have been identified as Sonu Singh, Raju alias Rajkumar and Suraj Singh, according to the police. One of them, Sonu, was in the top 10 wanted list of Greater Noida's Surajpur police station, the additional DCP said. — PTI

■ Company indulges in anti-users practices by obtaining trick consent: Centre

WhatsApp forcing users to accept new policy: HC told

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 3

The Centre has told the Delhi high court that social messaging platform WhatsApp was trying to "force" its users to consent to the new privacy policy before the Personal Data Protection Bill becomes a law by bombarding them with notifications daily to obtain their consent.

Terming WhatsApp's bombarding of notifications on its customers as an "anti-user practice" for obtaining "trick consent," the Central government has urged the court to direct the messaging platform to desist from pushing notifications onto its existing users with regard to the new privacy policy.

The Centre's claim has been made in an additional affidavit filed in response to several pleas challenging the new privacy policy of WhatsApp.

One of the pleas, which was the first one to be



▶ Central government has urged the court to direct the messaging platform to desist from pushing notifications onto its existing users with regard to the new privacy policy

filed, was moved by Chaitanya Rohilla, a lawyer, in January this year.

Mr Rohilla, represented by advocate Manohar Lal, has contended that the updated privacy policy violates users' right to privacy under the Constitution and they can either accept it or exit the app, but they cannot opt not to share their data with other Facebook-owned or third party apps.

The plea has claimed that the new privacy policy of WhatsApp allows full access into a user's online activity without there being any supervi-

sion by the government.

In its additional affidavit, which supports the petitioner's claims, the Centre has said the privacy policy violates the rules as it fails to specify the types of sensitive personal data being collected and also fails to notify users about the details of the sensitive personal information which is collected.

Besides, the policy also does not provide an option to users to review or amend the information, does not provide an option to withdraw consent retrospectively, and also fails to guarantee further non-disclosure by third parties,

the affidavit has said.

It has also stated that WhatsApp was "indulging in anti-users practices by obtaining 'trick consent' from the users for its updated privacy policy."

"It is submitted that millions of WhatsApp existing users, those who have not accepted the updated 2021 privacy policy, are being bombarded with notifications on an everyday basis," it has said.

The government has said that WhatsApp "has unleashed its digital prowess to the unsuspecting existing users and would like to force them to accept the updated 2021 privacy policy by flashing such notifications at regular intervals."

"The game plan is very clear, i.e., to transfer the entire existing user base committed to the updated 2021 privacy policy before the Personal Data Protection (PDP) Bill becomes the law," the government has said in its affidavit.

487 Covid cases in city, lowest in over 2.5 months

New Delhi, June 3: Delhi recorded 487 fresh Covid cases, the lowest in over two-and-a-half months and 45 fatalities on Thursday, while the positivity rate slumped to 0.61 per cent, according to data shared by the health department here.

This is the first time the daily death count has gone below the 50-mark since April 11 when the tally was 48. According to the latest health bulletin, these new fatalities pushed the death toll from Covid in Delhi to 24,447.

On March 16, Delhi had recorded 425 cases and on March 17, the daily tally was 536, according to official data. On Thursday, 487 fresh cases were recorded with a positivity rate of 0.61 per cent, according to the latest bulletin.

The infection rate, which had reached 36 per cent in the last week of April, has come down to below 1 per cent now. Meanwhile, keeping an eye on the anticipated third wave of the pandemic, Delhi health minister Satyendar Jain on Thursday visited two healthcare project sites.

"To provide Delhi with world-class health infra-

structure, a new 1,168 bedded hospital is being constructed by the Delhi government at Siraspur. Visited the site today to inspect the work. The work is advancing at a great pace. Efforts are being made to complete the work on time," he tweeted.

In another tweet, he said, "New blocks are being added in Bhagwan Mahavir Hospital by the @ArvindKejriwal Government with advanced facilities. Inspected the remodelling work today. This will increase its existing bed capacity from 300 to 700 beds. The transformed hospital will serve Delhiites for many decades."

Delhi has been reeling under a brutal second wave of the pandemic that is sweeping the country, claiming a massive number of lives daily, with the recent oxygen supply shortage issue at various hospitals, adding to the woes. Since April 19, both daily cases and single-day death count had been spiralling up, with over 28,000 cases and 277 deaths recorded on April 20; rising to 306 fatalities on April 22. — PTI

BJP asks if AAP govt fudged death tally, seeks white paper

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 3

The BJP on Thursday demanded a white paper from Delhi's Aam Aadmi Party government on issues related to Covid, asking if the number of deaths was "fudged" to keep the official tally down and what were the reasons for the city high death rate. BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra hit out at chief minister Arvind Kejriwal over "unaccounted" deaths, citing a media report that municipal corporations in Delhi had issued 34,750 death certificates for April and May

while the official Covid tally for the period was 13,201. "We want to hold the AAP accountable for what has happened," Mr Patra said, accusing it of hiding the real tally.

He noted that the number of death certificates for the corresponding period last year was 9,916, marking a rise of about 250 per cent this year. April and May saw the peak of the second wave of the pandemic.

"Who are these people (whose deaths remain unaccounted for) as Delhi government does not want to even name them," Mr Patra said.

Delhi records 1,044 black fungus cases, 89 deaths: Jain

AGE CORRESPONDENT
with agency inputs
NEW DELHI, JUNE 3

Delhi recorded 1,044 cases of mucormycosis or black fungus and 89 deaths due to the infection till Wednesday, health minister Satyendar Jain said.

He said 92 patients have recovered till now, while pointing out that there is a shortage of medicines to treat the infection.

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday said if the city government could not ensure that people get both doses of coronavirus vaccine Covaxin within the stipulated time, it should



A child undergoes treatment for Covid at Guru Tegh Bahadur Covid care centre in New Delhi on Thursday.

not have started so many vaccination centres with "much pomp and splendour".

"The vaccination programme was prepared according to the schedule given by the Centre. But

Gambhir's foundation guilty of hoarding Fabiflu: DCGI

'AAP MLA Praveen Kumar guilty of similar offences'

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 3

BJP MP Gautam Gambhir's foundation was found guilty of unauthorised stocking, procurement, and distribution of the medicine Fabiflu to Covid-19 patients, Delhi's drug control body informed the Delhi high court on Thursday.

The Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) also found Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) MLA Praveen Kumar guilty of similar offences under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act.

The Drug Controller informed the Delhi high court that action will be taken against Mr Gambhir's foundation, drug dealers, as well as in other such cases which were brought to its notice.

The DCGI was submitting a fresh report to the Delhi HC after the body was reprimanded for previously giving a clean chit to Mr Gambhir's foundation. The Delhi HC asked the DCGI to file a status



Gautam Gambhir

report on further progress in the case within six weeks.

The matter has been listed for hearing on July 29. The DCGI said action would be taken without delay.

On May 31, the Delhi high court had said it cannot be taken for a ride as it pulled up the Drug Controller for not properly probing the issues involved with procurement of huge quantities of Fabiflu, used in the treatment of Covid-19 patients, by BJP MP Gautam Gambhir.

Rejecting the status report filed by the Drug Controller, the court said its confidence in the Drug Controller was shaken.

The report was filed in connection with its probe into the procurement of the medicine by cricketer-turned-politician Gautam Gambhir.

The court noted it was well-known that the essential Covid drug was in short supply. However, Mr Gambhir purchased several strips of the medicine while the others, who needed it, could not get it, the bench added.

The high court did not mince words in criticising the recent statement by Mr Gambhir stating that he will continue to do such work.

The bench said, "We have already said it is a malpractice. This tendency of people, trying to take advantage and then trying to appear as saviours when they themselves created the problem, has to be denounced."

The court also examined the report in connection with the allegations against AAP MLAs Priti Tomar and Praveen Kumar for hoarding medical oxygen.

Centre colluding with pvt hospitals for vaccine: AAP

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 3

Demanding the supply of vaccines for the youth, AAP MLA Atishi, on Thursday, accused the Central government for allegedly colluding with private hospitals.

The senior AAP leader, during a briefing on Thursday, said that the Central government is providing Covid vaccines to private hospitals—who are charging exorbitant prices from people in the 18-44 age group—instead of the Delhi government,

which is providing the jabs for free, alleging a "collusion" between the two.

It has been 11 days since the city government stopped vaccination for the 18-44 age group due to unavailability of vaccines. The Centre has said it will provide fresh supply for the age group on June 10.

"This unavailability of vaccines for the youth of the city is a serious issue for Delhi as we have seen how the previous wave of Covid wreaked havoc for the youth," she added.



Atishi

India began vaccinating people in the 18-44 age bracket in the "liberalised and accelerated" Phase 3 of Covid-19 vac-

nation from May 1.

Under the third phase, the vaccine manufacturers would supply 50 per cent of their monthly Central Drugs Laboratory (CDL) released doses to the Central government and would be free to supply the remaining 50 per cent doses to state governments and in the open market.

According to Ms Atishi, where almost "50 per cent" of the people above 45 years have been vaccinated in Delhi, the percentage in the 18-44 age bracket stands at "10-12

per cent" only due to shortage of vaccines.

The Delhi government, on Wednesday, received an additional 2.25 lakh Covishield doses, taking the total available vaccine stock in the city to 6,25,660, including 23,000 doses of Covaxin.

"The present stock of Covishield and Covaxin vaccines available for the 45-plus age group would last for 29 days and 1-2 days respectively. Covaxin is only given to those who are due for their second dose," she said.

3 held for cheating people on pretext of providing O2 cylinders

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 3

The Delhi police has arrested four persons, including a juvenile, for allegedly duping the attendants of Covid-19 patients on the pretext of providing them oxygen cylinders.

On a complaint filed by a resident of Greater Kailash-1 in South Delhi, the police arrested Balender Chaudhary, Kameshwar Parsad, Gopal, and a juvenile from Nalanda in Bihar.

According to the police, the victim alleged that she needed oxygen cylinders for her Covid-19 infected grandfather.

During a search on the internet, she came across a mobile number on social media promising oxygen gas cylinders. She called the number and the accused promised to provide her the cylinders on an advance payment of ₹7,500 for each.

After the victim transferred an advance of ₹15,000 for two oxygen cylinders, the accused switched off his mobile phone.

The accused ran a crime syndicate and used to dupe the families of Covid-19 infected patients on the pretext of providing oxygen cylinders, the police said.

BJP abuses CM to evade questions on giving Covid vaccine availability: Sisodia

BHASKAR HARI SHARMA
NEW DELHI, JUNE 3

Deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia on Thursday slammed the BJP and accused it of "abusing" Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal to evade giving answers on Covid vaccine availability.

The people want Covid-19 vaccine, not Kejriwal's criticism. The BJP leaders always criticise Kejriwal when asked about the vaccine. They should let people know why they sent vaccines abroad? Our children were dying here,"



Manish Sisodia

said Mr Sisodia at a press conference.

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader also said that vaccination centres of many state governments are shutting down, whereas private hospitals are getting the Covid-19 shots.

▶ **DEPUTY CHIEF** minister Manish Sisodia also said that vaccination centres of many state governments are shutting down, whereas private hospitals are getting the Covid-19 shots.

vaccines?" he asked. The Aam Aadmi Party has been accusing the Centre of a "vaccination scam". "The Delhi government wants to vaccinate all its youth free of cost. If there are no vaccines for this purpose, how are vaccines available at private hospitals," Mr Sisodia asked.

Over 2,800 inmates get emergency parole, bail

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 3

Over 2,800 prisoners have been released on interim bail or emergency parole from three Delhi jails, including Tihar, to decongest the prisons during the second wave of the coronavirus infection, officials said on Thursday.

These include inmates who were released last year and then surrendered with no adverse report and also new prisoners who were eligible for such interim bail or emergency parole in view of the pandemic under the criteria laid down by a high-powered committee in its meetings on May 4 and 11.

On March 16, 2020, the Supreme Court had taken suo motu cognisance of overcrowding in prisons across the country and had said it is difficult for jail inmates to maintain social distance to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

It had directed all states and union territories to constitute high-level committees to consider giving parole or interim bail to prisoners and undertrials for offences entailing up to a seven-year jail term.



SHORT TAKES

VILLAGERS GATHER IN HUGE NUMBERS OVER SUPERSTITION

Rajgarh: Defying Covid-19 norms, a large number of people gathered at a village here in Madhya Pradesh under the belief that a woman, supposedly blessed by a Goddess, can protect them from the viral infection, police said on Thursday. Following the gathering of over 150 people on Tuesday at Chatukhedra village in Rajgarh, police registered a case against the woman and three other persons under the IPC and the Disaster Management Act, Khujner police station in-charge Umesh Yadav said. A video of the incident went viral on social media in which a temple priest was purportedly heard saying the woman was under the spell of "Pari Mata", a local deity, and the water offered by her would help them keep the coronavirus at bay, the official said. In the video, a large number of people, mostly women, were seen standing at a place in the village and most of them were neither wearing masks nor following the social distancing norms, he said. The district administration has banned all social and religious gatherings in the wake of Covid-19, he said. — PTI

AIR MARSHAL V.R. CHAUDHARI SET TO BE NEXT VICE-CHIEF

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JUNE 3

The Indian Air Force (IAF), which is at a high alert due to ongoing tensions with China, is going to see changes in top commanders. Air Marshal Vivek Ram Chaudhari will be the next Vice Chief of Air Staff. He will take charge on June 30. The current Vice-Chief Air Marshal H.S. Arora will superannuate on June 30. In the Air Force, Vice-Chief is in-charge of the operations and therefore is a critical position. At present, Air Marshal Chaudhari is heading the Western Air Command in Delhi, which looks after both the crucial borders, with China in Ladakh and all along Pakistan from Ladakh up to Bikaner in Rajasthan. Air Marshal Ballabha Radha Krishna would be succeeding Air Marshal Chaudhari at the Western Air Command. Western Air Command has over 200 bases placed under its command and has been involved in all major operations in India since Independence. In another major appointment, Air Marshal R.J. Duckworth would be taking charge of the Central Air Command in Prayagraj. Air Marshal Chaudhari was commissioned into the fighter stream of the IAF on 29 December 1982. He is an alumni of the National Defence Academy. He has flown various aircraft and is experienced on MiG-21, MiG-23MF and Mig-29 and has flown over 3,800 hours.

Rift in MVA again over easing curbs

Congress minister announces 5-phase Covid 'unlock' in Maha, Uddhav's office denies it

SONU SHRIVASTAVA MUMBAI, JUNE 3

The conflict among Maharashtra's ruling parties was again out in the open after the chief minister's office disapproved the announcement made by a Congress minister regarding withdrawal of lockdown.

Senior Congress leader and Maharashtra relief and rehabilitation minister Vijay Wadettiwar on Thursday held a press conference and declared the withdrawal of lockdown in 18 out of 36 districts from Friday. Within an hour after Mr Wadettiwar's announcement, Maharashtra chief minister's office (CMO) issued a statement stating that curbs have not been withdrawn. "A proposal in this connection with unlock is under consideration. The decision is yet to be taken," the statement said.

Chief minister Uddhav Thackeray on Thursday held a meeting of the State Disaster Management Authority through video conferencing.

Subsequently, Mr Wade-ttiwar said that the state government has decided to "unlock" 18 districts of the state, where the positivity rate of Covid is less than five per cent. The state has planned to lift the restrictions in five phases.

However, in a statement, the CMO said, "We have not prevented the spread of coronavirus infection completely as yet. The infection is increasing in some rural parts of the state. Considering the deadly coronavirus and mutations in it, it is necessary to decide whether the curbs should be relaxed or not. The restrictions imposed in the state are yet to be lifted."

The decision on relaxing restrictions is under consideration and no decision has been taken, the chief minister's office said.



A BMC health worker conducts thermal screening of a child passenger for a Covid-19 test at Dadar railway station in Mumbai on Thursday. — PTI

Parents of minors to get vaccine priority: Shivraj

AGE CORRESPONDENT BHOPAL, JUNE 3

As a part of measures to gear up the state to effectively deal with a possible third wave of coronavirus pandemic, MP CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Thursday announced to give priority to parents of minors aged below 12 years in the current vaccination drive.

Mr Chouhan said the decision was taken following warnings by experts that children may be affected the most in the third wave of pandemic, feared to hit the country by December this year.

Highest single-day spike in Covid deaths in Odisha

AGE CORRESPONDENT BHUBANESWAR, JUNE 3

Odisha on Thursday reported 42 Covid-19 deaths, the highest single-day since the pandemic began last year. With the fresh number of deaths, the overall Covid toll in the state surged to 2,873.

Of the 42 victims, 31 belonged to the age group of 30 to 50. Of the total deceased, 8 are females and three of them are above the age of 50. Thursday's statistics revealed that the number of youths perishing in the disease was higher than the elders.

PM thanks leader for help, solidarity extended in Covid fight

Modi speaks to US V-P Kamala Harris

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JUNE 3

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday spoke to US vice-president Kamala Harris who told him about the "US plans to make vaccines against the coronavirus and mutations in it, it is necessary to decide whether the curbs should be relaxed or not. The restrictions imposed in the state are yet to be lifted."

PM Modi thanked Ms. Harris for the help and solidarity extended by the US to India in battling the second wave of Covid that has battered the country. PM Modi also invited Ms

Harris, who is partly of Indian origin, to India once the situation normalises after the pandemic.

In a statement, New Delhi said, "Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke on phone today with US vice-president Kamala Harris. Ms Harris informed Mr Modi about US plans to make vaccines against Covid available to other countries, including India, under its 'Strategy for Global Vaccine Sharing'."

PM Modi thanked Ms. Harris for the help and solidarity extended by the US to India in battling the second wave of Covid that has battered the country. PM Modi also invited Ms



Minister expressed his appreciation to Vice President Harris for the US decision, as well as for all other forms of support and solidarity that India has received in recent days from the US Government, businesses and the Indian expatriate community in the US."

India added, "The leaders discussed ongoing efforts to strengthen the health supply chain between the US and India, including in the area of vaccine manufacturing.

Mumbai mayor in controversy over post

Sena leader deletes tweet, claims party worker posted rude comment on her handle

BHAGWAN PARAB MUMBAI, JUNE 3

Mumbai mayor Kishori Pednekar on Thursday landed herself in controversy over a tweet, in which she allegedly used objectionable language. She later deleted the tweet claiming that her party worker had posted the message from her account.

Responding to a Twitter user's tweet "Contract Konala Dila? (to whom contract has been given?)", about the B r i h a n m u b a i



Responding to a Twitter user's tweet 'Contract Konala Dila? (to whom the contract has been given?)', about the BMC global tender for vaccine supply, Kishori Pednekar replied 'Tujhya Bapala! (to Your father)'

Municipal Corporation's (BMC) global tender for Covid-19 vaccine supply. Ms Pednekar replied "Tujhya Bapala! (to your father)."

The mayor later deleted the tweet by claiming that her party worker had posted the message

They highlighted the potential of the India-US partnership as well as the Quad vaccine initiative in addressing the long-term health impact of the pandemic. The Prime Minister expressed the hope to welcome Ms Harris in India soon after the normalisation of the global health situation."

Besides Mr Modi, Ms Harris spoke to President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador of Mexico, President Alejandro Giammattei of Guatemala and PM Keith Rowley, chairman of the Caribbean community.

Modi dials Mukul Roy, talks about health of his wife

RAJIB CHOWDHURI KOLKATA, JUNE 3

Prime Minister Narendra Modi dialled BJP vice-president Mukul Roy on Thursday morning and inquired about his ailing wife Krishna Roy, who has been admitted to Apollo Gleneagles Hospital after getting infected by Covid-19 along with her husband recently.

The PM's call to the newly-elected BJP MLA of Krishnanagar North, who recovered from the infection, however, comes a day after chief minister Mamata Banerjee's nephew Abhishek Banerjee suddenly met his son Shubhrangshu Roy, now in the BJP, at the private hospital off EM Bypass in Kolkata to know about his mother's health, which left the saffron party stunned.

Mr Modi called up Mukul at around 10.30 am. "The PM is a functionary of the BJP. My father also is a functionary there. The PM wanted to know about my mother. My father spoke to him. The CM also inquired about my parents through many con-

■ 'CM Mamata Banerjee also inquired about my parents through many contacts. I am indebted to her and Abhishek,' Mukul Roy's son Shubhrangshu said

tacts. I am indebted to her and Abhishek. The way they thought about my mother, I think they are unparalleled," Shubhrangshu said.

On the Diamond Harbour Trinamul Congress MP, he later added, "Our relation with Abhishek and his family is not new. It is old. Like my mother cares for him, he also respects her a lot. Whenever he met earlier, he inquired about her first. There was no exception yesterday too. So when he heard of my mother in a critical condition, he rushed to visit her as his own aunt rising above politics. This is more than a courtesy which is not only rare but also take the country's politics to a different map."

Abhishek said, "It is not right to see my visit to Mr Roy's wife politically. I know and respect her since childhood."

RSS discusses chances of holding yearly July meet

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JUNE 3

With India grappling with Covid-19 and gathering of large number of people still banned in most states, the RSS top brass has been holding consultations on whether or not to hold the "prant pracharaks" meeting, which is held in July every year.

The RSS leaders will also review the ongoing Covid relief measures being carried out by the Sangh in different states and will also discuss various organisational issues.

A senior RSS functionary said it is a "routine meeting" of the RSS leaders and such meetings are held "almost every month".

RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat, who reached the national capital earlier this week, and other leaders, including general secretary Dattatreya Hosabale, joint general secretaries Arun Kumar, Krishna Gopal and others have been consulting on whether to postpone the "praant pracharaks" meeting or to hold it in groups through video-conferencing.

Bihar starts express vans to intensify Covid vaccine drive

NAYEAR AZAD PATNA, JUNE 3

The Bihar government on Thursday started a special mobile vaccination drive for the urban areas.

Chief minister Nitish Kumar and state health minister Mangal Pandey flagged off 121 "vaccine express" intending to vaccinate a maximum number of people living in the urban areas of the state.

The move comes amid an acute shortage of vaccines for people in the age group of 18 to 44 years. The state government plans to expedite vaccina-

tion drive in the urban areas through these vans, health department officials said.

A similar campaign was also launched a few days earlier for the rural areas. On Thursday while launching the special vaccination drive through a video conference Mr Kumar congratulated the health department and said, "The purpose is to reach out to a maximum number of people in urban areas. The move is also being supported by the Centre and we have been assured that vaccines will be available to us."

Kerala stays on top in Niti's SDG Index; TN and Himachal follow

New Delhi, June 3: Kerala has retained the top rank in Niti Aayog's SDG India Index 2020-21, while Bihar has been adjudged as the worst performer, as per a report released on Thursday.

The Index for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) evaluates progress of states and union territories on social, economic and environmental parameters.

Kerala retained its rank as the top state with a score of 75. Both Himachal Pradesh and Tamil Nadu took the second spot with a score of 74.

Bihar, Jharkhand and Assam were the worst performing states in this year's India index.

The third rendition of India's SDG Index was launched by Niti Aayog vice-chairman Rajiv Kumar on Thursday. Our effort of monitoring SDGs through the SDG India Index and Dashboard continues to be widely noticed and applauded around the world. It remains a rare data-driven initiative to rank our states and union territories by computing a composite index on the SDGs, Kumar

■ BIHAR, JHARKHAND and Assam were the worst performing states in this year's India index

First launched in December 2018, the index has become the primary tool for monitoring progress on the SDGs in the country and has simultaneously fostered competition among the states and union territories by ranking them on the global goals.

The index, developed in collaboration with the UN in India, measures the progress at the national and sub-national level in the country's journey towards meeting the global goals and targets and has been successful as an advocacy tool to propagate the messages of sustainability, resilience, and partnerships, as well.

From covering 13 goals, 39 targets, and 62 indicators in the first edition in 2018-19 to 17 goals, 54 targets and 100 indicators in the second; this third edition of the index covers 17 goals, 70 targets, and 115 indicators.

— PTI

NORTHERN RAILWAY

E-TENDER NOTICE

Sr.DEN/I/MB acting for and on behalf of The President of India invites E-Tenders against Tender No. 21-DRM-MB-21-22 Closing date 24/06/2021 16:00 hrs. Name of Work: General annual repair works at service building and staff quarters from BLM (INCL)-SPC (EXCL) - ON(EXCL) including wood and road work for 2021-22 in the section of SSE/W/BLM under ADEN/HRI-II. Tender closing date/time: 24/06/2021 16:00. Cost of Work: Rs. 8999999.84 Earnest Money: Rs. Nil. Tender Cost: Nil. Bidding Start Date: 10/06/2021 and Period of Completion: 12 Months Bidders will be able to submit their original/revised bids upto closing date and time only. Manual offers are not allowed against this tender, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored. For detail information please log into www.irops.gov.in. Contractors are allowed to make payments against this tender towards tender document cost and earnest money only through online payment modes available on IREPS portal like net banking debit card, credit card etc. Manual payments through Demand draft, Banker's cheque, Deposit receipts, FDR etc. are not allowed.

Tender No. 21-DRM-MB-21-22 Dated-02.06.2021 1199/2021

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Revised Traffic Handling Plan

In continuation to the Notice "Temporary Cancellation/ Diversion/Partial Cancellation/ Rescheduling/ Regulation/ Skipping of Stoppage of Trains due to traffic block" which was published in the various Newspapers on 30.05.2021. Following amendments are being issued:-

- Train no. 04652 Amritsar-Jaynagar Special Express which was cancelled earlier on 25.06.21, 27.06.21 & 30.06.21, will also be cancelled on 23.06.21.
- Train no. 04651 Jaynagar-Amritsar Special Express which was cancelled earlier on 25.06.21, 27.06.21 & 29.06.21, will also be cancelled on 02.07.21.
- Train no. 04501/04502 Saharanpur-Una Himachal-Saharanpur Special Express on 25.06.21, will not be short terminated & short originated at/from Ambala. This train will be short terminated & short originated on 26.06.21 to 30.06.21 at/from Ambala.
- Train no. 04674 Amritsar-Jaynagar Shaheed Special Express which was rescheduled for 120 minutes at Amritsar on 25.06.21, is cancelled on 25.06.21, 27.06.21 & 29.06.21.

Note: For any kind of information such as detailed Time-Table & Stations enroute etc., passengers are requested to contact Railway Enquiry No. 139 or may visit Indian Railways website: <https://enquiry.indianrailways.gov.in> or NTES App.

RailMadad Helpline No. 139 Visit RailMadad website: www.railmadad.indianrailways.gov.in Download Railmadad App

Visit us at: www.nr.indianrailways.gov.in Your Convenience - Our Concern

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

NORTHERN RAILWAY

Tender Notice

The Senior Divisional Commercial Manager/Freight, Northern Railway, New Delhi invites E-tender for the contract of leasing of SLR/SLRD space in the following special trains originating from various stations over Delhi Division:-

Tender Opening Date :- 25.06.2021

S. No.	Train No.	From	To	Comptt.	CC	Freq	R.P. (in Rs.)	EMD (in Rs.)	Tender Cost (including GST @18% (in Rs.))	Tender No.
1	04521	DLI (DELHI Jn.)	UMB (Ambala Cantt)	FI	4	Daily	6048	100000	1180	SLR-FI-04521-June21
2	04206	DLI (DELHI Jn.)	FD (Faizabad Jn)	RI	4	Daily	10711	100000	1180	SLR-FI-04206-June21
3	04018	ANVT (Anand Vihar Terminal)	RXL (Raxaul Jn)	FSLR	3.9	Wednesday	20145	100000	1180	SLR-FSLR-04018-June21
4	05058	ANVT (Anand Vihar Terminal)	GKP (Gorakhpur Jn.)	FSLR	3.9	Wednesday	12399	100000	1180	SLR-FSLR-05058-June21
5	04162	ANVT (Anand Vihar Terminal)	CNB (Kanpur Central)	FSLR	3.9	Sunday	8593	100000	1180	SLR-FSLR-04162-June21
6	02394	NDLS (New Delhi)	Rajender Nagar Patna (RJPB)	FSLR	3.9	Daily	16409	100000	1180	SLR-FSLR-02394-June21
7	02824	NDLS (New Delhi)	BBS (Bhubaneswar)	FSLR	3.9	Tuesday Wednesday Thursday & Saturday	32293	100000	1180	SLR-FSLR-02824-June21
8	02958	NDLS (New Delhi)	ADI (Ahmedabad)	FSLR	3.9	Daily	19168	100000	1180	SLR-FSLR-02958-June21
9	02622	NDLS (New Delhi)	MAS (MGR Chennai Central)	FSLR	3.9	Daily	29456	100000	1180	SLR-FSLR-02622-June21
10	04164	MTC (Meerut City)	PRYJ (Prayagraj Jn.)	FI	4	Tuesday Thursday Saturday Sunday	11052	100000	1180	SLR-FI-04164-June21
11	04164	MTC (Meerut City)	PRYJ (Prayagraj Jn.)	FII	4	Tuesday Thursday Saturday Sunday	11052	100000	1180	SLR-FII-04164-June21
12	04164	MTC (Meerut City)	PRYJ (Prayagraj Jn.)	RI	4	Tuesday Thursday Saturday Sunday	11052	100000	1180	SLR-RI-04164-June21

Interested bidders may please visit official website for E-tendering i.e. www.irops.gov.in for further details and submitting tender.

Important Note:

1. Bidders who wish to participate in the E-tendering will have to procure class-3 valid digital security certificate (DSC) as per Information Technology Act, 2000. Bidders can procure this certificate from any of the certifying authority of Controller of Certifying Authorities (CCA) Government of India. Details of certifying authorities can be obtained from www.cca.gov.in

2. Bidders who want to participate in this E-tender will be required to register on Indian Railways website www.irops.gov.in through a valid class-3 Digital Security Certificate (DSC), if not registered earlier. All information related to bidder registration and participation in this E-tender is available on the official website of Indian Railways www.irops.gov.in

3. Railway Administration reserves the full and absolute rights to short terminate these tenders/contracts at any point of time (or for taking any decision regarding the discontinuation/continuation of these tenders/contracts with modified/additional terms and conditions) depending upon the continuation/discontinuation of these special trains or commencement of correspondence regular train services.

4. Kindly carefully read and follow the 'General Instructions, Instructions to tenderers and "Terms and Conditions" (including certain new modified instructions/conditions) given in the Tender Document before submitting the ONLINE BID.

No. CIID/SLR/Tender/2020 (Part V)

Serving Customers With A Smile

1207/2021

SHORT TAKES

'DON' WHO DARED COPS WITH MOVIE DIALOGUES HELDRABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY
BHOPAL, JUNE 3

A murder accused who dared the cops in Gwalior in Madhya Pradesh to arrest him by reminding the latter of the iconic Bollywood dialogue, *"Don ko pakadna mushkil hi nahin namumkin hai"* was finally arrested, police said on Thursday.

Ramesh Valmiki (31), accused of murdering two people in a gap of three days in Gwalior in April this year, had given slip to the police a number of times in the last one and half months which emboldened him to throw down gauntlet at the police to arrest him. The history-sheeter used to poke fun at the police every time he gave slip by circulating posters that quoted the popular dialogue of the Amitabh Bachchan-starrer *"Don"* to send the message that it was impossible to arrest him. He used to circulate posters that read *"Don ko pakadna mushkil hi nahin, namumkin hai (it is not only difficult to arrest the don, but impossible too)"*. The Gwalior police has declared a bounty of ₹10,000 on his head. The murder accused was however finally arrested in Gwalior city late on Wednesday night when he was going to "target his third victim".

Acting on a tip off that he was visiting a particular person in a locality in the city to attack him, a team of crime branch police laid a trap for him and later arrested him, police said. "He (the murder accused) appeared to be a drug addict," the police said.

No headway in ops to rescue 5 miners

Shillong: The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) joined the rescue efforts at the illegal coal mine in Meghalaya's East Jaintia Hills district where five miners are trapped. The miners are trapped for the last four days inside the illegal coal mine that was flooded after a dynamite explosion. "A 24-member team from NDRF has arrived at the accident site in Umpleng," a senior official said. There are no signs of those trapped at the bottom of the vertical opening of the mine, he said. The mine has an opening of about 25 ft x 25 ft and is over 500 ft deep, the official said. "Members of the NDRF team got onto an iron basket and made use of the crane at the site to inspect the water level. We have requisitioned more pumps to try and reduce the water to a level safe enough for the divers to begin their search,"

Gov Dhankhar seeks report from Bengal govt on next DGP choiceRAJIB CHOWDHURI
KOLKATA, JUNE 3

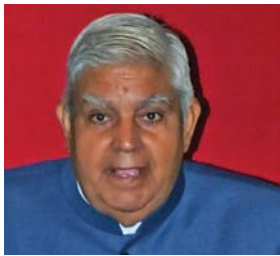
Close on the heels of a fierce tug of war between the Centre and the Mamata Banerjee government over retired IAS officer Alapan Bandyopadhyay's stint as the West Bengal chief secretary, another controversy is likely to unfold in the state over the selection and appointment of the next director-general of police (DGP).

Current DGP Virendra is due to retire on August 31 this year. He was removed by the Election Commission as the state's top cop during the Assembly election over the BJP's allegations of

bias towards the ruling Trinamul Congress. The 1985-batch IPS officer, known to be in the good books of the CM, was however reinstated by the TMC chief after coming to power for the third consecutive time.

Though it is not clear whether chief minister Mamata Banerjee, who is also the state home minister, has any plans to seek an extension for Virendra like she did and also succeeded in the case of Mr Bandyopadhyay, Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar, however, flagged his concerns on her government's role in the selection process of the next state DGP.

"...Incumbent DGP Shri Virendra, IPS (1985),



Jagdeep Dhankhar

superannuates on August 31, 2021, and the process for appointment of successor DGP as per Supreme Court directive deserves to be started before three months. Am sure this must have been done and the names of IPS officers eligible, and superannuating post-February 28, 2022, must have been sent to the

concerned," Mr Dhankhar said in a statement.

He added that the state government is required to send its proposals at least three months prior to the retirement date of the incumbent DGP. Sources claimed that the list was not sent till the reports last came in.

"Government @MamataOfficial shall appoint 1 person from the panel prepared by UPSC and shall not appoint acting DGP or on a temporary basis. Supreme Court directives to be scrupulously followed. WB plea seeking modification declined by Supreme Court on January 16, 2019," Mr Dhankhar tweeted on Thursday afternoon.



West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee distributes free rations to needy people during a Covid-induced lockdown in Kolkata on Thursday. — PRITAM BANDYOPADHYAY

Aligarh hit by hooch tragedy again, 5 dead, 22 in hospital

Aligarh, June 3: Five people died and 22 more were hospitalised after consuming spurious liquor in a village here, days after another hooch tragedy resulted in the death of at least 35 in the district, police said on Thursday.

On Wednesday night, some brick kiln labourers fell sick after consuming country-made liquor dumped in a canal near Rohera village in the Jawan area, they said.

"It appears that some persons involved in the spurious liquor trade dumped their entire stock in the canal fearing a raid," senior superintendent of police Kalanidhi Naithani told reporters. This is the second hooch tragedy reported in the district in recent days.

In the earlier case, at least 35 people died after consuming illicit liquor, while autopsies were conducted on a total of 87 victims. Officials fear some of them may have died of the same cause and many people have suffered eye damage and vision loss.

In Wednesday's incident, the brick kiln workers found the liquor cartons dumped in the canal. They started celebrating but were taken ill shortly after consuming the brew. An alarm was raised and a police party from the nearby Jawan police station rushed to the spot and took the victims to a hospital. — PTI

Monsoon hits Kerala after a delay of 2 days, says IMD

New Delhi, June 3: After a delay of two days, the southwest monsoon made an onset over Kerala on Thursday, marking the commencement of the four-month rainfall season in the country, the India meteorological department (IMD) said.

The southwest monsoon has made an onset over southern parts of Kerala, said IMD director-general Mrutunjay Mohapatra.

The normal onset date for southwest monsoon over Kerala is June 1. The southwest monsoon is likely to advance into remaining parts of south Arabian Sea and some parts of central Arabian Sea, remaining parts of Kerala, Lakshadweep, some parts of Tamil

Nadu, Puducherry, coastal and south interior Karnataka, Rayalaseema, and south and central Bay of Bengal during the next two days, the IMD said.

This is the third time in the last six years that monsoon arrived late. In 2016 and 2019, Southwest Monsoon made an onset over Kerala on June 8.

The IMD had earlier forecast that monsoon would make an onset over Kerala around May 31.

Skymet, a private weather forecasting station, said southwest monsoon made an onset over Kerala on May 30. However, the IMD said conditions were not ripe for declaring the onset of monsoon.

The southwest monsoon is likely to be normal in

north and south India, above-normal in central India and below-normal in east and northeast India, the met office had said.

Most parts of the country are expected to receive normal to above normal rainfall during the season, the IMD said. However, there are some regions in east and northeast India like eastern parts of Bihar, some parts of West Bengal, Assam, Meghalaya, Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, adjoining Himachal Pradesh, south-west peninsula India, specifically some parts of Kerala, coastal Karnataka and parts of interior Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu where the probability of below normal activity is predicted. — PTI

J&K protectees told not to move out without security

After BJP councilor's murder, police nod must for travel

AGE CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR, JUNE 3

The authorities in Jammu and Kashmir have completely banned the travel of protected mainstream political activists out of their designated secured accommodations without informing the police or moving out without their personal security officers (PSOs).

"No protectee should go anywhere without PSOs. Visits are allowed only after ground assessment of local threats is done," a statement issued by Kashmir's IGP Vijay Kumar reads.

The diktat comes a day after a BJP municipal councillor Rakesh Pandita was gunned down by suspected militants in Tral area of southern Pulwama district.

Late Wednesday night, three gunmen who, the police said, were members of a proscribed militant outfit, targeted Pandita inside the house of his friend and neighbour Mushtaq Ahmad whose daughter identified as Asifa Mushtaq was critically injured in the firing incident at Tral Payeen.

Pandita, a resident of the same area, was for being a protected person putting up at a secured accommodation in capital Srinagar and had been provided with two PSOs by the police but, as was claimed by the authorities, he chose to visit Tral without informing the police authorities and even did not take his PSOs along.

The BJP has termed it a 'political murder' that took place due to a 'security lapse'. A party leader Ashok Koul said, "It is a security lapse. Weren't the security agencies aware that three unidentified terrorists were roaming in the area? Is this not a security lapse? We agree

Youth who snatched cop's gun shot dead in encounterYUSUF JAMEEL
SRINAGAR, JUNE 3

The man who had while being interrogated for his alleged militant connection at a police camp in Tral area of J&K's southern Pulwama district snatched the service rifle of a policeman and then shot him a day ago was killed in what the officials claimed was an encounter early Thursday.

Inspector-general of police (Kashmir range) Vijay Kumar claimed the slain man Muhammad Amin Malik was provided "ample opportunities" to surrender but he refused. "The officers made repeated appeals to him to surrender. Also, his mother and some other family members were called to persuade him to lay down the weapon and surrender before the authorities but he ignored all these appeals and continued to open fire at the policemen. He was killed in retaliatory fire." There was no word from Malik's family on the police claims.

Malik, as per the police, had taken shelter in the power-generator room

within the camp of J&K police's counterinsurgency special operations group at Tral. A police statement issued here claimed that he was an "active terror operative" of Hizb-ul-Mujahideen who was "neutralised" in an overnight operation jointly conducted by the police, 42 Rashtriya Rifles of the Army and the 180th Battalion of the CRPF.

It said that Malik was arrested on May 30 along with "incriminating materials—arms, ammunition and explosives including unlicensed 12 bore gun, live rounds, explosives, iron and steel balls, nine feature phones and other warlike stores used in the fabrication of IEDs". It added, "The terror operative was on police remand and was on Wednesday brought from the police station Tral to the police component complex, Tral, for further interrogation". But during the interrogation, he got hold of the service rifle (AK 47) of constable Amjad Khan and fired indiscriminately with the intention to kill the police personnel".

Rakesh had not taken his PSOs along but the government must admit lapses on its part". He also said that being a political killing, the incident should not be connected with the return of Kashmiri Pandits to the Valley.

MEA: India's position on Palestine not newAGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 3

Soon after Palestine expressed dismay to New Delhi over India abstaining during a recent vote at the UN Human Rights Council on a resolution to set up a commission of inquiry into human rights violations in Gaza, India on Thursday sought to downplay the developments by arguing that its position is not new and it has "abstained on previous occasions" too.

According to reports, Palestinian foreign minister Riyad al-Maliki wrote to external affairs minister S. Jaishankar, complaining that New Delhi's abstention "stifles

the important work of... advancing human rights for all peoples, including those of the Palestinian people" and that "India missed an opportunity to join the international community at this turning point, both crucial and long overdue, on the path to accountability, justice and peace."

MEA spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said, "Regarding the letter from the Palestinian foreign minister, I understand that Palestine has written similar letters to all the countries that abstained during the UNHRC vote. The position we took is not a new position and we have abstained on previous occasions."

6 farmers hurt in clash with BSF in Bengal

Berhampore/Kolkata June 3: Six farmers were allegedly injured while a BSF vehicle was damaged during a violent clash between the farmers and the BSF jawans in Murshidabad of West Bengal early Thursday.

A group of farmers wanted to enter Char Island for farming and lined up at a gate of the border outpost for entry pass at around 5 am. The BSF jawans however denied them entry, asking each of them to show a voter identity card. But the farmers protested.

The villagers attacked BSF jawans, ransacked their gypsy and tried to harm a company commander-rank officer also.

Govt seals deal for 30cr jobs

■ **Continued from Page 1** while India is looking forward to WHO's nod for Bharat Biotech's indigenously developed Covaxin, the government has worked with key partners to ease regulatory disruptions to vaccine supply chains through diplomatic interventions.

He said a number of serious global conversations are underway on platforms such as the G7, G20, QUAD, BRICS, the United Nations and WHO itself.

"We are also part of discussions with major vaccine manufacturers like Pfizer, Johnson and Johnson, and Moderna about sourcing and possible local manufacturing of their vaccines in India. We have also helped to expedite the introduction of the Sputnik-V vaccine. Vaccines have complex supply chains. We have worked to ease regulatory disruptions to these supply chains with key partners through diplomatic interventions," Mr Shringla said.

"We remain engaged

with the US vaccine manufacturers (for Covid vaccines) and are also separately engaged with the US administration for raw materials," MEA spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said.

India on Thursday recorded 1.34 lakh fresh cases in the last 24 hours and daily detections of new positive cases remained less than two lakh for the seventh consecutive day. With 17.13 lakh active cases, a caseload has been below 20 lakh for three successive days and daily recoveries continue to outnumber the new detections for the 21st consecutive day. The national recovery rate has further climbed to 92.79 per cent while daily positivity rate at 6.21 per cent continues a trend of less than 10 per cent positivity for 10 continuous days.

Mumbai's Dharavi, that was once the epicenter, reported only one new positive case on Thursday and the total number of active cases in the area is 19. Delhi recorded 487 new cases and 45 deaths as its posi-

tivity rate dropped to 0.61 per cent.

A Maharashtra government minister on Thursday announced a five-phase relaxation of lockdown in the state, but the government later retracted it saying lockdown will continue like other parts of the country. "Relaxation of restrictions as per the situation in different areas is only under consideration and no decision has been taken", a statement from the Maharashtra chief minister's office said.

Saying Covid-19 cases have decreased to half in the State, West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee announced opening up of restaurants between 5 pm and 8 pm after all their staffers get vaccinated.

Karnataka, however, has extended the lockdown by a week. "Covid-19 situation is worse, that is why we have extended the lockdown by one week. I am hoping that everything will be fine after one week," Karnataka CM B.S. Yediyurappa said.

■ **Continued from Page 1** 505 (1) (b) of the IPC would be unjust," the court said. "Those offences, going by the allegations in the FIR and other attending circumstances, are not made out at all and any prosecution in respect thereof

would be violative of the rights of the petitioner guaranteed under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution," the court said in its order.

However, the court declined Mr Dua's plea that before registering a

case against a journalist with 10 years of professional standing, the complaint should be examined by a high-powered committee.

A five-judge constitution bench by its January 20, 1962, judgment in Kedar

Nath Singh vs State of Bihar case had said, "...comments, however strongly worded, expressing disapprobation of actions of the government, without exciting those feelings which generate the inclination to cause public

disorder by acts of violence, would not be penal." It had further said, "In other words, disloyalty to government established by law is not the same thing as commenting in strong terms upon the measures or acts of gov-

ernment, or its agencies, so as to ameliorate the condition of the people or to secure the cancellation or alteration of those acts or measures by lawful means... without exciting those feelings of enmity and disloyalty..."

Choksi says he was kidnapped■ **Continued from Page 1**

May 23 from Antigua and Barbuda where he was staying since 2018 as a citizen. He was detained in neighbouring island country Dominica for illegal entry after a possible romantic escapade with his rumoured girlfriend.

Mr Choksi, wanted in India in connection with a Rs 13,500-crore fraud in the Punjab National Bank (PNB), pleaded before the magistrate that he was abducted and forcibly brought to Dominica from neighbouring Antigua and Barbuda, about 100 nautical miles away. His lawyers alleged that he was kidnapped from Jolly Harbour in Antigua by policemen looking like Antiguan and Indian and brought to Dominica on a boat.

The 62-year-old wheelchair-bound diamondaire, who has a pending Interpol Red Corner Notice (RCN) against him, arrived before the presiding Rouseau Magistrate Court in a black pair of shorts and a blue T-shirt from the Dominica China Friendship Hospital, where he is undergoing treatment.

The Dominica high court, which was hearing a habeas corpus petition filed by Mr Choksi, had ordered him to be present before the magistrate to face charges of illegal entry. A habeas corpus petition is filed for producing before a court a person who is under arrest or in unlawful detention.

During the hearing before magistrate Candia Carrette-George, the Dominica prosecution cited two main arguments to keep Choksi under detention -- the RCN against him and the ongoing extradition proceedings in the courts of Antigua and Barbuda, where he is staying since 2018 after leaving India. Prosecutor Sherma Dalrymple told the court that Mr Choksi is a "flight risk" and does not have any ties in Dominica that prevent him from fleeing the country if bail is granted.

Defence counsel Wayne Norde said Mr Choksi was not a flight risk considering his health and the pending extradition proceedings in Antigua and Barbuda were also a reason for him not to leave

Dominica.

Offering to pay a bail amount of ECD 10,000, double the fine amount for illegal entry to Dominica, Mr Norde said Mr Choksi did not have any criminal case in Antigua and Barbuda and the proceedings against him were civil in nature, which shows that he is a man of good character.

In her order, the magistrate said considering the "severity" of the matter, she is not convinced that Mr Choksi will stay in the country to face legal proceedings and adjourned the matter till June 14.

India's ministry of external affairs on Thursday said India remains steadfast in its resolve that fugitives of the country are brought back and all efforts would continue to bring back Mr Choksi, who is wanted in a major banking fraud here.

"He (Choksi) is currently in the custody of Dominica where some legal proceedings are underway. We will continue to ensure that he is brought back to India," MEA spokesperson Arindam Bagchi told reporters at an online press briefing. — PTI

Naravane hints troops cut...■ **Continued from Page 1**

winding up his two-day visit to Kashmir, when he reviewed the security situation in the hinterland and also along the LoC, coinciding with the completion of the renewal of ceasefire pledge between the two armies, asserted that the situation on the de facto border and in the hinterland had greatly improved, yet he urged the people of the Valley to shun the path of violence as "it will not take you anywhere".

He said: "After being briefed by the (Army) commanders here on the prevailing situation, both along the LoC and hinterland, I'm glad to say that all parameters we judge normal by have seen great improvement. There have been few (militant) initiated incidents."

He added: "There have been hardly any cases of stone pelting, any cases or nil cases of IEDs (blasts) in the recent past and all these are indicators of return of the sense of normalcy... these are all indicators that awaam (people) also want the same. It's a very good thing

that is happening."

Replying to a question, he said troop reduction in J&K was possible if the situation permitted it. He said: "A ceasefire is in place... this is a dynamic process depending on threat perceptions... If the situation permits, we do pull out troops from active deployments."

Gen. Naravane said the Army is ready to supplement the government's effort towards holding a peaceful and smooth Amarnath Yatra and has already taken all necessary steps. He added, however, that the decision to conduct the annual pilgrimage to the 3,882-metre cave shrine lies with the civil administration. The yatra is due to begin from both the traditional Pahalgam and the shorter Balal routes on June 28, but in view of the surge in the number of deaths and positive cases in the Covid-19 second wave, the Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board had last month announced a temporary suspension of the registration of pilgrims for the event.

Ex-CS sends a 'strong' reply■ **Continued from Page 1**

by the Prime Minister, who is also the chairman of National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), in the aftermath of Cyclone Yaas as part of his visit to cyclone affected areas in the State of West Bengal, Shri Alapan Bandyopadhyay, chief secretary, government of West Bengal has acted in a manner tantamount to refusing to comply with lawful directions of the Central Government and is thus violative of Section 51(b) of the Disaster Management Act 2005," the MHA stated.

Mr Bandyopadhyay was "called upon to explain in writing to this ministry within a period of 3 (three) days, as to why action should not be taken against him under Section 51 of the Disaster Management Act 2005 for the aforesaid violation under the Disaster Management Act 2005." Meanwhile, the state's new chief secretary, Mr H.K. Dwiwedi, also sent a report to the Centre which had asked him to inform it about the new role of Mr Bandyopadhyay as the chief adviser to the chief minister.

THE ASIAN AGE

4 JUNE 2021

Vaccines for all: SC has put Centre squarely on the mat

The demand for a review of the Union government’s liberalised vaccine policy that handed over the responsibility of vaccinating people aged between 18 and 44 years to the state governments and private hospitals is gaining strength what with the Supreme Court questioning its very logic. In its interim order in a suo motu case on Wednesday, the apex court wondered why the Centre cannot procure the vaccines for the states as well if it gets the doses cheap because of the size of its order. The court pointed out that the Union Budget for 2021-22 has earmarked ₹35,000 crores to vaccinate people unlike the cash-strapped states, and asked the latter whether they have plans to vaccinate their people for free. After digging out data which said there are about 13,000 villages with no common service centres, the court flagged the issue of digital divide and reminded the government that accessibility barrier could have serious implications on the fundamental rights to equality and health of the marginalised sections of society as registering themselves on the CoWin app is mandatory to get the jab.

The government should take the court’s intervention as an opportunity to make a course correction and take charge. It should go in for a thorough review of the botched policy.

ments, experts and epidemiologists as it refuses to address the challenges the pandemic poses to the nation. The latest to join the chorus is Odisha chief minister Navin Patnaik who wants the Centre to procure vaccines for all the states.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is on record saying vaccination is an important tool in the fight against the virus but the government he heads does not seem to understand its import, lest it should not have forced state government and private companies to fight with one another for a life-saving product in a market where the supply is limited. The Centre should have long ended the charade of the state governments floating global tenders for vaccines only to get poor response when it, as it stated the other day, had known that there is a global shortage of the doses and that manufacturers are unlikely to deal with state governments. It should have taken an early decision on making the Integrated Vaccine Complex at Chengalpet in Tamil Nadu functional instead of sitting on the repeated reminders by chief minister M.K. Stalin.

The government should take the court’s intervention as an opportunity to make a course correction and take charge. It should go in for a thorough review of the botched policy and come out with a comprehensive one which will inoculate every citizen whether a third wave hits the nation or not. Better late than never.

Osaka’s prerogative

Sport mirrors the society it is played in but in the modern age that society has got unimaginably more complex. Take for instance the walkout from the French Open by one of the most talented players in women’s tennis — Naomi Osaka, four time Grand Slam winner. Facing mental health issues as in dealing with a psychosis over media conferences, which she thinks only induce doubts in players’ minds, she decided to abandon the Grand Slam rather than face up to her demons. But what did sport do but throw the book at her in pedantic action and which proved so unpopular, with public opinion swinging hugely in sympathy with her condition, that the sports administrators were running for cover.

Professional sport can no longer be run like a circus ring into which athletes are corralled to perform while taking home fat pay and endorsement cheques. The finest athletes are subjected to extreme anxieties, which their skills help tame sometimes. But they all suffer the same human frailties as John Doe and that calls for empathy rather than stentorian diktats from the keepers of the codes of behaviour. Ironically, the men running the most from the press and media were the admin men of the Grand Slams just when they were required to come clean and act in the interest of inclusivity in sport by explaining themselves.

The mental well-being of sportspeople is also important for the entertainment they offer through their artistic skills that please the aesthete and the aficionado as well as the common man. The complexities of individual behaviour under competitive pressures in young people may seem administratively difficult to handle. But sport must endure all that besides taking a stand against so much else that is wrong with the world, such as racism, sexism and jingoism. They made the debutant England Test cricketer Ollie Robinson apologise cringingly and in public for tweets of 2012 and 2013 that were racist and sexist. It is in addressing sympathetically the issue of his career that sport can show it has the equanimity and the empathy when it comes to dealing with sportspeople.

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T. VENKATRAM REDDY
Editor in Chief

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Pranay Sinha,
Amita Sudhir,
Tania A. Thomas and
Scott K. Heysell

Why is medical care making Covid-hit sicker, poorer in India?

Jugaad is a Hindi word which refers to using resources frugally yet creatively. From low-cost space flights to cost-efficient cardiac surgery, India has pioneered ways to maximise its limited resources. And yet, as front-line emergency physicians and infectious diseases physicians, we have seen a wasteful misuse of healthcare resources in India during the Covid-19 pandemic, which threatens the health and wealth of millions. Emboldened by falling Covid-19 cases, the Indian government loosened restrictions by October 2020. By March 2021, there were signs that the virus was resurgent. According to the Johns Hopkins database, India has seen more than 2.8 crore cases of Covid-19 and more than 3.2 lakh deaths by May 31, 2021. More than 50 per cent of deaths have occurred during the second wave and models suggest that these numbers may be underestimates. Heroic Indian healthcare workers, many of them still unvaccinated, are persevering despite the unprecedented shortages of hospital beds, oxygen, even fever-reducing acetaminophen. Unfortunately, clinicians are using government guidelines based on tenuous or even counterfactual medical evidence, that are resulting in systematic errors. Anti-bacterial drugs like

azithromycin and doxycycline are commonly prescribed despite a lot of evidence that they have no plausible benefits for the viral infection of Covid-19. In addition to monetary costs, patients also face health risks from unnecessary antibiotics. For instance, azithromycin may promote dangerous and even fatal changes in the heartbeat pattern. Antibiotic overuse also propagates anti-microbial resistance, already a major concern in India. The latest Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) recommendations from May 18 still include repeatedly debunked drugs like ivermectin and hydroxychloroquine. These inclusions are entirely inconsistent with the current scientific consensus and should be removed promptly to avoid all confusion. We are heartened that nationally well-known medical leaders like Dr Randeep Guleria, the head of New Delhi’s All India Institute of Medical Sciences, have publicly opposed the use of these discredited Covid therapies. The ICMR guidelines should also be purged of these ineffective drugs to avoid confusion. The ICMR guidelines also suggest use of remdesivir for in-patients. This drug has not been found to have any mortality benefit, and its benefit in shortening

hospitalisation is studied only in the background of adequate supportive care, which is currently available to most Indians. And yet, many Indians are paying \$65 (Rs 5,000) for a five-day course and even higher costs on the black market. Similarly, we are concerned about the recent premature emergency use authorisation given to 2-deoxy-D-glucose (2-DG.). Although the government cites success for this drug in clinical trials, these data have not been made available to the public. Steroids, a cornerstone of Covid-19 therapy, are also being used improperly. The evidence on steroids is clear — they should be given to patients who need oxygen, at a specific dose, and for up to 10 days. In India, steroids are being given early in the disease — before oxygen needs are apparent, at higher doses, and for much longer periods. They can weaken the immune system, worsen diabetes, a disease one in eleven Indians have, and may be implicated in an alarming number of Indians developing a range of fungal infections, including deadly mucormycosis (which is being called black fungus). Fungal infections are not inevitable with steroid use — we did not observe such high rates of invasive fungal infections in the United States when using steroids as recommended

by clinical trials. Indians with Covid-19 are advised to take a large assortment of minerals and vitamins that again have not been shown to be effective. As physicians who cared for patients in the early days of the pandemic in the US, we understand the impulse to “do something” in the midst of so much death, devastation, and desperation. However, having also seen our relatives confused by interminable lists of drugs, we know that seemingly harmless nutritional supplements have opportunity costs — they draw attention away from what is essential. Additionally, given that more than a billion Indians subsist on less than \$5.50 (₹40) daily per capita, each addition to their medication list must be evidence-based and serve a clear purpose. We have the utmost empathy for the Indian healthcare workers who are stretched beyond belief and lack the time to research their recommendations and follow the rapidly growing Covid-19 literature. We exhort the Indian public health leadership to promptly take three specific steps to support Indian clinicians. First, increase public awareness of what to do to care for loved ones at different stages of the disease and keep patients out of hospitals when possible.

NGOs like Swasth and volunteer groups like India COVIDSOS have already developed accessible protocols that can empower Indians to care for sick family members at home, and community organisations to care for patients in Covid-19 care centres, an essential option when hospitals are overwhelmed. Second, the ICMR guidelines must be purged of any therapies that do not stand up to hard-nosed scientific scrutiny. Lastly, the Indian leadership should ensure regular clinical updates to support beleaguered Indian healthcare workers. These updates should come as digestible recommendations straight to the healthcare providers’ phones. Clinicians should be made aware of the cost and the effectiveness of the drugs they prescribe so they can personalise care and share decision-making with patients struggling with the financial burden of Covid-19. Adversity is the mother of frugal creativity, and it is hard to imagine a time more adverse. Though despondent, we nourish the hope that India can mitigate further misery with jugaad, delivered with clear communication, and backed by scientific rigour.

The writers are doctors working in different hospitals in the United States

VACCINATION POLICY...

Subhani



Why China needs to pay reparations to the world



Abhijit Bhattacharya

In an article in August last year, I had argued that the “world needs to seek reparations from China” for the all-round harm it had caused. “Covid-19 has done more damage to the global economy in six months than the two world wars did in 10 years. The Chinese origin virus has already claimed over six lakh lives, while more than 1.6 crore cases have been recorded. There is debt worth billions, perhaps trillions, of dollars and over 200 countries are on the road to ruin”, I had written.

Today, in June 2021, the casualty figures have not only multiplied several hundred times in just 10 months, but skyrocketed to astronomical levels, battering all 223 countries, minus China. Therefore, I reiterate that the world, including India, must compel the Communist Party of China’s government in Beijing to pay suitable reparations or damages to all nations that have been left devastated by the China-conceived Third World War, which is still raging. No one has been left untouched. The effects are starkly visible all over: with India’s economics, society, industry, public health, trade, commerce, security, territorial integrity and 1.3 billion people’s lives turned upside down.

No one is quite sure what lies in store for the world’s second most populous country six months from now, except to helplessly stare at the stark reality of New Delhi being in cusp of an unprecedented period of economic turbulence, caused wholly by the Chinese chemical and biological warfare germ, known to the world as Covid-19, which originated from Wuhan in 2019. The WHO and international bodies have now, belatedly, started an investigation into the origins of the virus, but its credibility has already hit

rock bottom in the eyes of most people in the affected nations, which certainly includes Indians.

Thus, New Delhi continues to pay dearly for the blind trust it reposed in the congenitally deceptive “goodwill” and false “promises” of the CPC’s deceitful and duplicitous leaders and has rarely learnt any lessons.

Just consider some of the facts and figures compiled by Prof. Kaushik Basu, a world-renowned economist, currently a professor at Cornell University and a former chief economic adviser to the Government of India and former World Bank chief economist. Of 14 Asian nations (Bangladesh, Myanmar, China, Vietnam, Bhutan, Nepal, Pakistan, Indonesia, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines, India), the minus eight per cent annual GDP growth of 2020 positions India last but one (above Philippines’ minus 8.3 per cent). In contrast, Bangladesh, with 3.8 per cent annual GDP growth in 2020 tops the list of 14 Asians, with China’s 1.9 per cent growth putting it in third spot, below second-placed Myanmar’s two per cent GDP growth.

In Covid-19 deaths per million population too (as of May 21, 2021), India hit nadir in descending order of 14 Asian states. Bhutan’s one, to India’s 212, and China’s three deaths per million, that clearly shows the scale of beating India has taken at the hands of the CPC-ruled dragon.

The story doesn’t end here. The quantity and quality of universal damage, maliciously inflicted by the CPC since 2019, indisputably qualifies China as the principal destroyer which must be compelled to pay reparations to the world at large, and India in particular.

Just as vanquished Germany was compelled, by 40-odd nations by the Treaty

of Versailles (June 28, 1919) to pay reparations, especially to France, for starting the First World War and ravaging its neighbours. In comparison to the universally destructive 2021, 1919 appears miniscule, as China has set the whole world on fire with its lab created CBW airborne germs; killing, maiming, numbing, crippling soldiers to factory workers; farmers to college students; doctors and nurses on duty to a host of service industry personnel.

Beijing’s single-point agenda is to monopolise the world economy. In India-China bilateral trade alone, Beijing has so far profited by over \$483 billion in 20 years, starting 1999-2000. In other areas too, like Chinese banks operating in India, and sub-standard Chinese automaker MG, is on a profiteering spree through high prices and poor service. India’s roads, railways, telecoms, tech are all being targeted, and the aim is to bolster China and destroy India.

Let’s translate \$483 billion to India’s annual defence expenditure. Military Balance 2021, published by the International Institute for Strategic Studies, London, shows India’s 2020 defence budget of \$64.1 billion standing third behind America’s \$738 billion and China’s \$193.3 billion. The outcome of a one-way \$483 billion Chinese profit implies loss of the same amount to India — which is equivalent to seven and a half years of India’s defence budget! That’s just one segment, not to speak of several other sectoral losses worth millions/billions. One, therefore, fails to comprehend, why a battered India shouldn’t demand reparations from the CPC. After all, the world has already entered

The twenty-first century is, so far, a ‘war without gunshots’ (except in Ladakh), but its airborne destruction far outweighs the twentieth century firepower of the two world wars

the third year of the Third World War, which has put the lives of 1.3 billion Indians under grave threat.

Paradoxically, the Wuhan-origin “Third World War CBW virus”, despite looking surreal and bizarre, has turned the much-touted cliché “world is one” and “world is a global village” into reality. The world is indeed “really one”, as all sides, except China, are “sinking as one”. In unison, Beijing’s bragging now stands out. The CPC is claiming that China has hiked industrial production, exports to the US, EU and India, and this comes amid an assault on freedom of navigation through international waters and the “wolf warrior diplomacy” targeting everyone and anyone — from Canberra to London, Pacific islands to the Balkans, along with landlocked Tibet, Xinjiang and Taiwan. Plus of course the never-ending standoff in Ladakh and tensions across the Himalayas.

Today, therefore, is a time of reckoning. The world must collectively demand reparations, as done after the First World War by the Versailles Treaty. Two articles — 231 and 232 — made Germany capitulate and agree to pay for the wilful death, damage and destruction it caused to Europe.

The prefix “re” thus becomes the economic password of battered countries: “Reconstruction, recovery, rebuild, reparations, retrenchment, repayment of war debts,” revaluation of currency and restoration of the gold standard. The twenty-first century is, so far, a “war without gunshots” (except in Ladakh), but its airborne destruction far outweighs the twentieth century firepower of the two world wars. The CPC must be forced to pay reparations, if the world is not to capitulate to the dictates of Emperor Xi Jinping. Incidentally, Xi will turn 68 on June 15, the day he killed 22 Indian soldiers in 2020 to mark his 67 years!

The writer is a Supreme Court advocate. The views expressed here are personal.

LETTERS

PLAN AHEAD

With reference to the editorial, “Testing time for students”, post cancellation of the CBSE and ISC examinations in one fell swoop, there is understandable euphoria among the students. Criteria for admission to colleges must be rolled out at the earliest. Then aspiring students can start the preparations for entrance exams immediately and appropriately. Also, as fear of a third wave looms large, the boards ought to proactively devise a fallback plan for the current batches of class 10 and 12 students.

Deepak Singhal
Noida

SEARCH NO EVIL

THERE IS WISDOM in Google’s contention that the new Information Technology Rules 2021, which came into effect late last month, did not apply to the US-based tech giant as it is a “search engine”, unlike social media intermediaries like Facebook, Twitter or Instagram. In a plea to the Delhi High Court, Google asked the court to overturn a previous ruling directing it to remove objectionable content from its search results globally, flagged as objectionable by a female petitioner. Many legal experts also see the merit behind Google’s stance that it does not mandate users to register on the platform to search for info.

N.J. Ravi Chander
Bengaluru

HOPE FOR VILLAGES

MAHARASHTRA HAS shown the way! To keep the country safe from the coronavirus, the Maharashtra government has decided to take an interesting step to ensure compliance with Covid-19 norms. The state has announced “Corona-Free Village” competitions in which the top three villages in each revenue district will be awarded prizes up to Rs 50 lakh. Maharashtra rural development minister Hasan Mushrif informed that the contest is a part of the initiative “My Village Corona Free” announced by the CM. The first prize will be of ₹50 lakh, to be utilised for development works.

Bhagwan Thadani
Mumbai

SHORT TAKES

6.1-MAGNITUDE
QUAKE STRIKES
INDONESIA

Jakarta, June 3: A 6.1-magnitude earthquake struck off the coast of Indonesia's remote Maluku islands Thursday, the United States Geological Survey said, but no tsunami warning was issued.

The strong quake hit at a relatively shallow depth of 31 kilometres, about 127 kilometres southwest of the city of Ternate. Shallower quakes tend to cause more damage, but there were no immediate reports of casualties. "It was a decent shake, but people weren't panicking," said Ternate resident Nasarudin Amin. "There are warnings about potential aftershocks." Indonesia experiences frequent quakes due to its position on the Pacific "Ring of Fire".

4 KILLED AS BOMB
HITS MINIVAN
IN KABUL

Kabul, June 3: A bomb ripped through a minivan in the western part of the Afghan capital Kabul on Thursday, killing at least four people.

No one took responsibility for the attack in the neighbourhood, which is largely populated by the minority Hazara ethnic group who are mostly Shiite Muslims. The Islamic State has carried out similar bombings in the area, including an attack on two minivans on Tuesday that killed at least 10 people. Shiites are a minority in mostly Sunni Afghanistan, and the Islamic State affiliate has declared war against them. In a statement, IS said they had also bombed an electrical grid station on Tuesday, leaving much of Kabul in darkness.

TRUMP SHUTS
DOWN HIS SOCIAL
MEDIA SITE

Washington, June 3: Donald Trump has permanently closed his blog, a webpage where the former US president shared his fiery speeches and statements after being banned by social media giants, including Facebook and Twitter.

The page titled From the Desk of Donald J. Trump has been removed from Trump's website after going live less than a month earlier, his spokesperson Jason Miller told *CNBC* news on Wednesday.

It was just auxiliary to the broader efforts we have and are working on, Miller said, adding that the webpage will not be returning.

"Hoping to have more information on the broader efforts soon, but I do not have a precise awareness of timing," Miller said.

FRANCE'S DAVID
DIOP WINS INT'L
BOOKER PRIZE

London, June 3: French novelist David Diop on Wednesday won the prestigious International Booker Prize for books translated into English with his World War I-set novel, "At Night All Blood is Black".

The Paris-born writer became the first French winner of the prize, awarded for a book translated into English and published in the UK or Ireland, a ceremony broadcast online.

Lucy Hughes-Hallett, chair of the judges, said "this story of warfare and love and madness has a terrifying power".

"We judges agreed that its incantatory prose and dark, brilliant vision had jangled our emotions and blown our minds," she said, adding "it had cast a spell on us".

BLOOD MONEY
SAVES INDIAN
FROM DEATH ROW

Abu Dhabi, June 3: A 45-year-old Indian, who was on death row in the United Arab Emirates for killing a young Sudanese boy in a road accident in 2012, can't believe that he will be a free man and can return to the country to be with his family. Becks Krishnan was saved by prominent NRI businessman and philanthropist M.A. Yusufali who helped to pay his "blood money" amounting nearly ₹one crore.

Krishnan, who hails from Kerala, was sentenced to death by UAE Supreme Court after he was found guilty of killing a young Sudanese boy when he recklessly drove and rammed his car into a group of children in September 2012. Ever since, his family and friends have been trying hard for Krishnan's release without any success, especially as the victim's family had already gone back and settled in Sudan, putting an end to any discussion or pardon. The Krishnan family then approached Yusufali,

Tiananmen protest anniv eve



Visitors tour in front of Tiananmen Gate on the eve of Friday's anniversary in Beijing, on Thursday. Communist Party leaders have imprisoned or driven activists into exile and largely succeeded in ensuring young people know little about the June 4, 1989, deadly crackdown on the pro-democracy movement. — AP

Bill to remove per nation cap
on Green Card in US Congress

Washington, June 3: A bipartisan legislation has been introduced in the US House of Representatives to eliminate the per country cap on employment-based Green Card. The legislation was introduced by Congresswoman Zoe Lofgren and Congressman John Curtis and it is likely to benefit Indian IT professionals anguishing over decades of Green Card wait. The Equal Access to Green cards for Legal Employment (EAGLE) Act, 2021 needs to be passed by the Senate before it can be sent to the White House for the president to sign it into a law.

The bill phases out the seven per cent per-country limit on employment-based immigrant visas. The bill also raises the seven per cent per-country limit on family-sponsored visas to 15 per cent.

● **THE BILL** phases out the seven per cent per-country limit on employment-based immigrant visas. The bill also raises the seven per cent per-country limit on family-sponsored visas to 15 per cent.

Its predecessor, the Fairness for High Skilled Immigrants Act, was passed in the House in the 116th Congress with a resounding bipartisan vote of 365 to 65.

"We all know that our immigration system is severely broken and it has been broken for decades," said Lofgren, Chair of the House Subcommittee on Immigration and Citizenship. The basic framework for allocating im-

migrant visas dates back to the middle of the 20th century and was last seriously updated in 1990, when the Congress established the worldwide numerical limits on visas and the seven per cent per-country cap that still exists today, she said.

Over time, these limitations have led to backlogs that were unimaginable in 1990. The effect has been that countries with relatively small populations are allocated the same number of visas as a relatively large population country. "The result? A person from a large-population country with extraordinary qualifications who could contribute greatly to our economy and create jobs waits behind a person with lesser qualifications from a smaller country," she added.

"It makes no sense. Because of this, we are now seeing recruiters from outside America luring those with the highest skills away from the US. That hurts our economy. The bipartisan EAGLE Act moves our country toward a system that emphasises birthplace and better serves America. Simply put, it will allow US companies to focus on what they do best — hiring smart people to create products and services, which creates jobs in our districts," Lofgren said. Congressman Curtis said the 2020 census showed that Utah has the fastest-growing state in the nation due to major growth and innovation in the technology sector, bringing thousands of new jobs to the state.

— PTI

S'PORE BEGINS
PROBE INTO
FIRE ON SHIP

Singapore, June 3: Singapore on Thursday started its own investigation into the massive fire on a chemical-laden cargo vessel, sailing under the country's flag, that sank in Sri Lankan waters and posed a grave threat to the environment and marine life.

The Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore (MPA) in a press statement said it also understands that the Sri Lankan authorities are investigating the incident.

"As the flag State, MPA has also commenced its own investigation on the incident," it said. The container ship MV X-Press Pearl, carrying a consignment of chemicals and raw materials for cosmetics from Hazira in Gujarat to Colombo Port, sank.

— PTI

Cyberattack: Biden says
looking at Russia reprisal

Washington, June 3: US President Joe Biden said Wednesday he is "looking" at possible retaliation after the White House linked Russia to a cyberattack against global meat processing giant JBS.

Asked by a reporter if he would take action against President Vladimir Putin, whom he will meet for a summit in Geneva later this month, Biden said: "We're looking closely at that issue." The ransomware attack on a US subsidiary of Brazilian-owned JBS has again prompted accusations that Russia is at least harbouring cybercriminals.

Similar suspicions were raised after ransomware hackers forced the temporary shutdown of the huge Colonial fuel pipeline in the eastern United States last month.

Asked if Putin is testing him ahead of their summit, Biden said "no." The Federal Bureau of Investigation on Wednesday attributed the attack to "REvil and Sodinokibi," which experts have said are two names for the same hacking group with ties to Russia, and said it was "working diligently to bring the threat actors to justice."

"We continue to focus our efforts on imposing risk and consequences

and holding the responsible cyber actors accountable," the FBI said in a statement.

The White House says Biden will bring up US concerns during the summit on June 16, as well as at earlier summits with allies in the G7 group, the European Union and Nato. "We expect this to be an issue of discussion throughout the President's trip," Press Secretary Jen Psaki told reporters.

"Harbouring criminal entities that are intending to do harm, that are doing harm to the critical infrastructure in the United States, is not acceptable," she said.

"We're not going to stand by that. We will raise that and we're not going to take options off the table."

— AFP

Bibi rivals reach
deal to oust him

Lapid: 8-party coalition has been formed

Jerusalem, June 3: Israel's Opposition parties on Thursday set the wheels in motion for a potential national unity government after clinching a last-minute agreement to oust Benjamin Netanyahu, the longest-serving prime minister in the Jewish nation's history.

Yair Lapid, leader of the centrist Yesh Atid party, announced an eight-party coalition had been formed after tough political negotiations. Under a rotation arrangement, the head of the right-wing Yamina party, Naftali Bennett, 49, would serve as the prime minister first before handing over to Lapid.

Lapid, 57, officially informed President Reuven Rivlin and Knesset (Parliament) Speaker Yariv Levin about the deal late Wednesday night, barely half an hour before the Wednesday midnight deadline.

The announcement came after a series of back-to-back meetings with the leaders of the anti-Netanyahu camp in the 120-member Knesset.

"In accordance with Clause 13(b) of the Basic Law: The Government I am honoured to inform you

● **UNDER A** rotation arrangement, the head of the right-wing Yamina party, Naftali Bennett, 49, would serve as the prime minister first before handing over to Lapid.

that I have succeeded in forming a government... MK (Member of Knesset) Naftali Bennett will serve as a prime minister first, Lapid told Rivlin.

"I commit to you Mr President that this government will work to serve all the citizens of Israel including those who aren't members of it, will respect those who oppose it and do everything in its power to unite all parts of Israeli society," the Yesh Atid party leader said.

Lapid will serve as foreign minister until the two men swap roles halfway through the term.

There still needs to be a parliamentary vote before the government is sworn in.

The Israeli president thanked Lapid saying, "We expect the Knesset will convene as soon as possible to ratify the government, as required."

The development, seen by some as historic as it

includes an Arab party in the coalition, will break an ongoing political impasse that has seen Israel go through four polls yielding inconclusive results in less than two years.

Lapid's coalition is composed of Yesh Atid, Yamina, Kahol Lavan, New Hope, Labor, Yisrael Beiteinu, Meretz and United Arab List.

Netanyahu, 71, in his first reaction on Twitter said "all legislators elected by votes from the right must oppose this dangerous left-wing government."

The Opposition on Thursday moved quickly to push for a vote for the Knesset Speaker to be replaced as soon as possible.

The move to replace Likud's Yariv Levin is designed to deny the Speaker the chance to drag his feet on scheduling a confidence vote on the new government.

In the letter to the Knesset's secretary-general, the Opposition bloc asked that a vote to replace Levin with Yesh Atid MK Mickey Levy as Speaker be placed on the agenda at the next plenum session, which is set to take place on Monday.

— PTI

UK SEEKS TO FLIP
GOVT'S FOREIGN
AID BUDGET CUT

London, June 3: Lawmakers from Britain's governing Conservative Party said Thursday they hope to force a vote in Parliament next week that could make the government reverse a contentious cut to the United Kingdom's foreign aid budget.

The British government dropped a long-standing commitment to spend 0.7% of the UK's gross domestic product on international aid, citing the coronavirus pandemic's blow to the economy. It says the cut to 0.5 per cent is temporary.

United Nations agencies and other international organisations say the reduction will hurt programmes that help some of the world's poorest people.

Former International Development Secretary Andrew Mitchell says he has enough support to win a vote on Monday, just days before Prime Minister Boris Johnson hosts leaders of the Group of Seven wealthy nations for a June 11-13 summit in Cornwall, England.

The vote will only happen if the speaker of the House of Commons allows it, which is not guaranteed.

But the growing list of Conservative lawmakers supporting Mitchell nevertheless could pressure the government to change course.

— AP

G7 health heads
talk vax sharing

Oxford, June 3: Health ministers from the G7 group of wealthy nations met Thursday in Britain to discuss sharing vaccines with poorer countries, as calls continue to ensure fairer global distribution of doses.

The meeting in Oxford in southern England comes ahead of next week's G7 summit, hosted by the United Kingdom, which is set to be dominated by discussion of the coronavirus pandemic and recovery plans.

"We'll be working together with G7 partners to try to meet the objective that a vaccine is made available right across the world," UK Health Secretary Matt Hancock told reporters.

"After all, this is a global pandemic and nobody is safe from it until everybody is safe," he added.

The G7 gathering was also set to focus on improving identification of animal-borne infections, given three-fifths of all infections jump from animals to humans.

The ministers from Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States vowed to "combat future health threats by working together to identify early warning signs from animals and the environ-

CHINA SEEKING
POLITICAL GAINS
OVER VAX: TAIWAN

Taipei, June 3: Taiwan's foreign minister on Thursday said China is seeking political gains abroad in return for providing vaccines and other pandemic assistance, partly to increase pressure on Taiwan, which it claims as its own territory.

Beijing's Communist Party leaders further exploited the pandemic to impose their political agenda on many others," Joseph Wu said in a video conference with the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan. China's vaccine diplomacy is creating divisions among countries in Central and South America.

— AP

ment". "There will be more diseases that cross that boundary from animals to humans," Hancock added.

"We must be better prepared as a world in the future and that is something that is very much on the table in the discussions.

— AFP

Vax refusal: Sindh
to stop staff pay

Islamabad, June 3: The chief minister of Pakistan's Sindh province on Thursday directed the authorities to stop the salaries of government officials from July if they fail to get vaccinated for Covid-19.

The order was passed during a meeting of the provincial task force on Covid-19 chaired by Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah. "Government employees who do not get themselves vaccinated will have their salaries stopped from July," Shah said.

A directive on this has been issued to the finance ministry, officials said.

The Sindh government has already fixed June 5 as the deadline for all teachers in the province to get vaccinated. The step is because all educational institutions are to open from June 7.

According to the the Sindh Health Department, 1,550,553 people have been vaccinated in the province so far, while 1,121,000 people have received the first dose and 429,000 people have been fully vaccinated against

MORE CASES IN
VIRUS CLUSTER
IN SOUTH CHINA

Beijing, June 3: Fifteen more Covid-19 cases have been reported in the southern Chinese province of Guangzhou, with a report saying the Coronavirus variant is more transmissible than in previous clusters in the country.

The city of Guangdong has locked down neighbourhoods and requires anyone wishing to leave the province to show a negative virus test taken within the past 72 hours.

— AP

the virus. Meanwhile, Pakistan's Coronavirus tally reached 926,695 on Thursday with the detection of 2,028 cases in the last 24 hours, while 92 more fatalities pushed the death toll to 21,022, the health ministry said.

— PTI

OVERLOOKED | NEIGHBOUR

Aim to understand how planet became an inferno

Nasa announces 2 new Venus missions

EARLIER VOYAGES

1970: Nasa's Mariner 2 performed the first successful flyby in 1962, and the Soviets' Venera 7 made the first successful landing.

1978: The year when a US-led mission had last gone to the Venusian atmosphere.

1989: Nasa used a space shuttle to send its Magellan spacecraft into orbit around Venus.

2006: The European Space Agency put a spacecraft around Venus.

Veritas, will seek a geological history by mapping the rocky planet's surface.

"It is astounding how little we know about Venus," but the new missions will give fresh views of the planet's atmosphere, made up mostly of carbon dioxide, down to the core, Nasa scientist Tom Wagner said in a statement. "It will be as if we have rediscovered the planet."

Nasa's top science official, Thomas Zurbuchen, calls it "a new decade of Venus". Each mission — launching sometime around 2028 to 2030 — will receive \$500 million for development under Nasa's Discovery programme. The missions beat out two other proposed projects, to Jupiter's moon Io and Neptune's icy moon Triton. The US and the former



In this photo provided by Nasa, Administrator Bill Nelson speaks during his first major address to employees, at the agency's headquarters in Washington on Wednesday. — NASA/Bill Ingalls

Soviet Union sent multiple spacecraft to Venus in the early days of space exploration.

Nasa's Mariner 2 performed the first successful flyby in 1962, and the Soviets' Venera 7 made the first successful landing in

1970. In 1989, Nasa used a space shuttle to send its Magellan spacecraft into orbit around Venus.

The European Space Agency put a spacecraft around Venus in 2006.

— AP

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	52,232.43	0.74
Nifty 50	15,690.40	0.73
S&P 500*	4,199.05	-0.22
Dollar (₹)	72.90	0.25
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.44	-0.08
Euro (₹)	88.88	0.14
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	48,530*339	0.69
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	70.99	-0.50
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.997	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.615	0.024

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Services sector moves into contraction zone

Services sector activities slumped into contraction territory for the first time in eight months, amid renewed decline in new work intakes due to the escalation of the pandemic and the reintroduction of restrictions. The seasonally adjusted India Services Business Activity Index fell to 46.4 in May, down from 54.0 in April. In PMI parlance, a print above 50 means expansion while a score below 50 denotes contraction.

Guidelines for ₹12K-cr telecom PLI issued



The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) issued operational guidelines for the Rs 12,195-crore PLI scheme for the telecom sector. The registration process for the scheme will begin on Friday and remain open for 30 days till July 3, the DoT said. The scheme, which will be effective from April 1, 2021, will provide incentives to companies on their investments and incremental sale till 2025-26.

MFs' overseas exposure limit raised to \$1 bn

The Sebi enhanced the overseas investment limit for a mutual fund house to \$1 billion from the existing \$600 million. The overall mutual fund industry limit is capped at \$7 billion. The higher limit would allow MFs to allocate a higher share of their corpus for foreign securities. "Mutual funds can make overseas investments subject to a maximum of \$1 billion per mutual fund, within the overall industry limit of \$7 billion," the Sebi said.

VW drives in Polo automatic at ₹8.51 lakh

Volkswagen introduced the Comfortline variant of the Polo 1.0 TSI with an automatic transmission at a starting price of Rs 8.51 lakh at Delhi showroom. The new model is powered by a BS 6-compliant 1.0-litre turbocharged stratified injection (TSI) engine from the Volkswagen Group. The new Polo variant comes with an auto-climatronic air-conditioning feature, besides a 17.7 cm Blaupunkt music system, exclusive to this trim only.

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■Capa expects traffic to pick up in H2

Airlines stare at \$4.1 bn loss

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, JUNE 3

Hit by the second wave, India's airline companies are likely to register a consolidated loss of about \$4.1 billion in FY22, similar to the losses clocked in FY21, provided there is no third wave of the pandemic this year. The companies will require \$5 billion of recapitalisation this financial year to survive.

"We expect that Indian airlines will lose a consolidated \$4.1-billion in FY22, similar to that in FY2021. This will take total losses over two years to around \$8 billion as a result of the two Covid-19 waves," aviation consultancy firm Capa India said in a report. The report finds that the full-service carriers are expected to contribute as much as \$2.1 billion in the total losses this year, while the budget carriers would account for the remaining \$2 billion.

Full-service carrier Air India and no-frills player IndiGo together will account for around \$4.5 billion of the combined \$8 billion of losses in two years.

The projected losses could rise further if necessary recapitalisation comes in the form of debt, as the borrowing costs will have to be included.

Capa estimates that the airline companies will require close to \$5 billion of recapitalisation in FY22 just to survive. Out of this, around \$1.1 billion is in the pipeline in the form of Initial Public Offering,



Qualified Institutional Placement and other financial instruments. If these plans materialise, the incremental requirement could be reduced to \$3.5 billion.

The government had recently expanded Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) to include civil aviation in the scheme. The scheme has already sanctioned Rs 2.54 lakh crore of loans and will be valid up to September end or till the unutilised amount in the Rs 3 lakh crore under the scheme is exhausted.

Capa also expects domestic airline traffic to pick up to 80-95 million during FY22, far higher than 52.5 million traffic recorded in FY21, but well below the 140 million registered during FY20. Capa estimates a moderate recovery in June after the second wave subsides. However, its projections did not take a possible third wave into consideration.

"After a massive slump

in April and May, we expect to see a moderate recovery in June as activity returns, with an acceleration in traffic from the second quarter.

"As was the case in the second half of FY2021, we expect to see rising confidence and continued traffic recovery in the second half of this financial year," Capa said.

According to rating and research firm Icra, domestic air traffic nosedived to 19.20 lakh passengers in May from around 57.3 lakh in April, registering a sharp 65-67 per cent month-on-month contraction. Average daily departures were around 900 against 2,000 in April 2021 and average number of passengers per flight in May was 72, against 93 passengers in April 2021.

International passenger traffic stood at around 1.4 lakh in May, a sequential decline of around 96 per cent. The international traffic is projected to be in the range of 16-21 million passengers for the year.

Nifty hits record high as curbs ease

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, JUNE 3

The market gained more than half a per cent on Thursday, buoyed by the sharp decline in fresh Covid cases and several states partially lifting lockdown curbs.

The Nifty-50 closed at new all-time high of 15,690.35, gaining 114.15 points, or 0.73 per cent.

The Sensex gained 382.95 points, or 0.74 per cent, closing at a new high this year at 52,232.43, surpassing the earlier closing high of 52,154.13 on February 15, 2021. The index is now near its all-time high of 52,516.76.

The broader market outperformed with BSE Mid-cap and Small-cap indices gaining 1.04 per cent each.

The market capitalisation of all BSE-listed companies close stood at a new all-time high of Rs 226.51 lakh crore.

Foreign portfolio investors were net buyers of equities worth Rs 1,079.20 while domestic institutions booked profit worth Rs 278.97 crore.

As several states have started lifting restrictions with the second wave receding, consumer focused sectors gained on Thursday.

BSE Consumer Durable index topped sectoral gainers list with a 4.44 per cent gain. The other sectors that gained included BSE Realty (3.95 per cent), Capital Goods (1.46 per cent), Oil Gas (1.25 per cent) and Bankex (0.90 per cent).

Saudi raises oil prices for Asia customers as market tightens

JAVIER BLAS, SALMA EL WARDANY & ANTHONY DI PAOLA JUNE 3



Saudi Arabia increased oil prices for customers in its main market of Asia by more than expected after crude surged above \$70 a barrel and the Opec forecast that global demand would heavily outstrip supply over the rest of the year.

State energy firm Saudi Aramco hiked its key Arab Light grade for July shipments to Asia by 20 cents to \$1.90 a barrel above a benchmark. Analysts surveyed by Bloomberg were expecting a raise of just 10 cents.

The kingdom sends more than 60 per cent of its exports to Asia, with China, India, South Korea and Japan, being the biggest buyers. Last month, it shipped 6.1 million barrels a day, accord-

ing to preliminary data compiled by Bloomberg.

Prices for four of Aramco's five Asian grades were increased, with the only drop coming for heavy crude. All grades for Europe were raised, while those for the US were kept the same as for June.

The move is a reverse of Aramco's cut for Asian customers in June, a decision made in early May as new coronavirus cases hammered fuel demand in India.

The Asian country and others such as Japan and

Malaysia are still struggling to slow the pandemic. Still, the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries this week predicted that oil stockpiles will decline rapidly from August as lockdowns ease across major economies and travel picks up.

The Opec and its partners—a 23-nation grouping led by Saudi Arabia and Russia—stuck to a plan to increase production this month and in July. But they refused to say what their plans were beyond those dates.

Brent crude has climbed 38 per cent in 2021 to a two-year high of about \$71.20 a barrel. It extended gains this week on Opec's new outlook and because nuclear talks between Iran and world powers stalled. Should the sides reach a deal, the US will probably ease sanctions on Tehran's oil exports.

—Bloomberg

Rural net users to beat urban by '25

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, JUNE 3

Active internet users in India will touch 900 million in five years, finds a study. By 2025, rural India will have more internet users than urban India.

There are around 622 million active internet users as of 2020 and in five years the number of active users will grow by 45 per cent, as per IAMA Kantar -ICUBE 2020 Report. The report finds that there is a lot of

headroom for growth in rural India and this would help in bridging the urban-rural digital divide.

"By 2025, there would be a greater number of internet users in rural India than in urban India. Given this, the digital ecosystem will need to evolve to address the specific needs of this emerging demography. Vernacular, voice and video will emerge as the gamechangers for the digital ecosystem over the next few years," said

Biswapriya Bhattacharjee, executive vice president, insights division, Kantar.

Though internet penetration in urban areas is higher than rural now, usership in rural areas has been growing at a faster rate on a year-on-year basis. Internet users grew by 4 per cent in urban India reaching 323 million users or 67 per cent of urban population in 2020.

Small towns account for almost two out of five active internet users.

Steel prices hiked by up to ₹4,900/tonne

New Delhi, June 3:

Leading steel-makers have hiked the prices of hot rolled coil (HRC) and cold rolled coil (CRC) by up to Rs 4,000 and Rs 4,900 per tonne, respectively, industry sources said on Thursday.

After the price revision,

a tonne of HRC will cost Rs 70,000-71,000 while CRC will cost Rs 83,000-84,000 per tonne.

The price revision has been made in the last two days, the sources said.

HRC and CRC are flat steel used in industries such as auto, appliances

and construction. Hence, any rise in steel prices impacts the prices of vehicles and consumer goods and raise the cost of construction, as steel is a key raw material for these sectors.

Sail, JSW Steel, Tata Steel, JSPL and AMNS

India are the leading steel-making companies in the country which jointly contribute about 55 per cent to India's total steel production.

When contacted, a Sail official said "it is market driven" and did not comment further. —PTI

US tax: G&J trade hopeful of solution

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, JUNE 3

The gems and jewellery industry finds the six-month suspension of retaliatory tax by the US as an indication for a multilateral solution.

Concluding one-year Section 301 investigations on Wednesday, the United States trade representative (USTR) deferred by 180 days the proposal to impose punitive tariff of 25 per cent on select products imported from countries like India, Austria, UK, Turkey and Spain for imposing digital services tax on online platforms of foreign companies. The

products include 17 jewellery items imported from India.

The suspension is intended to provide additional time to complete the ongoing multilateral negotiations on international taxation at the OECD and in the G20 process, the USTR, which coordinates US' international trade, commodity, and direct investment policy, said in a statement.

At the USTR multi-jurisdictional hearing held virtually on May 10, the GJEPC along with other major trade bodies and leading exporters from the gems and jewellery sector put forward Indian indus-

try's grievances.

"Most of the speakers at the hearing were of the view that a multilateral solution would be a preferable option, as a unilateral action undermines and weakens the Dispute Settlement Mechanism under WTO. The suspension of tariff on goods for up to 180 days is an indication that the USTR is willing to wait till a multilateral solution is found for Digital Service Taxes (DST)," said Colin Shah, chairman, GJEPC.

The Indian gems and jewellery industry had argued that the imposition of the proposed 25 per cent import duty on 17 Indian

jewellery items would immensely impact the labour-intensive sector with loss of jobs and livelihoods and a shift of business to countries such as China and Mexico.

The US is India's major export market for gem and jewellery products. Exports of around \$9.3 billion go to the market accounting for 25.6 per cent of the total gem and jewellery exports of \$36 billion from the country.

American jewellery companies also bank on Indian companies to fund their business through long credit and memo facilities, which would have major repercussions.

PRICEY | GROCERY

Very little room for any production shock: FAO economist

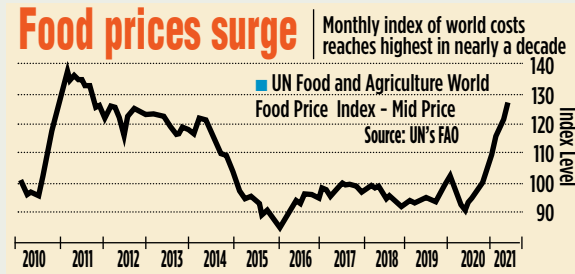
Global food prices surge to near decade high

MEGAN DURISIN JUNE 3

Global food prices extended their rally to the highest in almost a decade, heightening concerns over bulging grocery bills as economies struggle to exit the Covid-19 crisis.

A United Nation's gauge of world food costs climbed for a 12th straight month in May, its longest stretch in a decade. The continued advance risks accelerating broader inflation, complicating central banks efforts to provide more stimulus.

Drought in key Brazilian growing regions is crippling crops from corn to coffee, and vegetable oil production growth has slowed in Southeast Asia. That's boosting costs for livestock producers and



risks further straining global grain stockpiles that have been depleted by soaring Chinese demand. The surge has stirred memories of 2008 and 2011, when price spikes led to food riots in more than 30 nations.

"We have very little room for any production shock. We have very little room for any unexpected surge in demand in any country," Abdolreza Abbassian,

senior economist at the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization, said by phone. "Any of those things could push prices up further than they are now, and then we could start getting worried."

The prolonged gains across the staple commodities are trickling through to store shelves, with countries from Kenya to Mexico reporting higher food costs. The pain

led by pricier vegetable oils, grain and sugar.

The world's hunger problem has already reached its worst in years as the pandemic exacerbates food inequalities, compounding extreme weather and political conflicts.

There were other elements that exacerbated skyrocketing food costs a decade ago. For example, oil prices neared \$150 a barrel—double current levels—and there was a wave of trade restrictions by major grain shippers. Costs for rice, one of the world's food staples, have remained relatively subdued during the current agricultural price surge.

Gains in the past year have been fuelled by China's "unpredictably huge" purchases of foreign grain. —Bloomberg

Across the board

All food categories tracked by FAO climbed in past 12 months

Overall food index (%)	40
Cereals	37
Vegetable oil	124
Dairy	28
Meat	10
Sugar	57

Source: UN's FAO/Bloomberg

STATES TOLD TO ISSUE RATION CARDS TO POOR

New Delhi, June 3: The Centre has issued an advisory to all states and UTs to identify and issue ration cards to the most vulnerable and economically weaker sections to ensure their coverage under the National Food Security Act (NFSA).

Addressing a virtual press conference, food secretary Sudhanshu Pandey said states and Union territories have scope to add coverage of 1.97 crore under the NFSA. Fourteen states have completed 100 per cent coverage quota.

On Wednesday, the food ministry has issued an advisory to all states and UTs to launch a special drive to reach out to vulnerable and weakest sections of the society, such as street dwellers, rag pickers, hawkers and rickshaw pullers. —PTI

SHORT TAKES

Hockey team all set for Olympics

Jalpur: Seasoned striker Yuvraj Walmiki has a “gut feeling” that the Indian men’s hockey team will win a medal if the Tokyo Olympics goes ahead as per schedule. Among other things, the 31-year-old Walmiki, spoke about the national team’s prospects in Tokyo, his life’s struggles and how they helped him become a better human being on the latest episode of ‘SportTiger Talks’.

“One thing I will definitely say is that Indian hockey right now is doing wonderfully well under (leadership of) (PR) Sreejesh and Manpreet (Singh),” Walmiki said.

“I still have this gut feeling... In case, Tokyo Olympics takes place, the Indian hockey team will bag a medal this time. I have this strong belief in my heart,” he added. — *PTI*

India hoopster in US varsity side

New Delhi: NBA Academy India graduate Lalnehpuia Chhakhuak has enrolled at North Park University in Chicago, Illinois, becoming the sixth male student-athlete from the academy to commit to a high school or college basketball programme in the US. Chhakhuak first participated in the 2017-18 Reliance Foundation Jr. NBA program before joining NBA Academy India in 2018 as a part of the academy’s second class of student-athletes identified through the ACG-NBA Jump program. The 6-1 guard represented NBA Academy India at the 2018 and 2019 NBA Academy Games in Australia and the US, respectively, as well as the Point Loma Nazarene Team Camp in San Diego in 2019. — *PTI*

Vidit qualifies for chess World Cup

Chennai: India No.3 Vidit Gujrathi has qualified for the FIDE chess World Cup 2021, to be held in Sochi, Russia from July 10 on the basis of his rating. With this, Grandmaster Gujrathi becomes the fourth Indian man to qualify for the upcoming World Cup, a press release said on Thursday. The Nashik-based player joins Grandmasters P. Harikrishna, Aravindh Chidambaram and P. N. Anand as the Indian men to have qualified for the World Cup. Meanwhile, Koneru Humpy, D. Harika, Bhakti Kulkarni, R. Vaishali and Padmini Rout have qualified for the women’s event at the World Cup. This will be Gujrathi’s third World Cup appearance, having previously featured in 2017 and 2019. — *PTI*

Indian teams arrive in England

London: The Indian men’s cricket team arrived here on Thursday for the upcoming World Test Championship final against New Zealand and the subsequent Test series versus hosts England. The men’s team was accompanied by the women’s side which is touring England for three ODIs and as many T20s besides the one-off Test, starting in Bristol on June 16.

“Touchdown,” top-order batsman K. L. Rahul tweeted with a picture of the chartered flight in the background, confirming their safe arrival in London. Both the teams will now travel to Southampton, where they will complete their mandatory quarantine. — *PTI*

76ers, Hawks in NBA playoffs

Los Angeles: The Philadelphia 76ers and Atlanta Hawks advanced to an Eastern Conference semifinal showdown on Wednesday, wrapping up emphatic series victories over the Washington Wizards and New York Knicks. Seth Curry’s 30-point display helped the Sixers shrug off the injury absence of Joel Embiid as the top seeds completed a 4-1 playoff series win with a 129-112 defeat of the Wizards in Philadelphia. In New York, the fifth-seeded Hawks brought the Knicks’ season to an end with a 103-89 victory at Madison Square Garden to clinch the best-of-seven series 4-1 after a bruising contest. — *AFP*

SERENA ON SONG

Federer blows hot, Djokovic cool as stars advance in France

Paris, June 3: Serena Williams survived a French Open scare to extend her latest bid for an elusive 24th Grand Slam singles title with a three-set victory over Mihaela Buzarnescu on Wednesday, while men’s fifth seed Stefanos Tsitsipas and World No.2 Daniil Medvedev also reached the third round.

The 39-year-old Williams, who has been one short of Margaret Court’s all-time record of most major trophies since 2017, brushed off a second-set blip to win 6-3, 5-7, 6-1.

Meanwhile, Roger Federer became entangled in a rare running dispute with a chair umpire on Thursday before safely securing his place in the Last 32.

Federer saw off Marin Cilic for the 10th time in 11 meetings, winning 6-2, 2-6, 7-6 (7/4), 6-2 but only after a second set bust-up with umpire Emmanuel Joseph.

The 20-time Grand Slam title winner was handed a time violation at 1-3 down in the for taking too long between points. “I don’t even dare to go my towel anymore,” he said to Joseph.

Federer, the oldest man in the draw at 39, lost his cool and the set before recovering to defeat former world number three Cilic.

World number one Novak Djokovic continued his bid for a 19th Grand Slam title with a straight-sets win over Uruguay’s Pablo Cuevas to reach the third round. The 34-year-old, who is looking to become the first man in more than 50 years to win all four Slams multiple times, won 6-3, 6-2, 6-4 on Court Suzanne Lenglen.

Tsitsipas put in a strong display to dispose of Spaniard Pedro Martinez



Serena Williams of the United States serves to Romania’s Mihaela Buzarnescu during their second round match of the French Open tennis tournament at Roland Garros in Paris, France, on Wednesday.

— *AP*

6-3, 6-4, 6-3. The Greek next faces American John Isner.

Medvedev bounced back from losing the first set to American Tommy Paul in style by romping to a 3-6, 6-1, 6-4, 6-3 victory.

INJURED BARTY IS OUT

Top seed Ashleigh Barty retired injured midway through the second set of her French Open second-round match against Poland’s Magda Linette on Thursday. She left the court for medical treat-

ment after losing the first set 6-1. She had struggled with a hip problem during her first-round win and called it quits at 2-2 in the second set on Court Philippe Chatrier.

MEN’S PAIR COVID +VE

French Open organisers say that both members of a men’s doubles team have tested positive for Covid-19 and have been dropped from the tournament.

The players were placed in quarantine. The tournament did not identify

them. The French tennis federation said these were the first two positives from the 2,446 Coronavirus tests that have been administered on players and their entourages since the start of qualifying rounds on May 24.

— *Agencies*

OTHER RESULTS

Men’s second round: Jannik Sinner (ITA x18) bt Gianluca Mager (ITA) 6-1, 7-5, 3-6, 6-3; Mikael Ymer (SWE) bt Gael Monfils (FRA x14) 6-0, 2-6, 6-4, 6-3; Diego Schwartzman (ARG x10) bt Aljaz Bedene (SLO) 6-4, 6-2, 6-4; Philipp Kohlschreiber

(GER) bt Aslan Karatsev (RUS x24) 6-3, 7-6 (7/4), 4-6, 6-1.

Women’s second round: Magda Linette (Poland) bt Ashleigh Barty (Australia x1) 6-1, 2-2 — retired; Ons Jabeur (Tunisia x25) bt Astra Sharma (Australia) 6-2, 6-4; Sloane Stephens (USA) bt Karolina Pliskova (CZE x9) 7-5, 6-1; Karolina Muchova (CZE x18) bt Varvara Lepchenko (USA) 6-3, 6-4; Elina Svitolina (UKR x5) bt Ann Li (USA) 6-0, 6-4; Sofia Kenin (USA x4) bt Hailey Baptiste (USA) 7-5, 6-3; Jessica Pegula (USA x28) bt Tereza Martincova (CZE) 6-3, 6-3; Maria Sakkari (GRE x17) bt Jasmine Paolini (ITA) 6-2, 6-3.

Srini’s daughter in conflict of interest

AGE CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 3

Tamil Nadu Cricket Association president Rupa Gurunath has been found guilty of conflict of interest. The BCCI’s Ethics Officer Justice D. K. Jain, in his order on Tuesday, upheld a complaint made by Sanjeev Gupta. Rupa is the daughter of former BCCI chief N. Srinivasan.

Gupta, a former life member of the Madhya Pradesh Cricket Association, had alleged that Rupa was occupying more than one position,

contrary to the Board rules. Rupa is the president of TNCA and also a whole-time director of India Cements Limited, the company which owns Chennai Super Kings Cricket Ltd (CSKCL).

According to Gupta, all seven directors of CSKCL sit as directors on the subsidiary companies of India Cements, thus “giving rise to an instance of conflict” against Rupa.

Justice Jain, in his order, said Rupa “has an indirect interest (if not direct) in CSKCL which has entered into a contract with BCCI.”



Rupa Gurunath

“All these facts go on to show that a circuitous web of entities, including CSKCL has been created under the umbrella of

ICL. The management and governance of all such entities directly or indirectly lies in the hands of the board of ICL, notwithstanding the defence pleaded that ICL has no stake in CSKCL.

“In the given factual scenario, it can be safely inferred that the respondent (Rupa), in her capacity as the whole time director and promoter of ICL, has close associations with the trustees of IC Shareholders Trust and the Directors of CSKCL, which has a franchise agreement with the BCCI. This is one of the recog-

nised forms of conflict of interest,” the order said.

“ICL, CSKCL, IC Shareholders Trust, subsidiary companies of ICL, IC Capital, all share the same official address and ICL has been one of the sponsors of CSKCL franchise Chennai Super Kings,” the order added.

The Ethics Officer also said the BCCI shall requisite steps in accordance with law to ensure due compliance. Thus, Rupa has to relinquish one of the posts. TNCA sources, however, said Rupa is likely to appeal against the order in a court of law.

Conway cracks double on debut

Devon seventh in Test history to score 200 in first knock

London, June 3: New Zealand opener Devon Conway made exactly 200 on Test debut before England slumped to 25-2 on the second day of the series opener at Lord’s on Thursday.

Conway was last man out in a first-innings total of 378 on the second day of this two-match series.

The South Africa-born left-hander was in sight of becoming the very first batsman in the 144-year history of Test cricket to carry their bat — bat throughout the entire innings — in their first knock in the format when he was run out to end a stay of more than nine-and-a-half hours.

Nevertheless, it needed a review of a close call before it was confirmed that England captain Joe Root had taken the bails off in time.

Even so, Conway was only the seventh batsman to make a double hundred on Test debut.

Conway has also broken former India captain Sourav Ganguly’s 25-year-old record of registering the highest Test score on debut at Lord’s when he went past the stylish southpaw’s 131.

He faced 347 balls, with 22 fours and went to 200 in style when he hooked fast bowler Mark Wood for the only six of his innings.

New Zealand No. 11 Neil



New Zealand’s Devon Conway celebrates after reaching his double century during the second day of the first Test against England at Lords Cricket Ground in London on Thursday.

— *AFP*

Wagner, also born in South Africa, made 25 not out off 21 balls that included a superb straight six off Stuart Broad during an entertaining last-wicket stand

of 40. Sussex paceman Ollie Robinson, like Conway making his Test debut, led England’s attack with four wickets for 75 runs in 28 overs. But New Zealand then

DOUBLE CENTURIANS ON TEST DEBUT

- 287 — Tip Foster (England) vs Australia in Sydney, 1903-04
- 222* — Jacques Rudolph (South Africa) vs Bangladesh at Chattogram, 2002-03
- 214 — Lawrence Rowe (West Indies) vs New Zealand at Kingston, 1971-72
- 214 — Mathew Sinclair (New Zealand) vs West Indies at Wellington, 1999-00
- 210* — Kyle Mayers (West Indies) vs Bangladesh at Chattogram, 2020-21
- 201* — Brendon Kuruppu (Sri Lanka) vs New Zealand in Colombo, 1986-87
- 200 — Devon Conway (New Zealand) vs England at Lord’s, London, 2021

— *S. PERVEZ QAISER*

struck twice with the ball themselves.

Kyle Jamieson had Dom Sibley lbw for a duck with a ball that straightened to hit the opener on the back pad, the decision upheld on ‘umpire’s call’ after a review. But there was no room for doubt when Zak Crawley was caught behind off Tim Southee for two.

BRIEF SCORES

Day 2, at Tea: New Zealand 378 in 122.4 overs (Devon Conway 200; Ollie Robinson 4/75) vs England 25/2 in 10 overs.

10,000 Olympic volunteers quit

Tokyo, June 3: The Tokyo Olympics chief said the Games would only be cancelled in extreme circumstances on Thursday as organisers revealed 10,000 volunteers had quit over Coronavirus fears, a sexism row and scheduling problems.

Exactly 50 days before the opening ceremony, Tokyo 2020 president Seiko Hashimoto said the show would go on unless the pandemic stops a majority of teams from travelling.

“If various countries around the world experience very serious situations, and delegations from most countries can’t come, then we wouldn’t be able to hold it,” she told the *Nikkan Sports* daily.

“But conversely, unless such a situation emerges, the Games will not be cancelled,” she added.

The 2020 Games remain beset by doubts and low public support as Japan battles a fourth Coronavirus wave with much of the country, including Tokyo, under a state of emergency.

Late on Wednesday, Tokyo 2020 CEO Toshiro Muto said around 10,000 of the 80,000 volunteers — vital to the smooth running of the Games — had quit, largely over coronavirus concerns.

Others dropped out after the Games were postponed, or in protest at sexist remarks made by Hashimoto’s predecessor

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— **SEIKO HASHIMOTO**
Tokyo 2020 president

who was forced to resign, Muto told Japanese media. However, Muto said the reduction in volunteers would not affect the Games because the event has been scaled back, so fewer people are needed.

Overseas fans have already been barred, and a decision on whether to allow domestic spectators is expected after the state of emergency in Tokyo ends on June 20.

The number of overseas officials and participants has been cut by about half, to around 78,000, with calls for further reductions.

Organisers will unveil details of the medal ceremonies later on Thursday — the latest attempt to generate positive momentum.

Polls show 80 per cent of Japanese oppose hosting the Games this year. But surveys among the population of Tokyo have found a more even split between those in favour and against.

— *AFP*

Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju (centre) poses with athletes after unveiling India’s kit for the Tokyo Olympics, in New Delhi on Thursday.

— *D. KAMRAJ*

INDIA’S OLYMPIC SQUAD LIKELY TO BE 190-STRONG

New Delhi, June 3: The Indian contingent for the upcoming Tokyo Olympics is expected to be around 190, including over 100 athletes, IOA president Narinder Batra said on Thursday as Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju unveiled the official kits for the country’s participants.

So far, 100 athletes have qualified for the Tokyo Games, including 56 men and 44 women. The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) expects another 25 to 35 to make the cut for the Games, which open on July 23.

Indian athletes from 12 sports — badminton, boxing, hockey, wrestling, sailing, athletics, archery, equestrian, fencing, rowing, shooting and table tennis — have so far qualified for the Tokyo Olympics.

“We are estimating to touch 125 to 135 (qualified athletes) by the next two to three weeks when the qualification process is over,” Batra said.

“This means the Indian contingent, including officials and support staff, is likely to be around 190,” he added. The number of officials cannot be more than one-third of the athlete group as per the Sports Ministry rules. The ministry can, however, allow additional officials at no cost to the government.

— *PTI*

Mbappe stars as France win big

Nice (France), June 3: Karim Benzema said he was happy with his performance despite a missed penalty as he made his first France appearance in almost six years in Wednesday’s 3-0 Euro 2020 friendly win over Wales in Nice.

Benzema had been left out of Didier Deschamps’ squad since October 2015 due to his alleged role in a blackmail plot.

Kylian Mbappe, Antoine Griezmann and Ousmane Dembele were on the score-sheet for the World Cup winners against the Euro 2016 semifinalists, who had Neco Williams sent off for handling the ball in his area.

Meanwhile, Trent Alexander-Arnold gave Gareth Southgate a Euro 2020 injury scare as Bukayo Saka scored his first goal for England in Wednesday’s 1-0 friendly win against Austria.

Liverpool right-back Alexander-Arnold limped off late in the second half after injuring his thigh while clearing the ball. He looked emotional as he needed assistance to hobble around the Riverside Stadium pitch.

In another match, Memphis Depay scored twice to salvage a 2-2 draw for the Netherlands in a pre-Euro 2020 friendly on Wednesday against a Scotland side missing seven players following midfielder John Fleck’s positive Covid-19 test.

Celtic centre-back Jack Hendry drilled in from 20 yards to give Scotland an early lead in Faro with his first international goal, but Depay soon equalised with a crisp volley. Elsewhere, Mats Hummels and Thomas Mueller made their return to international football after a two-year exile as Germany were held to a 1-1 draw.

— *AFP*