

NEW DELHI FRIDAY 18 JUNE 2021



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TABLOID | 16

Nushratt Bharuccha's single song *Saiyan Ji* has been viewed by 400m viewers

SHORT TAKES

SHIV SENA HINTS AT TIEUP WITH NCP FOR FUTURE POLLS

BHAGWAN PARAB
MUMBAI, JUNE 17

The Shiv Sena has hinted at a possibility of striking an alliance with the NCP in saying both the parties will have to fight together in future in the interest of Maharashtra. The Uddhav Thackeray-led party's stand has come on the backdrop of Maharashtra Congress chief Nana Patole announcing that his party will contest forthcoming polls on its own. "The BJP and Congress are preparing to contest elections on their own. If every party is trying to do so, then Shiv Sena and NCP, keeping in view the interest of Maharashtra, will contest the elections in alliance. Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray and NCP chief Sharad Pawar have also indicated the same," an editorial in Sena mouthpiece *Saamana* said on Thursday. Though the Congress is in alliance with the Shiv Sena and NCP in the Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government, it has announced that it will fight the elections alone in the state. "Congress will contest the Maharashtra Assembly elections alone. I am ready to be the chief ministerial face if the high command decides," Mr Patole had said. However, Maharashtra deputy CM Ajit Pawar of the NCP had snubbed Mr Patole saying that Congress leader Sonia Gandhi, Sharad Pawar and Uddhav Thackeray have the final say on the state polls.

INDIA SLAMS PAK, ASKS IT TO REVIEW JADHAV CASE BILL

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 17

Slamming Pakistan's Review and Reconsideration Bill 2020 passed recently by the Pakistani National Assembly as violating the judgement of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in the case pertaining to imprisoned former Indian naval officer Kulbhusan Jadhav, India on Thursday said the bill "does not create a machinery to facilitate effective review and reconsideration" of the Jadhav case, "as mandated by the judgment of the ICJ". According to reports, the Bill was passed in the Pakistani Parliament last week to provide a right to appeal to Mr. Jadhav who was sentenced in 2017 by a Pakistani military Court to death on charges of "espionage and sabotage". India called upon Pakistan to take appropriate steps to address the shortcomings in the Bill and to comply with the judgement of the ICJ "in letter and spirit". Explaining its position, New Delhi said the "Bill invites the municipal courts in Pakistan to decide whether or not any prejudice has been caused to Mr Jadhav on account of the failure to provide consular access".

K'taka BJP MLA: Phone being tapped, conspiracy to fix me

Leader said to be from faction seeking CM Yediyurappa's replacement

Bengaluru, June 17: Karnataka BJP MLA Arvind Bellad, who is said to be from the faction of the party that is seeking chief minister B.S. Yediyurappa's replacement, on Thursday alleged that his phone was being tapped and attempts were on to fix him as part of some conspiracy, in order to defame him.

The MLA from Hubli-Dharwad West said he has petitioned home minister Basavaraj S. Bommai and Assembly Speaker Vishweshwar Hegde Kageri in this regard for an inquiry and to get the matter investigated.

"A few days ago when I returned a call that I had missed, a person said his name was Yuvraj Swamy and wanted to speak to me about political develop-

BJP in-charge meets legislators amid talk of leadership change

Bengaluru, June 17: Rumbblings within the ruling BJP in Karnataka were out in the open on Thursday, even as party's national general secretary in-charge of the State Arun Singh met legislators individually, in the backdrop of speculation over replacing chief minister B.S. Yediyurappa. Amid his efforts to project that the party was united as a couple of disgruntled MLAs made open statements against the

government and its leadership, Mr Singh warned them of consequences, even as he stated that their conduct has damaged the party's image.

MLC A.H. Vishwanath's openly demanded Mr Yediyurappa's ouster; and his allegations of corruption and interference in administration against CM's younger son B.Y. Vijayendra, who is also BJP vice-president, resulted in political slugfest.

— PTI

ments and my name being heard in it... as I could not recognise who he was, I had cut short the discus-

sion and disconnected the call."

"Again after three four days he called claiming

that he was unnecessarily put in jail and was in hospital now," Mr Bellad said.

He said there was a "conspiracy" behind sudden calls to him in recent days from Yuvraj Swamy, a person who is facing cases and someone whom he has not known or spoken to in the past.

"I feel attempts are being made to fix me by making such people call and talk to me... Big hands are behind it," he added.

Yuvraj Swamy, who Mr Bellad is referring to, is said to be the same person who had reportedly claimed to have ties with central political leaders and a powerful right-wing organisations and had allegedly conned several people taking money with assurances that he would get them plum positions.

— PTI

Heavy rains batter Kolkata, streets waterlogged



People waded through a waterlogged street after heavy rainfall lashed Kolkata on Thursday. Several low-lying areas and thoroughfares in the city and its outskirts lay inundated as heavy rainfall continued to lash parts of Bengal, with the Met department predicting more downpour over the next three days.

— PRITAM BANDYOPADHYAY

Actor donates ₹1cr for construction of school

Akshay spends time with Army, BSF jawans, locals in LoC area

YUSUF JAMEEL
SRINAGAR, JULY 17

Bollywood actor Akshay Kumar was on Thursday in Tulail sub-valley in the 2,400-metres-high Gurez Valley of Jammu and Kashmir to spend quality time together with the Army and BSF jawans and officers posted near the Line of Control (LoC) and the local people.

He also donated ₹1 crore for the construction of a school building in Neeru village of Tulail. He mingled with the villagers and asked them questions pertaining to the issues and problems they were facing, how they are cop-



ing with Covid-19 and their culture and traditions, the BSF and government sources said.

Earlier after reaching the area by an Army chopper, Kumar interacted with the jawans of the

Army and Border Security Force (BSF) at Neeru "to boost their morale". He also danced with locals at a function organised by a BSF unit, the sources said.

Gurez valley lies 120 kilometres northeast of the district headquarters of Bandipora and 200 kilometres from Srinagar and remains cut off for most of the winter months due to accumulation of snow and recurring snowstorms along Razdan Pass, a high mountain pass at an elevation of 3,557m (11,672ft) above the sea level, which is part of the Bandipora-Gurez road.

Rajnath inaugurates 12 strategic roads built by BRO

'India advocates peace, but will respond to aggression'

MANOJ ANAND
GUWAHATI, JUNE 17

Defence minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday said that though India is a peace loving country, it was capable of responding to any aggression.

Inaugurating 12 strategic roads constructed by the Border Roads Organisation (BRO), Mr Singh described India as a priest of world peace but warned any serious disturbance to peace and tranquillity in border areas would have adverse implications.

"We seek world peace if someone shows us an aggressive attitude, we will respond to them in their terms," said Mr Singh while pointing out as to how the new roads would help in securing international borders.

The defence minister



who was in Guwahati to dedicate strategic roads, mostly adjoining

China, to the nation, also paid his tribute to Indian soldiers who displayed exemplary courage and valour in Galwan Valley in Ladakh a year ago. "I salute all brave soldiers who laid down their lives fighting for the nation," said the defence minister.

Mr Singh said that the 12 strategic roads, including 10 in Arunachal Pradesh and one each in Ladakh and Jammu and Kashmir, inaugurated during the day, would not only give a boost in connectivity but would also facilitate faster movement of troops along the international border.

"The capability of BRO in constructing world class roads despite chal-

lenges, in tough and hilly terrain underlines the mantra of Atma Nirbhar Bharat," Mr Singh said while lauding the road construction unit for its dedicated work.

He said the road projects are part of the Act East Policy, envisioned by PM Narendra Modi.

"The budget for BRO has increased manifold since 2013 and today stands at ₹11,000 crore. The BRO since 2014 had developed a record 4,800 km of border roads in the country," the defence minister said.

He asserted that the country's defence sector in the last few years had witnessed major changes including appointment of a Chief of Defence Staff for the first time. "Our vision is also to produce our own weapons and if necessary export them to other countries," he said.

Paswan's kin Paras named LJP prez amid rift with Chirag

NAYEAR AZAD
PATNA, JUNE 17

Hajipur MP Pashupati Kumar Paras, younger brother of late Union minister Ram Vilas Paswan was elected as LJP president on Thursday amid an ongoing rift with his nephew Chirag Paswan.

The decision was taken during the party's national council meeting in Patna which was chaired by former LJP MP Surajbhan Singh. Chirag Paswan's cousin Prince Raj who is in the soup over allegations of sexual harassment did not attend the meeting, party leaders said.

The development comes after Mr Paras along with four other MPs of the party staged a political coup against Chirag Paswan and deposed him as LJP president.

On Sunday four LJP MPs — Veena Devi, Chandan Singh, Chaudhary Mahboob Ali Kaiser and Prince Raj — had backed Pashupati Paras as their leader.

Pashupati Paras had reached Patna on Wednesday and filed a nomination on Thursday, party insiders told this newspaper that he was elected unopposed. "I assure you that there is no dispute within the party. I have been given a big responsibility to carry forward the work started by my elder brother Ram Vilas Paswan," Mr Paras told reporters after he was elected as the LJP president.



Slight rise in Covid-19 count, active cases fall

■ **Continued from Page 1**
The SARS-CoV-2 sero-positivity rate among children was high and was comparable to the adult population in the survey, that was held in five states with a total sample size of 10,000. The data of 4,500 participants were taken for the results of the time of the mid-term analysis from four states of India and more results are likely to come in the next two-three months. It was found that in resettlement colonies in South Delhi urban areas, which have a very con-

gested population, there was a very high (highest reported yet in any sero-assessment) sero-prevalence of 74.7 per cent, said Dr Puneet Misra, professor at AIIMS, who led the survey. The Serum Institute of India says it will begin Novavax trials on children from July 15 and hopes to introduce its Indian version — Covavax — by September. Sputnik V has said it will soon offer a booster shot, adjusted to work against the Delta Covid variant, to other vaccine manufacturers.

BJP to ask Speaker to disqualify Mukul Roy

■ **Continued from Page 1**
to the Assembly Speaker via email according to the law. The Nandigram BJP MLA held a meeting with two lawyers and some party legislators in his chamber at the Assembly during the day to prepare the petition. Mr Roy was not available for comments. However, TMC state general secretary Kunal Ghosh said, "The law will take its own course... But I definitely feel that Mr Adhikari is not suited to talk about the anti-defection law because he enjoyed the power of party post and ministership from TMC

before switching to the BJP." "His father, Sisir Adhikari, won as a TMC MP in Lok Sabha but defected to the BJP ahead of the Assembly polls. Our party also gave a petition to the Lok Sabha Speaker for his disqualification as an MP. While he is facing the anti-defection law, his son is giving lectures on the same! This reflects the politics of double standards within the same family. Let Mr Adhikari give a sermon to his father first. If he moves any petition, it will be looked into by the Assembly Speaker," he added.

Activists walk out of jail

■ **Continued from Page 1**
addresses and sureties of the students. On the police's application seeking more time before releasing them on bail, the judge said, "I would say that this by itself cannot be a plausible reason for the accused to be kept imprisoned till the time such reports are filed."

Dismissing the police application, the judge directed the police to verify the addresses of the accused in Delhi and submit the report on Thursday itself by 5 pm. The report on verification of their permanent address in other states has been called by the court on June 23. The sessions court cited the high court's observation which stated

that once the incarcerated have been ordered to be released on bail and furnished the bail bond with sureties, they ought not to remain behind bars "even for a minute".

The sessions judge stated that the state should ensure the infrastructure necessary for such verification process within minimum possible time and there cannot be any reason sufficient enough to deny such a person his/her liberty. Taking note of the undertaking given by the counsel of the accused that their client will not leave the jurisdiction of the national capital, the court sent the warrant to the superintendent of the Tihar Jail for their immediate release.

New Maoist threat

■ **Continued from Page 1**
halting, etc of the Hon'ble CM of WB needs to be thoroughly sterilised to prevent any planting of IEDs or any kind of attack/sabotage. All are requested to collect prior information regarding any nefarious design of any militant and anti-government outfit during the movement / stay / halt / return journey of the VIP. The ground-level intelligence should be

geared up to collect grass-roots level real-time information."

Asked about the Maoist threat, Ms Banerjee said at Nabanna, the state secretariat: "I do not have information on Jangalmahal. But I saw a video of some people threatening to increase extremist activities. The CID, special task force and police will take proper action. They have already been given instructions on this."

Ex-encounter cop held in bomb scare case

■ **Continued from Page 1**
possession of the car that was found parked near Mukesh Ambani's residence in South Mumbai.

Mr Soni and Mr Muthukari were also produced before the court along with Mr Sharma and all the accused were remanded to NIA custody together.

While seeking Mr Sharma's custody, the

probe agency contended that he was involved in the conspiracy to kill businessman Mansukh Hiran, whose body was recovered from Mumbra creek on March 5, 2021, 10 days after the explosives-laden car was found near the Ambani residence.

The NIA further claimed that the "murderers" had called co-accused and dismissed assistant police

inspector — Sachin Waze — and Mr Sharma right after they killed Hiran on March 4.

While seeking custody of the trio for 14 days, the public prosecutor argued that they had disclosed the location where Hiran was killed.

It has been claimed that the investigating officers have found DNA samples from the Red Tavera Car

which have been given for forensic analysis.

Furthermore, the police have found huge amounts of cash from the accused and they needed to be confronted with each other.

During the hearing, the judge also asked the NIA the reason for the delay in arresting Mr Sharma. The public prosecutor replied that the accused are tough nuts to crack.

SC okays CBSE/ICSE marks plan

■ **Continued from Page 1**
Khanwilkar and Justice Dinesh Maheshwari in their order.

However, Justice Khanwilkar in the order pronounced by him said that the scheme "must incorporate" providing for a "dispute resolution mechanism" in case the students apply for correction of the final results declared by the concerned Boards. The court made it clear that the conduct of optional examination would be subject to "conducive situation and logistical constraint".

Under the scheme framed by the CBSE, each school will constitute a five-member Result Committee to be headed by the principal.

Noting that the marks to be awarded will be based on the school-level assessment involving variations in the quality of question papers, evaluation standard, the mode of conduct of exams etc, in an important rider the CBSE said that the total marks awarded should be in consonance with the past performance of the school in Class 12 Board examinations.

The subject wise marks assessed by the school for 2020-2021 should be within a range of +/- 5 marks obtained by students in the school in the subject in the reference year.

However, the overall average marks for the school assessed in 2020-2021, for all the subjects, should not exceed the

overall average marks obtained by the school by 2 marks in the specific reference year.

Over an hour long hearing saw the court rejecting a plea by some students seeking revisiting the decision to cancel Class 12 exams. These students were seeking conduct of physical examination as there is a substantial decline in the number of Covid cases across the country.

"There is no question of reversing the earlier decision regarding cancellation of examination because no prejudice will be caused to the students as they can still appear in the optional examination to be concluded in due course," the court said in

its order. In any case, the court said that the students, "who want to appear in the examination for improvisation of their marks, will get that opportunity under the scheme. That takes care of the concern of such students."

Meanwhile the top court sought response from Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Tripura and Punjab on a plea seeking the cancellation of board examinations to be conducted by them.

Lawyer appearing for the petitioner Anubha Shrivastava Sahai and others told the court that out of 28 states, 18 have cancelled their exams, 6 have conducted and completed them and remaining four have not responded.

SHORT TAKES

Mother-son duo held for faking robbery

New Delhi: A 30-year-old man was arrested along with his mother for allegedly creating fake robbery incident to grab over ₹6 lakh of his employer in north Delhi, police said on Thursday. The accused have been identified as Chetan Saini and Madhu Saini (52), residents of Kanhiya Nagar, Ganesh Pura, they said. On Tuesday, one Kamal Gupta, proprietor of Kamal Auto Industries in Anand Parbat Industrial Area, informed police that he entrusted ₹6.33 lakh to his employee Chetan for deposit in bank, but he switched off his number and was untraceable, a senior police officer said.

2 illegal hookah bars busted in Kalkaji

New Delhi: The Delhi Police on Thursday claimed to have busted two illegal hookah bars and apprehended 29 people, including the owners at Kalkaji in South Delhi. The police found a cafe near Govindpuri Extension where several customers were having hookah, the police said. Police raided the cafe and apprehended its owners along with five customers. A case under relevant sections was registered at the Kalkaji police station. The accused persons were apprehended, and one hookah was seized, the police alleged. The police later raided another establishment, Khana Badosh Cafe, near the Gol Chakkar in Kalkaji and its owners.

'IT IS FOR AFGHAN PEOPLE TO JUDGE THEIR PARTNERS'

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 17

In a thinly-veiled jibe at Pakistan, India on Thursday said it leaves it to the Afghan people "to judge each of their partners on how actions by these partners have affected the Afghan people". New Delhi also confirmed that External Affairs Minister (EAM) S. Jaishankar had discussed the situation in the strife-torn nation with the leadership of Gulf nation Qatar during his recent visit there and had also been briefed in the Gulf country by US Special Representative for Afghanistan reconciliation Zalmay Khalilzad. Responding to a media query on Turkey's reported views in favour of a greater role for Pakistan in Afghanistan once the US troops pull out of there, MEA Spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said, "Our position regarding the Afghan peace process is well known, and I need not repeat it. As regards your specific question, we can only speak for ourselves. India has been pro-development, pro-democracy, pro-human rights and pro-progress. It is for the people of Afghanistan to judge each of their partners on how actions by these partners have affected the Afghan people."

Kejri sends ration delivery scheme to L-G Baijal again

BHASKAR HARI SHARMA
NEW DELHI, JUNE 17

Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, on Thursday, questioned lieutenant-governor Anil Baijal's observations on the ration scheme.

The CM said that the instant matter before the L-G is not the "approval" of the scheme as the scheme has already attained finality. The CM wrote in the note that it was unfortunate that the scheme has been put on hold due to the L-G's observations.

Earlier this month, the Arvind Kejriwal government had claimed that the scheme was rejected by the L-G contending that the Centre's approval was not sought for it and there was a pending case in the court.

Mr Kejriwal has again sent the file to the L-G and said that it was according to the law and the objections raised by the Centre earlier have been addressed, the statement said.

Mr Kejriwal has stressed that the Centre's directions have been followed and claimed that it was wrong to "stop" the scheme during the coronavirus pandemic, it said.



Arvind Kejriwal

Anil Baijal

After receiving the L-G's opinion, the Delhi government wrote to the Centre on June 15, informing that it has cleared all their objections by way of a Cabinet decision on March 24.

"The Kejriwal government plans to implement an order by the Central government on February 1, 2018, in which all states and UT governments have been directed to ensure home delivery of ration to senior citizens, differently-abled, and pregnant women," the CMO statement said.

"However, the Delhi government has gone a step ahead and implemented a doorstep delivery scheme for all its citizens benefitting pregnant women, disabled citizens, and senior citizens as well. Under this scheme, every citizen will be given an option whereby they can take ration either through FPS or home delivery," the statement said.

Complaint against Swara Bhaskar, Twitter India MD

Cops received plaint in connection with Ghaziabad assault case

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 17

The Delhi police has received a complaint against Swara Bhaskar, Manish Maheshwari, the MD of Twitter, and others in connection with the Loni incident where an elderly Muslim man was attacked, officials said on Thursday.

According to the police, the complaint was received at the Tilak Marg police station.

"We have received a complaint against Swara Bhaskar, Twitter MD Manish Maheshwari, and others at the Tilak Marg police station. It is under inquiry," a senior police officer said.



Swara Bhaskar



Manish Maheshwari

In a video on social media, an elderly Muslim man had accused four men of beating him up, chopping his beard, and asking him to chant 'Jai Shri Ram' in the Loni area of Ghaziabad. The Ghaziabad police had said it has already registered an FIR in connection with this alleged incident which took

place on June 5 but was reported to the police two days later.

Ghaziabad senior superintendent of police Amit Pathak, however, had said victim Abdul Samad, a Bulandshahr resident, had not made any allegation of being forced to chant 'Jai Shri Ram' or the chopping up of his beard in his FIR lodged on June 7.

SC to hear cops plea against bail order to student activists today

PARMOD KUMAR
NEW DELHI, JUNE 17

The Supreme Court will hear on Friday an appeal by the Delhi police challenging the Delhi high court order granting bail to three student activists—Natasha Narwal, Devangana Kalita, and Asif Iqbal Tanha—incarcerated in jail since May 2020 in connection with last year's Northeast Delhi riots.

Three appeals moved on Wednesday seeking to cancel the bail to the activists are listed for hearing before a vacation bench of Justice Hemant Gupta and Justice Ramasubramanian.

The police rushed to the top court, saying that the high court's contention against the use of UAPA was a "perverse insinuation" and it may be used for release of a score of persons nabbed by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) across the country.



A woman covers her face with her saree to avoid the scorching sunlight at Taj Mahal in Agra on Thursday. — PTI

India cautions Lanka on port project

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI
NEW DELHI, JUNE 17

In a strong message to Sri Lanka that clearly highlights Indian security concerns on the Chinese-backed Colombo port city project (CPCP), India on Thursday said it expected the island nation to "remain mindful of our excellent bilateral cooperation, including for mutual security in our shared environment, which includes the maritime domain".

Stating that it was "closely following

recent developments from our security perspective" on the project, New Delhi also said it had "noted the concerns that have been raised in Lanka regarding several aspects of the framework for the CPCP".

In his weekly briefing, MEA Spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said, "Regarding the CPCP, we have been closely following recent developments from our security perspective. We have also noted the concerns that have been raised in Sri Lanka regarding several aspects of the framework for the

Colombo Port City. We expect Sri Lanka will remain mindful of our excellent bilateral cooperation, including for mutual security in our shared environment, which includes the maritime domain."

He added, "As regards our projects, India has a very extensive portfolio of partnership development projects in Sri Lanka and we are in regular contact with Sri Lankan authorities regarding their implementation."

It may be recalled that Indian Government

sources had last month said the Colombo port city project should be transparent and respect the sovereignty of Sri Lanka.

But New Delhi's official stand on Thursday clearly seems to reflect concerns about the increasing Chinese footprints in the island nation amid apprehensions from certain quarters that the project could also be utilised by the Chinese military at a later date. The Rajapaksa brothers—President Gotabaya and PM Mahinda—are seen as pro-China.

Didi challenges her poll defeat in court

Mamata can go to the court, but fact is she still cannot accept her defeat to Adhikari: BJP

RAJIB CHOWDHURI
KOLKATA, JUNE 17

Challenging her defeat in the hands of her protege-turned-adversary Suwendu Adhikari of the BJP at Nandigram in the Bengal Assembly polls, CM Mamata Banerjee filed a petition at the Calcutta High Court on Thursday to corner the leader of the opposition of the state.

The TMC supremo's plea countering Mr Adhikari's

victory is expected to come up for hearing by Justice Koushik Chanda on Friday in a virtual mode. This is the first time a CM of the state made such a move.

Though Ms Banerjee had initially emerged as a winner in her prestige fight, she, however, lost to Mr Adhikari by a narrow margin of 1,956 votes after a dramatic twist at the end of counting of votes on May 2. She later alleged malpractice in the count-



Mamata Banerjee

Suwendu Adhikari

ing of votes amid pressure on a poll official by the winner of the Nandigram seat and also declared that she would move the court for justice.

Senior TMC MP Sougata

Roy said, "Representation of People's Act has the provision of filing a case on the declaration of the poll results which happened one and a half months ago. Ms Banerjee already declared her step. Now she has done it."

BJP spokesperson Shameek Bhattacharjee however said, "Ms Banerjee has the right to fight it out in the court. But even when she has moved the court, she can not defeat Mr Adhikari.

Fact is she still can not accept her defeat to him."

Asked about Mr Dhankhar's meeting with Union home minister Amit Shah, she said at the state secretariat Nabanna, "He can meet them. After all, he belongs to them."

The TMC supremo however described Mr Dhankhar's claims of continuous post-poll violence in the state in an explosive letter to her, before he left for the Capital, as "BJP's gimmick."

Clergy in Kashmir launches campaign to end jab hesitancy

YUSUF JAMEEL
SRINAGAR, JUNE 17

The Islamic religious leadership of Kashmir is formally launching a Valley-wide campaign, on Friday, to end the Covid-19 vaccination timidity and encourage people to get vaccinated to protect themselves against the deadly virus.

The campaign, under the banner of Muthahida Majlis-e-Ulema (MMU), an amalgam of religious organisations and leaders, will begin with special sermons to be delivered by the imams and preachers before congregational Friday prayers to highlight the importance and urgency of the vaccination.

"At each masjid (mosque) and other places of worship, the aima (Islamic leaders) will tell the faithful the well-being and safety of human lives is a religious and human obligation. In fact, Shariat (Islamic canonical law based on the teachings of the Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad often referred to as Hadith and Sunna) lays special emphasis on it," said

Covid-19: MP reports 1st Delta Plus case

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY
BHOPAL, JUNE 17

Madhya Pradesh has reported the first case of Delta Plus, a new variant of Covid. The advanced Delta variant was detected in a 65-year-old woman in Bhopal during the genome sequencing of samples sent from MP to National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), a senior health department officer said here on Thursday.

Kashmir's chief Muslim cleric Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, who is also the head of the MMU. He added that the Friday prayers would be offered strictly under the Covid guidelines and standard operating procedures (SOPs).

The amalgam has also issued a poster carrying a passionate appeal to the people to shun 'vaccine hesitancy.'

NORTHERN RAILWAY E-Tender Notice

Sr. DME acting for and on behalf of the President of India invites E-Tender against Tender No. MC-9-OT-Wheel-TP-2021 Closing Date/Time 08.07.2021, 1500 Hrs. Bidders will be able to submit their original/revised bids upto closing date and time only. Manual offers are not allowed against this tender, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored. Information regarding this tender is available on website www.ireps.gov.in on internet & can be seen/downloaded.

Department	C&W	Tender No.	MC-9-OT-Wheel-TP- 2021
Name of work	Transportation of rolling stock (Coaching & freight) wheel sets through road truck/trailer to and fro between Moradabad C&W depot to Railway workshop Jagadhri (JUDW) and Bareilly C&W depot to Railway workshop Alambagh Lucknow (AMV(M)/CB/LKO) for two years.		
Tender Type	Open	Bidding system	Single Packet System
Tender closing Date & Time:	08.07.2021, 15.00 hrs.		
Advertised Value	Rs. 78.67,494.60/-	Validity of Offer (Days)	45 Days
No.: MC-9-OT-Wheel-TP-2021	Date: 16.06.2021		1333/2021

Serving Customers with a Smile

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION

General public is hereby informed that an unidentified female body namely Unknown, W/o: Unknown, R/o: Unknown was found on 02.06.2021 at unconscious condition from Safdarjung Hospital, New Delhi MLC No. 149679/21 VIDE DD No. 12A. She was declared dead by Safdarjung Doctor during treatment. In this regard DD No. 02A U/S 174CR PC dated 04.06.2021 has been lodged at Police Station, Safdarjung Enclave, New Delhi. Identification of unidentified female dead body is as under:

Name: Unknown, Age: 50 Years, Height: 157 CM, Complexion: Dark, Face: Oval, Built: Thin, Wearing: Blue Kameez and Blue Salwar.

If anyone has any information or clue about this female deceased may kindly be inform undersigned.

SHO
Police Station, Safdarjung Enclave, New Delhi
DP/695/SW/2021 Ph.: 011-24106346, 24106345, 9896933598

EXTENSION OF SPECIAL TRAINS

For the convenience of Rail Passengers, Railways have decided to extend the Periodicity of run of the following Special Trains as per the details given below :-

Train No. & Name	Frequency Days of run	Notified up to	Extended up to
07323 Hubballi Jn. - Varanasi Jn. Festival Special Express	Weekly (Friday)	25.06.2021	Until Further Advised
07324 Varanasi Jn. - Hubballi Jn. Festival Special Express	Weekly (Sunday)	27.06.2021	Until Further Advised
02683 Yasvantpur Jn. - Lucknow Festival Spl. Superfast Exp.	Weekly (Monday)	28.06.2021	Until Further Advised
02684 Lucknow - Yasvantpur Jn. Festival Spl. Superfast Exp.	Weekly (Thursday)	01.07.2021	Until Further Advised
02539 Yasvantpur Jn. - Lucknow Festival Spl. Superfast Exp.	Weekly (Wednesday)	30.06.2021	Until Further Advised
02540 Lucknow - Yasvantpur Jn. Festival Spl. Superfast Exp.	Weekly (Friday)	02.07.2021	Until Further Advised
06229 Mysore Jn. - Varanasi Jn. Special Express	Bi-Weekly (Tue & Thu)	29.06.2021	Until Further Advised
06230 Varanasi Jn. - Mysore Jn. Special Express	Bi-Weekly (Thu & Sat)	01.07.2021	Until Further Advised
06249 Yasvantpur Jn. - Hazrat Nizamuddin Festival Special	5 days in a week (Sun, Mon, Wed, Fri & Sat)	30.06.2021	21.07.2021
06250 Hazrat Nizamuddin - Yasvantpur Jn. Festival Special	5 days in a week (Sun, Mon, Tue, Thu & Sat)	03.07.2021	24.07.2021
06593 Yasvantpur Jn. - Delhi Sarai Rohilla Duranto Express	Weekly (Saturday)	19.06.2021	Until Further Advised
06594 Delhi Sarai Rohilla - Yasvantpur Jn. Duranto Express	Weekly (Monday)	21.06.2021	Until Further Advised
02549 Kamakhya - Anand Vihar Terminal Special	Daily	01.07.2021	Until Further Advised
02550 Anand Vihar Terminal - Kamakhya Special	Daily	03.07.2021	Until Further Advised

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.

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SHORT TAKES

CHINA CREWED
SPACESHIP DOCKS
WITH SPACE STN

Jiuquan (China), June 17: State media say a Chinese spaceship carrying a three-person crew has docked with the country's new space station at the start of three-month mission.

The Shenzhou-12 craft connected with the Tianhe space station module about six hours after takeoff Thursday. The crew will carry out experiments, test equipment, conduct maintenance and prepare the station for receiving two laboratory modules next year. The mission brings to 14 the number of astronauts China has launched into space since 2003.

SHIP SINKS,
PROMPTS LANKA
POLLUTION FEAR

Colombo, June 17: A container ship carrying chemicals sank off Sri Lanka's capital on Thursday nearly a month after catching fire, raising concerns about a possible environmental disaster, officials said.

The ship's operator said the wreck of the Singapore-flagged X-Press Pearl "is now wholly sitting on the seabed at a depth of 21 metres (70 feet)". A salvage crew was at the site to deal with any debris and report any spill, X-Press Feeders said.

The head of Sri Lanka's Marine Environment Protection Authority, Darshini Lahandapura, also confirmed that the ship had sunk.

She said it was currently unsafe to remove the wreck because of rough monsoon seas. "The sea is very violent. In the rough season, we can't do anything," she said.

DOZEN KILLED IN
BHUTAN, NEPAL
MONSOON RAINS

Thimpu, June 17: At least a dozen people have been killed in Bhutan and Nepal and several others are missing as torrential monsoon rains hit the region, triggering landslides and inundating homes, officials said Thursday.

The annual monsoon season is crucial to replenish water supplies across South Asia, but it also causes death and destruction. Ten collectors of cordyceps — a fungus valued for its alleged aphrodisiac properties — died when their remote mountain camp north of Bhutan's capital Thimpu was washed away early Wednesday.

Five others were injured and were in a stable condition in hospital, officials said.

Bhutan's Prime Minister Lotay Tshering offered his prayers and condolences and said a rescue team had been sent to the site.

ONE LIFE LOST
IN BALTIMORE
SHOOTING

Baltimore (US), June 17: One person was killed and five others were wounded when gunmen walked up a street and opened fire on a Baltimore block from an intersection, the city's police commissioner said.

Commissioner Michael Harrison said the shooting on Wednesday erupted in a west Baltimore neighbourhood and the conditions of the five wounded ranged from serious to critical. He declined to release the identities of those who were shot.

Officers responded to reports of gunshots after 2 pm Wednesday and found two people shot, Harrison said. Those two were taken to hospitals, and the four others arrived separately in private vehicles, he said. So far investigators have learned that the six people were together on the tree-lined block of rowhouses when at least two or three people began firing.

13 WORKERS DIE
IN CHINA IRON
MINE ACCIDENT

Beijing, June 17: All 13 workers, who were trapped in an iron mine in north China's Shanxi Province, have been confirmed dead, according to the local authorities. The bodies of the workers were lifted out of the well that flooded the Dahongcai iron mine in Daixian County on June 10. A rescue team comprising 1,084 people worked for six straight days.

The DNA confirmation has been completed, according to the local rescue headquarters. Police have detained 13 suspects. An investigation into the cause of the accident is underway, the state-run *Xinhua* news agency reported on late Wednesday night.

Chinese coal mines are one of the deadliest in the world. In 2009, China had the most mining accident fatalities in the world, with a total of 2,631 coal miners dying in accidents.



People have dinner in Tokyo's Shinjuku area on Thursday, after Japan announced that a virus state of emergency in Tokyo and several other regions will be lifted on June 20. — AFP

Delta variant infections in
England doubling in 11 days

London, June 17: The number of people infected with the Coronavirus is increasing rapidly in England, doubling every 11 days, which coincides with the Delta variant of Covid-19 becoming dominant in the country, a new study reports on Thursday. The Imperial College London led Real-time Assessment of Community Transmission (REACT-1) analysis, based on over 100,000 home swab tests taken between May 20 and June 7, estimates that 0.15 per cent of people have the deadly virus, or roughly 1 in 670.

It found that the link between infections, hospitalisations and deaths had been weakening since February, but since late April, the trend has been reversing for hospitalisations. "We found strong evidence for exponential growth in infection from

W.H.O. WARNS OF FRESH INDONESIA
SPIKE FED BY CORONAVIRUS STRAINS

Jakarta, June 17: Indonesia's president ordered authorities to speed up the country's vaccination campaign as the World Health Organisation warned Thursday of the need to increase social restrictions in the country amid a fresh surge of Coronavirus infections caused by worrisome variants.

We need vaccination acceleration in order to achieve communal immunity, which we hope can

stop the Covid-19 spread, President Joko Widodo said in a remarks while visiting a vaccination center just outside the capital, Jakarta.

Widodo said he ordered his cabinet ministers and local governments to increase the number of people vaccinated each day to 1 million by next month. He said Indonesia is currently vaccinating half a million people a day. — AP

late May to early June in the REACT-1 study, with a doubling time of 11 days on average for England," said Professor Paul Elliott, director of the REACT programme from Imperial's School of Public Health.

"These data coincide with the Delta variant becoming dominant and show the importance of continuing to monitor infection rates and variants of concern in the community," he said.

The findings come days after UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced a month-long delay to an end to lockdown restrictions, citing the rising number of cases of the Delta variant — first identified in India. "These findings highlight the stark context in which we took the difficult decision to delay Step 4 of the roadmap out of lockdown," said UK Health Secretary Matt Hancock. "Cases are now rising, but thanks to our incredible vaccination programme and enhanced response package, including surge testing, we have the tools to curb the spread of this virus. We all must hold our nerve that little bit longer as our vaccine rollout continues and I urge everyone to keep observing hands, face, space and fresh air, and make sure you receive both doses," he said. — PTI

Oli defends dissolution,
says courts can't name PM

Kathmandu, June 17: Nepal's embattled Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli on Thursday defended his government's controversial decision to dissolve the House of Representatives and told the Supreme Court that it is not up to the judiciary to appoint a premier as it cannot undertake the legislative and the executive functions of the state.

President Bidya Devi Bhandari, at the recommendation of Prime Minister Oli, dissolved the lower house for the second time in five months on May 22 and announced snap elections on November 12 and November 19.

Prime Minister Oli is

● ON JUNE 9, the apex court issued a show-cause notice to the Office of the Prime Minister and the President's Office to furnish a written response within 15 days.

heading a minority government after losing a trust vote in the House.

On June 9, the apex court issued a show-cause notice to the Office of the Prime Minister and the President's Office to furnish a written response within 15 days.

Furnishing a written reply to the Supreme Court on Thursday as demanded by the Constitutional Bench, Oli said the

court cannot appoint a Prime Minister as it cannot undertake the legislative and the executive functions of the state.

The apex court received Oli's response via the Office of the Attorney General. "The Court's duty is to interpret the Constitution and the existing laws, it cannot play the role of the legislative or the executive bodies," 69-year-old Oli said in his response.

"Forming governments on the basis of parties is the fundamental characteristic of the parliamentary system and the Constitution does not imagine party-less practices," he added. — PTI

S'PORE TO SACK
LECTURER OVER
RACIST REMARKS

Singapore, June 17: A lecturer at a polytechnic in Singapore is being sacked for serious misconduct for allegedly making racist remarks against an Indian-Chinese descent couple, according to a media report on Thursday. Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) said it is in the process of sacking senior lecturer Tan Boon Lee for serious misconduct. This comes after a video posted on June 6 of Tan making racist remarks to an interracial couple in Orchard Road went viral online. Tan was captured in a video arguing with Dave Parkash, a Singaporean who is half-Indian and half-Filipino. — PTI

Net outages hit
websites, apps

As most services come online, probe on

Hong Kong, June 17: A wave of brief internet outages hit the websites and apps of dozens of financial institutions, airlines and other companies across the globe Thursday.

The Hong Kong Stock Exchange said in a post on Twitter Thursday afternoon Hong Kong time that its site was facing technical issues and that it was investigating. It said in another post 17 minutes later that its websites were back to normal.

Internet monitoring websites including ThousandEyes, Downtetector.com and fmg.com showed dozens of disruptions, including to US-based airlines. Many of the outages were reported by people in Australia trying to do banking, book flights and access postal services. Australia Post, the country's postal service, said on Twitter that an "external outage" had impacted a number of its services.

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further problems.

Banking services were severely disrupted, with Westpac, the Commonwealth, ANZ and St George all down, along with the website of the Reserve Bank of Australia.

Services have mostly been restored. Virgin Australia said flights were largely operating as scheduled after it restored

access to its website and guest contact centre. "Virgin Australia was one of many organisations to experience an outage with the Akamai content delivery system today," it said.

"We are working with them to ensure that necessary measures are taken to prevent these outages from reoccurring." Akamai counts some of the world's biggest companies and banks as customers. Calls to Akamai, which is headquartered in Cambridge, Massachusetts, but has global services, went unanswered. The disruptions came just days after many of the world's top websites went offline briefly due to a problem with software at Fastly, another major web services company.

The company blamed the problem on a software bug that was triggered when a customer changed a setting. Brief internet service outages are not uncommon and are only rarely the result of hacking or other mischief. But the outages have underscored how vital a small number of behind-the-scenes companies have become to running the internet. — AP

HK pro-democracy
paper editors held

Hong Kong, June 17: Hong Kong police used a sweeping national security law against a pro-democracy newspaper for the first time Thursday, arresting five editors and executives on charges of collusion with foreign powers. Police said they had strong evidence that more than 30 articles published by *Apple Daily* played a "crucial part" in a conspiracy with foreign countries to impose sanctions against China and Hong Kong, in response to a crackdown on civil liberties in the semi-autonomous Chinese city.

Apple Daily has often criticised the Chinese and Hong Kong governments for tightening control over the city and walking back on promises by Beijing that the territory could retain its freedoms when it was handed over from Britain in 1997.

Apple Daily founder Jimmy Lai is currently serving a 20-month prison sentence for his role in unauthorised assemblies in 2019, during a period when Hong Kong saw massive anti-government protest calling for universal suffrage and democratic freedoms. Police also froze \$18 million Hong Kong dollars (\$ 2.3 million) worth of assets belonging to three companies linked to *Apple Daily*, said Li Kwai-wah, a senior superintendent at Hong Kong's National Security Department. More than 200 police officers were involved in the search of *Apple Daily*'s offices, and the government said a warrant was obtained to look for evidence of a suspected violation of the national security law.

● **APPLE DAILY** has often criticised the Chinese and Hong Kong governments for tightening control over the city and walking back on promises by Beijing that the territory could retain its freedoms when it was handed over from Britain in 1997.

Those arrested included *Apple Daily*'s chief editor Ryan Law, Next Digital CEO Cheung Kim-hung, the publisher's chief operating officer and two other editors, according to *Apple Daily*, the *South China Morning Post* and other local media. Hong Kong Security Minister John Lee told a news conference that police will investigate both people in the *Apple Daily* companies and others to establish if they have assisted in instigating or funding the offences. — AP

U.S. CONGRESS
NOD TO MAKE
JUNETEENTH A
FED. HOLIDAY

Washington, June 17: The United States will soon have a new federal holiday commemorating the end of slavery. The House voted 415-14 on Wednesday to make Juneteenth, or June 19th, the 12th federal holiday. The bill now goes to President Joe Biden's desk, and he is expected to sign it into law. Juneteenth commemorates June 19, 1865, when Union soldiers brought the news of freedom to enslaved PoC people in Galveston, Texas — two months after the Confederacy had surrendered. That was also about 2 1/2 years after the Emancipation Proclamation freed slaves in the Southern states.

It's the first new federal holiday since Martin Luther King Jr. Day was created in 1983.

"Our federal holidays are purposely few in number and recognise the most important milestones," said Rep. Carolyn Maloney, D-N.Y. "I cannot think of a more important milestone to commemorate than the end of slavery in the United States."

Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee, D-Texas, speaking next to a large poster of a PoC man whose back bore massive scarring from being whipped, said she would be in Galveston this Saturday to celebrate along with Republican Sen. John Cornyn of Texas.

"Can you imagine?" said the rather short Jackson Lee. — AP

SC DISMISSES
CHALLENGE TO
OBAMACARE

Washington, June 17: The Supreme Court has dismissed a challenge to the Obama era health care law, preserving insurance coverage for millions of Americans.

The justices, by a 7-2 vote, left the entire law intact Thursday in ruling that Texas, other Republican-led states and two individuals had no right to bring their lawsuit in federal court. The Biden administration says 31 million people have health insurance because of the law known as "Obamacare."

Major provisions include protections for people with pre-existing health conditions, a range of no-cost preventive services and the expansion of the Medicaid programme. — AP

India's \$100 mn aid
for Lanka projects

Colombo, June 17: India has extended a \$100 million Line of Credit to Sri Lanka to help the island nation finance various projects in the solar energy sector and ensure that the country's 70 per cent power requirements are fulfilled by renewable energy sources by 2030.

An agreement signed between the Sri Lankan government and the Export-Import Bank of India was exchanged by High Commissioner of India to

Sri Lanka Gopal Baglay and Secretary to the Treasury S.R. Attiygalle in the presence of Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa on Wednesday.

It will help finance various projects in the solar energy sector, including those announced during the Founding Conference of the International Solar Alliance held in March 2018, such as rooftop solar photo-voltaic systems for households and government buildings. — PTI

PIO to lead US EPA's water office

Washington, June 17: The US Senate has confirmed Indian-American water issues expert Radhika Fox as head of the Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Water. The Senate, bitterly divided on party lines, confirmed Fox's nomination on Wednesday by 55 to 43 votes after seven Republican Senators supported her candidature. Two Democratic Senators did not cast their votes. "Ms Fox brings with her an impressive professional record of service and accomplishment, spa-



Radhika Fox

nnings over two decades, working on water issues at the local, state and federal level," Senator Tom Carper, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, said. "We have the oppor-

tunity today to confirm a truly gifted leader and put her to work serving our country right away," he added. On April 14, President Joe Biden nominated Fox for the post of Assistant Administrator for Water, Environmental Protection Agency. Fox currently serves as the Acting Assistant Administrator for Water.

The EPA's Office of Water works to ensure that drinking water is safe, waste water is safely returned to the environment, and surface waters are properly managed and protected.

Prior to joining EPA, Fox served as the Chief Executive Officer for the US Water Alliance, where she established herself as a widely recognised national thought leader on complex water issues, from equitable water management to investing in the nation's water infrastructure. Her work has helped address the most salient water issues facing the US, including climate change, affordability, equity, governance, innovative finance and the evolution of the One Water movement. — PTI

DUTCH | CONTROVERSY

The carriage underwent extensive restoration in September 2015

Golden Coach exhibition revives racism debate

Amsterdam, June 17: On a blustery autumn day in 2015 Dutch King Willem-Alexander and Queen Maxima for the last time stepped out of the golden coach which traditionally transported them to the opening of parliament.

Nearly six years later, the monarch was back on Thursday to unveil a newly restored carriage — but this time as the centrepiece of an exhibition at the Amst-

erdam Museum exploring the Netherlands' troubled relationship with its colonial past.

The horse-drawn carriage called the "De Gouden Koets" has been embroiled in a racism controversy over a picture on the left-side panel of the opulent coach, which has undergone an extensive refit.

Called "Tribute of the Colonies", the image depicts kneeling PoC people

handing over produce like cocoa and sugarcane to their white masters — including to a young white woman on a throne representing the Netherlands.

Next to her, a young white man is seen giving a young PoC boy a book as he is presented by his subservient father, an image which painter Nicolaas van der Waay in 1896 said was meant to portray "civilisation."

Margriet Schavemaker, artistic director of the Amsterdam Museum, said the carriage used by the Dutch royals for baptisms, marriages and other occasions "has also become an object of controversy."

"In ongoing debates it has become known that one of the panels depicting the Dutch colonial past is making a large group in the Netherlands uncomfortable," Schavemaker said.

The carriage underwent extensive restoration in September 2015 shortly after its last parliament trip, in a day marked by pomp and ceremony when the Dutch royals are traditionally driven through the streets of The Hague.

Last year the government announced that, amid the controversy, its return to ceremonial duties would be postponed following the refit and it would go on

show at the museum instead. The Amsterdam Museum show also comes as the Netherlands faces a reckoning with its history as a colonial and slave-trading power in Asia, the Caribbean and South America.

Several other Dutch museums have launched similar projects, including the famed Rijksmuseum which recently opened an exhibit entitled "Slavery". — AFP

THE ASIAN AGE

18 JUNE 2021

Pragmatism in Geneva as Biden, Putin stabilise ties

America's President Joe Biden and Russia's boss Vladimir Putin, showing a remarkable order of statesmanship and good sense, avoided any temptation to offer drama and guaranteed failure in their first (business-like) meeting in Geneva on Wednesday, an outcome which may have pleased the liberal extremists of America, no matter how bad it may have been for the world.

Instead, they provided a low-key, "pragmatic", way forward in their bilateral relationship which can probably only move forward in cautious, incremental steps, so deep is the mutual mistrust accumulated in the three decades since the collapse of the USSR and the birth of Russian capitalism which does not privilege a political system that exalts Western-style individualism.

With the perpetually drunk Boris Yeltsin the new czar in Moscow when Communism ended, the US sensed they had in the bag the only country, which was its military equal and exercised geostrategic influence as well. With his early exit and the arrival on the scene of Mr Putin, a former middle-rank KGB agent, expectations from the new Russia faded as this leader fortified himself on the plank of Russian nationalism.

President Biden has played his hand with finesse. He planned his first face-to-face contact with Mr Putin very early in his presidency — and not long after calling the Russian leader "a murderer". This bolstered his liberal credentials (and his constituents loved it), and situated him as an emphatic counterpoint to his disastrous predecessor, Donald Trump, who had foolishly given credence to Moscow's assessments on bilateral issues over those

of his intelligence agencies, making the West squirm. But the choreographed personal insult led Mr Putin to withdraw the Russian ambassador in Washington and a tit-for-tat recall of the American ambassador followed. The dyke in relations widened. In this background, the course that the intense three-hour long conversation between the two leaders with their key foreign policy and national security aides in tow, can only be viewed positively — more than just a glass half-full.

At separate press conferences, they confirmed this. Mr Biden used "positive" and "good" to describe the event. Mr Putin, responding to an ambush question from a prominent US news outlet, denied that the talks were marked with "hostility", and said the leaders had a "constructive" conversation. Both Presidents called the outcome "pragmatic". Mr Biden also said that Russia was not looking for "a new Cold War". A "joint communiqué" issued after the separate press conferences noted that talks will commence on restoring "strategic stability" in order to prevent unintentional conflict. At their meeting, the two leaders decided to send back their ambassadors. This is important in conducting state-to-state relations.

An important American concern was met when the Presidents agreed to institute a committee of experts to look into the issue of cyber-attacks that the US has attacked Russia for, including in meddling with its elections. Mr Biden wisely indicated that "the proof of the pudding was in the eating" and that it would become clear in a relatively short time if Moscow meant business on this. It appears the leaders of America and Russia have hinted at being constructive in dealing with trouble spots such as Afghanistan and Libya, although Syria can be more difficult.

Mr Biden was adroit. He took Mr Putin for what he was and was not out to change him or Russia, but rather to reach preferred goals. Mr Putin quoted Tolstoy to suggest "there is no happiness in life, there is only a mirage on the horizon, so cherish that". This is a realistic start. If US-Russia hostilities remain restricted, a country like India can have a broader bandwidth to operate in.

Women priests: TN's bold move

Welcoming women to the sanctum sanctorum, Tamil Nadu's minister in charge of temples, P.K. Sekar Babu, recently heralded the breaking of another glass ceiling on the distaff side. Knowledge of Agama Sastra alone will be the qualifier to be a priest and not gender, he declared, opening a Pandora's Box. Out came the naysayers with their own objections based on custom, least considering the fact that women priests are already there in substantial numbers in the country.

Apart from performing priestly duties in small temples in the state, women have also been solemnising weddings for celebrities in big cities. Very recently, Bollywood actor Dia Mirza's wedding to Vaibhav Rekhi in Mumbai was conducted by a woman priest. Earlier on, actor Aparna Sen's daughter was united in wedlock by a woman priest. Closer home, a woman who stepped into the shoes of her deceased father and took over as priest of an Amman temple near Madurai in 2006 got her right to succession ratified by the Madras high court. When the presiding deity is an Amman with the form of a woman, why should a woman not perform pujas, the judge had asked.

Yet minister Sekar Babu's idea is facing opposition. Even if he has made it clear that women priests would be given leave on the five days of their menstruation, their storming Agama temples is not that easy. Even the locus standi of a secular government in taking such a decision has been questioned. But in the land of Periyar E.V. Ramasamy, a woman inside the sanctum sanctorum might just become a reality.

THE ASIAN AGE

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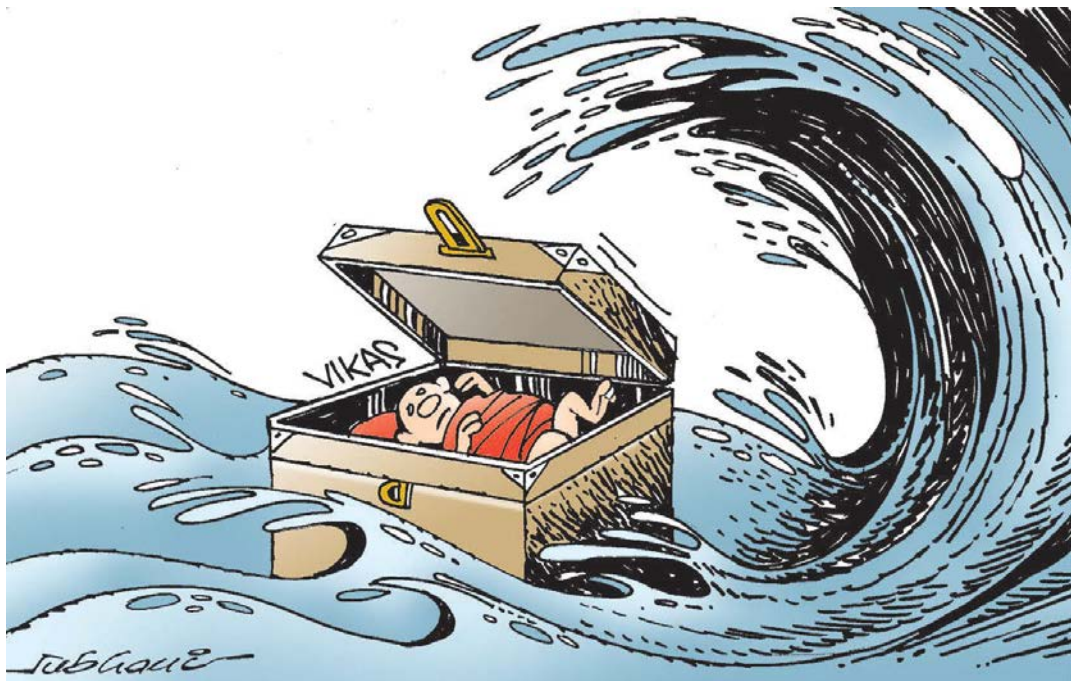
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Subhani



RSS, BJP & Yogi factor: Key to 2024 lies in UP



Anand K. Sahay

Far & Near

The summoning of Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath to New Delhi recently in the wake of widespread anxiety being expressed in the state BJP over its Assembly poll prospects in a few months, given the CM's disastrous Covid-19 management, naturally became a high-profile political event. The stakes were rightly deemed to be high. A slip in UP can ricochet at the Centre, and who knows how the pieces will fall.

The CM showed up when called — but after that the story dries up. It didn't matter that the UP leader had held really long conversations with those at the very top — Prime Minister Narendra Modi (well over an hour), home minister Amit Shah (even longer), and BJP president J.P. Nadda. Here was rich material to be tapped for political reporting, speculation, or comment, but no one did — as if on cue.

For comparison, look at Punjab, whose CM and MLAs were recently summoned to Delhi by the Congress leadership because there seems to be a crisis brewing. The news pages were filled with plausible and implausible stories or just plain repetitions for want of anything new to say. "Hold the dateline!" is an old newsroom mantra, and the media did not let go.

In the case of UP, however, there was nothing at all — not even the regurgitating of background as is frequently done, or clever words extolling the power duo at the Centre about how well they had handled the UP crisis (since nothing less than gushing praise will do in

their case). It is noteworthy that there was resounding silence on this front even after the chief minister returned to Lucknow. Top-rung BJP politicians who had just days earlier bitterly complained to their high command — and above all to the RSS bosses — about Yogi's general high-handedness, his arrogant mismanagement of the Covid crisis, and his many caste-slanted actions, seemed clueless about what had transpired in Delhi, or preferred to stay quiet if they knew. Busy newshounds, who had waxed eloquent about a PM-CM tussle and other such astounding things, fell silent.

Is the overall motif of silence in this important matter a part of a well thought out strategy crafted by the BJP, or indeed the RSS, since it is the RSS cadre on the ground who will be required to do the heavy lifting at election time? After all, it is the RSS — rather than the formal shell of the BJP — which really exercises supervision or control over the main body of legislators, and typically it is the low-key RSS organiser who plays pastor. The pastor offers counsel and keeps his superiors informed about the goings-on. He meddles, but not in full view. Evidently, since senior BJP leaders in UP had publicly complained against the CM's mismanagement and his autocratic style, it wouldn't have done to keep quiet and do nothing; hence the directive to the CM to go to Delhi to explain himself to the big shots. This was a triumph of form over substance, and also careful choreography and convenient optics.

If any action — or concession — follows at Yogi's end as a consequence of the Centre's supposed advice, it is likely to be only about as cataclysmic as tinkering with his council of ministers. And look at what Yogi has got in return. His actions say it all. The man had the gumption to calmly hand his three principal interlocutors, as well as the President of India, some so-called Harvard University report commending his management of the pandemic which no one believes, but that's hardly the point.

The point is that Yogi was summoned but was also pandered to. He was permitted to create the impression that he was on a goodwill mission to New Delhi, and not summoned as a boy to be chastised, which is usually the fate of erring CMs of the same party as the one that rules at the Centre. It is well understood that UP is Mr Modi's first line of defence. It has already fallen in the recent panchayat elections, with BJP performing poorly. If it falls in the Assembly election too, reputations can roll in Delhi, and the fallout can be uncertain.

There are also other reasons why Yogi couldn't have been ticked off. He is an extreme egoist, a far-right maverick, who runs his own outfit, the Hindu Vahini. He is not of RSS-BJP stock. He is a stranger to institutional or collegial functioning. If he is stung, he can fight the Assembly election on his own if

If Yogi is stung, he can fight the Assembly election on his own if only to spite the BJP and deny it the votes of the ultra-right Hindu constituency. Confident of this ability, he did not need to genuflect in Delhi.

only to spite the BJP and deny it the votes of the ultra-right Hindu constituency. Confident of his ability to do so, the saffron-robed monk CM did not need to bend or genuflect in Delhi.

Whatever the UP BJP, or the national BJP, may think of Adityanath and his usefulness to the party in UP, the RSS's assessment of this matter is not known. It may or may not be exactly the same as that of the BJP. Indeed, the RSS's assessment of the performance of the Union government under the present leader, especially on the handling of the pandemic, steep unemployment and inflation, surrendering of territory to China in Ladakh, and worsening relations even with Nepal, is also not known.

On this subject, of no little importance, we have just one clue. A few weeks ago, in a well-publicised address, the RSS chief, Mohan Bhagwat, held the people, the administration, as well as the government, responsible for the surge in the Covid second wave numbers and the exceptionally high death figures. This forced the government to stop in its tracks in the planning of a false propaganda blitz on the handling of the pandemic.

But the Prime Minister did not fail to fire a riposte at Mr Bhagwat in his June 7 address to the nation. Without any reference to the latter, he sang his government's praises and ran down its opponents and critics. Such an open, daring, even insolent, defiance of the RSS *sarsanghchalak* by a BJP or Jan Sangh leader, mounted in full public view, has not been encountered before.

It will be interesting to know how Mr Bhagwat has taken the insult, and whether the RSS organisation is behind him foursquare. The untangling of this puzzle can tell us something about how things might shape in UP, or indeed in Delhi.

LETTERS

JOE CHICKENED OUT?

The just-concluded Geneva summit between Russian President Vladimir Putin and his US counterpart, Joe Biden, could signal a modest thaw in relations. But one wonders why they avoided facing each other during the photo op, sending out confusing signals to the world community. The two sides expected a five-hour meet, but the talks wrapped up in under three hours. Both leaders agreed to return their expelled envoys to their posts and begin negotiations to replace the last remaining treaty, limiting nuclear weapons. Mr Biden also raised human rights issues, and dissident Alexei Navalny's arrest.

N.J. Ravi Chander
Bengaluru

FAIR FORMULA

WELL DONE, CBSE, for coming out with an equitable methodology to assess the merit of students. The 30:30:40 formula — 30 per cent from Class 10 board, 30 per cent from Class 11 exam, and 40 per cent from Class 12 assessment — to tabulate the Class 12 results this year which got the nod of the Supreme Court should satisfy everyone. And those who aren't have the choice of appearing in examinations to be conducted by the Board when conditions are conducive, so no cribbing!

Bhagwan Thadani
Mumbai

INTERPRETING DISSENT

WITH THE government increasingly branding dissent as sedition, our hopes had to rest on high institutions. The judiciary has vindicated our faith in the recent case of sedition against three university students. Free speech and argument is at the heart of a self-governing society and cannot be a partisan issue. Dissent is a product of application of sane human intellect to an issue at hand and yet the government would brand intellectualism itself to be anti-national.

R. Narayanan
Navi Mumbai

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

Mohan Guruswamy



India's culture & how it evolved... Yoga is exercise, it's not Hinduism

Most of India's culture has been much influenced and shaped by the successive waves of invasions from the northwest. How we look at it depends on how far back we want to go. The northwestern waves were a continuous process till continental Indian power was consolidated by the rise of the British in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

These hordes were mostly not encumbered by religious ideology or cultural baggage and the Brahmanical elite quite willingly assimilated them into the Hindu fabric and gave them a place in the Hindu social hierarchy. Possibly the last of these hordes were the Buddhist Kushans led by Kanishka who established their dominance over the Aryavarta region, stretching from the Indus to Pataliputra. Kanishka was a descendant of Kujula Kadphises, founder of the Kushan dynasty that ruled much of Central Asia, including Afghanistan. Buddhism and Brahminical Hinduism had a long history of theological intermingling and cultural exchange.

The waves after this came armed with Islam and the process of complete assimilation ceased. The Afghan and Mughal kings of Delhi too shared pret-

ty much the same geographical origins as Kanishka and those before him. But Islam made them different. This difference gave rise to a new era of, for lack of a better description, separate development, which was what apartheid was also meant to be. That separateness can be seen even today. But it wasn't as if racial and cultural intermingling ceased. While it was common, it was no longer the norm. Yet the pre-British story of India was how these two great theologies and cultures fused to give the region new languages, art forms, literature, music and architecture. Among the greatest exponents of our ragas and sanget were Muslims, just as Hindus like Firaq Gorakhpuri (Raghupati Sahay) and Ram Prasad Bismil became great writers in Urdu. Only our theologies became impervious and separate dogmas. Bade Ghulam Ali Khan and Bismillah Khan were not singing Hindu songs and playing Hindu ragas, just as Wadali Brothers, Puranchand and Pyarelal, were not singing Muslim songs. Unfortunately, of late we have seen an acceleration towards separation when with time we should be seeing more creative fusion.

The All-India Muslim Personal Law Board, the VHP's Muslim version,

opposes the celebration of International Yoga Day on June 21. This is utterly misguided, unfortunate and silly. It calls yoga a religious symbol. It is not. Today it's just a school of balance-focused exercises, pure and simple. Like Tai Chi. I wonder what they would say about Hyderabad's Nawab Sadiq Jung Bahadur "Hilm", who wrote: "*Kanhaiya yaad hai kuch bhi hamaari*", or Mah Laqa Bai or Chanda Bibi, who had a diwan or collection of poems in Dakhni called "*Gulzar-e-Mahlaqa*"?

Yoga, like jihad, takes different meanings by what is prefixed or suffixed to it. Jihad is an Arabic word that just means "striving" or "struggling", especially with a praiseworthy aim. It was meant as self-betterment, but in the Islamic context it has acquired very different meanings. Yoga as exercise is a physical activity — mainly of postures in sequences that are sometimes accompanied by breathing exercises. It's this yoga that has become familiar worldwide, especially in Europe and the United States. It is derived from the postures used in the medieval spiritual discipline of Hatha Yoga.

The AIMPLB specifically cites Surya Namaskar as offensive, but it's just a common sequence of asanas. Most

Hindus revere the Sun as it is the giver of life and sustenance. Due to this, some Hindus set aside a part of their daily worship for salutations to the Sun by prostrations. This method of adoration affords them so much muscular activity that it takes to some extent the place of physical exercise. Muslims can practise these same asanas without worshipping the Sun. But before they reject the Sun salutation, they'll do well to recall Allama Iqbal, who wrote: "*A'iaaf-taab! Hum ko zia-e-shaoor de/ Chasm-e-khird ko apni tajjali se noor de.*" (O radiant one! Grant us the grace of wisdom/Let our eyes see reason in your resplendent glow.)

I only hope some of the "grace of wisdom" will penetrate the dark recesses of minds in the AIMPLB. Muslims as whole will do well to listen to saner voices in the community like Prof. Mohd Abbas Nazki of AMU, who said: "Yoga is an exercise, and no religion is against a healthy lifestyle." Or quietly just don't do yoga, without making a hullabaloo over it. But don't dismiss it as unsecular. Yoga is no extension of Hinduism, just as a raga isn't. The Brihaddeshi describes raga as "a combination of tones which, with beautiful illuminating graces, pleases people".

Modern yoga practices' only link

with Hinduism is that it evolved in India. By this standard, they must oppose many mathematical principles that evolved in ancient India and think of algebra as an exclusive Islamic discipline. Yoga is a non-sectarian physical and mental health-oriented set of exercises. If yoga is Hindu, then karate is Buddhist, kung fu is Confucian and taekwondo also Buddhist. Will the AIMPLB seek a ban on them too?

The RSS and BJP governments all over India are trying to impose yoga as an exercise in schools. Like any exercise, this too should be optional. Those who want to skip yoga can use it for some other form of exercise. But exercise is a must. When I was in school, we used to have an exercise period every day. Some played soccer, others played kabaddi, some just marched about, drilled by the NCC instructor. We didn't have yoga then. It was still a Western fad.

The writer, a policy analyst studying economic and security issues, held senior positions in government and industry. He also specialises in the Chinese economy.

Monday, June 21, is International Yoga Day

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	52,323.33	-0.34
Nifty 50	15,691.40	-0.48
S&P 500*	4,224.04	0.01
Dollar (₹)	74.07	-1.03
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.51	-0.02
Euro (₹)	88.53	0.42
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	46,863*861	1.83
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	72.73	-2.23
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.019	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.504	-0.065

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Top 5 IT firms to add over 96,000 staff: Nasscom

Nasscom said the sector continues to be a net hirer of skilled talent, and that the top five Indian IT companies are planning to add over 96,000 employees in 2021-22. "With the evolution of technology and increasing automation, the nature of traditional IT jobs and roles will evolve overall leading to creation of newer jobs. The industry continues to be a net hirer of skilled talent, adding 1,38,000 people in FY2021."

Tariff value for edible oil import slashed



The government has reduced the tariff value for import of edible oil, including palm oil, by up to \$112 per tonne, a move which can lower domestic prices. The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs, through a notification, has cut the tariff import value of crude palm oil by \$86 per tonne, and of RBD and crude palmolein by \$112 per tonne each. It also reduced the base import price of crude soyabean oil by \$37 per tonne.

Mis-selling: HDFC Bank to refund GPS commissions

HDFC Bank announced a refund of the controversial 'GPS device commission' charged to auto loan borrowers for six years. The bank's then chief executive Aditya Puri had last year admitted to irregularities in the auto loan disbursements by its team. The bank was also fined Rs 10 crore by the RBI earlier this year. The lender announced the refund in a public notice published in newspapers.

UP gets ₹13,408 cr investment proposals in mfg

Uttar Pradesh has emerged as the top investment destination and has received 98 investment proposals worth Rs 13,408.19 crore in the manufacturing sector during the past three-and-a-half years, an official statement said. "Big industrialists of the country and abroad are investing in infrastructure, food processing, textile, electronic manufacturing, real estate, power and manufacturing sectors in UP in a big way," they said.

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Rupee loses 76p, to remain weak Hawkish US Fed comments trip ₹

FALAKNAAZ SYED
MUMBAI, JUNE 17

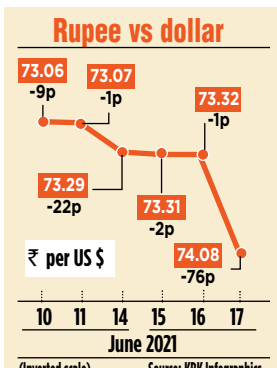
The rupee fell sharply on Thursday breaking the 74-mark after the US Federal Reserve held rates unchanged but turned a little hawkish in its monetary policy commentary, indicating two rate hikes in 2023.

Federal Reserve chairman Jerome Powell said that there had also been initial discussions about when to pull back on the Fed's \$120 billion in monthly bond purchases, a conversation that would be completed in coming months as the economy continues to heal.

The surprisingly hawkish tone drove US treasury yields and the dollar up, weakening the Indian currency to its lowest level since early May and making it a top loser among Asian emerging market currencies.

The Fed's comments came in conjunction with the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) reiteration of its forex stance in its latest bulletin, in which it indicated that India's record \$600 billion foreign exchange reserves might not be good enough, as it falls short on some measures, including import cover and liability outflows. Analysts expect the rupee to remain an underperformer among emerging market currencies.

At the interbank forex market, the domestic unit opened weak at 73.65 against the American currency, then lost further



ground and finally closed at 74.08, losing 76 paise over its previous close.

On Wednesday, the rupee had settled at 73.32. The domestic currency has lost 128 paise in the last eight trading sessions.

Weakness in global equity markets—after the Fed surprised investors by signalling faster-than-expected rate hikes—and the sharp drop in the rupee sapped the risk appetite of stock traders in Mumbai. The Sensex ended 0.34 per cent lower at 52,323.33 and the Nifty-50 declined 0.48 per cent to 15,691.40.

The Dollar Index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, rose 0.6 per cent to 91.67.

"While foreign exchange reserves provide cushions against unforeseen exter-

nal shocks, levels are often deceptive," RBI researchers, led by deputy governor Michael Debabrata Patra, wrote in the RBI Bulletin for June 2021, released on Wednesday. "A better gauge of external vulnerability is an assessment of specific indicators."

Forex reserves surged to \$605 billion in the week to June 4 as the RBI mopped up dollars flowing into the nation's booming stock market as well as via foreign direct investments. The pile is the world's fifth-biggest after China, Japan, Switzerland and Russia, and is enough to cover 15 months of imports. But that's less than the 39 months cover offered by Switzerland's reserves, 22 by Japan's, 20 by Russia's and 16 months by China's pile, said the RBI researchers.

"This (the Fed's comments) comes in conjunction with RBI's reiteration of its FX stance in yesterday's bulletin, where it indicated that FX reserves are still not adequate enough when seen in the light of cross country comparison ratios, high net international investment position of (-)12.9 per cent of GDP and random shocks amid heightened global uncertainty—all of it implying that RBI's tactical forex intervention in forex will be biased towards dollar purchases, keeping INR subdued/EM underperformer even in case of healthy EM flows," said Madhavi Arora, lead economist, Emkay Global.

MICROSOFT NAMES CEO NADELLA AS CHAIRMAN



Satya Nadella

New York, June 17: Microsoft's India-born CEO Satya Nadella has been appointed as the technology giant's new chairman, an additional role in which he will lead the work to set the agenda for the board.

Microsoft Corp on Wednesday announced that the board's independent directors unanimously elected Nadella to the role of board chair, and unanimously elected John W. Thompson as the lead independent director, a role he held previously from 2012 to 2014.

In this role, Nadella will lead the work to set the agenda for the board, leveraging his deep understanding of the business to elevate the right strategic opportunities and identify key risks and mitigation approaches for the board's review, the company said in a statement.

Nadella, 53, succeeds Thompson, who as the lead independent director, will retain significant authority, including providing input on behalf of the independent directors on board agendas, calling meetings of the independent directors, setting agendas for executive sessions, and leading performance evaluations of the CEO. —PTI

CII pitches for ₹3L cr stimulus to spur growth

New Delhi, June 17: The Indian economy requires a Rs 3 lakh crore fiscal stimulus, including cash transfer to households through Jan Dhan accounts to spur economic growth amid the pandemic, industry chamber CII said on Thursday and pitched for appointment of a 'Vaccine Czar' for speedy vaccination coverage.

CII president T. V. Narendran also said the chamber expects GDP to grow at 9.5 per cent in 2021-22 as the strong growth in the second half of the fiscal year will be supported by robust external demand and large-scale coverage of vaccination, allowing resumption of economic activity.

He also advocated for appointment of a "Vaccine Czar" for speedy vaccination coverage.

The new president said suitable fiscal measures to alleviate the stress of people impacted by the second wave of Covid-19 are the need of the hour.

The Indian economy is a consumption-led economy and the pandemic has impacted the consumer demand and due to this, the chamber has called for measures such as cash transfer as a number of actions are needed to deal with this demand shock, he told reporters.

"Fiscal stimulus of Rs 3 lakh crore is required...There is room for administering additional fiscal stimulus of up to Rs 3 lakh crore," he said adding the RBI should expand its balance sheet to accommodate the increased stimulus so that lending costs are contained. Measures suggested by it

INDUSTRY VOICE

■ Economy requires ₹3 lakh crore fiscal stimulus, including cash transfer to households through Jan Dhan accounts to spur growth

■ A 'Vaccine Czar' be appointed for speedy vaccination coverage

■ Other suggestions include enhanced MNREGA allocations; short-term GST cuts to boost demand; time bound tax relief/interest subvention/stamp duty concession for home buyers



T. V. Narendran

include enhanced MNREGA allocations from the budgeted amount; short-term and focused GST cuts to boost demand; time bound tax relief/interest subvention/stamp duty concession for home buyers; LTC cash voucher scheme like last year; and extension of the Aatmanirbhar Bharat Rozgar Yojana till March 31, 2022.

Narendran also asked for ensuring timely payment to companies, including MSMEs; accelerating public works programmes to ensure implementation of NIP; hiking ECLGS (Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme) amount to Rs 5 lakh crore, reduction in excise duty on fuel and

inclusion of ATF (aviation turbine fuel) and other fuel products in GST (Goods and Services Tax). On vaccination, he said there should be minimum 71.2 lakh average daily vaccination doses from now till December 2021 to cover the entire adult population.

"The Vaccine Czar (or minister) should be empowered to undertake actions like in the UK on a daily campaign to track domestic vaccine production and import supplies; equitable distribution of vaccines; track progress on vaccine deployment and administration; and using a dashboard approach and share progress reports daily," he said.

He said vaccination is a complex process as it needs coordination among different agencies, states, Centre, private and public sectors. "Lot of players are involved in the process... So for all that a single person contact is required with whom everyone can deal with," the CII president, who is also CEO and MD of Tata Steel, said.

He also called for incentivising people to get vaccinated—at the bottom of the pyramid, there should be cash/ food/ insurance incentive for those taking two doses and for the relatively better off, the government could offer rebate on air/train travel within the country.

He said the cumulative impact of the two Covid waves on incomes and consumer sentiment, coupled with the rise in household medical expenses in the second wave, may affect consumer demand for some time. —PTI

More Telangana firms plan public issue

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, JUNE 17

Companies from the Telangana State are queuing up for stock market debut after the recent successful listing of Gland Pharma and MTAR Technologies.

Hyderabad-based KIMS Hospitals and Doodla Dairy's initial public offerings (IPOs) are currently open for subscription.

Vijaya Diagnostics Centre, Gemini Edibles &

Fats India and MedPlus Health Services may tap the primary market in the near future to raise about Rs 3,850 crore, according to market sources.

Vijaya Diagnostics filed the draft red herring prospectus with the Securities and Exchange Board of India in early June. It has a network of 80 diagnostics centres and 11 laboratories across 13 cities and towns in Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, NCR and Kolkata.

Vijaya Diagnostics' Rs 1,000 crore public offer is an offer for sale by promoter S. Surendranath Reddy and private equity investor Kedaara Capital.

Hyderabad-based edible oil company Gemini Edibles & Fats India produces and markets rice bran oil. The company is looking to raise around Rs 850 crore from the primary market, sources said.

Hyderabad-based MedPlus Health Services, an online pharmacy and

general store, is planning to raise around Rs 1,500 crore from the primary market and has shortlisted merchant bankers for the public offer. The company may file its draft offer document by August.

MedPlus Health Services was started by Dr. Madhukar Gangadi in 2006 with its first pharmacy store in Hyderabad. MedPlus is the second largest pharmacy retail chain in the country with over 2000 pharmacy stores.

Tide turns for banker who quit and got \$1.6 mn in litigation

GASPARD SEBAG
JUNE 17

A Paris banker who quit Mediobanca SpA's Messier Maris & Associates won a 1.3 million euros (\$1.6 million) payout after convincing judges he'd been unfairly treated by the M&A boutique.

But that was 2018. Last week, a Paris court put the finishing touches on a costly turnaround that left Laurent Azout losing all but a fraction of his award and even owing the

company thousands of euros for not working his three-month notice period.

The legal saga puts the spotlight on a French provision called a "prise d'acte," often used by white-collar workers to complain that their employer's behaviour is so egregious they simply can't stay. In effect, employees can quit while blaming their bosses for their departure and subsequently collect unfair-dismissal payouts in court.

The provision allows an employee to terminate a job contract if the employer carries out "sufficiently serious breaches," the Paris judges had ruled.

After joining Messier Maris in 2011 to run the newly created structure's telecom, media and technology sector, Azout got nearly 1.7 million euros over four years through a so-called guaranteed-bonus programme. The awards were meant to ensure his pay was sufficient as he built up a new clientele after leaving

Lazard Ltd and until he started collecting performance-based "origination" bonuses.

The judges considered in their ruling that the phasing out of the guaranteed bonus was justified given that Azout had received a 1.1 million-euro origination bonus in 2015.

The 43-year-old was ordered in the Paris appeals court last week to pay Messier Maris 54,999.99 euros for not working his three-month notice period. —Bloomberg

Adani juggernaut will roll on but it needs quality investors

ANDY MUKHERJEE
JUNE 17

Gautam Adani's debt-fuelled empire received a jolt this week when the *Economic Times* reported that three of the six Mauritius-based funds that have invested most of their money in the Indian billionaire's stocks had seen their accounts frozen by the national share depository.

The Adani Group refuted the report as "blatantly erroneous," helping to put a floor below plunging share prices. But not before \$6 billion of wealth was lost on Monday. The jitters returned the next day and continued through Thursday.

A temporary bout of nervousness in the stock market won't shake Asia's second-richest man, who

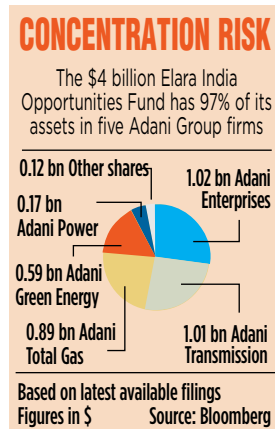
has managed to sustain - without any visibility on future profit - a decade-long entanglement in a controversial and costly coal mine investment in Australia. Behind that confidence lies the workhorse of the group. Adani Ports & Special Economic Zone Ltd. is spewing \$1 billion of cash annually, a nine-fold jump from 2014.

All that the businessman needs to make his bets pay off is a decade-long dream run in which India goes from lower-middle-income economy status to higher-middle-income nation.

That jump in per capita income may have been delayed even before Covid-19. Still, when the growth spurt eventually comes, it should trigger a hunger for commodities similar to what China witnessed between 2006 and 2016. By supplying electricity to 1.4 billion Indians when they're sleeping, providing them with piped gas when they're sitting down for breakfast, and hosting their data when they're browsing the Internet and waiting for a flight to take off from one of his airports, Adani will collect the cash that will justify the estimated \$20 billion debt in the group's listed companies.

That's why the turbulence this week isn't entirely without significance. In case of lingering damage to investor confidence, the conglomerate may need to taper its breathless expansion, lest financiers turn skittish as well. And that won't do for Adani.

In less than three



decades, his low-key trading firm has transformed itself into a massive owner of energy and transport assets in the country. Now the businessman wants to expand into cement manufacturing, presumably making

use of the fly ash produced by his power plants. An initial public offering for the airport business may also be on the cards.

It would be a typical move. To grab the capital-guzzling opportunities that have come its way, the original firm, Adani Enterprises Ltd, has spun off several units into the public market. But the list of shareholders

of these stocks, which have risen 200 to 900 per cent in value in the past year, need some explaining. Take Adani Green Energy Ltd, which wants to be the world's largest renewable energy producer by 2030. Earlier this year, the firm sold a 20 per cent stake to Total SE. That's a solid name. As are Vanguard Group Inc

and Blackrock Inc, which have small shares.

Sandwiched between them, however, are the likes of Elara India Opportunities Fund. The \$4 billion investment vehicle seems to have found most of its opportunities in Adani group shares. Look beyond the 97 per cent of the fund's assets that are parked in five of them, and it doesn't hold even a \$1 million stake in what other fund managers would typically buy in India.

Elara isn't alone. Six Mauritius-based offshore funds have put more than 95 per cent of their assets (\$2 billion to \$4 billion) into Adani's firms.

In an interview with CNBC, Jugeshinder Singh, the CFO of Adani

Group, said that more high-quality institutions will come as the firms establish a longer track record in public markets. He also argued that the questions that are being asked of him about obscure fund managers should ideally be answered by the investors themselves. Trouble is, where do we find them? I could have asked analysts, but I couldn't find a single one who covers the Adani Green stock the market values at \$25 billion.

The Adani juggernaut will roll on. However, as the group gets bigger—and more covetous of cash-generating assets—it would need larger dollops of outside equity. It would be helpful if it comes from investors who at least have a website. —Bloomberg

SHORT TAKES

Shafali, Smriti lead India's fightback

Bristol: Shafali Verma and Smriti Mandhana provided India Women a confident start but the visitors still have a mountain to climb after England Women posted a mammoth 396 for nine in their first innings in the one-off Test, here on Friday. It was the highest-ever total scored by a team against India in Test cricket and the visitors are still trailing by 333 runs with Verma (35 not out) and Mandhana (27 not out) taking India to 63 for no loss at tea on the second day. — *PTI*

Brief Scores: England women 396/9 decl. in 121.2 overs. (H Knight 95, Sophia Dunkley 74 not out, Tammy Beaumont 66; Sneh Rana 4/131, Deepti Sharma 3/65) vs **India women 63/0 in 23 overs** (Shafali Verma 35 n.o., Smriti Mandhana 27 n.o.).

Milkha is 'stable and improving'

Chandigarh: Legendary Indian sprinter Milkha Singh is "stable and improving" under the constant supervision of a medical team at the PGIMER here after having recovered from Covid-19, which he contracted last month. "He is stable and improving. He is constantly being monitored by a medical team," PGIMER officials said on Thursday. The 91-year-old was on Wednesday shifted out of Covid ICU to another section of the PGIMER hospital, a statement from his family had said describing his condition as "stable". Another statement issued by the family on Thursday said, "Milkha ji continues to battle and we remain hopeful". — *PTI*

Ledecky locks up two Games spots

Omaha, United States: Katie Ledecky powered through a punishing and unprecedented double at the US Olympic swimming trials Wednesday, winning the 200m and 1,500m freestyles to keep building her Tokyo programme. Little more than an hour after winning the 200m free, Ledecky returned to win the 1,500m in 15min 40.50sec, shaving five-hundredths of a second off her previous best this year. Ledecky launched her night by adding the 200m to the 400m free victory she claimed on Monday, giving herself a chance to defend two of the four titles she won in Rio de Janeiro in 2016. Trailing Allison Schmitt at the halfway mark, Ledecky surged home to win in 1min 55.11sec with Schmitt, the 2012 Olympic gold medalist, second in 1:56.79 to book a trip to Tokyo. — *AFP*

Gopi launches training program

Bengaluru: Indian badminton head coach Pullela Gopichand on Thursday announced a national scholarship program at The Sports School here. Under the chief mentorship of Gopichand, The Sports School Badminton Academy with technical partner Badminton Gurukul has come together to provide the best training methods to students to groom their willingness to play the sport and turn it into a full-fledged profession. Up to 100 per cent scholarships will be awarded to students who have the drive and talent to succeed in the sport, without compromising on their academics. Students will be selected for the scholarship, which will cover the academic and sport fees, on the basis of their rankings and achievements, followed by trials. — *PTI*

Sixers, Jazz are on brink of exit

Los Angeles: The top-seeded Philadelphia 76ers and Utah Jazz were left on the brink of elimination from the NBA playoffs on Wednesday as the Atlanta Hawks and Los Angeles Clippers notched against-the-odds victories on the road. In Philadelphia, Atlanta overturned a 26-point second-half deficit to lead the Hawks to a 109-106 defeat of the Sixers in their Eastern Conference semifinal clash. — *AFP*

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ULTIMATE TEST

Kohli eyes legacy, Kane prize for consistency in WTC final

Southampton, June 17: Virat Kohli carries the expectations of a billion while cricket romantics will pin their hopes on Kane Williamson when India and New Zealand engage in a battle to create a lasting legacy in pristine whites in the inaugural World Test Championship final starting here on Friday.

For the connoisseurs of the glorious game, Test cricket is the ultimate format and despite its aura, the 144-year-old history needed a facelift along with a context which the World Test Championship provided despite various bottle-necks, including the Covid-19 pandemic.

For Kohli, India's most successful Test captain, a trophy-less cabinet doesn't do justice to the champion performer that he has been for a decade.

Lest one forgets, he has been a fine leader in his own right even though Mahendra Singh Dhoni may forever remain a sentimental favourite.

Kohli needs a global triumph. Every captain needs it but perhaps the Indian captain wants it more.

It's how history will remember him just like it remembers Dhoni with a lot of respect and utmost fondness for those heroic World title wins.

Williamson stands in his way with a bunch of fine cricketers and the most amiable set of players that one would come across in international cricket.

They are India's rivals but when Williamson hits those cover drives, Devon Conway teases a Ravichandran Ashwin or Ravindra Jadeja, Trent Boult gets one banana inswinger aimed at Rohit Sharma's bootlaces, the crazy fans of a cricket-mad nation wouldn't possibly be



able to hate them.

ISHANT PREFERRED OVER SIRAJ

India on Thursday went for tried and tested players, preferring veteran Ishant Sharma over Mohammed Siraj in the playing eleven for the WTC final.

On expected lines, the team picked two specialist spinners in Ravindra Jadeja and R. Ashwin, who are also more than handy with the bat.

The three pacers are Ishant, Mohammad Shami and Jasprit Bumrah, leaving no space for the impressive Siraj. Wicketkeeper-batsman Rishabh Pant will bat at number six. — *PTI*

India's Playing XI: Virat Kohli (captain), Rohit Sharma, Shubman Gill, Cheteshwar Pujara, Ajinkya Rahane, Rishabh Pant, Ravindra Jadeja, R. Ashwin, Jasprit Bumrah, Ishant Sharma and Mohammad Shami.

India captain Virat Kohli (right) and his New Zealand counterpart Kane Williamson pose with the World Test Championship trophy on Thursday, eve of the final beginning in Southampton.

NUMBERS GAME

KEEN CONTEST ON CARDS IN WTC FINAL

- The second-ranked India take on the No.1 Test side New Zealand in the ICC World Test Championship Final at the Hampshire Bowl in Southampton from Friday (June 18).
- It will be the 60th Test between India and New Zealand and first in England. India have won 21, lost 12 and draw 26 in 59 previous Test matches played against New Zealand.
- Men in Blue have won three and lost two in last five Test matches played against the Kiwis.
- India enter the final by finishing top with 520 points from 17 matches while New Zealand qualify for the Summit Clash by finishing second with 420 points from 11 matches.
- The winners of this final will take home \$1.6 million, as well as the Test Championship Mace, while the losing team will get \$800,000. If weather prevents a winner from being identified despite the reserve day, the two teams will split the total prize money of \$2.4 million.

INDIA-NEW ZEALAND IN TESTS

- **Highest Innings Totals:** India: 583/7 declared at Ahmedabad 1999-2000 New Zealand: 680/8 declared at Wellington 2013-14
- **Lowest Innings Totals:** India: 81 at Wellington 1975-76 New Zealand: 94 at Hamilton 2002-03
- **Highest Individual Scores:** India: 231 Vinoo Mankad at Chennai 1955-56 New Zealand: 302 Brendon McCullum at Wellington 2013-14
- **Best bowling performance in an inning:** India: 8-72 S. Venkataraghavan at Delhi 1964-65 New Zealand: 7-23 Richard Hadlee at Wellington 1975-76
- **Best bowling in a match:** India: 13/140 Ravichandran Ashwin at Indore 2016-17 New Zealand: 11/58 Richard Hadlee at Wellington 1975-76

FOR THE RECORD

- Ravichandran Ashwin, who took 48 wickets at an average of 16.97 in 11 innings of six Test matches, needs just two wickets to become the fourth Indian bowler to complete a half century of wickets against New Zealand.
- Devon Conway scored 306 runs at an average of 76.50 with a double hundreds and a fifty in four innings of two Test matches.

— S. PERVEZ QAISER

Nadal to skip Oly and Wimbledon

Paris, June 17: Rafael Nadal said on Thursday he was withdrawing from Wimbledon and the Tokyo Olympics in a bid "to prolong my career".

The 35-year-old Spaniard, who won Olympic gold and Wimbledon in 2008, triumphing again at the All England Club two years later, revealed his decision on Twitter.

"I have decided not to participate at this year's Championships at Wimbledon and the Olympic Games in Tokyo," he tweeted. "It's never an easy decision to take but after listening to my body and discuss(ing) it with my team I understand that it is the right decision."

World number one Novak Djokovic last week ended Nadal's four-year reign as French Open champion and went on to seal his 19th Grand Slam.

"The goal is to prolong my career and continue to do what makes me happy, that is to compete at the highest level and keep fighting for those professional and personal goals at the maximum level of competition," said Nadal.

The former world number one said the shorter break between the French Open and Wimbledon this year — Roland Garros was pushed back by a week — had influenced his decision.

"The fact that there has only been 2 weeks between RG and Wimbledon didn't make it easier on my body

● **The former world number one said the shorter break between the French Open and Wimbledon this year — Roland Garros was pushed back by a week — had influenced his decision.**

to recuperate after the always-demanding clay court season," he said.

"They have been two months of great effort and the decision I take is focused looking at the mid and long term."

OLYMPIC CHAMPION

Nadal is a double Olympic champion, having won gold in singles in Beijing in 2008 and in doubles with Marc Lopez in Rio in 2016, when he also carried Spain's flag in the opening ceremony.

"The Olympic Games always meant a lot and they were always a priority as a sports person," he said.

Nadal, who will be replaced as third seed at Wimbledon by defeated French Open finalist Stefanos Tsitsipas, missed the championships in London in 2004, 2009 and 2016 because of injury.

His absence from Wimbledon means Djokovic, 34, will be an even stronger favourite to win the tournament for the sixth time. — *AFP*



Eight new girls in hockey team

Bengaluru, June 17: India on Thursday named eight Olympic debutants and as many veterans in its 16-member women's hockey squad for the Tokyo Games to be held from July 23 to August 8.

The squad is a perfect mix of youth and experience and includes as many as eight players who had represented India in the 2016 Rio Olympics.

Although, star striker Rani Rampal has been the captain of the side in the lead up to the Olympics, the national selectors are yet to name the leader of the Tokyo-bound team.

However, as per officials in the know how of developments, Rani is expected to lead the side in Tokyo but a confirmation is still awaited.

The eight Olympic debutants include drag-flicker Gurjit Kaur, Udita, Nisha, Neha, Navneet Kaur, Sharmila Devi, Lalremsiami, the first player hailing from Mizoram in the team, and Salima Tete. Tete had led the Indian

TOKYO | OLYMPICS

INDIA SQUAD

Goalkeeper: Savita.
Defenders: Deep Grace Ekka, Nikki Pradhan, Gurjit Kaur, Udita, Nisha.
Midfielders: Nisha, Udita, Sushila Chanu, Pukhrabam, Monika, Navjot Kaur, Salima Tete.
Forwards: Rani Rampal, Navneet Kaur, Lalremsiami, Vandana Katariya, Sharmila Devi.

team at the 2018 Youth Olympic Games at Buenos Aires to a silver medal performance.

The eight experienced players, who were part of the last Olympics, include Rani, goalkeeper Savita, Deep Grace Ekka, Sushila Chanu, Pukhrabam, Monika, Nikki Pradhan, Navjot Kaur and Vandana Katariya.

These eight players have amassed a total experience of 1,492 caps between them. The selected squad has just one goalkeeper in Savita, four defenders, six mid-fielders and five forwards. — *PTI*

WTC final 'just another' match for captain Kohli

Southampton, June 17: India captain Virat Kohli on Thursday asserted that one Test match is not a "true reflection" of his team even if it happens to be the World Test Championship final against New Zealand here and he is treating it as "just another" game.

For the Indian captain and his team, the WTC final is like their Test debuts as young players trying to come up the ranks.

"One game over five days. It's not going to reflect anything and those who understand the game know and also what has gone over the period of last four to five years," Kohli said on the eve of the big final against the Black Caps.

"If we win, cricket will not stop and if we lose also, cricket won't stop. We are playing in quest of excellence and understand who we are as a team," the eloquent Indian captain added.

He was not forthcoming when a question on team combination was posed based on a previous answer that the team would select a composi-



Virat Kohli takes a selfie with Mohammad Siraj and Ishant Sharma in Southampton.

tion "with all bases covered" regardless of the weather forecast of rain on opening day.

"... A team with enough batting depth and bowling resources," he said when asked if he would factor in the rain and overcast conditions.

He was also dismissive when asked if this was the biggest cricketing event of his illustrious career. "No," pat came the reply.

"This is just another Test match. All these

things (WTC final) look good from the outside. One game can't become a do-or-die game. It's a great moment but cricket goes on just like life goes on."

"The occasion needs to be enjoyed and no more important than the first Test that we all played as young players trying to rise through the ranks."

"We need to have belief in our abilities and keep things simple. It's a contest between bat and ball." — *PTI*

IT'S IDEAL TO BAT FIRST & SOAK IN PRESSURE: DADA

New Delhi, June 17: Up against the "best New Zealand" side of the past 35 years, India should opt to bat first even if the conditions are overcast as that is what has worked best for the side during overseas tours, feels BCCI President and former captain Sourav Ganguly.

"If you dig into the record books and see India's best overseas performances (save 2021 Australia), we have always won matches when we have batted first. It's about a choice whether you want to face the pressure first up in adverse conditions or wait for the fourth innings," Ganguly told *Aaj Tak*.

"Look at Leeds in 2002 or 2018 South Africa, we batted first in bowling friendly conditions, soaked in the initial pressure, put runs on the board and that's how won those games. Even Mark Taylor or Steve Waugh's Australian teams rarely fielded even in seaming conditions." — *PTI*

Doc 'killed' Diego via negligence

San Isidro (Argentina), June 17: A lawyer for a nurse under investigation in the death of Argentine football great Diego Maradona said Wednesday that doctors killed him through negligence.

"They killed Diego," attorney Rodolfo Baque told reporters after his client, nurse Dahiana Gisela Madrid, was questioned by prosecutors.

Maradona died of a heart attack last November at the age of 60, weeks after undergoing brain surgery for a blood clot.

Madrid, 36, is one of seven people under investigation for manslaughter after a board of experts looking into Maradona's

death found he had received inadequate care and was abandoned to his fate for a "prolonged, agonizing period."

Baque insisted it was the doctors treating Maradona while he recovered from the brain operation, not his client, who were to blame for the soccer legend's death.

He said Maradona was being treated for heart trouble but at the same time was on psychiatric medication that sped up his heart rate.

Also, Maradona fell while in the hospital, and when Madrid asked to have a CAT scan done on him, an aide to Maradona refused, arguing that if the press found out it would look bad, Baque



said.

"In the end, there were many warning signs that Maradona was going to die, give or take a day. And none of the doctors did anything to prevent it," Baque said during a break in the interrogation of Madrid, which went on for more than eight hours.

Madrid was Maradona's daytime nurse and one of the last people to see him

alive.

An investigation was opened following a complaint filed by two of Maradona's five children against neurosurgeon Leopoldo Luque, whom they blame for their father's deteriorating condition after the brain operation.

A panel of 20 medical experts convened by Argentina's public prosecutor said last month that Maradona's treatment was rife with "deficiencies and irregularities" and the medical team had left his survival "to fate."

If found guilty, the seven, who are barred from leaving the country, could face between eight and 25 years in prison.

— *AFP*

RESCHEDULING/REGULATION OF TRAINS

Northern Railway will undertake the construction work of Foot Over Bridge at Bhodwal Majri yard between Ganaur and Samalkha stations on Delhi Sabzi Mandi-Ambala Cantt. Section. To execute this work, 4 hours (0.20 - 4.20 hrs.) Power and Traffic Block will be taken on 20.06.2021. Consequently the following trains will be affected as under:-

RESCHEDULING OF SPECIAL TRAIN

02422 Jammu Tawi - Ajmer Express Special Train will depart from Jammu Tawi at 20.30 hrs. instead of 18.15 hrs. on 19.06.2021.

REGULATION OF SPECIAL TRAINS

Train No. & Train Name	Time/Period of Regulation
04554 Daulatpur Chowk - Delhi Jn. Himachal Exp. Spl.	Train commencing its journey on 19.06.2021 will be regulated for 60 minutes between Ambala - Panipat section.
02312 Kalka - Howrah Jn. Netaji Express Special	Train commencing its journey on 19.06.2021 will be regulated for 30 minutes between Ambala - Panipat section.

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

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

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