

SHORT TAKES

Tree plantation in city: Empanelment of 4 agencies approved

New Delhi: The Delhi government on Monday approved the empanelment of four technical agencies to carry out tree transplantation in the national capital. The four agencies include Green Morning Horticulture Pvt. Ltd, Hyderabad; Rohit Nursery, New Delhi; DD MEP Engineers, Gurgaon; and RP Entrepreneurs. "After rigorous research and study, the environment department of the Delhi government has approved the empanelment of four agencies to carry out tree transplantation in the national capital. Applicants will be required to select an agency from among the empanelled agencies only," an official statement read. In response to the advertisement published by the forest department, 13 agencies had sent their expression of interest for empanelment, it said. Under the tree transplantation policy, which was notified late last year, agencies concerned have to transplant 80 per cent of the trees affected by their projects to a new location. Ten saplings have to be planted for each tree transplanted or felled. According to the policy, the responsibility of the technical agency is limited to one year of the completion of tree transplantation to a new site. It is also required to submit a survival assessment report at the end of one year along with a completion certificate signed by the tree officer at the receptor site. The benchmark tree survival rate at the end of one year of the tree transplantation is 80 per cent.

Irani gang man held for robbing gold ornaments

New Delhi: A 36-year-old member of Irani gang was arrested for allegedly posing as police officers of Crime Branch and later fleeing away with gold ornaments from a man after intercepting him in North Delhi's Bara Hindu Rao area, police said on Monday. Accused Qasim Zafri alias Joju, a resident of Thane district in Maharashtra was arrested by the Crime Branch team of Delhi Police from Bhopal on Saturday, they said. On June 10, the victim was travelling in an autorickshaw from Karol Bagh to Chandni Chowk with a bag containing gold ornaments weighing 915 grams. At about 2:45 pm, when the vehicle reached near a mall on Bara Hindu Rao, four men on two motorcycles arrived there and stopped the autorickshaw. They posed themselves as police officers of Crime Branch while two among them started checking his bag. When the victim could not produce any bill and invoice, they directed him to bring the bill from his shop and fled from the spot, according to police.

Delhi Metro plans to work out SOPs after monkey enters train

New Delhi, June 21: Days after a monkey wandered into a Delhi Metro train, the DMRC on Monday said it plans to work out a standard operating procedure to tackle such issues in future. The primate cavorted and roamed around in coaches of the train on the Blue Line before settling on a seat, leaving some passengers amused, and some others scared. The video of the incident was widely shared on the social media. "The monkey had sneaked into the train at the Akshardham Metro Station and remained in the system for 3-4 minutes. DMRC staff acted swiftly after getting information on the issue and the train was evacuated at the next station," the DMRC had said in a statement on Monday. The simian ambled around in the coach and did playful antics much to the surprise of the commuters. The video which had surfaced on the social media on Saturday showed the monkey roaming around and then climbing onto the handrail bar before traipsing to the neighbouring coach.

"The DMRC in consultation with the forest department plans to work out a standard operating procedure to deal with such unexpected situations arising out of their entry into metro premises for passengers' safety," the statement said. In this connection, DMRC would also like to appeal and advise passengers to refrain from encouraging, feeding (animals) or indulging in any activity which may endanger them in such a situation, it added. In the past, DMRC had roped in services wherein a person could scare away the monkeys on being spotted at vulnerable stations, by mimicking a langur's voice, officials said. The DMRC once again appeals to the general public to inform the train operator or metro authorities in case of such an incident, for immediate remedial action, the statement said. The Delhi Metro authorities had on Sunday said "no harm was caused to anyone" in the incident. The DMRC officials earlier said there have been a couple of similar incidents in the past as well. —PTI

7th International Yoga Day celebrated



A common yoga protocol on the occasion of International Yoga Day at Red Fort in New Delhi on Monday. — G.N. JHA

Special yoga sessions for cops organised

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 21

On the occasion of seventh International Yoga Day, the Delhi Police on Monday organised special yoga sessions for its personnel deployed across various units. Delhi police commissioner S.N. Shrivastava posted pictures of him and his wife performing different "asanas". Personnel from the Delhi Police and Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) units deployed at Singhu border also practiced yoga in a special yoga session organised over there, a senior police officer said. A similar programme was also carried out in the southeast district, he added.

Kejriwal, L-G urge people to make yoga part of life

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 21

Observing the seventh International Yoga Day, Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal and lieutenant governor Anil Bajjal on Monday appealed to people to make yoga a part of their daily life. Bajjal said yoga has more significance amid Covid-19 times and it can boost immunity and mental health. "Hearty congratulations to all on the occasion of International Yoga Day. Yoga has more significance in this time of Covid 19. We can boost immunity along with ensuring mental health through its regular practice. Let us make yoga a daily part of our life,"

▶ **YOGA HAS** more significance in this time of Covid 19. We can boost immunity along with ensuring mental health through its regular practice. Let us make yoga a daily part of our life, L-G Anil Bajjal tweeted.

the lieutenant governor tweeted. In a tweet, Kejriwal said: "Let us pledge on the occasion of International Yoga Day to make yoga a part of our daily routine. Take care of yourself and be healthy in this difficult time of pandemic." The United Nations recognised June 21 as the International Yoga Day in 2014.

Man trying to purchase ₹1.4L mobile with fake cheque held

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 21

A 40-year-old man who allegedly impersonated himself as an IAS officer and tried to get a Samsung smartphone worth ₹1.4 lakh has been arrested by the Delhi Police from South Extension area. The accused has been identified as Abhay Bahl, a resident of Noida. According to the police an information was received during patrolling in South Extension-2 that a person posing as an IAS officer would come to Samsung showroom for purchasing a mobile through a fake cheque. Subsequently a team was deployed near the showroom and the accused was apprehended who came and

▶ **ACCORDING TO** the police an information was received during patrolling in South Extension-2 that a person posing as an IAS officer would come to Samsung showroom for purchasing a mobile through a fake cheque. Subsequently a team was deployed near the showroom and the accused was apprehended.

approached the showroom's manager to get a mobile phone of ₹1.4 lakh with a fake cheque. The accused's search was conducted and a fake blank cheque was recovered from his pocket. During enquiry it was revealed that the accused made a phone call to an employee of the show-

room and represented himself as a senior officer of Samsung Company. After that he said that one of his friends, who was an IAS officer, would come in the evening. He would pay via cheque and they should deliver to him a new mobile worth of ₹1.4 lakh. When employees confirmed this, the caller was found to be fake. Later, the accused came and introduced himself as an IAS officer and produced a cheque which was not even in his name. A case has been registered against the accused at Hauz Khas police station under relevant sections. The police said that the accused was also earlier arrested for impersonating himself as a senior officer in Noida.

■ 57 lakh vaccine doses received but 2.94 crore needed: Delhi govt

People need vaccines, not advertisements: Sisodia

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 21

Taking a jibe at the Centre over its rigorous media publicity for free vaccines, Delhi deputy CM Manish Sisodia on Monday said "People do not need advertisements but vaccines."

Sisodia pointed out that the city received only 57 lakh doses against the stipulated 2.94 crore needed on Monday. Sisodia alleged that the Centre pressured officials in Delhi to publish advertisements in newspapers thanking it for providing free Covid-19 vaccines for all from June 21, while the city has got only 57 lakh doses so far against the 2.94 crore needed. He also said the Centre will supply only 15 lakh Covid-19 vaccine doses to Delhi in July and at this rate, it will take around 16 more months to inoculate the city's entire population.

Sisodia said several BJP-ruled states have published advertisements in newspapers, thanking the Centre for providing free Covid-19 vaccines for all aged above 18 years from June 21. "They also asked officials in Delhi to publish advertisements in newspapers thanking (Prime Minister Narendra



I request the PM to supply 2.3 crore more doses in the next two months. I promise that we will do your publicity...publish advertisements in entire Delhi

— Manish Sisodia, Delhi Dy CM

Modi for the free vaccination. They sent this toolkit to Delhi government officials and pressured them to issue such advertisements," he alleged during a digital press conference. "People do not need advertisements but vaccines. I request the Prime Minister to supply 2.3 crore more doses in the next two months. I promise that we will do your publicity...publish advertisements in entire Delhi, but you have been asking states to do so without giving them vaccines," the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader alleged. On June 7, the Prime Minister announced that all citizens aged 18 years and above will be vaccinated against Covid-19 for free from June 21, with the Centre distributing doses to the states. "I got to know that not a single free vaccine has been supplied to Delhi for use beyond June 21," Sisodia said. The Centre will supply only 15 lakh Covid vaccine doses in July and at this rate, it will take

No mess-up in vaccination programme: City BJP

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 21

Hitting out at Delhi deputy CM Manish Sisodia, Delhi BJP spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor on Monday said that there is no mess-up in the country's vaccination programme. It was going on in planned phased manner when Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal demanded freedom to buy vaccines which the Central government allowed but failing to buy vaccine in international

market he again demanded Centre's help so its very clear that it was Arvind Kejriwal who created all the confusion.

Mr Kapoor said, the Central government had already announced schedule of vaccine distribution according to which not only Delhi but entire country will get two doses of vaccine by mid December 2021. It will be better if the Delhi government instead of creating further confusion adheres to Centre's given time table.

15-16 more months to vaccinate the entire population of Delhi, he said. "You have been saying India has been conducting the largest vaccination drive globally, but it has turned out to be the most mismanaged, derailed and messed up exercise in the world," Sisodia alleged. With the positivity rate dipping to all time low of 0.16 per cent since the pandemic began, Delhi on Monday reported 89 Covid-19 cases, the lowest since April 2020.

Central library to remain closed: JNU

New Delhi, June 21: In view of the ongoing pandemic situation, the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) has announced that Dr BR Ambedkar Central Library will remain closed. The decision comes amid demands by students to reopen the library.

On June 11, the university had said that it would reopen the library soon in line with the government's orders. "Due to the prevailing situation of Covid-19 and curfew announced by the Delhi government, the Dr BR Ambedkar Central Library will remain closed till further orders," the university said.

Earlier this month, the university administration alleged that a few students had broken into the library and scuffled with security guards, and "occupied" the Dr BR Ambedkar Central library. It had lodged an FIR against them for allegedly breaking into the facility and clashing with the staff there. —PTI

4 shoe godown workers yet to be rescued after fire in 2-storey

BHASKAR HARI SHARMA
NEW DELHI, JUNE 21

Four more workers are suspected to be trapped inside a shoe godown, even as the search and rescue operations are underway in the two-storey building where a major fire broke out on Monday morning, police said. The shoe godown is located in west Delhi's Udyog Nagar, they said.

Initially both police and fire-fighters received a call about blaze in factory but during the enquiry, it came to light that the two-storey building houses godown where shoes are assembled and packed for sale, officials said.

Police said ten workers were suspected to be trapped inside the godown. Four among them were safely unhurt in the initial stages while two other workers who were rescued later suffered minor burn

injuries and were given first aid at the spot.

"We got a PCR call about a fire in a shoe factory in Udyog Nagar at 8.56 am. Twenty-four fire tenders are at the spot and 15 more vehicles were later pressed into service to bring the blaze under control," DCP (Outer) Parvinder Singh said. The police said four more workers are still suspected to be trapped inside the godown and search-cum-rescue operations are still underway to trace those reported missing.

The senior police officer suspected that the fire started from the first floor of the building and later spread to other floors. He said the godown was shut and usually starts its operations around 8.30 am but suspected that a few workers who came earlier got trapped inside as the fire broke out. No major injuries have

been reported in the incident so far, according to the police.

The owner of the godown has been identified as Pankaj Garg, police said, adding a case is being registered in connection with the incident.

Delhi Fire Service officials said 35 fire tenders and around 140 fire personnel have been involved in the fire-fighting operations. "Fire is completely under control now, cooling operation and search operation continues, the building has been declared dangerous by the civic body," said Atul Garg, Director, Delhi Fire Service.

Elaborating on the challenges faced by the fire-fighters, the senior fire official said they were initially informed that the fire was in a shoe factory but it was found to be a godown where shoe materials were assembled for packaging.



A firefighter tries to douse a fire at a shoe factory at Udyog Nagar in New Delhi on Monday. —PTI

ATS nabs two Jamia Nagar men for running conversion drive in UP: Cops

Lucknow, June 21: Two men of Delhi's Jamia Nagar, allegedly running an outfit involved in converting deaf students and other poor people to Islam in Uttar Pradesh with funding from Pakistan's ISI, have been arrested here. The arrests were made by Uttar Pradesh Anti-Terror Squad following the registration of an FIR in the case at Lucknow's ATS police station. Additional director general of police (law and order) Prashant Kumar identified the arrested accused as Mufti Qazi Jahangir Alam Qasmi and Mohammad Umar Gautam, both resi-

dents of Jamia Nagar in New Delhi. Gautam lived in Batla House of Jamia Nagar, the infamous site of September 2008 encounter between the Special Cell of Delhi police and Indian Mujahideen operatives, in which Inspector Mohan Chand Sharma was gunned down by terrorists, two of whom were shot dead and two arrested, while two other had escaped. Kumar said Gautam, who is himself a convert to Islam from Hinduism, boasted to the police of having converted at least 1,000 people to Islam, luring them with marriage,

money and jobs.

"I converted at least 1,000 non-Muslims to Islam, marrying them all to Muslims," Kumar quoted Gautam as boasting.

The outfit that they ran is named Islamic Dawah Center, having access of funds from Pakistan's ISI and other foreign agencies, said Kumar.

The ADGP said the ATS had been working on the case on the intelligence that some people were getting funds from ISI and other foreign agencies for converting poor people to Islam and spreading communal enmity in the society. —PTI



Delhi Pradesh Congress activists demonstrate against excessive VAT on petroleum products in New Delhi on Monday. — G.N. JHA

Ayurveda can help in post-Covid hyperglycemia control: Experts

New Delhi, June 21: Those suffering from high blood sugar post COVID-19 can find some relief in ayurvedic formulations like BGR-34 which are based on natural bioactive compounds with dipeptidyl-peptidase-4 (DPP-4) inhibitory effects to manage blood glucose levels. According to experts, a global study published in Diabetes, Obesity and Metabolism Journal found that at least 14.4 per cent of hospitalised patients reported onset of diabetes, causing dysfunctioning of glucose metabolism resulting into hyperglycaemia after recovery. Though a number of drugs are available to control hyperglycemia, DPP-4 inhibitors have been found to be the safest against post-

Covid high blood sugar, according to a recent study in Elsevier journal, they said.

Researched by the Council Scientific and Industrial Research - National Botanical Research Institute (CSIR-NBRI) and CIMAP (Central Institute for Medicinal and Aromatic Plants), BGR-34 has natural bioactive compounds of Daruharidra with DPP-4 inhibitory effect.

In fact, according to the Journal of Drug Research, the primary source of DPP-4 inhibitor is the Daruharidra plant.

Dr A.K.S. Rawat, a scientist from National Botanical Research Institute (NBRI), Lucknow, which has developed the ayurvedic drug, said, "Because of this property, the Daruharidra was

added in the herbal formulation BGR-34." Scientists researched intensively to study its efficacy, he said.

Apart from Daruharidra, BGR-34 has two herbal elements that can keep hyperglycemia in check.

One is gynecemic acid, sourced from Gudmar medicinal plant which, according to ChemRxiv journal, controls such conditions in diabetic patients. Similarly, another chemical element, Trigonoside IB, that is found in fenugreek also helps in controlling hyperglycemia, as has been detailed in the journal, Environmental Challenges.

BGR-34, among other herbal ingredients, also contains bioactive compounds of both these medicinal plants. —PTI

SHORT TAKES

West Naval Command celebrates Yoga Day

Mumbai: Naval personnel and their family members at the Western Naval Command here on Monday celebrated the International Yoga Day by performing various asanas or postures which were demonstrated on digital platforms, an official release said. The International Day of Yoga was celebrated at the Western Naval Command (WNC), with all serving naval personnel including Defence Security Corps (DSC), Military Engineer Services (MES), Defence Civilian Employees and their family members on the theme "Be with Yoga-Be At Home", it said. Additionally, all sea-going units in the WNC also took part in celebrating the day by conducting Yoga sessions at the unit level, both at sea and in the harbour, with due observance of all Covid-19 protocols. An online yoga session was conducted under the aegis of the Navy Wives Welfare Association (Western Region) for the naval community. — PTI

14.71L vaccinated in single day in MP

Bhopal: Madhya Pradesh set a new single-day vaccination record in the country with inoculation of 14.71 lakh people on Monday. The Shivraj government launched a 10-day special vaccination drive in the state coinciding with the International Yoga Day on Monday. Madhya Pradesh has overtaken the single-day vaccination record set by Andhra Pradesh on Sunday. Total 13.41 people were vaccinated in Andhra Pradesh on Sunday. Indore set a record as being the first city in the country to have vaccinated 2.10 lakh people in a single day on Monday. "The vaccination campaign started in all the 52 districts in MP simultaneously in an atmosphere of enthusiasm", chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan who launched the vaccination campaign at the village of Parasari in Datia district, told reporters.

Cong looks at Yoga via religion: Minister

New Delhi: Accusing the Congress of looking at yoga through the prism of religion, Union minister and senior BJP leader Prakash Javadekar on Monday said the opposition party continues to practise the "politics of appeasement". He was reacting to a tweet of Congress spokesperson Abhishek Singhvi that the chanting of "Om" will neither make yoga stronger nor the chanting of "Allah" will reduce its strength. "The Congress looks at yoga through the prism of religion and is proving that it is even today engaged in politics of appeasement," Mr Javadekar said in a tweet. India celebrated the International Yoga Day on Monday with Prime Minister Narendra Modi lauding the positive impact of yoga. — PTI

SURI TAKES OVER AS NEW DG OF ARMY AVIATION

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JUNE 21

Lieutenant General Ajay Kumar Suri on Monday took over as the Director General Army Aviation. Lieutenant General Lt. Gen. A.K. Suri comes at a crucial juncture when Army Aviation Corps is in the midst of modernisation, and transformation with a wide range of equipment in various stages of induction. He is an alumnus of St Edwards School, Shimla and National Defence Academy, Pune. Lt. Gen. Suri was commissioned to the Indian Army in June 1985 as an Artillery Officer and was awarded wings to fly as a combat helicopter pilot in June 1990. Lieutenant General Suri has more than 6000 hours of total service flying and is the first Director General to have flown all types of helicopters Cheetah, Chetak, ALH (Dhruv) and ALH (WSI) (Rudra) over all types of terrain, in a wide variety of locations in India and abroad. He has earlier tenanted several coveted staff and instructional assignments including Air Operations Officer in the UN Mission in Sierra Leone, Brigadier Aviation in Eastern and Southern Sectors, Senior Aviation Instructor and Commandant of Combat Army Aviation Training School, Nasik prior to being the Additional Director General and Officiating Director General in November 2019.

Yogi on mind: BJP team meets RSS leadership

Lucknow, June 21: BJP's national general secretary (organisation) BL Santhosh and Uttar Pradesh in-charge Radha Mohan Singh on Monday held meetings with RSS office-bearers here during which assembly election preparations and the row over Ram Temple land purchase were discussed, party sources said.

Arriving here on a two-day visit, the two leaders also met UP BJP chief Swatantra Dev Singh and state general secretary Sunil Bansal and discussed various campaigns of the party.

This is their second visit this month as the party sets in motion prepara-

UP's CM to be decided by party after polls: Maurya

Lucknow, June 21: Senior BJP leader and Uttar Pradesh Labour Minister Swami Prasad Maurya has said that the next chief minister of the state will be decided by the central leadership after the completion of Assembly elections early next year. The chief minister will

tions for the crucial assembly polls next year in the shadow of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The two leaders later headed for the office of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) in

be finalised by the central leadership after the Assembly elections, Maurya told newsmen in reply to a question at the BJP headquarters here on Sunday. Conflicting signals have continued to emerge from the ruling BJP over who will lead the party in the 2022 Assembly elec-

tions and who will be the chief ministerial candidate. Speaking to newsmen in Etah last week, the BJP's state unit president Swatantra Dev Singh had said that the next Assembly polls will be contested under the leadership of chief minister Yogi Adityanath. — PTI

Niralanagar locality in the state capital.

Party sources said that at the RSS office, Santhosh and other party leaders met Sangh office bearers, including 'Kshetra Pracharak' Anil.

They held discussions on the 2022 UP Assembly elections and the allegations of corruption in the purchase of land in Ayodhya by the Ram temple trust, the sources said. However, when asked



People perform Yoga on the occasion of International Day of Yoga at Bhedaghat alongside the banks of river Narmada in Jabalpur on Monday.

— PTI

BJP's north Bengal leader, seven others join Trinamul

Kolkata, June 21: In yet another jolt to the BJP, the party's Alipurduar district president, Ganga Prasad Sharma, joined the TMC on Monday, as senior leader of the state's ruling party Mukul Roy, who also switched sides two weeks ago, claimed that this was the "beginning of the saffron party's end" in the state.

Seven other BJP leaders from the region, too, fol-

lowed in Sharma's footsteps and joined the Mamata Banerjee camp.

Mr Roy, addressing a press meet here, said the BJP's rise in the state began with the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, when it managed to bag several seats in north Bengal, and its downfall, too, will start from the region.

"This is just a glimpse of what lies ahead... The BJP's fall in the state is

about the meeting, Swatantra Dev Singh said that it was a courtesy call.

He said that a meeting is proposed at the residence of UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath where discussions on organisational campaigns will be held.

A UP BJP spokesperson said that Santhosh will hold meetings with party office bearers and review Covid-19-related campaigns and other "sewa" works. He will also give his guidance for upcoming party campaigns and programmes. A party office-bearer said that Santhosh has come for the "monthly review" of the various ongoing programmes of the party. — PTI

HIMANTA GOVT AGENDA

Assam to launch 2-child policy in phased manner

MANOJ ANAND GUWAHATI, JUNE 21

The population control policy in government jobs which was introduced in 2020, the BJP government has decided to start its implementation in phased manner in Assam.

Assam chief minister Himanata Biswa Sarma said that the state will take into account population norms for selecting government beneficiaries be it loan waiver or any other government schemes. He, however, made an exception saying that the rule won't be applicable to tea garden workers and the SC-ST community.

"In future, population norms will be taken into account as eligibility for government benefits. Population policy has begun," said the chief minister. "We will gradually incorporate a two-child policy for availing government benefits. You can consider this as an announcement," said Mr Sarma.

It is significant that Madhya Pradesh had imposed restrictions on persons with more than two children from taking up judicial positions in 2001. Rajasthan enacted a law in 1994 that stated

▶ ASSAM CHIEF minister Himanata Biswa Sarma said that the state will take into account population norms for selecting government beneficiaries be it loan waiver or any other government schemes

that if an individual had more than two children then that person would not be allowed to contest any elections in the state.

Maharashtra as well does not allow people with more than two children from standing for elections, while also prohibiting them from obtaining government jobs. Similarly in Karnataka, only candidates who have two children or, along with a 'sanitary latrine' in their residence, are qualified to contest in local elections. Many others such as Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Uttarakhand and Odisha have enforced population control laws in the country.

The proposed population control policy in Assam will not be applicable in all the schemes as many of the benefits are offered by the central government.

NORTHERN RAILWAY

Tender Notice No. 04/AM/2021-22/NRCH Dated: 19.06.2021

Invitation of Tenders through E-procurement system

Deputy Chief Materials Manager, Northern Railway, New Delhi-110055, for and on behalf of the President of India, invites e-tenders through e-procurement system for supply of the following items:-

| S.No. | Tender No. | Brief Description | Qty. | Closing Date |
|-------|------------|--------------------------------|------|--------------|
| 01 | 82212455 | Tablet Pazopanib 400 mg | 7000 | 09.07.2021 |
| 02 | 82212378A | Injection Nano Docetaxel 80 mg | 400 | 09.07.2021 |

Note:- 1. Vendors may visit the IREPS website i.e. www.ireps.gov.in for details.
2. No Manual offer will be entertained. 1365/2021

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Sh. Manohar Lal, Chief Minister, Haryana

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- Free COVID-19 vaccination for everyone above 18 years of age in India
- So far, vaccines were free for people of 45 years age and above
- Vaccines will be available free of cost in Government-run vaccination centres
- Government of India is providing free vaccines to all States
- Central Government has provided 30 crore vaccine doses so far
- Three vaccines approved in India so far, several new vaccines in approval process

Get Vaccinated, Stay Safe

- Vaccines are safe, ignore rumours
- Visit www.cowin.gov.in to register and get full details on vaccination centres and vaccines
- Follow COVID-appropriate behaviour even after vaccination



“Central Government is providing free Vaccination under a special campaign to every Indian from now. The biggest beneficiary of this phase of India's vaccination drive shall be the poor, the middle class and the youth of the country. All of us should pledge to get ourselves vaccinated. Together we will defeat COVID-19.”

Prime Minister Narendra Modi

TOGETHER LET US DEFEAT COVID-19, GET YOURSELF VACCINATED AS PER YOUR TURN

Information, Public Relations & Languages Department, Haryana | www.prharyana.gov.in @Cmohry @DiprHaryana

Nadda to address 'Kisan Morchha' meeting today

New Delhi: BJP president J.P. Nadda will address the first meeting of the newly nominated national office-bearers of the party's 'Kisan Morchha' on Tuesday.

The party's farmer wing's spokesperson Manoj Yadav said in a statement the meeting will deliberate on countering opposition parties and some farm unions on their "misinformation" campaign against the three agriculture reform laws, which have drawn protests from a section of farmers.

— PTI

NORTHERN RAILWAY

TENDER NOTICE

Sr. DEN/CM/MB acting for and on behalf of The President of India invites E-Tender against following Tenders Notice, closing date & time are mentioned against each column. 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. Contractors are allowed to make payments against this tender towards tender document cost and earnest money only through online payment modes available on IREPS portal like net banking, debit card, credit card etc. Manual payments through Demand draft, Banker's cheque, Deposit receipt, FDR etc. are not allowed.

| Tender No. | 35-DRM-MB-21-22 Date:- 18.06.2021 | Q/Route data/DEN/T/21-22 dt. 21.06.2021 |
|--|---|---|
| Name of work | Provision of Rail Level Loading/Unloading Platform by using Unserviceable PRC Sleepers at Gajraula Yard in the section of SSE-W-G.J.L. under ADEN/HPU | Repair and service of route data file preparation system as per RDSO specification no. TM/SM/2015 |
| Contract Type | Works | Works |
| Tender Closing Date | 15.07.2021 | 01.07.2021 |
| Tender Closing Time | 16:00 Hrs. | 16:00 Hrs. |
| Advertised Value | ₹67,85,872.65 | ₹79,525.00 |
| Earnest Money | NIL | NIL |
| Tender Doc. Cost | NIL | NIL |
| Period of Completion | 06 months | 12 months |
| Bidding Start Date | 01.07.2021 | 21.06.2021 |
| No. DEN-IV-35-DRM-MB-21-22 Dated: 21.06.2021 1364/21 | | |

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

INCREASE IN THE FREQUENCY OF SPECIAL TRAINS

For the convenience of passengers, Railways have decided to increase the frequency of Superfast/Rajdhani Special Trains from 3 days in a week to Daily as per details given below:-

| Train No. | From | To | Existing Frequency/Day | Revised days of run | Revised Frequency w.e.f. |
|-----------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|--|
| 02919 | Dr. Ambedkar Nagar | Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra | Monday, Wednesday & Friday | Daily | From 01-07-2021 to till further advice |
| 02920 | Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra | Dr. Ambedkar Nagar | Wednesday, Friday & Sunday | Daily | From 03-07-2021 to till further advice |
| 02957 | Ahmedabad Jn. | New Delhi (Rajdhani Spl.) | Sunday, Tuesday & Friday | Daily | From 28-06-2021 to till further advice |
| 02958 | New Delhi | Ahmedabad Jn. (Rajdhani Spl.) | Monday, Wednesday, & Saturday | Daily | From 29-06-2021 to till further advice |

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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NORTHERN RAILWAY
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Serving Customers with a Smile

SHORT TAKES

SC to hear pleas on Board cancellation

New Delhi: The Supreme Court will hear on Tuesday a batch of petitions challenging the Central Board of Secondary Education's (CBSE) decision to cancel the Class 12 board examination even as it reiterated that it has accepted in "principle" the CBSE scheme for the evaluation of marks for the students who were to appear in the cancelled examinations. Posting the petitions for hearing on Tuesday, a bench comprising Justice A.M. Khanwilkar and Justice Dinesh Maheshwari said that they will pass an order relating to suggestions on the CBSE/ICSE scheme for the evaluation of marks only after deciding the petitions challenging the cancellation decision that are pending with its registry. However, the court made it clear that no fresh petition challenging the cancellation decision would be entertained.

HC grants transit bail to Rana Ayyub

Mumbai: The Bombay High Court on Monday granted transit anticipatory bail to journalist Rana Ayyub in a case filed by UP police over her tweet on an assault incident in Gaziabad. Senior counsel Mihir Desai, on behalf of Ayyub contended before the Justice Prakash Deu Naik that she was a globally renowned journalist who has won several awards for her work and she had only made a tweet based on news reports about the incident of the Muslim man being attacked. He argued that she deleted the tweet after conflicting versions emerged about the incident. Advocate Desai also told the bench that Ayyub had recently undergone a spinal surgery and therefore required 3-4 weeks time to approach the jurisdictional courts in UP. He also pointed out that all offences mentioned in the FIR are punishable with less than 3 years imprisonment.

BJP creates ruckus at vaccination site

Bhubaneswar: BJP leaders and activists in Odisha's Balasore, Rayagada, Koraput and Angul districts on Monday created ruckus at mass vaccination centres moments before the inauguration of the much awaited mass Covid-19 inoculation programme. As per reports from Bhubaneswar, the BJP supporters snapped the ribbon meant to be cut to kick off the drive and got into an argument with the officials present after they found the posters and banners of Prime Minister Narendra Modi missing at the site, though those of chief minister Naveen Patnaik were prominently displayed. The angry party workers sought answers for the absence of PM Modi's posters given the fact that the Prime Minister had ensured the supply of the vaccines to all states free of cost to carry out the mass inoculation drive.

ODISHA GOVT KICKS OFF LIVE STREAMING OF YOUTUBE CLASSES

Bhubaneswar: With no immediate possibility of reopening of schools for classroom teaching in sight, the Odisha government on Monday kicked off live streaming of classes on YouTube platform for Class I to Class X students. The state school and mass education department has prepared a detailed blueprint to reach out to students through virtual mode. The department has also prepared the time table for the subjects to be taught every day. The teaching process for the students of Classes IX and X will continue till July 31. As many as four periods, beginning from 10.45 to 1 pm, will be held for five days from Monday to Friday for Class IX and X. Classes for the students of Class I to III will be held from 9 am to 10 am while class IV to VIII will be held live from 9 am to 10.30 am. Teachers of the concerned subjects will look after their classes through online mode and clarify doubts of students through WhatsApp chat and voice call. According to reports, 33 per cent students were accessible to online classes last year while the rate has gone up to 40 per cent this year. Besides teaching through live streaming on YouTube, e-evaluation will also be held through which students can appear for the examinations through Whatsapp.

BJP will chalk out strategy to counter Gupkar alliance

YUSUF JAMEEL
SRINAGAR JUNE 21

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) will devise its own careful strategy and prudent maneuver for the all-party meeting called by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, at his official residence on Thursday to discuss certain critical issues concerning Jammu and Kashmir.

The party's strategy will be worked out necessarily to counter that of People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD), an alliance of J&K's regional opposition parties and their allies from the national Left parties, at the meet, a senior BJP leader said on Monday.

The proposed June 24 meeting is seen by political watchers as the first post-August 2019 major attempt by the Central government to end the political stalemate in the erstwhile state. However,

► **THE PARTY'S** strategy will be worked out necessarily to counter that of People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration, an alliance of J&K's regional opposition parties and their allies from the national Left parties, at the meet

the government sources in the Union capital had said on Sunday that the agenda of the meeting will be to discuss the issue of delimitation and the possibility of holding elections to the Assembly in the Union Territory after the restructuring of the constituencies and not the restoration of its statehood. The sources also categorically ruled out the possibility of granting any special status to J&K, a demand the PAGD is likely to exude at the meet.

BJP's J&K unit president Ravinder Raina said on Monday that he has convened an emergency meet-

ing of the party's senior leaders in Jammu to chalk out a "counter-strategy" against the PAGD ahead of the all-party meeting to be chaired by the Prime Minister.

Raina and two senior BJP leaders Nirmal Singh and Kavinder Gupta who served as deputy chief ministers in the PDP-BJP coalition governments are among fourteen mainstream leaders of J&K invited to the meeting. They are likely to be joined also by another senior BJP leader from J&K and Union minister of state at the PMO, Jitendra Singh.

Raina said that all prominent BJP leaders of J&K would be meeting at the party headquarters in Jammu's Trikuta Nagar on Tuesday. After the individual strategy meets, the leaders of all the constituents of the PADG are also meeting here on the same day to evolve a joint strategy for the all-party meet.



Doctors and health workers perform yoga on International Day of Yoga at government institute of medical sciences in Greater Noida on Monday.

— PTI

Theatre Commands: High-level committee to meet this week

Age correspondent
New Delhi, June 21

The high level committee constituted to thrash out differences on the new military structure of unified commands, Theatre Commands, is proposed to meet this week to formulate a way forward.

The different Theatre Commands will integrate the assets of the Army, Air Force, and Navy in a domain under one commander to give punitive response to any external threat. The committee has been formed to look at the issues raised by services and other ministries before a note is prepared on the Theatre Command to be presented to the Cabinet Committee on Security. "The first meeting of the committee is

planned for this week. It will be one of a series of meetings to work out a plan," said a senior official. The committee has three vice chiefs of the Armed Forces, Chief of Integrated Defence Staff, and representatives from defence and other ministries. India is expected to have two to three Integrated Theatre Commands over land looking at China and Pakistan, a Maritime Theatre Command and a National Integrated Air Defence Command (ADC).

Each of the Theatre Commands will have units of the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force and all of them will work as a single entity looking after security challenges in a specified geographical territory under an

operational commander.

However, during a high level meeting on the issue in the defence ministry there were differences on the structure of Theatre Commands including from the Air Force. Also, it was felt that there was a need to consult the home ministry as there was a proposal to take over the command of BSF and ITBP. The finance ministry also needed to be consulted. There was also a proposal to merge the Coast Guard into the Maritime Theatre Command (MTC).

The command structure proposed to give service extension to the theatre commanders who would be above the vice chiefs of the Army, Navy, and Air Force and below the chiefs.

Amarnath yatra cancelled over Covid for 2nd year

■ Continued from Page 1

The spokesman said the meeting was informed that the SASB has put in place a virtual and televised mechanism for live darshan of the aarti from the cave-shrine. The 56-day annual pilgrimage was due to begin from both traditional Pahalgam and shorter Baltal routes on June 28, coinciding with Ashaad Chaturthi, an auspicious day in Hindu calendar, and end on Shravan Purnima (Raksha Bandhan) on August 22. However, the SASB had on April 22 suspended registrations for the yatra temporarily due to the

grim Covid-19 situation across India. Last year, the yatra was cancelled at the eleventh hour in the face of the threat posed by the pandemic, while in 2019 the government had asked devotees who had arrived in the Valley to pay obeisance at Amarnath and also tourists to cut short their visit and leave immediately, claiming that Pakistan-sponsored militants were planning a terror attack against the yatra, while the lives of outside holidaymakers too were in danger in view of the prevailing security situation in the Valley.

Govt threat of 'major penalty'

■ Continued from Page 1

(hereinafter referred to as Retirement Benefit Rules)." The DoPT directed Mr Bandhopadhyay, now chief adviser to chief minister Mamata Banerjee, "to submit within 30 days of the receipt of this memorandum a written statement of his defence and also to state whether he desires to be heard in person", with a caution: "An

inquiry will be held only in respect of the article of charge as is not admitted. He should therefore specifically admit or deny the article of charge." On June 3, Mr Bandhopadhyay sent a strong reply to a show-cause notice sent to him by the Union home ministry under the Disaster Management Act for skipping Mr Modi's meeting on May 28.

■ 'Slain militants involved in 2 major attacks in the area' Foreign militants still in J&K: DGP

YUSUF JAMEEL
SRINAGAR JUNE 21

Foreign militants continue to have a sizable presence in Jammu and Kashmir, but they are currently lying low, a top police official said on Monday, adding that security forces will target them when and wherever they find them.

"No doubt, there has been a positive impact of the ceasefire along the Line of Control (LoC) like infiltration has been greatly checked but it would be wrong to suggest that there are no foreign terrorists present in J&K," said Director General of Police, Dilbag Singh. He said, "We will continue to target them in future operations".

The police chief who was briefing media on the outcome of a nightlong gunfight in which a top commander of proscribed Lashkar-e-Tayyaba (LeT) Mudassir Pandit was killed along with two other militants including a Pakistani national said, "So far, this

Top LeT terrorist among 3 killed in gunfight with armed forces in J&K

Srinagar, June 21: One of the most wanted militants, Mudassir Pandit, and a Pakistani ultra were among the three militants killed in an overnight encounter with security forces in the Sopore area of Jammu and Kashmir's Baramulla district, police said on Monday.

Director general of police (DGP) Dilbag Singh said all the three slain militants were top commanders of the Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) outfit.

The operation was very important for the police and other security forces as the militants were involved in several attacks and killings, he added. These include two major attacks in Sopore - one on March 29 in which two municipal councillors and a policeman were killed and another on June 12 in which two policemen and an equal number of civilians were killed.

— PTI

Special Operations Group (SOG),

year two foreign terrorists have been killed and incidentally both of them in Sopore". He added, "Both were from LeT which shows there is still presence of foreign terrorists."

Singh said that the slain militants were involved in

the Army's Kilo Force and the CRPF.

He said there were 18 FIRS lodged at different police stations against Pandit who carried out several attacks on the security forces together with Pakistani militant Abdullah alias Asrar. The third militant killed in the encounter was Khurshed Mir, a resident of Brath Kalan against whom there were six FIRs, he said.

"All three terrorists were involved in many militancy related incidents that included killing of civilians, security forces personnel, former militants, Sarpanchs and Hurriyat and separatist activists in north Kashmir. This group was also involved in two major attacks in the Sopore area—first one on March 29 in which two Municipal Councillors and a policeman were killed and the other in which two policemen and two civilians were killed in main market Sopore took place on June 12," the DGP said.

Amid infighting in Punjab Cong, Capt. to meet panel

‘Not a showpiece for poll campaigns: Sidhu slams Punjab govt’

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 21

Punjab CM Captain Amarinder Singh landed in Delhi to meet the high-powered committee amidst the infighting in the Punjab Congress. Hectic parleys continued during the day with several MPs, MLAs having separate meetings. Insiders claim that some of them even met senior Congress leader Mr Rahul Gandhi. The Congress party has a strong majority in the Punjab Vidhan Sabha with 80 seats in the 117-member assembly. But the infighting within the Punjab unit has now come out in the open. The high-powered committee consisting of Mallikarjun Kharge, Harish Rawat and J.P. Agarwal has already submitted a report to the Congress President Mrs. Sonia Gandhi who is keen that the matter be resolved. Meanwhile, party dissenter Mr. Navjot Singh



Infighting within Punjab unit has now come out in the open. The high-powered committee consisting of Mallikarjun Kharge, Harish Rawat, J.P. Agarwal has already submitted a report to Sonia Gandhi who is keen that the matter be resolved.

Sidhu opened a direct front against Punjab PM Captain Amarinder Singh. Hitting out at the chief minister, the former PM Mr. Sidhu said, "I am not a showpiece that you will take me out campaigning, win the elections and then keep me back in the almirah. So that I can see how you do this, how you do that. And self-vested interests overriding the interests of the state. This is unbearable for me." He further added Captain Amarinder Singh is not Congress as he lies everyday. Insiders claim that even after the intervention of senior leaders

Mr. Sidhu is adamant in his demands. The latest utterances of Mr. Sidhu have further diminished the chances of a truce between the two factions. The high command is in a quandary which side needs to be placated. As elections are early next year a solution to the imbroglio is needed soon. The Punjab unit chief Mr. Sunil Jhakar has also become an issue as many leaders have complained against his style of functioning to the high-powered committee. There are several names doing the rounds for his replacement but first, the issue of Mr. Sidhu needs to be resolved.

MP: Lapse in Scindia's security, 14 police officials suspended

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY
BHOPAL, JUNE 21

Senior Bharatiya Janata Party leader and Rajya Sabha member Jyotiraditya Scindia's pilot vehicle missed the car in which he was travelling at Nirawali point in Morena-Gwalior border in the state of Madhya Pradesh on the intervening night of Sunday and Monday, causing security scare for him.

Fourteen policemen including five sub-inspectors were on Monday suspended for lapses in his security.

This was the second case of security lapse involving Mr Scindia in the last ten days.

According to the police, a police vehicle started piloting the car in which Mr Scindia was travelling from Delhi to Gwalior, when it entered Morena in Madhya Pradesh late on Sunday night.

Yoga is a 'ray of hope' as the world fights coronavirus

■ Continued from Page 1

across the world "Yoga Day is not their age-old cultural festival and in this difficult time, people could have forgotten about it and ignored it, but on the contrary, people's enthusiasm for yoga has increased". "When the unseen coronavirus knocked on the doors of the world, no country was prepared for it in terms of resources, capability and mental state," PM said.

Amit Shah: Pace of vaccinations to be raised by July-Aug

■ Continued from Page 1

malls, theatres and multiplexes will remain shut. In Assam, the Kamakhya Temple management said the Ambubachi Mela, which is held from June 22 to 26, will not be conducted this year due to the Covid-19 situation. However, rituals will be performed though no devotee will be allowed to enter the temple complex till June 30.

Indian, EU naval forces conduct joint exercise

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 21

India and EU conducted a joint naval exercise in the Gulf of Aden on 18-19 June 2021.

The exercise involved Indian Navy frigate INS Trikan, EU NAVFOR Somalia - Operation Atalanta assets, including Italian frigate Carabiniere (Atalanta's flagship) and Spanish frigate Navarra, French frigate Surcouf and French amphibious assault helicopter carrier Tonnerre. The exercise was based on the scenario of an anti-piracy operation. It included cross-deck helicopter landings, complex tactical evolutions at sea, live firing, a night-time joint patrol and a naval parade in the high seas off the coast of Somalia.

Ambani Bomb scare case: Senior cops under NIA scanner

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 21

National Investigation Agency, which is investigating the high profile Antilia case in which an explosive laden car was found near the residence of industrialist Mukesh Ambani, is now looking into the role of senior Mumbai Police officials, both serving and former, in the sensational case.

Top National Investigation Agency sources claimed that these officers were of the rank of DCP and above. The disclosure comes close on the heels of the high profile arrest of former encounter specialist of Mumbai Police Pradeep Sharma last week.

THE ASIAN AGE

22 JUNE 2021

Will harassment of Sena MLAs hit Maha coalition?

Three Shiv Sena MLAs, including transport minister Anil Parab who is said to be close to Chief Minister Udhav Thackeray, are being investigated by the Enforcement Directorate and other central agencies for money laundering and other corrupt practices. One of the three has gone public and urged the CM to re-forge ties with BJP and ditch NCP and Congress, Sena's alliance partners in the MVA government. The MLA in question contends that the harassment of Sena legislators and their families will cease if the Sena returns to partnering BJP, to begin with in the upcoming local bodies election. On the face of it, this is an old tactical line in play.

Investigation agencies of the Union government have been unleashed in the past to harass political opponents, break parties, and re-shape politics. In Maharashtra, the most prominent case was the ED notice to NCP leader Sharad Pawar before the October 2019 Assembly poll, with the ED running for cover only when Mr Pawar threatened to descend on the agency's office in Mumbai with thousands of his supporters. In West Bengal too, the central agencies tormented Trinamul Congress leaders until their defection to BJP was secured. In the end, the low tactics failed to impress and the BJP suffered a humiliating defeat in the recent state poll. The defectors are now begging CM Mamata Banerjee for forgiveness.

For the ruling alliance in Maharashtra, security is not likely to lie in succumbing to BJP's indirect pressure, and Mr Thackeray reneging on his own coalition allies on the strength of a legislator becoming a cry baby. He had broken off ties with the BJP after fighting the polls in alliance with the saffron party because the latter evidently went back on its promise to share the post of CM with the Sena. If the Sena, on the

strength of a complaining MLA, returns to the BJP's embrace, it is unlikely Mr Thackeray will be able to hold on to his position for long.

On the other hand, if the partners in the ruling coalition contest the forthcoming municipal polls jointly, rather than separately as the Congress has threatened in pique, a strong political message will go to the electorate- and to the BJP. If the event they perform creditably, BJP pressures may be expected to ease. It is useful to bear in mind the full import of the words of Sena leader Sanjay Raut, who urges that it is important to fathom who is building pressure on Sena MLAs, and why.

The pressure on the Sena MLAs has come at about the same time as Sena and NCP agreeing to contest elections together in the foreseeable future, with the Congress being the outlier in the ruling alliance. Although the Congress in Maharashtra won 44 seats — three more than in 2014 — on its own steam, and when the party received no assistance from its headquarters in Delhi, it remains organisationally weak in the state.

There is glaring factionalism which keeps the party weak and the ruling coalition somewhat off-balance. The state party chief, Nana Patole, is cultivating the habit of firing broadsides at the Sena. For the overall health of the state government and the Congress organisation, the party's leadership at the Centre will do well to impart the lesson of responsible political conduct to its Maharashtra unit.

Can Raisi make peace with US?

The election of hardline cleric Ibrahim Raisi as Iran's new President was a foregone conclusion. To say the disillusioned electors were guided into choosing the former chief justice is to put it mildly, since there were reasons to assume this was a rigged election in which blank ballots placed second to Mr Raisi, who took 62 per cent of the "popular" vote. The new President has a dubious record that goes beyond his being the chosen one from seven candidates who were allowed to contest by Iran's conservative Guardian Council from among 600 who had initially applied. He was the youngest member of the 1988 Tehran death commission that has been accused of killing 3,000 Opposition prisoners.

What Mr Raisi, who is known to be close to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, inherits as President is an economy in shambles, riven by corruption and mismanagement and throwing into disaffection large sections of its people. The question that arises despite his known record is whether Mr Raisi, as a member of the innermost ruling theocracy, can make peace with the Americans under President Joe Biden and pursue the 2015 Obama-era nuclear deal that Mr Biden's predecessor Donald Trump had torn to pieces in 2018. A revival of the economy would be contingent on US sanctions being lifted and Iran being allowed to sell its oil internationally without constraints.

The suspicion is that Iran has been enriching its uranium to levels far beyond what constitutes a peaceful programme. Its offer to abandon enrichment, which could be made in talks that are on in Vienna among Iran, Russia, China, Germany, France and Britain, with the US indirectly involved, may be contingent on a guarantee that any nuclear deal it signs with the West would be permanent and not subject to the whims of a US President, but a democratic America can hardly make such a commitment unless a treaty is forged. The fact remains that Iran is a major player in a region fraught with tensions and the mullahs would have to be willing to pursue real peace at least for the sake of its people.

THE ASIAN AGE

KAUSHIK MITTER

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Subhani



Biden B3W vs China BRI: Is India the odd man out?



Sunanda K. Datta-Ray

Reflections

India's embattled government cannot draw much comfort from US President Joe Biden's promise (or was it a threat?) to lead an alliance of global democracies against the world's autocracies, with specific reference to the challenge that Communist China presents.

But then, does the government at all feel embattled? Prime Minister Narendra Modi's announcements, bland when not boastful, suggest that all is for the best in this best of all possible worlds. Evidence to the contrary can be brushed aside, as Mr Modi has told us that "neither have they (the Chinese) intruded into our border, nor has any post been taken over by them". Why then the defensive rhetoric, the emphasis on security in a region that we are flattered to note has been dubbed the "Indo-Pacific"? Why, too, the "Quad" or the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, with the United States, Japan and Australia which everyone, the Chinese especially, see as countering Beijing?

True, "20 of our jawans were martyred" in hand-to-hand combat with the People's Liberation Army in eastern Ladakh. But we can gloat over the revelation that "those who dared Bharat Mata, they were taught a lesson".

Were they? Mr Modi has no doubts. India is so mighty "that no one can eye even one inch of our land". It's the Chinese who should quake in their boots for "India's armed forces have the capability to move into multiple sectors at one go". It would be interesting to hear what defence officials have to say about that. Or diplomatists. Or the external affairs minister, with his experience of Beijing where he repre-

sented India from 2009 to 2013.

Far from indulging in braggadocio or inviting ridicule, Mr Biden used his first official overseas trip to mobilise support against his country's two main perceived adversaries. Problems with Russia revive the Cold War postures that were briefly laid to rest during Mikhail Gorbachev's time. But China, whose all-powerful ruling Communist Party is celebrating its centenary next month and which has now sent three astronauts into orbit to become the only country to own and run its own space station, is seen as the real threat of the future. Of course, China rejects the view of North Atlantic Treaty Organisation leaders that its rise presents "systemic challenges" for the world. When Jens Stoltenberg, Nato's secretary-general, levelled that charge in Brussels, China promptly accused Nato of "slandering" its "peaceful development". Being committed to a "defensive" defence policy, China did "not present 'systematic challenges' to anyone" but would "not sit by and do nothing if 'systematic challenges' come closer to us".

Echoes of the arguments that preceded the first Opium War (1839-1842) between Qing China and Britain can be heard all over again. Then, the British reported that the Chinese hoped there would be "much talk-ee-talk-ee" before "fight-ee-fight-ee". This time round it's the West that appears to be sending pacific smoke signals even while the defiant talk gets louder.

The main reason why there might not be any serious friction after all lies in the disclosure that in the last few weeks, top Chinese and US trade and treasury officials have

engaged in a series of virtual chats on the business of doing business. China has invested substantially in British companies as well as public utilities. The US, the European Union and Japan are among China's biggest trade partners, with exports and imports totalling more than \$1,660 billion. Neither side will easily risk that.

India can expect even less sympathy (and no support) from Asean, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, whose collective trade with China jumped last year to \$731.9 billion, making Asean China's largest trading partner for the first time while China remained Asean's largest trading partner for the 12th successive year.

Vietnamese or Filipino grievances in the South China Sea or Malaysia's complaint about Chinese military aircraft intruding into its Exclusive Economic Zone are not likely to be vigorously or collectively pursued when trade registers seven per cent growth.

China has also redefined aid to make it an integral feature of about 60 developing countries that can expect \$500 billion from Beijing over the next few years, while President Xi Jinping's Belt and Road Initiative could mobilise \$1 trillion of Chinese state financing. Conventional aid plays only a marginal role in China's commerce-is-development vision of growth as articulated by Justin Yifu Lin, a former World Bank chief economist and author of the book *Going Beyond Aid*. More than 100 countries have joined

India can expect even less sympathy (and no support) from Asean, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, whose collective trade with China jumped to \$731.9 bn last year, making Asean China's largest trading partner for the first time

BRI projects, of which there were more than 2,600 costing \$3.7 trillion in mid-2020. Beijing says that the Covid-19 pandemic has seriously affected about 20 per cent of them.

The G-7 representatives whom Mr Biden met in England at the start of his European mission enthusiastically supported his Build Back Better World (B3W) Partnership, an alternative to the BRI, and promised to "collectively catalyse hundreds of billions of dollars of infrastructure investment". While China's focus is on big-ticket projects in traditional infrastructure — like Sri Lanka's \$1.4 billion Hambantota Port — Mr Biden's plan will focus on climate, health and health security, digital technology, gender equity and equality. That doesn't suggest direct competition. But the commitment to "rally the world's democracies to meet the challenges" of dictatorship, human rights abuse and forced labour identifies the target easily enough.

These are worthy aims in keeping with the lofty vision of the nation whose Marshall Plan rescued Europe from the ravages of World War II. But they are not of as much gripping interest in war-torn Yemen or famine-stricken Somalia as the BRI's promised ports, highways, airports and dams. Whether or not the promises will be kept is another matter but the hope generates at least initial support.

Various factors make India the odd man out in this contest for hearts and minds. It cannot promise lavish help like the BRI or B3W. It doesn't brandish an ideological banner like the United States. So far as anyone knows, the dispute is only over territory, and rocky, inhospitable, uninhabited terrain at that. And if India's Prime Minister is to be believed, there is no aggression either.

So, what are we fighting about? And why do we need the Quad?

The writer is a senior journalist, columnist and author

LETTERS

MISSING IN ACTION?

The Centre has informed the Supreme Court that compensation of ₹4 lakh can't be given to Covid-19 victims as this applies only to natural disasters, and it would exhaust disaster relief funds. A broader approach seems essential as hundreds of health workers, including doctors, died in the pandemic. Meanwhile, Indians' Swiss bank deposits saw a sharp rise in the recent past. Thus, despite all the ruling BJP's promises of bringing home black money, putting ₹15 lakh in every bank account and "accche din", when push comes to shove, the Centre is seen either sneakily supporting the capitalists or missing in action.

Sankar Paul
Chakdaha, West Bengal

NO GAME-CHANGER

THE MOVE by the Centre to convene a meeting on June 24 with the political leadership of Jammu and Kashmir is encouraging. That said, most meetings under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Narendra Modi have been in the form of monologues. Prior to any meeting, the die is already cast and the Opposition parties are treated with disdain. Hopefully, this time around, the Centre shall provide more headroom to other sides to air their views. However, it is unlikely it will do so, and the meeting won't be the gamechanger that it is being projected to be.

Deepak Singhal
Noida

BACK IN BUSINESS

THE KARNATAKA government's move to relax Covid restrictions from June 21 in 16 districts where the positivity rate dipped below five per cent, must help kickstart the economy. Shops will be open from 6 am to 5 pm. Hotels, clubs, restaurants, lodges, and gyms will open their doors to the public, albeit with some restrictions. Sports events and outdoor shooting can be held without an audience. But for the remaining districts with a positivity rate between five per cent and 10 per cent, the existing restrictions will apply. Mysuru, with a positivity rate of over 10 per cent, will be the only district under complete lockdown.

N.J. Ravi Chander
Bengaluru

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

Aakar Patel



No good news: It's difficult to be an optimist in India today

It is not easy to find good news in India and has not been easy for a long time now. A recent report said that the Indian economy is contracting again in this quarter, between April and June, by more than double digits.

This report from one agency was carried in multiple media outlets but it was not refuted or commented upon by others, including by the government. It was just assumed to be true. After 24 months of slowdown starting in January 2018 before the Covid-19 pandemic, and then 18 months of collapse since January 2020, we have turned into the world's worst performing economy.

India's economic growth has been falling for 42 months now, but the government has not spoken about why that is so and what went wrong or what it plans to do to correct it. Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in an interview last year offered five points to correct course, but he also added that a course-correction was possible only after one had acknowledged that there was a problem.

Since we have not accepted that

anything is wrong, we will continue.

CMIE, the only body offering regular employment data (the Narendra Modi government has little data and says that it is conducting some surveys, whose results will come around the end of the year) says that unemployment in India is at 11 per cent, higher than Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Inflation is high though demand is low, and wholesale prices are at their highest since 1992. Petrol is around ₹100 a litre, diesel is almost there and the price of crude oil is expected to rise another 20 per cent by the end of the year. Exports are at the same level as they were in 2014 and in seven years under Narendra Modi have shown no growth, though in the same period Bangladesh and Vietnam have grown and China has held onto its share.

Eighty crore Indians are being given free food for seven months from May till November. Five kilos of wheat or rice per person per month and one kilo of dal. In May, 16 lakh tonnes of wheat and 15 lakh tonnes of rice was distributed.

Sixty per cent of Indians depend on

free food. This should tell you more than enough about the state of poverty in India today.

When Mr Modi took over in 2014, he said MGNREGA was a monument to the failure of the Manmohan Singh government. He would give people real jobs, and not MGNREGA jobs. The MGNREGA programme's size last year was three times what it was under UPA rule because crores of people have lost their jobs and fallen into poverty and now depend on MGNREGA and free foodgrains. The Gujarat government put out a statement last week which said that MGNREGA was a lifesaver.

Elsewhere, it has been a year since the clash in Ladakh. China has stopped its disengagement. This means India has to keep tens of thousands of troops in that area almost permanently.

China has also told us that it is demoting the level of talks, and now only area commanders will discuss specific issues rather than general disagreement. Our soldiers still cannot patrol in the Depsang Plain but the government has not acknowledged that or held a single press

briefing on Ladakh since the crisis began a year ago. Opacity is the hallmark of dictatorships and not democracies, but this is the status of our national security.

India was supposed to be the Vaccine Guru and Vaccine Factory for the world. Instead, India has wrecked the world's vaccination programme by stopping the delivery of vaccines others already paid for in advance and which were manufactured in India. Our government has begun taking over those stocks while the world waits. Even with that, India has only managed to fully vaccinate only three per cent of its population against the world's average of nine per cent. Why? We have not been told.

Every day there is a report of excess deaths from states being between four and 10 times the official Covid-19 toll. India seems to lead the world by far in both cases and deaths. There has not been a government initiative to find out the true number of cases and deaths and the media continues to parrot the official numbers and at the same time publishing reports on the excess deaths. Mass faking of

tests at the Kumbh Mela has been reported, and this is also par for the course.

At the G-7 summit earlier this month in Britain, Prime Minister Modi, who attended virtually, endorsed a document called the "Open Societies Statement" in which he pledged India would practice and promote human rights and civil liberties. At home, those who ask for these have been locked up under UAPA. The farmers' protest continues with tens of thousands living on the highways outside Delhi. The three controversial farm laws have been suspended, but not withdrawn. Why? We do not know because Mr Modi has not spoken about the laws since they were suspended by the Supreme Court six months ago.

It doesn't matter whether you are a supporter of Prime Minister Modi or an opponent or neutral. Anyone looking around the state that India finds itself in will find it hard to extract any good news and will find it difficult to be optimistic.

The writer is a columnist and a senior journalist

SHORT TAKES

NINE CATALAN SEPARATISTS TO BE PARDONED

Madrid, June 21: Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said Monday that the Spanish Cabinet will approve pardons for nine separatist Catalan politicians and activists imprisoned for their roles in the 2017 push to break away from Spain.

Sanchez made the announcement on Monday in Barcelona during a speech set to lay the roadmap for the future of the northeastern region before a few hundred representatives of the region's civil society. He said the Cabinet would approve the pardons on Tuesday.

DESPITE VISA ISSUES, TAIWAN TO KEEP HK OFFICE

Taipei, June 21: Taiwan says it will continue operating its de facto consulate in Hong Kong in spite of visa difficulties for its staffers while also providing consular services online.

The Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Hong Kong has been unable to get new visas for its staff after the Hong Kong government in 2018 began requiring that Taiwanese personnel at the office sign a statement accepting the one-China principle, Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council said.

The office has just one staffer left in Hong Kong whose visa is due to expire next month. The one-China principle holds that Taiwan is part of China and the Communist government in Beijing is China's sole legitimate government.

U.S. ENVOY HOPES N. KOREA ACCEPTS OFFER FOR TALKS

Seoul, June 21: President Joe Biden's special envoy for North Korea said on Monday he hopes to see a positive reaction from the North soon on US offers for talks after the North Korean leader ordered officials to prepare for both dialogue and confrontation.

Sung Kim, Biden's special representative for North Korea, is in Seoul to speak with South Korean and Japanese officials about the United States' stalled diplomacy with the North over its nuclear programme and US-led sanctions.

The trilateral talks followed a North Korean political conference last week where leader Kim Jong Un called for stronger efforts to improve his nation's economy.

ARMENIA PM'S PARTY WINS SNAP PARL ELECTION

Yerevan, June 21: Results released on Monday showed the party of Armenia's acting Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan won the snap parliamentary elections he called to ease anger over a peace deal he signed with Azerbaijan.

With all precincts counted, Pashinyan's Civil Contract party won 53.9% of the vote and former President Robert Kocharyan's bloc was a distant second place with about 21%, the election commission said Monday. A bloc affiliated with another former president came third with 5.2%, and another party had nearly 4%. Blocs need 7% to get into parliament, however, Armenia's laws allow a third party or bloc to get seats if only two political forces pass the threshold to get into parliament. Pashinyan called the early election after months of

PHOTO SHOWS DUBAI PRINCESS IN SPAIN

Madrid, June 21: A Dubai princess who has been the subject of concern from a United Nations panel after being seized trying to flee the sheikhdom in 2018 appeared in a social media post early Monday that described her as being in Spain on a European holiday.

An Instagram image published by a woman identified in British media as former Royal Navy member Sioned Taylor shows Sheikha Latifa bint Mohammed Al Maktoum at Adolfo Suarez Madrid-Barajas Airport. Taylor's caption, punctuated by a smiley face emoji, read: Great European holiday with Latifa. We're having fun exploring!" Comments by Taylor acknowledged the location of the image, which match other images of the airport.

Asked about Sheikha Latifa, Taylor wrote in another comment she is great with a thumbs-up emoji. Taylor, the United Arab Emirates' embassies in London and Madrid, as well as the government's Dubai Media Office, did not immediately respond to requests for comment Monday.

Taliban take key Afghan district

Insurgents add to string of recent victories

Kabul, June 21: Taliban fighters took control of a key district in Afghanistan's northern Kunduz province on Monday and encircled the provincial capital, police said, as the insurgent group added to its string of recent victories on the battlefield.

Fighting around Imam Sahib district began late Sunday and by mid-day Monday the Taliban had overrun the district headquarters and were in control of police headquarters, said Inamuddin Rahmani, provincial police spokesman said.

Taliban militants were within a kilometre of Kunduz, the provincial capital but had not entered into the city, he said, although there were reports of small bands of Taliban near the outskirts and residents trying to leave for Kabul.

Dozens of districts have fallen to the Taliban since May 1, when US and Nato troops began their final departure from Afghanistan. Like Imam Sahib district in northern Kunduz, their significance often lies in their proximity to roads and major cities. Imam Sahib is strategically located near Afghanistan's

● **DOZENS OF districts have fallen to the Taliban since May 1, when United States and Nato troops began their final departure from Afghanistan. Like Imam Sahib district in northern Kunduz, their significance often lies in their proximity to roads and major cities.**

tan's northern border with Tajikistan, a key supply route from Central Asia.

Rahmani said police and Afghan National Army soldiers had jointly tried to defend the district. He said it still wasn't clear how many casualties the Afghan National Security and Defence Forces suffered in the protracted battle or how many Taliban were killed or wounded. Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahed confirmed Imam Sahib district was in Taliban hands.

Several other districts in Kunduz have also fallen to the insurgent group in the latest round of fighting, including Dasht-e Archi, which neighbours Imam Sahib, said Rahmani.

Syed Mohammad Mousavi drove with his family to the relative safety of Kabul from northern

Mazar-e-Sharif, about 120 kilometres west of Kunduz on Sunday. He said people were trying to leave Kunduz city for Kabul fearing additional fighting. "The Taliban were all over the road, checking cars. We were very scared," he said after reaching the capital.

In recent days, the Taliban have taken several districts across the three northern provinces of Kunduz, Baghlan and Balkh, said Mousavi. Significantly, witnesses said Doshi district in Baghlan province was in Taliban hands, which if it true gives the insurgent group control of the one road that links five northern provinces to the capital Kabul.

The Taliban have circulated videos on their website and to WhatsApp groups which they claim show government soldiers who have surrendered being told to return to their homes and receiving money from the Taliban.

On Sunday, Taliban leader Mawlawi Hibatullah Akhundzada issued a statement ordering his soldiers to "treat those who surrender well and display good behaviour with them". — AP

Israeli FM in UAE next week

Jerusalem, June 21: Israel's new foreign minister will head to the United Arab Emirates next week for the first-ever visit by a top Israeli diplomat to the Gulf Arab country, the ministry said Monday.

Foreign Minister Yair Lapid's trip comes after the two countries normalised relations last year in an agreement brokered by the Trump administration, the first of four similar deals with Arab states that had long shunned Israel over its conflict with the Palestinians.

Both Israel's new government and the Biden administration have said they hope to reach similar accords with other Arab sta-

tes. Israel and the UAE have meanwhile continued working to deepen ties despite last month's Gaza war. The Israeli Foreign Ministry said Lapid will visit the UAE June 29-30, and will inaugurate an Israeli Embassy in Abu Dhabi and a consulate in Dubai. "Ties between Israel and the UAE are an important relationship, the fruits of which will be enjoyed not only by the citizens of the two countries, but by the entire Middle East," it said in a statement.

Lapid was the driving force behind a new Israeli government sworn in just over a week ago that ended Benjamin Netanyahu's record 12-year run as prime

minister. Netanyahu and Trump had held up the agreements with the UAE, Bahrain, Sudan and Morocco as among their biggest achievements.

Israelis have flocked to the UAE since the agreement was reached to enjoy futuristic Dubai. The UAE is a major global travel hub, and normalisation has made it much easier for Israelis to travel further afield. The two countries have also signed a raft of agreements to cooperate in commerce, technology and other fields.

Shortly after the accord was reached, the Trump administration authorised the sale of 50 advanced F-35 fighter jets to the

UAE, which would make it only the second country in the Middle East, after Israel, to acquire them.

The Biden administration put that agreement on hold in January after it drew fierce criticism from Democrats in Congress, who argued that the sale had unfolded too quickly and without sufficient transparency. But in April, the administration decided to proceed with the \$23 billion arms sale, saying it would work with the UAE to ensure adherence to human rights standards and the laws of war.

The Palestinians strongly criticised the normalisation agreements.

— AP

Tumult over statue



Protesters gather in front of the "Forever Marilyn" statue unveiled on its return to Palm Springs, California. The 26-foot tall and 17-tonne sculpture by artist Seward Johnson Atelier was displayed earlier this decade in Palm Springs, but the return has drawn the ire of residents on infringement of surrounding natural landscape views and on allegations that the statue is sexist and inappropriate, despite the popularity of Marilyn Monroe's iconic dress-flying pose from the 1955 comedy "The Seven Year Itch".

— Photo by Frederic J. Brown/AFP

Sweden's PM loses confidence vote over realty

Stockholm, June 21: Stefan Lofven, Sweden's Social Democratic prime minister since 2014, lost a confidence vote in parliament on Monday amid a housing crisis and skyrocketing real estate prices, making him the first Swedish government leader ever to lose such a motion. The vote was initiated by the small Left Party, an ally of the minority government that is not in the two-party centre-left coalition but had provided the votes to pass legislation.

At the centre of a controversy that sparked the Left Party to lose confidence and vote against Lofven are plans to deregulate Sweden's housing market because of accelerating price increases that took place during the pandemic. Sweden has strict regulations on rents aimed at maintaining affordable prices in larger cities.

However, this disincents property developers from building new homes for the rental market. People needing to rent a home can find themselves waiting for years for a contract, and buying property is increasingly hard amid soaring home prices. However, the Left Party fears that deregulating the rental market will lead to rapid price increases and deeper segregation

● **AT THE centre of a controversy that sparked the Left Party to lose confidence and vote against Lofven are plans to deregulate Sweden's housing market because of accelerating price increases that took place during the pandemic.**

on between rich and poor. It is unclear what will happen next in Sweden.

Lofven said last week he would wait for the vote and then "think through what is best for Sweden."

The prime minister has one week to decide whether to call an early election. Over the weekend, Lofven held last-minute meetings seeking to secure a majority in parliament for his proposed rent reforms.

On Sunday, he sought to soften the reforms by inviting landlords and tenant organisations for talks. However, the leader of the Left Party Nooshi Dadgostar stood by his decision to oppose Lofven and said his effort was "a political show."

"We have done something that is perceived as unusual in politics ... kept our word," she said.

— AP

10K Myanmarese fled to India, Thailand, says UN

United Nations, June 21: About 10,000 refugees have fled from Myanmar to India and Thailand as nationwide clashes in the country led to "acute" new displacements of hundreds of thousands of civilians, Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General on Myanmar has said, warning that the regional threat of the crisis is real.

"In my daily contacts with stakeholders in Myanmar, I hear first-hand accounts about the dire situation. People suffer from deprivation, have no hope and live in fear," Christine Schraner Burgener, Special Envoy of Secretary-General Antonio Guterres

on Myanmar, told the UN General Assembly on Friday. In the absence of international action, civilians are forming people's defence forces, she said.

They use self-made weapons and receive military training from ethnic armed organisations in their resistance grounded on democratic solidarity. Multiple regions of the country which have not seen armed clashes in decades become zones of significant unrest.

"Nationwide clashes, including in central Myanmar and regions bordering China, India and Thailand, have led to acute new displacements

of around 175,000 civilians, and some 10,000 refugees have fled to India and Thailand. The regional threat of the crisis is real," she said, adding that "we must continue to call for maximum restraint and condemn all forms of violence. The risk of a large-scale civil war is real."

Burgener emphasised that as the region faces a multi-dimensional crisis in the heart of Asia, "our timely support and action is paramount". She also stressed that the international community must not forget the Rohingya people as the situation of the Rohingya remains dire. — PTI

EU curbs to hurt Belarus economy

Brussels, June 21: European Union foreign ministers will approve Monday a fresh set of sanctions against scores of officials in Belarus and prepare a series of measures aimed at hurting the country's economy, EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said.

The EU has ratcheted up sanctions since President Alexander Lukashenko won a sixth term last August in elections slammed as fraudulent by the 27-nation bloc. The measures have targeted people accused of electoral misconduct and responsibility for the police crackdown that followed.

We will approve the package of new sanctions, which is a wider package, Borrell told reporters as he arrived in Luxembourg to chair the ministerial meeting. He said asset freezes and travel bans will be slapped on a total of around 86 people and organisations.

Diplomats have said that a number of those targeted are linked to an in-

cident last month in which a Ryanair flight travelling from Greece to Lithuania was diverted to Minsk, where authorities arrested Raman Pratasevich, a dissident journalist who was on board the airliner. The EU has already banned Belarus airline companies from flying over the bloc's territory or using its airports.

Borrell said the ministers will also prepare a raft of economic sanctions for EU leaders to endorse at a summit on Thursday. These are going to hurt, going to hurt the economy of Belarus heavily, he said. The measures may include action against the export of potash and petroleum products.

"We will no longer just sanction individuals. We will now also impose sectoral sanctions — meaning that we will now get to work on the economic areas that are of particular significance for Belarus and for the regime's income," German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said. — AP

Oz official: Stick with AZ for 2nd dose 92 Indian factory workers in Lanka Covid positive

Canberra, June 21: A top health official is urging Australians to get their second doses of AstraZeneca despite deaths from the vaccine exceeding the nation's Covid-19 death toll this year.

Two women in Australia have died from rare blood clots caused by the vaccine. The only Covid-19 fatality this year was an 80-year-old traveller who died in April after being infected overseas and diagnosed in hotel quarantine. Chief Medical Officer Paul Kelly told state leaders on Monday that health authorities did not recommend people follow up their first AstraZeneca dose with a different vaccine.

Globally, the safety and effectiveness of switching vaccines between doses is still being tested. He urged people not to cancel their second AstraZeneca jab, which is booked three months after the first, saying the chances of developing blood clots after a second dose were 1.5 in a million.

Covid-19 has claimed 910 lives in Australia, but vaccine hesitancy is on the rise as the death rate slows. Australia last week

Colombo, June 21: Ninety two Indian workers at an iron works factory in Sri Lanka tested positive for Covid-19 on Monday, health officials said.

The Indians were among the 128 workers at the factory in Colombo north suburb of Wattala who were found to have contracted the virus. They have been put under quarantine. The factory, which has a total of 194 workers, has been closed temporarily, a report in the Newscenter.lk said. Those who have tested negative have been put under quarantine in the factory premises, the report said.

Meanwhile, Sri Lanka on Monday ended its

Covid-19 lockdown by lifting travel restrictions, amid concerns by health officials who insisted that it must be continued in view of the raging third wave. For the first time in nearly four weeks, the travel restrictions were lifted at 4 am on Monday and will be re-imposed at 10 pm on June 23.

"We will be closely monitoring people's movements through special units," police spokesman and Senior Deputy Inspector General Ajith Rohana said. He said the public must stay indoors as much as possible despite the lifting of restrictions. No inter-district travel will be allowed, the police said.

lifted its recommended age limit for AstraZeneca from 50 to 60 after a 52-year-old woman died of clots. A 48-year-old woman

died in April. Pfizer is currently the only alternative to AstraZeneca in Australia, although Moderna is expected to be registered

Health officials issued more guidelines on public behaviour during the lifting of the lockdown. The health authorities were wary of the Delta variant of the coronavirus which is spreading fast across the country. "We still view this as dangerous, the travel restrictions were only loosely observed. The lifting of even that could be dangerous," Upul Rohana, a spokesman for the public health inspectors said.

The nation has recorded nearly 2,000 cases per day since the third wave which began mid April. The total number of cases in the country stood at 239,689, while 201,389 are recovering. — PTI

PAK'S DEATH TOLL CROSSES MARK OF 22K

Islamabad, June 21: Pakistan's coronavirus death toll crossed the grim figure of 22,000 on Monday, as Sindh province continued to report the highest number of fresh cases in the country. Thirty patients died and 907 new cases were detected in the last 24 hours, the Ministry of National Health Services said in its daily bulletin. Now, the death toll stands at 22,007 and national caseload at 949,175.

Of the 907 new cases, the majority of them were reported from Sindh province at 595 cases. The Coronavirus has greatly impacted the province. So far, Sindh has reported over 3.07 lakh cases. Pakistan on Sunday received 1.55 million doses of a China-made Coronavirus vaccine, as the immunisation drive picks up pace in the country. — PTI

SENSITIVE | PROJECT

Millions of Polish, Ukrainian, Hungarian or Slovakian citizens had lost their homes

Museum on WWII-expelled Germans raises Nazi crimes

Berlin, June 21: Germany is opening a museum exploring the fate of millions of Germans forced to leave eastern and central Europe at the end of World War II, along with other forced displacements of the 20th and 21st centuries — a sensitive project that has taken years to realise.

Chancellor Angela Merkel is due to speak to an opening ceremony Monday for the Documentation Ce-

nter for Displacement, Expulsion, Reconciliation, more than 13 years after her government gave the plan the go-ahead.

Housed in a late-1920s building in downtown Berlin, it features some 700 exhibits over 1,500 square metres (16,000 square feet). Making the project reality was long viewed as "an impossible balancing act," said the center's director, Gundula Bavendamm, recalling

ing "heated arguments about priorities and contextualisation."

Controversies revolved around one central question, she said: "How can the exodus and expulsion of Germans at the end of and after World War II be portrayed without raising the slightest doubt that this country is aware of its lasting responsibility for the German crimes of World War II and the murder of

European Jews?"

The project centres on the millions of Germans who fled from advancing Soviet forces or were kicked out of parts of eastern and central Europe as Germany's borders were moved westward after the war, "in the historical context" of Nazi crimes, said Bavendamm — the project's third director.

"Without the Nazi policies of expulsion and annihilation, 14 million Ger-

mans wouldn't have lost their homes as a result of flight and expulsion," she added. "But that doesn't change the fact that their expulsion by the Allies and the eastern and central European states in the aftermath of World War II was also an injustice."

In its efforts to provide context, the exhibition explores "forced migration as a phenomenon of modern

Europe," including displacements during World War I, the arrival of Vietnamese "boat people" in West Germany in the 1970s, the fallout from the disintegration of Yugoslavia in 1990s and the European migration crisis of recent years.

Exhibits include some 30 passports, including a German Jew's passport stamped with the letter "J" in the Nazi era, a "Nansen

passport" for stateless refugees from 1937 and a modern-day provisional refugee passport. There is the diary of a girl from East Prussia, a territory Germany lost at the end of the war, chronicling sexual violence. There's also a bicycle used by a Syrian refugee to cross the Russian-Norwegian border in 2016. There are audio accounts by people recounting their arrival in Germany. — AP

quick BITES

| INDICATORS | | % |
|------------------------|------------|-------|
| Sensex | 52,574.46 | 0.44 |
| Nifty 50 | 15,746.50 | 0.40 |
| S&P 500* | 4,216.85 | 1.21 |
| Dollar (₹) | 73.87 | 0.28 |
| Pound Sterling (₹) | 103.18 | 0.31 |
| Euro (₹) | 88.36 | 0.19 |
| Gold (10gm)* (₹) | 46,277.250 | 0.54 |
| Brent crude (\$/bbl)* | 74.85 | 1.82 |
| IN 10-Yr bond yield | 6.029 | 0.00 |
| US 10-Yr T-bill yield* | 1.468 | 0.018 |

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Transmission charges waived for RE till June '25

The power ministry announced the extension of timeline by two years for waiver on inter-state transmission charge for electricity generated from solar and wind sources. Now, the waiver would be available till June 30, 2025 against June 30, 2023 earlier. Besides, the waiver would now be available for hydro pumped storage plant (PSP) and battery energy storage system (BESS) projects also.

Housing prices up in major cities in Q4: RBI data



The All-India Housing Price Index (HPI) increased 2.7 per cent year-on-year in the March quarter of 2020-21, the latest RBI data shows. The index takes into account transaction-level data received from housing registration authorities in ten cities—Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi, Jaipur, Kanpur, Kochi, Kolkata, Lucknow and Mumbai. The All-India HPI rose year-on-year by 2.7 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2020-21.

Umbrella unit of 170 MSME bodies formed

As many as 170 industry associations have joined hands to form All-India Council of Association of MSMEs (AICA) in order to deal with issues of the sector hit hard by the pandemic. "AICA today announced that 170 industry associations have joined together to address post Covid issues faced by two lakh MSMEs across India," AICA said in a statement. It said the pandemic has affected every industry.

Honeywell's new tech to detect counterfeit drugs

Honeywell announced digital authentication technology for the pharmaceutical industry in response to the growing menace of counterfeit products, especially in vaccines and Covid drugs. The Honeywell solution comprises a digital code embedded in the packaging of pharmaceutical products. The end user can validate the authenticity of the product by scanning the digital code with a smartphone.

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Govt to alter consumer protection norms Rules seek to curb e-com flash sale

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, JUNE 21

Tightening the rules governing e-commerce companies, the central government has proposed to restrict e-commerce entities from organising "flash sale" of goods or services. It also seeks to bar any e-commerce entity from using information collected through its platform for unfair advantage of its related parties and associated enterprises and manipulating price of the goods or services to gain unreasonable profit.

By the proposed amendments to the Consumer Protection (E-Commerce) Rules, 2020, notified by the government on Monday, no e-commerce entity should organise a "flash sale" of goods or services offered on its platform. This restricts the entity from organising a sale at significantly reduced prices, high discounts or any other such promotions or attractive offers for a predetermined period of time on selective goods and services or otherwise with an intent to draw a large number of consumers.

E-commerce entities have been holding such sales around festivals and similar occasions and have been receiving tremendous response from customers.

However, the rules restrict such sales "provided such sales are organised by fraudulently intercepting the ordinary course of business using technological means with an intent to

HEMMING IN BIG SELLERS

- ▶ No e-commerce entity should organise a "flash sale" on its platform
- ▶ It should not use any info collected for the unfair advantage of its related parties
- ▶ It should not impose cancellation charges unless it bears

similar charges

- ▶ Should appoint nodal contact, grievance officer and compliance officer
- ▶ Sellers should also have a grievance officer
- ▶ No seller should post false reviews about goods or services.

enable only a specified seller or group of sellers managed by such entity to sell goods or services on its platform."

Experts doubted the practical impact of this measure. "At first glance it will be interesting to see how practically these changes will be implemented," said Archana Tewary, partner, J Sagar Associates.

According to the proposals, no entity having a dominant position cannot abuse its position. "Abuse of dominant position" will have the same meaning as prescribed under Section 4 of the Competition Act, 2002.

It should not use any information collected through its platform for unfair advantage of its related parties and associated enterprises; none of its related parties and associated enterprises are enlisted as sellers for sale to consumers directly; and ensure that nothing is done by related parties which the e-commerce entity cannot do itself.

An e-commerce entity

should ensure that sponsored listing of products and services are distinctly identified.

It should not impose cancellation charges on consumers unless similar charges are also borne by it.

The e-commerce companies are mandated to register with the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade. It should appoint a nodal person of contact, Resident Grievance Officer to address concerns of customers, Chief Compliance Officer to ensure compliance to rules and a nodal contact person for 24x7 coordination with law enforcement agencies.

Sellers on the e-commerce platform also should also have a grievance officer, acknowledge receipt of consumer complaints within 48 hours and redress the complaint within one month.

No seller should falsely represent itself as a consumer and post reviews about goods or services.

SAT sets aside Sebi direction; allows PNB HF voting today

New Delhi, June 21: Setting aside Sebi's direction, the Securities Appellate Tribunal (SAT) on Monday allowed PNB Housing Finance to go ahead with the shareholders' meeting on Tuesday to consider a Rs 4,000 crore investment by private equity firm Carlyle and others in the mortgage firm.

However, results of the shareholders' voting will not be disclosed till further directions from the tribunal.

The ruling comes hours after PNB Housing Finance informed stock exchanges it has appealed against Sebi's direction on June 18 wherein it was asked to defer consideration of the proposed capital infusion proposal till a valuation of the company's shares is done by a registered independent valuer.

The extraordinary general meeting (EGM) is scheduled for June 22.

Taking up the matter on an urgent basis, a two-member bench of the tribunal said as "electronic voting has already commenced it would not be fair to stay the consideration of agenda no. 1 (issuance of preference shares)." The bench of Justices Tarun Agarwala and M. T. Joshi said no factual dispute exists and only an interpretation of the provisions of the ICDR Regulations and Companies Act read with Articles of Association is required to be considered. — PTI

Top economists to advise TN CM

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, JUNE 21

Some of the globally acclaimed economists, including Nobel laureate Esther Duflo, former RBI governor Raghuram Rajan and former chief economic advisor to the Government of India Arvind Subramanian will advise the chief minister of Tamil Nadu, Development Economist Jean Dreze and former Union finance secretary S. Narayan also will be part of the 'Economic Advisory Council to the Chief Minister'.

"In recent years, we have seen a slowdown in Tamil Nadu's economic growth rate. This government will make all out efforts to reverse this trend and usher in a period of rapid economic growth taking full advantage of the available limited window of the demographic dividend. To chart out a rapid and inclusive economic growth path for Tamil Nadu, this government will constitute an 'Economic Advisory Council to the Chief Minister' with leading economic experts from all over the world as its members," governor Banwarilal Purohit announced on Monday in his customary address to the first session of the 16th state legislative assembly, which also marks the commencement of the first session after the formation of the DMK government last month.

Esther Duflo is professor of Poverty



Alleviation and Development Economics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She along with her husband and economist Abhijit Banerjee and co-researcher Michael Kremer received the Nobel Prize in economics for in 2019 for their "experimental approach to alleviating global poverty".

Former Reserve Bank of India governor Raghuram Rajan is Katherine Dusak Miller Distinguished Service Professor of Finance at the University of Chicago Booth School of Business.

Former chief economic advisor Arvind Subramanian is non-resident senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics.

Belgian-born development economist Jean Dreze is an Indian national. He has been a member of the UPA's National Advisory Council and is visiting professor at the department of economics, Ranchi University. S. Narayan has served as

the finance secretary of Government of India and as the economic advisor to the Prime Minister.

"Based on the recommendations of this council, the government will revitalise the state's economy and ensure that the benefits of economic growth reach all segments of the society," Purohit said.

He also noted that the fiscal health of the state is a cause for concern. The government will focus on improving the fiscal position and bringing down the overall debt burden. As a first step, a white paper detailing the true state of Tamil Nadu's finances will be released in the month of July, so that the people of Tamil Nadu are fully informed, he said.

There could be no social justice when there is high economic inequality and stratification. Inclusive growth is government's priority and growth and progress must benefit all sections of society and not just the top of the economic pyramid, the governor noted.

KKR TO MAJORITY OWN VINI COSMETICS FOR ₹4,600 CR

Mumbai, June 21: Global buyout major KKR on Monday announced a \$625 million, or Rs 4,600-crore, investment in deodorant maker Vini Cosmetics for a controlling stake.

The PE major has signed a definitive agreement, by which Vini's founder group led by Darshan Patel, chairman and joint managing director (JMD), and Dipam Patel, JMD, and Sequoia Capital will sell stakes.

The co-founders of the 11-year-old company, which manufactures and markets brands like FOGG, will continue to hold a significant stake in Vini and will collaborate with KKR in the next phase of the company's growth, as per the statement. In addition, existing investor Westbridge Capital will acquire a further stake from the founder group to increase its shareholding, it said.

The statement said Patel will continue to be the chairman while Dipam Patel will be appointed as the vice-chairman. — PTI

Murdoch Jr. to tap billionaire families for India investment

BEN STUPPLES JUNE 21

James Murdoch is considering raising funds from ultra-rich families around the globe, a move that would give him more firepower to make acquisitions and further establish his investment firm.

Murdoch's Lupa Systems is looking for about \$150 million each from fewer than half-a-dozen family offices for investments in India, according to a person with knowledge of the matter. It intends to use an external fundraiser to help with the drive, said the person, who asked not to be identified as the plans are private and still tentative.

A spokesperson for Murdoch declined to comment.

James, 48, set up Lupa Systems in 2019. Based in New York and Mumbai, it already counts Indian startups Doubnut and Harappa Education among its investments. The firm is also backing a US blank-cheque company



James Murdoch

that will focus on India as it hunts for targets across South and Southeast Asia.

Nitin Kukreja, a former Morgan Stanley banker, is managing director of Lupa Systems's operations in India.

The firm also owns a \$160-million stake in MCH Group, the organiser of the Art Basel shows. In 2019, it invested in Norwegian drone technology company UBIQ Aerospace, New York-based comic book publishing startup Artists Writers & Artisans and

Maruti Suzuki to hike car prices in Q2

New Delhi, June 21: The country's largest carmaker Maruti Suzuki India (MSI) on Monday said it will increase prices of its entire product portfolio in the second quarter of the current fiscal due to rise in prices of various commodities, including steel.

MSI, which has already taken a price increase in April, noted that the price of steel and various precious metals has gone up considerably, prompting the company to pass on some of the impact.

"The prices of steel and precious metals like rhodium and palladium have gone up substantially. In April we passed on a part of the increased input costs to consumers thinking that the prices of these essential commodities will come down eventually. But that has not happened and as a last resort we are doing it to safeguard the company's financial health," MSI executive director (sales & marketing) Shashank Srivastava said. — PTI

Airtel, Tata team up for India-made 5G solutions

FC BUREAU MUMBAI, JUNE 21

Telecom major Bharti Airtel and Tata Group's flagship Tata Consultancy Services announced a strategic partnership for implementing 5G networks solutions for India.

Bharti Airtel has started 5G trials in major cities using spectrum allocated by the Department of Telecom.

The tieup underscores a push for indigenous 5G solutions in India, as the world's second-largest telecom market gears up for fifth-generation mobile networks that would enable connecting virtually everything together including machines, objects, and devices at ultra-high speeds.

Notably, the partnership with Tata Group allows

telecom operator Airtel to take head-on, rival Jio's pitch on homegrown 5G solutions. Reliance Jio is accelerating the rollout of digital platforms and indigenously-developed next-generation 5G stack.

On Monday, Airtel and Tata Group/TCS announced a collaboration for 'Made in India' 5G. Tata Group has developed O-RAN (Open Radio Access Network) based Radio and core elements and integrated a totally indigenous telecom stack, while Airtel will pilot and deploy this indigenous solution as part of its 5G rollout plans in India, with a pilot beginning in January 2022.

"The 5G solutions, once commercially proven in Airtel's diverse and brown-field network, will open export opportunities for India," said a joint release.

FIFTH | LARGEST Inflow rose from \$51 bn in '19 to \$64 bn in '20

FDI inflow surges 25% in 2020

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, JUNE 21

FDI inflow into India grew 25 per cent to \$64 billion in 2020, taking the country to the fifth position globally.

Pushed up by acquisitions in the information and communication technology (ICT) industry, FDI inflow into India grew from \$51 billion in 2019 to \$64 billion in 2020. India improved its global ranking from eight to fifth position in the pandemic year, finds Unctad.

Amid India's struggle to contain the Covid-19 outbreak, robust investment through acquisitions in ICT (software and hardware) and construction bolstered FDI. Cross-border mergers and acquisitions surged 83 per cent to



\$27 billion, with major deals in ICT, health, infrastructure and energy.

Large transactions included the acquisition of Jio Platforms by Facebook's subsidiary Jaadhu for \$5.7 billion, the acquisition of Tower Infrastructure Trust by Brookfield and GIC Singapore for \$3.7 billion and the sale of the electrical and automation division of Larsen & Toubro India for \$2.1 billion.

India helped FDI in South Asia rise by 20 per cent to \$71 billion.

Meanwhile, FDI outflow from South Asia fell 12 per cent to \$12 billion, once again driven by a drop in investment from India. FDI from India dropped to \$12 billion 2020 from \$13 billion 2019. Companies in India are South Asia's largest investors, with more than 90 per cent of outflows in 2020. Investments from India are expected to stabilise in 2021, supported by the country's resumption of free trade agreement (FTA) talks with the European Union (EU) and its strong investment in Africa, finds Unctad.

India's FDI stock stood at \$480 billion in 2020 against \$205 billion in 2010.

Going ahead, Unctad says India will continue to attract foreign investment in high-tech industries, given their market size and their advanced digital and technology ecosystem. However, the recent second wave of Covid-19 shows that significant uncertainties remain. This has major impacts on the prospects for South Asia as well.

According to the UN body, announced green-field projects in India contracted by 19 per cent to \$24 billion, and the second wave in April 2021 is affecting economic activities, which could lead to a larger contraction in 2021. The outbreak severely hit main investment destinations such as Maharashtra and Karnataka, it said.

APARNA ENT. TO INVEST ₹100 CR

FC BUREAU HYDERABAD, JUNE 21

Hyderabad-based building materials firm Aparna Enterprises Ltd said on Monday it would invest Rs 100 crore towards building its aluminium window and door system brand Alteza in the next four years. The investment will also be used for setting up a new manufacturing unit in Hyderabad.

Sixty per cent of our investment will be used for strengthening our manufacturing capacity and the rest towards research & development and building our dealership network, said Ashwin Reddy, the managing director of Aparna Enterprises.

After launching the company's latest range of slim aluminium sliding door system, the ACA M-19 series, Reddy said the demand for quality products and services is growing in the country.

SHORT TAKES

Maharaj hat-trick puts SA on course

Gros Islet: Keshav Maharaj became just the second South African to take a hat-trick in Test and the Proteas were on course for a series victory as West Indies slid to 109-6 at lunch on day four of the second Test on Monday. West Indies were still 215 runs short of its target of 324 and South Africa was in sight of a 2-0 series sweep. Maharaj's hat trick came in the second-to-last over of the session. He claimed a big breakthrough when Kieran Powell was caught near the square leg boundary for 51. But the spinner added the wickets of Holder and Joshua Da Silva off his next two balls. — **AP**

Brief scores (Day 4, at lunch): South Africa 298 & 174 (van der Dussen 75 n.o., Roach 4/52) vs West Indies 149 & 109/6 in 38 overs (Kieran Powell 51, Keshav Maharaj 3/20).

Rahm wins first US Open crown

La Jolla: Jon Rahm made tension-packed long birdie putts on the last two holes on Sunday to win the 121st US Open and capture his first major title, defeating South African Louis Oosthuizen by one stroke. The 26-year-old Spaniard curled in a spectacular birdie putt from just inside 25 feet at the par-4 17th hole then made his fourth birdie of the week at the par-5 18th, blasting out of a bunker and rolling in an 18-footer to seize the lead. "I have a hard time explaining what just happened because I can't even believe I made the last two putts," Rahm said. — **AFP**

Chhetri extends stay with BFC

Bengaluru: India captain Sunil Chhetri has extended his contract with Bengaluru FC for another two years and will be with the Indian Super League side till 2023. The new deal will enable Chhetri, who joined 'the Blues' in 2013, to extend his stay with the club into the 10th season. Chhetri has made 203 appearances for the club, scoring 101 goals in eight seasons. "I'm really happy to have signed on for two more years at Bengaluru FC. The city is home now, and the people at this club are like family to me," said the 36-year-old, who has led the club since its inception in 2013. — **PTI**

Elina into top five in WTA rankings

Paris: Elina Svitolina of Ukraine moved into the top five in the latest WTA rankings published on Monday, displacing American Sofia Kenin a week before Wimbledon starts. Recently crowned French Open champion Barbora Krejickova slipped two places to 17th while Swiss Belinda Bencic is once again on the cusp of the top ten after her run to the grass-court final in Berlin. Ashleigh Barty retains the top rank ahead of Naomi Osaka, who will miss Wimbledon and hence an opportunity to close the gap. — **AFP**

Hawks upset top seeded Sixers

Los Angeles: Kevin Huerter scored a playoff career-high 27 points as the upstart Atlanta Hawks punched their ticket to their first Eastern Conference finals in six years on Sunday, with a 103-96 game seven win over the Philadelphia 76ers. All-star Trae Young finished with 21 points and 10 assists, John Collins had 14 points and 16 rebounds and Danilo Gallinari came off the bench to score 17 points for the Hawks, who won three games in Philadelphia to take the series 4-3. — **AFP**

Live on TV

CRICKET

World Test Championship final, Day 5: India vs New Zealand from 3pm on Star Sports 1, HD1

EURO

Group Stage: Czech Republic vs England; Croatia vs Scotland from 12.30 am (Wednesday) on Sony Ten 1, 2

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DRAW LOOMS

Weather plays havoc as another day washed out

Southampton, June 21: The fickle English weather played spoilsport in a game promising high quality contest as day four of the inaugural World Test Championship final between India and New Zealand was washed out due to rain.

For the second time in the one-off clash, a whole day was lost after no play was possible also on the opening day.

With the weather not improving since morning at the Hampshire Bowl, the umpires took the call almost four hours and 30 minutes after the scheduled start time of 10.30 am local time (3 pm IST).

"Day four of the #WTC21 Final has been abandoned due to persistent rain," read an ICC update.

The fans who were patiently waiting for the play to start had to leave disappointed. "We thank our fans who turned up and kept the tempo high. See you again, tomorrow," the BCCI added.

Rain is not forecast for the remaining two days of the big final but it is likely to remain overcast as it has been the case so far when play did take place. When it wasn't the rain, bad light stopped play on both day two and day three.

A maximum of 196 overs can be played in the game to force a result. The trophy will be shared if the game is drawn.

The final was nicely poised at stumps on day three with New Zealand reaching 101 for two in response to India's 217 all out. The Black Caps however remain in control of the game despite a late strike from Ishant Sharma close to stumps.

Weather has played havoc with the final and Former India opener Virender Sehwag was among many who questioned ICC's decision to host the final in Southampton. — **PTI**



India's Ajinkya Rahane (left) and Cheteshwar Pujara during Day 4 of the World Test Championship final in Southampton on Monday. — **ICC**

Jamieson relishes Kohli wicket

Southampton, June 21: Rookie New Zealand pacer Kyle Jamieson, who rattled India with a fifer, on the second day of the World Test Championship final, feels that any batsman could have been dismissed with that inswinger that got rid of rival skipper Virat Kohli.

Jamieson got a five-wicket haul as New Zealand dismissed India for 217 on the third day of the WTC final.

Asked if setting up Kohli with outswingers and then bringing one back in like they did in New Zealand is a template

they have said, Jamieson answered in affirmative.

"Oh, I guess yes. May be there is some sort of pattern and this we know talk about huge amount, the one that I was able to get him (Kohli) today certainly seemed back a little bit.

"And that was pretty hard to control as a bowler and pretty harder to manage as a batter no matter who you are. So I don't think it is necessarily just for him (Kohli)," Jamieson said.

According to the 26-year-old lanky speedster, who returned with fine figures

of 5-31, Kohli's dismissal played a key part in how things unfolded on the second day.

"Yeah, obviously he (Kohli) is a massive part of their team and pretty big wicket to get, so to get him pretty early morning, was I guess was nice and pleasing and pretty crucial for how the day followed," added the right-arm pacer.

However he didn't feel that Kohli has any apparent glitches in his technique.

"Oh, not really I think, he is (Kohli) world class batter and those guys

FINAL SHOULD NOT HAVE BEEN HELD IN UK: KP

Southampton, June 21: Former England captain Kevin Pietersen feels that no "one-off" cricket games of "incredible importance" should ever be held in the UK, which is famous for its fickle weather as one is witnessing during the World Test Championship final.

"It pains me to say it, but a ONE OFF & incredibly important cricket game should NOT be played in the UK," Pietersen tweeted taking a dig at the ICC for opting Hampshire Bowl in Southampton as the venue for a marquee final.

"If it was up to me, Dubai would always host a one off match like this WTC game. neutral venue, fabulous stadium, guaranteed weather, excellent training facilities and a travel hub! Oh, and ICC home is next to the stadium," the former England batsman wrote.

— **PTI**

Lack of practice hurt India: Doull

Southampton, June 21: Former Kiwi pacer Simon Doull feels lack of match practice in the run-up to the ongoing World Test Championship final against New Zealand was hurting India's pace bowling attack.

Unlike New Zealand, who played two Tests against England before the WTC final, India have been devoid of match practice ahead of the marquee clash.

The Virat Kohli-led side's last five-day match was against England in a 2-1 series win at home in March.

"...at times you look and overthink and say 'did they (India) have enough preparation?' I think they did. I am sure in the last 10-12 days they would have bowled enough deliveries to make sure they are ready and raring to go," Doull told Harsha Bhogle in a *cricbuzz* show.

"But its hard to simulate match practice. You can try in these intra-squad games but it just doesn't quite work and that's the key. It is genuinely hard to replace match practice that makes you better and get you ready for those matches."

Doull made the statement in reference to Indian pacers below-par display in New Zealand's first innings score of 101 for 2 in reply to India's 217 all out.

The pace trio of Jasprit Bumrah, Ishant Sharma and Mohammed Shami failed to extract consider-



Jasprit Bumrah

able amount of swing from the favourable Ageas Bowl conditions, unlike their Kiwi counterparts.

Kyle Jamieson (5/31), Neil Wagner (2/40) and Trent Boult (2/47) used the seaming conditions well to bundle out India for a timid total in the rain-affected match.

Doull said New Zealand were definitely benefited by the two games against England ahead of the marquee clash.

"...New Zealand went into their first Test match at Lord's against England, they had the very same preparation that India had coming into this Test match. New Zealand were in Southampton for around 10-11 days, played intra-squad matches, training practices and when they turned at Lord's they looked pretty set and ready to go." — **PTI**

THUNDER & SAINT



In a social media post, Usain Bolt shared the names of his newborn twin sons, Thunder and Saint Leo. — **Twitter**

Olympic briefs

Shot-putter Toor qualifies

Shot-putter Tejinder Singh Toor qualified for the Tokyo Olympics with a new national record at the Indian Grand Prix 4 on a day when the national women's 4x100m relay team and sprinter Dutee Chand also breached the previous best marks in the country. Toor crossed the Olympic Qualification mark with a throw of 21.49m and broke his own National Record. The Olympic Qualifying effort in this event is 21.10m. The previous record, which was also in Toor's name, stood at 20.92m and was set in 2019. The women's relay team, however, failed to place themselves inside the Olympic qualifying bracket despite the record effort of their own. The quartet of Hima Das, Dutee Chand, S. Dhanalakshmi and Archana Suseendran clocked 43.37 seconds to win the race ahead of India 'B' team (48.02 seconds) and Maldives (50.74) in the three team race.

Trailblazing transgender

Laurel Hubbard hefted 628 pounds (185 kilograms) in two lifts on the way to qualifying in the women's super-heavyweight division for the Tokyo Olympics. That's heavy. But it's nowhere near the figurative weight Hubbard has carried to become the first transgender athlete to compete at an Olympic Games.

Hubbard was among five weightlifters confirmed Monday in New Zealand's team for Tokyo. At 43, she will also be the oldest weightlifter at the games, and will be ranked fourth in the competition on Aug. 2 for women 87 kilograms (192 pounds) and over. Hubbard won a silver medal at the 2017 World Championships and gold in the 2019 Pacific Games in Samoa.



Laurel Hubbard

Local fans limited to 10K

The Tokyo Olympics will allow some local fans to attend when the games open in just over a month, organising committee officials and the IOC said on Monday. Organisers set a limit of 50% of capacity up to a maximum of 10,000 fans for all Olympic venues. The decision was announced after so-called Five Party talks online with local organisers, the International Olympic Committee, the International Paralympic Committee, the Japanese government and the government of metropolitan Tokyo. The decision contradicts the country's top medical adviser, Dr. Shigeru Omi, who recommended last week that the safest way to hold the Olympics would be without fans.

England look to get back on track against Czechia

London, June 21: English football manager Gareth Southgate insists England can overcome their growing pains as his young side aim to get their Euro 2020 campaign back on track by winning Group D against the Czech Republic on Tuesday.

England are level on four points with the Czechs and will be guaranteed a first-place finish if they win their last group match.

A victory at Wembley feels essential for England to lift the gloom that descended after they were booted off following Friday's lacklustre 0-0 draw with old rivals Scotland.

With an average age of 25 years and 31 days, England's starting line-up against Scotland was the youngest they had ever fielded in a major tournament.



(From left) England's Harry Kane, Jack Grealish and Harry Maguire during a training session. — **AP**

SCOTLAND ON BRINK OF QUALIFYING

After a 23-year wait to even reach a major tournament, more history beckons for Scotland on Tuesday if they can beat Croatia at Hampden to reach the knockout stage for the first time at Euro.

A hard-earned 0-0 draw against England at

Wembley has restored belief in the Scottish support that had been shaken by a 2-0 defeat to the Czech Republic in their opening match.

Victory against the World Cup finalists should be enough to seal Scotland's place in the last 16.

— **AFP**

Peru pip Colombia, keep hopes alive



Peru's Christian Cueva (left) and Colombia's Wilmar Barrios in action during their Copa America match on Sunday. — **AP**

this Copa America," Peru defender Renato Tapia said. "We are in a good position, but we have to keep rowing to go farther."

Peru lost 4-0 to Brazil in their first game in the tournament, which raised doubts about coach

Ricardo Gareca's team. The 2019 Copa America finalists are also struggling in South American World Cup qualifiers.

VENEZUELA, ECUADOR SHARE SPOILS

Ronald Hernandez scored an injury time equaliser

to earn minnows Venezuela a share of the spoils in a 2-2 draw with Ecuador on Sunday.

Ecuador twice took the lead through Ayrton Preciado and Gonzalo Plata either side of a powerful headed goal from Venezuela's Edson

COPA RESULTS

| | |
|--|----------|
| Peru (Sergio Pena 17', Yerry Mina 64-og) | 2 |
| Colombia (Miguel Borja 53) | 1 |
| Venezuela (Edson Castillo 51, Ronald Hernandez 91) | 2 |
| Ecuador (Ayrton Preciado 39, Gonzalo Plata 71) | 2 |

Castillo.

It was a remarkable achievement for a team still missing 12 players due to testing positive for Covid-19 or injury.

"I have no words to describe my admiration for these lads," said Venezuela's coach Jose Peseiro.

"The way they played for the first time in the professional team, they're here showing an ability to sacrifice, to fight, to defend the Burgundy (jersey), which excites me."

The point left Ecuador bottom of the five team group on one point, with Venezuela a place and a point above them after having played a game more. Hosts Brazil lead the group with a perfect two wins from two ahead of Colombia. — **Agencies**