



NETANYAHU RIVALS
REACH COALITION
DEAL TO OUST HIM

P9



US BILL INTRODUCED
TO DROP PER-COUNTRY
CAP ON GREEN CARD

P10



PEOPLE'S PARLIAMENT, ALWAYS IN SESSION

AUDIO LEAKS SUGGEST
SASIKALA'S COMEBACK

'HOCKEY MEDAL AN
EASY TARGET IF
GAMES ARE HELD'

P4



P12

WEATHER

Partly cloudy sky. The maximum and minimum temperatures would be around 39 and 24 degrees Celsius respectively.

RAINFALL: NIL

RELATIVE HUMIDITY

Max: 74% Min: 39%

TEMPERATURE

Max: 38.2°C (-2) Min: 24.4°C (-3)

SUN RISES

05:23 hrs

MOON RISES

02:22 hrs

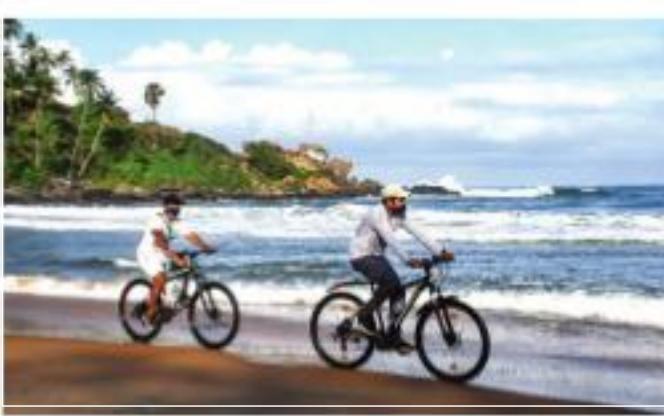
SUN SETS

19:16 hrs

MOON SETS

14:00 hrs

THUMBNAILS



Volunteers participate in a bicycle ride at Grove beach to mark the World Bicycle Day, in Thiruvananthapuram on Thursday. AGENCIES

Home-based Covid test kit Coviself hits markets: India's first indigenous home-based coronavirus disease rapid testing kit that detects the virus within 15 minutes has been commercially launched, and will be available at chemist shops across the country in the next two-three days, its maker, Pune-based Mylab Discovery Solutions Ltd, announced on Thursday. The kit is called Coviself and costs ₹250 per unit.

PM reviews preparations for Tokyo Olympics: Every need of India's sportspersons, from vaccination to training facilities, must be fulfilled as a top priority, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Thursday at a meeting to review the country's preparations for the Tokyo Olympics that begins in 50 days. He directed that every qualified and probable athlete, support staff and officials travelling to Tokyo for the mega sporting event must be vaccinated.

Kerala retains top rank in Niti Aayog's SDG index: Kerala has retained the top rank in Niti Aayog's SDG Index 2020-21, while Bihar has been adjudged as the worst performer, according to a report released on Thursday. The Index for Sustainable Development Goals evaluates progress of states, UTs on social, economic and environmental parameters.

Submit assessment criteria for XII students, CBSE, CISCE told

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

The Supreme Court on Thursday said it was happy to note that the government has cancelled the class 12 board exams, and directed the CBSE and CISCE to place on record well-defined objective criteria for assessment of students in two weeks.

A bench of Justices A M Khanwilkar and Dinesh Maheshwari asked Attorney General K K Venugopal and advocate J K Das, appearing for the CISCE, to place on record the parameters within two weeks. The bench clarified that it will not give more

time for placement of objective criteria as many students will be taking admissions in colleges in India and abroad.

The top court said that it will go through the objective parameters for assessment, so that if anyone has objections they can be dealt with.

The bench was hearing a plea seeking directions to cancel the class 12 exams of the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) and Council for the Indian School Certificate Examination (CISCE) amidst the pandemic.

Veugopal said that CBSE will require some time to formulate the objective criteria for assessment and the

court may defer the hearing for at least two weeks.

Das said CISCE wanted 3-4 weeks for placing the objective criteria. The bench said, "You (CISCE) can do it over-night. Four weeks' time is a little longer. We cannot give you 3-4 weeks' time."

Petitioner Mamta Sharma said like CBSE and CISCE, there are many state boards which have not taken any decision on class 12 exams. The bench told Sharma, You should have patience and not rush things. First let CBSE place on record objective criteria. Then we will see about other boards. The top court then deferred the hearing.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

The Gautam Gambhir Foundation has been found guilty of unauthorisedly stocking, procuring and distributing Fabiflu medicine to Covid-19 patients, the Delhi government's drug controller informed the Delhi High Court on Thursday which said the BBMP did a lot of charity but caused a lot of shortage of drug and inconvenience to the society.

The high court deprecated the manner in which a huge quantity of the drug was procured and said genuine patients who needed the medicine at that particular time could not get it as the bulk stock was taken away by cricketer-turned-politician Gambhir.

This was certainly not the way. In this pandemic, it should not be done just because people have means to do it. It should not be that I will do it for one class or for my constituency and it should not be for popularity.

Firstly, you do charity for charity. Doing charity for some other reason is no charity. We want to curb this practice and for this, we want you (drug controller) to take action, a bench of Justices Vipin

Sanghi and Jasmeet Singh said. The drug controller also submitted that action will be taken without delay against the foundation, drug dealers as also in other such cases which would be brought to its notice.

AP MLA Praveen Kumar has also been found guilty for similar offences under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act and action will also be taken against him, the court was informed.

The counsel for drug controller also said that show cause notices have been issued to licensees under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act as well as those who were found to have breached the law and their responses are awaited.

The court asked the drug controller to file status reports on further progress in these cases within six weeks and listed the matter for hearing on 29 July.

The high court was hearing a PIL seeking lodging of an FIR on the allegations that politicians are able to procure and distribute in huge quantities the Covid-19 medicines even as patients were running from pillar to post to get them.

An application was also filed in the pending petition making allegations against Kumar.

Choksi denied bail in Dominica

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

A Dominica magistrate has denied bail to absconding diamond tycoon Mehul Choksi, who was arrested on 23 May for alleged illegal entry to the Caribbean island country, the local media reported.

Choksi, wanted here in connection with a Rs 13,500-crore fraud in the Punjab National Bank (PNB), pleaded before the magistrate that he was abducted and forcibly brought to Dominica from neighbouring Antigua and Barbuda.

The Ministry of External Affairs said on Thursday that all efforts would continue to bring back Mehul Choksi.

PTI

Govt issues guidelines for care of Covid-hit children

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

The government has come out with guidelines for the care and protection of the children affected by Covid-19 and fixed responsibilities for the states, district magistrates, police, Panchayati Raj institutions and urban local bodies.

In a letter to the chief secretaries of all the states and Union territories, Women and Child Development Ministry Secretary Ram Mohan Mishra on Wednesday said in order to streamline and facilitate the actions being taken, the major responsibilities of the primary duty holders have been enlisted to ensure the best interest of children during the pandemic.



The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR), in an affidavit to the Supreme Court, said 9,346 children have lost at least one of the parents to the deadly virus, including over 1,700 who have lost both their parents, according to data received from the states

in distress through outreach and surveys and prepare a database with a profile of each child, along with the details of their specific needs and requirements, and ensure that the data is uploaded on the Track Child portal.

Mishra told the states and UTs to temporarily allocate child care institutions (CCIs) to house those children whose parents have been unwell

due to Covid-19 and provide necessary support to them, in case the extended family is not available to take care of them.

The WCD Ministry has asked the states to issue directions to hospitals to collect the contact details of trustworthy persons known to the patients in the admission form, to be contacted for taking care of children in case of any emergency. "Immediate temporary rehabilitation of children through the existing child care facilities supported under the Child Protection Services scheme must be ensured," Mishra said.

The states have also been asked to make suitable arrangements for isolation facilities within the CCIs to take care of the children suffering

from Covid. Mishra asked the states to launch a local helpline number manned by experts for giving psychosocial care to the children in distress.

On the role of the DMs, he said they shall be the guardians of the vulnerable children impacted adversely by Covid.

"The DM shall make efforts that such children are rehabilitated in the following order of preference, in the manner as prescribed under the Juvenile Justice Act, 2015," he said. The DMs need to create a district-level multi-departmental task force to map the needs, monitor the progress.

The WCD secretary said district police teams must stay alert to prevent trafficking of children, illegal adoption or any other kind of abuse.

SC quashes seditious case against Dua

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

The Supreme Court on Thursday quashed a seditious case against veteran scribe Vinod Dua for his alleged comments against Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his YouTube show last year, saying a 1962 verdict entitles every journalist to protection under the Kedar Nath Singh judgment (the famous verdict of 1962 on the scope and ambit of offence of sedition in the IPC).

"Every journalist is entitled to protection under the Kedar Nath Singh judgment (the famous verdict of 1962 on the scope and ambit of offence of sedition in the IPC)."

On the issue of protection of freedom of speech and

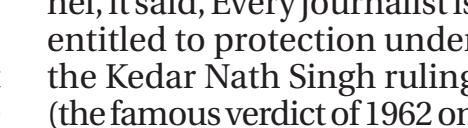
expression of media personnel, it said, Every journalist is entitled to protection under the Kedar Nath Singh judgment (the famous verdict of 1962 on the scope and ambit of offence of sedition in the IPC)."

While upholding validity of section 124A (sedition) of the IPC, the top court in 1962 had ruled the sedition charges could not be invoked against a citizen for criticism of government actions as it would be in conformity with the

freedom of speech and expression. The bench on 6 October last year had reserved the verdict on the petition after hearing arguments for Dua, the Himachal Pradesh government and the complainant, a local BJP leader, in the case.

On July last year, the top court had extended till further orders the protection granted to Dua from any coercive action in the case.

An FIR against Dua for alleged offences of sedition, public nuisance, printing defamatory materials and public mischief was lodged by BJP leader Shyam Lal Kumar in Shimla on 6 May last year. In an unprecedented hearing on 14 June last year, the top court had granted protection from arrest to Dua till further orders.



SUPREME COURT



People of Kalimpong have once again demonstrated that they all are conscious citizens

RUDEN SADA LEPCHA, MLA, KALIMPONG

ON KALIMPONG DISTRICT LEADING THE COVID VACCINATION DRIVE TARGET IN WEST BENGAL

Delhi records 1,044 black fungus cases, 89 deaths till 2 June: Jain

Capital logs 487 new Covid cases, even as death count dips below 50 for first time since 11 April

SNS & PTI

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

Delhi has recorded 1,044 cases of black fungus or mucormycosis and 89 deaths due to it yesterday, Delhi health minister Satyendar Jain today said.

Noting that the states must be provided the required number of Covid vaccines, Jain said the Centre's vaccine policy needs to be reworked.

"I think it is high time to rethink this policy (Centre's vaccination policy) and rework it. When a state is ready to vaccinate its citizens then that state must get the required number of vaccines," he said.

While stressing that the Delhi government is fully prepared to vaccinate its entire population, the minister said they were not getting the required doses to do so.

"We are buying these vaccines and giving them free to the citizens but due to the policy of the central government, we are not getting the required amount of vaccines."

"The whole control over the vaccines and the price of the vaccines



are with the central government. The cost of the vaccines in the private hospitals is also monitored by the central government," he said.

The Delhi High Court yesterday said if the Delhi government could not ensure that people get both doses of Covaxin within the stipulated time, it should not have started so many vaccination centres with "much pomp and splendour".

"I understand that many people who have taken the first jab of Covaxin are not getting the scheduled second jab in Delhi. The situation has become like this because of the mismanagement of the central govern-

ment. They have changed the schedule of vaccination. If the central government had given us the required number of vaccines, then no problem would have happened. But they are not providing vaccines. We are hopeful that people who are waiting for the second dose of Covaxin will get it as early as possible," Jain told reporters here.

He was also questioned about the cases of black fungus infection in the national capital, which Delhi has already declared as epidemic. Mucormycosis or black fungus is more common among people whose immunity has got lowered due to Covid, but now the number of cases is com-

ing down which is a good sign.

"Before this second phase of the pandemic in Delhi, there was time when the daily cases used to stay with 200. My appeal to every citizen is that please maintain social distancing, wear a mask all the time and wash your hands from time to time," Jain said. In view of the anticipated third Covid wave, the minister today visited two healthcare project sites.

"To provide Delhi with world-class health infrastructure, a new 1,168-bedded hospital is being constructed by the Delhi government at Siraspur. Visited the site today to inspect the work. The work is advancing at a great pace. Efforts are being made to complete the work on time," Jain stated.

According to the fifth serosurvey, conducted between January 15 and January 23, around 56 per cent of Delhi's population have developed antibodies against the deadly virus.

"For the last three days continuously, the positivity rate in Delhi has been under one per cent. In this phase of Covid pandemic, Delhi witnessed over 28,000 cases in 24 hours on a day but now the number of cases is com-

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"For the last three days continuously, the positivity rate in Delhi has been under one per cent. In this phase of Covid pandemic, Delhi witnessed over 28,000 cases in 24 hours on a day but now the number of cases is com-

—and 45 coronavirus-linked deaths while the positivity rate dropped to 0.61 per cent, according to the Delhi government's latest health bulletin.

This is the first time the daily death count in the city has gone below the 50-marks since 11 April, when the tally was 48.

On 16 March, Delhi had recorded 425 Covid cases and on 17 March this count was 536, according to official data.

Today's fresh cases were detected out of 80,046 tests, including 55,638 RT-PCR tests and 24,408 rapid antigen tests, the health bulletin stated.

The number of Delhi's cumulative Covid caseload rose to 14,27,926 while its toll climbed to 24,447. Over 13 lakh patients have recovered from the virus in the city so far, the bulletin said.

The number of active cases decreased to 8,748 from yesterday's 9,364. The number of people under home isolation dipped to 4,233 from 4,531 a day before while the number of containment zones in the city dipped to 16,287 from yesterday's 17,770, the bulletin added.

Fire breaks out at shoe factory in west Delhi, no one injured

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

Fire broke out at a shoe manufacturing factory in west Delhi's Madipur area, fire officials said on Thursday. No one was reportedly injured and the fire was doused, they said.

After the fire department received a call at around 12.42 am, 24 fire tenders were pressed into service to douse the fire, said Atul Garg, director, Delhi Fire Service. The fire started from the ground floor and later spread to the first floor of the four-storey building which comprises residence and commercial space, he said.

The ground floor is a shoe manufacturing factory while the first and second floors are used as godown. The third floor is a residential space and the top floor is a tin-shed hall, Garg said. The cause of the fire and extent of damage were yet to be ascertained, Garg added. Thick smoke billowing out of the ground floor and first floor triggered panic among local residents. The building lacked fire safety measures, officials added.

SNS

Classified



My client Yadav Krishan, s/o Prabhati Ram, R/o S-657A, School Block, Shakarpur, East Delhi, Delhi-110092, has debarred his son Ramash Kumar and his wife Mrs. Poonam, from his all movable-immovable properties and also severed his all relations from him due to their deplorable behavior. If any person deals with my client shall not be responsible for the same.

Rakesh Verma
Advocate
Ch. No. D-510, D-Block,
5th Floor, Karkardooma
Courts, Shahdara,
Delhi-110062.
M. No. 7827131382.

PUBLIC NOTICE
This is for notice of the general public that a political party is proposed to be registered by the name of **DELHI YUVA PARTY**. The office of the party is located at G.F.A.T. 101/102, Sector 10, Saket, New Delhi-110091. This party has submitted application to the Election Commission of India, New Delhi for its registration as political party under section 29A of the Representation of People Act 1951. Name/address of the office bearers of the party are as follows:-
President- SANJIV KUMAR,
Vice President- SANT KUMAR
General Secretary-
LOKENDRA KUMAR
Treasurer- VIPIN KUMAR
If any one has any objection to the registration of this party, they may send their Objection with reasons thereof, to the Secretary (Political Party), Election Commission of India, Nirvachan Sadan, Ashok Road, New Delhi-110001 within 30 days of the publication of this notice.

PUBLIC NOTICE
This is for information to all concerned that My Client has entered into an agreement to sell his Residential Property situated at M U BUILDCON PVT. LTD in respect of Property Bearing No. 101/102 Niwas Marg, Civil Lines, New Delhi-110054 and the details of the same are as under:-
Buyer Name: Mr. Siddharth Naranjan - ADVOCATE Ch. No. 487, Civil Wing, Tis Hazari Courts, Delhi-110064 Mob. 9810656000
TENDERS

Nepal Transit & Warehousing Co. Ltd.

Notice Inviting Sealed Quotation

SQ.No: NTWCL/India/

Works/01/2027/078

(First Date of Publication:
04.06.2021)

Sealed Quotations are invited from civil Contractors for the Repairing & Painting of Exterior portion of existing office Building of Nepal Transit & Warehousing Co.Ltd. At Haldia Township. For further details Please visit the website: www.info@nepaltransit.com or contact on Phone: 2449-6670 or Mob. No.: 7439552326 during office hours (10:00 hrs to 17:00 hrs).

Atishi alleges collusion between Centre, pvt hosp in vax supply

PTI
NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

AAP MLA Atishi on Thursday said the central government is providing Covid vaccines to private hospitals who are charging exorbitant prices from people in the 18-44 age group instead of the Delhi government which is providing the jabs for free, alleging a "collusion" between the two.

It has been 11 days since the city government stopped vaccination for the 18-44 age group due to unavailability of vaccine. The Centre has said it will provide fresh supply for the age group on June 10.

"What kind of collusion is there between private hospitals and the BJP-led central government that they are providing vaccine continuously to the private hospitals, charging anywhere between Rs 850-Rs 1,400 per dose, but not giving it to Delhi which is doing it for absolutely free?" Atishi said.

"This unavailability of vaccines for the youth of the city is a serious issue for Delhi as we have seen

how the previous wave of Covid wreaked havoc for the youth," she added.

India began vaccinating people in the 18-44 age bracket in the "liberalised and accelerated" Phase 3 of COVID-19 vaccination from May 1.

Under the third phase, the vaccine manufacturers would supply 50 per cent of their monthly Central Drugs Laboratory (CDL) released doses to the central government and would be free to supply the remaining 50 per cent doses to state governments and in the open market.

According to Atishi, where almost 50 per cent of the people above 45 years have been vaccinated in Delhi, the percentage in the 18-44 age bracket stands at 10-12 percent only due to shortage of vaccine.

"Youth is the segment which wants to get vaccinated at the earliest and has no vaccine hesitancy also. This is also the segment which will bring others along with them to get vaccinated. And this is why we request the Centre that instead of the private hospitals they should

give the supply to the Delhi government," she urged.

A total of 37,793 people aged above 45 years were vaccinated against the viral disease in the national capital on Wednesday. Of them, 29,735 received the first dose and 8,058 the second dose, the Kalkaji MLA said.

"The dip in the number of people getting vaccinated is because Wednesday is the day marked for routine children immunisation -- and not Covid immunisation -- all government-run dispensaries," she said.

A total of 50,382 people aged above 45 years were vaccinated against COVID-19 in the city on Tuesday.

The Delhi government on Wednesday received additional 2.25 lakh Covishield doses, taking the total available vaccine stock in the city to 6,25,660, including 23,000 doses of Covaxin.

"The present stock of Covishield and Covaxin vaccine available for 45 plus would last for 29 days and 1-2 days, respectively. Covaxin is only given to those who are due for their second dose," she said.

BJP abuses Kejriwal to evade giving answers on Covid vaccine availability: Sisodia

PTI
NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Thursday slammed the BJP and accused it of "abusing" Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to evade giving answers on Covid vaccine availability.

"Whenever asked where are the vaccines, the BJP leaders start abusing Kejriwal," the senior AAP leader said referring to BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra's press conference earlier in the day.

Patra attacked Kejriwal over vaccine procurement and COVID-19 other issues during his press conference.

"They do not seem to be concerned with availability of vaccines or the third wave of COVID-19. It seemed Patra was sent just to abuse Kejriwal," Sisodia said in an online briefing.

Asserting that the BJP-ruled central government has

"messed up" the Covid vaccination programme in the country, Sisodia alleged that vaccines were provided through the backdoor to private hospitals.

He sought answers from the BJP as to how private hospitals were getting vaccines at a time when vaccination centres were being closed in the country due to shortage of doses.

SNS

Unlock Delhi markets without further delay: CAIT to LG, CM

PTI
NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

Domestic traders body CAIT on Thursday wrote a letter to Delhi Lieutenant Governor Anil Baijal and Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, urging them to take cognisance of the declining positivity rate in the city and pass an "immediate order" to reopen markets.

The 15 lakh city traders, according to the Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT), have taken a "severe beating" due to the over-one-month-long lockdown period and are in "dire financial state".

"The combined efforts of the government and citizens of Delhi have had a significant impact on the Covid situation in Delhi and as per yesterday's health bulletin the positivity rate in Delhi has slipped around 1 per cent with a positive cases of about 500 only, which is a big relief from almost 35 per cent a month back," read the letter by Praveen Khandelwal, National Secretary General, CAIT.

"In view of the above, we request you to take immediate steps to unlock Delhi, which is the need of the hour, to ensure that commercial activities should start without any further delay," it added.

Delhi, which has been under strict lockdown since April 19 to combat the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, had started the unlock process from Monday by allowing the construction sector and factories to resume operations.

This, besides "avoiding spread of COVID-19", will ensure social distancing and give the hawkers and street vendors "every opportunity" to earn their livelihood, the traders body explained. It also recommended a mass sanitisation drive across Delhi markets by the MCD as markets are shut for over 60 days.

Emphasizing on the need and importance of vaccination, they also requested the authorities to set up vaccination camps in markets in collaboration with respective trade associations for employees and work force.

Not in favour of the old "odd-even" system of unlocking, which they said has been a "failure" in the past too, they have urged that markets should open every day based on wholesale-retail staggered timing format.

"The wholesale markets should have work timings from morning 10 am to evening 4 pm, whereas the retail markets should open from afternoon 12 pm to evening 7 pm," the CAIT suggested.

"All transport & Logistics also be allowed to function as per these timings rather than following the general rules of 'No Entry'... The Delhi Metro Rail services should be aligned with market opening timings," it said.

Further, it also noted that the decision to choose between wholesale and retail for classification of trade under any of the two formats should be left open to the markets.

While the night curfew should continue to be imposed from "10 pm to 5 am", in case of any increase in Covid cases post unlocking, according to the CAIT, the government might declare the concerned area as "containment zone" with applicable restrictions.

"In this way, any possible infection can be controlled, whereas on the other hand the economic and commercial activities can also take place," it explained.

For Delhi's hawkers and street vendors, who have been struggling for their livelihood due to the ongoing coronavirus-induced lockdown, the body recommended that they be moved into a special "Hawking Zone" or be stationed in government school premises, which are empty at the moment.

This, besides "avoiding spread of COVID-19", will ensure social distancing and give the hawkers and street vendors "every opportunity" to earn their livelihood, the traders body explained. It also recommended a mass sanitisation drive across Delhi markets by the MCD as markets are shut for over 60 days.

Emphasizing on the need and importance of vaccination, they also requested the authorities to set up vaccination camps in markets in collaboration with respective trade associations for employees and work force.

"We want to hold the AAP accountable for what has happened," Patra said, accusing it of hiding the real tally.

Addressing a virtual press conference, he noted that the



Delhi Police's Northern Range has, in collaboration with Jamia Hamdard University, launched a four-week training programme for 'Skill Development in Healthcare Sector' in Outer-North and Rohini under its 'YUVA' initiative on Thursday.



*Money was misused... not utilised properly. This resulted in shoddy work.
Those in charge of such work have minimum concern for the people.*

TRINAMUL YOUTH CONGRESS PRESIDENT ABHISHEK BANERJEE
IN A THINLY VEILED ATTACK ON SUVENDU ADHIKARI AND SISR ADHIKARI

3 rebel Punjab AAP MLAs join Congress in Capt's presence

CM induces them into party before leaving for Delhi to meet high command-constituted panel

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 3 JUNE

In a boost to the ruling Congress in Punjab ahead of the early 2022 Assembly polls, three rebel Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) legislators Thursday joined the party in the presence of Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh at a low-key event at the CM's residence.

These three dissident Punjab AAP Members of Legislative Assembly (MLAs) include Bhola MLA Sukhpal Khaira along with Bhadaur MLA Pirmal Singh and Maur MLA Jagdev Singh Kamal.

Khaira had served as Leader of the Opposition in the Punjab Assembly after getting elected on AAP ticket in 2017 polls. The two-time MLA had earlier quit the Congress in

December 2015 to join the AAP, which made him Leader of the Opposition.

But following his removal from the post by his party high command, Khaira resigned from the primary membership of the AAP in January 2019 and had also floated his own outfit, Punjabi Ekta Party. The two MLAs who joined the Congress with him were also part of the Punjabi Ekta Party.

The CM induced the three legislators into the Congress fold before going to Delhi for a meeting with the three-member panel which has been formed by the Congress central leadership to resolve the infighting in the party's Punjab unit.

"Chief Minister @capt_amarinderSingh before leaving for Delhi today welcomed former Leader of Opposition and his two AAP MLA colleagues namely Jagdev Singh Kamal, MLA Maur



and Pirmal Singh Dhaula, MLA Bhadaur into the party fold," the Punjab Congress tweeted.

The AAP's state president and Member of Parliament, Bhagwant Mann said Khaira had left the party about two years ago and since then he had formed his own party, but the people rejected him.

Mann said the AAP had been repeatedly requesting the Punjab Assembly Speaker for dismissal of Khaira from the Assembly, but he did not take any action against him allegedly at the behest of the government. The AAP leaders charged that "Khaira was just pretending to be benevolent to the people, but he had made his intention known by standing with the anti-Punjab party". They alleged, "Khaira had betrayed his family and the Panth devotees by standing with those responsible for the 1984 massacre."

Bholath legislator Khaira and two other rebel AAP MLAs to throw in their lot with the Congress party, Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) president Sukhbir Singh Badal said, "The cat is out of the bag".

"This only goes on to show that the Congress and AAP are essentially on the same page. Earlier Khaira, who had contested the 2017 Assembly elections on an AAP ticket after leaving the Congress, had formed the Punjab Ekta Party (PEP). Now all three of them are officially in the Congress party. I am sure my client will listen to him, Justice C Hari Shankar said.

The high court issued summons to Ramdev on the suit filed by Delhi Medical Association (DMA) and asked him to file response in three weeks and listed the matter for hearing on July 13.

Considerable time has passed since passing of alleged injurious statements. The

counsel says defendant no. 1 (Ramdev) continues to make statement. No injunctive order can be given without giving an opportunity to the plaintiff, especially in view of the objections. Issue summons on the suit, Justice Shankar said.

The court also issued summons to social media platforms Twitter and Facebook and Astha channel, who are made parties to the petition.

DMA, on behalf of its doctor members, submitted before the court that Ramdev's statement affects as Coronil medicine does not cure coronavirus and it is misleading. It has claimed a token damage of Rs 1 from him.

On being asked by the court as to how did this statement affect the association, senior advocate Rajiv Dutta, representing DMA, said it affects because this medicine does not cure coronavirus and this was a suit for civil rights of doctors.

The court said it cannot say as to whether Coronil is a cure or not and that it was something to be decided by medical experts.

The judge said he was "least concerned" with the association's argument that Ramdev was a powerful person having large number of followers. Ramdev is a person who doesn't have faith in allopathy. He believes everything can be cured by Yoga and Ayurveda. He may be right or wrong," he said.

He added that the court can understand it is argued his statements are affecting the public but here you say oh my God Ramdev has done some



thing. You people should be spending time to find cure for the pandemic instead of wasting the court's time.

On the point of locus of DMA to file the suit, Dutta said it was affecting the public and also the members of the association as the statements made in open affects and that Ramdev was calling this science fake.

To this, the judge said, If

I feel some science is fake. Tomorrow I will feel homeopathy is fake. Do you mean they will file a suit against me? I put in on twitter. You will say take down the Twitter account. It is a public opinion. I do not think your allopathic profession is so fragile, and added that it has to be tested on the touchstone of free speech.

The court said someone has a view that it is because of inefficacy of allopathic medicines that so many people have died and it was of the view that it comes under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution.

Senior advocate Rajiv Nayar, representing Ramdev, raised preliminary objection on the maintainability of the plea and argued that prima facie the suit was not maintainable as they are asking for an injunction and raising the ground of public good.

Dutta also said that Ayush Ministry had made a statement that Coronil was not a cure for COVID-19 and could not be advertised as such and had also asked Patanjali to give details after which Ramdev had clarified that it was an immunity booster.

The court noted that Ramdev has clarified and said with this clarification the entire grievance of DMA should have gone.

If this was mandatory on Patanjali (to give details and not to advertise) and if he acts in violation, it is for the Ayush Ministry to look into. Why are you carrying the torch, the court said.

DMA's counsel further claimed that Patanjali had made Rs 25 crore from Coronil sales, after it was touted as a cure for COVID-19 and that he has a vast following in the country.

The court said, "Is he to be blamed for people buying Coronil?" and suggested the association to file a public interest litigation instead of pursuing the suit.

Himachal to give preference to online booking for Covid jabs

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 3 JUNE

The Himachal Pradesh government will give preference to beneficiaries who have booked their slots online for Covid jabs as per the directions of the Union government.

A state health department official said the decision had been taken as self registration and online appointments by the beneficiaries were helpful in minimizing the vaccine wastage.

"The Covid vaccination centers are providing both online and onsite slots to the beneficiaries of age group 45 years or above, healthcare workers or frontline workers. Besides, directions have been given to the field staff to ensure that beneficiaries who have taken online appointments through the Cowin app should be given preference for availing vaccination over the walk-in clients," he added.

He stated that the officials had also directed that vaccination sites should have adequate sitting arrangements in the waiting area with appropriate social distancing so that elderly citizens do not have to stand in queues at the vaccination centers.

He further stated that the



people of age group of above 45 years who were unable to book their sessions because of unavailability of network and appropriate devices like smartphones or do not have knowledge of internet may come directly to the vaccination centers for onsite registration.

He urged the public to book their online appointments for vaccination through Cowin portal and added the onsite registration slots for the vaccination of 18-44 years would be available only in the tribal and remote areas.

"The health department has also issued clinical guidelines on diagnosis and management of diabetes in Covid

patients as patients with normal glucose levels have been seen to develop increased blood glucose levels (hyperglycemia).

Besides, the steroids given during the severe Covid complications also contribute to hyperglycemia in such individuals and therefore, stringent glycemic assessment and choice of drugs is a dynamic and ongoing process in these patients," he added.

He added out of the total deaths due to Covid in the state, 50 percent of the deceased had co-morbidities and out of these deaths with co-morbidities, diabetes mellitus contributed to 48.1 percent of the deaths.

Jai Ram concerned over HP's Covid death rate

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 3 JUNE

Himachal Pradesh chief minister Jai Ram Thakur on Thursday said a sharp decline in Covid cases has been noticed in the last 10-12 days in the state and death rate has also reduced but it is still not satisfactory.

After inaugurating a dedicated makeshift hospital at Bhangroti, in Mandi district, Thakur said there was a time when the active cases exceeded 40,000 but now the number had reduced to 11,000.

"If there is continuous decline in the Corona infection cases, the present dedicated health institutions for Covid care would be de-notified in a phased manner," he said while directing officials for capacity building to tackle the third wave of Covid-19.

He stated that to fight the third wave of Coronavirus, it was important to prepare a precise strategy and to get prepared beforehand.

"It is expected that the children are more vulnerable to the third wave of Covid and keeping in view the necessary health requirements of the children, all necessary arrangements are being made in the state.

As part of preparedness, health equipment and other facilities are being arranged in advance," the CM said.

He further stated that the vac-

cination programme for the age group of more than 45 years was going smoothly and after 15th June, vaccines will again be available for the 18 plus age group and the vaccination programme will further be accelerated.

He asked to chalk out a solid strategy to tackle Covid-19 in districts and to prepare civil hospitals of various subdivisions for managing Coronavirus effectively.

The CM said that Bhangrotu makeshift hospital having ultra-modern facilities will be helpful in fighting against Corona pandemic and once the pandemic was over, this hospital would be useful as a super specialty hospital to facilitate the people of the area.

"The government has done a commendable job in strengthening and expansion of health facilities in the state along with capacity building. As a result of effective management by the state government, there is no dearth of oxygenated beds and oxygen supply even when the highest number of Covid cases are being registered in Himachal," he stated.

Increase children wards ahead of 3rd Covid wave: Khattar to officials

CHANDIGARH, 3 JUNE

With medical experts predicting a third Covid-19 wave would impact children the most, Haryana Chief Minister, Manohar Lal Khattar, on Thursday directed the officers concerned to ramp up their health arrangements at the community health center (CHC) level along with increasing the number of children wards well in advance.

"Though now a downturn in the number of daily active cases has been seen but still Covid-19 appropriate behaviour should be followed religiously," said the Chief Minister while presiding over the meeting of deputy commissioners (DCs) held today. During the meeting, DCs apprised the CM about the strategies being adopted by them for combating the second wave. The DCs were directed to remain vigilant for the expected possibility of a third wave.

"If the need of making additional arrangement of beds and rooms is felt at CHCs, then the works regarding this should be made at the earliest," directed Khattar. The CM further directed that the number of oxygen beds should also be increased along with keeping the multidisciplinary teams conducting health checkups in villages on alert for better coordination.

SNS

'Modi govt guilty of criminal mismanagement of Covid vaccination'

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 3 JUNE

The Himachal Pradesh Congress on Thursday accused the Narendra Modi government of abandoning people of the country in Covid pandemic and said the Union government is guilty of "criminal mismanagement" of the vaccination campaign.

Mukesh Agnihotri, the leader of opposition in Himachal, said vaccination was the only protection in the midst of the raging Covid-19 pandemic and Modi government's vaccination strategy was a dangerous cocktail of blunders.

"The Central government has failed to plan vaccination campaigns for the people effectively and the government has deliberately created a 'digital divide', thereby slowing down vaccination.

The Central government has been willfully complicit in creating multiple pricing slabs' i.e. differential pricing, for the same vaccine that is provided



to the different states of the country.

He stated that Centre government's sponsored three price slabs for the same vaccine were a recipe for profiteering out of people's misery while the need of the hour is that the government must procure the vaccines and supply it free of cost to the states and private hospitals.

"Anything less is a huge disservice to India and its people," he said.

HP Congress chief Kuldeep Singh Rathore said as other countries started placing purchase orders for vaccines from May 2020, the Modi government failed India as the first order of vaccines was placed only in January 2021.

As per information available in public domain, Modi government and state governments have till date ordered only 39 crore vaccine doses for a total population of 140 crores so far.

Till 31 May, 21.31 crore vaccine doses had been administered but, only 4.45 crore Indians had received both the doses of Covid vaccine which was only 3.17 per cent of India's population, he said.

He stated that in the last 134 days, the average pace of vaccination was about 16 lakh vaccine doses per day and at this pace, it will take more than three years for us to vaccinate our adult population.

"If this is the case, then how will we be able to save our fellow citizens from the third wave of Corona, a question that the Modi government needs to answer. As our citizens are getting infected from Corona in the pandemic, the Central government is busy exporting vaccines and till date, 6.63 crore vaccines have gone to other countries which is a disservice to the nation," Rathore added.

Rathore added, The Congress leaders submitted a memorandum to Governor Bandaru Dattatreya and urged him to ensure free vaccination of all.

A plea has been moved in the Delhi High Court seeking stay on the phase II/III clinical trials of Covaxin COVID-19 vaccine on the 2-18 age group.

The application was moved in a petition filed in May for setting aside the permission granted by the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) to Bharat Biotech for conducting trials of its vaccine on children.

The petitioner, Sanjeev Kumar, has claimed in his application that while the issue was pending before the high court with notices issued to the Centre and Bharat Biotech, the trials have commenced from June.

He has said, in his plea, that since the court did not grant stay when it heard the matter, the government was going ahead with the trials.

Plea in Delhi HC to stay Covaxin trial on children

PTI
NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE



is being used on adults in India's ongoing COVID-19 vaccination drive.

Kumar, in his main petition, has raised an apprehension that the children who would be part of the trial could suffer adverse health or mental effects due to the testing of the vaccine on them.

He has claimed that the children, who would be the test subjects, cannot be termed as volunteers as they are not capable of understanding the consequences of the trial for consenting to the same.

Conducting the trial on healthy children would amount to "homicide", the petition has claimed and has sought criminal prosecution of the persons involved in such trials or those authorised to conduct the Health Ministry.

Covaxin, which has been indigenously developed by Bharat Biotech in collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), has become infructuous.

Uttarakhand govt may open Chardham Yatra in phased manner

PTI
DEHRADUN, 3 JUNE

The Uttarakhand government is considering a phased opening of the Chardham Yatra after Covid subsides and the coronavirus induced curfew is lifted.

It is being planned to open the Chardham Yatra in a phased manner if the pandemic subsides in the coming weeks

though nothing has been finalised yet. Tourism and Culture Minister Satpal Maharaj said on Thursday.

He had met Chief Minister Tirath Singh Rawat to discuss problems faced by the tourism industry due to the second wave of Covid.

In the first phase, the yatra will be opened for tourists of Chamoli, Rudraprayag and Uttarkashi districts where the

Gangotri and Yamunotri are located in Uttarkashi district.

"However, everything will depend on the Covid situation. A phased opening of the Chardham Yatra is possible only if the declining trend in Covid positivity and mortality rates continue and the curfew which is currently in force comes to an end," the minister said.

The ongoing Covid curfew in Uttarakhand is scheduled to

end on June 8 but certain restrictions may continue as it is likely to be lifted in a phased manner.



Rather than playing politics she should educate and enlighten herself with facts.

BJP SPOKESPERSON SAMBIT PATRA

THUMBNAILS



A Sikh priest shows the shell of a bullet that is said to have hit the Sikh holy book during Operation Blue Star, in Amritsar.

AGENCIES

Woman accuses MLA of rape: FIR has been lodged against ruling NPP MLA Thomas Sangma in Meghalaya, after a woman accused him of rape on the pretext of marriage.

PTI

Row over tweet: Mumbai Mayor Kishori Pednekar said a tweet from her Twitter which had triggered a controversy over use of objectionable language was posted by a Shiv Sena activist in a "fit of anger".

PTI

Stalin's tribute to DMK patriarch Karunanidhi

Tamil Nadu chief minister launches slew of welfare measures and schemes

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHENNAI, 3 JUNE



DMK party members pay tribute to their party founder and former chief minister Karunanidhi on his 98th birth anniversary, at Pollachi in Coimbatore on Thursday. ■ AGENCIES

Tamil Nadu chief minister M K Stalin today launched a slew of welfare schemes and other measures to mark the 98th birth anniversary of his father and late DMK patriarch M Karunanidhi.

In an official function held at the State Secretariat, Stalin launched the second phase distribution of ₹2,000 of the total ₹4,000 Covid financial assistance to all the rice ration cardholders in the state. As promised in the DMK's election manifesto, the chief minister launched the first installment of the Covid assistance scheme by distributing Rs 2,000 last month benefiting 2.09 crore ration cardholders involving a total outlay of Rs 4196.38 crore.

Stalin also launched distribution of a cash assistance of Rs 4,000 and a package of 10kg rice and 15 grocery items valued at Rs 1,000 to about 14,000 temple priests and workers who did not have a

guaranteed monthly salary.

He also launched a scheme to distribute Rs 25 lakh financial assistance to members of the judiciary and police personnel who had lost their lives due to Covid.

A scheme to distribute Rs 10 lakh financial aid to journalists who succumbed due

to Covid-19, besides a kit containing 14 grocery items to all rice card holders, were also launched by Stalin today.

He also presented welfare measures for the beneficiaries under the 'Chief Minister in your constituency' scheme to mark the occasion.

The DMK is celebrating

the birth anniversary of Karunanidhi with Mr Stalin at the helm of affairs of the State for the first time. The day began with Stalin, accompanied by senior party leaders and his Cabinet colleagues. Stalin later garlanded the statue and paid floral tributes to a decorated portrait of Karunanidhi at the party organ Murasoli's office in the city and at the DMK headquarters Anna Arivalayam.

The distribution of Covid-19 relief hamper, containing 14 essential commodities including wheat and sugar to beneficiaries was launched here on Thursday by chief minister Stalin.

The pandemic relief pack contains a kilo each of wheat, salt and rava and half kilo each of sugar and urad dhal. Tamarind and Bengal gram 250 grams each and mustard, cumin, turmeric and chilli powders, all 100 gram each are part of the pack.

Two tea packets (total 200 grams), a bathing soap and a bar of detergent also find a place in the bag.

Black money heist puts Kerala BJP in crisis

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,
3 JUNE

Reports regarding the investigation into the Kodakara black money heist case, appearing in the media, has put the BJP in Kerala in an uncomfortable situation. The sensational case has not only dented the image of the saffron party in Kerala, but has also reignited the internal feud among its leaders.

The party is in a tight spot after several party leaders were questioned by the police in connection with the Kodakara black money case. The Kodakara case has been a hot topic of discussion in Kerala as reports said Rs 3.5 crore in black money was brought for Assembly election campaigning.

The CPI-M has alleged that the BJP was planning to use the money to purchase votes for the recent Kerala Assembly elections. The BJP finds itself entangled in the case, after an RSS functionary and a former office-bearer of the Yuva Morcha reportedly confessed.

India calls for disengagement with China at Eastern Ladakh

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

India today reiterated that only an early completion of the disengagement between Indian and Chinese troops in Eastern Ladakh would lead to the restoration of peace and tranquillity in the border areas between the two countries.

"The process of disengagement remains incomplete.

The two sides have in the interim agreed that they would maintain stability on the ground and avoid any new incidents," Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said. He said India expected that neither side would do anything that was not in keeping with mutual understanding.

His comments assume significance since talks between the two sides, both at the diplomatic and military level, for disengagement have been stalled for quite some time.

The two sides had completed disengagement at the North and South banks of the Pangong Tso Lake, hoping of an early completion of the disengagement process.

Sharmila registers YSR Telangana Party with ECI

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD, 3 JUNE

YS Sharmila, the sister of Andhra Pradesh CM and YSR chief YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has registered her new party as YSR Telangana party with the Election Commission of India. Ms Sharmila who is the daughter of the late CM of united Andhra Pradesh YS Rajasekhar Reddy will float her new party formally on 9 July, the birth anniversary of her father. Not unlike her brother Ms Sharmila too is claiming the political legacy and popularity of her father but in Telangana, although she hails from Andhra Pradesh.

The Andhra Pradesh CM however, has not been too keen on the idea, eager to maintain cordial relations with the neighbouring state.

VACCINE-SEEKERS



People line up to have their Covid vaccine shots at the Champasari health centre in Siliguri on Thursday. ■ PULAK KARMAKAR

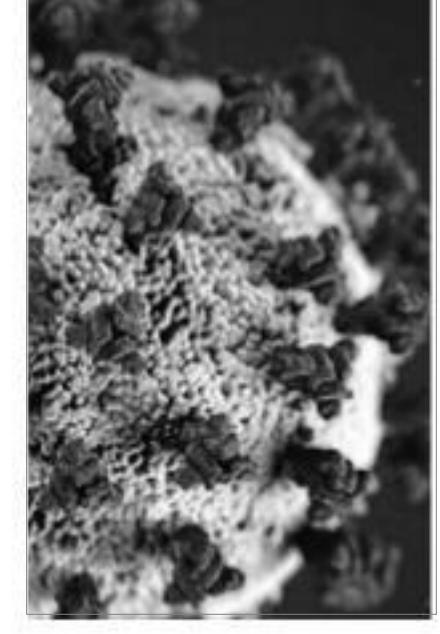
Health staff strength a worry in S Dinajpur

SRIKANTA THAKUR
BALURGHAT, 3 JUNE

As the second wave of Covid-19 revealed an unprepared and inadequate health infrastructure not only in the state, but across the country, the health department in South Dinajpur has already started work so as to remain prepared for the much-talked-about third wave of the virus likely to hit the country soon.

The health department has started developing infrastructure and the process of recruitment of doctors and nurses is also going on at a fast pace. However, officials have said that they have noticed that doctors and nurses are not very willing to work in Covid hospitals. "Even after the notification for such recruitment, only one doctor and a few nurses have agreed to join their new jobs. This has posed a big question mark on the plans to prepare the health infrastructure in the district," an official said.

The district health department had issued a notification for such recruitment on 20 May.



tal for Covid patients at the Balurghat Natya Utkarsh Kendra. The district health department, however, does not have the required number of doctors and nurses to treat a large number of patients in these beds.

"This fact has resulted in everyone wondering as to what kind of treatment can be provided to the patients, even after boosting the infrastructure," a source said.

The district health department had issued a notification for such recruitment on 20 May.

As per the government rules, there should be one nurse for every five patients, and there should be one doc-

Vaccine drive for 60+ population to resume

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BALURGHAT, 3 JUNE

The drive to administer the first dose of Covid-19 vaccine among people above 60 years of age is set to resume in South Dinajpur district on Friday morning, officials said. On the other hand, even though two doctors had agreed to work in Gangarampur, only one has joined duties so far.

According to officials, the district health office will resume the drive as fresh stock of the vaccines has arrived in the district. A total of 13 centers have been selected for the same, except for Gangarampur, Balurghat Hospital and Buniadpur ITI College.

Meanwhile, the vaccination drive for other categories, like businesspersons, transport workers, vegetable vendors etc and people above the age of 18 will also continue simultaneously, health officials have said.

According to the district health department, the tar-

get was to vaccinate around 213,000 people aged 45 to 58 in South Dinajpur district, of which around 81,000 people have been given the first dose. The remaining 62 percent have not yet been vaccinated. On the other hand, the target drive was earlier stopped due to a shortage of vaccines.

According to officials, the

district health office will

resume the drive as fresh

stock of the vaccines has

arrived in the district. A

total of 13 centers have

been selected for the same,

except for Gangarampur,

Balurghat Hospital and Buniadpur ITI College.

Meanwhile, the vaccination

drive for other categories, like businesspersons, transport workers, vegetable vendors etc and people above the age of 18 will also continue simultaneously, health officials have said.

According to the district health department, the tar-

MP urges Telecom Minister to ensure Internet in rural areas

DARJEELING, 3 JUNE

Darjeeling's BJP MP Raju Bista has sent a request to Telecom Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad, urging him to look into the lack of internet connectivity in border regions of Darjeeling and Kalimpong districts.

"I have requested him to instruct the concerned departments to increase the coverage and bandwidth of BSNL and other Indian mobile service providers in the region," Mr Bista said in a press release, where he attached a letter he sent to the minister and memorandums submitted to him by different organisations. Speaking about the issue, he said, "During the course of visiting various parts of my constituency, I have received many complaints from people living in rural areas, particularly Milikthung, Pokhrayabong valley, Jaldhaka-Bindu and Toley-Tangta region. They have highlighted how they do not have any cellular or broadband network connection and with many of these villages lying in the international border regions it forces them to use network from another country, as our domestic network are either very feeble or do not cater to the

region."

PTI

Southwest Monsoon makes onset over Kerala: IMD

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

After a delay of two days, the Southwest Monsoon made an onset over Kerala on Thursday, marking the commencement of the four-month rainfall season in the country, said Director General of the India Meteorological Department (IMD) Mrutunjay Mohapatra. The normal onset date for Southwest Monsoon over Kerala is 1 June. Southwest Monsoon is likely to advance into remaining parts of south Arabian Sea and some parts of central Arabian Sea, remaining parts of Kerala, Lakshadweep, some parts of Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, coastal and south interior Karnataka, Rayalaseema, and south and central Bay

of Bengal during the next two days, the IMD said.

Skymet, a private weather forecasting station, said Southwest Monsoon made an onset over Kerala on 30 May. However, the IMD said conditions were not ripe for declaring the onset of monsoon.

According to the IMD, three parameters need to be fulfilled for declaring the onset of the Southwest Monsoon over Kerala.

If after 10 May, 60 per cent of the 14 stations including Minicoy, Amini, Thiruvananthapuram, Kochi, Thirissur, Mangalore etc report rainfall of 2.5 millimetres or more for two consecutive days, the onset over Kerala can be declared on the second day, provided other two criteria are also in concurrence.

NOTICE INVITING BIDS FOR ROAD/ BRIDGE/ BUILDING WORKS

Executive Engineer, Bharwain Division, HP. PWD, Bharwain-177109 on behalf of Governor of Himachal Pradesh, invites online e-tenders on item rate basis from approved and eligible contractors registered in CPWD/HPPWD for the following works:-

Sl. No.	Name of Work	Estimated cost	Earnest money	Cost of documents	Time allowed for completion (Months)	Time & date of opening of technical bids	Class of contractor
1	C/O link road Jallow Di Bar to Kunet Rattian via Behimba in GP Bhaderkali km 0/0 to 5/0 (SH: C/O Retaining wall at RD 2/630 to 2/670) under MNP	110765/-	22200/-	500/-	Three months	11.30 AM on 29.06.2021	Class -C & D
2	C/O link road Jallow Di Bar to Kunet Rattian via Behimba in GP Bhaderkali km 0/0 to 5/0 (SH: P/L GSB, WMM & Tarring including C/O shoulders between RD 2/650 to 3/650) under MNP	1551450/-	30900/-	500/-	Six months	11.30 AM on 29.06.2021	Class -C & D
3	C/O & M/T link road from Harijan Basti Tinda Mundu from Lower Bhindia km 0/0 to 2/780 (SH: P/L GSB, WMM & Tarring including C/O shoulders between RD 2/0 to 2/500) under SCP	777224/-	15500/-	350/-	Six months	11.30 AM on 29.06.2021	Class -C & D
4	C/O & M/T link road from Nehri Khalsa to Rounki Behai km 0/0 to 2/780 (SH: P/L GSB, WMM & Tarring between RD 5/630 & 5/690 alongwith Wing walls) under SCP	1148245/-	23000/-	500/-	Six months	11.30 AM on 29.06.2021	Class -C & D
5	C/O & M/T link road Pangli to Maiari via Mayur Gwalasri Sanoh road including No. Bridge (portion) Gwalasri to Sanoh km 0/0 to 2/0 (SH: P/L GSB, WMM & Tarring i/c C/O Sub granular between km 0/500 to 1/500) under MNP	1530994/-	30500/-	500/-	Six months	11.30 AM on 29.06.2021	Class -C & D
6	C/O & M/T link road Harijan Basti Dandri to Kabirpanthian Govt. High School Takala km 0/0 to 3/0 (SH: P/L GSB, WMM & Tarring between km 1/750 to 2/250) under SCP	765497/-	15350/-	350/-	Six months	11.30 AM on 29.06.2021	Class -C & D
7	C/O link road Fatehpur to Jawal via Behimba km 0/0 to 7/0 (SH: C/O 2.00m span slab culvert at RD 5/638 & 5/690 alongwith Wing walls) under MNP	1531555/-	30400/-	500/-	Six months	11.30 AM on 29.06.2021	Class -C & D
8	C/O link road from Amb Salor road to village Mansoh Tikkri Mohalla Panga in GP Amb km 0/0 to 2/670 (SH: C/O 900mm dia (double row) Hume pipe culvert at RD 0/220 i/c Retaining walls) under MNP	907080/-	18200/-	350/-	Three months	11.30 AM on 29.06.2021	Class -C & D
9	C/O link road Harijan Basti Rejoph to Kuchhan via Palahar km 0/0 to 3/0 (SH: P/L GSB, WMM & Tarring i/c P/L 0/1 to 1/500) under SCP	777224/-	15500				

Fresh thinking

It is an oft-repeated truism that with global geopolitics in a state of flux, Indian foreign policy needs to be nimble, balance competing interests, and move away from legacy positions when in the national interest. The example which comes to mind immediately when applying this principle is India's stand on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. New Delhi, it must be remembered, has a history with the Palestinians, and their cause was championed unflaggingly by the Non-Aligned Movement under India's leadership. The MEA too has historically been sympathetic to the Palestinian cause and its mandarins ensured India voted in accordance with this leaning at various United Nations (UN) fora more often than not. The pivot towards Israel to ensure a semblance of equidistance from the parties to the conflict, which began under Prime Minister Narasimha Rao in conjunction with a marked departure from the moralism that had permeated the foreign policy establishment since Independence, has gathered pace over the past two decades.

Earlier this week, India abstained from voting on a resolution at the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) proposing to set up a Commission of Inquiry into violations surrounding the latest violence in Gaza, and "systematic abuses" in the Palestinian territories as well as inside Israel. More significantly, New Delhi omitted its stock phrase of expressing its "strong support" for the "just Palestinian cause" in its UNHRC statement. At the same time, India continues correctly to support a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict which has bedevilled West Asia for decades and taken a huge toll of innocent lives on both sides. Yet, it is important to underline that India has signalled its discomfort with a broad, international investigation - its critics term it an open-ended fishing expedition - into the alleged violations. There is some disquiet among traditionalists at this move. They argue that Israel ought not to be allowed to get away with what they term pre-emptive strikes, targeted assassinations, and a disproportionate military response. On the other hand, pro-Israel commentators see this as a fundamental and welcome shift in New Delhi's thinking which no longer equalises structurally opaque non-state actors such as Hamas with the democratic state of Israel. The longer-lasting outcome of India's fresh thinking in dealing with intractable global conflicts, however, is likely to be the recognition by the policy establishment that its actions need to exhibit the understanding that the nation-state is the only credible unit for international engagement and the time for maps to be redrawn by force of arms is over. Given the violent, state-seeking separatisms which India is dealing with in parts of the country, utilising every opportunity to articulate this position on the international stage would certainly be in the national interest. Ideally, such a shift could have been preceded by a bipartisan articulation by India's political class but in these fractious times, this may be impossible.

Class 12 onwards

It is deeply unfortunate that the critical public exam in Class 12 - the transition stage from high school to under-graduate studies - has been cancelled both by the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) and the Council for the Indian School Certificate Examination. On closer reflection, both entities had countenanced a damned-if-you do and damned-if-you don't situation in the midst of the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic. Had the exams been conducted, it would have rendered the teachers and the examinees and also, of course, the parents still more vulnerable to the potentially deadly affliction, not to forget the heightened tension. Hence the Prime Minister on Tuesday underlined what he calls the "foremost priority" to students, parents and teachers primarily to "put an end to the anxiety". The anxiety has been overwhelming and to the detriment of studies. That said, it is direly imperative for both the CBSE and the Council to firm up the praxis of evaluation throughout the country. The new system, to which both the teachers and the taught are strangers, must be concordant with a well-defined objective criteria and must be carried out in a time-barred manner. Colleges and institutions that offer technological and medical courses ought also to be agreeable to the change. Some schools may have completed the syllabus; many others alas have not. To that can be added the confusion caused by online instruction, which is no substitute for the conventional classroom lectures and is beyond the means of a sizable segment of students, notably in the rural areas. "The health and safety of the students," the Prime Minister told the meeting, "are of utmost importance and there will be no compromise on this aspect." The new matrix of evaluation must be firmed up with urgent despatch and with suitable emphasis on the course content and standard of evaluation. A "stressful situation" for students has perhaps been avoided. To go ahead with the exams would have deepened the crisis that confronts public health; to pursue a wholly revised format ought not to convey the impression that both the Central Board and the Council are engaged in cutting corners. Both entities, that have a duty towards the students, face an intricate task in the aftermath of the cancellation and the revised terms of evaluation... on which will depend admission to colleges, both the general and of the specialised variety. Not to put too fine a point on it, the cancellation and the revised format are unlikely to be universally accepted. The Prime Minister has a point when he contends that students should not be forced to appear for exams in such a stressful situation. At the same time, institutions that induct students on the basis of competitive exams - and not Class 12 evaluations - will have to consider afresh their procedures. If one set of exams pose a challenge, so would the other.

Recasting the Budget

In the changed circumstances, withdrawing Government support for the poor and marginalised may spell doom for them; rather, increasing allocation to MNREGA and provision of a small cash subsidy to BPL families may be necessary. Limited by our resources, we can emulate the US, which has committed \$1.9 trillion to Covid-19 relief



Belying the hopes of optimists, annus horribilis 2020 was not followed by an annus mirabilis but by annus magis (more) horribilis 2021. The havoc wrought by Covid-19, 2021 edition, has ruined countless lives; many have lost their loved ones and many have lost both their livelihoods and savings. Fear of the pandemic has made Indians stop or truncate most recreational activities like walks, sports, outings, tourism and even family celebrations. Lack of activity, combined with a fearful and claustrophobic atmosphere, has made people the world over lose their zest for life.

As the pandemic rages, the Government of India is at a loss; with little success in controlling the pandemic, the Government faces a decline in its popularity ratings. Public disappointment at the failure to anticipate the second wave of coronavirus infections has been aggravated by the tendency of ministers and bureaucrats to behave as if it was business as usual; routine denials of shortage of medical equipment and under-reporting of deaths continue while the Government persists with vanity projects. There is a disconnect with the public.

Coincidentally, Budget 2020 was presented at the time when the WHO was debating whether the Coronavirus outbreak was really a pandemic, and Budget 2021 was presented when Covid-19 infections in India were at their lowest ebb. No wonder Budget 2020 made no financial provision for the pandemic; Budget 2021 did make some noises about increasing the spending on health but as pointed out in "A better future" (The Statesman, 25 May) there was no real increase in the healthcare budget.

Now, with a perceptible decline in the intensity of the second wave of Coronavirus, the time appears ripe to reconsider Budget provisions in light of the changed circumstances since the time Budget 2021 was drafted. To elucidate, Budget 2021 was premised on a real GDP growth rate of 10.5 per cent, but with all agencies predicting a much-reduced GDP growth, Budget 2021 has lost its moorings. Also, revenue receipts from both direct and indirect taxes are likely to be much lower than the Budget Estimates, while expenses have already galloped ahead.

Budget 2021 postulated an increase in revenue receipts by 16.7 per cent; in similar circumstances last year, we had a shortfall of 5.5 per cent, against a projected increase in revenue receipts by more than 20 per cent. Probably, we should scale down our estimate of the rise in revenue receipts to a more realistic figure or in the alternative adopt some novel measures for raising additional revenue. Necessarily, we also have to provide for upgradation of our healthcare services and infrastructure to interdict the third wave of Covid-19 infections, which is said to be lurking on the horizon.

Currently, a number of problems befall the economy. There has been a perceptible decline in economic activity since January 2021 and after coming down to 6.52 per cent in January 2021 the unemployment rate has been rising relentlessly, currently touching a weekly average of 14.73 per cent. Rural India is gasping from another round of reverse labour migration and a pronounced rise in coronavirus infections. The rampaging cyclones and the ongoing farmers' agitation have compounded the problem. The net effect has been that more than 23 crore people have been pushed back into poverty.

Budget 2021, drafted in better times, had reduced the allocation for MNREGA from the RE of Rs 1,15,500 crore to Rs 73,000 crore. After spending Rs 42,617 crore on social assistance programmes in FY 2020-21, the expenditure proposed on social assistance programmes in FY 2021-22 was a paltry Rs 9,200 crore. However, in the changed circumstances, withdrawing Government support for the poor and marginalised may spell doom for them; rather, increasing allocation to MNREGA and provision of a small cash subsidy to BPL families may be necessary.

Limited by our resources, we can emulate the US, which has committed \$1.9 trillion to Covid-19 relief encompassing five major cash-transfer programmes, including \$1,400 to Americans earning up to \$75,000, an additional \$300 a week in unemployment benefits up to September 6,

and assistance for rent and health care and a child allowance of \$250 to \$300 a month per child.

Education is a sector hit badly by the Covid-19 pandemic. Academic session 2020-21 has been washed out by the ravages of the first and second waves of the pandemic and the third wave, if it comes, may pose a threat to academic session 2021-22. Taking no chances, an appropriate and adequately funded strategy for promoting online learning is required. Finding money for this exercise may be difficult from the funds allocated for education, since allocation for education has been reduced from Rs 99,311 crore of last year to Rs 93,224 crore this year.

Moreover, Central and State Governments are spending less than 2.6 per cent of GDP on education, as against the goal of 6 per cent visualised by National Education Policy.

The Finance Minister is a votary of doing things in bits and pieces; after Budget 2019, every week the FM announced some significant concessions, and after partial withdrawal of the lockdown on 1 June 2020, the FM announced stimuli measures every week. It would, however, be better if the FM recasts some elements of Budget 2021 at one go. As it is, the bits and pieces approach adopted last year led to increased spending, without a commensurate decline in expenses. Consequently, the fiscal deficit for FY 2020-21 ballooned to Rs 18.5 lakh crore or 9.5 per cent of GDP, as against the budgeted figure of Rs 7.96 lakh crore, or 3.5 per cent of GDP. This un-budgeted, huge fiscal deficit has resulted in the Wholesale Price Index rising by 10.5 per cent in April 2021.

Significantly, the fiscal deficit of FY 2021-22 is pegged at 6.8 per cent of the GDP, a tidy figure of Rs 15.06 lakh crore, which is likely to be exceeded should things continue at their current pace. This would not have been a cause for worry if the economy was expanding fast enough, which is not the case now.

By persisting with a large fiscal deficit, in addition to inflation, we also risk a downgrade in

sovereign ratings which would drive away international investors. The IMF has also warned us about our rising level of debt.

Moreover, India's debt to GDP ratio which was 66.5 per cent in 2014 has risen to 99 per cent in 2020. Most importantly, a rise in the fiscal deficit would lead to further inflation, which would be disastrous for the economy.

A three-pronged approach is required to garner resources to finance the additional expenditure, indicated above, without increasing the fiscal deficit in Budget 2021. Firstly, we could identify the items of expenditure in Budget 2021 which may be carried forward to next year. Secondly, we may prune the allocation for Central Sector Schemes and Centrally Sponsored Schemes which has increased to Rs 14.33 lakh crore in FY 2021-22, from Rs 12.28 lakh crore in FY 2020-21. As discussed in these columns, most of the evergreen Central Sector Schemes and Centrally Sponsored Schemes are dysfunctional and a drain on our scarce resources. Thirdly, we can augment revenue collection by introducing well-thought-out taxes on wealth and inheritance.

A word of caution is in order. Pessimism is on the rise, according to CMIE, only 5 per cent of the population expects a rise in their income as opposed to 35 per cent in January 2021.

Purely monetary measures to kickstart growth have run their course. Reducing the repo rate further would only fuel inflation. We can lighten the gloomy atmosphere by launching universal free vaccination with an adequate stock of vaccines and put 'sabka saath sabka vikas' in practice. Only a country free from the dread of the pandemic can move ahead.

We should also understand that we cannot rescue our economy by unbridled spending, financed by deficit financing. A fiscal deficit is nothing but a debt to be repaid by future generations; US politician and author, Richard Lamm, has beautifully explained the ills of fiscal deficit: "Christmas is the time when kids tell Santa what they want and adults pay for it. Deficits are when adults tell Government what they want and their kids pay for it."

Avoiding profligacy and spending wisely and frugally should be our leitmotif.

A MEMBER OF THE **ANN**
ASIAN VOICES

Licence to plunder

Construction continues to boom in Kathmandu Valley and across the country, with ambitious plans to build smart cities and towns and mega infrastructure. Over the past three decades, the building boom in Nepal has driven illegal and unregulated sand and gravel mining business at the cost of the environment. Excessive excavation of riverbeds and hillsides, environmental experts say, has increased the threat of environmental hazards such as soil erosion, flooding and landslides and groundwater depletion.

Besides altering natural water systems and hill slopes, the indiscriminate sand and gravel mining has also killed people, affected livelihoods and made the ecology unstable. But at a time when environmental concerns should have guided government policies, the Oli administration over the weekend announced a plan to extract construction materials and export them.

First things first. It is common knowledge that for a long time now, illegal and unregulated sand and gravel businesses have been allowed to operate freely in the country with protection from politicians, local authorities and the police. Journalists have been attacked and threatened by mining mafias, locals have been silenced, and activists have also been murdered. And although the government has

THE KATHMANDU POST
issued a slew of standards for extraction, they remain primarily on paper as mines operate unmonitored and guarded by goons across the country. The consequences are visible for everyone to see and in more detail, in satellite imagery; but rather than alarm the government, which should have introduced sterner implementation of guidelines and launched a massive crackdown on illegal operators, the announcement from the finance minister as part of his budget presentation seeks to overturn the 2014 ban on the export of river and mine-based construction materials to support the interests of a few.

The outrageous announcement erodes years of conservation efforts at the stroke of a pen. It is nothing but a ploy to legalise illegal mines by handing out licences to plunder. Minister Bishnu Prasad Poudel, while announcing the plan, had said that based on an environmental impact assessment, mine-based stones, pebbles and sand can be exported to minimise the trade deficit, but we know very well by now how environmental impact assessments are mere paperwork with no real scientific scrutiny, or the mining wouldn't have become more rampant after the local-level elections in 2017 which saw more people with ties to the construction and mining business come to power. Besides the conflict of interest of elected officials, conservationists have rightly pointed out how a parallel plan in the new budget offers concession on importing materials required to construct a ropeway for ferrying construction materials from the mining site to the export point reeks of policy corruption. The demand for sand and gravel will undoubtedly grow as construction picks up pace no sooner than the pandemic situation we are in sees some respite. It is a lucrative business, which makes sand and gravel one of the most valuable contraband. But we cannot wait for an ecological disaster to change our course because the damage to the environment caused by unscientific and unmonitored mining is irreversible. We are mining the materials faster than the river can replenish them.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

editor@thestatesman.com

Centre for Ego Studies

SIR, Since the election results were announced on May 2nd, and the new government was sworn in, thrills and chills that began since December during the election campaign, still continue unabated. Instead, the complete focus should have been on procurement of vaccines, oxygen cylinders and hospital beds in order to

fight the surging Covid crisis. While teaching at the university I often told my colleagues that the one Centre almost all universities in the world lacked was a Centre for Ego Studies. The very recent charade of the Chief Secretary of West Bengal being asked to show cause and taken to task for not attending a meeting chaired

by the PM and also for keeping the PM waiting for 15 long minutes, is not just bizarre but inexplicably ridiculous, though this also gestures towards an invidious agenda. Chief Secretary Alapan Bandopadhyay must have been thanking his stars and his parents for choosing his birth date with such brilliant foresight. I wonder the

extent to which he could have been humiliated if he had said, another five or even one year of service to complete. Resignation would have been the last and most inconvenient option for those who have to earn their livelihood by disbursing their professional responsibilities with dedication. But who knows, when the back is pushed to the wall, one can well step forward with a fearless mind. Right now we need to focus on the plight of the people whose homes have been submerged under the swirling waters. These are the people who are battered by cyclones, poverty, pangs of hunger, lack of basic facilities such as homes, toilets, drinking water, food, medicines, education and jobs. Instead of trying to alleviate this persistent national problem, which is no less than any mammoth natural disaster such as cyclone-

RIGHT CALL

SIR, A very pragmatic and correct decision has been taken with regard to CBSE Class 12 examinations. Cancellation of examinations was of utmost importance. When Covid-19 surfaced in March 2020, the situation was not conducive for anything. It was not expected that the situation would not be conducive in 2021 also. But the prevailing conditions suggest that the situation may be the same in 2022 also. The only ray of hope is that before that the entire population gets vaccinated. In the present situation, examinations not only for the students of CBSE Class 12 but also for all others need to be cancelled. More so, as children are said to be susceptible in the third wave. To make the matters worse mucormycosis (black fungus) has started playing a devastating role. This is a matter of grave concern.

Yours, etc., KV Seetharamaiah, Hassan, 2 June.

es and earthquakes, the advantaged heads of power are absurdly targeting a soft option, Chief Secretary Alapan Bandopadhyay, was merely doing his duty of accompanying the CM in order to survey and assess the disaster-hit areas. Imagine the fracas that would have resul-

ted if without the consent of the CM, Alapan Bandopadhyay had desisted from accompanying the CM and had sat back to attend the PM's meeting, waving off the CM to carry on with the rest of the survey work on her own!

Yours, etc., Sanjukta Dasgupta, Kolkata, 4 June.



GAUTAM BHATTACHARYA

Recently in the context of granting quota to 'Marathas' in educational institutes and jobs of the Maharashtra government, the Supreme Court asked for how many generations would reservations continue? The observation of the apex court is like a metaphor: it's just not about asking how long the reservations would continue but once a person has availed the benefits of quota, how many of his successive generations should be eligible for such affirmative action?

A little boy A, coming from a poor middle-class family of a district in Bengal, was selected for admission in the Zilla School run by the State Government in the 1950s. His father, whose serene lifestyle in the village was shattered by partition, had to struggle all through after migration to this side of the border. However, he rightly realised that the best that he could do for his son was to procure a Caste Certificate for him that his family was entitled to. This would enable his child to get reasonably good education in a government school, almost free.

Since seats were limited, admission in the Zilla School was not that easy in those days. However, A got a berth in the reserved quota. He was diligent and passed the Higher Secondary in first division. He took admission to BA honours in a prestigious government college at Calcutta against a reserved quota. After graduation he did not have much option but to try for a government job. He had seen with his parents how the settled life of millions could get unsettled by one political decision.

He got a job in the Assistant Grade of the Government of India under reserved quota and was posted in a ministry at Delhi. A was liked by his officers because of his sincerity and he got promotions to the subsequent grade in reserved quota, bypassing his batchmates, till the stage he reached the Group-A grade.

His batchmates coming from non-reserved categories always envied him for his early promotions. At the time of retirement, A reached the level of Director in a Ministry. He had his own house at CR Park in Delhi.

All his children studied in prestigious Missionary Schools and colleges of Mumbai. However, his son after graduation in Commerce wanted to study management in one of the IIMs. He was good at his studies and was attending expensive tutorial classes to prepare himself for admission through CAT. Here his Caste certificate came to help him. He made it into IIM Bangalore on his second

Affirmative action for the creamy layer



in IIT Kharagpur against the reserved quota and the daughter got the benefit of reservation for entry in a leading medical college of Delhi. After graduation, the son decided to appear for the Civil Services Examination and in his second attempt, he made it into the IAS against the reserved quota vacancies. He was allotted the Maharashtra cadre.

He was an honest officer and was reasonably successful in his career and had also married well. He possessed a posh flat in Navi Mumbai and a house in Pune. Also, he inherited lots of property from his in-laws, who belonged to an upper caste business family.

All his children studied in prestigious Missionary Schools and colleges of Mumbai. However, his son after graduation in Commerce wanted to study management in one of the IIMs. He was good at his studies and was attending expensive tutorial classes to prepare himself for admission through CAT. Here his Caste certificate came to help him. He made it into IIM Bangalore on his second

attempt against reserved quota.

The question that comes is when the Constituent Assembly of India had debated on the affirmative actions that could provide adequate representations in education and employment to historically disadvantaged groups, did they have this third generation in mind? Can they be treated as still belonging to disadvantaged groups by any sense of the term?

The Sattanathan Commission (1971) appointed by the Tamil Nadu Government, first recommended that the "creamy layer" from the scheduled categories should be excluded from reservation from civil posts in order to take the benefits of affirmative action of the State to the lowest strata of the identified groups. However, no government has ever thought of implementing these recommendations except for reservation of OBCs where some upper limit of family income was notified from time to time in order to make one eligible for reserved quota vacancies.

A five-judge Bench of the Supreme Court observed in the M.

Nagraj Case (2006) that quota benefits should be accessible to the weakest of the weak of the identified groups and not to be snatched away by members of the group who are in the top creamy layer. The Nagraj verdict was also validated by the apex court in the Jarnail Singh vs Lachhmi Narain Gupta case (2018).

The interested lobbies who do not want the government to go ahead with the Creamy Layer concept in SC/ST reservation always say that such demands should come from the beneficiary groups and those who are outside that group have no moral right to interfere in the matter. This logic is self-defeating as the most vocal amongst the Dalits and Tribes are those who have already got the benefits of affirmative action and obviously want such benefits to perpetuate for generations to come in their strata.

Though the Supreme Court observed that it will not be possible to uplift the weaker sections if the creamy layer in that group bags all the coveted jobs, perhaps the issue is

too sensitive from the point of view of vote-banks for any ruling party to act on. Government of India, therefore, has asked the Supreme Court to reconsider its verdict in the Jarnail Singh case with respect to applicability of the creamy layer principle for SC/ST reservations.

Perhaps the Government wants the issue to be sorted out in its own course over time. As A in the instance that we cited, did not get his son admitted in government school and his son, in turn, had no need to avail the benefits of Caste Certificate for schooling and for graduate studies of his children, a day may come, may be a hundred years from today, when reserved categories may not need reservation in government educational institutions and government jobs. Till then, political parties feel, let's keep our eyes closed on the matter, no matter what the apex court says or no matter what justice demands.

The writer is a former civil servant who retired in the grade of Additional Secretary to the Government of India.

100 YEARS AGO

OCCASIONAL NOTE

The Hun - using the term in the strictly technical sense employed by the ex-Kaiser when despatching his famous contingent to China twenty years ago - has ceased, in the meantime, to be formidable in the field, but he remains a bugbear in the industrial arena, even as he was before the war. The greatest compliment ever paid to individual prowess was the habit of the nurses and mothers of past generations to quiet troublesome children by using the names of certain conquerors, or pirates, or both - the dividing line used to be rather slender, and possibly still is - assuring their charges that they would infallibly be carried off by these worthies if they did not behave themselves. The role played by Bonaparte in the British nurseries of a century and a quarter ago is now filled by the Germans in the industrial nurseries where so much play and so little work goes on. The national mentors before the war were constantly holding them up to the admiration and imitation of the British workman, and our telegraphic columns during the past few weeks have contained frequent references to the same subject, very much in the ancient vein. The special cable which we publish today recurs to it, and draws an impressive contrast between the spectacle of British apathy and German industry - "working overtime to pay their debts and capture the world's trade."

NEWS ITEMS

SEQUEL TO LYON'S RANGE DACOITY

Mr. Justice Newbould and a special jury disposed of the case of Ahmed Shah and his wife, Noreen Shah, at the High Court Sessions yesterday. In this case both the accused were charged with receiving stolen property, the allegation being that Rs 34,000 in small notes, a portion of the property stolen from the Chartered Bank in the course of the dacoity committed at Lyon's Range, was found buried in the compound of Sheriffs Lane, where the accused lived. This amount was found during the second search of the house by the police. The jury returned a divided verdict in the proportion of 8 to 1. They found Ahmed Shah guilty, but Noreen Shah not guilty. Ahmed Shah sentenced to three years' rigorous imprisonment while Noreen was acquitted.

ACTION AGAINST CALCUTTA BARRISTER

The hearing of the case instituted against Mr. P. Banerji, of the Calcutta Bar, by a landowner named Tulsidas Burman under circumstances already reported, was resumed yesterday afternoon before Mr. P.B. Chakraborty, Sub-Deputy Magistrate of Sealdah. Mr. J.N. Roy Chaudhuri, vakil, appeared for the complainant, and SK Sen, counsel, appeared on behalf of Mr. Banerji. Johar Lal Mullick, a broker, said he was asked by the complainant to find out a lessee for 600 bighas of land situated on the riverside at the Botanical Gardens. Witness settled matters with the accused, and Rs 10,000 was advanced by a cheque to the complainant by Mr. K.K. Mitter, solicitor for the accused. As no other witness for the prosecution was present the hearing was adjourned.

AGITATION IN THE TEA GARDENS

Presiding at the Assam dinner, Mr. McMorran said that European members of the Legislatures had the duty and privilege to cooperate with their Indian colleagues in solving India's problems, the most pressing of which was to counter the non-cooperation movement. He could not protest too strongly against the deliberate attempts to disturb the harmony hitherto existing between employers and workers in the tea districts. He hoped that the Government of India would deal energetically with the movement, which would benefit nobody and which would bring loss to the workers as well as to the employers. He trusted that tea growers would unitedly resist the present unreasonable demands, which were not economic but political. He urged the need in the present depression to restrict production and improve the quality of tea.

SEDITION CASE AGAINST BUDDHIST MONK

Rangoon, Je 3
In the case against U. Ottama, a Buddhist monk, the hearing of the prosecution witnesses' evidence, which has been proceeding before the District Magistrate, Maubin, for the past few weeks, concluded yesterday. The accused, in reply to the court in the course of his examination, admitted uttering certain words in his speeches at Dedaye, but not all that the prosecution said. He denied having preached hatred against the Government or anybody. He preached on national welfare, education religion and unity. The accused replied in similar terms in regard to his speeches delivered at Sukalat and Tamatakaw. He finally denied having committed any offence. The magistrate promised to pass orders on Monday.

From Tulsa to Floyd, a bitter legacy

MAHIR ALI

Last week the United States marked the first anniversary of the very public murder of George Floyd. The inescapable brutality of the police killing sparked protests on an unparalleled scale that were echoed far from American shores in other countries with a legacy of racist violence.

This week's commemoration revolves around the centenary of the Tulsa massacre, which has been described by a local historian as an 'American Kristallnacht'. On May 31-June 1, 1921, Greenwood, a thriving African-American section of the segregated Oklahoman town, was razed to the ground.

Greenwood's relative prosperity led it to being dubbed the 'Black Wall Street' — a red rag to the white supremacist bull that dominated Tulsa. The racists needed an excuse to live out their fantasies. They found it in a non-event.

Dick Rowland, a 19-year-old African American shoeshine boy in downtown Tulsa, needed to empty his bladder. He headed for the only nearby facility for blacks, in what was known as the Drexel Building. He apparently tripped as he entered the elevator, and inadvertently touched the arm or shoulder of the 17-year-old elevator operator, Sarah Page.

She screamed, and Rowland sprinted out of the building. Someone called the police, and Rowland was subsequently arrested. The local afternoon rag, the Tulsa Tribune, published a lurid report the following day, alleging a sexual assault, and



an incendiary editorial headlined 'To Lynch Negro Tonight'.

A burgeoning mob thirsting for vengeance thronged to the city courthouse. A much smaller contingent of black World War I veterans turned up to protect Rowland. They were turned away, but as they were leaving

a shot was fired — in anger, or perhaps accidentally. That's when all hell broke loose, and 16 hours later Greenwood was a smouldering ruin.

Scott Ellsworth, the aforementioned historian, says the first time he saw a photograph of the aftermath, "it looked just like Nagasaki or

Hiroshima or Frankfurt". The hotels, cinemas, clinics, pharmacies and groceries were all gone. So were most of the churches. At least 300 people were killed, but the death toll is disputed.

A substantial proportion of the community simply disappeared. Some fled to neighbouring states, but the fate of others remains unknown. There were bodies floating down the Arkansas River, and mass graves are still being unearthed 100 years later. The atrocity included the first instance of an American city being bombed from the air, as biplanes dropped incendiary turpentine shells on to buildings and streets in Greenwood. (The napalm indiscriminately showered on Vietnam had not yet been invented.)

To their credit, the Tulsa sheriff and his black deputy spirited Rowland safely out of the state, and the charges against him were dropped a few months later. Page, the supposed victim, wrote a letter exonerating him. It has even been claimed that the two of them were not only well acquainted, but intended to defy the law against interracial marriage.

Be that as it may, what cannot be denied is the continuum between the Tulsa massacre and the deaths of so many others before and since the cold-blooded murder of Floyd. The main culprit has been found guilty — which in itself is an unusual judicial outcome, given that most police officers continue to go scot-free after killing black citizens. But the systemic racism that Joe Biden acknowledges remains pretty much undiminished.

Of course, the Tulsa massacre itself did not come out of the blue. Embedded in it were the entire legacy of slavery — the perpetuation of which was a key motivation for the war of independence — and the white supremacist back-lash that followed its bitterly contested abolition and accompanied the brief triumph of the late 19th-century Re-cons-truction.

It comes as no surprise to discover that the Ku Klux Klan used the Tulsa massacre as a recruiting tool — or that Adolf Hitler and the Nazis looked upon Jim Crow as a role model.

The Tulsa massacre was effectively wiped out from history, referred to in hushed tones by white families as a 'riot' or 'race riot' rather than a pogrom, and edited out of conversations by black families when children were around. Most descendants of the victims and survivors knew next to nothing about it until they were adults.

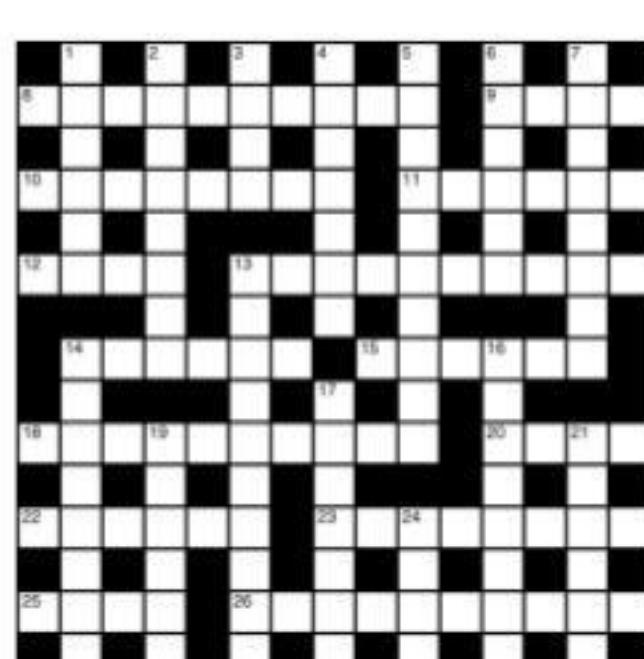
The USSR began filling up the 'blank pages of history' in the Gorbachev era. It's taken longer in the US. Marking the "solemn centennial", President Biden has called on "the American people to reflect on the deep roots of racial terror ... and recommit to the work of rooting out systemic racism".

The stated intent is admirable, even if it comes from someone who had no qualms about befriending segregationist fellow senators such as Strom Thurmond. Whether it is anything more than lip service to a worthy cause remains to be seen. But the alternative is writ large in the living history of the United States of America.

Dawn/ANN

NO 28932

CROSSWORD



YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

ACROSS

- 8 Spools trouser fabric, introducing drop of antique liqueur (10)
- 9 Man's sound? It must be the armour (4)
- 10 Change brings in tenor in excellent piece by Gilbert and Sullivan (8)
- 11 Left it in care of former editor (6)
- 12 Sudden attack has one leaving Italian city (4)
- 13 Delay with sheep jumping? One doesn't need jumping sheep (10)
- 14 British attracted to authentic German playwright (6)
- 15 Police appearing after travel document trimmed? That's sticky (6)
- 18 Expert on Muslim leader brought into court (10)
- 20 No expression of contentment from
- 22 White companions deserted force in conflicts (6)
- 23 It helps one remember being churlish about Caesar's opening comment (8)
- 25 End of forest area stripped by fire, ultimately - ash? (4)
- 26 I will participate in request, not against making a start (10)

DOWN

- 1 Middle of exam, and confused over capital of Uruguay — an exotic place (6)
- 2 Discrepancy, note, in serving of caviare (8)
- 3 Significant figure seen in piece of currency I promoted (4)
- 4 Soccer team players are in Paris? I questioned commitment (7)
- 5 Cricketer initially cross about beer, having received nothing (5,5)
- 6 I'm a derogatory comment as intended by a prankster? (6)
- 7 Source of red and white? Red and navy, I fancy (8)
- 13 Regarding education, second option (dropping English) will receive stick (10)
- 14 Intellectual work degraded during economic success (8)
- 16 Notice FT is torn up, producing bits of paper (8)
- 17 Was a number of ships required? Try I saw three ships, perhaps (7)
- 19 Long document beginning to support belief system (6)
- 21 American writer revealing name of apostle forgotten Bible (6)
- 24 University to veto operating system (4)

NOTE: Figures in parentheses denote the number of letters in the words required. (By arrangement with The Independent, London)



Stock markets remained firmly in the grip of bulls ahead of the RBI policy announcement on Friday.

S RANGANATHAN
HEAD OF RESEARCH, LKP SECURITIES

THUMBNAILS

HDFC Bank plan: Ahead of the World Environment Day on 5 June, private sector lender HDFC Bank on Thursday announced its plans to become carbon-neutral by 2031-32. As part of this initiative, the bank is looking at reducing its emissions, energy, and water consumption. It will continue to incorporate and scale up the use of renewable energy in its operations. "As one of the largest banks in the country, I think the onus is on us to be not just a socially responsible corporate but also environmentally conscious," its group head (CSR, business finance and strategy, administration and infrastructure) Ashima Bhat told reporters. PTI

TCS target: India's largest IT firm Tata Consultancy Services on Thursday said it plans to reduce its absolute greenhouse gas emissions across Scope 1 and Scope 2 by 70 per cent by 2025 (over 2016 base year), and achieve net-zero emissions by 2030. The company has set forth this new carbon reduction goal after having achieved the previous target of reducing its specific carbon footprint by half by 2020 (versus baseline year FY2008), ahead of schedule, TCS said in a statement. PTI

PhonePe users: Digital payments platform PhonePe on Thursday announced that it has crossed the 300 million lifetime registered users milestone. The company reported 125 million monthly active users (MAU) and an annualised TPV run-rate of over \$390 billion in May 2021. Its merchant network also continues to grow rapidly across India, and now boasts of over 20 million offline merchants across 11,000 towns and talukas in India, said a release. SNS

Cognizant's Covid aid: Leading IT company Cognizant, in a Press statement issued on Thursday, announced its nationwide drive to vaccinate more than 650,000 associates, their families, support teams and continue delivery of life-saving supplies to worst hit communities, including 1000 oxygenated beds, ventilators, and vaccinations through \$8.5 million (approximately Rs 60 crore) in Covid relief funding. SNS

Motovolt tie-up: To celebrate World Bicycle Day, which falls on 3rd June 2021, Motovolt Mobility Pvt Ltd, an electric mobility company, has tied up with Global Assurance as an assistance partner for their range of smart electric cycles. Global Assurance will be providing cycle protection to riders, said a Press release. SNS

Internet users: The number of active Internet users in the country is likely to grow nearly 45 per cent to 900 million by 2025 compared to 622 million as of last year, an IAMAI-Kantar Cube report said. PTI

Steel makers up prices of HRC, CRC by ₹4,000/ton

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

Leading domestic steel makers have hiked the prices of hot rolled coil (HRC) and cold rolled coil (CRC) by up to Rs 4,000 and Rs 4,900 per ton, respectively, industry sources said today.

After the price revision, a ton of HRC will cost Rs 70,000-71,000 while the buyers will get CRC at Rs 83,000-84,000 per ton.

The price revision has been made in the last two days, the sources said.

HRC and CRC are flat steel used in industries such as auto, appliances and construction. Hence, any rise in steel prices impacts the prices of vehicles,

Sensex, Nifty surge to record highs

Rupee snaps its three-day losing streak

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 3 JUNE

Equity market benchmarks rose to fresh lifetime highs today after two days of muted trade as banking, finance and infra stocks saw hectic buying ahead of RBI's monetary policy decision. A rebounding rupee added to the momentum, with mid-cap and small-cap gauges outperforming the benchmarks.

The 30-share BSE Sensex opened strong and carried the gains through the day to finish 382.95 points or 0.70 per cent higher at 52,232.43 points. The index surpassed its previous closing record of 52,154.13 points, hit on 15 February this year.

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► Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty soared 114.15 points or 0.73 per cent to end at its lifetime peak of 15,690.35 points.

day, with investors expecting the central bank to continue with its accommodative stance while keeping a watchful eye on inflation.

Expectations of vaccinations being ramped up coupled with capex programmes is likely to improve credit growth, he added.

All BSE sectoral indices ended in the positive terrain, with consumer durables, realty, capital goods, oil and gas, bankex and finance rallying up to 4.44 per cent each.

Broader BSE mid-cap and small-cap indices rose 1.04 per cent each.

World stocks took a breather ahead of the crucial US payrolls data which will give cues on the economic recovery as well as broader inflation.

Elsewhere in Asia, bourses in Shanghai and Hong Kong ended in the red, while Tokyo and Seoul finished with gains.

Equities in Europe were also trading with losses in mid-session deals.

International oil benchmark Brent crude was trading 0.18 per cent lower at \$71.22 per barrel.

The rupee snapped its three-day losing streak and closed 18 paise higher at 72.91 against the US dollar.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

Former power secretary Sanjeev Nandan Sahai, who virtually made a last-minute entry into the list of candidates, has been selected as the new chairman of oil regulator PNGRB, sources said.

A search committee, headed by V.K. Saraswat, member (S&T), NITI Aayog, picked up Sahai, a 1986 batch IAS officer who retired as secretary in ministry of power on 31 January this year, after interviews on Wednesday, three sources with knowledge of the matter said.

Following this, Sahai was approached and he was included on 30 or 31 May, they said.

"He was last to be interviewed by the committee on Wednesday," a source said.

Along with Sahai a couple of other names which the panel felt were suited for the job of chairman, Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB), were added.

The committee interviewed 8-9 candidates including ones who had applied and the ones panel members thought were suitable and invited.

The candidates selected will now be sent to the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) for decision. ACC

Singh to be added to the list even though he hadn't originally applied, on 28 May afternoon asked panel members to include more names who they think are fit for the job, sources said.

Following this, Sahai was approached and he was included on 30 or 31 May, they said.

"He was last to be interviewed by the committee on Wednesday," a source said.

Along with Sahai a couple of other names which the panel felt were suited for the job of chairman, Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB), were added.

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The candidates selected will now be sent to the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) for decision. ACC

will decide after obtaining vigilance clearance.

While previously only those who have retired as chairman of public sector firms or senior bureaucrats were considered for the PNGRB top job, directors of PSUs were included in the selection universe by the search committee at its meeting on 15 January.

Such candidates, however, should have been affirmed by any member of the panel.

Gurmeet Singh too hadn't

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

The intensification of the Covid-19 crisis and associated restrictions suppressed domestic and international demand for Indian services. Total sales decreased for the first time in eight months, while the fall in external orders was the most pronounced since last November.

In PMI parlance, a print above 50 means expansion while a score below 50 denotes contraction.

The intensification of the Covid-19 crisis and associated restrictions suppressed domestic and international demand for Indian services. Total sales decreased for the first time in eight months, while the fall in external orders was the most pronounced since last November.

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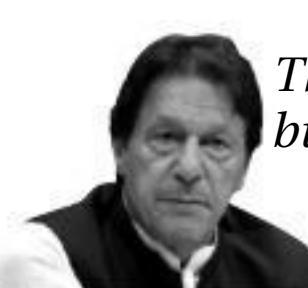
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There are giants that contribute to carbon emissions but countries like us face the consequences

PAKISTAN PRIME MINISTER IMRAN KHAN
COMMENTING ON CLIMATE CHANGE IN THE COUNTRY

The Statesman
NEW DELHI, FRIDAY 04 JUNE 2021

09

Netanyahu's rivals reach coalition deal to oust him

Yair Lapid, leader of centrist Yesh Atid party, announced formation of an eight-party coalition

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
JERUSALEM, 3 JUNE

Israel's Opposition parties have finally clinched a last-minute agreement to form a new national unity government and oust Benjamin Netanyahu, the longest-serving prime minister in the Jewish nation's history.

Yair Lapid, leader of the centrist Yesh Atid party, announced an eight-party coalition had been formed.

Under a rotation arrangement, the head of the right-wing Yamina party, Naftali Bennett, 49, would serve as the prime minister first before handing over to Lapid.

Lapid, 57, officially informed President Reuven Rivlin and Knesset (Parliament) Speaker Yariv Levin



about the deal late on Wednesday night, barely half an hour before the Wednesday midnight deadline.

The announcement came after a series of back-to-back meetings with the leaders of the anti-Netanyahu camp in the Knesset.

"I commit to you Mr President that this government will work to serve all the citizens of Israel including those who aren't members of it, will respect those who oppose it

ment. The government will be an alternate government in accordance with Clause 13(a) of the Basic Law: The Government, and MK (Member of Knesset) Naftali Bennett will serve as a prime minister first, Lapid told Rivlin.

"I commit to you Mr President that this government will work to serve all the citizens of Israel including those who aren't members of it, will respect those who oppose it

and do everything in its power to unite all parts of Israeli society," the Yesh Atid party leader said. Lapid will serve as foreign minister until the two men swap roles halfway through the term.

There still needs to be a parliamentary vote before the government is sworn in. Lapid called upon the Speaker to fulfil the legal responsibility incumbent upon him and call a special session of the plenary as soon as possible.

The Israeli president thanked Lapid saying, I congratulate you and the heads of the parties on your agreement to form a government. We expect the Knesset will convene as soon as possible to ratify the government, as required.

The development, seen by some as historic as it includes an Arab party in the

coalition, will break an ongoing political impasse that has seen Israel go through four polls yielding inconclusive results in less than two years.

Lapid's coalition is composed of Yesh Atid, Yamina, Kahol Lavan, New Hope, Labor, Yisrael Beiteinu, Meretz and United Arab List.

If successful in passing the floor test in the Knesset, the new government would save the country from the ignominious spectre of a fifth election since April 2019.

Sources point to some unresolved issues, but not too dramatic, which if sorted out could also mean a break from the "Bibi-regime", the nickname for the incumbent prime minister who has been at the helm of Israeli politics uninterrupted for the last 12 years.

China's silencing of Tiananmen tributes extends to Hong Kong



ASSOCIATED PRESS
HONG KONG, 3 JUNE

For years, China has quashed any discussion on the mainland of its bloody 1989 crackdown on pro-democracy protesters in Beijing's Tiananmen Square, nearly erasing what happened from the collective consciousness. Now it may be Hong Kong's turn, as China's ruling Communist Party pulls the city more directly into its orbit.

The semi-autonomous territories of Hong Kong and nearby Macao were for years the last places on Chinese soil allowed to publicly mark the events of 4 June, 1989, when the People's Liberation Army opened fire on student-led protesters in a crackdown that left hundreds, if not thousands, dead.

But authorities, citing the coronavirus pandemic, are banning that vigil for the second straight year. And a museum dedicated to the event suddenly closed Wednesday, just two days before Friday's anniversary.

Hong Kong's security minister warned residents last week against taking part in

unauthorized assemblies.

In mainland China, younger generations have grown up with little knowledge or debate about the crackdown, but the efforts to suppress commemorations in Hong Kong reflect another turn of the screw in Beijing's ever-tightening control over Hong Kong following massive anti-government protests in 2019. Those demonstrations evolved into months of sometimes violent clashes between smaller groups of protesters and police. And they have led to a broader crackdown on dissent in the former British colony, which was long an oasis of capitalism and democracy and was promised that it would largely maintain its freedoms for 50 years when it was returned to China in 1997.

In Hong Kong, the recent arrests and convictions of prominent activists have had a chilling effect on those who participated in the vigil in the past, said Chow Hang Tung, the vice chair of the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China, which operates the June 4 museum.

Sindh govt to stop salaries of employees who refuse Covid jabs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
ISLAMABAD, 3 JUNE

The chief minister of Pakistan's Sindh province on Thursday directed the authorities to stop the salaries of government officials from July if they fail to get vaccinated for Covid-19.

The order was passed during a meeting of the provincial task force on Covid-19 chaired by Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah.

"Government employees who do not get themselves vac-

cinated will have their salaries stopped from July," Shah said.

A directive on this has been issued to the finance ministry, officials said.

The Sindh government has already fixed June 5 as the deadline for all teachers in the

province to get vaccinated in order to reopen all educational institutions from 7 June.

According to the Sindh Health Department, 1,550,553 people have been vaccinated in the province so far, while 1,121,000 people have received the first dose and 429,000 people have been fully vaccinated against the virus.

Meanwhile, Pakistan's coronavirus tally reached 926,695 on Thursday, with the detection of 2,028 cases in the last 24 hours.

Uyghur exiles describe forced abortions, torture in Xinjiang

ASSOCIATED PRESS
ISTANBUL, 3 JUNE

Three Uyghurs who fled from China to Turkey have described forced abortions and torture by Chinese authorities in China's far western Xinjiang region, ahead of giving testimony to a people's tribunal in London that is investigating if Beijing's actions against ethnic Uyghurs amount to genocide.

The three witnesses include a woman who said she was forced into an abortion at 6 1/2 months pregnant, a former doctor who spoke of draconian birth control policies, and a former detainee who alleged he was tortured day and night by Chinese soldiers while he was imprisoned in the remote border region.

They spoke to The Associated Press before testifying by video link to the independent UK tribunal, which is expected to draw dozens of witnesses when it opens four days of hearings on Friday.

The tribunal, which does not have UK government backing, will be chaired by prominent human rights lawyer Geoffrey Nice, who led the prosecution of ex-Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic and worked with the International Criminal Court.

While the tribunal's judgment is not binding on any government, organisers hope the process of publicly laying out evidence will compel international action to tackle growing concerns about alleged abuses in Xinjiang against the Uyghurs, a largely Muslim ethnic group.

One witness, mother-of-four Bumeryem Rozi, said authorities in Xinjiang rounded her up along with other pregnant women to abort her fifth child in 2007.

She said she complied

because she feared that otherwise authorities would have

confiscated her home and belongings and endangered her family.

"I was 6 1/2 months pregnant ... The police came, one Uyghur and two Chinese. They put me and eight other pregnant women in cars and took us to the hospital," Rozi,

told the AP from her home in Istanbul.

They first gave me a pill and said to take it. So I did. I didn't know what it was, she continued. Half an hour later, they put a needle in my belly. And sometime after that I lost my child.

Semsin Gafur, a former obstetrician-gynecologist who worked in a village hospital in Xinjiang in the 1990s, said she and other female clinicians used to go from house to house with a mobile ultrasound machine to check if any-one was pregnant.

If a household had more births than allowed, they would raze the home ... They would flatten the house, destroy it, Gafur said.

This was my life there. It was very distressing. And because I worked in a state hos-

pital, people didn't trust me. The Uyghur people saw me as a Chinese traitor.

A third Uyghur exile, Mahmut Tekekul, said he was imprisoned and tortured in 2010 by Chinese authorities who interrogated him for information about one of his brothers. Tekekul said the brother was detained partly because he published a religious book in Arabic.

The tribunal is the latest attempt to hold China accountable for alleged rights abuses against the Uyghurs and other predominantly Muslim and ethnic Turkic minorities.

An estimated 1 million people or more most of them Uyghurs have been confined in re-education camps in Xinjiang in recent years, according to researchers.

LEISURE

10 MINUTE CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1 Garden statue (5)
- 2 Drugs (9)
- 4 Milliner (6)
- 9 Odd (7)
- 10 Concede (5)
- 11 In the past (3)
- 12 Hoax victim (5,4)
- 14 Branched out (11)
- 18 Final irritation (4,5)
- 20 For example (3)
- 21 Make amends (5)
- 23 Stir (7)
- 24 Drenched (6)
- 25 Concur (5)

DOWN

- 2 Drugs (9)
- 3 Everyday (7)
- 5 Be of use (5)
- 6 Male cat (3)
- 7 Baby's toy (6)
- 8 Earthly (11)
- 13 Exaggerate (9)
- 15 Obsequious (7)
- 16 Every time (6)
- 17 Sort (4)
- 19 Play act division (5)
- 22 Elderly (3)

SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD

BEETLE BAILEY/Mort Walker



RED EYE/Bill Yates & Mel Casson



DADDY DAZE/John Kovaleski



NEED TO KNOW

HOSPITALS

- ALIMS 26588500, 26588900
- Moolchand Medcity (formerly Hospital) 42000000 & 24-hour Chemist Shop 42000447
- Vidyasagar Institute for Mental Health and Neuro-Sciences 26924300, 26924304
- Batra Hospital & Medical Research Centre 29051280, 29958747
- Deen Dayal Upadhyay 25496320, 25494403
- Guru Tegh Bahadur 23717473, 23253230

RAILWAY INQUIRY

- General Inquiry 139

- Toll Free Nos. 180012511

- SMS Inquiry Nos. 57886, 54959, 5676747

ROADWAYS INQUIRY

- ISBT (General Inquiry): 23868836, 23865181
- AIR INDIA Flight Inquiry and Reservation 018001801407
- INDIGO AIRLINES New Delhi City Office 43512185, Call Centre 09910383838, 18001803838, Reservation 43513186; Indigo Airlines Air-

- port 011-25671580; Terminal I-23860626

- 25671576, Palam Road 23864470

- RAJASTHAN Roadways 23868709

FLIGHT INQUIRY

- JET AIRWAYS Flight Inquiry and Reservation 09910383838
- AIR CANADA Flight Inquiry and Reservation 23466262 (City) 25656421/25656431 Reservation 41528181
- AIR FRANCE Flight Inquiry and Reservation 23466262 (City) 25652294 (Airport)
- KUWAIT AIRWAYS Flight Inquiry and Reservation 09910383838

SCRABBLE® BRAND



PAR SCORE 135-145

by JUDD

FOUR RACK TOTAL TIME LIMIT: 20 MIN

SCRABBLE®	G	R	A	M	S
	R	O	T	E	S
	Y	R	I	A	I
	S	E	T	L	E
	R	T	A	N	E

RACK 1 RACK 2 RACK 3 RACK 4

PAR SCORE 135-145

JUDD TOTAL 235

SCRABBLE®

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We cannot pretend that there were no issues before the Covid-19 pandemic

PRESIDENT OF THE 75TH SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY (UNGA) VOLKAN BOZKIRZ

DURING THE FIRST DAY OF SPECIAL SESSION CONVENED TO GALVANISE POLITICAL WILL TO FIGHT THE COVID SCOURGE

WEATHER

CITY	MAX(°C)	MIN(°C)
SINGAPORE	31	27 R
HONG KONG	31	26 R
TOKYO	22	20 R
LONDON	18	12 R
DUBAI	41	28 S
SAN FRANCISCO	17	11 H
NEW YORK	26	18 R
MOSCOW	23	12 S

S=sunny, CL=clear, H=hazy, R=rainy...

THUMBNAILS



A Spider-Man character performs during 'The Amazing Spider-Man' show at the Avengers Campus media preview at Disney's California Adventure Park on Wednesday in Anaheim, California. ■ AP

Nicaragua police detain government opponent: Nicaraguan police on Wednesday raided the home of Cristiana Chamorro, a potential candidate and daughter of former President Violeta Barrios de Chamorro, one day after formally filing money laundering charges against the journalist. ■ AP

US chopper makes emergency off-base landing: A US military helicopter made an emergency off-base landing on a small island in Japan's southern-most prefecture of Okinawa, authorities said on Thursday. The incident, which occurred at around 11 pm on Wednesday, involved a UH-1 helicopter with five crew members aboard landing in a field on Tsuken Island due to engine trouble. ■ IANS

Hong Kong cargo ship fire doused: The fire aboard a cargo ship off the Hong Kong coast has been largely put out on Thursday after erupting a day earlier, with no casualties. The fire erupted at 5:26 pm on Wednesday at the vessel carrying metal scrap in waters south of Tsing Yi and was upgraded to No. 3 alarm at 11.09 pm. ■ IANS

Bill to drop per country cap on job-based Green Card

Indian IT professionals are the worst sufferers of the current immigration system

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

WASHINGTON, 3 JUNE



A bipartisan legislation has been introduced in the US House of Representatives to eliminate the per country cap on employment-based Green Card, a move which is likely to benefit Indian IT professionals languishing over decades of waiting for the Permanent Resident Card.

The legislation was introduced by Congresswoman Zoe Lofgren and Congressman John Curtis.

The Equal Access to Green Cards for Legal Employment (EAGLE) Act, 2021 needs to be passed by the Senate before it can be sent to the White House for the president to sign it into a law.

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

Indian IT professionals, most of whom are highly skilled and come to the US mainly on the H-1B work visas, are the worst sufferers of the current immigration sys-

tem which imposes a seven percent per country quota on allotment of the coveted Green Card or permanent legal residency.

The bill phases out the seven per cent per-country limit on employment-based immigrant visas. The bill also raises the seven per cent per-country limit on family-sponsored visas to 15 per cent.

Its predecessor, the Fairness for High Skilled Immigrants Act, was passed in the House in the 116th Congress with a resounding bipartisan vote of 365 to 65.

We all know that our immigration system is severely

broken and it has been broken for decades, said Lofgren, Chair of the House Subcommittee on Immigration and Citizenship on Wednesday.

The basic framework for allocating immigrant visas dates back to the middle of the 20th century and was last seriously updated in 1990, when the Congress established the worldwide numerical limits on visas and the seven percent per-country cap that still exists today, the Democratic Party lawmaker said.

Over time, these limitations have led to backlogs that were

unimaginable in 1990. The effect has been that countries with relatively small populations are allocated the same number of visas as a relatively large population country.

The result? A person from a large-population country with extraordinary qualifications who could contribute greatly to our economy and create jobs waits behind a person with lesser qualifications from a smaller country, she added.

It makes no sense. Because of this, we are now seeing recruiters from outside America luring those with the highest skills away from the US. That hurts our economy.

"The bipartisan EAGLE Act moves our country toward a system that de-emphasises birthplace and better serves America. Simply put, it will allow US companies to focus on what they do best hiring smart people to create products and services, which creates jobs in our districts, Lofgren said. Congressman Curtis said the 2020 census showed that Utah has the fastest-growing state in the nation due to major growth and innovation in the tech-

nology sector, bringing thousands of new jobs to the state.

At the same time, Utah is tied for the lowest unemployment rate in the country, leaving many companies to rely on foreign workers and navigate our complicated immigration system when there is a shortage of Americans seeking these positions.

The bipartisan EAGLE Act will create a more fair employment-based visa system by eliminating per-country limitations and creating a first-come, first-served system focused on merit instead of country of origin, making it easier for Utah's businesses to expand and compete globally, Curtis, a Republican, said.

Meanwhile, Immigration Voice, a national non-profit organisation that advocates for the alleviation of restrictions on employment, travel, and working conditions faced by more than 1.2 million legal high-skilled immigrants in the US has welcomed the bipartisan legislation in the House. The EAGLE Act is one of the first bipartisan immigration bills that members of the House have introduced this year, it noted.

Top German, US officials discuss Nord Stream 2 pipeline

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

WASHINGTON, 3 JUNE

High-ranking government representatives of the US and Germany held discussions over the disputed German-Russian gas pipeline, Nord Stream 2.

US President Joe Biden's National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan met German Chancellor Angela Merkel's foreign policy advisor Jan Hecker on Wednesday, the National Security Council in Washington announced.

Their talks also focused on US concerns about the impact of the pipeline on Ukraine and European energy security, dpa news agency reported.

Other topics included the upcoming summits of the G7 and NATO countries, the

fight against the coronavirus pandemic and cybersecurity.

The German Chancellor's Office did not want to comment on possible results of the meeting when asked on Thursday.

A spokesperson merely referred to the statement made the day before by deputy government spokesperson Martina Fietz, according to which such meetings were part of the normality of US-German cooperation.

In May, the US government had deliberately refrained from imposing sanctions on the company operating the pipeline.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken, however, had stressed that the US remained strictly opposed to Nord Stream 2.

Trump's blog page shuts down



AGENCIES

WASHINGTON, 3 JUNE

Former US President Donald Trump's blog page, launched last month in the wake of major social media platforms banning him, has been removed from his website. Trump aide Jason Miller on Wednesday said that the page, which had been called "from the Desk of Donald J. Trump," would not be returning.

The blog page, which was billed as a place to "speak freely and safely," served as a one-way means of communica-

tion that contained posts from Trump that could be liked and shared to social networks such as Twitter and Facebook from which Trump remains blocked.

A slew of social media platforms barred him following the Jan. 6 riot at the US Capitol by a pro-Trump mob.

Twitter Inc, which Trump had used frequently, has said its ban is permanent, even if he runs for office again. Before being banned, the businessman-turned-politician had more than 88 million followers.

Facebook Inc's independent oversight board determined that the company was correct to suspend Trump but criticised it for the ban's indefinite nature. In May, the oversight board gave Facebook six months to determine a proportionate response to the case.

A dissident journalist who was arrested after his plane was diverted to Belarus said in a video from prison that protests against the country's authoritarian leader had fizzled and the opposition should wait for a better moment to revive demonstrations.

It was Raman Pratasevich's second such appearance that allies dismissed as having been coerced.

In footage aired late Wednesday on Belarusian state TV during an hour-long program, Pratasevich also said that he had been set up by an unidentified associate. The presenter of the broadcast on the ONT channel claimed that the Belaru-

Judge: UK broke law by housing refugees in run-down barracks

ASSOCIATED PRESS

LONDON, 3 JUNE

Britain's High Court ruled Thursday that the Conservative government broke the law when it housed asylum-seekers in overcrowded, rundown conditions in a disused army barracks.

Hundreds of migrants who crossed the English Channel in small boats have been sent to Napier Barracks in southeast England since September, despite a warning from public health authorities that it was unsuitable.

A refugee charity said residents at the barracks faced freezing cold conditions over the winter and the government said almost 200 had tested positive for COVID-19 during an

outbreak earlier this year. In January there were disturbances and a fire at the facility.

Six asylum-seekers challenged the British government in court, arguing that conditions at the barracks posed real and immediate risks to life and of ill-treatment. When this is considered, a decision that accommodation in a detention-like setting is enclosed by a perimeter fence topped with barbed wire, access to which is through padlocked gates guarded by uniformed security personnel will be adequate for their needs, begins to look questionable, the judge said.

Refugee advocates welcomed the ruling.

Napier Barracks and all other camp-style accommodation must be shut down, she said.

The judge declined to rule that the barracks should never be used to house asylum seekers.

The judge also questioned the detention-like setting, given that residents were

Canada announces funds to help locate dead indigenous kids

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

OTTAWA, 3 JUNE

The Canadian government has announced a C\$27 million funding to assist indigenous communities to locate more indigenous children who died at residential schools in the country.

At a press conference here on Wednesday, Canadian Crown-Indigenous Relations Minister Carolyn Bennett said the government earmarked some C\$33 million in its 2019 budget to implement the burial-related recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Little of that money has been spent so far, with C\$27 million still available to help Indigenous communities find and commemorate lost children.

Bennett said the money will be distributed on an urgent basis in partnership with Canada's National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation and Indigenous communities. Last week, the Tk'emlups te Secwepemc First Nation in Kamloops city announced that it had discovered the remains of 215 children buried at the site of the former Kamloops Indian Residential School.

Following the discovery, indigenous leaders, residential school survivors, and opposition parties have called for the government to fund the research and excavation of all sites of former residential schools for unmarked graves in the country.

FLYING DINING



People have dinner sitting on a platform raised by a crane to a height of 50 metres and silhouetting against the sun as they participate in the traveling international project 'Dinner in the Sky' in St. Petersburg, Russia, on Wednesday. ■ AP

Covid-19: Why the lab leak theory must be formally investigated

VIRGINIE COURIER

PARIS, 3 JUNE

A year and a half into the pandemic, we still do not know exactly where the SARS-CoV-2 virus, which causes Covid-19, came from.

The prevailing view so far has been that the virus spilled over from bats into humans. But there are increasing calls to investigate the possibility that it emerged from a lab in Wuhan, China, where Covid first appeared at the end of 2019.

So what do we know for sure, and what do we need still to find out? We know the sequence of the SARS-CoV-2 virus is close to that of bat coronaviruses. Several decades ago its ancestor was circulating in bat populations in southern Asia.

But there are still many unanswered questions: we don't know how the virus arrived in Wuhan, how its

meant to be living their voluntarily while their asylum applications were processed.

When this is considered, a decision that accommodation in a detention-like setting is enclosed by a perimeter fence topped with barbed wire, access to which is through padlocked gates guarded by uniformed security personnel will be adequate for their needs, begins to look questionable, the judge said.

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sequence evolved to allow human infection, and under what conditions it infected the first people who crossed its path. And for each of these stages, we don't know whether there was a human contribution (direct or indirect).

Zoonotic transmission pathways, in other words the passage of viruses from animals to humans, are now widely documented around the world. Scientists even consider that this is a principal mechanism for the spread-

Which theory is correct? In the absence of definitive proof, and without promoting conspiracy theories, there needs to be a serious international conversation about the origin of SARS-CoV-2.

The zoonosis theory: In the scientific community, the debate on the origin of SARS-CoV-2 started with the publication of two articles at the very beginning of the outbreak.

The first, dated February 19, 2020, was published in the medical science journal The Lancet.

This article, signed by 27 scientists, highlighted the efforts of Chinese experts to identify the source of the pandemic and share the results.

The authors deplored

rumours and misinformation about the origins of the virus, and stated that they strongly condemn conspiracy theories suggesting that Covid-19 does not have a natural origin.

Claims based on a sec-

ond-hand account of con-

versations from over 50 years

ago should not be used to draw

or infer conclusions about

modern-day events or oper-

ations, a palace spokesman

said, speaking on the cus-

tomary condition of anonymi-

ty.

The palace replied force-

fully to the historical allega-

tions,

stressing that the queen and her household comply in principle and in practice with anti-discrimination leg-

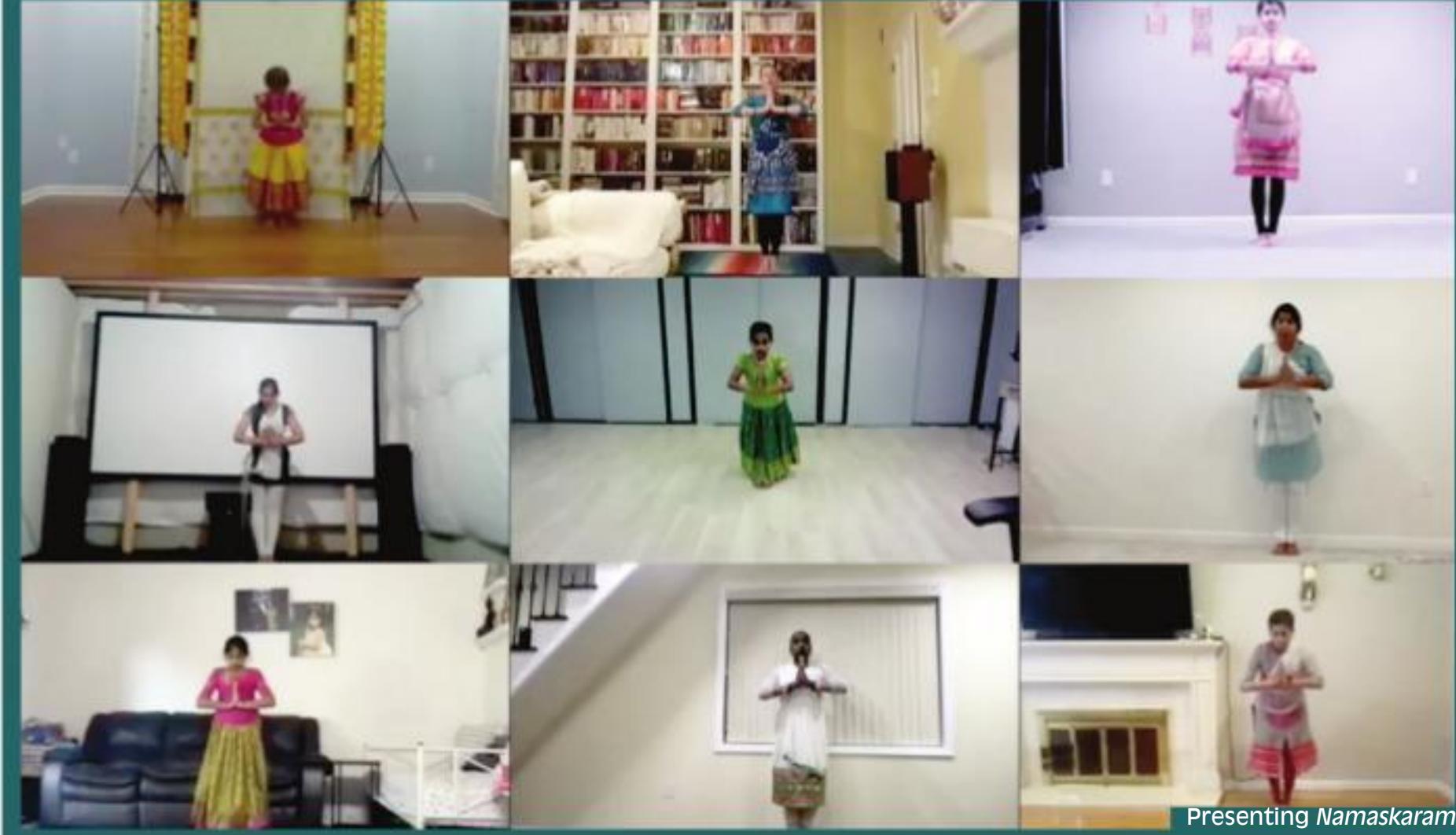
islation.

Claims based on a sec-

ond-hand account of con-

Living & breathing dance

International Centre for Kuchipudi Dance celebrated its first anniversary online by bringing together performers from across the globe



TAPATI CHOWDHURIE

Bhavana Reddy, the illustrious daughter of Raja Radha Reddy and Kaushalya Reddy, founded the International Centre for Kuchipudi Dance as a branch of Natya Tarangini in New Delhi, a year ago. Ever since, ICKD has been spreading out its wings and soaring high, which is a positive sign during these negative times when the world is out of gear on account of the Covid-19 pandemic. Students are joining her institution in hordes every week from the United States, United Kingdom, Singapore, Australia and Europe. Recently, there were quite a few entrants from the United Arab Emirates as well.

Their growing into the Kuchipudi form under Reddy has been, so far, spectacular. All of them share the common distinction of being dedicated and hardworking, which is the hallmark of Kuchipudi or, for that matter, any other Indian Classical dance form.

At the close of a flourishing year of online teaching and learning process, ICKD held its first virtual anniversary. "Concert for Hope", as they called it, was a success story. The event witnessed live interaction by guests from across the globe, comprising almost 200 admirers of dance, particularly Kuchipudi. The slip of a girl, Reddy, managed to bring Kuchipudi to the world stage. Though there were participants belonging to different time zones, it wasn't an obstacle to their unflagging interest in coming together to see the presentations.

Shiva Panchakshara Stuti in *Ragamalika* and *tala Khanda Chapu* was vocalised by Sudha Raghuraman, which was complemented with mridangam by Banna Bhaskar Rao, the melodious flute by Govindrajan Raghuraman, and violin by V S K Annadurai. Gauri Taneja from Los Angeles, Adya Sharma from Texas, Swetha Godavarthi from San Diego, Aishwarya Busi from Virginia, Sindhu

Shivani Ravuri from San Jose and Pranita Mantravadi from Seattle — all senior disciples of Reddy — danced to the *stuti*. So incredible was the presentation that one had to literally rub one's eyes to be reassured of such a marvelous sight.

Junior disciples performed on *shlokas*, which were perfect renditions even though they got a short span for preparation. Aarushi Aravind from New York, Geetharth Sundaram from Singapore, Mythri Valluri from Michigan, Srilatha Bekkem from New York, Vaishnavi Reddy Pingili from Missouri, Kati Krishna from Virginia, Risa and Nora Garg from Philadelphia, Ananya Kunam from Texas, Manasa and Darshita from Seattle, Kelsey Faye from San Diego and Roshini Velamuri from Portland, danced happily in their own performance spaces. Reddy sang the *shlokas* to the mridangam played by Manohar Balachandiran.

The intermediate group presented *Jathiswaram*, a piece in *raga Athana*



Reddy presenting *Shiva Tarangam*



Raja Radha Reddy and Kaushalya Reddy (left) and Bhavana Reddy

and *tala Adi*. Sowmya Ramisetty from Cupertino, California, Dhriti Mudigonda from Illinois, Sravani Vootukuri from the UK and Roopa Modha from Boston danced to vocal renditions by Sai Bhavani, accompanied with Bhaskar Rao, Annadurai and Raghuraman on musical instruments.

Shiva Tarangam, a signature dance coming from the house of the Reddys, in *raga Saurashtra* and *Revati* and *tala Adi* was done by Reddy herself. In fact, she had grown up seeing her father perform the composition with precision and balance, which sunk into her psyche, even before she had realised it. And the *Tarangam* was her mother's forte. Dexterity, acrobatic movements and deeply embedded philosophy — the defining features of the *Tarangam* — is so entrenched in her mother that it did not go unnoticed by the talented daughter even when she was a child. Her rendition of *Shiva Tarangam* was flawless and meditative.

The musical ensemble included singer Lavanya Kumar and, once again, Balachandiran, Raghuraman and Annadurai.

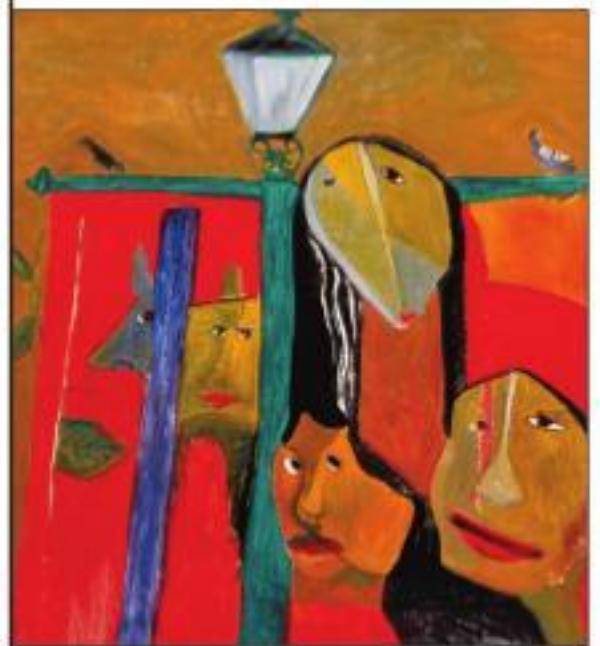
Reddy has lived and breathed dance from the time she was born. Dance runs in her blood. That, coupled with excellent training and prodigious confidence has made her what she is today, with promise to excel as she grows experienced with future endeavours. In 2019, she choreographed and performed Kuchipudi for a Los Angeles Philharmonic orchestra production called *Rite of Spring*, which had drawn the attention of connoisseurs.

"Concert for Hope" was a neatly designed production. Raja, Radha and Kaushalya Reddy blessed the young and upcoming talents, stressing the need for arts as a lifelong venture to overcome the vicissitudes of life and uphold aesthetic values. Dance, being a universal language, rendered the event truly global.

The writer is a senior dance critic

SNIPPETS

Pyne remembered



Every canvas is a journey in itself, and Kartick Chandra Pyne's exhibition of paintings at Emami Art is no exception.

To pay respect to the eminent artist on his 90th birth anniversary, who passed away four years ago, the exhibition "The (in)Visible and the (un)Revealed: The Secret World of Kartick Chandra Pyne" was organised recently. It is an effort to convey to art lovers the range of versatility in his works.

Moving away from the prevalent modernist approach, Pyne chose to walk the road less travelled picking up *en route* an intimate and simple style akin to folk art. It is a distinctive and original approach, the likes of which one does not often come across. He had a vision and he painted it with a few tools and little instruction.

Pyne's works stand out for their lack of geometricity, artefacts and imagery. The emphasis was on organic rhythm. Indigenous subjects found precedence in his works. Colourful images were distorted in his paintings in a free whimsy of the artist. An unlaboured naturalness runs through his paintings. These works on display (on the art gallery's website) till 12 June are replete with a spontaneity which is a part and parcel of his works and should have been better appreciated years ago.

—TIRTHANKAR MITRA

Wrap up story



Thor: Love and Thunder has finished shooting just one week after Taika Waititi was embroiled in a viral photo controversy.

The film, which stars Chris Hemsworth as the God of Thunder, has been in production since January, with familiar faces from Marvel's other franchises also set to make appearances. Co-starring in the film is Natalie Portman, who'll play Lady Thor, and Christian Bale, who was cast as Gorr the God Butcher.

The production wrap comes a week after photographs showing director Waititi sharing an intimate moment with both Rita Ora, who he's rumoured to be dating, and Tessa Thompson, who plays Valkyrie in the film, went viral on social media. They were sitting on the balcony of Waititi's home in Sydney.

An insider close to *Thor: Love and Thunder*'s production told the publication that the behaviour exhibited in the photo is "not exactly the image they're looking to project in relation to one of their biggest franchises".

The Independent has contacted a representative of Marvel for comment. Announcing the completion of filming, Hemsworth wrote on Instagram, "That's a wrap on *Thor: Love and Thunder*. The film is gonna be crazy off the wall funny and might also pull a heart string or two. Lots of love, lots of thunder! Thank you to all the cast and crew who made this another incredible Marvel journey. Buckle in, get ready and see ya in cinemas!! (sic)"

Thor: Love and Thunder is scheduled to be released in cinemas in February 2022.

—The independent



SUDIPTO MULLICK

The golden jubilee celebrations of the All India Bhaskar Rao Nritya and Sangeet Sammelan, initiated by Pracheen Kala Kendra in Chandigarh, was understandably shelved last year. Despite being left to count their losses, they powered through to reprise it this year. Inevitably, the original celebratory tone of pairing illustrious exponents, who had previously illuminated this prestigious stage, with their practicing progenies had to be greatly rethought owing to the pandemic.

The vestige of that schema was almost an inevitability with Padma Bhushan Pandit Vishwa Mohan Bhatt billed to inaugurate the conference, held at Tagore Theater in Chandigarh, alongside his son, Salil with a duet. Bhatt senior, however, was held prisoner to an unanticipated health issue. He did air a congratulatory video message, after which, Bhatt junior took to a solo Satvik Veena rendition, launching into *raga Jogeshwari*. He rued the lack of prevalence of rare *ragas* like *Gangeshwari*, *Kameshwari* and *Parameshwari* — all of which, including the one he staged, being Pandit Ravi Shankar inventions.

One wished for him to subside the posturing and instead extend the equivalent earnestness to performing. He and tabla player Abhishek Mishra were then joined by Rajasthani folk artist and khartal player, Kutla Khan, who handsomely held up his end, and Paarth Koser, a cub drummer, to render a mash based on *raga Bhopali*, *Pahari* and folk music, in succession.



During the week-long turnout, Odissi danseuse, Vidushi Sujata Mohapatra — disciple and daughter-in-law of the legendary guru Padmavibhushan Kelucharan Mohapatra — and her troupe essayed *Mangalacharan*, a terpsichorean oblation to Lord Jagannatha followed by *Hansadhvani* *palabi* and allied items.

The edition's only other danseuse, Guru Kamili Dutta and her troupe's Kathak-Bharatanatyam amalgam, *Rango'ntaratma* — a journey navigating *nada*, *bindu*, *kala* and *rasa* was premised on *Shiva tattva* depicting *shakti*, the birth of nature and culminated in an existential euphoria.

Vocalist Vidushi Purnima Bhattacharya of Dharwad district, Karnataka, exuded brilliance via *raga Puria Kalyan* (*bandish: Hovan lagi sanjh bhai in vilambit ek-taal*) and upped the pace with a *drut bandish* (*Dhan dhan tero bhag*). Her assertive gain and *tankari-laykari* control were just as evident in the *tarana* and *hori* in *Mishra Shadja* (*Khele nandal sang rangbhari hori*) that she intonated before winding up.

Durjay Bhaumik on tabla and Paromita Mukherjee on harmonium both complemented her judiciously.

Enchanting with *raga Kalavati*, Vidushi Mahalakshmi Shenoy initiated it with an *aalap* and progressed to a *bandish* (*Sajan ghar aaye*) in *vilambit ek-taal*. The applause was thick as her *drut teen-taal bandish* (*Tumhare bina main toh*) came to rest; a couple of *bajans* including one in her mother-tongue, Konkani, were proffered before she exited along with Pandit Abhishek Mishra and Tarun Joshi, her tabla and harmonium accompanists, respectively.

Her poised vibrato, simulation of Krishna's frolicking in *Nari nayan chakora* (*Ahir Bhairav*) and anoesis-induction during the self-written *Meera bhajan* in *Bhinnna Mishra Shadja* were lost to none.

Kajra kaise dalu in vilambit ek-taal; *Avgun na kijiye guni sang (drut)*, and *Aae mayi aaj aaye ghari mitwa in teen-taal* were the *bandishes* intrinsically harnessed by Ambareesh Das to

MARKED BY ENCHANTING RECITALS

In its 50th edition, the All India Bhaskar Rao Nritya and Sangeet Sammelan enthralled connoisseurs from far and wide



Pandit Rakesh Chaurasia



Vidushi Mahalakshmi Shenoy

portray *raga Yaman Kalyan*. And when he delved into a *Basant raag bandish* (*Ayo pagua briji dekhana ko chalo ri*), his tabla catalyst, Pandit Debadish Adhikary, came into his own.

Raga Jog was the opener for Prashant and Nishant Mallick, the contemporary flag-bearers of Darbhanga gharana. An elaborate *aalap*, segued through *badat* to blossom into their father Prem Kumar's *bandish*, *Khelan aaye hori kanhai* set to *dhamar-taal*. Mallick brothers, the 13th generation concatenation, sealed their thoroughly riveting session with *Kripalam Mahakal* — a veneration structured on the rare and brisk 10-matra rhythm cycles attempted customarily only by expert drupadists. Pakhawaj player, Rishabhkar Upadhyay's *Gaya gharana* notations were congruent with the gravitas of the recital.

Mesmerising from the onset, father-son sarodists' duo, Pandit Alok and Abhishek Lahiri, commenced with *raga Rageshri* (*aalap, jod, jhapa-taal, teen-taal, sawal-jawab*) — a rather flip-flop tune — was Pandit Tarun Bhat-tacharya's presentation with tabla maestro Pandit Ramdas Palsule in tow, closing with a *bhatiyali dhun* and an overall perfunctory effort.

Sitarist Harvinder Kumar Sharma's cantabile predicated on *khayal-ang* in *raga Pahadi* before peaking with *aalap, jod alap* and the *gats* — *masitkhani* (slow) and *razakhani* (fast). Emulating Imdadkhani gharana's Ustad Vilayat Hussain Khan's late-career habit, he broke into singing *Rangi sari gulabi*; *payojni maine ram ratan* which for some could slump the sublimation. Ustad Akram Khan supplied him with deliciously counterpoints.

Flautist Pandit Rakesh Chaurasia's solemn *raga Durga* (*aalap, jod in madhyalaya*), fluttered about the auditorium. The concluding *pahari dhun* too lingered beyond its exhausted notes, all the while conversing with the con-

templative, though faintly stentorian, tabla voicing of Ram Kumar Mishra.

The self-composed *raga Janasamohani* (*aalap, jod, gat, jhapa-taal, teen-taal, sawal-jawab*) — a rather flip-flop tune — was Pandit Tarun Bhat-tacharya's presentation with tabla maestro Pandit Ramdas Palsule in tow, closing with a *bhatiyali dhun* and an overall perfunctory effort.

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PAST IMPERFECT

Ollie Robinson (photo, left) will remember the biggest moment of his cricket career for the wrong reasons. Soon after stumps on the first day of the first Test against New Zealand on Wednesday, the 27-year-old England fast bowler was close to tears, apologising for a string of sexist and racist messages made on Twitter from 2012-14. The jibes surfaced over social media while the game was being played.

For more updates

www.thestatesman.com

THUMBNAILS

French Open India: Indian tennis player Rohan Bopanna and his Croatian partner Franko Skugor advanced to the pre-quarterfinals of the French Open with a straight set win over Americans Frances Tiafo and Nicholas Monroe on Thursday..

Sania visa: Indian tennis star Sania Mirza on Thursday thanked, among others, Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju for their prompt intervention in getting her son and sister's UK visa approved, enabling them to accompany her for the Olympics' preparatory tournaments.

Gavaskar T20: Sunil Gavaskar says that he is fond of the T20 format unlike most other cricketers of his era as it features more action than the others.

Inter coach: Inter Milan appointed Simone Inzaghi as coach on Thursday, signing him to a two-year contract. Inzaghi replaces Antonio Conte, who left Inter last month after leading the club to the Serie A title.

Abu Dhabi dislikes presence of Indians in Pakistan Super League

DAWN/ANN & AGENCIES

LAHORE/LONDON/MUMBAI/SYDNEY/MELBOURNE, 3 JUNE

The Abu Dhabi health ministry has surprisingly raised an objection over the presence there of Indian broadcasters covering the Pakistan Super League despite the fact that the UAE government issued visas to them.

Sources said that the Pakistan Cricket Board, determined to start the matches on 7 June, had sought a special permission for the visas to be given to the Indians and some South Africans because the United Arab Emirates government earlier put both the countries on its red list owing to the rising number of Covid-19 infections there.

The health ministry

voiced its objections after the Indians and the South Africans had reached Abu Dhabi, having landed in Ras Al Khaimah.

All the Indians are now going through their quarantine period in Dubai. Sources said that if the UAE government allowed them to stay in Abu Dhabi, the matches could start on 7 June.

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PSL matches will end on 24 June and the day after, the Pakistan team will fly to England to play three One-Day Internationals and as

many Twenty20 matches.

Arrival report

The Indian men's cricket team arrived in London today for the World Test Championship final against New Zealand and the subsequent Test series versus the hosts. The men's team were accompanied by the women's side who would play three ODIs and three T20s apart from a one-off Test, starting in Bristol on 16 June.

"Touchdown," top-order batsman KL Rahul (in photo) tweeted, placing a picture of the chartered flight in the background, confirming their safe arrival in London.

Both the teams were to travel subsequently to Southampton, where they would pass their mandatory

quarantine period.

Scorers' request

Around 17 scorers have now appealed in unison to BCCI president Sourav Ganguly, seeking "retirement benefits" after reaching 55. The initiative was taken by veteran Mumbai Cricket Association's Vivek Gupte, who sent an e-mail to Ganguly.

Bayliss' exit

Trevor Bayliss is leaving England and will return home to take charge of Sydney Thunder for the next three Twenty20 Big Bash League seasons.

The 58-year-old Bayliss led England to the ODI World Cup at Lord's in 2019 and twice won the Indian Premier League while in charge of the Kolkata Knight Riders.

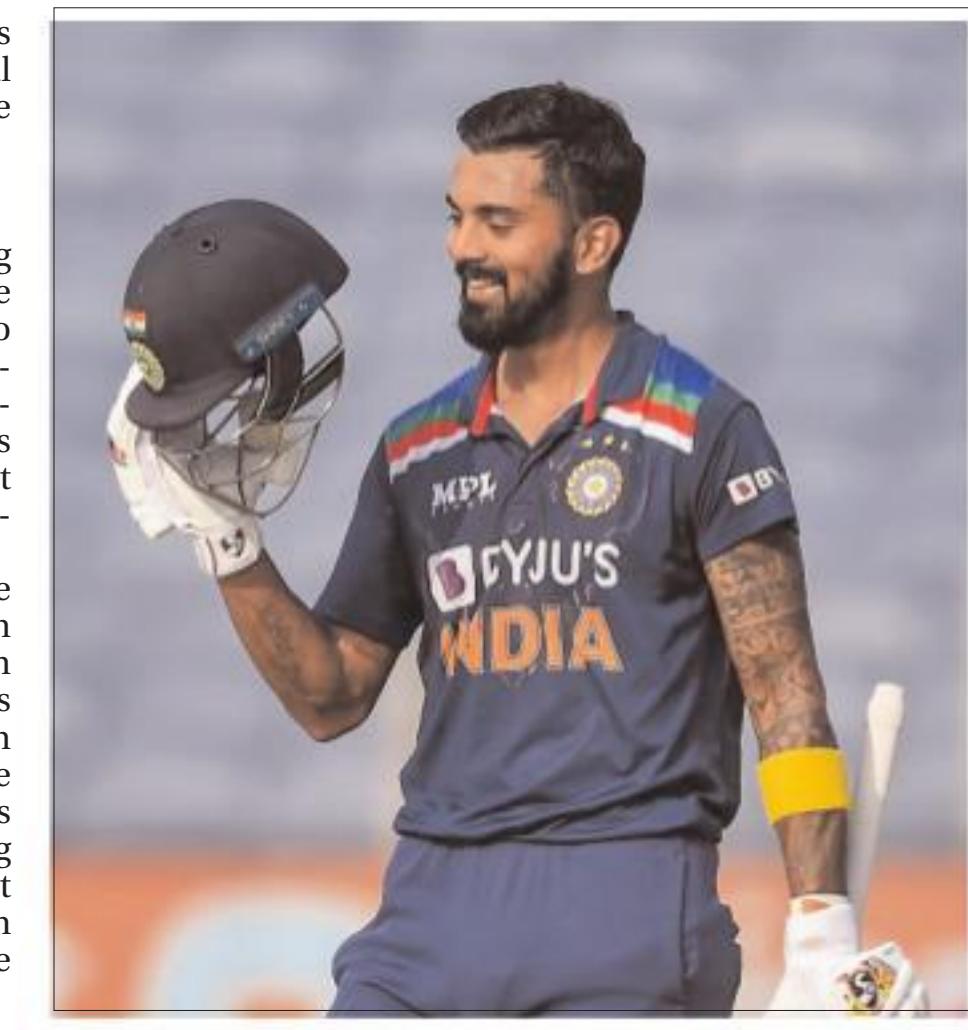
He also led Sydney Sixers to the title in the inaugural season of the Big Bash League a decade ago.

Saker's demand

Former Australia bowling coach David Saker wants the country's cricket board to make the report of its investigation into the 2018 ball-tampering scandal public as he feels releasing that report might end the questions surrounding the incident.

The ball-tampering issue resurfaced when Cameron Bancroft recently hinted in an interview that the bowlers in the team might have been aware of the plot to use sandpaper to alter the ball's condition.

Saker, bowling coach of the side at that time, earlier stated that even he could be held accountable for what happened.



Dubai high-ups more inclusive with big events

LONDON, 3 JUNE

The men's Cricket World Cup will once again become a 14-team tournament in 2027 and 2031, the International Cricket Council said.

The changes were announced as the ICC, cricket's global governing body headquartered in Dubai, unveiled its global schedule of events from 2024 to 2031. The Champions Trophy, a "mini"-World Cup last staged in 2017, when Pakistan won it in England, is to be revived again in 2025 and 2029 as an event for the top-ranked eight One-Day

international teams.

Only 10 sides contested the 2019 World Cup, won by hosts England, compared with 14 four years earlier. But a statement issued by the ICC board said: "The ICC Men's Cricket World Cup will become a 14 team, 54-match event in 2027 and 2031, whilst the ICC Men's T20 World Cup will be expanded to a 20-team, 55-match event in 2024, 2026, 2028 and 2030."

The board, however, has retained the format for the World Test Championship in the next cycle, with nine teams playing six series each to compete in the final every two years. AFP

NZ dismissed for 378 in 1st Test

LONDON, 3 JUNE

Devon Conway was run out for 200 on his Test debut as New Zealand was dismissed for 378 midway through Day 2 of the first Test against England at Lord's on Thursday.

Conway reached his double-century with a pull for six and was out without facing another ball, coming up just short as he sprinted back to the non-striker's end for second run.

The South African-born opener was given a standing ovation at the home of cricket, having made the highest score by a batsman on test debut in England. He broke

a 125-year-old record held by former England player K.S. Ranjitsinhji, who scored 154 in Manchester in 1896.

Conway is the second New Zealand batsman to score double hundred on Test debut.

New Zealand had resumed on its overnight score of 246-3, with Conway on 136, and the dismissal of Henry Nicholls for 61 triggered the Black Caps' collapse from 288-3.

No. 11 Neil Wagner was 25 not out off 21 balls, adding some valuable runs at the end of the innings.

Ollie Robinson, also making his Test debut, had England's best bowling figures of 4-75. AP

Ghana player tests positive after arriving in Japan

AGENCIES

TOKYO, 3 JUNE

A player on Ghana's U-24 team has tested positive for Covid-19 and have been dropped from the tournament. The players were placed in quarantine. The tournament did not identify them.

The player had been isolated from the rest of the squad and staff, who are themselves isolated at a designated facility, the JFA said in a statement.

The news comes just two days after the JFA cancelled a friendly match against Jamaica as 10 of their players were unable to board a flight to Japan due to Covid-19 testing issues.

Japan is battling a fourth wave of Covid-19 just 50 days before the scheduled start of the 2020 Olympic Games, with Tokyo and other regions under a state of emergency until 20 June.

The Ghana team arrived late on Wednesday for the friendly against Japan's U-24 team in the southern city of Fukuoka. The team would need health clearance before the match can go ahead as planned on Saturday, the JFA said, adding that it would provide an update when more information was available.

The team are ranked fourth in the world and Taiwan was originally scheduled to host the tournament before a spike in Covid-19 cases forced the World Baseball Softball Confederation to move the event to Puebla, Mexico. Mexico is still reporting thousands of new Covid-19 cases a day and health ministry data released yesterday said that 228,146 people had died since the start of the pandemic.

The surge in Covid-19 infections in Taiwan was also behind the refusal of the Yunlin county local government to let the squad prepare at training fields under its jurisdiction, the Chinese Taipei Baseball Association said in a statement.

India likely to send 190-strong contingent to Olympics: Batra

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

The Indian contingent for the upcoming Tokyo Olympics is expected to be around 190, including over 100 athletes, IOA president Narinder Batra said on Thursday as Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju unveiled the official kit for the country's participants.

So far, 100 athletes have qualified for the Tokyo Games, including 56 men and 44 women. The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) expects another 25 to 30 to make the cut for the Games, which open on July 23.

"...we are estimating to touch 125 to 135 (qualified athletes) by the next two to three weeks when the qualification process is over," Batra said during the online ceremony which also marked 50 days to the Games.

"This means the Indian contingent, including officials and support staff, is likely to be around 190," he added.

The number of officials cannot be more than one-third of the athlete group as per the Sports Ministry rules. The ministry can, however, allow additional officials at no cost to the government.

Batra also reiterated that India's medal haul can touch the double-digit mark in Tokyo, which will be an unprecedented achievement. India's best medal haul came in the

2012 London Olympics, where the country snared six medals, including two silver and four bronze.

The IOA chief said that all the athletes who have qualified for the Olympics have received the first dose of COVID-19 vaccine except for a few who have recently contracted the virus.

He requested Rijiju to ensure that all the Indian athletes are fully vaccinated before they head to Tokyo.

"The IOC will issue a Playbook (latest version) this month but there will be only minor changes (from earlier version). We have to follow all the health and safety protocols in view of the pandemic."

Unveiling the official kits of the Indian contingent, Rijiju said the whole country is behind the athletes.

"Olympics is the platform where the best in the world will compete. I hope our athletes will make their best effort and make the country proud by winning medals," he said.

"Today, the Prime Minister took a review of the country's preparation for the Olympics and assured the participating athletes that the entire country is behind them," he added.

He said his ministry has provided all kinds of support -- financial and logistical -- to the athletes amid the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Barty retires from French Open with hip injury

AGENCIES

PARIS, 3 JUNE



herright arm. She said that injury had healed and did not hamper her in Paris.

The Australian started the match with her left thigh bandaged and it was immediately clear she could not move properly. Too slow to chase her opponent's shots, she suffered in long rallies and struggled with her first serve.

Barty called for a medical timeout at the end of the opening set, then briefly left the court for treatment. She stopped after Linette hit an ace. Barty then walked to the net to shake the 45th-ranked player's hand.

Already dealing with her hip problem in the first round, Barty had struggled through a

6-4, 3-6, 6-2 win against 70th-ranked Bernarda Pera.

"We did everything, absolutely everything we could, to give myself a chance," Barty said. "It was a small miracle that we were able to get on court for that first round. Again, today it was no better and getting worse again."

Barty decided not to defend herself last year because of the coronavirus pandemic, choosing instead to remain home in Australia.

After ending a four-match losing streak on clay in the previous round, last year's runner-up Sofia Kenin advanced to the third round with a 7-5, 6-3 win over Hailey Baptiste in a battle of Americans.

Benzema misses penalty, Alexander-Arnold hurt

ASSOCIATED PRESS

PARIS, 3 JUNE



The international returns of France striker Karim Benzema (in photo), England defender Trent Alexander-Arnold and Germany players Mats Hummels and Thomas Mller didn't go according to plan.

Benzema, back in France's team after a 5-year absence, had a penalty saved on Wednesday and also hit the post in a 3-0 win over Wales in a warmup match ahead of the European Championship.

At least he came through the game unscathed, unlike Alexander-Arnold. The Liverpool right back, who was selected by England for Euro 2020 after being dropped for international matches in March, sustained a thigh injury late in a 1-0 win over Austria and had to be helped back to the locker room.

"It's not good to see him come off the way he did," England coach Gareth Southgate said of Alexander-Arnold, one of four right backs in the 26-man squad. Hummels and Mller made their returns for Germany 2 years after their last national-team appearances but had to settle for a 1-1 draw with Denmark in another match between sides who qualified for the Euros.

The Netherlands scored an 89th-minute equaliser through Memphis Depay to draw 2-2 with Scotland in another warmup. Euro 2020 starts on 11 June.

French front line

France coach Didier Deschamps ended his long feud with Benzema, which came amid a sextape scandal involving the striker, by calling him up for the first time since October 2015 and immediately putting him in the starting lineup alongside Kylian Mbappé and Antoine Griezmann playing just behind them in a 4-2 diamond formation.

Mbappé and Griezmann both scored in the first half for

the world champions, after Wales had been reduced to 10 men when Neco Williams was sent off for a goal-saving handball to set up the penalty that Benzema missed in the 27th.

Ousmane Dembele added a third with a 79th-minute effort which came after Benzema struck the post with a shot on the swivel.

English jeers

England and Austria players took a knee before their warmup match and it was met with a mixture of loud boos and applause. It was the first time an England side has made the anti-racism gesture in front of a home crowd. "I did hear it," Southgate said of the jeers.

Germany coach Joachim Loew felt the returns of the experienced Mller and Hummels, who both played the full game against Denmark, improved the communication in the team. "Of course, maybe a game or two to refine the connection a bit," Loew said. "We haven't been here for a while and haven't always played with some of the others like that. What was better was communication, talking to each other. It was louder on the pitch. The commands were better, it wasn't as quiet as it was before."

Florian Neuhaus' 48th-minute opener for Germany was cancelled out by Yussuf Poulsen, who plays in the Bundesliga for Leipzig, in the 71st.

Copa America

South American soccer body Conmebol has announced that the historic Maracana stadium in Rio de Janeiro will host the final of Copa America on 10 July.

It also picked Brazil against Venezuela as the opener on 13 June at Brasília's Man Garrincha stadium.

The decider of the South American championship will be the only match of the tournament at the Maracana, which also hosted the final two years ago when Brazil beat Peru 3-1 to win their ninth title.

Conmebol on Wednesday chose Brazil as a replacement host on Monday after Argentina was dropped because of the spread of Covid-19.

Colombia was removed as a co-host on 20 May amid street protests against President Iván Duque. Many health experts criticised the move to bring Copa America to Brazil, where the death toll is currently at more than 465,000.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

JAIPUR, 3 JUNE

Striker Yuvraj Walmiki (in photo) has a "gut feeling" that the Indian men's hockey team will win a medal if the Tokyo Olympics are held on schedule.

"One thing I will definitely say is that Indian hockey right now is doing wonderfully under the (leadership of PR) Sreejesh and Manpreet (Singh)," Walmiki claimed, adding: "I still have this gut feeling... in case the Tokyo Olympics take place, the Indian hockey team will bag a medal this time around. I have this strong belief."

Indian hockey teams have won eight gold medals at the Olympics, the most by any team in the history of the Games. But the last podium finish was the gold medal triumph at the Moscow Olympics, back in 1980.

However, as far as the Tokyo Olympics are concerned, the International Olympic Committee is facing pressure, especially from the general Japanese public, to call off the Games owing to a surge in Covid-19 infections in the country.

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