

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | FRIDAY 18 | JUNE 2021

WEATHER



Max: 33°C
Min: 21°C
Rainfall: Nil

ASTROGUIDE

Pilava: Aani 4
Tithi: Ashtami
Star: Uthiram
Rahukalam:
10.30 am to 12 noon
Yamagandam:
3 pm to 4.30 pm
PRAYERS
Fajar: 4.23 am
Luhar: 12.14 pm
Asar: 3.35 pm
Maghrib: 6.36 pm
Isha: 7.55 pm

If others followed law, why couldn't Twitter: Govt

New Delhi: Union Electronics and IT Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad on the removal of Twitter's intermediary status. "I am not the one who declared it (removal of Twitter's intermediary status), the law has. If others followed, why couldn't they? We asked for three officers to be appointed.

COUNTER

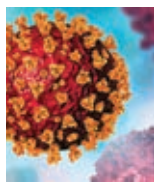
POINT



This is the list of malls, restaurants and parks to visit... once the lockdown is lifted!

CITY | 2

Shivashankar Baba sent to 14 days of judicial custody



WORLD | 5

Delta variant infections in England doubling in 11 days

SPORT | 8

World Test Championship final begins today



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CM takes up NEET, vaccine supply in meet with Modi

■ Stalin presents PM state's needs under 25 heads

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR, D. SEKAR | DC CHENNAI, JUNE 17

Dropping of National Entrance-cum-Eligibility-Test (NEET), providing OBC reservation in all-India quota for medical college admissions, removal of the creamy layer concept for determining OBC beneficiaries and declaring Tamil as an official language of India are among the long list of demands that Chief Minister M.K. Stalin placed before Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday.

Mr Stalin also asked Tamil to be made a language used in the High Court through the memorandum, running to more than 125 pages with the demands classified under 25 heads, which he presented to Modi during his meeting at New Delhi.

The demands relating to the tackling of the Coronavirus pandemic were adequate allotment of vaccine, supply of life saving drugs like Liposomal and Amphotericin B and commencing vaccine production in the HLL Biotech unit in Chengalpattu and the Pasteur Institute in Coonoor.



Tamil Nadu CM M.K. Stalin greets Prime Minister Narendra Modi with a 'ponnadai' in New Delhi on Thursday evening. This was Stalin's first meeting with the PM after he was elected as CM.

The other demands listed under 'health' included demands like dropping NEET and building of the promised AIIMS at Madurai and another one at Coimbatore.

Dropping of the Chennai-Salem Greenfield Expressway, giving up on the hydrocarbon schemes and neutrino project and the repeal of Draft EIA Notification, 2020, were

demands relating to environmental protection.

The first among the list of subjects was, however, issues relating to water, under which the Chief Minister expressed concern over the Mekedatu scheme that Karnataka was planning to implement and wanted to restore the storage level in the Mullaiperiyar dam to its FRL of 152 feet. ■ P2

TN WISH LIST

- Release of Cauvery water as per SC judgment
- Restoration of water level to FRL of 152ft at Mullaiperiyar dam
- Linking of Godavari-Cauvery; Cauvery-Gundarau rivers
- Concern over Mekedatu scheme of Karnataka
- Declaration of Tamil as official language of India
- Use of Tamil in the High Court
- Expansion of Thoothukudi port
- Construction of new world class international airport in Chennai
- Passing of bill reserving 33 per seats for women in Parliament and state legislatures
- Amending MGNREG Act to provide 150 days of employment to rural people
- Release of pending grants as per 14th Finance Commission award
- Release of pending GST dues
- Revocation of the National Education Policy
- Sharing proceeds of cess and surcharge with states

SC clears Class 12 evaluation norms

PARMOD KUMAR | DC WITH AGENCY INPUTS NEW DELHI, JUNE 17

The Supreme Court on Thursday accepted the evaluation plan submitted by the CBSE and ICSE for awarding marks to students who are to appear for Class XII Board examination this year.

Based on results of Class XII, XI and X respectively, the CBSE has adopted a 40:30:30 formula to evaluate and mark students. The Council for the Indian School Certificate Examination (ISCCE) said that it would consider the performance of students for the last six classes in finalising the final board results.

According to the CBSE

formula, the theory marks of each subject will be computed using 40 per cent from the marks they got in the subject pre-boards or mid-term exams held by their schools earlier this year, 30 per cent from their Class XI final exam marks, and 30 per cent from their Class X Board exam results. This will be added to the actual marks that they got in their Class XII internal assessments and practicals for that subject.

The results of XII stand board examination by CBSE and ICSE will be declared by July 31, 2021.

Each school will constitute a five-member result committee to be headed by the principal.

■ P4

India toughens stand on Colombo port city

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC NEW DELHI, JUNE 17

In a strong message to Sri Lanka that clearly highlights Indian security concerns on the Chinese-backed Colombo port city project, India on Thursday said it expected the island nation to

"remain mindful of our excellent bilateral cooperation, including for mutual security in our shared environment, which includes the maritime domain". Stating that it was "closely following recent developments from our security perspective" on the project.

■ P4

HC TALKS TOUGH, 3 STUDENTS WALK OUT OF DELHI JAIL

New Delhi, June 17: Student activists Natasha Narwal, Devangana Kalita and Asif Iqbal Tanha walked out of Tihar prison on Thursday, hours after a court here ordered their immediate release in the north-east Delhi riots "conspiracy" case.

The order came two days after the Delhi High Court granted bail to Ms Narwal, Ms Kalita and Mr Tanha, who were arrested in May last year under the stringent Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act. A senior jail official said Ms Kalita and Ms Narwal were released around 7 pm and Mr Tanha around 7.30 pm. ■ P4

SII'S CHILDREN VAX BY SEPT

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JUNE 17

The Serum Institute of India will begin Novavax trials on children from July 15 and hopes to introduce its Indian version -- Covavax -- by September, sources said. Novavax, a US vaccine-maker, had recently announced that its vaccine was more than 90 per cent effective in clinical trials held in the US.



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OTHER STORIES

326 new coronavirus cases registered in Pondy

Puducherry, June 17: The union territory of Puducherry reported 326 new coronavirus cases during the last 24 hours, raising the overall tally to 1,13,948, a senior official of the Department of Health and Family Welfare said on Thursday.

The 326 cases were identified at the end of the examination of 9,106 samples in all the four regions of Puducherry, Karaikal, Mahe and Yanam, projecting a test positivity rate at 3.58 per cent.

Of the new cases, 280 were from the Puducherry region followed by Karaikal (30), Yanam (10) and Mahe (6).

Director of Health Department S Mohan Kumar said eight more people-six men and two women- succumbed to the virus during the last 24 hours ending 10 AM Thursday, raising the toll to 1,710.

As many as 480 patients recovered and were discharged during the last 24 hours taking the overall recoveries to 1,07,905.

The number of active cases in the union territory stood at 4,333 (666 in hospitals and 3,667 in home isolation), he said.

The Health department Director said 11,99,383 samples have been tested so far and it was found that 10,31,190 of them were negative.

The Director said that fatality and recovery rates were 1.50 per cent and 94.70 per cent respectively.

He said that 36,702 healthcare workers and 22,712 frontline workers have been inoculated so far.

The Health Department has so far vaccinated 2,37,541 people coming under the category of either senior citizens (above 60 years) or those above 45 years with comorbidities.

— PTI

No further construction on any waterbodies, says HC

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 17

The Madras high court has made it clear that there should be no further construction on any waterbodies, though construction can be carried out on lands not indicated as waterbodies in the records or survey maps.

The first bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthilkumar Ramamoorthy was passing further interim orders on a Public Interest Litigation filed by Iyarkai Valam Matrum Perumpalla Odai Pathukappu Nala Sangam, which sought a direction to the authorities to refrain from disturbing or altering the Perumpalla Odai at Kathirampatti village in Erode district in the name of Smart City scheme.



In order to protect the waterbodies in the state, the bench had earlier while passing interim orders in this PIL, directed the authorities to obtain satellite images of all taluks in the state and waterbodies earmarked so that in future it cannot be contended that there was no waterbody where there actually was one.

When the case came up for hearing on Thursday, the bench in its further interim orders said in

view of the second surge of the pandemic, it was understandable that the high resolution satellite images that were required to be prepared of the water bodies together with the relevant survey numbers may not have been finalised. "This exercise is extremely important and should be completed within the next three weeks with soft copies of such high resolution satellite images and corresponding survey numbers being available with several authorities so that there can be no future desecration or depletion of water bodies anywhere in the state. The matter will appear four weeks hence. It is hoped that the exercise is taken up in right earnest and completed within such time," the bench added.

The bench said govern-

ment advocate PMuthukumar, appearing for the state, has assured the court that every endeavour would be made to complete the exercise within the time permitted. It was submitted on behalf of the petitioner that in another matter connected to water bodies, an amicus has been appointed. Let such matter appear immediately after this matter on the next adjourned date. "It is submitted on behalf of the petitioner that there is ongoing construction work in the relevant waterbody in Erode. There should be no further construction on any waterbody, though construction can be carried out on lands not indicated as waterbodies in the records or survey maps", the bench added and posted to July 15, 2021, further hearing of the case.

Timely help



City Police Commissioner Shankar Jiwal greets Jaffer Ali, a 23-year-old from Assam, after he was rescued and given good medical treatment by 'Kaval karangal' of the city police.

— DC

Fresh stock of Covid-19 vaccine arrives in Chennai

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 17

With the shortage of Covid-19 vaccines reported in Tamil Nadu, about 4.36 lakh doses of Covid-19 vaccines arrived here at the state capital on Thursday. The additional stock arrived here today following a request by the state government to the centre.

According to the airport sources, 13 parcels with 60,000 doses of Covaxin manufactured by Hyderabad-based Bharath Biotech arrived here at Chennai airport on a private flight.

According to the airport sources, 13 parcels with 60,000 doses of Covaxin manufactured by Hyderabad-based Bharath Biotech arrived here at Chennai airport on a private flight

On Thursday evening, 32 cartons with 3,76,000 doses of Covishield from Pune's Serum Institute was airlifted by an Indigo airlines flight. 2.76 lakh doses of Covishield was sent to the Directorate Of Medical And Rural Health Services in Teynampet in Chennai, while the remaining one lakh doses were sent to be stored at the drug storage unit in

Periamet.

The processing of the shipment at the Chennai airport was completed quickly and it was handed over to department officials, airport sources said. The additional doses are expected to revive the vaccine drive in Tamil Nadu as the daily vaccination numbers recently had fallen sharply due to a shortage.

Corpn issues notices to 23 contractors

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 17

The Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) on Thursday issued show cause notices to 23 contractors who delayed the integrated stormwater drain and waterbody restoration works in various zones.

GCC commissioner Gagandeep Singh Bedi said that action would be taken after getting reply for the inordinate delay in the works. The notices were issued after the commissioner inspected various pending project sites at Kodambakkam and Nadambakkam areas.

After getting the reply to the notices, the contractors will be persuaded to complete the works without delay, he said.

The GCC administration shifted the focus on pending projects after it spearheaded a weeks-long clean-up drive during the complete lockdown period. In the morning, a team of officials led by the commissioner visited the project sites at Chinmaya Nagar,

GCC commissioner Gagandeep Singh Bedi said that action would be taken after getting reply for the inordinate delay in the work. The notices were issued after the commissioner inspected various pending project sites at Kodambakkam and Nadambakkam areas

Saligramam and Virugambakkam. Later, the commissioner took stock of the situation at the water body restoration worksite at Nandambakkam. The restoration works will be intensified with the help of smart poles to avoid a future flood situation in the city. The restored waterbodies will be protected from dumping garbage by erecting protective fences. So far, the GCC has cleared 43,200 metric tonne of garbage from the town with the support of advanced robotic machines as part of the clean-up drive, said the commissioner.

Idols case diaries missing: HC directs TN govt to check it out

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 17

The Madras high court has asked the state government to look into the allegation that case diaries in some cases (relating to missing idols or jewellery belonging to the temples) have gone missing and investigation may have been stopped midway for extraneous considerations.

The first bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthilkumar Ramamoorthy gave the directive while passing further interim orders on a Public Interest Litigation filed by R.Venkataraman.

The bench said the petitioner has brought some disturbing facts to the notice of the court. Indeed, upon being prima facie satisfied with the seriousness of the charges levelled, an order was passed on January 20, 2021 directing the authorities to coordinate with the DGP for ascertaining the temples from where idols or jewellery belonging to the temples may have gone missing. This court also

The bench said a counter affidavit has been filed and it does not appear that such counter affidavit can be taken too seriously. It cannot be the state's stand that idols or jewellery have not gone missing or that adequate or appropriate steps have been taken to recover the same

required a road map to be prepared to recover the stolen jewellery and prevent the recurrence of such incidents, the bench added.

The bench said a counter affidavit has been filed and it does not appear that such counter affidavit can be taken too seriously. It cannot be the state's stand that idols or jewellery have not gone missing or that adequate or appropriate steps have been taken to recover the same. The petitioner complains that the master register has gone missing from the HR & CE department. The state should reconsider the stand indicated in the counter affidavit, particularly since there has been a change of government here. The state should also look into the petitioner's allegation that case

diaries in some cases have gone missing and investigations may have been stopped midway for extraneous considerations, the bench added.

The bench said let a copy of this order be reached to the office of advocate general for the matter to be looked into at the highest level and upon deputing appropriate personnel before a status report was filed in court when the matter appears three weeks hence.

It will be open to the authorities to invite the petitioner since the petitioner appears to have sufficient material to indicate the particulars of the idols or the nature of the jewellery that may have gone missing, the bench added and posted to July 8, 2021, further hearing of the case.

Shivashankar Baba sent to 14 days of judicial custody

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 17

Self-styled godman Shivashankar Baba, the founder of a reputed school in Chennai arrested on the charges of sexually harassing girl students, was remanded to judicial custody on Thursday.

The 71-year-old has been remanded to judicial custody till July 1, the police said.

Allegations of sexual harassment and misconduct against the founder of the school had circulated on Social media and soon went viral.

After this, a few of the school's alumni lodged an official complaint with the Police.

Based on the complaint of victims, 3 cases were registered under the Pocco Act and Women Harassment Act in

Mamallapuram AWPS case against Sri Siva Sankar Baba for sexually harassing students in his Sushil Hari International School at Kelambakkam on the outskirts of Chennai.

The cases were transferred to CBCID by the DGP, Tamil Nadu for further investigation on June 13.

A CBCID team, led by Deputy Superintendent of Police Tr. Gunavarman rushed to Delhi and conducted an investigation. The accused was arrested from Chittaranjan Park in Delhi on June 16.

Arrested Baba was produced in a court in Delhi and brought to Chennai on Wednesday night on a transit warrant. On arrival at Chennai, he was taken to the CB-CID office in Egmore for investigation.

On Thursday evening, he

was produced before Magistrate Ambika in Chengalpet Mahila Court and Shivashankar Baba was remanded to judicial custody for 14 days till July 14.

Meanwhile, tension prevailed near the court premises on Thursday evening, after the cadres from All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA), Students Federation of India (SFI) and Democratic Youth's Federation of India (DYFI), marched towards the court, protesting and raising slogans against the accused. They were arrested by the police.

Any further complaint in the case sexual harassment case can be intimated to the Investigation officer Tr. Gunavarman in Cell No. 98405 58992 and Inspector Tr. Renugadevi 98406 69982 and in email id inspoc2@gmail.com.

Vax certificate upload delay, dosage gap irk Chennaiites



B. Vijayalakshmi

Viewpoint

Even while the gap between Covishield's first and second dose came under the scanner this week, people in Chennai are worried over the delay in uploading vaccine certificates on the CoWin portal.

The ferocious second wave and shortage of vaccines led to the decision to administer one dose to as many people as possible. Besides, the opening up of vaccination to

the 18-44 age group also led to an increase in vaccine demand.

With experts suggesting that the longer the gap, the higher the efficacy of the vaccine, the government increased the interval between vaccine doses from 6-8 weeks to 12-16 weeks based on scientific evidence after rounds of discussions with the National Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (NTAGI)

members.

Vaccination camps held by the Chennai corporation in UPHCs, residential areas and gated communities witnessed overwhelming response from residents. However, most of them are yet to find their vaccination status in the CoWin portal updated. Those who took their second dose a month ago have not got their vaccination certificates, but a SMS reminder from CoWin asking them to get their second dose!

Since the CoWin portal prescribes a 84-day gap between the vaccine doses, those who took their second jab as per the previous schedule, have also not got their vaccination certificate. The portal does not permit people to take the second dose before the prescribed interval. Dosage

interval and delay in uploading certificates have badly hit those wanting to go abroad for education and work.

The Chennai corporation must recruit eligible candidates in all UPHCs and ensure vaccination details are uploaded in CoWin portal every day.

There is no cause to worry about the gap. NTAGI is likely to review the evidence and suggest an alternate course soon.

As the pace of vaccination is set to pick up in July, everyone eligible for vaccination must get their jab as per the schedule.

At the same time, the government must take immediate corrective measures to update vaccine info and clear the backlog as early as possible.

Injured wild jumbo caged without using tranquilisers

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC
OOTY, JUNE 17

The forest staffers of Gudalur and Mudumalai Tiger Reserve (MTR) have scripted a success story by capturing an injured wild jumbo in the Gudalur limits near here without using the tranquillising darts. The pachyderm was shifted to the MTR.

The 27-year-old tusker was roaming around the human settlements in Gudalur, with a deep injury on its back, triggering panic among the residents. The officials in the Gudalur forest division made unsuccessful attempts to treat the jumbo in its natural environs. But on Wednesday evening, the forest teams captured the elephant inside a wooded zone in Maakamoola area in Gudalur. As the jumbo looked weak due to the injury, the forest teams avoided using tranquilisers and, instead, captured it by using the Kumki ele-



phants. On Thursday afternoon, it was shifted to the Abhayaranyam camp in MTR.

K.K. Kaushal, the field director of MTR, stated that the MTR elephant camp team comprising Kumkis, caretakers and the veterinary unit joined the Gudalur forest division team and captured the wild tusker

without giving sedation. There is an extensive chronic wound in the tail region and a swelling in the left hind leg. The tusker is highly debilitated. It is being treated as per the advice from experts of Tanuvas. It will be intensively treated inside the kraal in the coming days, he noted.

Meanwhile, in another

incident at Kurinjinar area in Pandalur,

a wild jumbo killed Balakrishnan(37), a casual labourer residing in the area, on Thursday early hours.

Sources said that when Balakrishnan was walking along a footpath there, a wild elephant which ventured out attacked and killed him.

SHORT TAKES

IIT-M launches memory studies network

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 17

Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IIT-M) has launched the 'Indian Network for Memory Studies' (INMS), the first formal national network in the field of memory studies in India. It has been formed under the aegis of the international Memory Studies Association (MSA), Amsterdam.

Prof. Bhaskar Ramamurthi, Director, IIT Madras, said that memory studies can be very important for India as it has a lot of historical developments and they are captured only in memories and not on documentation.

The INMS will coordinate complex engagements with 'memory' from different institutes as well as neuroscience laboratories and industry research on AI and related fields. The Network was inaugurated virtually on Wednesday. The INMS is founded by Dr. Avishek Parui and Dr. Merin Simi Raj, Assistant Professors, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT-M.

Fringe group describes Vanchinathan 'casteist'

M. ARULOLI | DC
TIRUNELVELI, JUNE 17

Popular freedom fighter 'Veeran' Vanchinathan, who shot down then British collector of Tirunelveli William Escourt Ashe on June 17, 1911, who was instrumental in arresting V.O. Chidambaram Pillai for running the Swadeshi Steam Navigation Company and for leading the labour struggle in Coral Mill in Thoothukudi, has been demeaned as a casteist by the members of Adhi Tamilar Peravai, who paid tributes at the Ashe memorial in Palayamkottai English Church in Tirunelveli on Thursday.

Kalaikannan, a district functionary of Adhi Tamilar Peravai, hailed Ashe as one who dedicated his life to eradicate untouchability and also

called Vanchinathan a casteist. Kalaikannan says, "Ashe's wife Mary Lillian Patterson was a social worker. One day during her visit to Shengottai, along with her husband, she took a Dalit woman having labour pain to a nearby hospital in a bullock cart through an agharam, infuriating the Brahmins residing there. Vanchinathan, a resident of the agharam, killed Ashe for the good deed done by his wife." Kannan added that it was Ashe who opened up the waterfalls in Sengottai region for all castes.

However, this version was trashed by Vanchi Makkal Iyakkam president P Ramanathan, who accused a local pastor, Stephen Ravi Kumar, of creating a malicious story to humiliate Vanchinathan.

"This story concocted by Stephen, however, has no

date mentioned in it," said Ramanathan, who questioned the veracity of Kalaikannan's version as Shengottai in 1911 was a part of the Travancore province. Ramanathan added that Ashe, as collector of Tirunelveli during the British rule, did not have the power to pass any order in a princely state outside the British Indian territory.

Meenakshi Sundaram of Nagercoil, a retired history teacher, acknowledging Ramanathan's version, said, "It has been proved in the court trial that Vanchinathan, then an employee of the Travancore forest department, shot Ashe on the latter's way to Kodaikanal at the Maniyachi railway station to avenge the imprisonment of Chidambaram Pillai by the British rulers." Had Vanchinathan killed Ashe for his caste, his community would

not have disowned him, said Meenakshi who added that Vanchinathan's father Raghupathy Iyer refused to perform the last rite for his son.

She added that if Vanchinathan had a caste motive, he would have killed Ashe's wife, not him, who, according to the new story, helped the Dalit woman. "But Vanchinathan did not harm Mary Lillian, who was in the same coach with Ashe," said Sundaram, who also remembered an email reconciliation message sent on June 18, 2011 by Ashe's grandson Robert W.D.E. Ashe to Harihara Subramanian, grandson of Vanchinathan's younger brother.

In his message W.D.E. Ashe called Vanchinathan an idealist political campaigner, whose zeal for freedom of his beloved India sent Robert Ashe to his early grave.



The temple authorities have sought for opinion from Thailand doctors on Thursday as the Meenakshi Amman Temple elephant Parvathy has eye ailments. —K.Manikandan

65 activists write to CM against 'Project Blue'

OP ARULN | DC
CHENNAI, JUNE 17

As many as 65 eminent civil and environmental activists and fisher folks have raised concern over 'Project Blue' a part of Singara Chennai 2.0 proposed by the Greater Chennai Corporation.

In an open letter sent to Chief Minister M.K. Stalin, they said the project should recognise and protect the livelihood rights of fishermen and hoped it will not be another plan that perpetuates the discriminatory policies of previous administrations.

The signatories include former Madras high court judge, Justice Hariparanthaman, musician T.M. Krishna, writer and social commentator Nityanand Jayaraman, Chennai Solidarity Group, Ajit Menon, professor, Madras Institute of Development Studies, Aarthi Sridhar, Dakshin Foundation, Benisha -

Chennai Climate Action Group, Dr. Bala Sathiapalan - Institute of Mathematical Sciences, Tharamani, Durai Mahendran - state secretary - Tamil Nadu Meenava Sangam, Dhruv Gangadharan - Biodiversity Collaborative, Debi Goenka - Conservation Action Trust, Gowtham of Eegaikuzhu, G Rajasekaran, professor emeritus, Institute of Mathematical and G Sundararajan of Poovulagin Nanbargal.

Recalling the previous editions of similar urban beautification and renewal projects by successive regimes, they said in the name of river restoration, infrastructure and beautification, the poor and vulnerable people in the city have been targeted. Over the last few years, efforts were made to evict fish vendors from the Marina Loop Road. In 2009, an attempt was made to construct an elevated expressway from Nochikuppam

to Kottivakkam across the Adyar estuary to cater to private vehicles. The plan was abandoned after public protests.

While details of the current project are not in public domain, the previous editions of similar urban beautification and infrastructure development projects give us cause for worry. "Contrary to this, we hope that Project Blue ensures the city is healthy and liveable for all of its residents, starting from the lives of the urban poor," they said.

Chennai's beaches are not just objects of beauty and recreation, they are first and foremost livelihood and living spaces for the city's fisherfolk. Even recreationally, the attraction of our beaches is the availability of open, unbuilt nature, not landscaped spaces and built infrastructure. Our beaches need to be kept clean, inclusive and safe, they said.

Woman loses five sovereign chain to attention diversion duo

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 17

Two men in Chennai diverted the attention of an eatery owner and made away with her five sovereign chain on Thursday morning. They diverted the attention of the woman by telling her to parcel idly, and when she was packing food, they snatched her chain and fled the scene.

According to the police, the victim Rajalakshmi (33) a resident of Chitalapakkam near Medavakkam runs an eatery in the area. On Thursday morning, two men had come to the hotel

According to the police, the victim Rajalakshmi (33) a resident of Chitalapakkam runs an eatery there. On Thursday morning, two men had come to the hotel and asked Rajalakshmi to parcel 60 idlies. While she was packing the food, they allegedly snatched the five sovereigns chain she was wearing and fled the scene.

When Rajalakshmi called out for help, a few youngsters in the area chased the bike and nabbed one of the accused. The man identified as, Shiva (23) of Vadapalani, was attacked

by the locals and handed over to the Perumbakkam police.

Based on the complaint by Rajalakshmi, the Police registered a case. They have arrested Shiva and launched a search for Pazhani, who managed to escape with the gold chain. The police admitted Shiva to Medavakkam Government hospital to treat his injuries. Investigations are on.

Woman pillion rider killed in a road accident

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 17

A 22-year-old pillion rider was killed in a road accident after the motorcycle she was travelling was hit by a speeding car on Chennai - Bengaluru National highway on Wednesday night.

The deceased is Bhuvaneshwari (22) from Villupuram, who worked here at a private automobile manufacturing unit in Oragadam, Sriperumbudur. She lived in Singaperumal Kovil in Chengalpet, the police said. Her friend Prabhakar (24), a native of Salem, suffered severe injuries from the accident.

According to police, the accident took place at 10.30 pm on Wednesday when Bhuvaneshwari and her friend Prabhakar (24)

were returning back from a birthday party on a two-wheeler. When they reached the Sriperumbudur tollgate on Chennai - Bengaluru National Highway, a speeding car coming behind rammed against their bike. The duo was thrown off the vehicle.

Passerbys alerted the 108 ambulances. By the time an ambulance could reach the spot, Bhuvaneshwari died due to excessive bleeding.

Police personnel from Sriperumbudur police station rushed to the spot and enquired about the accident. They arrested the car driver, Udhayakumar (35) for causing the accident. The body was shifted to the Sriperumbudur government hospital for autopsy. A case has been registered and the investigation is on.

AIADMK goes full blast against DMK and Sasikala

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR &
D. SEKAR/DC
CHENNAI, JUNE 17

Launching an all-out attack on both the DMK government and V K Sasikala, the AIADMK leaders, through a multi-pronged strategy, are making a bid to keep the party relevant in the political scene and also to be heard and seen as a viable opposition in the State.

Apart from the joint statement by the two top honchos O Panneerselvam and Edappadi K Palaniswami accusing the DMK government of unleashing violence against the AIADMK's IT wing members, on Thursday, the party's district units are passing resolutions aimed at keeping Sasikala away from the party.

Palaniswami, who became the Leader of the Opposition in the State Assembly by virtue of the extraordinary support he enjoys among the party MLAs, also did his party by coming out with a separate statement urging the DMK not to give permission to the ONGC for hydrocarbon exploration in Ariyalur district.

In that he attacked the DMK for bringing a slew of hydrocarbon exploration projects to the Cauvery delta in 2010, claiming that it was J Jayalalithaa who put an end

to those schemes by appointing an expert team to study the ill-effects of the explorations.

The joint statement, too, alleged that the DMK was targeting AIADMK IT wing members for exposing the government's inadequacies and inability to provide good governance while reiterating that the AIADMK was formed with a view to uplifting the poor.

Harping on the past 'achievements' of the party during the tenure of founder M G Ramachandran (MGR) and his successor Jayalalithaa, the statement said that the AIADMK was no pushover.

Similar sentiments were also expressed through the resolution passed by the Salem suburban district of the AIADMK at a meeting attended by Palaniswami. The resolution not only praised Palaniswami and also Panneerselvam for the good work they were doing but also lauded them for throwing out members who were in touch with Sasikala.

Making it clear that Sasikala was not a member of the party, the resolution described her and her family members as parasites who exploited the good work of Jayalalithaa and other party

leaders. Similar resolutions are being passed by all the district units in a bid to ensure that the rank and file of the party remain under the leadership of Palaniswami and Panneerselvam and do not drift towards Sasikala.

The wording of the resolutions betray the desperation of the party leadership to keep their flock with them and not let them be led astray into the Sasikala camp. For their statements and the resolutions repeatedly sing the praise of MGR and Jayalalithaa and suggest that the party is marching ahead under the twin leaders of Palaniswami and Panneerselvam.

The repeated attempt to proclaim that the party lost the Assembly elections by a thin margin and has won considerable number of seats in the House - 66 individually and 75 by the alliance together - seems to be a counter to Sasikala's claim in all her conversations with the 'cadre' that she would come in to save the party.

Also to prove to the cadre that the present leadership is also capable of taking on the night of the DMK, the statements picking on the government are being released with regularity.

New collectors in Central districts take charge

DC CORRESPONDENT
PUDUKKOTTAI/
NAGAPATTINAM, JUNE 17

Kavitha Ramu took charge as Pudukkottai Collector on Thursday, replacing B. Uma Maheswari who was posted as secretary of the Tamil Nadu Public Service Commission in Chennai.

Dr A. Arun Thamburaj assumed office of the Collector following the transfer of Praveen. P. Nair as director of rural development and panchayat raj in Chennai. P. Gayatri Krishnan took over as Collector of Tiruvapur on Thursday, replacing V. Shantha who was posted as additional commissioner, land administration department, Chennai.

Dr T. Prabhu Shankar took charge as Collector of Karur on Wednesday, following the transfer of Prashant M. Wadnere as additional secretary, finance department, Chennai.

P. Ramana Saraswathi assumed office of the Collector of Ariyalur who replaced D. Rathna, who was posted as director of social welfare, Chennai.



Minister for electricity, prohibition and excise V Senthil Balaji addresses the media at TNEB headoffice on Thursday. —DC

Govt sets paddy output target of 43L tonnes

G. SRINIVASAN | DC
THANJAVUR, JUNE 17

The state government has fixed a target of procuring 43 lakh tonnes of paddy, during the Kharif season from October last year to September end this year, said R. Sakkarapani, minister for food and civil supplies, here on Thursday.

He told mediapersons that so far 34.40 lakh tonnes have been procured. "In the coming months of June, July, August and September, we hope to procure the

remaining quantity of paddy to achieve the target. In all probability, we may exceed the target" the minister said.

Last year the target was 32 lakh tonnes and achievement was 32.40 lakh tonnes.

He inspected the TNCSC regional office at Thanjavur and later the rice mill of a hulling agent at Vallam near Thanjavur. He said that the government is committed to providing quality rice in ration shops to people.

"Last year, the previous

government procured paddy with moisture content more than the permissible 17 percent. Hence black rice grain was seen in PDS rice in some places. But these rice were removed. This time quality rice will be produced and given to people", the minister said.

MLAs T.K.G. Neelamegam, Durai Chandrasekaran, Dr.R.Anandhan, commissioner, civil supplies, and Dinesh Ponraj Oliver, Thanjavur district collector, were present on the occasion.

Minister tells officials to check on Covid aid

R.VALAYAPATHY | DC
TIRUCHY, JUNE 17

Food Minister R. Sakkarapani has appealed to the officials concerned to ensure uninterrupted distribution of the second instalment of the Covid-19 relief fund of Rs 2,000 and 14 varieties of essential commodities to the family cardholders, besides ensuring the quality of the essential commodities.

Sakkarapani, accompanied by his cabinet colleagues K.N. Nehru, S. Reghupathy, and Anbil Mahesh Poyya Mozhi, Tiruchy Collector S.Sivarasu and other officials, held a review meeting on the PDS system and direct purchase of paddy from the farmers with the officials of Tiruchy, Karur, Perambalur, and Pudukkottai districts, at Tiruchy.

He also appealed to the officials to clear all the pending petitions of the general public under the 'Ungal Thoguthi Muthalamaichar Thittam'.

Nehru appealed to the officials of the Tamil Nadu civil supplies corporation to open more direct purchase centres (DPCs) for procuring paddy from the farmers wherever needed, with adequate logistic facilities.

Ghastly blaze in Kumbakonam school killed 94 kids 17 years ago Health secy reaches out to parents at Natham

G. SRINIVASAN | DC
THANJAVUR, JUNE 17

On the fateful July 16 in 2004, 94 students perished in a massive fire that broke out at Krishna school at Kumbakonam in Thanjavur district. Eighteen students were injured.

Then district collector of Thanjavur Dr J. Radhakrishnan, now health secretary, rushed to the spot and organised rescue and relief operations. On that day and in the following months, he arranged for rehabilitation and counselling of the affected parents and injured students.

The children who survived the accident are now pursuing higher studies - thanks to the efforts made by the gov-



Dr.J.Radhakrishnan, health secretary, speaking to people of Natham, native village of 13 children killed in 2004 school fire accident. —DC

He makes it a point to reach out to them whenever he visits Thanjavur district.

On this June 16, he was here for a Covid-19 inspection along with health minister M. Subramanian. Taking a break, he visited Natham village near Kumbakonam.

Thirteen of the 94 children who were killed in the accident belonged to Natham. He met the parents of the deceased children.

"It's touching to meet old grandmothers who shared their tales in the intervening period apart from enquiring about me and my family. An elderly lady has lost her eyesight. I have asked our team to organise vaccination camps and other health support", Radhakrishnan told DC after visiting Natham. "I met the mother of Murganandam who died in the fire. My wife Krithika and son Arvind used to visit this village as part of psycho-social support in 2004 and subsequently thereafter," recalled Radhakrishnan.



Tirupur district collector S. Vineeth inspects a ration shop at Karuvampalayam in Tirupur on Thursday. —DC

SHORT TAKES

INDIA TOUGHENS
STAND ON COLOMBO
PORT CITY

FROM PG 1

New Delhi also said it had “noted the concerns that have been raised in Sri Lanka regarding several aspects of the framework for the Colombo Port City”.

In his weekly briefing on Thursday, MEA spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said, “Regarding the Colombo Port City project, we have been closely following recent developments from our security perspective. We have also noted the concerns that have been raised in Sri Lanka regarding several aspects of the framework for the Colombo Port City. We expect Sri Lanka will remain mindful of our excellent bilateral cooperation, including for mutual security in our shared environment, which includes the maritime domain.”

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

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

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

NIA OPPOSES
STAN SWAMY'S
BAIL PLEA IN HC

Mumbai, June 17 : The National Investigating Agency (NIA) has opposed the bail plea filed by Jesuit priest and activist Stan Swamy in the Bombay High Court, saying the Elgar Parishad case accused was a ‘Maoist’ who engaged in activities to spread Naxalism, and that he was part of a “deep rooted controversy to overthrow the government.”

The central agency urged the HC to dismiss the plea of Swamy (84), saying his allegations of fabricated evidence, his denial of having played any role in the said conspiracy and other charges against him, were all “endeavours to confuse truth with falsehood, and to create a mist around the evidence and reality.”

In an affidavit filed in the HC earlier this week, the NIA opposed the appeal filed by Swamy through his counsel, senior advocate Mihir Desai, in which the priest had challenged a special court's order denying him bail on health grounds as well as on merits in the Elgar Parishad-Maoist links case.

HC TALKS TOUGH,
3 STUDENTS WALK
OUT OF DELHI JAIL

FROM PG 1

The three student activists were not released from the prison on time over delays in verifying their addresses and sureties.

In its order for the immediate release of the trio, the Delhi court said the delay in the verification process by the police could not be a plausible reason for the accused to be kept imprisoned.

After securing bail from the high court, the activists had moved the trial court, seeking immediate release from prison.

When the trial court deferred the order on their plea for Thursday, they moved the Delhi High Court, which ordered the lower court to proceed with the issue with “promptitude and expedition”.

The three student activists were arrested in May 2020 and are accused of being the “masterminds” of the February 2020 violence, which left 53 people dead and more than 200 injured.

The high court, while granting them bail on June 15, had observed that “in an anxiety to suppress dissent, the state has blurred the line between right to protest and terrorist activity” and if such a mindset gains traction, it would be a “sad day for democracy”.

The Delhi Police has, however, moved the Supreme Court, challenging the high court judgement granting them bail in the case.

Buzzing market



People crowd at Chandni Chowk market that reopened after Delhi government eased some restrictions in the ongoing Covid-19 induced lockdown in New Delhi on Thursday.

—PTI

Paperwork completed for
Roy's disqualification: BJP

Yet to submit documents to assembly secretariat: Suwendu Adhikari

Kolkata, Jun 17 (PTI) BJP leader Suwendu Adhikari on Thursday said the party has completed the paperwork to back its demand for the disqualification of Mukul Roy, who recently switched over from the saffron party to the TMC, from the West Bengal assembly.

However, Adhikari said he couldn't submit the documents to the assembly secretariat during the day as the receive section was shut. The TMC, however, questioned whether Suwendu Adhikari has asked his father Sisir Adhikari, also a turncoat, to resign as the MP of the Kanthi Lok Sabha seat after joining the BJP. Mukul Roy returned to the TMC on June 11 after winning from the Krishnanagar North seat on a BJP ticket in the recently concluded assembly elections. He had joined the saffron party after quitting Mamata Banerjee's party

in 2017. “We have readied all the documents to back our demand for the disqualification of Mukul Roy from the assembly, who had won on the BJP's lotus symbol. “The receive section of the House was closed today. If we find it shut again tomorrow, we will mail the documents and our letter seeking Roy's disqualification. We will do whatever is required to realise our demand,” Adhikari, the opposition leader in the assembly, told reporters. Responding to the demand, TMC state unit general secretary Kunal Ghosh said that law will take its own course but Suwendu Adhikari has no right to speak on the issue. “Suwendu must look at the mirror before raising such demands. Has he ever asked his father Sisir Adhikari to quit as the MP of Kanthi, which he had won on a TMC ticket?” he said. —PTI

TMC leader Mukul Roy
surrendered security: CentreDC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 17

The Home Ministry has clarified that security of senior TMC leader Mukul Roy has not been withdrawn but surrendered by himself. Mukul Roy has recently gone back to TMC from BJP following which he had written to the Union Home Ministry to withdraw his Z-category security which was being provided by CRPF.

Meanwhile, sources said CRPF has already started the process of handing over TMC leader Mukul Roy's security detail to the state police which will now provide him security cover which will be at par with what was being pro-

vided earlier by the CRPF.

The Home Ministry had provided security cover to Mukul Roy after he joined BJP from TMC in 2017.

“The earlier CRPF security to Mukul Roy was provided as he had faced threats from TMC after he joined BJP. But now that he is back with the TMC so we can presume that the threat no longer exists as he is now back with the same parent political outfit,” a senior Home Ministry official said.

The Home Ministry has already clarified that it will not review the security cover provided to all its 70-odd MLAs in West Bengal even though Roy has already surrendered

his Z-category security.

It has been decided that as of now there would be no change in the security of other top BJP functionaries in the States, sources added.

“Even though Mukul Roy has surrendered his security cover it does not mean that threat perception of other BJP MLAs has reduced so there would be no change in their security status,” the official added.

The Centre had decided to provide security cover to all the newly elected BJP MLAs in Bengal in view of the unprecedented post-poll violence witnessed in the States after counting of votes on May 2.

SC clears Class 12 evaluation norms

FROM PG 1

“After perusing the scheme presented by the concerned Boards, prima facie, we have no hesitation in accepting the same and permit the Boards to proceed on that basis,” said a vacation bench comprising Justice A.M. Khanwilkar and Justice Dinesh Maheshwari in their order.

However, Justice Khanwilkar in the order pronounced by him said that the scheme “must incorporate” providing for a “dispute resolution mechanism” in case the students apply for correction of the final results declared by the con-

cerned Boards. The court made it clear that the conduct of optional examination would be subject to “conducive situation and logistical constraint”.

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

The subject wise marks assessed by the school for

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

However, the overall average marks for the school assessed in 2020-2021, for all the subjects, should not exceed the overall average marks obtained by the school by 2 marks in the specific reference year.

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

across the country.

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

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

Meanwhile the top court sought response from

Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Tripura and Punjab on a plea seeking the cancellation of board examinations to be conducted by them.

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

In both the cases - CBSE/ICSE and in the matter relating to the cancellation of Class XII examination in four states - the next hearing will take place on June 21, 2021.

Ex-cop among three held
by NIA in Ambani security
scare-Hiran murder case

Mumbai, June 17 : The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Thursday arrested former “encounter specialist” police officer Pradeep Sharma and two others in Mumbai for their alleged involvement in the ‘Antilia’ bomb scare case and the murder of businessman Mansukh Hiran, an official said.

Sharma is the fifth policeman to be arrested in the case by the NIA, which has so far held 10 persons in this connection. “An NIA team picked up Sharma at Aamby Valley in Lonavla hill station near Mumbai on Wednesday night, after which he was brought to the central agency's office in south Mumbai for questioning,” he said. The NIA also conducted a raid at his residence located in J B Nagar in Mumbai's Andheri (west) around 6 am, and the operation continued for several hours, during which some incriminating documents were recovered, the official added.

After questioning him for a few hours, the NIA placed him under arrest on Thursday, he said.

The NIA also arrested Satish alias Tanni bhai alias Vicky Baba and Manish Soni from Malad in Mumbai in connection with the case, he said.

They were presented in a special court here, which remanded them in NIA custody till June 28.

According to sources, Sharma's involvement

came to light during the interrogation of two other accused - Santosh Shelar and Anand Jadhav, who were apprehended from Latur on June 11.

Both of them were arrested for their role in Hiran murder case, the sources said, adding that Shelar, who is in the redevelopment of Slum Rehabilitation Authority (SRA) projects, had links with Sharma.

Earlier, the agency had arrested police officers Sachin Waze, Riyazuddin Kazi, Sunil Mane. After their arrest, they were dismissed from service. It had also arrested former police constable Vinayak Shinde in this connection along with cricket bookie Naresh Gor. Sharma had allegedly helped Waze in destroying evidence in the case, the sources said, adding he was involved in hatching the conspiracy, and planning as well executing the murder of Hiran with the help of his men.

Around two months ago, the NIA had questioned Sharma at its office for two days after his name cropped up in the case.

An explosives-laden SUV was found abandoned near industrialist Mukesh Ambani's south Mumbai residence ‘Antilia’ on February 25 this year.

Thane-based businessman Mansukh Hiran, who had claimed that he was in possession of the vehicle, was found dead in a Mumbai creek on March 5. —PTI

Severed body of
6-yr-old foundAKSHAYA KUMAR
SAHOO | DC
BHUBANESWAR, JUNE 17

The Odisha police have recovered the severed body of a six-year-old girl who went missing on June 12 while playing on the courtyard of her house at Dhundugadia village in Nayagarh district.

The body was found at an isolated location near the village, nearly 400 metres away from the girl's house, Nayagarh superintendent of police Sidhartha Kataria informed on Thursday.

The autopsy of the body was conducted at Daspalla Hospital on Thursday afternoon and the report was awaited.

The SP said the body was traced following five days of intense interrogation of a suspect.

Sources in the police said the accused, a relative of the victim, killed the girl as he feared she would reveal to her parents about his sexual escapades.

Sources said the accused identified as Sagar Dalei had recently returned from Chennai where he worked as a daily-wage earner. As he had easy access to the girl's house, he used to visit her house very often everyday and allowed the girl to play games and view other contents on his mobile phone.

Taking advantage of the absence of the girl's parents during the day time as they go to work as agri-

Jilted Kerala youth
kills woman, stabs
her minor sisterGILVESTER ASSARY I DC
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,
JUNE 17

In a gruesome incident, a jilted youth murdered a woman and stabbed her younger sister at Perinthalmanna in Malappuram district of Kerala on Thursday.

The brutal incident took place at around 8.30am when the accused identified as Vineesh Vinod, 21, barged into the victim's house and stabbed her repeatedly.

Her 13-year-old sister also sustained stab injuries while trying to save her sibling.

She was rushed to a hospital where emergency surgery was performed on her.

labourers, Sagar started showing the girl obscene and pornographic contents. The little girl threatened Sagar to reveal all these activities to her parents. Fearing possible humiliation and shame, the accused decided to get rid of her, police sources informed.

On June 12, he took the girl to a secluded place where he strangled her to death with a piece of nylon rope, leading to near-complete severing of her head from the body.

STRATEGIC | ROADS

Defence minister says India is capable of responding to any aggression

India is advocate of world peace: Rajnath Singh

MANOJ ANAND | DC
GUWAHATI, JUNE 17

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

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

“We seek world peace. If someone shows us an aggressive attitude, we will respond to them in their

terms,” said Mr Singh while pointing out as to how the new roads would help in securing international borders.

The defence minister who was here to dedicate strategic roads, mostly adjoining China, to the nation, also paid his tribute to Indian soldiers who displayed exemplary courage and valour in Galwan Valley in Ladakh a year ago.

“I salute all brave soldiers who laid down their lives fighting for the nation,” he said.

Mr Singh said that the 12 strategic roads including 10 in Arunachal Pradesh and one each in Ladakh and Jammu and Kashmir, inau-

gurated during the day, would not only give a boost in connectivity but would also facilitate faster movement of troops along the International Border.

“The capability of BRO in constructing world class roads despite challenges, in tough and hilly terrain underlines the mantra of Atma Nirbhar Bharat,” said Mr Singh.

He said the road projects are part of the Act East Policy, envisioned by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. “The budget for BRO has increased manifold since 2013 and today stands at ₹11,000 crore. The BRO since 2014 had developed a record 4,800 kilometres of



TWITTER IMAGE POSTED by @DefenceMinIndia on Thursday in Lakhimpur: Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh during inauguration of Kimin-Potin Road in Assam's Lakhimpur district.

border roads in the country,” the Defence Minister said.

He asserted that the coun-

try's defence sector in the last few years had witnessed major changes including appointment of a

Chief of Defence Staff for the first time. “Our vision is also to produce our own weapons and if necessary export them to other countries,” he said.

The defence minister also claimed that development work in North-East India had picked up pace under the Narendra Modi Government.

The development of the region remained stagnant after Independence. However, after the NDA came to power in 2014, the region witnessed accelerated development. There are many challenges due to its close proximity with international borders, Mr Singh said.

“North-East is the right hand of the country and its development will make India strong. Our government is committed to its all-round development,” he reiterated.

According to BRO officials, out of the 12 roads inaugurated on the occasion, ten road projects of total 285.32 kilometres, are in Arunachal Pradesh being constructed by the BRO at an estimated cost of ₹1,228.34 cr.

Of the ten road projects, three each are under Project Arunank, Vartak and Udayak while one is being executed by Project Brahmank, officials added.

SHORT TAKES

CHINA CREWED
SPACESHIP DOCKS
WITH SPACE STN

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

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

SHIP SINKS,
PROMPTS LANKA
POLLUTION FEAR

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

The ship's operator said the wreck of the Singapore-flagged X-Press Pearl "is now wholly sitting on the seabed at a depth of 21 metres (70 feet)". A salvage crew was at the site to deal with any debris and report any spill. X-Press Feeders said. The head of Sri Lanka's Marine Environment Protection Authority, Darshini Lahandapura, also confirmed that the ship had sunk.

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

DOZEN KILLED IN
BHUTAN, NEPAL
MONSOON RAINS

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

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

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

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

ONE LIFE LOST
IN BALTIMORE
SHOOTING

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

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

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

13 WORKERS DIE
IN CHINA IRON
MINE ACCIDENT

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

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

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



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

Delta variant infections in
England doubling in 11 days

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

S'PORE TO SACK
LECTURER OVER
RACIST REMARKS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

India's \$100 mn aid
for Lanka projects

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

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

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

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

DUTCH | CONTROVERSY

The carriage underwent extensive restoration in September 2015

Golden Coach exhibition revives racism debate

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Net outages hit
websites, apps

As most services come online, probe on

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

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

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

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further problems.

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

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

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

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

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

HK pro-democracy
paper editors held

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

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

Apple Daily founder Jimmy Lai is currently serving a 20-month prison sentence for his role in unauthorised assemblies in 2019, during a period when Hong Kong saw massive anti-government protest calling for universal suffrage and democratic freedoms. Police also froze \$18 million Hong Kong dollars (\$ 2.3 million) worth of assets belonging to three compa-

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nies linked to *Apple Daily*, said Li Kwai-wah, a senior superintendent at Hong Kong's National Security Department. More than 200 police officers were involved in the search of *Apple Daily*'s offices, and the government said a warrant was obtained to look for evidence of a suspected violation of the national security law.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SC DISMISSES
CHALLENGE TO
OBAMACARE

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

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

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

DECCAN
Chronicle

18 JUNE 2021

Pragmatism in Geneva as Biden, Putin stabilise ties

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

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

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

expectations from the new Russia faded as this leader fortified himself on the plank of Russian nationalism.

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

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

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

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

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

Women priests: TN's bold move

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

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

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

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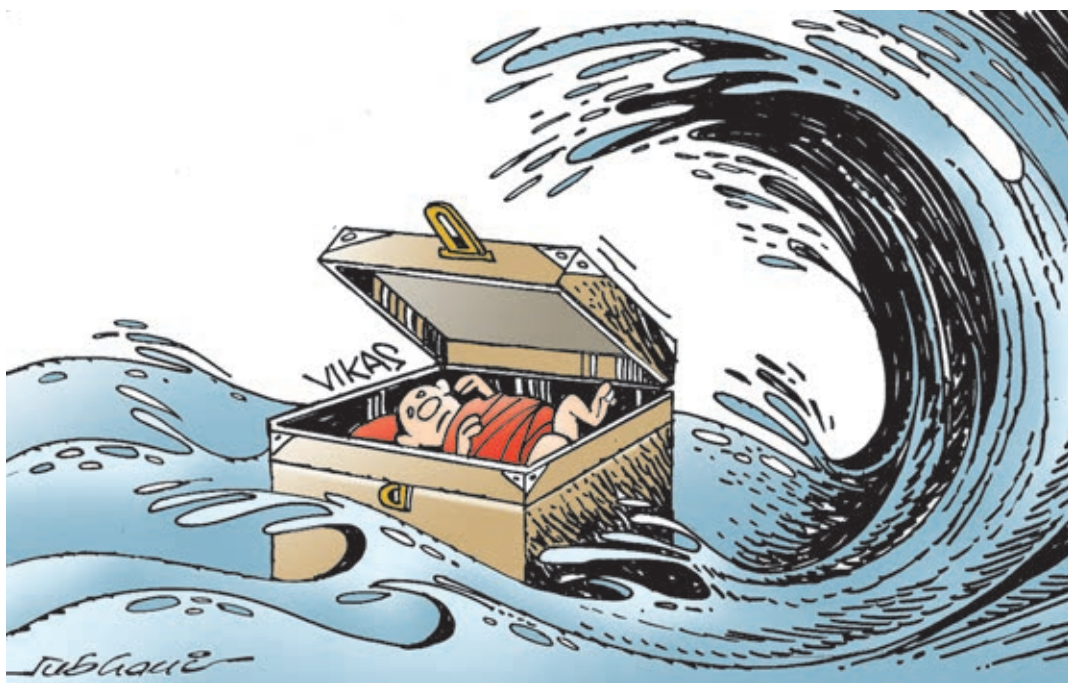
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RSS, BJP & Yogi factor: Key to 2024 lies in UP



Anand K. Sahay

Far & Near

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

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

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

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

their case).

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

Is the overall motif of silence in this important matter a part of a well thought out strategy crafted by the BJP, or indeed the RSS, since it is the RSS cadre on the ground who will be required to do the heavy lifting at election time? After all, it is the RSS — rather than the formal shell of the BJP — which really exercises supervision or control over the main body of legislators, and typically it is the low-key RSS organiser who plays pastor. The pastor offers counsel and keeps his superiors informed about the goings-on. He meddles, but not in full view.

Evidently, since senior BJP leaders in UP had publicly complained against the CM's mismanagement and his autocratic style, it wouldn't have done to keep quiet and do nothing; hence the directive to the CM to go to Delhi to explain himself to the big shots. This was a triumph of form over substance, and also careful choreography and convenient optics.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

LETTERS

SURPRISE VISIT

On Wednesday, Chief Minister M.K. Stalin paid a surprise visit to a few ration shops in Chennai. Convinced that there were no irregularities with regard to either availability of commodities or payment of cash incentive to cardholders, the CM left with a light heart. The shopkeepers, in turn, profusely thanked the men who had given them sufficient notice about the 'surprise' visit.

P.G. Menon, Chennai

RIGHT TO PROTEST

It is with reference to the news, HC's ray of hope: To protest is right, it's not a terror. By, granting bail to three student activists Delhi high court has once again upheld the constitutional rights of people to dissent and protest. In its bail order, the court has observed that the State has blurred the line between the constitutionally guaranteed 'right to protest' and 'terrorist activity.' It is welcome. The arrest exposed a total lack of professionalism on the part of the Delhi police. Frivolous application of laws is no less an injury than frivolous litigation in the eyes of justice. The Delhi court has done an exemplary job in granting bail. Every court across the country must do it should democracy survive and succeed.

P.Victor Selvaraj, Palayamkottai

LURING GAME

Apropos report, Sasikala, AIADMK leaders continue their mind games. Jayalalithaa too faced a similar situation after MGR's demise but stood her ground with determination and wrested the party from the opposite camp. Sasikala may have played her role as Jaya's confidante from behind the scenes but she lacks the same gumption and adroitness. As long as the AIADMK remains united sans dissensions among the top brass it is well neigh impossible for her to split and grab the party. She may be banking on the caste factor playing the Thevar card to lure leaders like Mr OPS but her hopes will be dashed. Considering OPS knows which side the bread is buttered, he may not oblige her and risk facing an uncertain future if he loses his present deputy opposition leader's post. And he might have realised that the AMMK which was mauled very badly at the hustings is not a force to be reckoned with, even if he joins it. Sasikala has to be content with her mind-games.

A. Seshagiri Rao, Chennai

Mohan
Guruswamy



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Modern yoga practices' only link

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

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

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

Monday, June 21, is International Yoga Day

SHORT TAKES

Eight new girls in India hockey team

Bengaluru: India on Thursday named eight Olympic debutants and as many veterans in its 16-member women's hockey squad for the Tokyo Games to be held from July 23 to August 8. The squad is a perfect mix of youth and experience and includes as many as eight players who had represented India in the 2016 Rio Olympics. The team will be captained by star striker Rani Rampal in the quadrennial Games. The eight Olympic debutants include drag-flicker Gurjit Kaur, Udita, Nisha, Neha, Navneet Kaur, Sharmila Devi, Lalremiami, the first player hailing from Mizoram in the team, and Salima Tete. Tete had led the Indian team at the 2018 Youth Olympic Games at Buenos Aires to a silver medal performance. — *PTI*

Nurse says docs 'killed Maradona'

San Isidro: A lawyer for a nurse under investigation in the death of Argentine football great Diego Maradona said on Wednesday that doctors killed him through negligence. "They killed Diego," attorney Rodolfo Baque told reporters after his client, nurse Dahiana Gisela Madrid, was questioned by prosecutors. Maradona died of a heart attack last November at the age of 60, weeks after undergoing brain surgery for a blood clot. Madrid, 36, is one of seven people under investigation for manslaughter after a board of experts looking into Maradona's death found he had received inadequate care and was abandoned to his fate for a "prolonged, agonising period." Baque insisted it was the doctors treating Maradona while he recovered from the brain operation, not his client, who were to blame for the soccer legend's death. — *AFP*

HCA suspends its own chief Azhar

Hyderabad: The Apex Council of Hyderabad Cricket Association (HCA) has "suspended" its own president, former India captain Mohammed Azharuddin, for alleged violation of its constitution. Allegations of Conflict of Interest levelled have been levelled against Azharuddin. The former India skipper termed the move as 'vendetta' against him by the anti-lobby and vowed to fight back. The HCA suspension notice, stated: "After considering the complaints made by the members against you (Azharuddin), it was decided at the Apex Council meeting on the 10th of this month to issue a show-cause notice on the ground that you have acted in violation of the rules." — *PTI*

Skipper Ramos to leave Real Madrid

Madrid: Sergio Ramos broke down in tears, saying leaving Real Madrid was one of the most difficult moments of his life as he bid farewell on Thursday after 16 years at the club. The defender played 671 games for Real Madrid and will be remembered as one of the club's greatest ever players, having won five La Liga titles and four Champions Leagues. The 35-year-old was unable to agree an extension to his contract and will become a free agent on July 1. "The moment has come, one of the most difficult in my life, because you are never ready to leave Real Madrid," Ramos said. — *AFP*

Live on TV

CRICKET

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

EURO

Group Stage: Sweden vs Slovakia from 6.30 pm; Croatia vs Czech Republic from 9.30 pm; England vs Scotland from 12.30 am (Saturday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

COPA AMERICA

Group Stage: Chile vs Bolivia from 2.30 am (Saturday) on Sony Ten 1, 2; Argentina vs Uruguay from 5.30 am (Saturday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

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ULTIMATE TEST

India, NZ in battle for legacy as WTC final begins today

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

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

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

Lest one forgets, he has been a fine leader in his own right even though Mahendra Singh Dhoni may forever remain a sentimental favourite. Kohli needs a global triumph. Every captain needs it but perhaps the Indian captain wants it more.

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

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

They are India's rivals but when Williamson hits those cover drives, Devon Conway teases a Ashwin or Jadeja, Boulton gets one banana inswinger aimed at Rohit Sharma's bootlaces, the crazy fans of a cricket-mad nation wouldn't possibly be able to hate them. — *PTI*

INDIA'S PLAYING XI

Rohit Sharma
Shubman Gill
Cheteshwar Pujara
Virat Kohli (captain)
Ajinkya Rahane (VC)
Rishabh Pant
Ravindra Jadeja
R. Ashwin
Mohammad Shami
Ishan Sharma
Jasprit Bumrah

FOR THE RECORD

Devon Conway has scored 306 runs at an average of 76.50 in four innings since his debut.



R. Ashwin who has taken 48 wickets at an average of 16.97 in 11 innings of six Tests needs just two wickets to become the fourth Indian bowler to complete a half century of wickets against New Zealand.



India skipper Virat Kohli (right) and his New Zealand counterpart Kane Williamson pose with the ICC mace that is to be awarded to the World Test champions. — *ICC*

Just another game: Virat

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

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

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

"If we win, cricket will

not stop and if we lose also, cricket won't stop. We are playing in quest of excellence and understand who we are as a team," he added.

He was not forthcoming when a question on team combination was posed based on a previous answer that the team would select a composition "with all bases covered" regardless of the weather forecast of rain on opening day.

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

He was also dismissive when asked if this was the biggest cricketing event of his illustrious career.

"This is just another

Test match. All these things (WTC final) look good from the outside. One game can't become a do-or-die game."

KANE PLAYS DOWN FAVOURITES TAG

New Zealand skipper Kane Williamson on Thursday said a place in the final against India is a testament to the team's growth over the past two years but he is not reading too much into the favourites tag given to his side.

"Firstly, we are really looking forward to the match, it's been quite a long time coming. In terms of favourites, these tags that come about. We are much more concerned with the cricket that we want to play," Williamson said. — *PTI*

TRACK RECORD

HIGHEST TOTALS

► **India** 583-7 decl. at Ahmedabad in 1999-00.

► **NZ** 680-8 decl. at Wellington in 2013-14.

LOWEST INNINGS TOTALS

► **India** 81 at Wellington in 1975-76.

► **NZ** 94 at Hamilton in 2002-03.

HIGHEST INDIVIDUAL SCORES

► **India** 231 Vinoo Mankad at Chennai in 1955-56.

► **NZ** 302 Brendon McCullum at Wellington 2013-14.

BEST BOWLING IN AN INNINGS

► **India** 8-72 S. Venkatraghavan at Delhi in 1964-65.

► **NZ** 7-23 Richard Hadlee at Wellington in 1975-76.

— *S. PERVEZ QAISER*

WOMEN'S | ONE-OFF TEST

Debutant Shafali falls short of ton

Bristol, June 17: Shafali Verma hit a brilliant 96 on debut, while Smriti Mandhana made 78 before five quick wickets derailed India Women as the visitors slumped to 187 for 5 in their first innings in reply to England's 396 for 9 declared at stumps on the second day of the one-off Test here on Thursday.

Verma and Mandhana shared a solid 167 runs off 48.5 overs for the opening stand before both departed in quick time as the collapse started for India.

If that was not enough, Shikha Pandey, skipper Mithali Raj and Punam Raut too got out in quick succession as India lost five wickets in a span of just 16 runs to hand England the upperhand.

At the close of play, Harmanpreet Kaur was batting on 4 in the company of Deepti Sharma with India still trailing England by 209 runs.

England's total of 396 was the highest-ever total scored by a team against India in Test.

Verma was at her usual aggressive self as she cut and pulled in her own inimitable style. The 17-year-old not only presented the straight bat for defence with grace, she also hit a six off Nat Sciver with remarkable ease.

It was only the second six hit by an Indian woman in Test cricket. Mandhana was cautious yet fluent. She got her first boundary when she punched one off Sciver in the cover region.

BRIEF SCORES

England 396/9 decl. (Beaumont 66, Heather 95, Sophia 74 (not out); Sneha 4/131, Deepti 3/65) vs India 187/5 in 60 overs (Smriti 78, Shafali 96; Harmanpreet 4 (batting); Heather 2/1).

When she got the opportunity, Mandhana did not hesitate to pull. Her elegant drives were a delight to watch.

Earlier resuming at the overnight score of 269 for six, Sophia Dunkley continued to frustrate the visitors, remaining unbeaten on 74.

Dunkley first added 56 runs for the eighth wicket with Sophie Ecclestone (17) and then forged a 70-run stand with Anya Shrubsole.

Debutant off-spinner Sneha Rana was the pick of the bowlers for India with figures of 4/131, while Deepti Sharma (3/65) too impressed with the ball.

England declared their innings when Shrubsole was bowled by Rana, who ended up as India's best bowler with a four-wicket haul.

Shrubsole was aggressive in the post-lunch session, punishing spinner Rana for two hours and a six. She also creamed off boundaries off pacer Shikha Pandey.

India are playing their first Test in nearly seven years. — *PTI*



Shafali Verma en route to her brilliant 96 against England in the one-off Test at Bristol on Thursday. — *BCCI*

Nadal out of Oly and Wimbledon

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

The 35-year-old Spaniard, who won Olympic gold and Wimbledon in 2008, triumphing again at the All England Club two years later, revealed his decision on Twitter. "I have decided not to participate at this year's Championships at Wimbledon and the Olympic Games in Tokyo," he tweeted.

"It's never an easy decision to take but after listening to my body and discussing it with my team I understand that it is the right decision."

World number one Novak Djokovic last week ended Nadal's four-year reign as French Open champion

and went on to seal his 19th Grand Slam.

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

SUPERSTAR NEYMAR TO MISS GAMERS

Paris Saint Germain striker Neymar, the world's most expensive footballer, will not play for Brazil at the Tokyo Olympics, but veteran Daniel Alves did make the squad announced Thursday. Neymar's PSG teammate Marquinhos, who also landed a gold medal in Rio five years ago, is another name not on coach Andre Jardine's list. — *AFP*

ERIKSEN TO BE FITTED WITH ICD HEART-STARTER DEVICE

Copenhagen, June 17: Christian Eriksen will be fitted with an implantable device to monitor his heart rhythm, the Danish football federation said on Thursday.

Eriksen is recovering in a Copenhagen hospital after suffering cardiac arrest during Denmark's game against Finland at the European Championship.

The Danish federation said doctors have determined that Eriksen needs to have an ICD implantable cardioverter-defibrillator. "This device is necessary after a cardiac attack due to rhythm disturbances," the federation said in a statement.

"Christian has accepted the solution and the plan has moreover been confirmed by specialists nationally and internationally who all recommend the same treatment. We encourage everybody to give Christian and his family peace and privacy the following time," it said.

An ICD monitors a person's heartbeat and can send electrical pulses to restore a normal rhythm if necessary. — *AP*

Locatelli blow for Swiss

Rome, June 17: Manuel Locatelli scored a brace and Ciro Immobile added a late third as Italy sealed their place in the Euro 2020 last 16 on Wednesday with a game to spare after a 3-0 win over Switzerland in Rome.

Sassuolo midfielder Locatelli put the Azzurri ahead after 26 minutes in the Group A clash, adding a second just after the break with Immobile scoring for the second consecutive game a minute from time.

Roberto Mancini's side are top of Group A with six points from two games, with six goals scored and none conceded, two points clear of Wales who beat Turkey 2-0 earlier.

Italy will advance as Group A winners if they avoid defeat against surprise Euro 2016 semi-finalists Wales at the Stadio Olimpico on Sunday.

The only bad news for the Italians in a game they dominated was the loss of captain Giorgio Chiellini who hobbled off the pitch with a muscle injury in the first half.

The 36-year-old Juventus defender had a 20th-minute goal ruled out for handball by VAR and four minutes later asked to be replaced, holding his thigh.

Lazio defender Francesco Acerbi took his place, making his debut in a major international tournament at the



Italy's Manuel Locatelli celebrates after scoring a goal against Switzerland in Euro 2020 on Wednesday. — *AP*

age of 33, with the captain's armband handed to Juventus teammate Leonardo Bonucci.

WALES CLOSE IN ON KNOCKOUTS

Aaron Ramsey and Connor Roberts scored as Wales took a huge step towards reaching the last

16 with a 2-0 win over Turkey in Baku.

Wales, semi-finalists five years ago, moved top of Group A before Italy host Switzerland later in the day in Rome.

Captain Gareth Bale missed a penalty before setting up Roberts for his goal during injury time.

RESULTS

Ukraine 2

(Yarmolenko 29, Yaremchuk 34)

North Macedonia 1

(Alioski 57)

Italy 3

(Locatelli 26, 52, Immobile 89)

Switzerland 0

Turkey 0

Wales 2

(Ramsey 42, Roberts 90+5)

"We've given ourselves a brilliant opportunity tonight," Ramsey said.

"It (the penalty) was a big moment in the game but we dug in, to a man we left everything out there. That's what we've built our success on."

NERVY WIN FOR UKRAINE

Andriy Yarmolenko scored one goal and set up Roman Yaremchuk for another as Ukraine defeated

North Macedonia 2-1 to boost their last-16 hopes. The West Ham forward grabbed the opener on 29 minutes in Bucharest and then teed up Yaremchuk with a brilliant first-time pass to double the lead five minutes later.

Ezgjani Alioski pulled a goal back for North Macedonia just before the hour as he converted the rebound from his missed penalty. — *AFP*

MISFIRING CROATIA AIM TO IMPROVE

Glasgow, June 17: Croatia's chances of advancing in the European Championship hinge on two things — firing up a struggling front line and containing Czech Republic forward Patrik Schick. Under pressure to deliver after reaching the World Cup final three years ago, Croatia were stifled against England in the first group match and lost 1-0.

Croatia assistant coach Vedran Corluka called on the team to be "more dangerous" and "attack-minded" in the Group D game against Czech Republic at Hampden Park on Friday.

RASHFORD HOPES TO START VS SCOTS

Marcus Rashford's status as a national figurehead couldn't earn a starting spot in the opening win against Croatia but he did come off the bench and finish wearing the captain's armband after Harry Kane was substituted. It's a sign of the depth of options available to England coach Gareth Southgate that Rashford is a backup despite his 21 goals in 57 appearances for Manchester United last season. "You have to be professional about it," Rashford said at England's St. George's Park training base. — *AP*