

SHORT TAKES

BJP BLAMES TRS FOR FAKE SEED SCAMS

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JUNE 12

Senior BJP leader N.V.S.S. Prabhakar criticised the state government for not checking the illegal sale of spurious seeds. Speaking to the media here on Saturday, he said that no action had been taken against at least seven offenders by the TRS government. On other issues, Prabhakar alleged that contrary to the HMDA master plan, 13 link roads were being constructed and said that TRS leaders were doing to increase land rates. Prabhakar alleged that minister K.T. Rama Rao's associates were behind every land transaction under the HMDA. He demanded a white paper on government lands.

TAKE STEPS TO IMPORT VACCINE, SAYS HARISH RAO

From page 1

He stated that measures should be taken to import the vaccine from abroad as per the requirement.

Responding to the tax recommendations made by the GST group of ministers on therapeutic drugs and other equipment, he pointed out that the Covid vaccine was not being produced in sufficient quantities domestically and should be delivered to the people in a planned and expeditious manner even if it was not imported. It was revealed in the meeting that the Centre wanted the vaccination programme to be carried out soon in the wake of scientists warning of a third wave of Covid.

BETTER INFRA PLANNED FOR DIGITAL CLASSES

From page 1

Unlike last year, when due to the pandemic and uncertainty over reopening of schools, the new academic session was delayed until September, this year the education department is working on establishing better infrastructure for digital classes through TSAT and Doordarshan, an official in the education department said.

However, so far the calendar has not been released for the upcoming academic year, nearly a month after the SSC results were announced. No official date for commencement of online classes has been finalised, said department officials.

KORUTLA POLICE NAB INTER-STATE BURGLAR

DC CORRESPONDENT
KARIMNAGAR, JUNE 12

The Korutla police officials on Saturday nabbed a notorious interstate burglar who was allegedly indulged in a series of theft cases at various places in both Maharashtra and Telangana states and seized 1.6 kg gold worth Rs 55 lakh and 1.31 kg silver ornaments worth Rs 1 lakh from his possession.

District superintendent of police, Sindhu Sharma said the police had received several complaints from Ibrahimpatnam, Metpalli, Korutla, Medipally, Jagtial, Raikot, Sarangapur and Dharmapuri mandals that several houses were robbed during night hours and also about chain snatching from women who were sleeping in their houses.

As many as 21 theft cases were registered from different areas in the district. In view of that, a special team was deployed under the supervision of Korutla circle inspector Rajashekar, Medipally sub-inspector Sudheer Rao, Korutla SI Satish and Kathalapur SI Pruthvidhar along with other police personnel for cracking the theft cases.

The police team, after studying various theft cases, nabbed one Pandari Balu Pawar (34), a native of Eastham village of Aurangabad district of Maharashtra at his residence situated on the outskirts of Korutla town in the early hours on Saturday.

The accused Balu Pawar was indulged in several theft cases in both Maharashtra and Telangana since 2014 and was absconding from the police. Sindhu Sharma appreciated the police team for apprehending the burglar who created panic for the past few days indulging in several theft cases in the district.

Hearty congratulations



TPCC chief N. Uttam Kumar Reddy calls on Chief Justice of India N. V. Ramana and congratulated him, in the city on Saturday. He also thanked the CJI for increasing the strength of Telangana High Court to 42 judges. — ANIL KUMAR

Suryapet, a seed racket hub

Highway links give TS town special position; cops form 5 teams to bust racket

DURGA PRASAD
SUNKU | DC
HYDERABAD, JUNE 12

Suryapet district is acting as a transit hub for spurious seed sellers. The well-connected roadway there is helping in the illegal activities. Suryapet police said they seized huge quantities of spurious seeds in recent days and arrested of a dozen persons.

Suryapet district, on the border of the two Telugu states, is directly connected to several districts by road, like Warangal, Khammam, and also the Krishna district in Andhra Pradesh. National Highway 65 passes through the district.

"Checking every vehicle on the road is impossible. Taking advantage, spurious seeds sellers are using Suryapet as a transit point and smuggling such seeds to other districts of Telangana and to areas in Andhra Pradesh," stated the police.

In the first case, on June 8, the police busted two gangs, arrested seven persons and seized around three tonnes of spurious cotton seeds worth ₹70 lakh. Main accused Veeranjanyulu is absconding. He is from Karnataka region.

He "manufactures" spurious seeds and smuggle them to Telangana. He is doing this shady business with the help of his brother Ramanjaneyulu from Suryapet, police said.

The "manufacturing" took place at Kushtagi in Koppal district of Karnataka. The accused cultivated BT-II spurious cotton seeds on 20 acres and BT III spurious cotton seeds on 13 acres in Karnataka. After a chemical treatment in the mill, the spurious seeds are processed, packed and then

Cops for 'fake seed-free TS'

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JUNE 12

A virtual coordination meeting was conducted with police officers and agricultural department officials throughout the state on Saturday. It was chaired by agriculture minister S. Niranjan Reddy. Telangana police revealed that 209 cases were booked and 6,511 quintals of spurious seeds seized.

Niranjan Reddy said "Our aim is to make Telangana a 'spurious seed-free state'. To achieve the same, in coordination with police, we are dealing spurious seeds sellers with an iron fist. We are analysing the loopholes in issuing licenses and trying to rectify them."

DGP M. Mahendar Reddy said, "This year we have booked 209 cases and

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EIGHT BOOKED FOR
ALLEGED ROLE IN
BHAINSA CLASHESDC CORRESPONDENT
ADILABAD, JUNE 21

The Nirmal police filed cases under PD Act against eight accused who were allegedly involved in the recent communal clashes in Bhainsa town and were sent to jail.

The police said they had taken the decision to protect the peace and tranquillity of Bhainsa town.

In a statement issued here on Saturday, Nirmal SP Ch. Praveen Kumar said the eight accused had hatched a conspiracy to create communal clashes to spread religious hatred and were involved in damaging properties and disturbing peace in Bhainsa town.

The SP said the accused persons were involved in incidents of communal nature and provoked two communities and many cases were pending against them.

The accused were identified as Abdul Quadir (present ward councillor), Sajid Khan, Abdul Jubher, Sheik Salman, Thota Vijay (present ward councillor), Naimathabad Lingoji, Thaloji Rakesh and Rati Kranthi. It is observed that the majority of the accused were young and cases were pending against them.

TRS cadre lose hopes
of nominated posts

Appointments put off due to pandemic and Rajendar's exit

DC CORRESPONDENT
KARIMNAGAR, JUNE 12

The hopes of several committed leaders of the Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS), who have been with the party through thick and thin since its inception, of getting some nominated posts seem to be just a mirage. Many of them are losing hope of landing in a nominated post, as the announcement of which has been getting delayed for long.

They now feel that the party will further postpone the announcement following the resignation of former minister Etala Rajendar from the Assembly which necessitates a byelection to the Huzurabad constituency.

Many leaders in the erstwhile Karimnagar district who did not get any recognition expected that the party would consider their efforts after registering a thumping victory for the second time in the 2018 Assembly elections.

● A TRS leader, on condition of anonymity, said that whenever there are elections, the party leadership lures leaders from other parties and assures them of nominated posts. In doing so, they are ignoring the loyal workers.

Right from the panchayat election held in January 2019 to the Nagarjunasagar bypoll and the municipal corporation elections in Khammam and Warangal held last month, the party leadership has been postponing the announcement of nominated posts.

The Coronavirus second wave also contributed to the TRS decision to put the announcement of nominated posts on the backburner.

Meanwhile, a TRS leader, on condition of anonymity, said the party leadership was playing tricks with committed workers so as not to lose them. Whenever there are elections, the party leadership lures leaders from other parties and assures them of nominated posts. In doing so, they

are ignoring the loyal workers.

Leaders like Tula Uma, E. Ravinder Reddy and others who strove hard for the party right from the beginning are now with Rajendar as they feel neglected by the leadership, the TRS leader said.

Following the recent appointments by party supreme and Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao in Telangana State Public Service Commission (TSPSC) and Vice-Chancellors of all universities, the aspirants were expecting that all nominated posts would be filled soon.

However, the TRS sources said that Chandrashekar Rao had prepared the final list of leaders to be accommodated in the nominated

posts. There are several posts to be filled in various corporations along with chairpersons to ST, SC and BC commissions and to the state treasury department.

One of the Muslim leaders of the TRS alleged that the party was showing discrimination against the leaders of the community. It is considering the people of Muslim community as vote bank.

Either in the TSPSC or in appointing the Vice-Chancellors of universities, it did not allot any post to people belonged to Muslim community, he said.

"In Karimnagar district alone, there are more than 50,000 people who belong to the Muslim community. If the party will not give proper recognition and major share in nominated posts to true party workers belonging to Muslim community, then it is going to face tough times in the days to come," he added.

KOUSHIK REDDY
ENACTS TRS
SCRIPT: KISAN
CONGRESS CHIEFDC CORRESPONDENT
KARIMNAGAR, JUNE 12

Kisan Congress president Patti Krishna Reddy questioned the silence of constituency in-charge of the Congress Padi Koushik Reddy over the Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) "purchasing Congress leaders of Huzurabad like commodities in the market."

Addressing the media at Press Bhavan in Karimnagar on Saturday, Krishna Reddy asked, "Why is Koushik Reddy not speaking anything against the TRS while it is busy buying Congress leaders? Does he want to stay in the party or want to shift his loyalty to the TRS?"

It may be recalled here that for the past few days, speculation is going round in political circles that Koushik Reddy is preparing ground to join the ruling TRS as the Huzurabad seat is going to be vacant with the resignation of ousted of Etala Rajendar. Incidentally, Koushik Reddy happens to be one of the close relatives of Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) president Uttam Kumar Reddy.

Krishna Reddy alleged that Koushik Reddy was acting on the directions of the TRS. It became evident with Koushik Reddy meeting TRS working president and IT minister K. T. Rama Rao in Hyderabad recently, he said adding that he had also been in touch with Rajya Sabha member J. Santosh Kumar for the past 10 days on phone.

When party workers questioned Koushik Reddy as to why he had met TRS leaders, he tried to convince them by explaining that he met K.T. Rama Rao to discuss the development of Huzurabad constituency. The video of Congress leader Koushik Reddy whispering something in the ears of K.T. Rama Rao was also being circulated in various social media platforms, he pointed out.

"The people of Huzurabad constituency are not going to believe Koushik Reddy who is trying to play silly politics with them. There is no place for Koushik Reddy in the Congress. If he wants to join the TRS, it is left to his choice but he should stop spoiling the image of the Congress," he warned.



EX MP RAMESH RATHOD LIKELY TO JOIN BJP

Adilabad: Senior leader and former Adilabad MP, Ramesh Rathod is likely to join the BJP on June 14. Ramesh Rathod contested in the 2018 Telangana assembly elections with Congress ticket and was

defeated. Ramesh Rathod met the Telangana BJP incharge Tharun Chug at the Etala Rajender's house in Hyderabad and got clear-ance for his joining in the presence of the party president J.P. Nadda.

Covid-19 hits blood
bank reserves hardDC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, JUNE 12

The Warangal branch of the Indian Red Cross Society (IRCS) which always had abundant blood reserves until last year is going dry as a result of the effect of the Coronavirus pandemic.

The Thalassemia and sickle cell patients who are dependent on the blood bank for transfusion of blood every 15 to 20 days are a worried lot and are seeking donors to provide blood.

With the onset of the second wave of the coronavirus and the state government imposed lockdown, blood donation camps have not been held for long.

This shortage is causing a huge impact on the free blood transfusion services provided by the IRCS to Thalassemia patients.

As of date, 312 thalassemia and sickle cell patients registered with the IRCS-W of which 218 are completely dependent on this blood bank for blood transfusion. Md

Salim, father of one-year-old Saad Affan said they had approached the IRCS for blood since his birth for blood transfusion.

"Due to the shortage incurred at present, I am seeking the help of my family and friends to donate blood so that my son can survive," he added.

"IRCS-Warangal holds the distinction of collecting 11,000 units of blood per year for the last four years. At any given point in time, the IRCS had a reserve of at least 300-400 units. However, the donations that come in way of birthday celebrations and goodwill gestures have subsided," IRCS state executive and managing committee member EV Srinivas Rao said.

Dr Vijay Chander Reddy, chairman of IRCS, Warangal and IRCS State Managing Committee Member said beginning with the World Blood Donor Day on June 14 they would conduct large scale blood donation camps and urged the youth to come forward to donate blood at this time of dire need.

State, Central govts distribute
free redgram seeds to farmers

Adilabad: The State and Union governments are jointly giving red gram seeds with 100 percent subsidy to farmers as a means to encourage cultivation of food crops like pulses as part of the National Food Security Mission.

The free distribution of red gram seeds is aimed at increasing production of pulses and food crops over a period of time.

Agriculture department officials are advising farmers to cultivate red gram as intercrop in cotton so as to avoid cotton becoming vulnerable

to pest attacks, especially pink bollworm, which has wreaked havoc for close to five years in old Adilabad district. The state government took this initiative to discourage cotton cultivation under controlled agriculture. Adilabad MLA Jogu Ramanna is distributing red gram seeds with full subsidy to farmers in select villages in Adilabad rural mandal. Ramanna said the move was to encourage farmers to cultivate pulses as part of the National Food Security Mission.

Adilabad in-charge joint director of agriculture (JDA) N. Ramesh said that the state government will contribute its share to the Centre. Agriculture officials said that there was good demand for pulses in the open market and farmers will find it less risky compared to cotton. They pointed out that there was a fall in production of pulses in recent years resulting in higher prices. They said that there was a need for a shift from traditional to commercial crops like pulses.

78 FOREST STAFF SUSPENDED FOR NEGLIGENCE IN 3 YRS

Adilabad: As many as 78 forest staff have been suspended for their negligence in protecting forest and wildlife and disciplinary action has been initiated against 115 staff since 2019 in Kawal Tiger Reserve and

Adilabad and Nirmal circle. In a statement issued here on Saturday, C. P. Vinod Kumar, field project director, Kawal Tiger Reserve, said they were making an all-out effort to protect the forest and wildlife under

the 'Jangle Bachao' programme.

He said four incidents of destruction of forest took place in the last three months and action was initiated against the staff for their negligence and connivance.

Vinay Bhaskar
call to prevent
child labourDC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, JUNE 12

Government Chief Whip Dasyam Vinay Bhaskar urged everyone to work towards the protection of the rights of children.

He took part in an event organised by the District Child Labor Eradication Organisation at the Circuit Guest House on Saturday to mark the International Day Against Child Labor and unveiled the wall magazine created by the organisation.

Vinay Bhaskar said that the government would take all necessary steps to eradicate the child labour system.

He expressed concern that parents in remote rural-urban areas are putting their children to work because of their economic situation, illiteracy and other reasons. Lack of welfare schemes by the government is also one of the reasons.

"The Telangana government was taking a number of steps to ensure that the authorities were constantly aware of the welfare schemes and to identify child labourers and enroll them in schools.

The year 2001 had been declared the International Year for the Elimination of Child Labor by the International Labor Organisation, which had drawn up a plan called 'Act Now and stop Child Labor' with the goal of seeing a world without child labour by 2025," he stated.

The Chief Whip assured that he would work to issue a special vehicle for Childline 1098 to rescue child labourers.

He said he would discuss with the authorities and take steps to set up a special building for comprehensive child protection.

Child Welfare Committee Chairman Anil Chander Rao, members Dr Pariku Suddhakar, K. Azhampuram, Damodara, Sandasani Rajendra Prasad, Juvenile Justice Board members Merugu Subhash, NCLP Project Director Burra Ashok, District Child Protection Officer P. Santosh Kumar and Protection Officer S.K. Praveen Kumar, Childline Coordinator Ragi Krishna Murthy were present among others.

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SHORT TAKES

U.P. COPS TOLD TO GIVE SECURITY TO INTERFAITH COUPLE

Allahabad, June 12: Directing the police to provide protection to an interfaith couple, the Allahabad High Court has clarified the woman's conversion to Islam would not be a relevant factor in ensuring that there is no interference in their liberty, unless there is any allegation by her regarding forcible conversion.

The court directed the Moradabad police to give protection to the interfaith couple who alleged that their family members were interfering in their marital life and liberty.

Yashi Devi, aged about 20, and Guchhan Khan, aged about 40, married on January 11, 2021 after she converted to Islam.

The couple, residents of Moradabad district in Uttar Pradesh, requested the High Court to issue necessary directions to the respondents not to interfere with their marital life and liberty.

COPS PROBE FAKE DOCTORS IN MP COVID HOSPITALS

DC CORRESPONDENT BHOPAL, JUNE 12

The Special Task Force (STF) of the Madhya Pradesh police on Saturday launched a drive to identify imposters serving as doctors in private Covid-19 hospitals. The move comes in the wake of the arrest of two 'fake' doctors employed by two private Covid hospitals in Jabalpur.

The two imposters, identified as Neeraj Sahu, 26, and Jatindra Singh Thakur, 26, were arrested on charges of involvement in black marketing of remdesivir recently. They were serving as doctors in two private Covid hospitals, Life Medicity Hospital and Ashish Hospital, in Jabalpur.

"We have found that the two 'doctors' have no genuine medical degree certificates. We have ordered the district chief medical health officers to verify the medical degrees of doctors serving in private Covid hospitals following the development," STF superintendent of police Neeraj Soni said.

Investigation has led to disclosure that while Sahu was never a student of medical college, Thakur dropped out after the MBBS fourth year.

The two imposters along with a nurse of a private hospital in Jabalpur were allegedly involved in the racket of stealing the antiviral drug from the hospitals and selling them in the black market when the demand for the life saving drug was at its peak in April-May this year.

CHINESE MAN, HELD BY BSF, SENT TO POLICE REMAND

DC CORRESPONDENT KOLKATA, JUNE 12

Chinese national Han Junwe, arrested by the Border Security Force (BSF) for sneaking through the India-Bangladesh border in Malda of West Bengal on June 10, was remanded in six days' police custody by a district court on Saturday.

Han, 36, from Hubei in China was handed over to the district police on Friday following his marathon interrogation by central agencies. He was booked under the Foreigners Act, said superintendent of police (Malda) Alok Rajoria.

On Saturday when Han was produced at the Malda district court, the police sought a seven-day remand for him. Gyanendra Dewang, lawyer of the accused, opposed the plea and said that his client had failed to find the border between two countries in absence of fencing.

According to BSF, Han's business partner, Sun Jiang, was earlier arrested by Uttar Pradesh ATS on several charges. Since then, the process of issuance of a Blue Corner Notice against Han was initiated.

BSF South Bengal Frontier stated that Han is a "wanted criminal" has so far taken "around 1,300 Indian SIMs to China using fake documents from India."

It said, "Han, through his associates, used to hide the SIM in undergarments and send these to China. These SIMs were used to hack accounts and to do other kinds of financial frauds. Their purpose was to cheat people using SIM to get their money out of money transaction machines."

Livelihood up in flames



Firefighters attempt to douse a blaze in a showroom at Lajpat Nagar's Central Market area, in New Delhi on Saturday. Around 30 fire tenders deployed to control the fire.

— PTI

BJP SLAMS DIGVIJAY FOR REMARKS OVER ARTICLE 370

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, JUNE 12

The BJP took serious exception to the purported remarks of Congress veteran Digvijay Singh on the abrogation of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir, and demanded a probe by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) into his "activities" because of the stands taken by him on sensitive issues in the past.

State BJP president Vishnu Dutt Sharma, a Lok Sabha member, wrote to Union home minister Amit Shah demanding a probe into Singh's "activities" by the NIA "urgently." Sharma drew Shah's attention to the former Chief Minister's conversation on Clubhouse, a social media app, in which a Pakistan-based journalist was reportedly present, criticising abrogation of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir.

"Mr Singh's stand on several sensitive issues have not only proved detrimental to the interest of India, but also helped Pakistan strengthen its anti-India campaign. It is high time the Centre initiated a probe into all his activities by the NIA before it is too late," Sharma said in his letter.

He cited how Singh had made a shocking statement in the aftermath of 26/11 terror attack on Mumbai, seeking to portray it a conspiracy by the RSS and how he had defended the accused in the Batla encounter who were later convicted by the court.

2 DELHI COPS ASSAULTED AT SINGHU BORDER

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JUNE 12

Two Delhi Policemen on duty were allegedly assaulted by a group of people at Singhu Border where farmers have been protesting against the Centre's farm laws for over six months now, police said on Saturday.

The two policemen on duty in civil clothes are Assistant Sub Inspectors (ASI) posted with the Special Branch of Delhi Police, they said.

The incident took place on June 10, when the two policemen in civil clothes deployed at the Singhu Border to oversee the security arrangements were allegedly beaten up by the group of people present at the spot, police said.

It is alleged that the two policemen were allegedly found clicking pictures at the protest site when they were allegedly assaulted by the group.

Chances of 3rd wave quite real: Kejriwal

Says government preparing on "war footing" to fight virus

BHASKAR HARI SHARMA | DC NEW DELHI, JUNE 12

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday cautioned that the chances of a third Covid wave were quite real, and asserted his government was preparing on a "war-footing" to combat it. He said that the indications of a third wave are coming from the UK where Coronavirus cases

are rising again despite "45 per cent of its population" being vaccinated.

"So, we cannot afford to sit idle," he told an online event to inaugurate 22 new PSA oxygen plants at nine hospitals across Delhi. He said these plants have a total production capacity of 17.3 metric tonnes (MT), and they will strengthen the preparations to fight Covid. As many as 17 more oxygen plants will be started by July, he said.

The Delhi government is also procuring oxygen tankers to aid the fight against a third wave, he said, adding that the previous wave, which in on the wane, was "very dangerous".

Expressing gratitude towards industries for their help in fighting the second wave, he also said the people of Delhi came together to combat it with struggle and discipline, and have "succeeded in controlling it".

He prayed that a third wave of Covid doesn't arrive. However, he cautioned that the chances of a third wave are "quite real", and "if it happens, Delhi has to again fight together". "We cannot afford to sit idle and our government is preparing on a war-footing to combat it," he said.

He also underlined the need for expanding the vaccination drive to fight the pandemic.

SISODIA ALLEGES MODI, AMARINDER ARE 'SOLID' PALS

New Delhi, June 12: Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader and Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Saturday alleged a "solid" friendship between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Punjab CM Amarinder Singh ahead of the Punjab elections, after the state was ranked number one in the Performance Grading Index (PGI) 2019-20 by the Centre in terms of school education.

The AAP is in opposition in the Congress-governed Punjab where Assembly polls are slated for early next year.

"This report claims that government schools in Punjab have emerged to be the best, while pointing that government schools in Delhi are not up to the mark. This report is just another way to show the blessings Modiji has showered on Captain Amarinder Singh,

extending a hand of friendship similar to the previous elections. Strangely this report has been released at a time when people have been raising questions regarding the performance and inadequacies of the Punjab government in education," Sisodia said.

— PTI

Mukul begins poaching oppn leaders for TMC

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, JUNE 12

Within hours of returning to the Trinamul Congress, Mukul Roy is back in the business of poaching Opposition leaders. This has left the BJP worried about its future in West Bengal.

According to sources, at least 10 MLAs and a Lok Sabha MP of the BJP got calls from Roy, their party's former national vice-president, between Friday night and Saturday morning, inviting them politely to follow his footsteps.

Among the 10, three are from North Bengal — one each from Coochbehar, Jalpaiguri and South Dinajpur, BJP insiders revealed. The other seven are from South Bengal. Among them, two are from Purulia and one each is from Nadia, North 24 Parganas and Hooghly, sources added.

The Lok Sabha MP who got Roy's call is also from North Bengal. The state BJP leadership came to know of Roy's bid after two MLAs informed them. Surprisingly, the rest remained silent, which is being seen as an ominous sign for the BJP.

Flagging his concerns BJP veteran Tathagata Roy tweeted, "Clearly Mukul Roy was a Trojan Horse. After having been welcomed into the BJP, (he) gained access to its all-India leaders and hobnobbed with state BJP's gullible leaders... having learnt all about the party and its innermost detail, he went back and leaked everything to

● **BJP LEGISLATURE** party chief whip Manoj Tigga said that the leader of the opposition Suwendu Adhikari was apprised of the overnight development.

Mamata. But what's done is done. Now the big question is, did Mukul leave back Trojan Horses within this 'Trojan Horse' (sic)?

BJP legislature party chief whip Manoj Tigga said that leader of the opposition Suwendu Adhikari was apprised of the overnight development. The party, which won 77 seats in the Assembly election, but was reduced to 74 in the House barely after a month, put up a brave face amid the threat of defection.

BJP state president Dilip Ghosh said, "Many are known to Mr Roy for a long time. In that sense, he can call them up. I am not bothered about who will stay or leave. Politicians are very clever. They make moves judging the wind. But BJP does not move on Ayaram-Gayaram. Time has come for the dust to go. We are now standing by those party workers who are facing attacks."

Meanwhile Roy and his son Shubhrangshu informed that they have given up the central forces security cover to them in writing to the Union home ministry. They have been provided the same level of security by the Mamata Banerjee government after their return to the TMC.



A commuter walks on the waterlogged railway tracks, after train services in the area were suspended due to heavy rain, at Kurla in Mumbai on Saturday.

— PTI

Mumbai rains hit train, bus services

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC MUMBAI, JUNE 12

Mumbai and its surrounding districts are likely to get extremely heavy rainfall on June 13 and 14.

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has issued a high alert asking Mumbaikars not to move out from their homes on these days.

According to Mumbai's Regional Meteorological Centre, the metropolis will receive thunderstorm with lightning, gusty winds and extreme heavy rainfall at isolated places for the next couple of days. In addition to this, a 'red alert' has been issued for Raigad and Ratnagiri districts, whereas Thane, Palghar and Sindhudurg districts will also receive heavy to very heavy

rains. Mumbai mayor Kishori Pednekar has issued a high alert in the city appealing people to venture out only if it is absolutely necessary. The BMC has asked people not to visit the beaches and its nearby places.

Mumbai has been witnessing heavy rains since Wednesday. Heavy rains, coupled with thunderstorms and strong winds, continued to lash the city and its suburbs on Saturday too, leading to disruption of train and bus services as tracks and roads got waterlogged at several locations.

The train services between Dadar and Kurla stations on Central Railway were suspended in the afternoon after the water rose above the track level.

Choksi was a "flight risk", did not have any ties with Dominica, the court

PLEA | REJECTED

New Delhi, June 12: The Dominica High Court has denied bail to fugitive diamondaire Mehul Choksi in the case of illegal entry into the island country after his mysterious disappearance from neighbouring Antigua and Barbuda where he is staying as a citizen since 2018, local Caribbean media reported.

The high court on Friday (local time) gave the ruling by concluding that Choksi was a "flight risk", did not have any ties with Dominica and the court could not impose any conditions which will stop

him from leaving the country, news outlet *AntiguaNewsroom* said. Choksi had approached the high court after the magistrate had rejected his bail petition. The 62-year old diamondaire, who has an Interpol Red Notice against him, had mysteriously gone missing on May 23 from Antigua and Barbuda where he has been staying since 2018 as a citizen after fleeing from India. He was detained in the neighbouring island country of Dominica for illegal entry after a possible romantic escapade with his rumoured girlfriend.



Mehul Choksi

Choksi's lawyers had filed a habeas corpus petition calling his arrest illegal and alleging that he was abducted, tortured

● **THE CBI** and the External Affairs Ministry have sought to implead in the habeas corpus petition by filing two affidavits in the Dominica High Court, officials said here.

and handed over to Dominica authority to deny him rights available to him in Antigua and Barbuda as a citizen. The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the External Affairs Ministry have sought to implead in the habeas corpus petition by filing two affidavits in the Dominica

High Court, officials said here. The central agency will focus on establishing criminal culpability of Choksi, fugitive status, pending warrants against him, Red Notice and charge sheets, while the External Affairs Ministry will argue that Choksi continues to be an Indian citizen, they said. The affidavits, if admitted, will pave way for noted lawyer Harish Salve to plead Indian case in Dominica, they said.

Choksi, promoter of Geetanjali Gems and other famous diamond brands in India, had fled the country

weeks before ₹13,500 crore fraud in Punjab National Bank (PNB) allegedly involving him and his nephew Nirav Modi surfaced. His lawyers alleged that he was kidnapped from Jolly Harbour in Antigua by policemen looking like Antiguan and Indian and brought to Dominica on a boat. Choksi was also brought before a Roseau magistrate, on the orders of High Court Judge Bernie Stephenson, hearing the habeas corpus matter, to answer charges of illegal entry where he pleaded not guilty but was denied bail.

— PTI

SHORT TAKES

JAN. 6 CAPITOL ATTACK: CHICAGO COP CHARGED

Chicago, June 12: A Chicago police officer has been charged with breaching the US Capitol and entering a senator's office during the January 6 insurrection. Karol Chwiesiuk, 29, was arrested on Friday and faces five misdemeanour counts, including entering a restricted building, disrupting government business and disorderly conduct on Capitol grounds with the intent to impede a congressional proceeding.

Prosecutors allege in a criminal complaint that Chwiesiuk was among a mob of people who broke into and damaged the office of Sen. Jeff Merkley, an Oregon Democrat. They say that days before he travelled to Washington to attend a rally of ex-President Donald Trump.

BOMBS HIT 2 MINIVANS IN KABUL, 7 DEAD

Kabul, June 12: Separate bombs hit two minivans in a mostly Shiite neighbourhood in the Afghan capital Saturday, killing at least seven people and wounding six others, the Interior Ministry said.

The attacks targeted minivans on the same road about 2 kilometres apart in a neighbourhood in western Kabul, Interior Ministry deputy spokesman Ahmad Zia Zia, said.

It wasn't immediately clear what type of bombs were used and no one immediately claimed responsibility for the attacks. The Islamic State group has carried out similar bombings in the area, including four attacks on four minivans earlier this month that killed at least 18 people.

13 HURT IN DOWNTOWN AUSTIN SHOOTING

Austin (US), June 12: A shooting in a busy entertainment district in downtown Austin, Texas injured 13 people early Saturday, and police said the suspected shooter was not in custody.

Two of the injured people were in critical condition but as of the news conference at 4 am local time, no one had died, interim Austin Police Chief Joseph Chacon said. Gunfire erupted just before 1:30 am along 6th Street, a popular area filled with bars and restaurants. The street was barricaded to keep out vehicle traffic at the time of the shooting, Chacon said. Eleven of the injured people were taken to one local hospital, another person was taken to a different hospital, and the other person went to an urgent care facility with gunshot wounds.

SAUDI CAPS HAJ TO 60K, BARS FOREIGNERS

Riyadh, June 12: Saudi Arabia announced Saturday it will allow 60,000 residents vaccinated against Covid to perform this year's haj, but Muslims from abroad will be barred for a second straight year.

The haj — a must for able-bodied Muslims at least once in their lives — typically packs millions of pilgrims into congested religious sites and could be a major source of contagion amid the Coronavirus pandemic. This year it would be "open for nationals and residents of the kingdom, limited to 60,000 pilgrims", the haj ministry said, quoted by the official Saudi Press Agency.

The pilgrimage, scheduled to be held in July, would be limited to those who have been vaccinated and are aged 18-65 with no chronic illnesses, it said.

Only up to 10,000 Muslims took part in the haj in July last year, a far cry from the 2.5 million who participated in the five-day annual pilgrimage in 2019 before the pandemic.

"In light of what the whole world is witnessing with the Coronavirus pandemic... and the emergence of new variants, the relevant authorities have continued to monitor the global health situation," the health ministry said.

"Considering the large crowds that perform haj, spending long periods of time in multiple and specific places... requires the highest levels of health precautions." Saudi Arabia said those wishing to perform the haj would have to apply online, without specifying how many foreign residents would be among the 60,000 pilgrims.

In 2020, foreigners were 70 percent of the pilgrims, while Saudis made up the rest.

The kingdom said later that it had informed other countries of the decision not to allow pilgrims from abroad. "There was great understanding," its deputy haj minister, Abdulfattah bin Sulaiman Mashat, said.



Activists from the climate change protest group Extinction Rebellion, dressed in red robes and known as the Red Brigade, demonstrate in Falmouth, Cornwall during the G7 summit on Saturday. — AFP

G7 adopts global infra plan in riposte to China

Beijing criticised for saddling small nations with heavy debt

Carbis Bay, June 12: G7 leaders on Saturday adopted a rival plan to oppose China's Belt and Road Initiative by helping build infrastructure in poorer nations in a "values-driven, high-standard and transparent" partnership.

The adoption of the US-inspired "Build Back Better World" (B3W) project came after President Joe Biden and leaders met to address "strategic competition with China and commit to concrete actions to help meet the tremendous infrastructure need in low- and middle-income countries", the White House said.

China has been widely criticised for saddling small countries with unmanageable debt as part of its trillion-dollar Belt and Road Initiative, which has seen money lent for projects stretching across Asia, Africa, Latin America and even Europe.

President Xi Jinping launched the BRI in 2013 to significantly expand China's economic and political influence, with many of the infrastructure plans seen as helping deliver its goods globally. China denies any ulterior motives to the vast investment project. But critics argue it uses the financial leverage arising from the scheme to boost its clout, in what they

London, June 12: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson held meetings with German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Emmanuel Macron on Saturday on the sidelines of a G-7 summit, as post-Brexit turbulence strains relations between Britain and the EU.

After Britain's top diplomat accused the EU of taking a bloody-minded approach to relations, Johnson also met the bloc's leaders, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and European Council President Charles Michel, at the Carbis Bay resort where G-7 leaders are gathering.

The two sides are locked

in an escalating diplomatic feud over Northern Ireland, the only part of the UK that has a land border with the bloc.

The EU is angry at British delay in implementing new checks on some goods coming into Northern Ireland from the rest of the UK required under the terms of Britain's divorce from the bloc.

Britain says the checks are imposing a big burden on businesses and destabilising Northern Ireland's hard-won peace.

The spat has drawn in US President Joe Biden, who is concerned about the potential threat to Northern Ireland's peace accord. Von der Leyen tweet-

ed after meeting Johnson that Northern Ireland peace was paramount, and the binding Brexit agreement protected it.

We want the best possible relations with the UK. Both sides must implement what we agreed on. There is complete EU unity on this, she said.

The EU is threatening legal action if the UK does not fully bring in the checks, which include a ban on chilled meats such as sausages from England, Scotland and Wales going to Northern Ireland starting next month.

It says Britain must fully implement the agreement, known as the Northern Ireland Protocol. — AP

dub "debt-trap diplomacy". The White House said the G7 initiative would be similarly global in scope, estimating that the developing world needs more than \$40 trillion in infrastructure, a gap "which has been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic".

"B3W will collectively catalyse hundreds of billions of dollars of infrastructure investment for low- and middle-income countries in the coming years," it said.

Funding will emphasise the environment and climate, labour safeguards, transparency, and anti-corruption, it added, in implicit contrast to China's opaque funding.

Further details would come in the G7 summit's final communique on Sunday, the White House said.

The issue is close to home for the elite club of wealthy democracies.

Italy was the first member nation to sign on to the BRI. — AFP

PIO wins Pulitzer for exposing Muslims' detention in China

New York, June 12: Megha Rajagopalan, an Indian-origin journalist, along with two contributors has won the Pulitzer Prize for innovative investigative reports that exposed a vast infrastructure of prisons and mass internment camps secretly built by China for detaining hundreds of thousands of Muslims in its restive Xinjiang region.

Rajagopalan from *BuzzFeed News* is among two Indian-origin journalists who won the US' top journalism award on Friday. *Tampa Bay Times'* Neil Bedi won for local report-

ing. Bedi along with Kathleen McGrory has been awarded the prize for the series exposing a Sheriff's Office initiative that used computer modelling to identify people believed to be future crime suspects.

About 1,000 people were monitored under the programme, including children. Bedi is an investigative reporter for the *Tampa Bay Times*.

"What Kathleen and Neil unearthed in Pasco County has had a profound impact on the community," said Mark Katches, *Times* executive editor. "This is what the best investigative



Megha Rajagopalan

journalism can do and why it is so essential."

Rajagopalan's Xinjiang series won the Pulitzer Prize in the International Reporting category. In 2017, not long after China

began to detain thousands of Muslims in Xinjiang, Rajagopalan was the first to visit an internment camp — at a time when China denied that such places existed, *BuzzFeed News* said.

"In response, the government tried to silence her, revoking her visa and ejecting her from the country," *BuzzFeed News* wrote in its entry for the prize.

"It would go on to cut off access to the entire region for most Westerners and stymie journalists. The release of basic facts about detainees slowed to a trickle." — PTI

Delta variant may delay Britain's unlock process

London, June 12: The UK government is considering a delay of up to four weeks from the scheduled June 21 end to all lockdown restrictions amid a continuing rise in cases of the Delta variant of Covid-19, according to a media report on Saturday. It comes as the country reported 8,125 new Covid-19 cases in a 24-hour period, another record daily high since the end of February, and Public Health England (PHE) found that infections from the Delta variant — the B.1.617.2 variant of concern (VOC) first identified in India — rose by nearly 30,000 in a week to hit 42,323.

Downing Street sources said that no final decision has been made yet and that several options are being evaluated as the latest data is studied before UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson makes a scheduled announcement regarding lockdown on Monday. The British Medical Association (BMA) is among some of the leading public healthcare groups and officials calling for a delay to the planned easing of all lockdown restrictions on June 21, dubbed "Freedom Day" as it would see all legal limits on social contact removed. Pushing the date back by a few weeks is intended to allow the country's vaccination programme to take greater effect, as the rollout moves through to younger age groups and the older age groups get covered with their

Italy limits AZ vax to over-60s

Rome, June 12: Italy said Saturday it would restrict the AstraZeneca vaccine to the over-60s, with younger people who have already received one dose to complete the cycle with an mRNA jab.

The change follows an improvement in Coronavirus infection rates in Italy, which has been devastated by the pandemic but will next week lift restrictions in much of the country following a sharp decline in cases.

The EU's medicine agency in April drew a link between rare blood clots and AstraZeneca jabs but stressed that the benefits of the vaccines outweighed the risks.

"The changed epidemiological situation has led to a reassessment of the risk-benefit ratio for age groups less at risk of severe forms of Covid-19," the Italian government's Technical and Scientific Committee (CTS) said. — AFP

Pandemic origin: China, US clash

Beijing, June 12: Top US and Chinese diplomats appear to have had another sharply worded exchange, with Beijing saying it told the US to cease interfering in its internal affairs and accusing Washington of politicising the search for the origin of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Senior Chinese foreign policy adviser Yang Jiechi and Secretary of State Antony Blinken held a phone call Friday that revealed wide divisions in a num-

ber of contentious areas, including the curtailing of freedoms in Hong Kong and the mass detention of Muslims in the northwestern Xinjiang region.

Calls for a more thorough investigation into the origin of the SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes Covid-19 are particularly sensitive for China because of suggestions that it might have escaped from a laboratory in the central city of Wuhan. — AP

In Russia, 47% spike in a week

Moscow, June 12: Russia's national Coronavirus taskforce on Saturday reported that the country's tally of daily new infections has risen by nearly 50 per cent over the past week and more than doubled in Moscow.

It said there were 13,510 infections recorded in the previous day, sharply higher than the 9,163 reported on June 6. Nearly half the new cases were in Moscow — 6,701 compared with 2,936 a week ago.

Faced with the spiking figures, Moscow authorities said enforcement of mask- and glove-wearing on mass transit, in stores and in other public places would be strengthened and that violators could face fines of up to 5,000 rubles (\$70).

For the entire pandemic period, the task force has reported nearly 5.2 million infections in the coun-

try of about 146 million people, and 126,000 deaths.

However, a report from the state statistics agency Rosstat on Friday found more than 144,000 virus-related deaths last year alone. The statistics agency, unlike the taskforce, counts fatalities in which Coronavirus infection was present or suspected but is not the main cause of death.

The agency's report found about 340,000 more people died in 2020 than in 2019; it did not give details of the causes of the higher year-on-year death toll.

The higher death toll and a lower number of births combined to make an overall population decline of 702,000, about twice the decline in 2019, Rosstat said. — AP

Keep Brexit word, France urges UK

Carbis Bay, June 12: France on Saturday told United Kingdom Prime Minister Boris Johnson to stick to the terms of the Brexit deal he signed with Europe, amid a standoff over new trading arrangements in Northern Ireland.

Johnson met French President Emmanuel Macron on the sidelines of the G7 summit in southwest England, with Brussels angered by Britain's failure to implement border checks on goods.

A source in Macron's office said he explained to Johnson in no uncertain terms that the UK should "keep its word" and abide by the terms of the deal he signed with the European Union just last December.

Other European leaders attending the summit, including German Chancellor Angela Merkel and EU Commission president Ursula von der Leyen, are expected to deliver the same message. — AFP

INDIA SAYS IT WANTS NORMAL TIES WITH PAK

United Nations, June 12: India has said it desires "normal" neighbourly relations with all countries, including Pakistan, and asserted that the onus is on Islamabad to create a "conducive atmosphere" and not allow its territory to be used for cross-border terrorism against India in any manner.

The remarks by Counsellor in India's Permanent Mission to the United Nations, R. Madhu Sudan came at the United Nations General Assembly meeting on 'Report of the Security Council for 2020' on Friday.

"India desires normal neighbourly relations with all countries, including Pakistan. Our consistent position is that issues, if any, between India and Pakistan should be resolved bilaterally and peacefully, in an atmosphere free of terror, hostility and violence," Sudan said in the General Assembly.

"The onus is on Pakistan to create such a conducive atmosphere, including by taking credible, verifiable action to not allow any territory under its control to be used for cross-border terrorism against India in any manner," he added. — PTI

SPACE | PUPS

Researchers wanted to know if radiation damages reproductive cell DNA

Mouse sperm on ISS produces 168 offspring

Washington, June 12: Turns out the comic books were wrong.

Japanese researchers found mouse sperm exposed to high levels of cosmic radiation for nearly six years produced a large brood of healthy, unremarkable "space pups." Their study was published Friday in *Science Advances* — which noted no signs so far of Mousezillas or rodent Hulks.

The sperm was stored in the International Space Station in freeze-dried

form. Once brought back to Earth and rehydrated, it resulted in the birth of 168 young, free of genetic defects. Developmental biologist and lead author Teruhiko Wakayama said on Thursday that there was little difference between mice fertilised by space sperm and sperm that had remained confined to our planet.

"All pups had normal appearance," he said, and when researchers examined their genes "no abnormalities were found." In

2013, Wakayama and colleagues at the University of Yamanashi in Japan launched three boxes, each containing 48 ampoules of freeze-dried sperm, to the ISS for the long-term study. They wanted to determine whether long term exposure to radiation in space would damage DNA in reproductive cells or pass mutations along to offspring.

That could be a problem for our own species in future space exploration and colonization missions.

Batches were returned to Earth for fertilisation after the first nine months, then after two years, and finally after six years, leading to hundreds of births. Freeze-dried sperm was selected for the experiment because it can be preserved at room temperature, rather than needing a freezer.

The ampoules were also small and very light, about the size of a small pencil, further cutting launch costs. When the space mice reached adulthood,

they were randomly mated and the next generation appeared normal as well.

Wakayama, now director for Advanced Biotechnology Center at the University of Yamanashi, said he had been inspired by the science fiction of Heinlein and Asimov and once wanted to be an astronaut.

Though he settled on becoming a scientist, the sense of wonder and whimsy about space exploration never left him.

"In the future, when the time comes to migrate to

other planets, we will need to maintain the diversity of genetic resources, not only for humans but also for pets and domestic animals," Wakayama and colleagues wrote in their paper.

"For cost and safety reasons, it is likely that stored germ cells will be transported by spaceships rather than by living animals." Getting to other planets means leaving the safety of Earth's protective atmosphere and magnetic field — which also extends to the ISS. — AFP

DECCAN Chronicle

13 JUNE 2021



Sanjeev Ahluwalia

Off the beaten track

The morality of stock markets

Indian stock markets look like “mushroom rocks”, top-heavy and delicately balanced, just waiting to be tipped over by bad news, of which there is plenty. Investors, whose stocks are part of the on-going bull-run starting February 2021, could not care less having gained ₹11 trillion, since May 24.

This bonanza of wealth accretion, for the less than 15 per cent of households who own stocks, contrasts with increasing penury for most others from the economic and health deprivations of the second wave of Covid-19 and its mutants.

It is hypocritical, however, to wring our hands in anguish because a few have become richer whilst the majority, particularly those in the bottom three quintiles are struggling. Gunnar Myrdal “hash tagged” India as a “dual economy” in 1968, in his seminal work *Asian Drama*.

Admittedly, much has changed since then. The urban, modern part of the economy has expanded significantly but so has inequity. Rapid wealth accretion at the pinnacle — an outcome of the 1992 liberalisation which unleashed entrepreneurship and economic growth — remains unmatched by enhanced living standards for the middle class, though, till the pandemic struck, poverty in the bottom two quintile had reduced significantly.

The stock market is not a useful proxy for economic welfare. It tracks the well-being of an elitist minority in the formal sector, albeit with trickle down benefits. But it is a real-time, high visibility metric of government's performance in partially liberalised economies like India, where government continues to be an intrusive economic agent via state owned companies and financial institutions, administered pricing and capital allocation regimes.

India's exchange rate regulator — the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) — strives to keep the exchange rate stable, except for adjustments reflecting the difference across currencies in the rate of inflation, which, RBI is mandated to keep within a float of two percentage points below or above the norm of four per cent per year. Presently we are scraping the under-side of the upper bound.

Sound inflation management and economic growth attracts foreign investors, who have invested ₹Rs 25 trillion in India or 13 per cent of the market capitalisation. These funds are important. They help us plug the foreign exchange gap because we chronically export less than we import.

The eco-system within which stocks are traded and fortunes won or lost, is regulated by the Securities Exchange Board of India (SEBI) since April 1992. On the demand side are 41 million registered investors — individuals and entities — of which 9,823 are foreign portfolio investors and 45,000 domestic companies. On the supply side 5,600 companies supply the bonds and equity traded publicly through 1,343 stockbrokers. Over 400 portfolio management entities and mutual funds, intermediate the flows.

The market capitalisation of ₹212 trillion was 107 per cent of the GDP in 2019-20 at current prices and around 2.4 per cent of the global market capitalisation (SEBI 2019-20).

The Bombay Stock Exchange was the first. It has operated from 1875. Since then, 20 other exchanges were established but have shut shop unilaterally or like the Calcutta Stock Exchange are under litigation to do so. Back then primary goods like opium, indigo and cotton were traded.

Today, Bombay is Mumbai, and the renamed BSE, no longer deals with commodities, for which there are specialised exchanges. 84 per cent of the capital raised in 2019-20, was by telecom, finance and electronics related firms. In 1992 the National Stock Exchange (NSE) became a competitor exchange for domestic trading.

Stock markets however remains a fairly “clubby” business. Of the ₹0.8 trillion of equity raised in 2019-20, just 12 companies accounted for 95.7 per cent while 64 others accounted for the residual 4.3 per cent.

Consider also, the constricted geographic spread from where the funds are sourced. BSE raises 51 per cent of funds from Mumbai, 17 per cent from the National Capital Region, 15 per cent from 18 other cities and the residual 17 per cent from the rest of the country. The newer National Stock Exchange is even more exclusive, relying on the twenty largest cities for 87 per cent for the funds.

Stock trading as an urban phenomenon is not unique to India. Happily, digital trading, allows anyone in remote areas with a smart phone, to link into licensed trading platforms. It already accounts for 12 per cent of the transactions and is the hope for democratising market access.

But democratising capital gains is tougher than democratising access. Capital intensive competitive “games” have a funneling effect where the biggest players benefit disproportionately. Savvy youngsters, with cash to spare, know this. They try and build capital through the volatile cryptocurrency exchanges worth \$750 million — an extra-legal play. Retail “crypto mining” requires spending ₹0.4 million. One computer — a tireless digital slave — can meet household expenses, in a throwback to the leisurely late 19th century, prior to slavery abolition.

Stock markets are as amoral as shopping malls. They make affordable money available for implementing business plans, make companies accountable and spread business gains widely, though transparency should be enhanced, and indiscretions sanctioned better. The trick is to keep regulation light-handed to attract more companies to the exchanges. The compulsory spend from profits on corporate social responsibility is bad regulation whilst taxing capital gains, to fund income redistribution to the have-nots, is good.

The writer is adviser, Observer Research Foundation

Subhani



Curb your enthusiasm, someone tell Dhankhar



Pavan K. Varna

Chanakya's View

Will somebody please tell His Excellency, Mahamahim, the governor of West Bengal, Shri Jagdeep Dhankhar, that he is crossing all the lines of Constitutional propriety? Dhankhar Saheb is under the mistaken impression, it would seem, that he is ensconced in the palatial Raj Bhavan as a representative of the BJP to which he belonged prior to being plucked out and made the Mahamahim. It is a lethal misapprehension, although to be fair to him, it has possessed other governors too in the past cutting across party lines. But, the degree to which Dhankharji appears to have become partisan, and the blatancy of his partisanship, sets a new benchmark of gubernatorial indiscretion.

Articles 155 and 156 of the Constitution lay down clearly where the loyalties of a governor should lie. Article 155 says: “The governor of a state shall be appointed by the President by warrant under his hand and seal.” Article 156 declares: “The governor shall hold office during the pleasure of the President.” The position is, therefore, crystal clear. A governor is the representative of the President of India. He has to then be, like the President, above all party politics, and independent of any political loyalties that may have guided him in the past. Dhankhar was an active member of the BJP for decades, and had represented the party both in the Rajasthan legislature

and the Lok Sabha. It is understandable then that his fidelity to his political alma mater is deep and abiding. However, once he assumed the office of the governor, he is bound, under the express provisions of the Constitution, to transcend such old loyalties and play his role with impartiality and dignity. I have worked in Rashtrapati Bhavan as the press secretary to two Presidents of India, Shri R. Venkataraman and Shankar Dayal Sharma. I still remember that in very first meeting with President Venkataraman, his first instruction to me was that the President of India does not comment on the day-to-day functioning of government. “I do not want publicity,” he said to me, “especially that which brings into question my political impartiality.”

Shankar Dayal Sharma also did not give — with one exception perhaps — a single interview to the media. These were stellar precedents. They reinforced the fact that the President remained resolutely above the political fray, and intervened only during a genuine Constitutional crisis, when — as Venkataraman used to say — the power of the presidency comes alive but only like an emergency lamp. Governors, appointed by the President, and holding office only at his pleasure, must model themselves on this kind of principled restraint. However, Mr Dhankhar has almost become a continuous voice in the political discourse. He tweets much too frequently. He gives media interviews. And, he is

forever ready to go public on every issue, instead of resorting to the discreet back channel ways in which a Constitutional head should communicate with a duly elected democratic government. As per the conventions of the high office he holds, his actions border on the adventurous. In an unprecedented manner, at the time of the swearing in of Mamata Banerjee, the newly elected chief minister of the state, he launched into a speech, delivering a public homily — bordering on a reprimand — on the need for her to control law and order. This very message could have been conveyed — if he was so keen that it should — to the chief minister in a private conversation. Similarly, in spite of the express advice to the contrary of the elected government, he broke convention by going off on a tour of the areas where alleged violence had taken place against BJP workers. Dhankharji has also made it a habit to summon senior officers of the state government to brief him. Technically, he may be within his rights to do so, but doing so on every occasion, and then publicly berating the officers and the state government if they don't satisfy his exacting and peremptory fiats, hardly appears to be becoming for the Raj Bhavan.

True, violence and lawlessness of any kind, including against BJP workers, needs to be unequivocally con-

Dhankharji's actions, to my mind, constitute a fit case for President Kovind to take suo motu initiative to counsel his state-level counterpart. The endeavour should always be to learn from the past...

demned. It is true also that the governor can legitimately be concerned about a deterioration in the law and order situation. But there is a sustainable perception that Governors^{saheb} is only exercised on those issues which fit into the BJP agenda. His interventions, therefore, become a kind of partisan hectoring where it almost seems that he is batting for the BJP rather than following the impartiality code befitting his position.

Frankly, I am a little surprised that the President of India has not as yet taken cognisance of the unconventional, undesirable and unprecedented behaviour of his appointee. Dhankharji's actions, to my mind, constitute a fit case for President Kovind to take suo motu initiative to counsel his state-level counterpart. It is not as if governors in the past have not acted in a partial manner. But the endeavour should be to learn from the past, and ensure that in our maturing democracy such mistakes are not repeated in the future.

The BJP, on its part, has already done great damage to several of our institutions. It should seriously ponder on the advisability of justifying the behaviour of Mr Dhankhar. What is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. Tomorrow, if they are on the other side of the fence, would they like a governor who in terms of both optics and substance has thrown all constitutional reticence to the winds, and is openly partial to those who rule at Delhi? The fire of wrong precedents must be doused. Otherwise, in the future, it can burn your house and mine, and the Constitution of India.

The writer, an author and a former diplomat, is in politics

LETTERS

BIG VAX DRIVE

My spouse took the first dose of Covid-19 vaccination in the mass camp carried out by Medcover Hospitals at Hitex on June 6. However, the details were not updated on the CoWIN website and nor did we receive any SMS. There is no response from Medcover.

Pushkar S. Hyderabad

COVID-19 ON KIDS

Those propagating theories that Covid-19 will target children are relying on assumptions made during the first and second waves that senior citizens and young people would be affected. Parents need not lose sleep over such predictions but adhere to protocols.

S. Nageswara Rao Hyderabad

GHMC'S 'ACTION'

I appreciate the GHMC's 'action' after ignoring illegal constructions till today (*District officials stop work at disputed site, DC, June 12*). I even appreciate the GHMC for letting street vendors in the twin cities to occupy footpaths and create sound pollution with mikes, forcing all aged people to take it whether they like it or not for paying taxes to the GHMC.

Prasad Hyderabad

PRICE RISE

Essential commodities have become unaffordable for the common man. In addition to food, even power and LPG prices have touched sky high. No attempts are being made to check inflation and price rise. The government must act against unscrupulous hoarders and traders.

Shamsuddin Maghrabi Hyderabad

NIGHT LOCKDOWN

There is no virtually no lockdown in the morning hours. Is the night lockdown serving any purpose? Nearly 50 per cent of hotels and restaurants are incurring loss, 25 per cent of them have closed permanently and roadside eateries have disappeared. People with their own wisdom must learn to fight and live.

Jakka Vijay Kumar Secunderabad

HIKE RTC STAFF PAY

It is good that instructions were issued by the TS government to implement PRC for government employees with 30 per cent fitment from July 2021. The government should be appreciated for implementing this even in this pandemic. But wages were not increased for TSRTC employees.

M. Mohan Rao Hyderabad

50 YEARS AGO IN

DECCAN Chronicle

TWA jet hijacked

NEW YORK, JUNE 12. A young Negro wounded by the police gunfire was taken into custody here early this morning shortly after a plane he hijacked from Chicago touched down at Kennedy international airport.

The man, not yet identified, seized the Tans World Airlines Boeing 727 in Chicago late last night, killing a passenger who, according to police there, apparently struggled with him.

He ordered all the passengers off and the plane then took off for New York with only the crew and hijacker abroad.

Anita Katyal

Political Gup-Shup



UP rumblings: Yogi's men bank on Modi to allay 2022 ticket fears

When the BJP dispatched senior leaders B.L. Santosh and Radha Mohan Singh to Lucknow earlier this month to get feedback about the handling of the coronavirus pandemic by the Yogi Adityanath government, it was expected that they would meet with all legislators. But Mr Santosh and Mr Singh met only a section of ministers and state party leaders after which CM Yogi Adityanath was given a clean chit for successfully tackling the second wave of Covid infections. Already upset with Yogi Adityanath's style of functioning, this led to further resentment among the BJP legislators who hoped to get an audience with the leaders so that they could apprise them of their grievances. The party's MLAs are unhappy as they feel neglected by the chief minister who, they maintain, depends solely on the bureaucracy. The MLAs have reason to worry as many of them were imported from other political parties before the last Assembly polls and with the next election coming up in early 2022, they are not sure if they will have to make way for fresh entrants. They were,

therefore, keen to apprise the BJP leadership about the hurdles they face in addressing the demands of their constituents, before they are axed for their non-performance. They are hoping Yogi's meetings with the Prime Minister and home minister Amit Shah will yield positive results.

Image management has been on top of the Modi government's agenda. The Centre first came in for severe criticism from the domestic and international media for not anticipating the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic. Even as the government's spin doctors were in the midst of handling this negative commentary, the government was pulled up by the Supreme Court which described its vaccine policy as “arbitrary and irrational”. Going into damage control mode, Prime Minister Modi announced a centralised procurement of vaccines and free doses to all in his address to the nation on June 7. Following this announcement, the government's spin doctors were again on the job. “Friendly” media-persons were informally told that the Prime Minister

had actually given in-principle approval for centralised free vaccine on June 1, two days before the Supreme Court's observations. Subsequently, the chosen journalists put out identical tweets giving the official version.

It is no secret that Gandhi loyalist Jitin Prasada was set to join the BJP two years ago but was dissuaded from leaving the Congress by Rahul Gandhi and other senior party leaders. According to the political grapevine, Mr Prasada decided to switch sides now as he had fallen out with Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, Congress general secretary in charge of Uttar Pradesh, who did not include him in the state unit's activities. With Assembly elections coming up early next year, Mr Prasada apparently thought this was the most opportune moment to leave. When the young leader was given charge of poll-bound West Bengal earlier this year, everyone believed Mr Prasada was back in favour even though he was among the signatories to the letter seeking radical changes in the Congress organisation. But, it appe-

ars this appointment was meant to ensure Mr Prasada's absence from UP. Plus, he was deliberately given this “punishment” assignment in which he was bound to fail.

As Punjab chief minister Amarinder Singh looks set to emerge victorious in the ongoing battle with his bete noire Navjot Singh Sidhu, he will have to thank his wife and Patiala MP Preneet Kaur for the final outcome. The chief minister or Captain, as he is called, deputed Preneet Kaur to speak with the dissident leaders. Unlike the Captain, Preneet Kaur is considered more approachable and consequently it was easier for her to talk to the rebels. If reports are to be believed, her efforts have paid off as the majority of state leaders who were summoned by the three-member panel set up by Congress president Sonia Gandhi to resolve the Punjab imbroglio, were not in favour of replacing Amarinder Singh. The rebels basically want their concerns to be addressed. The truth is that this rebellion was never about a change in leadership but it was to ensure

that those perceived to be in the anti-Captain camp were not ignored during ticket distribution in next year's Assembly polls.

Unable to travel due to the coronavirus pandemic, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra has stepped up her presence on social media. She has, however, changed trajectory in recent months. Instead of focussing on issues pertaining to Uttar Pradesh, she has also started attacking Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the Centre's vaccine policy, the shortage of oxygen and general handling of the coronavirus pandemic. But her numerous tweets, video messages and Facebook posts taking on Mr Modi have been ignored by the BJP which is usually quick to respond sharply to Rahul Gandhi's tweets. The BJP obviously does not wish to take the focus away from Rahul Gandhi considering its campaign to project the Nehru-Gandhi scion as an immature leader has met with resounding success.

Anita Katyal is a Delhi-based journalist

SHORT TAKES

British Medal for RKFC coach

New Delhi: David Alexander Robertson, coach of Kashmir's famous football club Real Kashmir FC, has been honoured with British Empire Medal (BEM) for his services to the community in the valley and strengthening UK-India relations, a feat he dedicated to the people of Kashmir and the team he has been engaged with. According to the list released on the occasion of Queen Elizabeth II's birthday on Friday evening, "Manager, Real Kashmir Football Club, India, receives a British Empire Medal (BEM) for services to the community in Kashmir and UK-India relations." The awards were announced on Saturday by the British government to mark the monarch's official birthday. — PTI

Sterling in Queen's B'day Honours list

London: Manchester City and England forward Raheem Sterling was on Friday named in Queen Elizabeth II's Birthday Honours list in recognition of his work to promote racial equality in sport. The 26-year-old, who has been heavily involved in anti-racism and anti-discrimination campaigns, has been made an MBE (Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire). Sterling, a Premier League and League Cup winner with City this season, has been subjected to racial slurs in stadiums and online during his career. In 2019, he took part in an anti-racism campaign, "No Room For Racism" and spoke out last year as the Black Lives Matter movement gained traction following the murder of George Floyd in the United States. — AFP

Ace marathoner Mathur no more

New Delhi: India's 1951 Asian Games marathon bronze medal winner and 1952 Olympian Surat Singh Mathur has died of Covid-19 here. He was 90. "My uncle passed away on Friday due to Covid-19. He was an Olympian and also a medal winner in the first Asian Games," his nephew Anil Mathur said. "He is our Hall of Fame athlete. Rest in peace sir. Thank you for making 'India proud,'" the Athletics Federation of India (AFI) said in a tweet. Mathur is the first athlete from independent India to complete an Olympic marathon race, at the 1952 Helsinki Games. Though Chhota Singh was the first runner from independent India to take part in an Olympic marathon event in the 1948 London Games, he could not finish the race. — PTI

Lahiri makes cut at Palmetto golf

Ridgeland, US: Indian golfer Anirban Lahiri managed to make the cut despite carding a disappointing 2-over 73 in the second round of the Palmetto Championship here. Lahiri, who shot 69 in the opening round, had three bogeys in the last four holes on day two to total an even par 142 and make the cut, which fell at 1-over. The Indian, who was tied-31st after the first round, dropped to tied-44th. Lahiri despite his erratic form has missed more cuts than he deserves to, but this time around, he would heaved a sigh of relief after being inside Top-20 at one point. Chesson Hadley shot 5-under 66 to take a two-stroke lead over World No. 1 Dustin Johnson. — PTI

Embiid scores as Sixers pin Hawks

Los Angeles: Joel Embiid finished with 27 points, nine rebounds and eight assists as the Philadelphia 76ers snapped the Atlanta Hawks' run of good fortune at home with a 127-111 win in game three of their NBA Eastern Conference playoff series. The teams split the first two games in Philadelphia, but the Sixers dominated Friday to grab a 2-1 series lead and halt the Hawks' 13-game winning streak at home. Tobias Harris scored 22 points, Ben Simmons tallied 18 points and seven assists, and Furkan Korkmaz drained three of six from beyond the arc for the 76ers in front of a crowd of 16,400 at State Farm Arena in Atlanta. Embiid had a couple of hard falls during the contest but nothing serious. "I'm OK," said Embiid, who is playing with a cartilage tear in his right knee. — AFP

NO DJOKE!

Djokovic stuns 13-time champ Nadal in French Open epic

Paris, June 12: Novak Djokovic handed 13-time champion Rafael Nadal only his third defeat in 16 years and 108 matches at the French Open on Friday to reach his sixth Roland Garros final after an epic showdown which even beat the country's Covid-19 curfew. In their 58th career clash, Djokovic triumphed 3-6, 6-3, 7-6 (7/4), 6-2 and stays on course to capture a 19th major and become the first man in over 50 years to win all four Slams twice. Djokovic, the 2016 champion in Paris who had also beaten Nadal at the 2015 tournament, will face Stefanos Tsitsipas in Sunday's final in what will be his 29th championship match at the Slams. Tsitsipas had earlier become the first Greek to reach a Grand Slam final with a 6-3, 6-3, 4-6, 4-6, 6-3 victory over Germany's Alexander Zverev. Nadal, 35, remains tied on 20 majors with Roger Federer. "It was a privilege to face Rafa in such an incredible match," said Djokovic after four hours and 11 minutes of intense action. He now leads Nadal 30-28 in their career rivalry. "It's hard to find words for Rafa's achievements at Roland Garros. The amount of wins on this court is incredible," he added. "You have to climb Mount Everest when you meet him here." It was Djokovic's second win in eight meetings in Paris with Nadal, a sequence which also included three losses in finals. It was Nadal's first defeat in 14 semi-finals in the French capital. "Probably it was not my best day today, even if I fought," said Nadal. "Sometimes you win, sometimes you lose. I had a big chance. There were some crazy points but there was fatigue there." Djokovic finished with 50 winners; Nadal committed 55 unforced errors under the relentless assault. Djokovic had two break points in the opening game of the first set which stretched to 10 minutes but was unable to convert. Nadal made him pay, sprinting away for a 5-0 lead before the top seed got on the board. Djokovic clung on, retrieving one break to get to 2-5 but Nadal eventually prevailed after one hour on court even if he required seven set points to edge ahead. — AFP



Novak Djokovic of Serbia celebrates his victory over Rafael Nadal of Spain in the French Open semifinal at Roland Garros in Paris on Friday. — AP

One of my greatest wins: Novak

IT'S JUST ANOTHER DEFEAT FOR NADAL

Paris, June 12: Rafael Nadal shrugged off his epic loss to Novak Djokovic at the French Open insisting "life goes on" as the 13-time champion suffered just his third ever defeat in 108 matches in Paris over 16 years. Nadal, the defending champion and chasing a record-setting 21st Grand Slam title, refused to dwell on the consequences of his 4-hour 11-minute loss. "I am sad to have lost in the most important tournament of the year for me, but life goes on, it is nothing more than a defeat on a tennis court," said 35-year-old Nadal. "If everything goes well, tomorrow I will be at home with my family and friends, and then we will see what is next." — AFP

career," said Djokovic. "Considering the quality of tennis, playing my biggest rival on the court where he has had so much success and has been the dominant force in the last 15-plus years, and the atmosphere which was completely electric. Just amazing. "It's hard to find words bigger than all the superlatives you can

KREJCIKOVA LIFTS MAIDEN SLAM CROWN

Paris, June 12: Barbora Krejcikova won her maiden Grand Slam singles title at the French Open on Saturday, beating Russia's Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova to become the first Czech woman in 40 years to conquer Roland Garros. Krejcikova, ranked 33 in the world and playing just her fifth main draw in a Slams singles event, triumphed 6-1, 2-6, 6-4 for a second career title. The 25-year-old emulates compatriot Hana Mandlikova who claimed the trophy in Paris in 1981. The 25-year-old Krejcikova dedicated her victory to her mentor, the former Wimbledon champion Jana Novotna who died of cancer at the age of 49 in 2017. "It's hard to put into words. I cannot believe I have just won a Grand Slam," said Krejcikova who was still outside the top 100 when the 2020 French Open took place last October. "I spent a lot of time with Jana before she died. Her last words to me were 'enjoy tennis and try and win a Grand Slam'." "I know she's looking after me. All this is pretty much because she is looking after me. "It was amazing that I got the chance to meet her. She was such an inspiration. I miss her and I hope she's really happy." In a nervy start to the final, Krejcikova was broken in the first game, serving up two double faults. — AFP

NATIONAL | FOOTBALL

Brazil women team protest harassment

Sao Paulo, June 12: Players from Brazil's women's team protested against sexual harassment on Friday, days after the president of the national federation was suspended for allegations of the same thing. Rogério Caboclo was formally accused a week ago before the ethics committee of the Brazilian Football Confederation. A former staffer provided recordings of conversations and text messages. Caboclo denies any wrongdoing. Brazil players including superstar Marta used their social media channels to protest, but didn't name Caboclo, who is not expected to return to his position after the 30-day suspension. "Every day thousands of people are affected and disrespected by moral and sexual harassment, especially us women," the text says. "Saying no to harassment goes beyond words, it is about action. We stimulate women and men to call it out!" The women carried a banner reading "No to harassment" before their friendly against Russia on Friday. Brazil won 3-0. Marta said after the friendly in Spain that all players and members of the coaching staff made the decision to speak out. "We are not prejudging (Caboclo), but the facts are there to be investigated," — AP

● **Rogério Caboclo was formally accused a week ago before the ethics committee of the Brazilian Football Confederation. A former staffer provided recordings of conversations and text messages.**

35-year-old said. "We needed to show our position." Their coach Pia Sundhage described the accusation against Caboclo as very serious. She spoke on Thursday amid the Brazil women's team's preparations in Spain for the Tokyo Olympics. "We spoke with the athletes, informed them of what was going on, and all had the opportunity to speak about it. Each one of us must have responsibility in what we answer," Sundhage said. "We were a bit overwhelmed by all of that situation, but now it is important to turn our focus to the pitch again." Brazil's men's national team players did not talk about Caboclo's suspension. Coach Tite said Tuesday it is not for him to discuss what happened to the soccer executive. He spoke after the team's 2-0 win at Paraguay in a match of World Cup qualifiers. — AP

IWF CONFIRMS CHANU'S OLYMPIC QUALIFICATION

New Delhi, June 12: The International Weightlifting Federation (IWF) on Saturday conformed that star Indian lifter Mirabai Chanu has qualified for the upcoming Tokyo Olympics in the women's 49kg category. Chanu, the 2017 world champion in weightlifting, had secured her place in Tokyo by winning a bronze medal in the Asian Championship in Tashkent in April with a world record in clean and jerk. The 26-year-old from Manipur has qualified on the basis of her standings on IWF's Absolute Ranking list. The Indian lifter is ranked second in the 49kg category with 4133,6172 points in her kitty. "Many congratulations to #TOPSAthlete weightlifter @mirabai_chanu who has qualified for #Tokyo2020 after @iwfnet published its Absolute Ranking list

where she is placed 2nd in the women's 49 kg," Sports Authority of India (SAI) tweeted. Chanu was earlier ranked fourth but North Korea's withdrawal from the Olympics lifted the Indian to the second place. This will be Chanu's second appearance in the Olympics, five years after a disappointing outing in Rio, where she failed to lift any of the weights in clean and jerk to bow out of the event. In the men's 67 kg category, India's Jeremy Lalrinnunga is ranked 12th and lost the continental quota to Korea's Hak Myeongmok, but the 18-year-old still has a chance to qualify. The final list will be released on June 25. As per IWF rules, the top eight lifters in each of the 14 weight categories, including seven in the women's group, are eligible to compete in the Games. — PTI

PROTEAS PACE ATTACK TOO HOT FOR WINDIES

Gros-Islet (Saint Lucia), June 12: South Africa's relentless pace attack left the West Indies facing the prospect of an innings defeat inside three days as they limped to 82 for four, still needing 143 runs to make the tourists bat again, at stumps on the second day of the first Test in St Lucia on Friday. The West Indies were routed for 97 — their lowest-ever total in a Test innings against the Proteas — after choosing to bat first on day one. In their second innings on Friday, the home side again laboured to come to terms with the consistent quality and intensity of the visitors' pacers and seamers. Earlier, Quinton de Kock had flailed a flagging West Indies bowling attack on the way to an unbeaten 141 to lift South Africa to a first-innings total of 322 and a commanding first-innings lead of 225 runs. He reached the century landmark with a six, one of seven in an innings embellished further with 12 fours off 170 deliveries. — AFP

Brief scores (Day 2): West Indies 97 & 82/4 (Chase 21 batting, Blackwood 10 batting) vs South Africa 322 (de Kock 141 n.o., Holder 4/75).

Henry strikes to boost Kiwis



New Zealand's Matt Henry (third from right) celebrates with teammates the dismissal of Dom Sibley of England on the third day of their second Test on Saturday. — AP

HOLDING SLAMS ENGLAND'S 'MOMENT OF UNITY' GESTURE

Birmingham, June 12: West Indies great Michael Holding has criticised England cricket team's "moment of unity" gesture in the ongoing Test series against New Zealand, saying it was not supporting Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement but giving subtle meaning of "all lives matter". England players wore T-

shirts sporting messages against any racism, religious intolerance, sexism and other anti-discrimination slogans, having decided to not take the knee after the series against West Indies last year. Holding, who is a passionate advocate for equality in cricket and the wider community, feels the gesture is akin to saying "all lives

matter" rather than supporting BLM movement. "What this England (cricket) team are doing now with this 'moment of unity', that is not supporting Black Lives Matter," Holding told 'Sky Sports'. "What you are doing there is, when I say, 'black lives matter', you are telling me 'all lives matter'," the 67-year-old added. — PTI

ODI SERIES | vs LANKA

Indian team to isolate, train

New Delhi, June 12: India's white ball squad, led by Shikhar Dhawan, will quarantine in Mumbai from June 14 to 28 and undergo six RT-PCR tests on alternate days before flying off to Colombo for the six-match series against Sri Lanka, starting on July 13.

It is understood that all the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) that will be followed by the Lanka-bound squad will be same as those of the first team currently in the United Kingdom for the World Test Championship final and five-match series against England. "All the rules will be same like we followed in England. The outstanding players will come by charter flight and some fly business class of commercial airline," a BCCI source privy to development said. "They will do seven days of room quarantine and then can meet in common areas inside the bio-bubble. The players will do gym sessions in staggered manner."

● **While the three-match ODI series starts on July 13, it is expected that Indian team will have match simulation practice (situational training) after individual sessions.**

While the three-match ODI series starts on July 13, the Indian team will have match simulation practice after individual sessions, following three days of room quarantine at the team hotel in Colombo. "It will be just like what's happening in England. Match situations will be created and that's how the intra-squad training will be held. "You can't have your main players get out off the first ball and not bat again or bat for the whole innings. Everyone needs training so it won't be practice games as such." The Indian teams over the years have always stayed at the Taj Samudra Hotel in Colombo. — PTI



Quick passes



A fan celebrates Italy's goal against Turkey as she watches the Euro opening Group 'A' match on a giant screen at the official fan zone at the Roman Forum in Rome on Friday. — AFP

Covid chaos will make Spain strong

Spanish defender Diego Llorente believes the team's Covid chaos has pulled the players closer together ahead of their Euro opener against Sweden on Monday. Llorente tested positive for the virus on Tuesday but has been allowed to rejoin the squad after giving a fourth consecutive negative test on Friday. Sergio Busquets is still self-isolating at home after testing positive last weekend, which meant the team had to train individually this week and sit out a final warm-up game against Lithuania. "All of us here see the glass half-full, not half-empty," said Llorente in a press conference on Saturday. "All these things have made us stronger as a group. We see the light at the end of the tunnel now. Even on a mental level, this sort of thing can help you face these games and trust your teammates," he added. — AFP

Austria brace for North Macedonia

Although scoring goals has been a major issue for Austria at previous European Championships, scoring goals against North Macedonia has been a non-issue in recent years. The Austrians will open play at Euro 2020 in Group 'C' against North Macedonia on Sunday in Bucharest. The two teams met twice in qualifying for the tournament, with Austria winning 4-1 and 2-1. But goals haven't come easy on the big stage. In six games played in the 2008 and 2016 editions of the continental tournament, the Austrian team managed only a single goal in open play — in a 2-1 loss to Iceland five years ago. — AP

Venezuelans hit by virus ahead of Copa

A dozen Venezuela players and coaching staff have tested positive for Covid-19 a day before their Copa America opener against the host in Brasilia, Brazilian health authorities said on Saturday. The health secretariat of the Federal District, which includes Brasilia, said in a statement that all of the infected people were isolated in a hotel. None of the Venezuelans were named. CONMEBOL has not said if the match against Brazil on Sunday at Man Garrincha Stadium will proceed as scheduled or be delayed. "They are all asymptomatic, isolated in single rooms and are being monitored by the team of CONMEBOL and local specialists," the statement said. — AP

Live on TV

EURO
Group Stage: England vs Croatia from 6.30 pm; Austria vs North Macedonia from 9.30 pm; Netherlands vs Ukraine from 12.30 am (Monday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

COPA AMERICA
Group Stage: Brazil vs Venezuela from 2.30 am (Monday) on Sony Ten 1, 2; Colombia vs Ecuador from 5.30 am (Monday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

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ITALIAN JOB!

Mancini's men shoot Turkey as they begin with a bang

Rome, June 12: Italy got their Euro 2020 campaign off the mark with an impressive 3-0 win over Turkey in the curtain-raiser for the postponed continental tournament in front of their home fans in Rome on Friday.

Playing their first major tournament in five years after failing to qualify for the 2018 World Cup, all the goals came in the second half in front of a Stadio Olimpico that was filled to a quarter of its capacity.

Merih Demiral's own goal put Italy ahead before Ciro Immobile and Lorenzo Insigne netted for Roberto Mancini's side in the Group 'A' opener.

The win capped an emotional night in the Italian capital which saw 16,000 fans return to the Stadio Olimpico.

There was a party atmosphere, with a spectacular sound and light show and fireworks display before kick-off for the opening of the month-long 24-team event, which will be played across 11 countries.

There was a performance by the Italian National Police orchestra, a parade of huge inflatable balloons on the pitch, tenor Andrea Bocelli sang 'Nessun Dorma' before a virtual performance from Martin Garrix, Bono and The Edge.

Former Italy World Cup winners Alessandro Nesta and Francesco Totti, who played for Lazio and Roma during their careers at the Stadio Olimpico, carried the ball to the centre of the pitch before kick-off.

On the pitch, Italy dominated early on with a three-man attack led by Immobile, who plays for Lazio.

The 31-year-old had several near misses in the first half, coming up against a solid Turkey defence who held their own.

Turkey could also thank goalkeeper Ugurcan Cakir for pulling off a big save on 23 minutes, tipping over Italy captain Giorgio Chiellini's powerful goal-bound header off an Insigne corner.

Italy finally got on the scoreboard eight minutes after the break when the



Italy forward Lorenzo Insigne (top) and teammates celebrate a goal against Turkey in their Euro Group 'A' match at the Olympic Stadium in Rome on Friday. — AFP

unfortunate Demiral found himself in the path of a Federico Berardi cross for Immobile, the Juventus defender bundling the ball into his own net.

Leonardo Spinazzola had a chance for a second minutes later, with Immobile sending the rebound wide.

Immobile finally got his goal, his 14th for Italy, and

first in a major tournament, in the 66th minute, scoring from a rebound after Cakir had saved from Spinazzola.

And Insigne curled in the third with 11 minutes to go.

Sassuolo winger Berardi had a role in all three goals, with Italy scoring three for the first time in a European Championship

match. All three Italy forwards proved efficient on the night with a defence organised around Juventus veterans Chiellini and Leonardo Bonucci holding firm, securing a ninth straight clean sheet.

"We struggled at the start, we tried to accelerate but we hit a wall," said Immobile. — AFP

Italy	3
(Merih Demiral 53-own goal, Ciro Immobile 66, Lorenzo Insigne 79)	
Turkey	0

ITALY'S COACH TERMS VICTORY IMPORTANT

Rome, June 12: Roberto Mancini hailed Italy's 3-0 Euro 2020 opening victory over Turkey as "an important win" but warned there is still a long way to go until a possible Wembley final.

"It was important to start well in Rome and I think it's a satisfaction for the public and for Italians," said Mancini of the match played at a Stadio Olimpico that was filled to a quarter of its capacity.

"It was a beautiful evening, I hope there are many others, but there are still six more for Wembley," he added.

Italy failed to qualify for the 2018 World Cup but are now on a 28-match unbeaten run under Mancini.

"We played a good match, even in the first half without being able to score. A great team. There was a lot of help from the crowd," Mancini said.

"We were hoping for another result, but Italy was dominant," said Turkey coach Senol Gunes.

"The first goal changed things in the second half and we lost control of the game," he added.

"There was an incredible emotion before the match, it was spine-chilling," said Roma midfielder Leonardo Spinazzola, UEFA's man-of-the-match after his performance in his club stadium.

"Then it was a perfect match, zero goals conceded and we played great football. We have a strong team, an incredible mix of strength and technique," Spinazzola, wearing a big smile, added. — AFP

Netherlands look to test Ukrainians

Amsterdam, June 12: Seven years is a long, long wait. It's been that many years since the Netherlands last played at a major football tournament, dating back to the orange-clad team's run to the World Cup semifinals in 2014. On Sunday in Amsterdam, the Dutch will finally be back on the field to take on Ukraine at the European Championship.

"We know that we missed two final tournaments, but now we're finally here and so we want to show what we can do, not just for fun but really for the prizes," said Memphis Depay, the striker who is the undisputed focal point of the Dutch attack at Euro 2020.

The team's captain and defensive anchor, Virgil van Dijk, will have to wait even longer. He pulled out of the tournament to reha-

bilite his surgically repaired knee. With Van Dijk sidelined, 21-year-old center back Matthijs de Ligt will be a key defender for the Netherlands, but he is trying to recover from a groin injury and will miss the opener.

Meanwhile, Ukraine qualified for the last two European Championships, but have never progressed past the group stage. The country's main player is Oleksandr Zinchenko, who plays at left back for Manchester City but is expected to switch to a central midfield role for his country.

The Ukrainians are coached by Andriy Shevchenko, whose mentality doesn't seem to have changed much from his playing days with the national team and clubs including AC Milan and Chelsea. — AP



Denmark midfielder Christian Eriksen lays on the ground after collapsing during the Euro Group 'B' match against Finland at the Parken Stadium in Copenhagen as one of his teammates calls for medical help on Saturday. — AFP

Player collapses, Dane game off

Copenhagen, June 12: Denmark midfielder Christian Eriksen was taken to a hospital on Saturday after collapsing on the field during a Group 'B' match against Finland at the European Championship.

UEFA, the governing body of European football said Eriksen has been stabilised and the Danish football federation said he was awake. "Christian Eriksen is awake and is undergoing further examinations at Rigshospitalet," the Danish federation wrote on Twitter.

"The player has been transferred to the hospital and has been stabilised," UEFA tweeted.

The Euro 2020 match between Denmark and Finland was suspended after Eriksen was given urgent medical attention on the field near the end of the first half.

He was treated for about 10 minutes after collapsing. He was then carried off on a stretcher: UEFA then announced the game had been suspended "due to a medical emergency."

UEFA said the teams were having an emergency

meeting and more information would be provided at 7.45 pm local time. A stadium announcer asked fans to stay in their seats and stay calm.

Eriksen had just played a short pass when he fell face-forward onto the ground. His teammates immediately gestured for help and medics rushed onto the field. Eriksen was given chest compressions as his Denmark teammates stood around him in a shielding wall for privacy.

The Finland players huddled by their bench and eventually walked off the field while Eriksen was still getting treatment, as did the referees.

Eriksen was eventually carried off to a loud ovation, with his teammates walking next to the stretcher. The game had been halted in the 43rd minute with the score 0-0.

Eriksen is one of Denmark's biggest stars and the incident brought an instant sense of shock to the Parken Stadium, where about 15,000 fans fell into hushed silence. Some supporters could be seen crying and hugging in the stands. — AP



Connor Roberts (left) of Wales and Switzerland's Ricardo Rodriguez vie for the ball during their Euro Group 'A' match at the Baku Olympic stadium in Baku, Azerbaijan, on Saturday. — AP

Welsh catch Swiss in the nick of time

Baku, June 12: A header from towering Kieffer Moore claimed a point for Wales in a 1-1 draw with Switzerland in Baku on Saturday to start both teams' Euro 2020 campaigns.

Moore responded to Breel Embolo's second-half opener with a quarter of an hour remaining. Both sides trail Group 'A' leaders Italy, who beat Turkey 3-0 in Friday's tournament curtain-raiser.

After a quarter of an hour played, Dan James broke free down the left before finding 1.95 metre-tall Moore who forced Swiss goalkeeper Yann Sommer to tip the ball over

Switzerland	1
(Breel Embolo 49)	
Wales	1
(Kieffer Moore 74)	

the bar. From the resulting corner, Moore rose highest again and clashed in the air with Manuel Akanji, which left the Cardiff forward playing the remainder of the game with red tape around his head.

With Moore bandaged, the momentum swung towards Wales and they dominated the remainder of the half. — AFP