

SHORT TAKES

Tabs for over 2,000 new teachers of Delhi govt schools

New Delhi: The Delhi government has decided to provide tabs to over 2,000 teachers newly appointed by the Directorate of Education, Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia said on Friday. Sisodia, in an official statement, said the vision of the Delhi government is to provide excellent education to each child, and providing tablets to teachers is a step in this direction. Usage of tabs by teachers will enable better teaching and learning, and empower teachers to use creative techniques in teaching children, he said. According to him, it was important to incorporate novel techniques into teaching as tabs would enable teachers to do their jobs without hassle in times of Covid. "In the 21st century, it has supremely important to incorporate various novel techniques in teaching," he said.

2 Nigerians arrested for drug-peddling

New Delhi: Two Nigerian nationals have been arrested by the Delhi Police for allegedly peddling drugs in outer Delhi's Chander Vihar area. The accused have been identified as Olunna Iriakannu (30) and Chidi (44). A total of 15.90 grams of heroine have been recovered from them, the police said. According to the police a tip-off was received after which the police kept a close watch on accused persons. Following this a team while on patrolling duty noticed them and found their activities suspicious. The accused tired to fled away but they were arrested on Tuesday. During enquiry, they could not give any satisfactory reply regarding their presence at the spot during few hours. One transparent polythene pouch each having brownish substance was recovered from their possession.



Taking the YUVA skill training initiative of Delhi Police to the next level, commissioner of police S.N. Shrivastava on Friday rolled out the programme to train 10,000 youth in healthcare and also inaugurated an advance Covid care training simulation lab at police station Chittaranjan Park. Shrivastava further launched a YUVA job & training portal. On the occasion, Shrivastava said that Delhi witnessed the severity of the second wave and all of us need to take lessons from it and put in place systems to deal with any emergencies.

HC refuses to stay release of film based on Rajput's life

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 25

The division bench of Delhi High Court on Friday sought a response from all the makers of the movie *Nyay: The Justice* and others on an appeal moved by actor Sushant Singh Rajput's father challenging a single-judge bench order, which dismissed his plea against the proposed movie being made about the actor's life.

The bench of Justice Anup Jairam Bhambhani and Justice Jasmeet Singh was informed by the counsel of makers of film *Nyay: The Justice* that the movie has been released on OTT platform named Lalapal. Earlier, the court sought clarity on the status of the movie as both sides lawyer gave contradictory version about the release of the movie.

The vacation bench of Justices during the hearing said there is nothing to show that there would be



S.S. Rajput

on "what is available in public domain".

Mr Rajput's father Krishna Kishore Singh had challenged a single judge's order refusing to stay the film or to restrain anyone from using his son's name or likeness in movies. The high court said there was no written script or story which has been used by the filmmaker and refused to pass any interim order on the appeal.

"There is nothing that they (makers) have, or they could have had used except what is available in the public domain. There is no unholy interest in the life story because the man's life was an exceptional life which is a plausible theme for a movie and they have made a movie," the court said.

■ Celebrity send-off for murder accused at Mandoli prison

Sushil's custody extended for 14 days, shifted to Tihar

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 25

With a Delhi court on Friday extending the judicial custody by 14 more days of the two-time Olympic medalist Sushil Kumar, the murder accused received a celebrity send-off by Delhi Police personnel on his way to Tihar Jail from Mandoli prison, where he was imprisoned earlier.

Keeping ethics aside, the Delhi police personnel or staff were seen getting clicked with the murder accused who were all smiles for the shutterbugs.

Sushil and Ajay Kumar had been arrested on 23 May in Delhi in connection with the Chhatrasal stadium murder case which led to the death of a 23-year-old wrestler Sagar Dhankar.

A magistrate has extended Kumar's judicial custody till July 9 after he was presented before the court on the expiry of his earlier period of judicial custody. On June 2, Kumar was



Olympic medalist wrestler Sushil Kumar being shifted from Mandoli jail to Tihar in New Delhi on Friday. — PTI

remanded to judicial custody till June 11, which was later extended till June 25.

According to Kumar's defence counsel, he has been shifted from Mandoli to Tihar Jail. He was earlier remanded to six days of police custody which was later extended to four days.

Kumar, a prime suspect

in the murder case, and his associate Ajay Bakkarwala were arrested by a team of Special Cell, Delhi Police on May 23 in the Mundka area of the national capital.

A non-bailable warrant was issued against Kumar and others in the case relating to the alleged killing of Dhankar. Earlier, a Delhi

Court dismissed an anticipatory bail application filed by Kumar in connection with the case.

An incident of a brawl among wrestlers was reported on May 4, in which some wrestlers were injured and had to be admitted to a hospital. Sagar, who was one of them, died during the treatment.

Homeless people without identity cards vaccinated at special session

New Delhi, June 25: Without an identity proof or a mobile phone, 46-year-old Sunil Thakur waited for four hours to get vaccinated at a special inoculation centre set up for homeless people at Yamuna Pushta Night Shelter here, while people who came from places like Baghpat and Ghaziabad and had IDs got jabs within minutes. "Confusion marred the pace of the vaccination

drive for homeless people. Nobody knew how to register such people without an identity card or mobile number," an officer at the vaccination centre said.

The Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board organised the vaccination camp in association with the office of the district magistrate (Central Delhi) the Centre for Holistic Development. One of the

officers present at the camp said he got to know about the drive last night. "There were no preparations whatsoever. Someone, we got it started around 10:30 am," he said. In the absence of a mechanism to register homeless people on the Cowin portal, those having an identity proof and a mobile number were vaccinated with Covishield first. "This drive was meant for

homeless people; most of them do not have any identity proof or mobile number. So, they had to wait for hours while people from outside got themselves registered and took the jabs within minutes," a member of an NGO present at the night shelter said.

Most of the first 50 people vaccinated at the centre till 2 pm on Friday belonged to nearby residential areas. — PTI

Dwarka murder: Cops quiz relatives of slain man's wife

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 25

Delhi Police on Friday questioned the father and uncle of the woman and identified some persons in connection with the incident where a 23-year-old man was shot dead and his wife got severely injured, officials said.

The incident took place on Thursday in Dwarka's Ambarhai village.

"Around 9.30 pm, a PCR call was received regarding gun shot injuries to a couple. The husband, identified as Vinay Dahiya, received four gunshot injuries around stomach and chest, while his wife Kiran Dahiya (19) received gunshot wound on her neck," Deputy Commissioner of

THE VICTIMS were residents of Gopalpur village in Sonipat and they got married in August 2020, following which they were living in Ambarhai. Vinay was working as a cab driver at airport.

Police (Dwarka) Santosh Kumar Meena said.

The neighbours got to know about the incident and took the victims to Venkateshwara hospital where Vinay was declared brought dead, the DCP said.

Kiran is undergoing treatment and her condition is stated to be not out of danger, police said.

"The identification of the accused is underway and we have identified

some of them. The investigation in the matter is conducted," the DCP said.

According to police, the father and uncle of the woman were interrogated in connection with the incident, however, they were not arrested.

The victims were the residents of Gopalpur village in Sonipat and they got married in August 2020, following which they were living in Ambarhai. Vinay was working as a cab driver at airport, police said.

In August last year, the couple approached Punjab and Haryana high court for their safety. The local police of Sonipat was given direction for the action, police said.

Call centre busted, 82 held; ₹64L seized

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 25

With the arrest of 82 people, the Delhi Police claimed to have busted a fake international call centre which used to dupe people in the name of answering Amazon related queries. Police has recovered ₹64 lakh cash, 93 laptops, two SUVs and four computers from their possession.

A tip-off was received that an illegal call centre is being run near Jagatpuri area which is involved in large scale cyber cheating on the pretext of solving queries and hacking of Amazon services by taking money as security, the police said.

Accordingly, a raid was conducted and it was found the accused impersonating themselves as Amazon employees were engaged in attending calls. After seeing the police, they tried to run away but could not succeed, the police said. It also came to notice that they were using illegal techniques through VOIP calling by passing the illegal international long-distance gateways and thus causing wrongful loss to govern-

ment exchangers and wrongful gain to themselves. They were cheating on the pretext of solving queries related to Amazon. Attractive messages were flashed on the mobile phone of customers saying that 1000 dollars has been credited to their particular Amazon account. On receiving these messages, they used to call back to know more about the message of credited amount after which the accused used to threaten that their social security number has been hacked and can be repaired only by purchasing gift vouchers and sharing the same with them.

Out of fear, these customers bought the gift voucher and shared the details which in turn was redeemed immediately into the selective account of the main accused persons. During interrogation it was revealed that one Rakesh was an overall caretaker and was reportedly running this call centre on behalf of one Mannu Singh Tanwar. On asking about any license and authority to run this centre the accused could not produce any documents.

My crime, I fought for breath of 2 crore people: Kejriwal

New Delhi, June 25: In the face of BJP's accusation of "criminal negligence" citing a report that the Delhi government "exaggerated" oxygen requirement during Covid-19 second wave, chief minister Arvind Kejriwal on Friday said his only "crime" was that he "fought for the breath of two crore people".

A sub-group constituted by the Supreme Court to audit oxygen consumption in the national capital's hospitals has said that the Delhi government "exaggerated" consumption of the life-saving gas. The five-member panel, headed by AIIMS director Randeep Guleria, said that

during the second wave of Covid-19 infections, the Delhi government had made claims for allocation of 700 MT of oxygen on April 30 using a "wrong formula". After the report came to light, the BJP accused



Arvind Kejriwal

'No report approved by SC panel about inflated O2 use'

New Delhi, June 25: Deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia on Friday claimed there is no report approved by the Supreme Court-appointed Oxygen Audit Committee about Delhi exaggerating its oxygen requirement by four times during the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic.

At an online press briefing, he accused the BJP of lying and alleged that the "bogus" and "misleading" report has been "cooked up" at its office and submitted by the Central government in the apex court.

Kejriwal of "heinous crime" and "criminal negligence". In reply to the allegation, Kejriwal took to Twitter to say, "My crime — I fought for the breath of my two crore people. When you were doing an election rally, I was



Manish Sisodia

slammed the Delhi government over it, terming it to be a "heinous crime".

"The truth about this report is that it does not exist. This alleged report which is being used by BJP to senselessly slam CM Arvind Kejriwal does not exist," Sisodia said. — PTI

awake all night arranging for oxygen. I fought, pleaded to get oxygen for people." "People have lost their loved ones due to lack of oxygen. Don't call them liars, they are feeling so bad," he said in a tweet in Hindi. — PTI

Shoe godown fire: Forensic team collects human remains

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 25

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

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

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

The fire broke out in the building, where shoes were assembled and packed for sale, on Monday and 35 fire

tenders and around 140 fire-fighters were pressed into service to douse the blaze.

Deputy commissioner of police (Outer) Parvinder Singh said, "One set of human remains has been collected from the second floor of the building. No identification is possible. The remains have been sent to a mortuary for preliminary autopsy."

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

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

Shopkeeper shot dead in Delhi

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 25

A 36-year-old man was shot dead allegedly by a group of men inside his shop in west Delhi's Raghbir Nagar on Friday, police said. The victim has been identified as Vinod Bhati.

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

Around noon, some men came on two motorcycles entered Bhati's shop and shot him. He was declared brought dead at Balaji Action Hospital.



International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking

June 26, 2021



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SHORT TAKES

Actor Payal Rohatgi arrested in Gujarat

Ahmedabad: Bollywood actor Payal Rohatgi was arrested by the Ahmedabad city police on Friday for allegedly threatening the residents of her housing society, an official said. An FIR was registered against her on Thursday based on a complaint lodged by society chairman Dr Parag Shah, inspector A.S. Roy of satellite police station said. The 36-year-old actor, who has been living with her parents in a posh society in Satellite area for the last over one year, was booked for uttering obscene words (IPC Section 294-b), intentional insult (504) and criminal intimidation (506), said Roy, quoting the FIR. In his complaint, Shah claimed that Rohatgi has been harassing society members, including children for some time, and she once even threatened children that she would “break their legs” if they played in the common area of the society. — PTI

Akhil Gogoi given parole to meet mom

Guwahati: An NIA court on Friday granted two-day parole to Independent Sivasagar MLA Akhil Gogoi on humanitarian grounds to visit his mother and son. NIA special judge Pranjal Das, after hearing a petition filed by Mr Gogoi's lawyers requesting permission for him to visit his family members in Guwahati and Jorhat, and people of Sivasagar, granted him parole for 48 hours which he can take as per his convenience. The court, however, allowed Mr Gogoi to visit only his ailing mother in Jorhat and his son, who has recently recovered from Covid-19, in Guwahati but forbade him from meeting the people of his constituency due to the prevailing pandemic situation. The Rajjor Dal chief can choose his parole days, and as he is still jailed, he will be escorted by security forces. — PTI

Zambian held with cocaine worth ₹7cr

Mumbai: The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) has busted a trans-continental drug racket with the seizure of cocaine worth ₹7.35 crore from a Zambian woman passenger at the Mumbai international airport, an official said on Friday. The woman, Emile Mulinde, seemed to be acting as a ‘mule’ (drug carrier), he said. Mulinde was intercepted by a DRI team after her arrival here from Addis Ababa on Thursday. A special pocket in the ladies purse in her checked-in baggage was found to have 700 grams of cocaine inside, the official said. The contraband was worth ₹7.35 crore in the illicit market, he said, adding that the woman was booked under the NDPC Act. — PTI

48 Delta Plus cases...

■ **Continued from Page 1** Amid scare about the new variant, Maharashtra government has started re-imposing restrictions on the movement of people. The state is aspiring to vaccinate 70 per cent of its eligible population as fast as it can and flying squads have been deployed to check Covid-19 rule violations. Shops and restaurants can now open only till 4 pm and suburban trains will remain out of bounds for the general public. Meanwhile, ICMR chief

Minister attacks Twitter

■ **Continued from Page 1** failed to provide any prior notice before denying me access to my own account.” Twitter and the government have been at loggerheads over multiple instances in the past few months. The new rules for social networking websites, which include appointing India-based compliance executives and other conditions, have led to a protracted feud, raising concerns that Twitter may no longer enjoy protection against user-generated content. “Further, it is now apparent why Twitter is refusing to comply with the Intermediary Guidelines because if Twitter does comply, it will be unable to arbitrarily deny access to an individual’s account which does not suit their agenda,” Mr Prasad wrote. As Twitter invoked the US Digital Millennium Copyright Act, Mr Prasad said: “The issue

■ PM’s initiative has raised a lot of expectations across J&K, says ex-IAS officer Shah Faesal
Leaders failed to speak for J&K, feel people

YUSUF JAMEEL
SRINAGAR, JUNE 25

The sequel of Thursday’s all-party meet on Jammu and Kashmir is a huge disappointment for many people in the Union Territory (UT) who took to social media platform to ridicule the invitees for their perceived failure in presenting the case of the people they claim to represent before Prime Minister Narendra Modi “expressly”.

More importantly, as some of them pointed out, the mainstream leaders from the Valley did not speak in unison on the vital issue of restoration of the erstwhile state’s special status with some of them taking refuge under the pretext of it being sub judice. “The BJP leaders, including ministers, have been repeatedly and vociferously saying Articles 370

and 35A can’t come back even as the matter is before the Supreme Court. If it is not sub judice for them why are some of our so-called leaders so apologetic about it?” asked one of them

Senior journalist Altaf Husain tweeted, “All-party meet on Kashmir yields nothing. Some leaders have, by their statements after the meeting, proved that they are collaborators. Others have proved they are spineless and inconsequential”.

But Mushtaq Ahmed Alaqaband, a Srinagar resident, disagreed with him. He said, “I don’t think major political decisions can be made in a single meeting, but require a continuous and comprehensive negotiation process, and Thursday’s meeting was the beginning”.

Arshad Ahmed, another resident, said, “People



Prime Minister’s initiative has raised a lot of expectations across J&K. Everyone I spoke to from Kashmir told me that something good is happening after a long time

— Shah Faesal, Former IAS officer

here as well in Jammu had attached several hopes with the meeting. But once again, they have been disappointed.”

Elaborating, he said, “If you wanted to win the hearts of the Kashmiris you should have sent through these leaders a gift, big enough to restore their faith in you and these leaders as well. Had you done it, people would have begun to trust you, these meetings and the entire system.”

All the 14 prominent leaders of J&K mainstream political parties

who attended the meeting said they raised the issues like the demand for restoration of its special status and statehood, release of political prisoners, addressing the economic distress to the urgency of resumption of peace dialogue with Pakistan and cross-LoC trade. But, as was confessed by Mohammad Yousuf Tarigami, CPIM leader and chief spokesperson of People’s Alliance for Gupkar Declaration, “Prime Minister heard us all very patiently but did not give

Raut seeks CBI, ED probes into Ayodhya land deal

SONU SHRIVASTAVA
MUMBAI, JUNE 25

Shiv Sena spokesperson Sanjay Raut on Friday demanded a probe by the central agencies into alleged financial irregularities in the purchase of land by the Ram temple trust in Ayodhya. The Sena leader said that it was a “fit case” for investigation by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Enforcement Directorate (ED). He also suggested the BJP to pass a resolution in its executive meeting to investigate the land deal.

The BJP’s state unit had passed a resolution on Thursday demanding CBI investigation against Maharashtra deputy chief minister Ajit Pawar and state transport minister Anil Parab in connection



Sanjay Raut

with the Sachin Waze case. Earlier the Sena had demanded an intervention of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and RSS chief Dr Mohan Bhagwat to ensure there is no scam in the construction of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya.

The Sena spokesperson said that he was surprised that the BJP had passed a resolution for a probe against Mr Pawar and Mr Parab in its state executive meeting.

M. Raut said that if the case of corruption in land

Kashmir, said, “I would, more particularly from the perspective of a Kashmiri, say it is somewhat a disappointment because the meeting, in a way, gave greater clearance to Delhi than the leadership here. It helped Narendra Modi to build up his own image at the country level and internationally also”.

However, former IAS officer Shah Faesal said, “Prime Minister’s initiative has raised a lot of expectations across J&K”. He claimed, “Everyone I spoke to from Kashmir told me that something good is happening after a long time.”

Referring to the Prime Minister’s assurance to the participants of Thursday’s meeting that he wants to gap *‘Dilli ki duri, Dil ki duri*’ (the detach from Delhi and the heart),” he said, “May the duri end soon”.

Kerala: Women’s panel chief steps down

GILVESTER ASSARY
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, JUNE 25

Kerala State Women’s Commission chairperson M.C. Josephine resigned on Friday following public outrage over her highly insensitive remarks against a woman petitioner during a live television programme of a Malayalam channel on Wednesday.

The CPM state secretariat met at the party headquarters AKG Centre here on Friday morning to discuss the matter. Ms Josephine, who is also a secretariat member, explained her position before the leadership. She informed the party about the apology tendered by her on Thursday evening.

“Josephine explained her side at the meeting and offered to step down from the post of Chairperson,” said CPM acting state secretary Mr A Vijayaraghavan at a press conference held after the meeting. When asked whether the party had sought her resignation, he said, “Josephine offered to resign from the post.”

During a TV programme that was held following back-to-back dowry harassment deaths in the state, the woman said that she was being harassed by her husband and mother-in-law. Josephine asked her if she had complained about the matter to the police.

When the woman said she hadn’t lodged the complaint yet, the chairperson shot back angrily; in that case, you suffer.” Josephine was rude to her throughout the brief conversation.

The chairperson’s insensitive remarks went viral on social media, triggering huge public outrage.

TN fishermen escape Lankan firing

Rameswaram (TN), June 25: Nine fishermen escaped unhurt when Sri Lankan naval personnel allegedly opened fire on their boats while they were returning from the Palk Straits after fishing. At least four boats in which they were on were riddled by bullets fired by the Lankan Navy and one bullet each was recovered from two boats, Arokiyam, fishermen’s representative and also a fisher, told reporters here.

“Luckily, nine of us escaped unhurt,” he said. A fisheries department official said he has received a complaint from

fishermen, seeking action to protect them.

They had to face the “Lankan bullets” on their return early on Friday and the island Navy also fired in the air, the representative alleged, adding they had set out for fishing on Thursday in more than 200 boats with 1,500 fishermen.

This is the third instance of “Lankan Navy opening fire” on fishermen in recent times and they were fishing on the Indian side of Palk Straits, he said.

The two bullets that were found in boats were handed over to fisheries

■ **THIS IS** the third instance of the ‘Lankan Navy opening fire’ on fishermen in recent times and they were fishing on the Indian side of Palk Straits, Arokiyam, fishermen’s representative said

authorities, he added. Video clips of boats riddled by bullets surfaced in the social media as well. Rajya Sabha MP Anbumani Ramadoss tweeted saying though nine fishermen thankfully escaped unhurt, their boats were damaged. The Central government

should condemn this and should provide compensation for damaged boats.

Condemning the firing, Mr Ramadoss said the Centre should not tolerate such attacks anymore.

“To find a permanent solution, the Centre should take legal steps to retrieve Katchatheevu (an islet) that was given to Sri Lanka on a platter,” he said.

Ramanathapuram MP, K. Navas Kani, meanwhile, has written to external affairs minister S. Jaishankar, seeking appropriate steps to prevent fishermen from being targeted. — PTI

‘Delhi made exaggerated claims for O2’

■ **Continued from Page 1** one should not play politics over issues that are in court,” Mr Sisodia said. The interim report prepared by the SC panel has already been submitted to the apex court.

The top court had on May 6 named a sub-group for carrying out the audit exercise for Delhi’s health infrastructure and allocation of oxygen and said that it shall consists of Dr Guleria, Sandeep Budhiraja of Max Healthcare and two IAS officers not below the rank of joint secretary -- one each from the Centre and the Delhi government.

From Delhi government, principal home secretary Bhupinder Bhalla was part of the committee, and from the Central government Jal Shakti ministry’s joint secretary Subodh Yadav and Sanjay Kumar Singh of the Petroleum

and Oxygen Safety Organisation (PESO).

Reacting to the alleged report, Mr Kejriwal said his only “crime” was that he had “fought for the breath of two crore people”. He also said that those who lost their loved ones due to the shortage of oxygen should not be called “liars” and that when the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was busy with election campaigns, he was fighting and begging to arrange oxygen for the people of Delhi.

Several BJP leaders, including Union ministers, attacked Mr Kejriwal with party spokesperson Sambit Patra citing the report to note that the Delhi government had demanded 1,140 MT of the life-saving gas during the peak of the second wave. “The requirement was 351 MT even if the panel went by the Delhi government’s

formula, while it was 289 MT according to the Central government’s estimate,” he said.

“It was discussed that there is a gross discrepancy (about 4 times) in that the actual oxygen consumption (1,140MT) was about 4 times higher than the versus calculated consumption by formula for bed capacity (289MT),” says the interim report of the sub-group which the Centre has submitted to the Supreme Court along with recommendations of the National Task Force on oxygen.

The panel in its report pointed out that four model hospitals in Delhi — Singhal Hospital, Aruna Asaf Ali Hospital, ESIC Model Hospital and Liferay Hospital -- claimed extremely high oxygen consumption with very few beds and the claims

appeared to be clearly erroneous, leading to extremely skewed information and significantly higher oxygen requirement for Delhi.

The panel, which submitted its interim report to the top court, said that during the meetings of the sub-group, it was repeatedly noted that there was gross discrepancy in the data recorded from proformas.

Additional secretary, department of promotion of Indian industry and internal trade, expressed anguish over the way the data was collated by the Delhi government. “It is still not clear on what basis had an allocation of 700 MT been sought by the government of Delhi in the Supreme Court of India when collated data had so many errors and it took an oxygen audit to point out the same,” the 23-page interim report said.

PM Modi criticises Congress

■ **Continued from Page 1** arbitrary Modi regime”.

Hitting back at Mr Modi, Mr Surjewala tweeted, “Says a PM, who is synonymous with three ‘S’ — Suppress, Stifle and Subjugate.”

“A PM-who has undermined Parliament, A PM who has disdain for Constitution, A PM who has eroded Institutions, A PM-who has trampled

Democracy, shouldn’t preach, for India is under ‘Modi-gency’ for 7 years,” he alleged.

Union home minister Amit Shah said the Congress “murdered the largest democracy in the world” for its selfishness and arrogance of power. He said Emergency was imposed to trample on voices that were raised against a family.

BJP president J.P. Nadda paid tributes to those who fought against the Emergency while suffering numerous atrocities.

Union textiles minister Smriti Irani said the Emergency era “saw illegal arrests of 1.4 lakh-plus people, muzzling of the freedom of press and expression, silence of the judicial system and umpteen number of atroci-

ties on innocent citizens.”

The Emergency was imposed by then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi for a 21-month period from 1975 to 1977, when curbs were imposed on the fundamental rights of people. It was lifted in 1977 and during the then Lok Sabha polls, the Congress faced its first defeat since Independence by the combined Opposition of

ED raids Deshmukh...

■ **Continued from Page 1** of Investigation.

The CBI registered a case against Mr Deshmukh following a preliminary inquiry against him. The high court had ordered the CBI to conduct the inquiry on the complaint of city based lawyer Jayshree Patil.

Ms Patil had filed a petition seeking inquiry into the allegations made by Param Bir Singh, former Mumbai police commissioner, in a letter written to Maharashtra chief minister Uddhav Thackeray alleging corruption charges against Mr Deshmukh. Ms Patil had filed the petition claiming that the police

didn’t take any action on her complaint against Mr Deshmukh.

Mr Deshmukh, who had to resign from his post in April following the allegations, has denied any wrongdoing.

The agency’s probe is focused on the allegation that illicit funds were generated in the transfer; posting of police personnel in Maharashtra and if illegal extortion was done by the cops as claimed by Mr Singh in his complaint.

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

SC annuls HC’s Narada order

■ **Continued from Page 1** high court to first decide the aforesaid applications of the petitioners herein, for taking the counter affidavit/affidavits in response on record, before proceeding to decide the merits of the case.”

The court further said that to avoid any prejudice to any of the parties, the June 9 order “shall stand annulled” and “the high court shall decide the matter de-novo”.

Similarly, the Supreme Court ordered that the CBI, if it so desired, would file a reply to the applications by June 29, 2021, after serving an advance copy to Mr

Ghatak and the State of West Bengal by June 28.

The hearing on the CBI’s plea for transfer of cases outside West Bengal and other matters are due to be heard by the high court on June 29.

In its June 9 order that was challenged by Mr Ghatak, the high court had said the chief minister, law minister and the state government had “waited for the arguments in the case to be substantially completed before seeking to place on record their pleadings in response... It is nothing else but filling the lacunae or supporting the accused”.

THE ASIAN AGE

26 JUNE 2021

J&K: Delimitation, polls on; statehood is carrot

There was no official agenda set for Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s meeting with leaders of mainstream parties of Jammu and Kashmir last Thursday. That was evidently done to let the Valley politicians steam off if they so wished about the events of August 5, 2019 when the state’s constitutional autonomy was taken away and its status reduced to that of a Union territory. But that does not mean Delhi did not have an agenda. And it is on this scheme of things that the PM was apparently able to secure the agreement of the Kashmiri leaders, although no papers appear to have been signed.

It’s three years since the last popular government was pulled down. In this time no major objectives cited as justification for ending J&K’s constitutional status-ending of terrorism, rapid development, and squelching of the separatist mindset (which does influence a segment of the population) have been achieved, although the Union home ministry has made extravagant claims. An elected government had to be installed.

To make that possible, the very politicians who were locked up in August 2019, and called the “Gupkar gang”, had to be persuaded to engage in dialogue with the PM. And they did. This is perhaps the Modi government’s singular achievement. But it is hard to bet on the people. It is useful to remember that alienation in the Valley has never been so complete. Still, as a rule the people of Kashmir do not refuse dialogue, and that is what we just saw. Does this mean that a chapter of hope has opened after the darkness that descended two years ago? Hardly. In no way can Mr Modi’s effort be compared with the mood that captured the Valley when another PM — in a speech in Srinagar — spoke of meeting the aspirations of the people in a spirit of “insaniyat, jamhooriyat, Kashmiriyat”. Alas, the present dispensation in Delhi lacks credibility in Kashmir as well as in Hindu-majority Jammu.

However, people in J&K are fed up with bureaucratic rule in which they have no voice. They have been hungering for an early Assembly election, and their politicians could not have turned against the popular mood. But the promise of Assembly polls comes with a caveat — that there would be a fresh delimitation exercise in the UT while the national-level delimitation is slated for 2026.

A plausible reason for this is the decades-old demand of the Sangh Parivar for more Hindu-dominated constituencies in the Muslim-majority state in the belief that this might offer a chance to have a Hindu CM. Will this hope of the BJP materialise after delimitation? That is an open question.

In light of the Thursday meeting, delimitation and state polls are now officially on the cards, and the Valley’s main politicians appear to have lent the process their sanction. Without their endorsement these processes would lack credibility.

In spite of impassioned appeals by senior elements among those gathered for the discussion with the PM, the Centre has not budged on restoring J&K’s statehood. The official mantra is this would happen at an “appropriate time”. This suggests that J&K will be run from the Centre as a UT even after the Assembly poll. This leaves questions: Is the election idea deceptive? Is it what the people want? In the final analysis, will Kashmir politicians agree to such an election? The fundamental subject of restoring J&K’s autonomy is before the Supreme Court, and that was cited as a reason to stymie discussion on it on Thursday.

McAfee: Fame and misfortune

The rich and famous may be destined to living their lives in a goldfish bowl unless they get obsessively reclusive. The rich also tend to come in all shapes, sizes and lifestyles with the only constant in their lives being that they are invariably led under public scrutiny. The cybersecurity pioneer John McAfee did not, however, fall into any well-known stereotypes of the rich with their lavish lifestyles whose privacy is invariably invaded by the tabloids, especially when their marriages run into the rocks as they often tend to in that charmed circle.

McAfee was an unusual man who made his fame and a bit of fortune when the first major computer virus named “Brain” hit the web in 1986 and he devised ways to combat it. To his misfortune he left the company in 1994 long after which Intel took it over, in 2011, for \$7.68 billion and built up a customer base of 500 million. McAfee’s expertise in computer security meant he made a small pile himself but he said he lost most of it in the 2008 crash. In a replay of the sour grapes fable, he knocked McAfee for what it had become without him but all that brought him was 10 million viewers and more notoriety than fame.

His troubles as a disillusioned millionaire may serve as a general warning to all of his ilk. He seemed to lose his self control when suspected of shooting a neighbour in a tiny island off Belize because that man may have poisoned four of his dogs. He somehow emerged from it unscathed until he ran afoul of the US tax authorities. Avoiding income tax may be a plaything of the rich but McAfee, once a wannabe US presidential candidate, simply refused to pay taxes on principle and ended up in a Spanish jail where he said he didn’t like the food. The fear of extradition to 30 years in a US prison pushed him into taking his own life, a final warning then that fame and fortune can lead to Shakespearean tragedy too.

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Farrukh Dhondy
Cabbages & Kings



Of ‘flat earth’ & science denial: New orthodoxy of intolerance

“The poets have all claimed the wine From Rumi to Hafiz I asked if they meant the draught divine And they said “mind your own biz!” Now Bachchoo cries out in vain to Saki Who replies with a fiendish grin “Abh sab khuttam, Koochh nahi baki The wages of your sin!”

— From **The Regrets of Messrs Rowe, Rowe and K Gumby-Harer**, by Bachchoo

Think, gentle reader, as you skim this column, of Galileo, one of the fathers of science and hence of freedom from assertive superstition. He looked through telescopes and observed the movement of the planets and the sun. He proceeded to assert, from his observations, that the sun didn’t circle the earth but, contrary to the firmly held doctrines and teachings of the Church, that our planet revolved and rotated, circling the sun, giving rise to day and night and to the seasons.

All hell broke loose on Twitter and

Instagram. The bigots of Catholicism accused him of blasphemy! The earth doesn’t move, they insisted. The outcry led the leaders of the Church to arrest poor Galileo and subject him to a trial. If this pioneer of truth had any supporters at the time, they might have pointed out to the court, and indeed to the world, that Galileo had not called for the castration or execution of those who believed that the sun went round the earth. He hadn’t even called for the banning of all documents or teaching materials which asserted that the earth was flat or that it didn’t move.

Nevertheless, he was tried for merely saying what he had scientifically deduced. He was aware that if they found him guilty of blasphemy, he could be put to death. Such was the power of the prevalent orthodoxy. Realising this, Galileo confessed to the bigots of the Inquisition that he recanted his blasphemous outburst. Of course, the earth was the centre of the universe and, as God’s central creation, didn’t move a millimetre. He may not have been applauded by the court, but he was certainly spared twenty lashes of the whip or being burned at the

stake.

The story goes that, true to his beliefs, as he left the court, he muttered to himself, or perhaps to his God if he still believed in Him, “*eppur si muove*” — and yet it moves!

I don’t suppose one can quite call her the Galileo of our times but, gentle reader, here follows the story of an artist called Jess de Wahl who this week hit the headlines through a controversy which she had sparked.

Ms de Wahl is an embroidery artist, and her work is famous enough and deemed good enough to be adopted by and sold in the gallery shop of the Royal Academy of Arts. The RA is probably the premier institution run by artists of all sorts. Their permanent exhibition and other occasional displays are among the most respectable, reviewed and revered in Britain.

Apart from excellence in her floral patterns, Ms de Wahl declares a devoted, thematic commitment to feminist principles and to feminist radical activism through art. But! But she doesn’t believe that men and women can through assertion, surgery, hormone treatment or all of these, change

their gender. She expressed her scepticism in a blog. She was very careful to assert that she absolutely supported the right of people to think as they like and for the political and social rights of everyone, including men who assert that they are women or women who assert that they are really men. Her reservations were about the scientific fact that you are born and grow with one gender determined by the chromosomes in your thirty trillion cells. I suppose the harshest way of putting it is that “trans-women are not really women and trans-men are not really men!”

The trans community’s representatives, if there are such people, took exception to her expressing this view. Eight people wrote to the Royal Academy to point out that the RA’s professed ethical stance was to respect and include, etc etc. The RA responded hastily and removed and banned all Ms Wahl’s exhibits and work from their shop, labelling her “transphobic”.

Ms Wahl objected, saying she had not been in any sense the perpetrator of a “hate crime” and that her freedom to express a scientifically valid view

should be respected. There was, from her supporters, some mention of suing the RA for transgressing equality laws. No such action has yet been taken.

Following this row, Ms Wahl has received literally thousands of texts, tweets or whatever in support of her stance and also some nasty ones wishing that she was dead.

Her stance follows that of Harry Potter writer J.K. Rowling and feminist philosopher Germaine Greer, among others. It is also supported by feminists who object to trans-women entering women’s athletic competitions and even challenge the idea that trans-women should use women’s changing rooms and toilets and be confined in women’s prisons when they offend.

The strictures against Ms de Wahl are part of a new orthodoxy of intolerance. Of course, individuals can assert what they please about their own gender or sexuality — though white people asserting that they are black would meet with the same intensity of strictures the orthodoxy favours. That “of course” should include the right to publicly assert scientific facts. The earth is not flat simply because I say so!

Subhani



Do Indians and our govt really care about sports?



Shobhaa’s Take

India rediscovered legendary athlete Milkha Singh after he died of Covid-19 complications at a Chandigarh hospital just five days after he lost Nirmal, his wife of 58 years, to the same disease. An avalanche of tributes poured in, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi calling him a “colossal sportsman who captured the nation’s imagination”. Several flowery tributes followed, but one thing that struck me amid all this gush was the sad fact that this outstanding sportsman, who brought so much fame and glory to India when he “flew” on the track, had only got the Padma Shri back in 1969, and nothing since. He declined the Arjuna Award and sulked publicly, hinting he expected a Padma Bhushan. We all know how Padma awards work; but surely years later Milkha should have been “upgraded”!

We can still do it! So many other sports stars have been richly rewarded for their achievements. Bharat Ratna Sachin Tendulkar, for example. No disrespect, but if a world-class cricketer can get the country’s highest civilian award, why not an internationally recognised track star? There is talk of a posthumous award for Milkha, but frankly posthumous awards have little meaning. The only people who benefit are family members. The recipient passes away without the thrill and joy of being publicly feted. Posthumous awards are a waste of time; those deserving should be celebrated when they are hale and hearty and can cherish the honour with their loved ones.

Milkha Singh must have been a fairly modest man: a huge attribute in today’s times when every

second person is a brazen hustler. Had Milkha been shrewder or more calculating, he would have milked his awe-inspiring status and demanded all sorts of privileges, like many others. I watched *Bhaag Milkha, Bhaag* thrice in 2013. For one, I was a track athlete myself, and know what it takes to breast that tape and create new records. Farhan Akhtar played Milkha in the biopic, which grossed over ₹100 crores. Apparently, Milkha asked for ₹1 as his fee, but insisted that a share of the profits go to his foundation. Akhtar did a convincing job of not just acquiring a runner’s taut frame, but sensitively portraying a runner’s anxieties and vulnerabilities. The man behind the movie, Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra, said of Milkha: “He believed there are no short cuts if you want to be the best in the world.”

It’s not too late to course correct. Governments and sports bodies the world over are commissioning statues of living sports heroes — Rafael Nadal recently posed in front of his magnificent statue that was unveiled at Roland Garros as Rafa fans worldwide cheered and applauded the legend, winner of 20 Grand slams. In India, the politics of erecting statues of public figures is mired in controversy. It’s bad enough that we have to endure the mediocrity of *netas* while they are alive. It’s much worse to have precious urban spaces blocked by ugly statues of awful people whose “contribution” is dodgy at best. I’m sure nobody would question an appropriate statue of “The Flying Sikh” (a title given to him by Pakistan’s Ayub Khan) outside Chandigarh airport. There is a wax statue of his at Delhi’s Madame Tussaud’s

museum. But is that really enough? Milkha Singh was orphaned during Partition and saw five members of his family being butchered. He arrived as a refugee in Delhi and joined the Indian Army after abandoning plans to become a dacoit out of sheer frustration! He went on to bring glory to the nation as a four-time Asian Games gold medallist. His 400 metres timing of 45.6 seconds was unbroken for 38 years. What a story for youngsters to derive inspiration from!

India really needs to value its sporting greats and reward them suitably. Since I am one of the growing voices saying “No” to the Tokyo Olympics (23 July-8 August 2021), I read sports minister Kiren Rijiju’s comments on India’s participation with interest. “This time we are aiming high, with full confidence and I believe we should do better than any of our previous performances.” Wait a minute, Sirji. Our “best” show was way back in 2012, when we came back with six measly medals. Minister *saab* is expecting a record haul and says he has interacted with most of our elite players and Olympians. For the record, Mr Rijiju’s ministry spent ₹1,000 crores in the past four years preparing for the Olympics.

While I admire his faith and am also hoping for a decent showing this year, despite the pandemic with all its challenges, it must be said that our contingent came back with two medals from the 2016 Rio Games (where China won 70). At that time, I was slaughtered across the social media for “criticising” our athletes for their dismal performance.

This outstanding sportsman had only got the Padma Shri back in 1959, and nothing since. He declined the Arjuna Award. We all know how Padma awards work; but surely Milkha should have been ‘upgraded’!

Our athletes are only as good as their support system. Mr Rijiju is a smart, young, dynamic politician (future Prime Minister material). He has as much riding on our medal haul as the athletes themselves, who have trained hard for this momentous event.

The problem is our casual attitude towards sports. Apart from cricket, almost no other sporting activity is “recognised” or encouraged as enthusiastically. Milkha Singh’s son Jeev Milkha Singh (also an Arjuna Award winner) is arguably one of India’s best golfers. We have our star tennis players and more recently, badminton is also receiving its due, along with table tennis. Our staple — hockey — where we used to be world leaders — has been relegated to a less hallowed position, after we failed to win any significant title after dominating the game for decades. The mindset of most Indian parents has not shifted sufficiently to support the sporting dreams of their children. Golf and tennis are seen as elitist sports that require generous financial support. Sports scholarships are hard to come by. Talented athletes have it tough. It’s only now that we see women boxers and wrestlers coming into their own and shining at global events. As are female shooters. Archery is finding takers across the country, but in terms of commercial success, the megabucks are made by cricketers, and cricketers alone. With our Olympics contingent all set to compete in the most prestigious sporting event on earth, here’s wishing them love and luck. Milkha Singh titled his autobiography *The Race of My Life*, and the nation ran it with him. His race ended on June 15, 2021. It’s time to chorus “Bhaag India, Bhaag”, and hope Mr Rijiju’s prediction of a rich Olympics’ haul goes beyond wishful thinking.

Instagram handle: @ShobhaaDe; Twitter: @DeShobhaa

LETTERS

KABUL CONUNDRUM

This refers to the editorial, “Cutting Kabul’s Gordian knot” (June 25). The Taliban are violating the peace pact by attacking the Afghan forces. If the US and Nato pull out by September, they will capture the power by force. New Delhi has every reason to worry about the massive investments made in Afghanistan since it rallied behind the Ashraf Ghani government whose legitimacy has been eroded. Moreover, they are now being armtwisted to make concessions in Jammu and Kashmir. India must revisit its Afghan policy.

Sankar Paul
Chakdaha, West Bengal
‘INDIAN’ VARIANT

THE DELTA PLUS VARIANT of SARS-CoV-2 appears to be spreading its tentacles far and wide. A day after Karnataka reported the first case of the variant in Mysuru, the health authorities detected another case in Bengaluru on Wednesday. Both patients have no history of foreign travel. Health experts have discovered 40 cases of the deadly variant in India, and they have rightly warned against throwing caution to the winds. Stress on surveillance, enhanced testing, quick contract-tracing and priority vaccination where such a strain exists could indeed prove handy.

N.J. Ravi Chander
Bengaluru

HAIL SAO JOAO

WHILE THE FEAST of Sao Joao (St John the Baptist) was celebrated across the Catholic world on June 24, Goa is the only place where it was marked by revellers leaping into wells. On this day, groups of Goans go around singing traditional Konkani songs accompanied by instruments like the ghumat, mhadalem, kansallem and guitar. Sao Joao is also a thanksgiving for newly-weds, and for families with babies born during the preceding year. Participants from Chapora and Zhor villages of Anjuna and Badem in Assagao and Siolim would come in boats to the chapel of Sao Joao in Pereira Vaddo, Siolim, every year to pay homage to the saint. The festival is known as Sanjao in East Indian Marathi and celebrated in the East Indian villages of Mumbai.

Jubel D’Cruz
Mumbai

SHORT TAKES

UK POLICE SEIZE \$114 MILLION IN CRYPTOCURRENCY

London: London police have seized a trove of cryptocurrency worth £114 million (\$159,000) that criminals were planning to launder, the UK's largest-ever seizure of digital currency.

The Metropolitan Police said late Thursday that detectives had seized the digital currency after receiving information about the transfer of criminal assets.

The statement did not say what type of cryptocurrency was involved.

"As technology and online platforms develop, some are moving to more sophisticated methods of laundering their profits", said deputy assistant commissioner Graham McNulty.

"But we have highly trained officers and specialist units working day and night to remain one step ahead," McNulty added.

FIVE DEAD, MANY HURT IN CZECH REPUBLIC TORNADO

Prague: A rare tornado believed to be the most devastating in the Czech Republic's modern history has torn through the country's south-east, killing at least five people and injuring hundreds, rescue services and police said on Friday.

The tornado touched down late Thursday as strong thunderstorms hit the entire country. Seven towns and villages sustained heavy damage that included buildings turned to rubble and overturned cars. The storms were accompanied by hail which in some cases was as big as tennis balls.

Hrusky Deputy Mayor Marek Babizs told Czech public radio that half of his town was almost completely wiped out. "The church is without the tower, the elementary school has no roof and insulation any more, only walls remain from what were houses ... It's really terrible." Some 360 extra police officers were dispatched to the area, along with army personnel.

FIRE KILLS 18 AT CHINESE MARTIAL ARTS SCHOOL

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

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

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

Four people were severely injured and 12 sustained minor wounds in the fire, the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post newspaper quoted local official media reports as saying.

An eyewitness said he heard the children screaming for help. "All the children screamed and we tried to help by pouring water on the fire, but it didn't stop. It eventually got so fierce there was simply no way for adults to get close," the eyewitness said.

SINGAPORE SHIP CATCHES FIRE IN INDIAN OCEAN

Colombo: A fire broke out on a container ship sailing toward Singapore in the Indian Ocean, the Sri Lankan Navy said on Friday, a week after a cargo ship carrying tonnes of chemicals sank near the country's main port in Colombo nearly a month after catching fire.

Navy spokesperson Indika de Silva said the Liberian-flagged MSC Messina ship had left the port of Colombo on June 22 heading for Singapore and it caught fire outside the island's international maritime borders. He said the Navy was alerted to the ship's fire early hours of Friday and since the ship is still within Sri Lanka's search and rescue limits they were obliged to respond.

The fire was reported from the engine compartment of the vessel, which is currently located some 483 nautical miles away from Kirinda, the southern most tip of the island, the Navy spokesman said. A merchant vessel in the proximity had been alerted to provide assistance and at this point it was unlikely that Sri Lanka Navy would be called upon to launch any rescue missions, the spokesperson said.

Over 160 missing in Miami mishap

Crews comb rubble of collapsed condo

Surfside (US), June 25:

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

With scores of firefighters working overnight to reach any possible survivors both from under and atop the remains of the building, hopes rested on how quickly crews using dogs and microphones to sift through the wreckage could complete their grim, yet delicate task.

"Every time we hear a sound, we concentrate on those areas," said Assistant Miami-Dade Fire Chief Raide Jadallah.

Three more bodies were removed overnight, and Miami-Dade Police Director Freddy Ramirez said authorities were working with the medical

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

Miami-Dade Mayor Daniella Levine Cava said rescuers were at "extreme risk" going through the rubble.

"Debris is falling on them as they do their work. We have structural engineers on site to ensure that they will not be injured, but they are proceeding because they are so motivated and they are taking extraordinary risk on the site every day," she said.

With searchers using saws and jackhammers to look for pockets large enough to hold a person, Levine Cava said there was still hope of finding people alive.

The missing at what was left of the 12-story Champlain Towers South included people from around the world: A beloved retired Miami-area teacher and his wife. Orthodox Jews from

Russia. Israelis. The sister of Paraguay's first lady. Others from South America.

State Sen. Jason Pizzo of Miami Beach told the *Miami Herald* he watched as tactical teams of six worked early Friday to sift through the debris. He said he saw one body taken in a yellow body bag and another that was marked. They were taken to a homicide unit tent that was set up along the beach.

Many people remained at the reunification center set up near the collapse site early Friday morning, awaiting results of DNA swabs that could help identify victims.

Officials said no cause for the collapse has been determined. Video of the collapse showed the center of the building appearing to tumble down first and a section nearest to the ocean teetering and coming down seconds later, as a huge dust cloud swallowed the neighborhood. — AP

N-deal: Iran told time running out

Paris, June 25:

The United States and France on Friday warned Iran that time was running out to return to a nuclear deal, voicing fear that Tehran's sensitive atomic activities could advance if talks drag on.

On the first high-level visit to Paris by President Joe Biden's administration, Secretary of State Antony Blinken and his French hosts saluted a new spirit of cooperation after four years of turbulence under Donald Trump.

But the two sides said that one key Biden promise — to return to the 2015 accord on the Iranian nuclear programme that was trashed by Trump — was at risk if the clerical regime does not make concessions during talks that have been going on for months in

Vienna. Blinken warned that the United States still had "serious differences" with Iran, which has kept negotiating since last week's presidential election won by hardliner Ebrahim Raisi.

"There will come a point, yes, where it will be very hard to return back to the standards set by the JCPOA," Blinken told reporters, using the formal name of the accord.

"We haven't reached that point — I can't put a date on it — but it's something that we're conscious of," Blinken warned that if Iran "continues to spin ever more sophisticated centrifuges" and steps up uranium enrichment, it will bring nearer the "breakout" time at which it will be dangerously close to the ability to develop a nuclear bomb. — AFP

Facing deportation, Indian youth seek White House aid

Washington, June 25:

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

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

A significantly large number of these parents are in a decades-long wait for a Green Card. A Green

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

The young Indians, led by Dip Patel, a clinical pharmacist in Illinois, surprised many of the congressmen and senators, who greeted them at the Capitol last week, as they were probably the first batch of lobbyists at the US Congress, after the recent lifting of social distancing restrictions by the Center for Diseases Control and Prevention (CDC).

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

out and self-deportation, was joined by Pareen Mhatre, 21, a senior at the University of Iowa majoring in Biomedical Engineering and minoring in Business Administration; Naga Raghav Sreeram, 21, a senior at the University of California, Davis majoring in Computer Science.

Lakshmi Parvathinathan, 18, a sophomore at Drexel University majoring in Biological Sciences; Sarvani Kunapareddy, 18, a rising freshman at the University of Illinois at Chicago majoring in Computer Science and French Ashley Pardo, 17, a rising freshman at the University of California, Berkeley studying Political Science and Human Rights also joined them. — PTI



Participants dance while being showered with water during the first Tel Aviv pride event since before the Covid-19 pandemic on Friday even as officials urged marchers to wear masks amid a surge in infections. Organisers called it the largest parade of its kind held worldwide since the outbreak of Covid-19.

Australia, Israel bring back mask rules as variant spreads

Sydney, June 25:

Australia and Israel, which had been successful in fending off Covid-19, reimposed restrictions on Friday as cases surged of the highly contagious Delta variant which also threatened Africa with a brutal third wave.

The centre of Australia's largest city Sydney entered lockdown, a shock for a population that had returned to relative normality after months of recording very few local cases, while vaccination success story Israel reimposed indoor mask-wearing less than two weeks after it lifted the measure.

And in Fiji, another country that saw early successes against the virus, health authorities admitted for the first time that Covid transmission is widespread in the community.

While vaccination campaigns have helped bring down infections in numerous — mostly wealthy — countries, the rise of the Delta variant which was first found in India has led to fears of new waves of a virus that has already killed nearly 3.9 million people.

In Australia, which has been one of the most successful nations in containing the Coronavirus after shutting its borders, around a million people in four eastern and central Sydney neighbourhoods were ordered to stay home for at least a week.

The premier of the state of New South Wales, Gladys Berejiklian, called it the "scariest period" since the pandemic began. — AFP

Covid-19 adapted to human cells: Study

Melbourne, June 25:

The SARS-CoV-2 virus, which causes Covid-19, is most ideally adapted to infect human cells, rather than bat or pangolin cells, according to a study which raises questions about the origin of the virus.

The researchers from Flinders University and La Trobe University in Australia used high-performance computer modelling of the form of the SARS-CoV-2 virus at the beginning of the pandemic to predict its ability to infect humans and 12 domestic and exotic animals.

The study, published in the journal Scientific Reports on Thursday, aimed to help identify any intermediate animal vector that may have played a role in transmitting a bat

virus to humans. The researchers used genomic data from the 12 animal species to painstakingly build computer models of the key ACE2 protein receptors for each species. These models were then used to calculate the strength of binding of the SARS-CoV-2 spike protein to each species' ACE2, which acts as the receptor for SARS-CoV-2 and allows it to infect the cell.

The results showed that SARS-CoV-2 bound to ACE2 on humans cells more tightly than any of the tested animal species, including bats and pangolins. The researchers explained that if one of the animals species tested was the origin, it would normally be expected to show the highest binding to the virus. — PTI

JAPANESE COLD CHAIN WORTH \$9.3 MN TO INDIA

Tokyo, June 25: Japan on Friday announced that it will provide \$9.3 million worth cold chain equipment and related assistance to India to help in the country's fight against Covid-19 pandemic.

The assistance, under Japan's Emergency Grant Aid scheme, will provide India with cold chain equipment including medical equipment such as cold-storage facilities, as "Last One Mile Support" to ensure vaccination in each country, through the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement.

India's coronavirus tally rose to 3,01,34,445 on Friday after a single-day rise of 51,667 Covid-19 infections. — PTI

UK health minister admits virus breach with embrace

London, June 25:

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

Health Secretary Matt Hancock, who has led the country's response to the Coronavirus pandemic, is the latest in a string of

government officials to be accused of breaching restrictions imposed on the rest of the population to curb the spread.

The tabloid *Sun* newspaper ran images appearing to show the married Hancock and a senior aide embracing in an office at the Department of Health. It said the closed circuit television images were

taken May 6 — 11 days before lockdown rules were eased to allow hugs and other physical contact with people outside one's own household. Hancock said in a statement that "I accept that I breached the social distancing guidance in these circumstances." "I have let people down and am very sorry," he said. — PTI

EU divided on meeting Putin

Brussels, June 25:

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

In a statement in the early hours of Friday morning, EU leaders said only that they "will explore formats and conditionalities of dialogue with Russia." There was no mention of any high-level meetings or

plans for a summit with Putin. The European Union is deeply divided in its approach to Moscow.

Russia is the EU's biggest natural gas supplier, and plays a key role in a series of international conflicts and issues linked to Europe's strategic interests, including the Iran nuclear deal, and conflicts in Syria and Libya. European heavyweight Germany has strong economic interests there, notably the NordStream 2 under-sea pipeline project, and a

number of countries, including France, are reluctant to continue waging a sanctions battle with Russia, including over the poisoning of opposition leader Alexei Navalny.

The EU is concerned that Putin is turning increasingly authoritarian and wants to distance himself from the West. Both the 27-nation trading bloc and the NATO military alliance are struggling to bring Russia to the table. U.S. President Joe Biden's meeting with Putin this month

was a rare exception.

"We have to deal with Russia, but being very cautious about the real intentions of Putin's regime," Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda told reporters at an EU summit in Brussels. "So far, we don't see any radical change in the pattern of behavior of Russia." "If, without any positive changes in the behavior of Russia, we start to engage, it will send very uncertain and bad signals," Nausėda said. — AP

UNHEALTHY | TREND Many countries saw rise in use of cannabis during the Coronavirus pandemic

275 mn used drugs worldwide in 2020: UN

Geneva, June 25: Around 36 million people suffered from drug use disorders as 275 million people used drugs worldwide in 2020, according to the 2021 World Drug Report which was released by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) on Thursday.

As per the report, in the last 24 years, cannabis potency had increased by as much as four times in parts of the world during the Covid-19 pandemic. In surveys of health professionals across 77 countries, 42 per cent asserted that cannabis use had increased.

"Lower perception of

drug use risks has been linked to higher rates of drug use, and the findings of UNODC's 2021 World Drug Report highlight the need to close the gap between perception and reality to educate young people and safeguard public health," said UNODC Executive Director Ghada Waly.

"The theme of this year's International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking is "Share facts on drugs. Save lives", emphasising the importance of strengthening the evidence base and raising public awareness, so that the international community, governments, civil



Afghanistan accounted for 85% of the global total of opium production in 2020, says Report. — AFP

society, families, and youth can make informed decisions, better target

efforts to prevent and treat drug use, and tackle world drug challenges," he

● **BETWEEN 2010-2019** the number of people using drugs increased by 22 per cent. Based on demographic changes alone, current projections suggest an 11 per cent rise in the number of people who use drugs globally by 2030 — and a marked increase of 40 per cent in Africa, due to its rapidly growing and young population.

According to the latest global estimates, about 5.5 per cent of the population aged between 15 and 64 years have used drugs at least once in the past year, while 36.3 million people, or 13 per cent of the total number of persons who use drugs, suffer from drug use disorders.

Globally, over 11 million people are estimated to inject drugs, half of whom

are living with Hepatitis C. Opioids continue to account for the largest burden of disease attributed to drug use.

The two pharmaceutical opioids most commonly used to treat people with opioid use disorders, methadone, and buprenorphine, have become increasingly accessible over the past two decades. The amount available for medical use has increased six-fold since 1999, from 557 million daily doses to 3,317 million by 2019, indicating that science-based pharmacological treatment is more available now than in the past.

— PTI

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	52,925.04	0.43
Nifty 50	15,860.40	0.44
S&P 500*	4,278.70	0.29
Dollar (₹)	74.20	-0.04
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.17	0.39
Euro (₹)	88.59	0.00
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	46,309▼66	0.14
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	76.07	0.67
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.028	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.502	0.015

* As of 8:30 PM IST

PNB HF voting okays red-flagged re-appointments

PNB Housing Finance shareholders have passed the resolutions regarding appointment of Harday Prasad as managing director and CEO and re-appointments of others on the company's board. Among various passed resolutions were re-appointments of independent directors (IDs) Chandrasekaran Ramakrishnan and Nilesh S. Vikramsey—whose re-induction was red flagged by a proxy advisory firm this month.

LIC, SBI Life pick up stake in Indian Bank under QIP



Life Insurance Corporation, SBI Life and Canara Bank were among the top investors picking up stakes in Indian Bank under a qualified institutional placement (QIP) that closed on Thursday, a regulatory filing said. LIC picked up 17.80 per cent, SBI Life Insurance 11.87 per cent, SBI Mutual Fund and its various schemes 11.87 per cent, SocGen and its various schemes 9.74 per cent and Canara Bank 5.93 per cent of the shares offered.

FAME Phase-II scheme extended by two years

The government said it has extended the second phase of FAME India scheme by two years till March 31, 2024, for faster adoption of electric mobility and development of its manufacturing ecosystem. The second phase of FAME (Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles) India scheme focuses on supporting electrification of public and shared transportation.

India Pesticides IPO subscribed 29 times

The IPO of India Pesticides Limited was subscribed 29 times on the closing day of the subscription. The Rs 800-crore IPO received bids for 56,07,11,650 shares against 1,93,10,345 shares on offer. The qualified institutional buyers category was subscribed 42.95 times, non-institutional investors 51.88 times, and those for retail individual investors 11.30 times. The offer was in a price range of Rs 290-296.

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■ Open offer makes it over ₹6,300-cr deal Pharmeasy to take reins of Thyrocare

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, JUNE 25

In yet another transaction in the online pharma space, digital healthcare company Pharmeasy on Friday announced it will acquire a controlling stake in diagnostic chain Thyrocare for Rs 4,546 crore in an all-cash deal. With this, the online space is witnessing acquisition of a listed entity by a start-up.

API Holdings, the parent of the Pharmeasy, will buy a 66.11 per cent stake in Thyrocare from A. Velumani, chairman and managing director of the company and his affiliates at Rs 1,300 per share, according to a statement.

The affiliates include A. Sundararaju, Amruta Velumani, Anand Velumani, Thyrocare Properties & Infrastructure, Pavilion Commercial, Thyrocare Publications, Sumathi Infra Project and Mahima Advertisings.

The acquisition of a majority stake in the listed entity will also see a subsidiary of API Holdings, Docon Technologies, making an open offer to acquire an additional 26 per cent stake of Thyrocare.

Docon Technologies along with API Holdings has announced an open offer for acquisition of up to 1,37,55,077 fully paid-up equity shares of face value of Rs 10 each from the public shareholders of Thyrocare Technologies, representing 26 per cent of the expanded voting share



capital, at a price of Rs 1,300 per equity share aggregating to total consideration of Rs 1,788 crore in cash, Thyrocare informed the exchanges. This takes the total value of the deal to about Rs 6,334 crore.

Velumani will be separately acquiring a minority non-controlling stake of less than 5 per cent in API as part of a series of equity investments by existing and new investors of API. According to reports, Velumani will be investing Rs 1,500 crore and hold a 4.9 per cent stake in API.

Shares of Thyrocare closed 6.23 per cent up at Rs 1,448.05 apiece on the BSE on Friday.

Pharmeasy has a user base of 12 million consumers, and a network of 6,000 digital consultation clinics and 90,000 partner retailers across the country. Thyrocare performs over 110 million diagnostic tests annually. It is the largest B2B player in the diagnostics space and has a network of 3,330 collec-

tion centres across 2,000 towns in India. "The unique reach and strength of Thyrocare in diagnostics blended with the young and dynamic team of PharmEasy will bring in better healthcare solutions for common man nationwide" said Velumani, CMD of Thyrocare.

Earlier in May, Pharmeasy had fully acquired Medlife after entering the unicorn club. API Holdings is reported to be strengthening its portfolio ahead of an initial public offering, probably in 12-18 months.

In other major deals in the online healthcare space in recent times, Tata Digital bought a majority stake in IMG Technologies. Reliance too had acquired a majority stake in Netmeds to enter the online pharmacy space.

According to consultants RedSeer, the e-health space touched a gross merchandise value of \$1.2 billion in FY20 and is estimated to have clocked a value of \$2 billion in FY21.

Bids invited for leasing out 16 railway land parcels

New Delhi, June 25: The Rail Land Development Authority (RLDA) has called for bids for leasing out 16 land parcels across the country with the aim of generating revenue of over Rs 1,900 crore.

Prominent among these 16 sites are Boulevard Road Colony in Delhi, land near Moula Ali Flyover in Secunderabad, Ramgarh Tal Colony in Gorakhpur, Lucknow Railway Station Redevelopment, plots at Gomti Nagar in Lucknow and at Salt Golah in Howrah.

These sites have been chosen due to their marketability and exclusive locations, which make them eminently suitable for commercial and residential development, the authority said.

RLDA will lease out these land parcels to prospective developers who will be mandated to develop these sites in line with local bye-laws," RLDA vice-chairman Ved Parkash Dudeja said.

The authority is targeting revenue generation of Rs 2,000 crore for the Indian Railways in 2021-22, up from Rs 352 crore the previous year.

RLDA is a statutory authority under the Ministry of Railways for the development of railway land.

Indian Railways has about 43,000 hectares of vacant land across India. —PTI

No tax liability on Covid-related receipts

FC BUREAU NEW DELHI, JUNE 25

Providing a much-needed tax concession to the people who may have received financial help from their employers and well-wishers for meeting expenses incurred for Covid-19 treatment, the government on Friday announced that there will be no tax liability on such amounts received.

"In order to ensure that no income-tax liability arises on this account, it has been decided to provide income-tax exemption to the amount received by a taxpayer for medical treatment from an employer or from any person for treatment of Covid-19 during FY2019-20 and subsequent years," the finance ministry said in a notification.

"Ex-gratia payments received by family members of a person who has died due to Covid 19 from an employer will also be tax exempt without any limit. Such a payment from other persons aggregating to Rs 10 lakh will be tax exempt," the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) said.

Besides, the government also announced various tax exemptions and extended some key tax compliance deadlines.

Of the deadline relaxation, the most important deadline extension involves the linking of PAN and the Aadhaar card. It has been extended by three months. "Other than that, the time to invest in residential house for tax deduction has been extended by more than three months

DEADLINES RELAXED
▶ Linking of PAN and the Aadhaar card extended to Sept. 30
▶ On sale of residential property the re-investment deadline extended to Sept. 30
▶ Due date for furnishing TDS statement for Q4 is now July 15
▶ Date for furnishing TDS certificate in Form 16 extended till July 31
▶ Quarterly statement in Form 15CC can be furnished by July 31
▶ Equalisation Levy Statement in Form No. 1 can be submitted by July 31

and the 'Vivad se Viswas' payment without interest has been extended by two months from June 30 to August 31," the notification said.

In case of taxing capital gains arising out of transfer of residential house property, the CBDT further said that for relief in taxation, the re-investment deadline would be September 3, 2021 for such capital gains. Generally, Section 54 of the Income Tax Act provides that in case there is capital gain on account of transfer of a residential house property, such capital gain can be exempt from tax if the taxpayer invests the capital gain amount into another house property within two years (in case of purchase of new house) or within three years (in case of construction of a house) from date of transfer of original house property.

However, the CBDT circular now provides that in case any such time period of two/three years is expiring between April 1, 2021 and September 29, 2021, will

be extended to September 30, 2021. "Besides, the deadline for making payments under the Vivad Se Vishwas direct tax dispute resolution scheme has been extended by two months till August 31," it said.

"The last date for PAN-Aadhaar linking too has been extended by three months to September 30, 2021, while the same for furnishing Tax Deducted at Source (TDS) certificate in Form 16 to the employees by employers has been extended till July 31, from July 15, 2021," it added.

The due date for furnishing TDS statement for the last (January-March) quarter has also been extended to July 15, from June 30. "The quarterly statement in Form 15CC to be furnished by an authorised dealer for remittances made for the June quarter would have to be furnished by July 31."

"Also, the deadline for furnishing Equalisation Levy Statement in Form No. 1 for the financial year 2020-21, has been extended by a month till July 31, 2021, the CBDT said.

RBI bars MPs, MLAs from urban co-op bank helm

FC BANKING BUREAU MUMBAI, JUNE 25

To curtail the nexus between urban co-operative banks and political leaders that have resulted in frauds and led to bank failures, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday prescribed educational qualifications and 'fit and proper' criteria for managing directors (MDs) and whole-time directors (WTDs) of primary urban cooperative banks and barred MPs and MLAs from these posts.

Issuing the guidelines for appointment of MDs and WTDs, the RBI said MPs, MLAs and representatives of municipal corporations will not be eligible to hold such positions in the primary urban cooperative banks (UCBs).

It further said the MD/WTD should be a post graduate or have qualifications in finance discipline. He or she could be either chartered/cost accountant, MBA (finance) or have a diploma in banking or cooperative business management. The person

should not be below 35 years of age or more than 70 years, it added.

"The person shall have a combined experience of at least eight years at the middle/senior management level in the banking sector (including the experience gained in the concerned UCB) or non-banking finance companies engaged in lending (loan companies) and asset financing," the notification said.

Besides MPs, MLAs and representatives of municipal corporations and local bodies, persons engaged in

business, trade or having substantial interest in any company too will not be eligible for appointment to such positions.

Regarding the tenure, the RBI said the person can be appointed for a maximum of five years and will be eligible for re-appointment, but not beyond 15 years. After that, the person, if necessary, may be re-appointed after a three-year cooling period.

It said the "UCBs whose existing MD/CEO has completed a tenure of five years may approach RBI."

PLI DOESN'T COMPENSATE FOR UNCOMPETITIVE ENVIRONMENT: MARUTI CHIEF

Kolkata, June 25: The production linked incentive (PLI) scheme announced by the government for ramping up large-scale manufacturing capacity does not compensate for obstacles in an uncompetitive business environment, Maruti Suzuki chairman R. C. Bhargava said on Friday.

He advocated policies directed at making manufacturing globally competitive by bringing down costs.

"The PLI scheme will help certain sectors and products. It cannot compensate for the obstacles of being uncompetitive," Bhargava said at an interactive session with The Bengal Chamber.

The government had announced an outlay of Rs 1.97 lakh crore for the PLI scheme for 13 sectors, including automobile, in the 2021-22 Union budget.

To a question, Bhargava said the Maruti Suzuki was not looking for new manufacturing plants as the industry CAGR for the last few years was less than 2 per cent.

To attract investment, there has to be political and administrative will, besides measures that ensure that costs are competitive, he said in the context of revitalisation of industry in West Bengal.

—PTI

‘Easing lockdown by vaccine coverage cuts risk to economy’

JAIVEER SHEKHAWAT JUNE 25

The rush by India's states to end lockdowns as new coronavirus infections drop, rather than waiting for vaccination rates to rise, risks triggering fresh restrictions and holding back the nation's recovery, according to Oxford Economics.

"States are easing lockdowns based on lower test positivity rates rather than vaccination progress," Priyanka Kishore, head of India and South East Asia Economics at Oxford Economics, wrote in a report to clients. "This risky strategy increases the chances of renewed outbreaks that would further delay the recovery."

Provinces including national capital New Delhi have begun reopening amid signs of infections plateauing, causing mobility rates to

improve as of mid-June. While that's likely to foster return of some demand in the near-term, there's the risk of consumption and business activity suffering going ahead should newer restrictions be placed to control a resurgent virus wave.

With only 3.9 per cent of India's population fully vaccinated, Kishore sees economically important states, including Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu, not yet reaching the "safe" levels of vaccination.

"The vaccine situation keeps our outlook cautious," said Kishore, who maintained India's growth forecast for this year at 9.1 per cent -- a pace slower than the 9.5 per cent predicted by the nation's central bank.

"Economic data also doesn't support an upward revision to our growth expectations at this point," she said.

—Bloomberg

BEING | 'COOL' Prez offers \$30 worth of Bitcoin to citizens to boost its use Bitcoin to be legal tender in El Salvador

MICHAEL MCDONALD JUNE 25

El Salvador President Nayib Bukele doubled down on the country's new law making Bitcoin legal tender and offered \$30 worth of the cryptocurrency to any citizen who signs up for a digital wallet.

The government will create its own Bitcoin wallet called Chivo, which is slang for "cool" in El Salvador, Bukele said during a national address on Thursday night. The funds will be deposited into the account of any citizen who downloads it and registers as a user with their phone number and ID number, he said.

The law making Bitcoin

legal tender will enter into force on September 7, he said.

Bukele, 39, reiterated his arguments that using the cryptocurrency will help attract investment, boost consumption and cut the cost of sending remittances for millions of Salvadorans working abroad. But bank accounts in dollars will remain in dollars, and salaries and pensions will continue to be paid in dollars, he said.

"Why create this law? Because Bitcoin has a \$600 billion market capitalisation globally and if we do this, investors and tourists who own Bitcoin will come to the country and benefit Salvadorans and the economy," Bukele said.



Nayib Bukele

Consumers can pay businesses with Bitcoins from their wallets for items listed in dollars. But if business owners want to receive payment in dollars, they can press a button in the Chivo application to convert the Bitcoins immediately to dollars, according to Bukele. "It will be totally optional. The dollar will continue to be legal ten-

der," he said.

The Chivo wallet will be available to download in September and it will be compatible with other Bitcoin wallets, Bukele said.

The government will provide training for businesses on Bitcoin transactions and seek to improve Internet and mobile phone penetration to encourage the cryptocurrency's use, he said. Businesses that are technologically unable to receive e-payments will be excluded from the law, he added.

Not everyone shares Bukele's enthusiasm for the plan. Fitch Ratings said in a report on Thursday that the legislation establishing Bitcoin as legal tender would

increase regulatory risks for financial institutions, including the potential of violating international anti-money laundering and terrorist financing standards.

"A rushed implementation of the new alternative payment system platform will affect financial institutions' management framework for operational, cyber/ransomware, currency and liquidity risks," Fitch analysts including Rolando Martinez wrote.

The International Monetary Fund has also criticised the move, while the World Bank rejected a request from the government to assist with Bitcoin implementation.

—Bloomberg

SHORT TAKES

Sam & Liam seal series for England

Cardiff: Sam Billings and Liam Livingstone burnished their Twenty20 credentials as England withstood a top-order wobble to seal a series win over Sri Lanka following a rain-affected second contest. The duo are on the fringes of the limited-overs setup but after England stuttered to 36-4 in pursuit of 112 — a target reduced to 103 from 18 overs following a sharp shower — they put on a crucial 54 from 48 balls. Billings departed with 13 still needed but Livingstone and Sam Curran got England over the line with five wickets and 11 balls to spare as they moved into an 2-0 lead. — *PTI*

Brief scores: Sri Lanka 111/7 (Kusal Mendis 39; Mark Wood 2/18, Adil Rashid 2/24) lost to England 108/5 (Livingstone 29 (not out), Sam Billings 24; W. Hasaranga 2/20). (*Won by five wickets, D/L method*)

Bronze for Indian women shooters

Osijek, Croatia: The Indian trioka of Manu Bhaker, Yashaswini Singh Deswal and Rahi Sarnobat claimed the bronze medal in the 10m air pistol women's team event of the ISSF Shooting World Cup here on Friday. They defeated the Hungarian team of Veronika Major, Miriam Jako and Sara Rahel Fabian 16-12 in the bronze medal match. The three Indians had qualified third with a score of 573. Earlier, in the 10m air rifle events, the men's trio of Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar, Deepak Kumar and Divyansh Singh Panwar lost the bronze medal match, while the women shooters failed to get past the qualifying round. Tomar, Kumar and Panwar lost 14-16 to the Serbian team of Milenko Sebic, Milutin Stefanovic and Lazar Kovacevic in the third-place match. — *PTI*

Women archers enter Cup final

Paris: The Indian women's recurve archery team, who failed to book an Olympic quota in the Qualifier, bounced back strongly to storm into the final of the World Cup Stage 3 here on Friday. The fancied trio of Deepika Kumari, Ankita Bhakat and Komalika Bari had lost to lower-ranked Colombia on Sunday to miss the Olympic team qualification, but on Friday they just dropped a set before defeating sixth-ranked France 6-2 in the semi-finals. World Cup Stage 3 is not an Olympic qualifying tournament. The trio, who had won the first stage of the World Cup in Guatemala City in April, will face Mexico on Sunday in a repeat of the first stage final. Deepika will be in the hunt for a hat-trick of gold medals. Deepika is also in the semi-final of the recurve section. — *PTI*

Judoka Sushila gets Olympic spot

New Delhi: Ace Indian judoka Sushila Devi has qualified for the Tokyo Olympics through the continental quota, the sport's international federation confirmed on Friday. Sushila, who competes in the 48kg category, has 989 points which puts her at seventh spot in the Asian list, the International Judo Federation said. The continental quotas are allotted based on a judoka's ranking in the region. Asia has 10 quota slots. This will be the 26-year-old's first participation at the Olympics. Only one athlete per NOC (National Olympic Committee) per division can qualify. Each NOC is entitled to only one spot through the continental quota. — *PTI*

Aditi gets off to creditable start

Johns Creek, Georgia: Aditi Ashok carded a one-over 73 in the opening round to be placed tied 39th at the KPMG Women's PGA Championship, which is her 17th Major start. Still searching for first Top-10 in a Major, Aditi was one-under through 12 holes. Aditi's 17 Major appearances are the most by any Indian and she now overtakes Anirban Lahiri with whom she was tied at 16. It must be noted that women have five Majors and men have four each year. — *PTI*

ASSURED AZZURRI

Italy look to continue unbeaten streak, face Austria

London, June 25: Italy's unbeaten streak won't last forever, and Austria coach Franco Foda is plotting to be the one to stop it. The Italians have become one of the favourites at the European Championship after winning all three of their games in the group stage, scoring seven goals and conceding none. Those three victories at Euro 2020 extended the team's unbeaten streak under coach Roberto Mancini to 30 games — matching the previous record set in the 1930s.

"Initially it seemed to be an insurmountable and impossible challenge for us, because they haven't lost for an eternity," Foda said. "But sooner or later even Mancini's team will lose."

Austria have reached the round of 16 at the tournament for the first time, will get their chance on Saturday at Wembley Stadium.

Besides the unbeaten streak, Italy will also be trying to set another record. They have not conceded a goal in 11 matches, a total of 1,055 minutes. If Austria fail to score, Italy will surpass the record of 1,143 minutes set between 1972 and 1974.

For a team who failed to qualify for the 2018 World Cup, Italy's recent results are quite remarkable.

"It's something that makes us proud, especially considering what they thought of us before the tournament started," Italy forward Lorenzo Insigne said.

"But we have to stay focused, calm and think about ourselves. Our



Italian players Giorgio Chiellini and Ciro Immobile during a training session ahead of their Euro Last 16 clash against Austria. — *Twitter*

objective is to go all the way, it wasn't just to get through the group stage."

DENMARK ON EURO ROAD FOR FIRST TIME

After three emotional European Championship matches in Copenhagen, Denmark will next play in a city that Christian Eriksen once called home.

The Danes will take on Wales in the round of 16 at the Johan Cruyff Arena on Saturday, a stadium where Eriksen is fondly remembered by Ajax fans as a stylish midfield playmaker from 2010-13 before his transfer to Tottenham.

Denmark lost their first match to Finland 0-1 after Eriksen suffered cardiac

arrest on the field and had to be resuscitated with a defibrillator. The Danes also lost to Belgium before beating Russia 4-1 to finish second in Group B and advance to knockout rounds.

While Denmark are hitting the road for the first time at a tournament that is being played in 11 cities

Live on TV

Wales vs Denmark from 9.30 pm
Italy vs Austria from 12.30 am (Sunday)
on Sony Ten 2, HD

HEAD TO HEAD

WALES-DENMARK

● **Matches:** 10. Denmark: 6. Wales: 4
● **EURO MEETINGS**
1987: Wales beat Denmark 1-0 in Cardiff.
1987: Denmark beat Wales 1-0 in Copenhagen.
1998: Wales beat Denmark 2-1 in Copenhagen.
1999: Denmark beat Wales 2-0 in Anfield.

ITALY-AUSTRIA

● **Matches:** 35. Italy: 16. Austria: 11. Drawn: 8.
● **EURO MEETINGS**
1970: Italy beat Austria 2-1 in Vienna.
1971: 2-2 in Rome.

— S. PERVEZ KAISER

COPA | AMERICA

Cool Cavani fires Uruguay into QF

Sao Paulo, June 25: Uruguay and Paraguay secured their spots in the Copa America knockout stage by winning their Group A matches by 2-0 scores.

Uruguay had their first win in the tournament against Bolivia, who could have jumped ahead on the table, but are out of the tournament due to Paraguay's convincing victory against Chile on Thursday.

Argentina lead Group A with seven points, followed by Paraguay with six. Chile have five, one more than Uruguay. Bolivia have none.

Uruguay's victory started after Bolivian goalkeeper Carlos Lampe, one of the best players of the match, had an own goal in the 40th minute.

Edinson Cavani doubled the Uruguayan lead from short range in the 79th minute at the Arena Pantanal in Cuiaba. It was the veteran striker's first goal for Uruguay since November.

Paraguay beat Chile with a header by Braian Samudio in the 33rd minute and a goal from the spot by Miguel Almiron in the 58th at the Man Garrincha stadium in Brasilia.

Uruguay and Paraguay will clash on Monday in a match that will decide who face defending champions and favourites Brazil in the quarterfinals.

If they draw or Uruguay win, Chile will face the hosts. A Paraguayan victory means Uruguay will take that spot.

"We have to think about winning, not about choos-

COPA RESULTS

Uruguay (Jairo Quinteros 40-og, Edinson Cavani 79)	2
Bolivia	0
Paraguay (Braian Samudio 33, Miguel Almiron 58-p)	2
Chile	0



Uruguay's Edinson Cavani celebrates after scoring a goal against Bolivia in Copa America. — *Twitter*

ing rivals," Uruguay midfielder Giorgian de Arrascaeta said.

"We created a lot of opportunities, we missed some that were very clear, but this gives us confidence. We never stopped believing in this squad."

Paraguay's Almiron is also optimistic about the future of his team in the tournament.

"We have done great work here," he said.

"Winning was the most important thing, but the most important thing is how we are playing," he said. — *AP*

AMACING | JOURNEY



New Zealand's World Test Championship Mace is heading home in style. — *Twitter*

IT IS YET TO SINK IN: SOUTHEE ON WTC WIN

Southampton, June 25: New Zealand pacer Tim Southee says the World Test Championship triumph over the mighty Indian team will take at least a couple of weeks to sink in.

For Southee, it wasn't just about 15 players in the current squad. "It is amazing to be part of this team. We have been working for this (WTC final win) for the last two years. Not only the 15 players but others probably in the last 5-6 years (have contributed) to get us to where we are now."

"It is very special. We had come very close to a few tournaments. It is yet to sink in and

may take a couple of weeks."

Southee believes that the crucial wickets of India captain Virat Kohli and Cheteshwar Pujara on the final day had set up his side's triumph.

India lost Kohli and Pujara to Kyle Jamieson inside the first eight overs of the day.

"We knew it was going to be tough on the final day, three results were possible then and the first hour to be crucial. But picking up the two wickets in that period was crucial in the end," Southee said in a video interview released by NZ Cricket. — *PTI*

TEAM INDIA UNLIKELY TO GET WARM-UP GAMES

New Delhi, June 25: The Indian cricket team will play two intra-squad games at the Riverside ground in Durham before the five-match Test series against England as Virat Kohli's men are unlikely to get any warm-up first-class games against county sides.

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

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

While it is understood that BCCI had requested ECB for a few practice games, the Covid-19 situation won't allow any such plan to go ahead.

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

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

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

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

India are currently travelling with 24 players — 20

in the official squad and four reserves — which will allow them to play intra-squad games.

However, legends like Sunil Gavaskar have questioned the amount of preparedness that a simulated match can give the team.

BCCI SELECTORS NOT TO TRAVEL TO UK

Chairman of national selectors Chetan Sharma and another senior selector Sunil Joshi are not going to England for the five-Test series as strict quarantine rules have become an impediment.

It is understood that India being among the Red List countries, there are no direct flights to the United Kingdom.

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

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

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

against Nick Kyrgios.

DEFENDING CHAMPION HALEP WITHDRAWS

Simona Halep said she was "really down and upset" at not being able to defend her ladies singles title at Wimbledon due to a calf injury.

The 29-year-old Romanian had been battling to be fit since withdrawing from her second round match at the Italian Open in mid-May.

"It is with great sadness that I'm announcing my withdrawal from The Championships as my calf injury has not fully recovered," she said. — *ATP*

It could be Novak vs Federer in final

Wimbledon, June 25: Novak Djokovic and Roger Federer were placed on opposite sides of the Wimbledon bracket in Friday's draw, meaning they only could meet in the final — which would be a rematch of their epic 2019 title showdown.

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

He seeks a 20th major title, which would tie the men's record shared by Federer and Rafael Nadal;

he can move closer to a calendar-year Grand Slam after winning the Australian Open in February and the French Open this month; he will be trying to win his third consecutive trophy, and sixth overall, at Wimbledon.

Two years ago, Djokovic edged Federer in a five-set tiebreaker after saving two championship points in the final.

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

The possible men's quarterfinals are Djokovic vs No. 5 Andrey Rublev, and No. 3 Stefanos Tsitsipas

WIMBLEDON | DRAW

vs. No. 8 Roberto Bautista Agut in the top half; No. 2 Daniil Medvedev vs. No. 6 Federer, and No. 4 Alexander Zverev vs. No. 7 Matteo Berrettini in the bottom half.

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

SINDHU SET TO CARRY TRI-COLOUR AT GAMES

New Delhi, June 25: India's star badminton player and Rio Games silver medallist PV Sindhu is a front-runner to become one of the two flag-bearers for the Indian contingent at the Tokyo Olympics. This time, India will have one male and female athlete as the flag bearer at the opening ceremony. The Olympics begin July 23.

The official announcement will happen at the

end of this month but it is all but certain that Sindhu will be one of the flag-bearers.

"Sindhu is likely to be one of the flag-bearers," an IOA source said. Although there is no rule but the convention has been that last edition's medal winner always has been the flag-bearer for the next edition.

From last edition, there were two medallists and one of them wrestler

Sakshi Malik has not qualified during this edition.

It is still not clear who among the male athletes will be the joint flag-bearer. Some of the big names include athlete Neeraj Chopra, TT player Sharath Kamal, wrestler Bajrang Punia, boxer Amit Panghal to name a few.

No male athletes got any medal at the last edition in Rio de Janeiro. — *PTI*

CANCELLATION/DIVERSION OF TRAINS

In order to upgrade the infrastructure, Railways will undertake the Non-Interlocking work in connection with doubling work between Betgara, Altagram, Dhupguri, Khalaigram, Jalpaiguri Road & Teesta Bridge Cabin stations of Alipur Duar division. To execute this work suitable traffic blocks from 26.06.2021 to 01.07.2021 will be taken on Betgara - Khalaigram - Jalpaiguri Road & Teesta Bridge Cabin section of Northeast Frontier Railway. During this Period following trains will temporarily be affected as under :-

CANCELLATION OF TRAINS	
Train No. & Train Name	Date of Cancellation (from Originating Station)
02550 Anand Vihar Terminal - Kamakhya Special	28.06.2021 to 30.06.2021
02549 Kamakhya- Anand Vihar Terminal Special	29.06.2021 to 01.07.2021
05956 Delhi Jn. - Kamakhya Brahmaputra Special	28.06.2021 & 29.06.2021
05955 Kamakhya - Delhi Jn. Brahmaputra Special	29.06.2021 & 30.06.2021

DIVERSION OF TRAINS		
Train No. & Train Name	Diverted Route	Date (from Originating Station)
05910 Lalgarh Jn. - Dibrugarh Avadh Assam Special	via Raninagar Jalpaiguri Jn. - Teesta Bridge Cabin - Mathabanga - New Cooch Behar	28.06.2021 25,26,27,28 & 30.06.2021
02424 New Delhi - Dibrugarh Rajdhani Special		25, 26, 28 & 30.06.2021
02504 New Delhi - Dibrugarh Rajdhani Special		27.06.2021
02506 New Delhi - Dibrugarh Rajdhani Special		25,26 & 27.06.2021
02550 Anand Vihar Terminal - Kamakhya Special		25.06.2021
05934 Amritsar Jn. - Dibrugarh Express Special	via Siliguri Jn. - Alipur Duar Jn. - Samuktala Road	29.06.2021
05623 Bhagat Ki Kothi - Kamakhya Special		29.06.2021
02424 New Delhi - Dibrugarh Rajdhani Special		29.06.2021
02504 New Delhi - Dibrugarh Rajdhani Special		29.06.2021
02503 Dibrugarh - New Delhi Rajdhani Special		26, 27 & 30.06.2021
02505 Dibrugarh - New Delhi Rajdhani Special	via New Cooch Behar - Mathabanga - Teesta Bridge Cabin - Raninagar Jalpaiguri Jn.	25 & 28.06.2021 25, 26, 27, 28 & 30.06.2021
02423 Dibrugarh - New Delhi Rajdhani Special		30.06.2021
05653 Guwahati - Jammu Tawi Special		30.06.2021
05909 Dibrugarh - Lalgarh Jn. Special		30.06.2021
02501 Agartala - Anand Vihar T. Rajdhani Special		28.06.2021
02503 Dibrugarh - New Delhi Rajdhani Special	via Samuktala Road - Alipur Duar Jn. - Siliguri Jn.	29.06.2021
02423 Dibrugarh - New Delhi Rajdhani Special		29.06.2021
05668 Kamakhya - Gandhidham Jn. Express Spl.		30.06.2021

Note: All norms of the State and Central Government regarding COVID-19 including Social distancing, sanitization etc., may be followed in the trains and at the Railway stations. All other precautions associated with COVID-19 should also be ensured.

For any kind of information such as detailed Time-Table and Stations enroute etc., passengers are requested to contact RailMadad Helpline No. 139 or may visit Indian Railways website <http://www.enquiry.indianrail.gov.in> or NTES App.

14/14/2021
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