

SHORT TAKES

Boy killed as truck hits boundary wall in Vasant Kunj area

New Delhi: A 12-year-old boy was killed while four children were injured after a truck rammed into the boundary wall of a plot in southwest Delhi's Vasant Kunj area, police said on Tuesday. The children were either playing or sitting near the wall that collapsed after the truck hit it on Monday evening. With the help of locals, the children were taken out of the debris and rushed to the Indian Spinal Injuries Centre, a senior police officer said. While a 12-year-old boy was declared brought dead at the hospital, the other children, who were aged between four and 10, were treated for injuries, police said. The injured children belong to Sapera basti in Rangpuri. Deputy commissioner of police (Southwest) Ingit Pratap Singh said truck driver Mukesh, who fled from the spot, was later caught from Alwar. The owner of the vehicle has also been taken into police custody. "A case has been registered under section 279 (rash driving or riding on a public way) and 304 A (causing death by negligence) of the Indian Penal Code, he said.

— PTI

Man, mother murdered at home, no arrests so far

New Delhi: A 27-year-old man and his mother were found dead inside their home on Tuesday evening in southwest Delhi's Raj Nagar area, police said. The deceased have been identified as Gaurav and Babita Verma (52), both residents of Raj Nagar Part-1, they said. According to police, a PCR call was received at Palam Village police station at 7.08 pm regarding the double murder. Father of deceased Shri Krishan Swroop Sudhir (55), who works as an accountant in Air Force, Airforce Station Palam, informed police when he reached home and saw them, a senior police officer said. Injuries seems to be blunt by a heavy dumbbell, police said. Deputy commissioner of police (southwest) Ingit Pratap Singh said, a case under relevant section has been registered and investigation is underway. Police are checking the CCTV footage of the area. As of now, no suspect has been identified in connection with the incident, the officer said. Gaurav used to work in a computer firm in Hyderabad, but was unemployed for past one year, police said.

1,324 overseas applications for DU 2021-22 session

New Delhi: The Delhi University on Tuesday said it has received a total of 1,324 overseas applications, including 320 from Afghanistan, for the 2021-22 academic year. The university's Foreign Students' Registry (FSR) admission committee said the applications were received from 61 countries. DU had invited online applications from foreign candidates in April for various undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. It received 185 applications from Nepal, 156 from Tibet, 10 from Vietnam, seven from Thailand, five from Sri Lanka. Other applicants are from Bangladesh, China, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Iraq, Japan, and Jordan among other countries, the committee said.

— PTI

Swati Maliwal gets another 3-year term as DCW chief

New Delhi: Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal on Tuesday approved another term for Delhi Commission For Women (DCW) chief Swati Maliwal and her team for doing "excellent work". The panel's term is for three years and this will be Maliwal's third stint, according to a DCW official. "Delhi Commission for Women has been doing an excellent work. Their term comes to an end. I approved another one term for the present Commission today. Best wishes to Swati and her team. Keep doing good work," Kejriwal said in a tweet. — PTI

Delhi govt launches financial aid scheme for Covid victims' families

₹50K ex gratia to every Covid victim's family, says CM Kejriwal

BHASKAR HARI SHARMA
NEW DELHI, JULY 6

Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal on Tuesday launched a scheme and an online portal to provide financial assistance to families who lost their loved ones to Covid-19 and asked officials not to find faults in their claim applications. Under the "Mukhyamantri Covid-19 Pariwar Aarthik Sahayata Yojana", ₹50,000 ex gratia will be given to every family that lost a member to Covid-19 and an additional ₹2,500 per month will be given if the deceased was the sole breadwinner. Addressing a virtual press conference, Kejriwal said the "fourth wave" of Covid-19 in Delhi affected almost every family and many people died. "Many children were orphaned, many families lost their sole breadwinner. In such a case, being a responsible government, we conceptualised this scheme," he said.

"We are launching a portal through which such people can apply for financial assistance. Our representatives will also visit such families and get applications filled up," he added. The chief minister said such representatives will not reject claims of families in case any document is missing and will only facilitate the process. "I want to tell all such representatives not to conduct scrutiny of applications. If the families lack any document, we will help them obtain it. We have to make sure that we make this happen. Don't find faults with their documents... don't make them unhappy, encourage them," Kejriwal said.

"We have to ensure that we provide financial assistance to such families as soon as possible," he added. The Delhi government's Department of Social Welfare had notified the "Mukhyamantri Covid-19 Pariwar Aarthik Sahayata Yojana" on June 22. The notification stated: "The government will also consider a single member of the affected family to be enrolled as a civil defence



People not adhering to social distancing norms wait in queue at a vaccination centre at HUDA City Centre Metro station in Gurgaon on Tuesday.

— PTI

Covid vaccine out of stock in city: Sisodia

New Delhi, July 6: The Delhi government's stock of Covid-19 vaccine has run out, deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia said on Tuesday and urged the Centre to send more doses for the people of the city as required for the inoculation exercise. In a tweet, he asserted that in the last two weeks, vaccination was done in the national capital at a "record speed". According to the vaccination bulletin issued on Tuesday, 80,841 doses were administered on July 5, while 84,63,689 doses have been given in total since the

start of the inoculation exercise. The bulletin also mentioned that less than a day of vaccine stock was left with the Delhi government, adding that data for July 6 was yet to be compiled.

Sidodia, in a tweet in Hindi on Tuesday evening, said, "In the last two weeks, vaccination was done in the national capital at a record speed. But, for the time being, vaccine stock is over in Delhi and no supply is coming from the central government as of now. It is my appeal to the central government to send vaccine to the people of Delhi as soon as possible, as per the requirement".

A total of 19,39,807 people have been fully vaccinated while 65,23,882 have received the first dose of the vaccine, the vaccination bulletin said. A total of 51,728 people received the first dose and 29,113 got the second dose of the vaccine on July 5, it said.

The Delhi government had started the vaccination programme for the 45 and above age-group from April 1, a month before those in the 18-44 group got the nod to receive doses.

Volunteer: Besides, the state affirms to look after the health and education needs of the dependent children as per existing policy. There is no income criterion to apply for financial assistance under the scheme. "The deceased and dependent both should be from Delhi... Death should be certified as Covid-19 death or death

within one month of testing Covid positive and verified by the health department as Covid death," the notification said.

Earlier on May 18, Kejriwal had said: "Each family in which a death has occurred due to Covid will be provided an ex gratia of ₹50,000. There are also many families where the earning member died due

to Covid-19. Such families will be provided a monthly pension of ₹2,500 besides the ex gratia of ₹50,000." Children who lost their both parents or one parent to Covid-19 will also be provided ₹2,500 per month till they turn 25 years old. The Delhi government will also provide free education to them, he had said.

Senior advocate Sajjan Poovayya, representing Twitter, said though Twitter is in process of making the appointment, it was true that as on date there is no chief compliance officer, RGO and

The affidavit filed by the centre said that Twitter has failed to comply with the IT Rules, 2021 as on July 1 for the following reasons — chief compliance officer has not been appointed; the positions of RGO and nodal contact person are vacant, and the physical contact address, which was shown to be there on May 29, is not available again on Twitter website.

Twitter has said in its affidavit that it was in the 'final stages' of appointing an interim chief compliance officer and an interim resident grievance officer under the new IT Rules.

Under the new rules, the social media firms will have to put in place the complaint redressal mechanism with an officer being based in the country to deal with online contents flagged by authorities and courts.

Earlier in the day, the Delhi High Court directed Twitter to inform it by July 8 as to when it will appoint a resident grievance officer in compliance with the new IT Rules after the microblogging platform submitted that it was in the process of doing so.

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Among the total 1,20,980 cases, the number cases of hurt, burglary, motor vehicle theft and house theft stand at 493, 1,173, 15,667 and 938 respectively. Senior IPS officer Balaji Srivastava took additional charge as the commissioner of the Delhi Police on Wednesday after the retirement of incumbent S.N. Shrivastava. — PTI

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The number of non-heinous crime have increased by over eight per cent. In 2021, a total of 1,20,980 cases of non-heinous crime have been reported, while the number was 1,11,419 in 2020, it said.

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Probe faster into chargesheet leakage: HC Delhi riots: 2 more weeks for police to complete inquiry

New Delhi, July 6: The Delhi high court on Tuesday allowed Delhi Police two more weeks to undertake a comprehensive inquiry into the leakage of content of chargesheet and supplementary chargesheet filed in case related to communal violence in northeast Delhi last year, to the media even before cognisance was taken by the concerned court.

A bench of Justice Mukta Gupta directed that the file containing the report on the inquiry be placed before it on the next date of hearing.

Jamia Millia Islamia University student and riots accused Asif Iqbal Tanha had moved the high court last year, alleging misconduct by police officials in leaking his alleged disclosure statement in the main charge sheet, recorded by the probe agency during the investigation, to the

female face of the protest. This is one of our grounds in the bail plea. We are fighting for justice and to prove her innocence to the court as she has been falsely implicated, said Sarwer Jahan.

She had sought bail citing the Covid-19 outbreak in Mandoli prison and other medical issues. — PTI

Advocate Sowjanya Shankaran, representing Tanha, told the court that while an additional affidavit on a subsequent

leakage with respect to a supplementary charge sheet had been filed, response from the State was not on record. — PTI

Advocate Pradeep Teotia along with lawyer and Ishrat's sister Sarwer Jahan is representing her in the case. She has been shown to be the leading

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HC to Twitter: Update on resident grievance officer's appointment

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JULY 6

The Delhi High Court on Tuesday raps microblogging site Twitter for misleading the court and stating that it is in clear 'defiance with the digital law'. Twitter has misled the court by failing to clarify that the Grievance Officer appointed was merely interim in nature, Delhi high court said.

The Delhi High Court has directed social media giant Twitter to inform it by July 8 as to when it will appoint a resident grievance officer in compliance with the new IT Rules after the platform submitted that it was in the process of doing so.

"How long does your (Twitter's) process take? If Twitter thinks it can take as long as it wants in our country, I'll not allow that", said Justice Rekha Palli of Delhi High Court expressing displeasure over delaying the appointment of grievance redressal officer.

The high court pointed out that only an interim RGO was appointed by Twitter and a wrong impression was given to the court on May 31 as it was not informed that the officer was on interim basis. This comes a day after the Centre told the Delhi High Court that the social media giant has failed to comply with India's new IT Rules, which could lead to losing its immunity conferred under the Information Technology (IT) Act.

Twitter has said in its affidavit that it was in the 'final stages' of appointing an interim chief compliance officer and an interim resident grievance officer under the new IT Rules.

Under the new rules, the social media firms will have to put in place the complaint redressal mechanism with an officer being based in the country to deal with online contents flagged by authorities and courts.

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66 east Delhi dairies to shut down for norms violation: DPCC

New Delhi, July 6: Sixty-six dairies in Kondli and Gharoli village of east Delhi have been directed to shut down for violating the prescribed environmental guidelines, the Delhi Pollution Control Committee said on Tuesday. The DPCC has also asked the 66 dairies to submit an environment damage compensation of ₹1 lakh each for operating without consent and discharging waste water and cow dung into drains. The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), DPCC and East Delhi Municipal Corporation had conducted joint inspections at Kondli, Gharoli villages and Gharoli dairy farms between June 4 and June 7. — PTI

— PTI

SHORT TAKES

Intl online cheated ring busted in MP

Bhopal: The cyber cell of Madhya Pradesh police has busted an international online cheating racket by arresting four people hailing from different places in the country. Preliminary investigation by the police has suggested links of some people in Pakistan and China in the racket, according to in-charge of cyber cell of police here Abhishek Sonkar. The police has so far detected frauds to the tune of ₹50 crore by the racket, he told reporters here on Tuesday. The money was transferred to Pakistan through cryptocurrency, police said. According to him, the racket basically targeted young entrepreneurs through fake web pages opened in fictitious Indian names. Bank accounts were opened in these names at different places in the country asking the traders to deposit their money in them to buy spices at dirt cheap prices. Six Indians were also allegedly involved in the racket.

Bengal dist tense as man dies in custody

Kulti (WB): A 21-year-old man died in police custody in Bengal's Paschim Bardhaman district on Tuesday morning, triggering tension in the area, as locals hurled stones at the outpost, where he was held, and torched several vehicles stationed outside, a senior officer said. A complaint was lodged by the father of the deceased, following which the two police officers, who had arrested him on Monday night for his involvement in a theft case, were suspended, he said. "The health condition of the accused deteriorated in custody. He was declared dead when taken to a nearby hospital," the senior police officer said. A huge police team, which was rushed to Barakar area to control the situation during the day, used teargas to disperse the mob that attacked the outpost. — PTI

Chhattisgarh: IPS officer suspended

Raipur: Additional director general of police of Chhattisgarh G.P. Singh whose properties were raided by anti-corruption Bureau of state police last week, was suspended late on Monday night. The suspension order issued by the state home department said the acts of the IPS officer of 1994 batch were found "unbecoming of a member of Indian Administrative Service". Fifteen properties related to the police officer were raided for three days by the ACB of Chhattisgarh police last week. Incidentally, the police officer headed the ACB and Economic Offence Wing of Chhattisgarh police just a year ago.

U'HAND IN SC TO STAY HC ORDER ON CHAR DHAM

New Delhi: The Uttarakhand government on Tuesday moved the Supreme Court against the High Court order staying the Chardham Yatra while reversing a state cabinet's decision to open it partially for residents of three districts from July 1. The state government said that the Uttarakhand High Court committed an error in not appreciating that the livelihood of a significant portion of the population living around the Char Dham is dependent on the Yatra. It said that the High Court has wrongly stayed the part of the state cabinet order dated June 25, with respect to conducting restricted Chardham Yatra, only for a fixed number of pilgrims residing in three districts of Chamoli, Rudrapur and Uttarkashi where the respective Char Dhams are located. The State government said that the present Covid positivity rate (between June 15 to July 2) in the concerning three districts are — Chamoli-0.64 per cent, Rudrapur-1.16 per cent and Uttarkashi-0.75 per cent. The four holy shrines dedicated to Hindu gods and rivers — being Badrinath Dham, Kedarnath Dham, Gangotri Dham and Yamunotri Dham are situated in Garhwal region of the State and lakhs of devotees visit these shrines every year during the Chardham Yatra, which commences from April uptill November. — PTI

India sees lowest daily count in 4 mnths

Less than 35K new cases of Covid were reported in last 24 hours, fatalities down to 553

VINEETA PANDEY
NEW DELHI, JULY 6

India, on Tuesday, recorded the lowest daily positive cases in four months with 34,703 new cases in one day.

The fatalities that were very high in the last few weeks have come down to 553. Some of the states and UTs that were earlier reporting the highest number of daily cases have started showing huge respite from virus load.

With cases reducing, Germany's health agency has said it would lift a ban on most travellers from the UK, India, Nepal, Russia, and Portugal that were hit by the Delta variant of Covid-19.

However, Union health ministry officials said the second wave is still existent in a limited way in some areas such as in Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura, Meghalaya, and Sikkim where more cases are being reported with positivity of more than 10 per cent.



Visitors at Cape Comorin after further ease in Covid lockdown restrictions in Kanyakumari on Tuesday.

— PTI

The Union health secretary has written to 73 districts and states that are reporting highest positivity in India.

The Centre and health experts are fuming and frowning over the visuals of huge crowds in markets and in hill stations. Referring to the massive footfall of people in hill stations, the health ministry stated that gross violations of Covid-19 appropriate behaviour can nullify the gains achieved so far as people travelling to hill stations are not following Covid-appropriate behaviour.

"We can nullify the ease in restrictions again if protocols are not complied with," said Mr Lav Agarwal, the joint secretary of the Union health ministry. Saying that such a crowd is "frightening," the Centre has threatened to impose a lockdown if norms are violated.

"The future challenge is not the third wave, but

how we act on it. Instead of highlighting the wave aspect, we should focus on Covid appropriate behaviour/restrictions to contain the spread. The pictures from hill stations are frightening," said Dr Balram Bhargava, the ICMR DG.

Meanwhile, the health ministry has said that the states and UTs had been informed adequately in advance about the total doses that will be made available to them as well as to the private sector hospitals during the month of July 2021.

"The states have been advised to plan their Covid-19 vaccination sessions based on the availability of Covid vaccines," the Union health ministry said amid news of vaccination centres in Rajasthan being shut due to vaccine shortage.

"The states have also been requested to indicate to the Union ministry of health and family welfare in case more doses of Covid vaccine are required by them," the ministry said in a statement.

Full lockdown in 7 Assam districts

MANOJ ANAND
GUWAHATI, JULY 6

The Assam health minister Keshab Mahanta on Tuesday announced a complete lockdown in seven districts of the state in view of the surge in Covid cases. In a fresh revised and consolidated directive for both rural and urban areas, Mr Mahanta said that the government has also decided to continue the restriction on inter-district movement until further orders.

The seven districts that will go under lockdown are — Goalpara, Golaghat, Jorhat, Sonitpur, Bisswanath, Lakhimpur and Morigaon where round the clock curfew has been clamped. All the commercial

setups, restaurants, shops will remain closed in the districts which have shown high positivity rate in recent weeks. All workplaces, business and commercial establishments, shops dealing with groceries, fruits and vegetables, dairy and milk booths, animal fodder, restaurants, roadside eateries and other eateries, sale counters, showrooms etc of cold storages and warehouses will also be closed. Other restrictions, including the odd-even formula for plying of vehicles, declaration of containment zones etc, and exemptions as notified earlier will continue to remain in force except those specifically modified.

Rahul Gandhi attacks govt on MNREGA wages

New Delhi, July 6: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday alleged that MGNREGA workers are not even getting their wages in some states and asked the government what kind of "acheche din" (good days) are these.

He said the rights of workers are being denied in the times of the pandemic, when they should be given financial assistance instead.

"MNREGA workers in many states are not getting their wages. When the government should have given additional financial assistance to them during the pandemic, the money that is the workers' rights is also being denied."

"There is a world beyond the false rhetoric where in some houses people are not able to even run their households — what kind of 'acheche din' (good days) are these," he asked. — PTI

■ 'TMC has also worked to have a consensus in national politics'

Abhijit wants to live up to father's legacy

Kolkata, July 6: Former President Pranab Mukherjee's son Abhijit Mukherjee who joined the Trinamul Congress of Mamata Banerjee wants to live up to his father's legacy of secular politics and of binding India through consensual politics.

Mr Mukherjee, an engineer-turned politician, said he also wants to help work towards re-industrialising eastern India, which he feels can be the trade corridor for the country's Look East or Act East policy of connecting with East and South East Asia.

"I have grown up believing in secular and inclusive politics which my father, our then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi



Abhijit Mukherjee

I have grown up believing in secular and inclusive politics which my father, our then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and others of that generation of Congress leaders believed in.

— Abhijit Mukherjee, TMC

and others of that generation of Congress leaders believed in. I cannot come anywhere near them in stature, but I think it is time those of us who are in public life took a stand and united to support the concept of a secular India," he told PTI in an interview.

Mukherjee, a two-time Lok Sabha MP from his father's pocket borough of Jangipur, said he

joined the Mamata Banerjee-led party because she has taken a strong stand on this issue.

"The TMC has also worked to have a consensus in national politics which is what my father was known for during his political career and later as President," he pointed out.

The stress on secular politics and consensus

in the afternoon.

"I offered my prayer in the Mahakal temple. After completing my visit to Ujjain, I am going to Delhi", Mr Scindia told reporters after emerging from the shrine.

He dropped at the local Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) office in Ujjain before proceeding to Indore to catch his Delhi flight.

Mr Scindia who had been on a four-day visit to

Madhya Pradesh since July three to attend various programmes in the Malwa region in the state was scheduled to leave for Delhi on Wednesday.

He however cut short his visit to MP and left for Delhi following the "call from Delhi".

Mr Scindia had switched over to BJP from Congress in March 2020 triggering the collapse of the 15-month-old Kamal Nath government.



BJP leader and Rajya Sabha MP Jyotiraditya Scindia offers prayers at Mahakaleshwar temple in Ujjain. — PTI

BHAGWAN PARAB
MUMBAI, JULY 6

The Maharashtra Legislative Assembly and Council on Tuesday passed a resolution, asking the Centre to provide a minimum of three crore Covid vaccine doses per month to the state to reduce the impact of a possible third wave of the viral infection.

Health minister Rajesh Tope moved the resolutions in both houses saying that the state machinery can vaccinate 10 lakh people per day if the doses were available by the Centre.

"With this number, we can vaccinate three crore people in the next two months. Expediting vaccination drive is necessary for the economic revival

► **HEALTH MINISTER** Rajesh Tope moved the resolutions in both houses saying that the state machinery can vaccinate 10 lakh people per day if the doses were available by the Centre

as well," he said.

As per the resolution, the Union government has so far provided 2,84,39,060 doses and the state has purchased another 25,10,730, while 3,43,82,583 persons have received the jab in the state till now, which is the highest in the country. Maharashtra has so far conducted 4.25 crore tests for coronavirus, of which 61 lakh came out positive while the viral infection has killed 1.23 lakh patients so far. There are

Supreme Court says Rath Yatra in Puri only

PARMOD KUMAR
NEW DELHI, JULY 6

The Supreme court on Tuesday refused to permitholding of Lord Jagannath's annual Rath Yatra in Odisha except for the one that is taken out from Lord Jagannath's temple at Puri, and allowed holding of rituals relating to Yatra within the premises of other Jagannath temples across the state.

Endorsing Odisha government's order that permits taking out of the Rath Yatra with all precautions at Puri and allowing performing of rituals within temple premises of all other Jagannath temples, Chief Justice N.V. Ramana heading a three judge bench said, "If Rath Yatra is permitted, it will be the devotees who could suffer and we don't want to take the risk."

1.23 lakh active cases, Mr Tope said.

The health minister also issued a warning that the Covid pandemic is far from over saying there are 21 cases of the 'Delta Plus' variant of coronavirus and 5,500 cases of mucormycosis. This is a serious situation, he added. Congress MLA and former chief minister Prithviraj Chavan attacked the Centre over the high prices of doses and 'profiteering.' "In no other country, people have to pay ₹1,200 per dose. Instead of asking states and municipalities to procure vaccines, the central government should purchase vaccines through a single order for the entire nation and sell or distribute them to the states," he said.

Chirag urges PM not to induct Paras in Cabinet

Patna, July 6: Amid reports of his uncle Pashupati Kumar Paras getting a berth in the union cabinet expansion, Chirag Paswan on Tuesday urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi that nobody from the breakaway faction should be taken in the ministry from the LJP quota otherwise they would go to court.

He said Paras or someone else siding with him can be made a minister as an Independent, but not as a member of the LJP with which they are no longer associated.

Sources in the political circles here said Paras, younger brother of dalit leader Ram Vilas Paswan and currently MP from Hajipur, has rushed to the national capital after getting a telephone call reportedly about his entry in the Prime Minister Narendra Modi cabinet.

— PTI

Bengal CM says NHRC working at BJP's behest

Official is active BJP member: Didi

RAJIB CHOWDHURI
KOLKATA, JULY 6

West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee, on Tuesday, accused the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) of working at the behest of the BJP amid its probe on the orders of the Calcutta high court into the large-scale post poll violence, allegedly unleashed by her party on the BJP workers since May 2. Without taking the name of NHRC chairperson Justice (retired) Arun Mishra, the Trinamul Congress supremo, in an oblique reference, branded him as an "active" BJP member also. She was making her Vote of Thanks speech on governor Jagdeep Dhankhar's address in the Assembly.

"I have information that the NHRC is directly working for the BJP and the person, who is in its charge, is an active BJP worker," Ms Banerjee told the House a day after an NHRC team met state director general of police Virendra at the state secretariat—Nabanna—and held a discussion with him over 30 minutes as part of its probe. Ms Banerjee also did not spare the EC for its role in the recently concluded Assembly polls.

She argued, "In Nandigram, votes cast were more than the number of voters. The BJP, if it did not get help from the EC, would not have gotten even 30 seats. The EC acted on the instructions of PM and Union home minister Amit Shah. Bengal cannot be cowed down by threats. Such tricks do not work here. BJP is a shame to the country. The states, under its rule, are witnessing



Mamata Banerjee

CM's Martyrs' Day to go virtual this yr

Kolkata: For the second year in a row, chief minister Mamata Banerjee will address her party's annual signature event: Martyrs' Day rally on July 21 virtually due to lockdown restrictions for the Covid. On Tuesday the Mamata tweeted, "#ShahidDibas on every 21st July is a solemn occasion for us to remember our 13 bravehearts who were killed in a politically orchestrated violence in 1993. We take this occasion every year to pay our respects for their heroic sacrifice. With the blessings of the Bengal people who have willed us to a landslide victory and a historic third term in government."

Jangal Raj." Before facing her attack, the BJP MLAs had already walked out of the House. Leader of Opposition Suwendu Adhikari had raised her defeat which however led to a verbal duel with the treasury bench. Assembly Speaker Biman Banerjee pointed out the matter as sub-judice since the election petition by the CM has been pending at the high court.

Bengal Assembly gives nod to revive Vidhan Parishad

AGE CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA, JULY 6

The Mamata Banerjee government's ad-hoc committee report to bring back Vidhan Parishad with the Members of Legislative Council (MLC) posts, five decades after it was abolished in West Bengal, was passed after discussion in the House on Tuesday with around two-third majority of votes by the MLAs. While 196 TMC MLAs voted for the move, 69 BJP MLAs opposed it. The resolution will be sent to Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar for his approval. Once he gives his nod, it will be forwarded to the union law ministry which will send it to the parliament for its passage in both the houses before being presented to President Ram Nath Kovind for his assent.

So far only seven states: UP, Maharashtra, Bihar, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and J&K have Vidhan Parishad. West Bengal also had the same with 51 MLCs from June 5 in 1952 before it was dissolved on March 21 in 1969.

Though the TMC supremo talked about setting up Vidhan Parishad in her 2011 election manifesto to come to power for the first time, it did not follow later. This time she promised it again, if elected to power. Parliamentary affairs minister Partha Chatterjee said, "Vidhan Parishad will have MLCs from different walks of life. When many BJP-ruled states also have it, why are the MLAs of that party opposing it here?"

Leader of the opposition Suwendu Adhikari however claimed, "The move is a wastage of government funds and time. While ₹500-600 crores are needed to be spent in a term of five years, bills will take longer time to be passed in the House."

NORTHERN RAILWAY			
E-TENDER NOTICE			
Sr. DSTE/FZR acting for and on behalf of The President of India invites E-Tenders against Tender Notice no. 433-Sig-T-1-21-22 Closing Date/Time 30/07/2021 15:00 Hrs. Bidders will be able to submit their original/revised bids up to closing date and time only. Manual offers are not allowed against this tender, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored. 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 cheque, Deposit receipts, FDR etc. are not allowed.			
Contract Type	Works		
Name of Work	Work no. 1:- Comprehensive Annual Maintenance Contract of Station make Integrated Power Supply (IPS) systems installed over Firozpur Division for Three years.		
	Work no. 2:- Comprehensive Annual Maintenance contract of Hitachi Rail STS India Private Ltd. make Electronic Interlocking System installed at 6 stations on FZR-BTI section of FZR division of FZR for three years.		
	Work no. 3:- Annual maintenance contract (AMC) of UFSBI systems of Deltion make installed over Firozpur division for three (03) years.		
	Work no. 4:- Recharge of 61 connections of Tata SKY DTH Hindi Lite HD pack over Firozpur division for one year.		
Tender Type	Open (E-Tendering)	Bidding System	Single Packet System
Tender Closing Date & Time	Work no. 1-3: 30/07/2021 15:00 Hrs. Work no. 4: 06/08/2021 15:00 Hrs.	Date Time of Uploading Tender	06/07/2021 10:48
Pre-Bid Required	No	Pre-Bid Query Date Time	Not Applicable
Advertised Value (Rs.)	Work no. 1 - 10383691.32 Work no. 2 - 6909300.00 Work no. 3 - 8423977.71 Work no. 4 - 267264.00	Tendering Section	SIGNAL & TELECOM
Bidding Style	Single Rate for Each Schedule Item	Bidding Unit	Rs./Unit
Earnest Money (Rs.)	NIL	Validity of Offer (Days)	45 days
Tender Doc. Cost (Rs.)	NIL	Period of Completion	Work no. 1-3: 36 Months Work no. 4: 12 Months
Bidding Start Date as per IREPS	Work no. 1-3: 16/07/2021 Work no. 4: 23/07/2021		
Tender Notice No: 433-Sig-T-1-21-22 Closing Date/Time: 30/07/2021 15:00 Dated:-06.07.2021			
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE			
1501/2021			

SHORT TAKES

Mufti's mother summoned by ED

Srinagar: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Tuesday summoned former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister, Mehbooba Mufti's, mother for questioning in connection with a case of alleged money laundering. Ms Mufti sought to link it with her PDP's decision to boycott the Delimitation Commission which is currently on a 4-day visit of the Union Territory to meet leaders and representatives of various registered political parties. "On the day PDP chose not to meet Delimitation Commission, ED sent a summon to my mother to appear in person for unknown charges. In its attempts to intimidate political opponents, GOI doesn't even spare senior citizens. Agencies like NIA & ED are now its tools to settle scores," she tweeted. The ED has asked her mother Gulshan Nazir to appear in person at its regional office in Srinagar on July 14.

Mumbai cops bust illegal call centre

Mumbai: The Mumbai police have busted a Bihar-based illegal call centre whose operators duped people in the name of coronavirus, and arrested five persons, one of them a B.Tech graduate, and detained a minor who were part of the racket. The cyber cell of the crime branch unearthed the racket during an investigation into a complaint lodged by a city resident who was cheated. Those apprehended were allegedly running the fake call centre and duping people by using the Covid-19 pandemic as bait, an official said. The accused suspected to have cheated at least 210 people across the country till now. The arrested accused were identified as Dharmajay Kumar, Dhananjay Kumar, Shrawan Paswan, Nitish Kumar and Suman Kumar, while their sixth accomplice was a minor who has been detained. — PTI

Ex-Congress leader to join BJP today

Mumbai: Former Maharashtra minister and Congress leader Kripashankar Singh is all set to join the BJP. Mr. Singh will be inducted on Wednesday at Maharashtra BJP headquarters in south Mumbai in the presence of the former chief minister Devendra Fadnis and Maharashtra BJP chief Chandrakant Patil. The party is expecting that his induction would help the party in the upcoming Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) election, which is scheduled in February 2022. Almost two years ago, Mr. Singh, who was Mumbai Congress chief, had resigned from the Congress over his party's stand against abrogation of Article 370 by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led NDA government.

Delimitation...

■ **Continued from Page 1**
the issue of redrawing the LoK Sabha and Assembly constituencies simultaneously in J&K, Assam and some other northeastern states. But later, when the commission headed by former Supreme Court judge Ranjana Prakash Desai had already laid the groundwork to start the delimitation exercise in these states, the government excluded Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Nagaland from its purview for the time being, raising many eyebrows in J&K and beyond. The Centre also extended its term by one year in March this year.

The commission, which accelerated its work following an all-party meeting on J&K chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at his residence on June 24, is expected to submit its report before its extended term comes to end on March 5, 2022. The commission's members include Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sushil Chandra, deputy election commissioner Chandra Bhushan and the Election Commissioner of J&K, K.K. Sharma. The commission will delimit the constituencies of J&K in accordance with the provisions of the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019.

During its four-day stay in J&K, apart from the leaders and representatives of various political parties registered with the Election Commission, the commission is also scheduled to meet the election officers of all 20 districts and some other government functionaries. The commission is also visiting Kashmir's premier resort Pahalgam, followed by a visit to Jammu.

Maha govt brings 3 bills to counter Centre's farm laws

Mumbai, July 6: The Shiv Sena-led MVA government in Maharashtra on Tuesday introduced three amendment bills in the assembly related to agriculture, co-operation, food and civil supplies, in a move to counter the new farm laws enacted by the Centre that are facing stiff opposition from a section of cultivators.

The bills have provisions for higher than MSP rate for produce in farming agreement with traders, timely payment of dues, three-year jail term and ₹5 lakh fine or both for harassment of farmers.

They also have provisions to give power to the state government to regulate and prohibit production, supply, distribution and impose stock limits on

Maha govt to probe Patole's allegations of phone-tapping

BHAGWAN PARAB
MUMBAI, JULY 6

The Maharashtra government on Tuesday ordered a high-level probe into allegations of phone-tapping made during the previous BJP-led government. Action will be taken against those responsible, said state home minister Dilip Walse-Patil.

"The phone tapping is a serious issue. A high-level inquiry will be conducted into it and the report will be tabled in the House in the next Vidhan Sabha session," he said in Vidhan Sabha on Tuesday.

The issue was raised by senior Congress MLA Nana Patole. "In 2016-17, phones of several MLAs and MPs were tapped in the state under the pretext of curbing anti-social activities. My phone was tapped under the name of Amjad Khan claiming that he was involved in narcotics smuggling. On whose orders, the phones were tapped? Who was the brain behind it?" he asked.

The phone-tapping of elected representatives is an attempt to destroy their political career. Those who will be found guilty must be booked accordingly and strict action must be taken against them, Mr Patole said.

NCP minister Jayant Patil urged the home minister to inquire with Central agencies about the phone tapping being done of the members of the Legislature.



Opposition leader Devendra Fadnis addresses a protest in Mumbai against the MVA government's decision to suspend 12 BJP MLAs for allegedly misbehaving with Speaker Bhaskar Jadhav. — RAJESH JADHAV

essential commodities.

Revenue minister Balasaheb Thorat said the central farm acts were passed without discussion and several of their provisions encroach on rights of state governments.

"The state government has right to make laws and we want to suggest amendments to the central agriculture laws which we feel are anti-farmer," he said.

The bills which have been placed in public

domain for two months for suggestions and objections are — Essential Commodities (Amendment), Farmers (Empowerment and Protection), Guarantee Price; Agriculture Related Agreements (Maharashtra Amendment) and Amendments to Central Government Farmer Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation).

However, the Opposition BJP termed the proposed amendments as "minor" and maintained they have already been incorporated in the laws passed by Parliament in September last year.

The draft bills have been prepared by a Cabinet sub-committee headed by deputy chief minister Ajit Pawar. — PTI



CPI(ML) activists hold a poster during a protest over the death of Father Stan Swamy in Kolkata on Tuesday. — PRITAM BANDYOPADHYAY

India rejects criticism over handling of Swamy's case

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JULY 6

After strong criticism of India by the United Nations Human Rights office over the death of 84-year-old Christian priest Father Stan Swamy, New Delhi on Tuesday said the priest had been arrested and detained by the NIA and that his bail application had been rejected by the courts in India, adding that "authorities in India act against violations of law and not against legitimate exercise of rights".

It further said that in view of the priest's ailing health, the Bombay High Court had allowed his medical treatment at a private hospital where he was receiving "all possible medical attention since May 28" and that "his health and medical treatment was being closely monitored by the courts". It said he died on July 5 following medical complications.

New Delhi added that "India's democratic and constitutional polity is complemented by an independent judiciary, a range of national and state-level Human Rights Commissions that monitor violations, a free media and a vibrant and vocal civil society" and that the country "remains committed to promotion and protection of human rights of all its citizens".

Earlier in the day, the UN human rights office tweeted, "We are saddened and disturbed by the death of 84-year-old

human rights defender Father Stan Swamy after prolonged pre-trial detention. With Covid 19, it is even more urgent that States release every person detained without sufficient legal basis. No one should be detained for exercising their rights of freedom of expression, of peaceful assembly and of association." It also tweeted a picture of the priest.

It said UN high commissioner for human rights Michelle Bachelet and the United Nations' independent experts have repeatedly raised the cases of Swamy, a Jesuit priest, and 15 other human rights defenders with the Indian government over the last three years and urged for their release from detention.

Another key ally from Bihar, the Janata Dal (United), sources said, is adamant on more than two posts, while Tamil Nadu ally AIADMK could also find a place in Team Modi.

For the LJP, which has split vertically, it will be seen whether or not late party leader Ram Vilas Paswan's brother Pashupati Kumar Paras, whose faction has been given approval in Parliament, will be accommodated or not. The late leader's son, Chirag Paswan, has been vehemently opposing any such move.

Earlier on Tuesday, the

Minister's son says he was not driving car
Farmer dies after K'taka
dy CM's son car hits bike

Bagalkote (Karnataka), July 6: A 56-year-old man died after being allegedly run over by a car owned by Karnataka deputy chief minister Laxman Savadi's son at Hungund in the district.

The victim's kin have alleged that Chidanand Savadi was behind the wheels and he even asked the locals to delete videos recorded at the site, from their mobile phones or face consequences, a charge denied by the latter.

According to the police, the accident took place when Kudleppa Boli was returning home on his bike on Monday evening. The farmer was rushed to the hospital, where he succumbed to injuries.

A case has been registered against the driver of the car, who was present on the spot, based on a complaint from the victim's relative.

"... we have seized the car and taken the driver in our custody," district superintendent of police Lokesh Jagalasar said.

The SP said investigation is on into the matter.

M e a n w h i l e, Mangalappa, son-in-law of



■ **SON-IN-LAW** OF the victim, alleged that Chidanand was driving the car. He accused Savadi's son of not taking his injured father-in-law to the hospital on time

■ **MINISTER'S SON** said that he was in his friend's car while Hanumanth (driver) was driving his car

the victim, alleged that Chidanand was driving the car.

He accused Savadi's son of not taking his injured father-in-law to the hospital on time.

"My uncle sustained injuries in his head and back. He was lying there. They should have made some arrangements on finding his lying there, but they did nothing," he told the media here.

Though Chidanand admitted that the car which was involved in the accident belonged to him, he denied the charge that he was driving it.

Laxman Savadi too rejected the allegations and said, "My son stopped driving 10 years ago, and Hanumanth (driver) was driving the vehicle."

Chidanand claimed that he along with his friends had gone to Anjanadri hill

for "Darshan" and were on the way to Athani.

Chidanand told reporters that he was in his friend's car while Hanumanth (driver) was driving his car when a biker suddenly appeared in front of the vehicle and the driver lost control of it and hit him.

He said his driver later apprised him of what happened, following which he (Chidanand) made arrangements to admit the injured to the hospital and informed the police.

"By the time I returned, there was no one on the spot. I went to the hospital to meet the victim, where I got the information that he has succumbed to injuries. I also tried to meet his family members but could not. I pray to God to give strength to the kin to bear the loss," he said. — PTI

Indian embassy rules out closing
Afghan missions

New Delhi, July 6: The Indian embassy in Afghanistan on Tuesday described as "incorrect" reports saying India is shutting down its diplomatic missions in the country in view of escalating violence.

In a Twitter post, the embassy said it is closely monitoring the evolving security situation, particularly around the cities of Kandahar and Mazar.

"Media reports on #India closing its Embassy & Consulates in AF are incorrect. @IndianEmbKabul, Consulates in Kandahar & Mazar are open, functioning. We DO HOWEVER continue to closely monitor the evolving security situation particularly around Kandahar & Mazar cities," it said.

The embassy last week asked all Indians visiting, staying and working in Afghanistan to exercise utmost caution with regard to their security and avoid all types of non-essential travel in view of a rising number of incidents of violence in various parts of the

country. In an advisory, the embassy said the security situation in Afghanistan remains "dangerous" and that terror groups have carried out a series of complex attacks, including targeting civilians, adding that Indian nationals additionally face a "serious threat" of abduction.

Afghanistan witnessed a series of attacks in the last few weeks as the United States looked to complete the withdrawal of its forces from the war-ravaged country by September 11, ending nearly two decades of its military presence there.

India is concerned over the increasing levels of violence as well as the Taliban's efforts to expand its influence in Afghanistan.

Last month, foreign secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla said the Taliban's relentless pursuit of power through violence has created an uncertain environment in Afghanistan and the situation in the country is "fluid" at this point in time. — PTI

3 accused of
honey-trap
scandal get
bail in MP

RABINDRA NATH
CHOUDHURY
BHOPAL, JULY 6

Three key accused in the infamous honey-trap and blackmailing scandal that rocked Madhya Pradesh a couple of years ago were on Tuesday granted bail by the Indore bench of MP high court.

The development has left a section in the political and bureaucratic circles here in a tizzy with talks doing rounds here that the three accused may spill the beans on involvement of some 'high and mighty' in the state in the scandal after they walked out of the jail.

The three accused, Shweta Vijay Jain, Shweta Swapnil Jain and Monica Yadav, were granted bail by the court on personal bonds of ₹50,000 each.

The police busted the honey trapping and blackmailing racket here in September, 2019 by arresting six women and the driver of one of the accused in the scandal.

PM's Cabinet shuffle looks imminent

■ **Continued from Page 1**
senior Cabinet minister, who is now recuperating, could also be asked to "take a complete rest" and another representative of his state, where elections are due early next year, could be accommodated in the team.

At least 10 ministers are now holding more than one portfolio.

Some of the prospective new members of Team Modi, including former Congress leader Jyotiraditya Scindia, former Assam CM Sarbananda Sonowal and Maharashtra heavyweight Narayan Rane have

reached New Delhi amid speculation that they were told to reach the national capital.

Senior JD(U) leader R.C.P. Singh and LJP's Pashupati Kumar Paras arrived in New Delhi from Bihar. It is also expected that the representation of BJP MPs from West Bengal and the Northeast may go up.

The rejig, it is learnt, will be done keeping in mind the coming Assembly polls, most importantly Uttar Pradesh, where the BJP also has to placate its allies, including Apna Dal(S) and Nishad Party.

Another key ally from Bihar, the Janata Dal (United), sources said, is adamant on more than two posts, while Tamil Nadu ally AIADMK could also find a place in Team Modi.

For the LJP, which has split vertically, it will be seen whether or not late party leader Ram Vilas Paswan's brother Pashupati Kumar Paras, whose faction has been given approval in Parliament, will be accommodated or not. The late leader's son, Chirag Paswan, has been vehemently opposing any such move.

Earlier on Tuesday, the

President appointed Mr Gehlot as governor of Karnataka while Mr Dattatreya was shifted from Himachal Pradesh to be made governor of Haryana.

Mr Gehlot was also a member of the ruling BJP's top decision-making body, the parliamentary board, which has not been reconstituted since 2014 and already has four vacancies. Mr Gehlot was also the Leader of the House in the Rajya Sabha where Union minister Piyush Goyal is the deputy leader of the House.

Mr Kovind also named Mangubhai Chhaganbhai

Patel as governor of Madhya Pradesh, while Hari Babu Kambhampati and Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar were appointed as governors of Mizoram and Himachal Pradesh respectively.

Mr Kambhampati succeeds P.S. Sreedharan Pillai, who has been transferred and named governor of Goa, while Satyadev Narayan Arya, governor of Haryana, has been transferred and appointed as governor of Tripura while Tripura governor Ramesh Bais has been transferred and appointed governor of Jharkhand.

PM greets Dalai on birthday

■ **Continued from Page 1**
reportedly been a cause of concern due to his advanced age. It is due to this that the selection of the next Dalai Lama eventually is being seen as a potential flashpoint between Beijing and the Dalai Lama's exiled followers in India, who had formed the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), popularly known as the Tibetan government-in-exile based out of Dharamsala in Himachal Pradesh decades ago. However, India has always recognised Tibet as a part of China.

The PM's tweet is being seen in the context of the current uneasy ties between the two Asian giants, with troops of the two sides not having disengaged yet from all friction points in the Ladakh sector despite numer-

ous rounds of talks at the diplomatic and military level. New Delhi has been upset over what it sees as China's reluctance to pull back its troops. Ties between the two neighbours have remained tense ever since the deadly clash between the troops of both sides at Galwan Valley in June last year.

Beijing has made it clear that while historically, the person to be the next Dalai Lama has always been chosen as per Tibetan Buddhist religious practices, in what will be the "first important step", the "approval of the Chinese government" would be the "second important step" in declaring the next Dalai Lama. Beijing also made it clear it will play a "leading role" in the identification of the next Dalai Lama.

THE ASIAN AGE

7 JULY 2021

Who has the credibility to probe Stan Swamy death?

The death of the 84-year old Jesuit priest Father Stan Swamy — who had emerged as one of India's foremost human rights defenders — in judicial custody in Mumbai on Sunday offers a great lesson in injustice. This death is a tragedy for India and the values it has cherished for centuries.

Clearly, the ruling dispensation is not likely to see it in this way. Its vicious representatives and spokespersons have offered crude and laboured justifications on television for the late activist's unwarranted incarceration and, further, the denial to him of the smallest consideration on grounds of medical condition, advanced age, and his eminence which derived from 55 years of dedicated service to the cause of the adivasis and dalits, namely the poorest Indians.

The death of this indefatigable champion of poor people's causes invites us to ponder over the nature of the present Indian State whose hallmark is to pander to the fatcats, bring about policies for the further impoverishment of the already marginalised sections of our fellow citizens, ingratiate itself with international capital and the political masters in the West, and at home spread divisive venom through carefully articulated economic and social religio-populism.

The matter deserves to be raised in the Monsoon Session of Parliament in a collective voice by all sections of the House, including those on the treasury benches who have a conscience

The rampant misuse of agencies and institutions of the State for political agendas, and the non-stop spread of disinformation to soften up the citizenry, also appear to be integral to the designs of many in authority. Even so, instances from 20th century European history may not be apt to find meaningful parallels with the present Indian regime. It may be more apt to think of patterns of behaviour of police states that operate within the framework of a perfectly democratic Constitution. But does there exist such an example, or is today's India really quite unique?

The late Fr Swamy's shocking demise brings into question the conduct and attitude of the National Investigating Agency (NIA), which reports to the Union home ministry and was created to investigate terrorism-related crimes but all too often happily doubles — along with some other agencies of the Centre — virtually as political police. Alas, it also raises doubts about the judiciary at the trial court level and, in this instance, the Bombay high court, too. Taken together these pretty much constitute the panoply of the justice system in its entirety.

Given the gravity of the situation, to which our attention has been drawn by the death of one of our most eminent citizens, and the negative international attention it has drawn, Fr Swamy's demise makes an impartial high-level inquiry imperative. But today which institution has the experience, and also its credibility intact, to carry out this onerous task?

The matter deserves to be raised in the Monsoon Session of Parliament in a collective voice by all sections of the House, including those on the treasury benches who have a conscience. This is all the more necessary because nearly a dozen noted intellectuals, lawyers, activists, with a lifetime's record of work for the poor, are also being made to rot in prison without trial in the Elgar Parishad case—as the late Fr Swamy was — on the false pretext of their membership of banned organizations intent on violently destroying the sovereignty of India and assassinating the Prime Minister.

If there is transparent justice, these monstrous charges will not stick, but many of those in prison are elderly and suffer from severe health problems, much as Fr Swamy did. The tragedy that befell the country on Monday must not be permitted to play out again.

Persecution with a quashed law

The Indian justice system is in focus after the death of the octogenarian rights activist Stan Swamy. The malaise, however, runs far deeper than just the highest courts of the land. The executive is constantly guilty of over reach when it comes to stifling dissent. The top court was flabbergasted recently when it came across many persons being arrested for posting dissenting opinions on social media under Section 66A of the IT Act which was struck off from the statute six years ago. It is apparent that police in some states are either unaware that the section is invalid or do not bother reading the footnote following an asterisk placed against Section 66 A in the law book.

The cause of such distressing and illegal action of police in going after dissent expressed on social media stems from the eagerness to please their political masters than any great desire to uphold the law. The usual logic behind such action is public order may be affected by the spread of restlessness. The social media is, however, known to host all kinds of rebellious, unconventional, outlandish or even outright cranky opinions but they have hardly wrought greater damage than cause a flutter. It is a well-known fact that posts against politicians are likely to draw the attention of netas ruling in states with Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand and Rajasthan seen to be most active in using the inoperative Sec. 66A.

What is more distressing than the sheer unintelligence of the police in using non-existent provisions of the law to go after critics or rebels is the prevailing atmosphere of distrust and the extreme sensitivity of the ruling class tending to take umbrage at the slightest provocation. It is the harassment of citizens with contrary opinions that is the aim. The registering of cases, which often get thrown out by the courts, is aimed to draw the “accused” into a legal net and use just the process to persecute him. What is to be balked at is the intent more than the ignorance of the police.

THE ASIAN AGE

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Subhani



China's hard talk: Sign of Xi's confidence or worry?



K.C. Singh

President Xi Jinping of China, after assuming office in 2012, declared twin goals for his country — a moderately developed China by the centenary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) on July 1 this year and a fully developed, rich and powerful nation by 2049 — the centenary of the People's Republic of China. By most accounts he has been able to achieve the first.

However, China, by its stated ambitions and aggressive behaviour, has also concomitantly set off concerns of its neighbours and the developed nations. Thus, the meetings of the Group of Seven and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation the week before the Chinese kicked off the CPC's centenary celebrations, sounded the alarm. The Chinese behaviour, said Nato, presented “systemic challenges”. US President Joe Biden, to the immense relief of America's European allies after his predecessor Donald Trump's dithering, committed the United States fully to the alliance, calling the mutual defence mandate a “sacred obligation”. This was a win for Mr Biden as the European allies have earlier been chary of naming and shaming China due to their dependence on Chinese markets. For instance, in 2020, Germany's trade with China was \$256 billion, as that of the US topped \$559 billion.

The two summits also brought the focus back on China's gross abuse of human rights in Xinjiang and the forced assimilation of Hong Kong. Of course, China called all such debates and resolutions “slander”. Chinese irritation was understandable as the criticism came on the very eve of their centennial celebrations. It was also a personal affront for President Xi Jinping as the post-2008 Chinese

assertiveness has his imprint on it. Slowly he has tightened the leash of the CPC and increased his centralised control over almost all levers of power. The personality cult and re-education evangelism is a reminder more of Mao Zedong than any of his successors, including the creator of China's economic miracle Deng Xiaoping.

It was therefore not surprising that President Xi's address on July 1 provided the response to the critique. Dressed in a grey Mao button-up assemblage, though his usual attire is a business suit, he spoke at Beijing's Tiananmen Square from the very platform and stage used by Mao. He delivered a stern message, warning that China would not tolerate any attempt by foreign powers at bullying, oppressing or subjugating them. He spun China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), seen by most of the developed world and India as a debt trap and a means of creating permanent dependence on China, as an instrument for China to share the fruits of its development with developing and underdeveloped nations. A strong nation needs a strong military and China is fulfilling that need, he said. President Xi was addressing not just the 95 million-odd members of the CPC, or indeed other citizens of China, but the entire neighbourhood and the world beyond. It was a clarion call that China had now fully arrived and willing and able to match its wits with the United States.

Just in case countries like India did not get the message, a running commentary was provided in English publications like *Global Times*.

Coincidentally, the centenary fell soon after India marked one year of the bloody Galwan clash between the armies of India and China. For decades China has consid-

ered India as an inferior power, incapable of mounting a challenge to it. However, the rising profile of the “Quad”, US President Joe Biden persisting with his predecessor's sceptical line on China and the BJP's consolidation of domestic political power has combined to irk China. India therefore began to get elevated in Beijing's perception as a strategic rival, if not yet a threat. This explains the sudden Chinese incursions in Ladakh and reluctance to vacate forward military ingress at a number of points. China has always used the unsettled border as a pressure point to condition India's strategic conduct.

It is also noteworthy that when the 19th Central Committee Politburo of the CPC met on June 25, the focus was on party affairs, foreign policy and security and military matters. Under previous Presidents, post-Mao, much greater attention was paid to economic issues. It is worth examining whether the jingoism and strong language, evoking the powerful imagery that foreign bullies will “face broken heads and bloodshed”, is a sign of confidence or deep worry?

Although the Chinese economy has recovered faster and better than the economies of the developed world during the Covid-19 pandemic, its exports have performed better than domestic consumption growth. There is also the Chinese worry over demographics as their population growth continues to fall below sustainable levels. There may also be murmurs within the party about President Xi's confrontational foreign policy as China now faces the potential danger

There may be murmurs within the party about Xi's confrontational foreign policy as China now faces the potential danger of antagonists restraining it through cooperation and coordinated response

of antagonists restraining it through cooperation and coordinated response. The Quad, with its implicit membership criteria being based on democratic credentials, presents an imminent threat. The fact that G-7 invited Australia, India, South Korea and South Africa as dialogue partners for the summit in the UK again underscored an attempt to align the interests of democracies across all continents. The direct or implicit message is that China is the new danger that needs to be contained by all means, including hard and soft power.

The Global Times, the perennial tool for disinformation and propaganda, warned India that because it cannot afford a “long and high-intensity confrontation” it should not try siding with the US in any power games in Indo-Pacific. Reports have been discounted that India had moved more troops to the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in response to China's troop deployment surge. President Xi's jingoism may be more for domestic consolidation than international browbeating as the neighbourhood has known Chinese high-handedness for many years. Thus, the rhetoric does not add to the reality of Chinese unilateralism in real and invented disputes.

India's concerns would be heightened by the new drone-based terrorism from Pakistan and the rapidly succeeding Taliban in Afghanistan. China appears less worried about the Afghan imbroglio than Russia, having the Pakistani assurances in hand. Iran has a new and more conservative President, leaving a question mark over Iranian interests in Afghanistan. Iran's priority would be to get the US sanctions lifted and its nuclear programme restored. India can only hope that China will moderate its “wolf warrior” diplomacy and move towards a genuinely stabilising role in South Asia. However, events appear to be moving in the reverse direction after the American exit from Afghanistan.

The writer is a former secretary in the external affairs ministry. He tweets at @ambksingh.

LETTERS

JUDICIAL FAILURE

This refers to the front page report, “Stan Swamy, 84, dies in hospital waiting for bail” (July 6). In practice, SC's 1977 dictum that bail is the rule is more often breached than honoured. The entire country is in a state of disbelief to the unfortunate passing away of Stan Swamy, a Jesuit committed to the cause of tribal development. His bail petition was rejected a number of times, and this proves the inherent weakness of the judiciary. Ironically, the courts in recent times have put more faith in the contentions of the prosecuting and investigating agencies.

Sankar Paul
Chakdaha, West Bengal

AIR POWER IS KEY

THE INFANTRY versus air force debate is as old as WWII. In later day warfare, air superiority became vital. Equipped with latest firepower, the air force paved the way for penetration into enemy lines. This era increasingly uses new technologies with minimal military footprint, through remote warfare. This approach also strategically creates political distance between the nation and the sites of its military interventions.

R. Narayanan
Navi Mumbai

ALOFT THE BANNER...

ACCLAIMED BOXER M.C. Mary Kom and men's hockey team skipper Manpreet Singh have earned the huge honour to be the flag-bearers at the opening ceremony of the Tokyo Olympics. One of India's biggest medal hopes, grappler Bajrang Punia will lead the contingent at the closing ceremony on August 8. This is the first time countries will have over one flag-bearer at the Games to ensure gender parity. Over 100 Indian athletes will vie for a medal at the showpiece, postponed by a year because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

N.J. Ravi Chander
Bengaluru

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

SHORT BRIEF

5 SUSPECTED MILITANTS KILLED IN PAK

Quetta: Security forces shot five suspected militants to death Monday during a raid on their hideout near Pakistan's southwestern city of Quetta, a spokesman for a counter-terrorism department said.

In a brief statement, it said there was an exchange of gunfire during the raid and officers seized weapons from the militant hideout after the successful operation.

Quetta is the capital of Baluchistan province, which has been the scene of frequent militant attacks and a long-running insurgency by small separatist groups that seek independence for the mineral- and gas-rich province bordering borders Iran and Afghanistan.

The Pakistani Taliban also have a presence there.

THAILAND SEIZES 315 KILOGRAMS OF HEROIN

Bangkok: Customs officials in Thailand made their biggest seizure of heroin this year, about 315 kilograms (700 pounds) worth up to 944 million baht (\$29 million), bringing the total confiscated so far this year to 2 tons, officials said on Tuesday.

They did not say where the drugs originated, but the seizure comes amid concerns that production may surge in neighboring Myanmar, the region's main supplier of illicit drugs, because of severe instability following the military's ouster of an elected government in February.

Customs Department Director-General Patchara Anuntasilpa said 134 shrink-wrapped packets of heroin, each weighing about 2.4 kilograms (5.3 pounds), had been concealed in a shipment of acrylic paint headed for Australia.

He said the drugs were discovered on Monday because the packets of heroin were placed in square plastic containers which stood out on X-rays of the paint buckets.

UK COURT QUASHES 1972 ROBBERY CONVICTIONS OF 3

London: Britain's Court of Appeal has exonerated three Black men who were convicted of robbery nearly 50 years ago, the latest in a series of cases that have been overturned because they relied on the testimony of a corrupt police officer who later died in prison.

The court on Monday quashed the convictions of Courtney Harriot, Paul Green and Cleveland Davidson, who were aged between 17 and 20 when they were accused of trying to rob a plainclothes detective on a London Underground train. The men always maintained their innocence and claimed that they were framed by the officer before his career ended in disgrace.

"It is most unfortunate that it has taken nearly 50 years to rectify the injustice suffered by these appellants," Judge Julian Flaux said.

The case is one of several involving questionable arrests of Black men in the 1970s by a British Transport Police unit run by the late Detective Sgt. Derek Ridgeway.

NZ RECORDS WARMEST JUNE ON RECORD

Wellington: New Zealand recorded its hottest June on record as temperatures continued to soar in a pattern consistent with global warming, a government scientific agency said on Tuesday (Jul 6).

Daily temperatures averaged 10.6 degrees Celsius — 1.9 degrees Celsius above average despite a cold snap late in the month, the National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research (NIWA) said.

"It's huge. There's only been 13 times since 1909 that we've had such an anomaly," NIWA scientist Chris Brandolino told public radio.

"What's alarming is that over the past 10 years that's happened six times." Brandolino said that while shorter-term factors such as warmer ocean temperatures helped heat the air over New Zealand, climate change was a constant underlying factor.

"We've had more north-easterly air flows than normal (from the Pacific), so they're coming from a warm place, and ocean temperatures are also warmer than average," he said.

6 kids among 9 held in alleged HK 'bomb plot'

Group was attempting to make the explosive TATP

Big tech threaten to quit HK

Hong Kong, July 6: Nine people, including six secondary school students, were arrested in Hong Kong on Tuesday for allegedly plotting to set off homemade bombs in courts, tunnels and trash cans as political tensions rise in the city where China is tightening its grip.

Police said they were detained on suspicion of engaging in terrorist activity under a harsh national security law that Beijing imposed a year ago as part of a crack-down on dissent in the former British colony that has long enjoyed freedoms not seen on the Chinese mainland.

Hong Kong authorities have used the law, enacted in response to anti-government protests that rocked the city in 2019, to arrest many of the city's prominent activists. Others have fled abroad as a result.

If the allegations are true, the group appears to

unveiled plans to pass a new law targeting "doxxing" — the act of publishing someone's private details online so they can be harassed by others.

But the broad wording of the proposed legislation has spooked major tech companies who fear they

could be held liable and their employees prosecuted for users' content.

They detailed their concerns in a letter sent to Hong Kong's government by the Asia Internet Coalition which includes tech giants such as Google, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Apple. — *AFP*

chemicals.

Nine people between 15 and 39 years old were arrested Tuesday, according to Senior Superintendent Li Kwai-wah of the Hong Kong Police National Security Department.

Hong Kong chief executive Carrie Lam said at a weekly news briefing that she hopes the members of the public will "openly condemn threats of violence." — *AP*



An Afghan soldier plays a guitar that was left behind after the American military departed Bagram air base, in Parwan province north of Kabul, Afghanistan, on Tuesday. — *AP*

US quits Bagram in a mess at night, Afghan commander not informed

Bagram, Afghanistan, July 6: The U.S. left Afghanistan's Bagram airfield after nearly 20 years by shutting off the electricity and slipping away in the night without notifying the base's new Afghan commander, who discovered the Americans' departure more than two hours after they left, Afghan military officials said.

Afghanistan's army showed off the sprawling air base Monday, providing a rare first glimpse of

what had been the epicenter of America's war to unseat the Taliban and hunt down the al-Qaida perpetrators of the 9/11 attacks on America.

The US announced on Friday it had completely vacated its biggest airfield in the country in advance of a final withdrawal the Pentagon says will be completed by the end of August.

"We (heard) some rumor that the Americans had left Bagram ... and finally by seven o'clock in the morning, we understood

that it was confirmed that they had already left Bagram," Gen. Mir Asadullah Kohistani, Bagram's new commander said. U.S. military spokesman Col. Sonny Leggett did not address the specific complaints of many Afghan soldiers who inherited the abandoned airfield, instead referring to a statement last week.

The statement said the handover of the many bases had been in the process soon after President Joe Biden's mid-April announcement that America

was withdrawing the last of its forces. Leggett said in the statement that they had coordinated their departures with Afghanistan's leaders.

Before the Afghan army could take control of the airfield about an hour's drive from the Afghan capital Kabul, it was invaded by a small army of looters, who ransacked barrack after barrack and rummaged through giant storage tents before being evicted, according to Afghan military officials. — *AFP*

Plane wreckage found in E. Russia

Moscow, July 6: Search teams on Tuesday found wreckage of a passenger plane carrying 28 people that had disappeared in Russia's remote far eastern Kamchatka peninsula, but there was little hope of survivors.

Search and rescue operations were suspended after night fell and Russian news agencies quoted local sources as saying it appeared that all

the passengers and crew had died.

The An-26 plane was flying from Kamchatka's main city of Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky to the coastal town of Palana when it disappeared at 2:40 pm (0240 GMT).

The governor of Kamchatka, a vast peninsula popular with adventure tourists for its abundant wildlife and live volcanoes, said search

teams had found parts of the fuselage along the coast and in the Okhotsk Sea. "There was a catastrophe during the go-around approach for landing," Vladimir Solodov in a video released on the government website.

Russia's aviation agency said in a statement that the plane's debris had been found at 9:06 pm local time (0906 GMT). Officials said that com-

munication with the plane had been lost nine kilometres (5.5 miles) from Palana's airport and 10 minutes before its scheduled landing time.

Russian news agencies quoted local officials as saying most of the passengers were from Palana — which has a population of about 3,000 — including four local government officials and the town's head Olga Mokhiryova. — *AFP*

COVID AT A GLANCE

Can avoid quarantine if jabbed or recovered

Germany relaxes curbs on travellers from UK, India

Israel, S. Korea agree vax swap

Berlin, July 6: Germany's health agency said on Monday five so-called virus variant countries would be reclassified as "high incidence areas", lifting a ban on entry for travellers from those nations who are not German residents or citizens.

The Robert Koch Institute (RKI) said India, Nepal, Russia, Portugal and the UK would be reclassified from on Wednesday, meaning any traveller will be able to enter as long as they observe quarantine and testing rules.

Germany introduced its "virus variant country" travel category in a bid to stop new Coronavirus variants that have not yet spread widely on home soil.

But Health Minister Jens Spahn said last week that the Delta variant was fast becoming dominant in Germany, meaning that bans on most travellers from countries hit by that variant may be lifted.

Given the increasing spread of Delta, which was first detected in India, and research suggesting vaccines are effective against it, "we will look at the situation in the next few days", Spahn said.

Chancellor Angela Merkel also hinted at a potential softening in Germany's stance towards travellers from Britain during a visit to London on Friday.

Last month, Merkel called for tough restrictions, including longer quarantine, for people travelling from Britain, where the Delta variant has caused a surge in cases. But she indicated that the stance could soften as travel advice was reviewed.

"We think that in the foreseeable future, those who have received double jabs will... be able to travel again, without having to go into quarantine," she said. Only citizens and residents of Germany are permitted to enter from a variant country and are subject to a two-week quarantine, regardless of whether they are fully vaccinated or can provide

a negative Covid-19 test. By contrast, anyone can enter from a high-incidence country as long as they provide a negative test on arrival. — *AFP*

being here for the return of the festival, in the opening film... it's a huge sense of relief and excitement," US actor Adam Driver said.

Driver co-stars with French actor Marion Cotillard in the opening night film, "Annette", a musical directed by cult favourite Leos Carax.

Members of the jury — headed for the first time by a black man, US director Spike Lee — arrived Monday night and will give their traditional press conference on Tuesday afternoon, before embarking on their 24-film marathon. — *AFP*

Cannes fest back after pandemic

Cannes, France, July 6: The famed Cannes Film Festival opens Tuesday, and despite social distancing subduing some of its signature glamour, excitement is rife for the first fully fledged film festival since the start of the Coronavirus pandemic.

Last year's edition was cancelled over the health crisis, and although stars will be allowed to go maskless on the red carpet this year, a health pass is required for entrance and many of the glitzy after-parties that are the festival's calling card have been postponed because of distancing measures.

"Covid is still there, but

Israel ban on Arab unifications lapses

Jerusalem, July 6: Israel's Prime Minister Naftali Bennett accused his opponents on Tuesday of harming national security as his coalition failed to extend a ban on citizenship for Palestinian spouses from the West Bank and Gaza.

The ban first enacted in 2003 during the second Palestinian intifada, or uprising, has been justified by supporters on security grounds — but critics derided it as discriminatory toward Israel's Arab minority.

The ban has caused endless complications for Palestinians living across Israel and the territories it has occupied since 1967. Many of those affected live in annexed east Jerusalem, often with Israeli residency but not citizenship.

The failure to pass the ban's extension in a parliament vote early Tuesday highlighted tensions within Bennett's ideologically diverse

eight-party coalition that spans his far-right Yamina party to Raam, a conservative Islamist Arab faction.

It was also a success for Benjamin Netanyahu, who is now the opposition leader after Bennett ousted him following 12 straight years as premier.

"The opposition deliberately took a direct strike at the state's security, out of some sort of bitterness and frustration," Bennett fumed. "They ultimately harmed the good of the country."

In overnight talks, Bennett's coalition had sought a deal for nearly all of its members to back the ban's extension, including Jewish left-wingers and two Raam lawmakers.

In exchange, the government would have granted residency or citizenship rights to more than 1,500 Palestinians who have been living in Israel for many years. — *AFP*



Viktor Babaryko

BELARUS OPPN FIGURE BABARYKO JAILED FOR 14 YRS

Moscow, July 6: One of Belarus's leading opposition figures was sentenced to 14 years in prison on Tuesday, the latest move in a months-long crackdown on critics of strongman leader Alexander Lukashenko.

Former banker Viktor Babaryko — considered one of Lukashenko's strongest opponents — was handed the sentence by the Supreme Court in Minsk.

His Twitter account, which is run by supporters, said he would serve the 14 years "in a maximum security colony".

The 57-year-old was arrested in June last year on fraud charges ahead of a disputed presidential election that sparked several months of protests.

He had planned to run in the election and was considered the strongest challenger to Lukashenko's almost three decade rule.

Babaryko was accused of receiving bribes and of money laundering when he was head of Belgazprombank, the Belarusian branch of a bank belonging to Russian energy giant Gazprom.

He was also ordered to pay 46 million Belarusian rubles (\$18 million, 15 million euros) in damages, according to local independent rights group Viasna. — *AFP*

LETHAL WEAPON

Director Richard Donner had a 'powerful command of his movies'

He gave us *The Omen* chills, *Superman* thrills

Washington, July 6: Richard Donner, a prolific filmmaker who directed the first *Superman* movie, *The Goonies* and other blockbuster hits, died on Monday at age 91, US media reported.

Donner's other credits include the 1976 horror classic *The Omen*, the *Lethal Weapon* cop franchise with Mel Gibson and Danny Glover starting in 1987, *Scrooged* (1988) and his final movie in 2006, *16 Blocks*. He also directed episodes of iconic

20th century television shows such as *Get Smart*, *Perry Mason*, *Gilligan's Island* and *The Twilight Zone*, according to IMDB, and took on a producer role for blockbuster hits including *X-Men* and *Free Willy*.

The *Hollywood Reporter* cited Donner's assistant in confirming his death, while *Deadline* said there was no cause of death revealed by Donner's business manager or producer wife, Lauren Schuler Donner.



Richard Donner

"Richard Donner had the biggest, boomiest voice you could imagine,"

● "RICHARD DONNER had the biggest, boomiest voice you could imagine," *Goonies* star Sean Astin said on Twitter. Richard Donner, a prolific filmmaker who directed many a blockbuster hits, died on Monday at age 91. Donner was born in the Bronx and grew up in New York before attending New York University.

Goonies star Sean Astin said on Twitter: "He commanded atten-

tion and he laughed like no man has ever laughed before. Dick was so much fun. What I perceived in him, as a 12 year old kid, is that he cared. I love how much he cared," Astin tweeted about his time acting in the 1985 teen treasure hunt movie.

Fellow director Steven Spielberg, who wrote the story on which *The Goonies* was based, said in a statement that Donner had a "powerful command of his movies".

"Being in his circle was

akin to hanging out with your favorite coach, smartest professor, fiercest motivator, most endearing friend, staunchest ally, and — of course — the greatest Goonie of all," Spielberg said in the statement tweeted by his production company Amblin.

Donner was born in the Bronx and grew up in New York before attending New York University and joining the US military, according to the *Hollywood Reporter*. — *AFP*

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	52,861.18	-0.04
Nifty 50	15,818.30	-0.10
S&P 500*	4,326.13	-0.60
Dollar (₹)	74.55	-0.30
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.21	-0.25
Euro (₹)	88.26	-0.01
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	46,762,389	0.83
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	74.45	-3.51
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.175	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.360	-0.072

* As of 8:30 PM IST

British Airways settles class action over data

British Airways settled a UK class-action lawsuit involving hundreds of thousands of customers caught up in a 2018 data breach. The settlement, for an undisclosed sum, followed the leak of the personal data of 420,000 customers and staff, including bank details, contact information and addresses. The deal between IAG-owned British Airways and law firm PGMBM doesn't include any admission of liability by the airline.

Wipro commits ₹1,000 cr more for Covid-19 relief



Wipro's philanthropic arm has committed an additional Rs 1,000 crore of grants over and above the Rs 1,125-crore support it had announced in the early days of the pandemic last year, its founder chairman Azim Premji said. The additional grant will be directed primarily on universal vaccination, Premji said while speaking at the foundation day event of the Bombay Chartered Accountants' Society.

Malabar Gold on hiring spree, with 5,000 vacancies

Malabar Gold and Diamonds announced hiring to fill more than 5,000 vacancies across its retail operations in India. The current vacancies are mainly in retail jewellery sales, store operations and accountants across India, along with other functions. Half of these openings are set aside for deserving female candidates. Internships and traineeships are also being offered for fresh BTech/MBA entrants to learn jewellery sales.

IIFL Home Fin's unsecured NCDs offer 10% interest

IIFL Home Finance, a subsidiary of IIFL Finance, announced the public issue of unsecured non-convertible debentures (NCDs) with coupon rates ranging from 9.60 per cent to 10.00 per cent per annum for a tenure of 7 years and 3 months (87 months). The issue with a base issue size of Rs 100 crore with an option to retain oversubscription up to Rs 900 crore, has been rated AA by Crisil Ratings and Brickwork Ratings.

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Talks collapse after UAE puts foot down Saudis up prices after Opec+ feud

SERENE CHEONG, SHARON CHO & ANTHONY DI PAOLA JULY 6

Saudi Arabia raised oil prices for buyers from Asia to the US for August after Opec+ talks broke down just as the market was clamouring for more supply.

The Saudis, along with Russia, sought over the past week to rally other members around a plan to unwind production cuts incrementally and to extend their accord through to the end of next year. The proposal collapsed when the United Arab Emirates balked at keeping in place what it says is an unfair production baseline for its quota for longer.

In its main market of Asia, Saudi Aramco increased the official selling price, or OSP, for Arab Light crude by 80 cents a barrel to \$2.70 above the regional benchmark. That's the biggest month-on-month increase since January, and suggests the oil giant won't raise supply next month even as it sees the market tightening.

"With domestic demand peaking around August, there will be less crude available for exports unless they draw down from the inventories," said Giovanni Staunovo, a commodities analyst at UBS Group AG. "As the market was looking for a slightly smaller OSP increase for Asia, Asian refineries can't expect additional vol-



umes from Saudi Arabia."

The kingdom sends more than 60 per cent of its crude exports to Asia, with China, Japan, South Korea and India being the biggest buyers. Last month, it shipped 5.7 million barrels a day globally, according to preliminary data compiled by Bloomberg.

Oil futures and physical markets have strengthened with widespread virus vaccinations supporting demand. The breakdown in Opec+ talks means current production limits will remain in place for August, likely leading to a deeper supply deficit.

Crude could rise to as high as \$90 a barrel with out higher output, Fereidun Fesharaki, chairman of industry consultant FGE, said in a Bloomberg Television interview. He said a compromise between the feuding Opec nations was likely.

Reuters adds from London: Oil prices were looking towards three-year highs on Tuesday, towing petrocurrencies and bond yields with

them, after the world's main oil producers failed to agree on production plans.

Europe's stocks spluttered at the prospect of faster inflation. China had spooked its tech sector too with another high profile clamp down, but the main action was all around the black stuff.

The Opec+ were forced to abandon talks on Monday after the UAE had rejected an eight-month extension to output curbs.

Some Opec+ sources said there would be no oil output increase in August, while others said a new meeting would take place in the coming days and they believed there will be a boost in August.

Crude traders were not hanging around to find out. They pushed Brent up as far as \$77.66—the highest level since October 2018—and US crude to its highest since late 2014 at \$76.90 a barrel. Oil is up roughly 50 per cent this year and over 385 per cent since last year's Covid-driven slump.

Govt plans to develop 10 'freight smart cities'

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, JULY 6

The Centre has asked state governments to identify ten cities which can be developed as 'freight smart cities'.

Since final-mile freight movement accounts for 50 per cent of logistics costs in e-commerce supply chains in India, the commerce ministry has come up with a plan to develop freight smart cities, starting with 10 cities in the initial phase, with the ambition to scale it up to 75 cities in the next phase.

The focus of the cities should be on the quick-wins like developing peri-urban freight centres, night-time deliveries, creating truck routes, using Intelligent Transportation Systems and other modern technologies and promoting electrification of urban freight, parcel delivery terminals and the like.

The Centre has asked state governments to set up institutional mechanisms for the same by involving private stakeholders like logistics services providers, users and citizens.

On this, the Logistics Division of the ministry is working closely with Germany's GIZ under Indo-German Development Cooperation. Rocky Mountain Institute (RMI) and RMI India. A challenge could also be announced to encourage the participation in the initiative.

After SBI, ICICI Bank too revises ATM charges

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, JULY 6



After State Bank of India, private lender ICICI Bank is all set to change rules and charges for cash withdrawals from ATMs, cheque books and other financial transactions for domestic savings accounts, including salary accounts. The revised charges would come into effect from August 1.

According to the bank's website, four cash transactions per month are free, after which the bank would charge Rs 150 per transaction. The cash transactions include both deposits and withdrawals at ICICI bank branches.

At the home branch, the value limit for ICICI Bank customers would be Rs 1 lakh free cash transaction per month, per account. To deposit or withdraw more than the fixed

amount, ICICI bank account-holders need to pay Rs 5 per Rs 1,000, subject to a minimum of Rs 150. For non-home branch, cash transactions up to Rs 25,000 per day is free. Above Rs 25,000, the bank would charge Rs 5 per Rs 1,000, subject to a minimum of Rs 150. For third party cash transaction, up to a limit of Rs 25,000 per transaction, the charge would be Rs 150 per transaction.

Customers will get three free cash withdrawals from non-ICICI Bank

ATMs in six metro cities (Mumbai, New Delhi, Chennai, Kolkata, Bengaluru and Hyderabad) in a month. In all other locations, first five transactions will be free. Beyond this limit, the bank will charge Rs 20 per financial transaction and Rs 8.50 per non-financial transactions.

Cheque book fee will be nil for 25 payable-at-par cheque leaves in a year; Rs 20 for every additional cheque book of 10 leaves.

For regular plus salary accounts, no charges will be levied for the first four transactions in a month; thereafter Rs 5 per Rs 1,000 or part thereof, subject to a minimum of Rs 150 in the same month.

A few days ago, State Bank of India introduced new rules and charges for cash withdrawals from its ATMs and bank branches from July 1.

GST collections fall below ₹1 lakh crore

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, JULY 6

Hit by the second wave, GST collections for June slipped below the Rs 1-lakh crore mark after a gap of eight months.

The gross GST revenue collected in June stood at Rs 92,849 crore against Rs 1,02,709 crore in May. But the mop-up is 2 per cent higher than that of Rs 90,917 crore in June 2020.

GST collections have remained above Rs 1 lakh crore for eight months in a row since September 2020. The collections for June for

the business transactions made during May, when most of the states were under either complete or partial lock down. In May, only 3.99 crore e-way bills were generated compared to 5.88 crore in April, down by more than 30 per cent, the government said.

Further, taxpayers with a turnover of up to Rs 5 crore were given waiver and reduction in interest on delayed return filing for 15 days.

The government expects the collections to increase again from July. With the reduction in virus caseload

and easing of lockdowns, the e-way bills generated during June stood at 5.5 crore, indicating recovery of trade and business.

Despite declining to a 10-month low, the June 2021 GST collections provided a positive surprise, says Aditi Nayar, chief economist, Ica.

The collections were significantly higher for the April-June quarter. The GST collections in the June quarter are nearly twice as high as the same quarter last year, highlighting the narrower impact of the second wave, Nayar said.

PINE LABS CLOSES \$600 MN FUND RAISING ROUND

SARITHA RAI JULY 6

Pine Labs Pvt Ltd, a payments platform for merchants, closed a \$600 million fundraising round with some of the world's largest investors, including Fidelity Management & Research Company and BlackRock Inc, as it targets a public offering within 18 months.

The Singapore-based startup, which offers solutions for in-store and online payments as well as prepaid, loyalty and "pay later" programmes, is valued at \$3 billion, CEO Amrish Rau said. Investors participating in the round included a fund advised by Neuberger Berman Group LLC and India's IIFL Finance Ltd. and Kotak Funds.

"It's a product from India that's succeeded in Malaysia and Singapore and is entering Indonesia and Thailand," Rau said in an interview via video call. "We've got a good, Ebitda-positive story as we plan our IPO in the next 18 months." The IPO will likely take place in the US, Rau said. — Bloomberg

Sumitomo Mitsui to acquire Fullerton Credit for \$2.5 bn

FC BANKING BUREAU with agency inputs MUMBAI, JULY 6

In what is billed as the first entry into India's retail financial business by a Japanese bank, Sumitomo Mitsui Financial Group Inc (SMFG) on Tuesday reached an agreement with Fullerton Financial Holdings (FFH) to acquire a 74.9 per cent stake in the Indian firm's non-banking arm, Fullerton India Credit Company, in a reported

\$2.5 billion deal. SMFG, Japan's second-largest lender, will eventually acquire 100 per cent of Fullerton India Credit Company (FICC).

Sources said Sumitomo will pay around \$2 billion for the 74.9 per cent stake in the first leg of the deal.

Fullerton Financial is a unit of Singapore's state investment fund Temasek Holdings Pte.

"This investment brings together SMFG's state push towards consumer

and MSME lending, with FICC's expertise in serving mass-market consumers and MSME customers in India," said a statement from Fullerton India.

"We intend to leverage our expertise in Japan market as well as capabilities of our franchisees across key emerging Asian markets," said Jun Ohta, president & group CEO of SMFG.

"India is one of our focus markets where we believe in its high growth potential

and want to build a deeper presence," added Ohta.

Faced with weak growth prospects at home, Sumitomo Mitsui has been allocating resources to Asia's emerging markets in recent years. The bank took control of Indonesian lender PT Bank Tabungan Pensiunan Nasional in 2019 after acquiring a minority stake earlier. Sumitomo Mitsui is looking for targets in Vietnam, the Philippines and India, Ohta said in December.

Tata Motors tanks over chip concerns

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, JULY 6

Tata Motors shares price fell over 10 per cent in the last hour of trade and finally closed 8.4 per cent down after the company flagged concerns of chip supply shortage impacting sales at its wholly owned subsidiary Jaguar Land Rover (UK) in the second quarter (Q2) of FY22.

Tata Motors touched a low of Rs 311.45 on the BSE before closing 8.41 per cent down at Rs 316.95.

While disclosing JLR first quarter (Q1) retail

sales performance during the market hours, Tata Motors said, "The chip shortage is presently very dynamic and difficult to forecast. Based on recent input from suppliers, we now expect chip supply shortages in the second quarter ended 30 September 2021 to be greater than in the first quarter, potentially resulting in wholesale volumes about 50 per cent lower than planned."

"We expect the situation will start to improve in the second half... However, the broader underlying struc-

tural capacity issues will only be resolved as supplier investment in new capacities comes online over the next 12-18 months and so we expect some level of shortages will continue through to the end of the year and beyond," Tata Motors said.

"In the scenario above, we expect an operating cash outflow of about \$1 billion with a negative Ebit margin in the second quarter," Tata Motors said.

JLR at present has about 110,000 global retail orders, the highest in the history of the company, it said.

SMART FOAM New material allows robots to sense nearby objects

Robots get ability to self-heal

TRAVIS TEO & LEE YING SHAN SINGAPORE, JULY 6



Singapore researchers have developed a smart foam material that allows robots to sense nearby objects, and repairs itself when damaged, just like human skin.

Artificially innervated foam, or AiFoam, is a highly elastic polymer created by mixing fluoropolymer with a compound that lowers surface tension.

This allows the spongy material to fuse easily into one piece when cut, according to the researchers at the National University of Singapore.

"There are many applications for such a materi-

al, especially in robotics and prosthetic devices, where robots need to be a lot more intelligent when working around humans," explained lead researcher Benjamin Tee.

To replicate the human sense of touch, the researchers infused the material with microscopic metal particles and added tiny electrodes underneath the surface of the foam.

When pressure is applied, the metal particles draw closer within the polymer matrix, changing their electrical properties. These changes can be detected by the electrodes connected to a computer, which then tells the robot what to do, Tee said.

"When I move my finger near the sensor, you can see the sensor is measuring the changes of my

electrical field and responds accordingly to my touch," he said.

This feature enables the robotic hand to detect not only the amount but also the direction of applied force, potentially making robots more intelligent and interactive.

Tee said AiFoam is the first of its kind to combine both self-healing properties and proximity and pressure sensing. After spending over two years developing it, he and his team hope the material can be put to practical use within five years.

"It can also allow prosthetic users to have more intuitive use of their robotic arms when grabbing objects," he said.

— Reuters

By purchasing jewellery with a diamond protected by a nano mark, the buyer can be sure that it is actually made by Alrosa," CEO Sergey Ivanov said.

The diamond industry has worked hard to reassure consumers that its stones aren't linked to the gems-for-weapons dealing that sullied its reputation in the wake of wars in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Angola. While so-called "blood diamonds" were addressed in the 2002 agreement known as the Kimberly Process, more recent trafficking in precious stones from countries such Central African Republic have highlighted the need to trace the origin of gems.

— Bloomberg

SHORT TAKES

Mithali reclaims No.1 rank in ODIs

Dubai: India skipper Mithali Raj on Tuesday reclaimed the number one spot in the women's ODI rankings after more than three years following a stellar show in the three-match series against England. India lost the series 1-2 but the 38-year-old Raj hit a half-century in each of the contest. She struck 72 and 59 in the first two ODIs and then guided India to a four-wicket victory in the final match of the series with an unbeaten 75, gaining four spots to reach the top of the ladder. She last occupied the top spot in February 2018. The first time she reached number one position was in April 2005 after scoring an unbeaten 91 against New Zealand at the World Cup in Potchefstroom and the difference of more than 16 years at No.1 is the largest for any woman batter. — *PTI*

Rashid to lead Afghan T20 side

New Delhi: Star leg-spinner Rashid Khan was appointed captain of Afghanistan's T20 team keeping the ICC T20 World Cup scheduled to be held in UAE from October 17 to November 14 in mind. Left-handed batsman Najibullah Zadran was appointed as the vice-captain of the team. "Rashid, one of the well-known global faces of the game, was selected by senior ACB leadership led by ACB Chairman Farhan Yousafzai, for the role considering his experience, brilliant performance as well as leadership skills with the National team over the years," Afghanistan Cricket Board said in a statement. Rashid, who is ranked world no 2 among bowlers, had earlier declined Afghanistan captaincy, saying that he believes he is more valuable as a player. — *PTI*

Anand returns to action after a year

Zagreb: Five-time world champion Viswanathan Anand will resume his storied rivalry with Russian legend Garry Kasparov in the Croatia Grand Chess Tour Rapid and Blitz tournament beginning here on Wednesday, returning to over-the-board action after more than a year. The Indian maestro's last over-the-board event was in March 2020. Anand will be featuring in both the rapid and blitz segments, while his long-time rival and former world champion Kasparov will take part only in the blitz event. Anand and Kasparov, who retired in 2005, have been involved in several memorable matches including the 1995 PCA World final in New York in 1995. — *PTI*

Injured Hima vows to return stronger

New Delhi: Star Indian sprinter Hima Das on Tuesday vowed to make a strong comeback in the major events next year after missing the Tokyo Olympics due to an injury. "I will miss the Olympics due to untimely injury when I was close to achieve the qualification standard in my new event 100m and 200m," Hima said. "I would like to thank my coaches, support staff and my teammates for their continuous support. But I will make a strong comeback and looking forward to Commonwealth Games 2022, Asian Games 2022 and World Championship 2022." — *PTI*

Australian Grand Prix cancelled

Melbourne: The Australian Grand Prix has been cancelled after local organisers and Formula One couldn't come up with a compromise over Australia's strict travel and quarantine issues relating to the Covid-19 pandemic. The race was postponed from its original season-opening spot on the F1 calendar on March 21 and had been rescheduled for November 21. The 2020 Australian GP in Melbourne last March was called off at the last minute at the start of the pandemic shutdown. "It's disappointing that these events can't proceed but this is the reality of the pandemic, but until we get much higher vaccination rates we cannot return to more normal settings," Victorian Sports Minister Martin Pakula said. — *AP*

IN THE LIONS' DEN

Denmark wander into Wembley, to take on England

London, July 6: England are shouldering rising expectations. Denmark are powered by resilience and recovery.

And emotions will be high at Wembley Stadium before their European Championship semifinal match even kicks off on Wednesday when there will be a moment to remember the tournament's most harrowing incident and the player who won't be playing for Denmark.

The England squad has signed a No.10 jersey emblazoned with Christian Eriksen's name that will be handed to Denmark captain Simon Kjaer by England counterpart Harry Kane.

The England players were on a bus traveling to London from their training base to prepare for their opening game of Euro 2020 on June 12 when Eriksen collapsed on the field while playing against Finland. He had to be resuscitated with a defibrillator.

"We saw it on the screens. I was close with Christian. The most important thing is he is getting better," said England defender Kieran Trippier, a former teammate of Eriksen's at Tottenham.

Perhaps what is most remarkable is that while Eriksen recovers from his cardiac arrest, Denmark have managed to reach the semifinals for the first time since unexpectedly winning the European Championship in 1992.

After losing the opening two games, the Danes looked on the verge of elimination. But they got used to the formation switch from 4-2-3-1 to 3-4-3 and beat Russia in their final group game to advance before ousting Wales and the Czech Republic.

Kasper Dolberg has scored three goals, Pierre-Emile Hojbjerg has been excellent and Kasper Schmeichel has provided leadership even beyond his saves in goal. "We had to pinch ourselves in the arms sometimes to realise what we've achieved," midfielder Christian Norgaard said. — *AP*



England captain Harry Kane (right) warms up with teammates during a training session at St George's Park on Tuesday, ahead of their Euro semifinal against Denmark. — *AP*

Fab five out to make mark

London, July 6: England manager Gareth Southgate has been able to regularly change his team, with a plethora of attacking talent at his disposal.

Here is a look at five England players who could make an impact off the bench if not named in the starting line-up:

JACK GREALISH

The Aston Villa forward has impressed during the tournament despite seeing limited game time. The 25-year-old, who has been linked with a move to Manchester City, set up Raheem Sterling's winner on his only start in the final group game against the Czech Republic. "This is what I was born to do. I

can't wait," he said before the Last-16 match against Germany, when he came off the bench to claim another assist, for Harry Kane.

He did not feature in the quarter-final thrashing of Ukraine at the Stadio Olimpico, so will be fresh if called upon by Southgate this week.

PHIL FODEN

The 21-year-old enjoyed a stellar season for Manchester City, scoring 16 goals in all competitions as Pep Guardiola's men won the Premier League and reached the Champions League final. Foden was widely tipped to be one of the stars of Euro 2020, but after starting England's opening two

matches, has not played since.

JADON SANCHO

When England were struggling to create chances during the group stage, Southgate was criticised by pundits and supporters for not giving a chance to Sancho, who made one late substitute appearance across the first four games. But he started in Rome and caught the eye with his dribbling skills and direct style of play.

BUKAYO SAKA

The Arsenal teenager was a slightly surprising selection in the 26-man squad ahead of Jesse Lingard, but has more than played his part in England's run.

Saka shone against the Czech Republic and then kept his place in the starting line-up for the Germany match, only to miss out on the quarter-final with an injury. Southgate has the luxury of choosing between Foden, Sancho and Saka for a spot on the right wing.

MARCUS RASHFORD

The most experienced player on this list is the only one yet to make a start at Euro 2020, although the winger is carrying foot and shoulder injuries and is expected to undergo surgery following the tournament.

Rashford has scored 12 goals in 45 international appearances. — *AFP*

SURYA TO START FROM SCRATCH IN LANKA SERIES

Colombo, July 6: The high of a successful debut series behind him, Indian batsman Suryakumar Yadav on Tuesday said he would be looking to "start from the scratch" in the upcoming limited-overs assignment against Sri Lanka, eager to learn from "calm and composed" head coach Rahul Dravid. "It will be a great challenge and I am really looking forward to it," said the Mumbai batsman.

Asked if a successful debut series would help him cope better with the pressure, Yadav said, "Everytime you go in or play a different game, you start from scratch," he added. — *PTI*

BHUVI RELISHES RESPONSIBILITY AS VICE-CAPTAIN

Colombo, July 6: Senior India speedster and vice-captain for the ongoing tour of Sri Lanka, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, says his role as Shikhar Dhawan's deputy would be to help other players in "improving their skills and mental health" during the upcoming limited-overs series. "But I don't think things will change. I think being a senior player my role is to do things that help other players in improving their skills and mental health," Bhuvneshwar said.

"I have played against Rahul Dravid (coach) and he was a part of the RCB team just when I got inducted into the team. When I got to the NCA, we did have some chats," he added. — *PTI*

COPA | SEMIFINAL

Paqueta powers Brazil past Peru

Rio De Janeiro, July 6: Star forward Neymar set up Lucas Paqueta to score the only goal as hosts Brazil beat Peru 1-0 on Monday to qualify for the Copa America final.

The semi-final was a repeat of the last final, two years ago, when a Brazil team shorn of the injured Neymar also triumphed on home soil.

The Selecao will play either Lionel Messi's Argentina or Colombia, who meet in Brasilia on Wednesday, in Saturday's final at Rio de Janeiro's iconic Maracana stadium.

Brazil totally dominated the first half at the empty Nilton Santos stadium in Rio but had to survive some nervous moments after the break before securing a spot in the final.

They opened up Peru on eight minutes as Paqueta's pass sent Richarlison in behind the defense, but after beating goalkeeper Pedro Gallese to the ball, the forward tried to pull it back to Neymar who blazed high and wide under pressure.

Gallese spilled a fierce Casemiro free-kick from distance but gathered the loose ball before winger Everton could turn in the

Brazil	1
(Lucas Paqueta 35)	
Peru	0

rebound. Brazil were turning the screw and Everton cut in off the right flank but shot straight at Gallese. The Peruvian shot-stopper was the busiest player on the pitch in the first quarter and after saving another Casemiro piledriver from distance he made an incredible double point blank save from Neymar and then Richarlison.

And when Gallese suffered a rush of blood to the head and charged out of his area only to be beaten to the ball by Richarlison, Brazil couldn't capitalize as Peru's defenders threw themselves in front of Everton's shot.

Peru were non-existent as an attacking force and when they did manage to win a corner just after the half hour, they ended up playing the ball all the way back to Gallese. Brazil deservedly took the lead 10 minutes before halftime after Peru gave the ball away in midfield for the umpteenth time. — *AFP*



Lucas Paqueta (left) and Neymar of Brazil celebrate after the former scored the goal against Peru during a Copa America semifinal in Rio de Janeiro on Monday. — *AP*

Olympic briefs

Maiden Games berth for Mane

Udayan Mane on Tuesday officially booked himself a maiden Olympic berth, becoming the second Indian male golfer after Anirban Lahiri to be Tokyo-bound for the mega-event starting July 23. The 30-year-old Mane, currently the second-highest ranked Indian in the world at 356, was all set to make the cut after Argentina's Emiliano Grillo announced his withdrawal from the quadrennial event on June 24. The official announcement was made on Tuesday with Mane finding himself at the 60th spot in the Olympic golf ranking list which was made available on the International Golf Federation's (IGF) website.

Coach Gopichand opts out

Chief National coach Pullela Gopichand, who guided India to two Olympic medals, has opted out of India's Olympic-bound badminton contingent to create space for Indonesian Agus Dwi Santosa, who trains singles shuttler B. Sai Praneeth. Gopichand, under whose guidance Saina Nehwal and PV Sindhu claimed a bronze and a silver medal at London and Rio Games respectively, opted out after the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) cleared only five-members support staff, that includes three coaches and two physios.

COVID | OUTBREAK

England forced to pick new team

London, July 6: England were forced to select a completely new group of players and management on Tuesday for the one-day international series against Pakistan after the coronavirus infected three players and four members of staff.

The initially selected squad went into isolation following the results of tests taken on Monday, a day after the team's last ODI against Sri Lanka in Bristol. The names of those who tested positive have not been disclosed. The remainder of the group were identified as close contacts.

The three ODIs and three Twenty20s against Pakistan, starting on Thursday with the first ODI in Cardiff, were still going ahead and at the same venues.

Ashley Giles, director of England's men's cricket, said he was confident there

had not been a breach of coronavirus protocols in the squad but that it was a natural consequence of restrictions being slightly eased around the squad in line with general society, despite cases rising in England because of the delta variant.

The players, for example, have been staying in shared hotels as opposed to living in strict bio-secure bubbles like last summer. "Given this variant, which is clearly more infectious, the risks of us catching an infection was going to go up," Giles said on a video call. — *AP*

Revised squad: Ben Stokes (captain), Jake Ball, Danny Briggs, Brydon Carse, Zak Crawley, Ben Duckett, Lewis Gregory, Tom Helm, Will Jacks, Dan Lawrence, Saqib Mahmood, Dawid Malan, Craig Overton, Matt Parkinson, David Payne, Phil Salt, John Simpson, James Vince.

HUBERT HURRICANE

Poland's Hurkacz knocks out second seed Medvedev

London, July 6: Hubert Hurkacz became just the fourth Polish man to reach the Wimbledon quarter-finals on Tuesday with a five-set win over Russian second seed Daniil Medvedev.

World number 18 Hurkacz triumphed 2-6, 7-6 (7/2), 3-6, 6-3, 6-4 in a match held over from Monday due to rain and will now face Roger Federer for a place in the semi-finals.

"For this sport, Roger is unbelievable, what he does, how he plays and the titles he has won throughout his career. He inspired so many people and it's going to be fun," said Hurkacz.

The Pole has only met Federer once — a straight sets loss at Indian Wells in the quarter-finals in 2019.

His run to the Wimbledon last-eight is impressive as he had won just one match on tour between his surprise Miami Masters title in March and the start of Wimbledon.

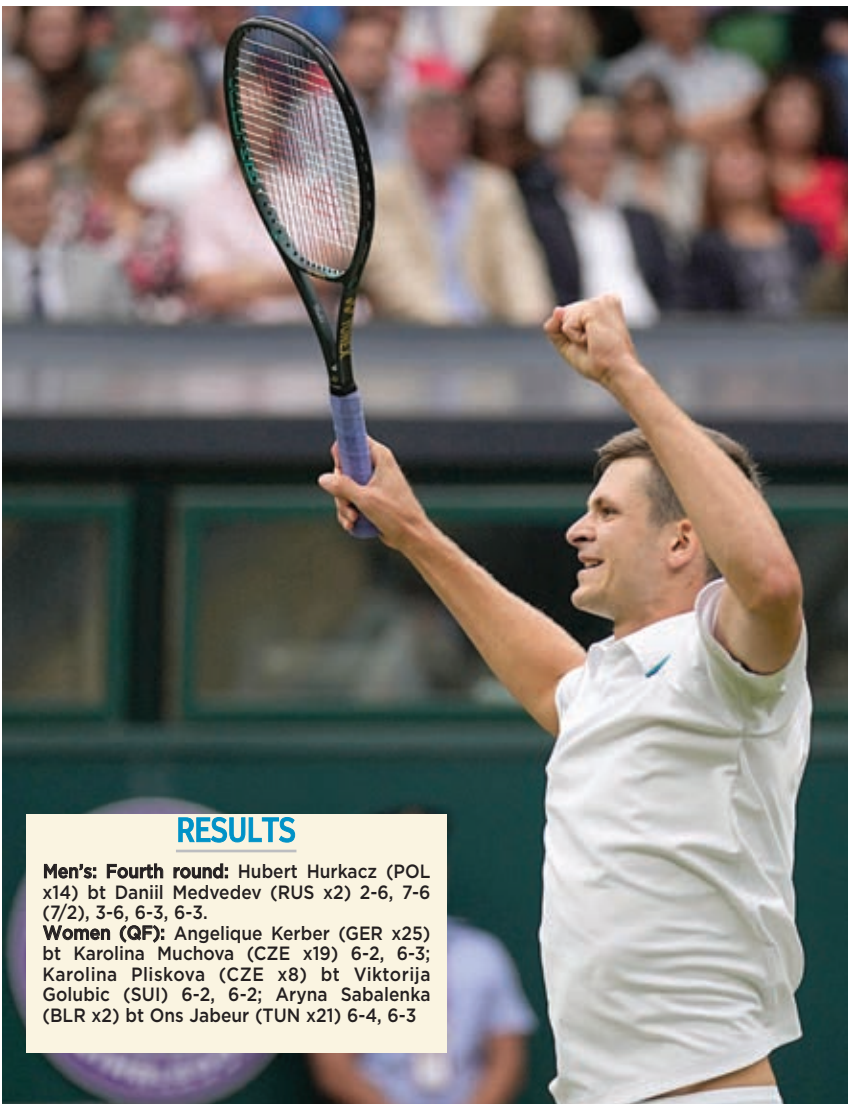
That dismal streak included defeat in the first round of the French Open to world number 154 Botic Van de Zandschulp and first-upt losses in the grass court events at Stuttgart and Halle.

The defeat in Stuttgart was particularly painful as it came at the hands of Dominic Stricker, ranked a lowly 335 at the time.

KERBER IN SEMIS

Former champion Angelique Kerber reached the Wimbledon semi-finals for the fourth time with a 6-2, 6-3 win over Karolina Muchova of the Czech Republic.

The German world number 28, who won the title in 2018, will face either top seed Ashleigh Barty or Ajla



Poland's Hubert Hurkacz celebrates after defeating Russia's Daniil Medvedev in the Wimbledon fourth round on Tuesday. — *AP*

RESULTS

Men's: Fourth round: Hubert Hurkacz (POL x14) bt Daniil Medvedev (RUS x2) 2-6, 7-6 (7/2), 3-6, 6-3, 6-3.

Women (GF): Angelique Kerber (GER x25) bt Karolina Muchova (CZE x19) 6-2, 6-3; Karolina Pliskova (CZE x8) bt Viktorija Golubic (SUI) 6-2, 6-2; Aryna Sabalenka (BLR x2) bt Ons Jabeur (TUN x21) 6-4, 6-3

Tomljanovic for a place in Saturday's final.

"It's a magical place for me," said Kerber, who is a three-time major winner, after securing the 80th victory of her career on grass.

Aryna Sabalenka ended Ons Jabeur's historic run at Wimbledon, the second-seeded Belarus play-

er's power getting the better of the guile of the Tunisian 6-4, 6-3 in 74 minutes.

The 23-year-old, who had only won one match on her three previous visits to Wimbledon, will play former world number one Karolina Pliskova who eased into the last four with a straight sets

win over Viktorija Golubic. Jabeur departs having lost in her second Grand Slam quarter-final.

However, the 26-year-old has done wonders in her goal to use her exploits to encourage young Arab women — especially North African — to take up the sport. — *AFP*