



Pages 12 | ₹ 5 | LC

KOLKATA | NEW DELHI | SILIGURI | BHUBANESWAR

# The Statesman

PEOPLE'S PARLIAMENT, ALWAYS IN SESSION



CHANGE IN  
ISRAEL



OLYMPICS SHORN  
OF GLORY



SUU KYI CONFRONTED  
WITH SEDITION CHARGES



ARGENTINA HOLD  
CHILE AT COPA  
AMERICA

P6

P7

P9

P12

## WEATHER

Generally cloudy sky with light rain/thundershowers accompanied with gusty winds. The maximum and minimum temperatures would be around 36 and 26 degrees Celsius respectively.

RAINFALL: Nil

RELATIVE HUMIDITY

Max: 81% Min: 44%

TEMPERATURE

Max: 38.7°C (-1) Min: 27.2°C (-1)

SUN RISES 05:24 hrs MOON RISES 11:27 hrs

SUN SETS 19:21 hrs MOON SETS 23:57 hrs

## THUMBNAILS



Commuters wait in a long queue to avail the Metro at Gate-1, Barakhamba Metro Station, in the Capital on Tuesday. SUBRATATA DUTTA

**Governor's letter:** In his latest tussle with the Bengal government, state Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar has written to chief minister Mamata Banerjee saying the state witnessed the worst form of post-pol violence while the state home department said that the letter was inconsistent with facts, and clarified that all the incidents had occurred when the law and order was under the Election Commission of India. The Governor is embarking on a four day trip to New Delhi, where he is expected to meet with Union home minister Amit Shah.

**Covaxin price:** Bharat Biotech the maker of indigenous Covid-19 vaccine said on Tuesday that its low supply price to the central government of Rs 150 per dose is not a sustainable one in the long run. Hence a higher price in private markets is required to offset part of the costs, it said in a statement. The Centre's supplying price is pushing the pricing structure for the private sector upward, the firm said, justifying the higher prices for private players.

## Row brewing over detention of social activist in Kashmir

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU, 15 JUNE

The jailing of an elderly man in Kashmir for speaking his mind and telling the Lt. Governor's advisor Baseer Khan in a public durbar that people have more expectations from local officers than those who have come from other states has snowballed into a major controversy, with parties demanding action under law against the erring officer for misuse of their authority.

Sajad Ahmad Sofi, who is a resident of Safapora in Ganderbal district on 10 June attended a public durbar hosted by Khan whom he is reported to have told that peo-

**Lt. Governor Manoj Sinha had initiated public durbars across J&K to reach out to the people and listen to their grievances in the absence of the political system.**

ple could have expectations from local officers like him and also seek answers from them. On the other hand, what could be expected from officers who belong to other states, he is supposed to have said.

The deputy commissioner of Ganderbal, Krittika Jyotsna, who is an IAS officer of Uttar Pradesh cadre, is said to have

taken exception to Sofi's remarks. Sofi was detained under Section 153 IPC that deals with promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion, race, place of birth, residence, language etc. Later, other sections were added.

Slamming the detention of Sofi, CPI-M leader Mohammad Yousuf Tarigami wondered if a man says he has more expectations from local officers, does it warrant his detention? Police did not release Sofi even when the court granted him interim bail as he has been reportedly booked additionally under sections 107 and 151 of the IPC. "This is a brazen misuse of power and authority," Tarigami said.

A vacation bench of Justices Indira Banerjee and M R Shah quashed the FIR and proceedings emanating from the case against the two Italian marines. The bench said that as per the international arbitral award accepted by India, Italy shall resume fur-

## SC closes criminal case against Italian marines

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 15 JUNE

The Supreme Court on Tuesday directed the closure of criminal proceedings in India against two Italian marines, accused of killing two fishermen off the Kerala coast in February 2012, and asked Kerala High Court to oversee the apportionment of Rs 10 crore compensation to the heirs of the victim.

A vacation bench of Justices Indira Banerjee and M R Shah quashed the FIR and proceedings emanating from the case against the two Italian marines. The bench said that as per the international arbitral award accepted by India, Italy shall resume fur-

ther investigation in the case against the marines ~ Massimiliano Latorre and Salvatore Girone.

The top court termed the Rs 10 crore compensation paid by Italy over and above the payment already made as reasonable and adequate.

It said that out of the Rs 10 crore compensation, Rs 4 crore each shall be deposited in the name of heirs of two deceased Kerala fishermen and Rs 2 crore shall be given to owner of boat. The top court said that Rs 10 crore deposited in apex court's registry shall be transferred to Kerala High Court, which will make a fixed deposit of Rs 4 crore each in the name of the heirs of the two deceased fishermen.

## Tit-for-tat in LJP tussle

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 15 JUNE

The two LJP factions headed by Chirag Paswan and Pashupati Kumar Paras moved swiftly on Tuesday to take control of the party as a national executive meeting of the organisation expelled five MPs while the Paras-led group removed Paswan as its president.

In his first reaction after his paternal uncle Paras ousted him as the leader of the party in Lok Sabha with the support of the five MPs, Paswan likened the organisation to a mother who should not be betrayed. He also shared on Twitter a letter he had written to him on March 29 that highlighted Paras' alleged indifference to the party's agenda and conduct against its interests, and

had urged him to fulfil his responsibilities to it and their family following the death of LJP founder Ram Vilas Paswan.

While five of its six Lok Sabha MPs have sided with Paras, the group headed by Chirag called a virtual meeting of the party's national executive in which 41 of 76 members were present, its Bihar unit president president Raju Tiwari said. It was unanimously decided to expel the five MPs from the LJP for their "anti-party" activities, he said.

## Twitter appoints interim Chief Compliance Officer for India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 15 JUNE



**Twitter has been facing heat over the delay in complying with the IT rules that mandate large digital platforms to undertake greater due diligence, and make them more accountable and responsible for the content that is hosted**

stry apprised of progress at every step of the process.

An interim Chief Compliance Officer has been retained and details will be shared with the Ministry directly soon, the spokesperson added.

The move by Twitter assumes significance as the microblogging platform has been facing heat over delay in complying with the IT rules that mandate large digital platforms to undertake greater due diligence, and make them more accountable and responsible for the content that is hosted.

As per the rules, significant social media intermediaries ~ those with over 50 lakh users ~ are required to appoint a grievance officer, a nodal officer and a chief compliance officer. These personnel have to be residents in India.

submit additional details within a week.

A Twitter spokesperson on Tuesday said the company continues to make every effort to comply with the new guidelines, and is keeping the IT Min-

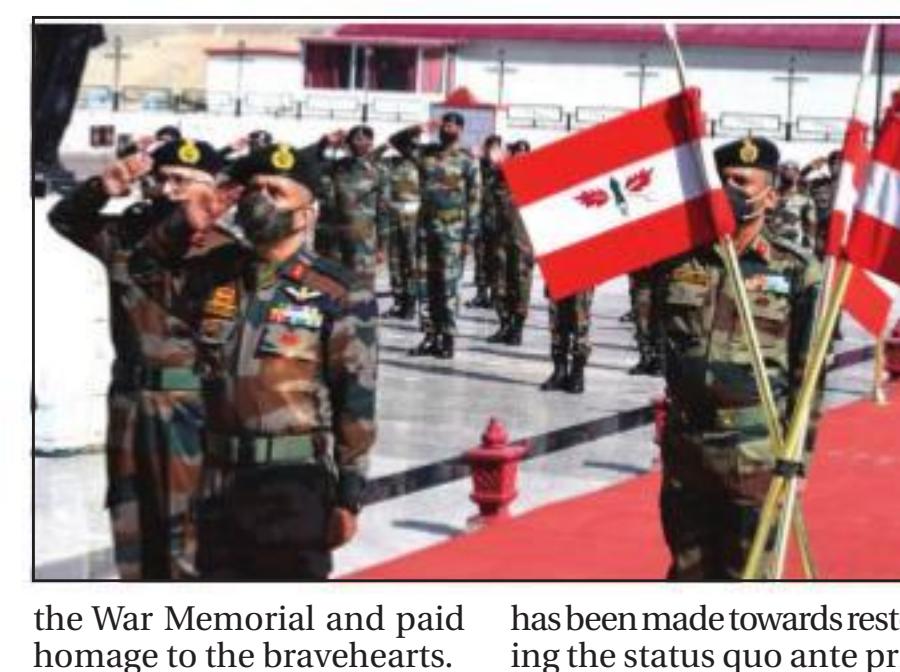
## Nation pays homage to Galwan Valley martyrs

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, 15 JUNE

The nation today paid homage to the 20 Indian troops who laid down their lives in a bloody clash with the People's Liberation Army (PLA) of China in the Galwan Valley in Eastern Ladakh. It was on this day last year that the incident, the worst violence on the India-China border since 1967 took place.

Chief of the Army Staff, Gen M M Naravane and all ranks of the Indian Army paid homage to the soldiers who died defending India's borders.

"Their valour will be eternally etched in the memory of the nation" the Indian Army tweeted. A remembrance ceremony was also held at Leh where Maj Gen Akash Kaushik, officiating chief of the Fire and Fury Corps, laid a wreath at



the War Memorial and paid homage to the bravehearts.

Congress President Sonia Gandhi said her party joins a grateful nation in remembrance of the supreme sacrifice of the soldiers. "We've repeatedly sought details of the episode in the light of the Prime Minister's statement and details of what progress

has been made towards restoring the status quo ante prior to April 2020. The disengagement agreement with China appears to have worked entirely to India's disadvantage," she said.

The violent clash about which China is yet to provide any credible explanation changed the dynamics of

Sino-Indian relations for a long time to come. China's aggression against India in Eastern Ladakh started in April-May last year at a time when the world was fighting Covid-19, shocking the entire global community.

While India acknowledged on 15 June itself that it had lost 20 of its soldiers in the Galwan Valley clash, China admitted only in February this year that eight of its troops too died in the incident.

In public statements made by it during the last one year, China has clearly blamed the Indian side for the Galwan Valley clash while making little or no mention of its own actions in the incident or elsewhere in Eastern Ladakh and portrayed Beijing not as the aggressor, but as the defender of its sovereignty. The two countries have

held umpteen rounds of talks both at the diplomatic and the military level to end the military stand-off in Eastern Ladakh but the negotiations have so far only resulted in the completion of disengagement at the Pangong Tso Lake in February. The situation at other friction points remains tense.

India has repeatedly stated that relations between the two countries could never become normal unless peace and tranquility was restored in the border areas. "We have repeatedly stressed that completion of disengagement in other areas would pave the way for the two sides to consider de-escalation of forces and ensure full restoration of peace and tranquility and enable progress in bilateral relations," Ministry of External Affairs Spokesperson Arindam Bagchi stated last week.



People here feel abandoned by the TMC government

RAJU BISTA, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT, DARJEELING

ON THE STATE OF AFFAIRS IN NORTH BENGAL AND ALLEGED STATE GOVERNMENT APATHY

## Amid unlock, doctors warn of 'worse than 2nd wave' situation if norms not followed

PTI  
NEW DELHI, 15 JUNE

With close gathering of shoppers in markets and restaurants resuming business amid phased unlock in the national capital, doctors on Tuesday cautioned that Delhi could face a "worse than second wave situation" of COVID-19 if people do not adhere to safety norms or lower their guards.

The remarks from many doctors at leading government or private facilities here come after visuals of various crowded markets surfaced in reports and on social media, showing Covid-appropriate behaviour not being followed by many people, like wearing of masks or maintaining social distance.

Dr Suranjan Chatterjee, a senior consultant at Apollo Hospitals here, warned that if safety norms are not followed by people and if there is no strict enforcement in case of violations, then "we are in for a trouble again".

"The way cases have come down from over 28,000 at peak in April to 131 cases reported yesterday, it is such a dramatic fall in numbers. And, if lockdown was the primary reason for it, then we have to treat very cautiously now with the restrictions being slowly eased," he told PTI.

"But, if people show laxity by not wearing masks or wearing it inappropriately or violate social distancing norms, and if law enforcement agencies do not penalise and ensure violations do not increase in quantum, then we are certainly in for a trouble. And, the next wave could be worse than the second wave situation," he said.

Medical experts in mid-May had concurred that it was lockdown majorly that had brought down the count of daily cases, while cautioning that the severity of cases was still the same.

Dr Sareen, consultant of pulmonology at Fortis hospital here, who recently lost her immediate family member to Covid, said, "The threat of the third wave hitting is quite real and not a hypothesis."

"And, we had similar threat in February when everyone had started going on a vacation or doing house parties or socialising in public places. Now, that the second wave has done so much damage and claimed so many lives, we need to realise that we have to be disciplined

and tread with caution," she said.

The pulmonologist emphasised that in the second wave, at least one member in every household here was either infected by Covid, or the families knew of someone who had been.

"We hoped that people will learn lessons from the second wave, but seems we are not being wise as common people. Situation will be worse than during the second wave if we do not wise up. A government cannot keep a lockdown forever, but, we can choose to be disciplined and go out only when needed," she said.

Chatterjee, Sareen and many doctors of government hospitals, also underlined that unlike in the UK and Italy, where third wave indications are coming from despite a significant portion of the adult population vaccinated, in India, the vaccination figure is "very minuscule", and, therefore the "threat of the next wave becomes imminent".

Delhi had been reeling under a brutal second wave of the pandemic that is sweeping the country, claiming a massive number of lives daily, with the recent oxygen supply shortage issue at various hospitals, adding to the woes.

Since April 19, both daily cases and single-day deaths count had been spiralling up.

Lockdown was imposed by the government on April 19, however, in the last two weeks, several restrictions have been eased, like metro services with 50 per cent seating capacity from June 7, restaurants with 50 per cent capacity from June 14, besides the market and the malls resuming business.

Since the imposition of the lockdown, a large number of people have been penalised for violating Covid safety norms, and the Delhi government while announcing phased lockdown easing had said that the restrictions will be imposed again if cases begin to rise.

According to a data shared by Additional PRO (Delhi Police) Anil Mittal, a total of 1,33,143 challans have been issued from April 19 to June 14.

Out of these, 1,12,265 challans were issued for mask-related violations, 19,153 for violating social distancing norms, 1,532 challans for holding large public gatherings and congregations, 72 for spitting in public and 121 for consumption of liquor, pan, gutka, tobacco, etc, according to police.

# Half of Covid vax centres for 18+ closed, rest to shut today: Atishi

Delhi records 228 fresh coronavirus cases, 12 deaths; positivity rate stands at 0.32 pc

SNS & PTI  
NEW DELHI, 15 JUNE

**L**ess than a day's stock of Covid-19 vaccine is left for Delhi people in the 18-44 age group due to which half of the vaccination centres for such beneficiaries in the city closed down today and the remaining half will shut tomorrow if the stock is not replenished, AAP MLA Atishi said.

In a vaccination bulletin issued online today, she also said the position is "quite comfortable" for people aged 45 and above, and over 50 per cent of eligible people in this group have been vaccinated.

"As the unlock is slowly happening and offices and markets are reopening, the youth segment will venture out more, and therefore, it was important that they would get vaccinated. Our drive for the 18+ years category was again picking pace, but for lack of doses, it has slowed down again," she said.

Atishi said less than a day's stock



of Covid vaccine is left for people in the age group of 18-44 years in Delhi due to which "half of the vaccination centres for such beneficiaries closed down today and the remaining half will shut tomorrow" if the stock is not replenished.

She appealed to the Centre to send more vaccine doses urgently to carry forward the vaccination process for the 18-44 age group seg-

**Atishi appealed to the Centre to send more vaccine doses urgently to carry forward the vaccination process for the 18-44 age group segment**

ment.

According to vaccine stock for people aged 45 and above, as on June 15 morning, she said 7,95,000 doses were available, out of which Covaxin doses will last for 22 days and Covishield doses for 43 days.

On 14 June, a total of 60,734 vaccine doses were administered, taking the total number of doses given till date to 61,50,931, according to the bulletin.

For healthcare workers, front-line workers and 45 and above age group, 784 centres are running at 626 locations, while for the 18-44 group, 64 centres across 36 locations were earmarked, the bulletin said.

Meanwhile, Delhi today reported 228 fresh coronavirus infections

and 12 Covid-linked fatalities while the positivity rate stood at 0.32 per cent, according to the Delhi government's latest health bulletin.

The city's Covid cases rose to 228 from yesterday's 131—the lowest since 22 February—following 71,291 tests. The tests conducted yesterday numbered 59,556.

The national capital's Covid caseload mounted to 14,31,498 while its death toll climbed to 24,851 now, the health bulletin stated.

The positivity rate was yesterday 0.22 per cent while the fatalities count was reported to be 16.

According to the health bulletin, the city now had 3,078 active Covid cases and the patients undergoing treatment in home isolation numbered 841.

The count of those patients who recovered during the last 24 hours was 364. The number of containment zones in Delhi stood at 6,476, the bulletin added.

There were 22,141 vacant beds out of 23,960 hospital beds meant for Covid patients in the city.

## Gopal Rai inspects ration distribution centre, mohalla clinic in Babarpur

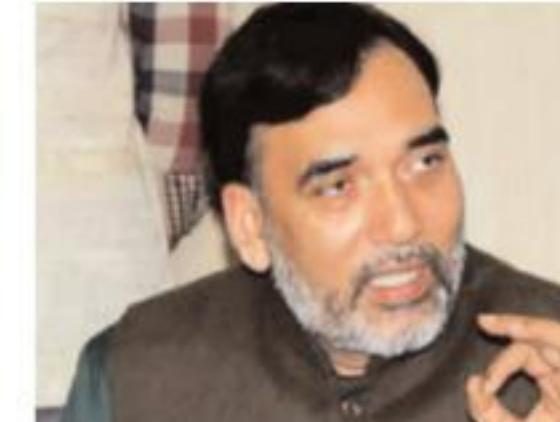
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, 15 JUNE

Delhi Development Minister Gopal Rai on Tuesday inspected a ration distribution centre and a mohalla clinic in Babarpur. He said, it would be ensured that all those who did not have a ration card must get 4 kg of wheat and 1 kg of rice on behalf of the Delhi government.

Gopal Rai said, "Right now I have come here to inspect the mohalla clinic of Balbeer Nagar and Rashan Vitan Kendra of Babarpur district. In this mohalla clinic, the OPD is facing some issues because of Covid-19 and we will do all kinds of arrangements to resolve the problems.

Today the doctor has told us about certain medicines that are needed, we will try to make these available as soon as possible."

He added, "In Delhi, all those people who do not have a ration card are



being given 4 kg of wheat and 1 kg of rice on behalf of the Delhi government. Ration comprising 4 kg of wheat and 1 kg of rice is being given on the basis of the Aadhaar card. Today, in this Vidhan Sabha area, the task of distribution is being carried out, and we have come to inspect and ensure that people are not facing any problems here. The work will continue in this manner."

All liquor shops in markets, malls and market complexes (out-

## Liquor not allowed to be served in hotels, restaurants in Delhi: Excise dept

PTI  
NEW DELHI, 15 JUNE

side containment zones) are allowed to operate between 10 am and 8 pm, it said. The liquor vending in the city reopened in Delhi on June 6.

The clarification was issued in view of queries about bars in hotels, clubs and restaurants after Delhi government allowed restaurants to reopen from Monday, an official said.

With a significant improvement in the COVID-19 situation in the national capital, liquor shops and restaurants that were closed after the imposition of lockdown in April have reopened now.

"Bars in the hotels, clubs and restaurants are not allowed to open till further orders," stated a clarification issued by the Excise Department of Delhi government on Monday.

All liquor shops in markets, malls and market complexes (out-

side increasing in the city, the restrictions may be clamped again, it said.

The DDMA also directed that liquor, pan, gutka, tobacco should not be consumed in shops, malls, markets, market complexes, restaurants and other such places.

A close watch and supervision will be maintained on the overall functioning of markets, market complexes, malls and restaurants by district magistrates, DCPs and other officers.

In case it is found that Covid appropriate behaviour is not being followed in the markets, market complexes, malls, restaurants and if the number of COVID-19 positive cases start increasing in Delhi, they will be closed without any loss of time, warned the DDMA.

## Ayodhya land deal: Sanjay Singh says house 'attacked' by BJP supporters

PTI  
NEW DELHI, 15 JUNE

AAP MP Sanjay Singh on Tuesday claimed his house here was "attacked" by BJP supporters for highlighting the alleged corruption in the purchase of a piece of land in Ayodhya by the Ram temple trust.

According to Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) sources, the nameplate of Singh's house in North Avenue locality, a high-security area, was blackened by two persons and they tried to forcibly enter the premises.

A senior police officer said the two have been detained and no one was injured in the incident.

Taking to Twitter, Singh said, "My house has been attacked. Listen carefully BJP supporters, no matter

how much hooliganism you indulge in, I will not allow the funds collected for constructing the Ram temple to be stolen even if I am killed."

At a press conference on Sunday, Singh had alleged that Champat Rai, general secretary of Shriram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust, purchased 1.208 hectares of land worth Rs 2

crore in Ayodhya's Baghajai village for Rs 18.5 crore with the help of trust member Anil Mishra.

The land, he claimed, was purchased from people who had brought it for Rs 2 crore just minutes before. The senior AAP leader also sought a probe by the Central Bureau of Investigation and the Enforcement Directorate

into the matter. The AAP sources said the nameplate of Singh's house was blackened by two persons. They raised slogans and tried to enter the premises forcibly.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (New Delhi) Deepak Yadav said two persons have been detained in connection with the incident.

"An attempt was made to deface the nameplate at the residence of Sanjay Singh, MP. Two persons have been detained in this regard. No physical injury has been caused to anyone. Further investigation is on," he tweeted.

The Ram temple trust, according to sources, sent its explanation over the land deal controversy to the Union government on Sunday night, saying it did not pay more than the going rate.

Rain likely today: Met

PTI  
NEW DELHI, 15 JUNE

Delhi recorded a maximum temperature of 38.7 degrees Celsius on Tuesday, a notch below the season's normal, the Meteorological department said.

According to the Met department, the minimum temperature settled at 27.2 degrees Celsius, which is also a notch below the season's normal.

The weather office has forecast generally cloudy skies with light to moderate rain and thundershowers accompanied by gusty winds of 40-50 kmph speed for Wednesday.

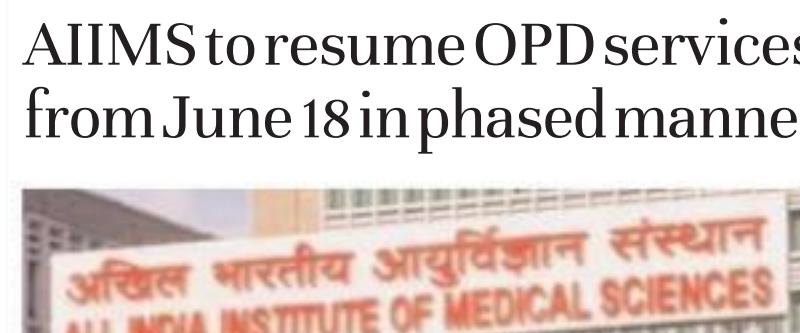
The maximum temperature is expected to hover around 36 degrees Celsius on Wednesday while the minimum temperature is likely to be around 26 degrees Celsius, the Met department said.

The relative humidity recorded in the city at 5.30 pm was 50 per cent, it said.

"Westerly winds have slowed down the progress of the monsoon in northwest India. It is not likely to hit Delhi in the next two days," an India Meteorological Department (IMD) official had said on Monday.

It was earlier predicted that the monsoon may reach Delhi by June 15--12 days ahead of its normal arrival in the city by June 27.

## AIIMS to resume OPD services from June 18 in phased manner

PTI  
NEW DELHI, 15 JUNE

Almost two months after it closed down its OPD services, AIIMS-Delhi has decided to resume the operations latest by June 18 in a phased manner.

Heads of Departments of all clinical departments have been requested to provide a proposed number of new and follow-up OPD patients per day who are to be given online/telephonic appointments, according to an order issued by the AIIMS medical superintendent on Tuesday.

As of now, OPD registration will be done only for such patients who are having prior online/telephonic appointments and a decision to allow walk-in registrations will be taken later after reviewing Covid situation, it said.

"In view of considerable decrease in COVID-19 cases, it has been decided by the director AIIMS to re-start the OPD services in a phased manner at the earliest but latest by 18 June 2021 (Friday)," the order stated.

All HoDs have been requested to provide the requisite information within two days of issue of the order.

## Delhi BJP seeks reopening of parks, gardens

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, 15 JUNE

Delhi BJP leaders, including former state BJP president Vijay Goel and leader of the Opposition in Delhi Assembly Ramvij Singh Bidhuri, today requested chief minister Arvind Kejriwal for immediate reopening of parks and open spaces as these parks are being used by people from all walks of life for health benefits.

State BJP functionary requested Lt. Governor Anil Baijal and chief minister Kejriwal to take immediate decision to open parks and open spaces so that people can resume their morning and evening walk and other fitness activities.

It is unfortunate that Delhi government has decided to keep park shut while shopping malls and bars and restaurant have been allowed to

function, said Bidhuri. Bidhuri has suggested all Covid related norms should be followed while allowing parks and other open spaces to be open for public.

Even doctors and experts have said that parks and open spaces are much safer than the closed auditoriums or close spaces if Covid norms are followed, former state BJP president Vijay Goel said.

State BJP leaders, along with its workers, will stage demonstration outside Lodhi garden tomorrow demanding immediate reopening of parks.

## The Statesman

KOLKATA

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HYDERABAD

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All other stations in India - Re. 1

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*He (Jagdeep Dhankhar) is trying to convey a view as if a war is going on in Bengal like that in Palestine and Israel*

TMC SPOKESPERSON SUKHENDU SEKHAR ROY  
ALLEGING THAT THE GOVERNOR IS MAKING VENOMOUS AND BASELESS COMMENTS AGAINST STATE GOVERNMENT

# Punjab eases curbs further as Covid positivity rate dips to 2%

CM Capt Amarinder announces further lockdown relaxations, allowing restaurants, cafes, eateries, cinemas, gyms to reopen at maximum 50 per cent capacity beginning today

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
CHANDIGARH, 15 JUNE

**W**ith Punjab's Covid positivity rate coming down to two per cent, Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh on Tuesday announced further easing of the lockdown restrictions, allowing restaurants and other eating joints as well as cinemas and gyms to reopen at 50 per cent capacity beginning tomorrow.

He also announced an increase in gathering of people, including for weddings and cremations, to 50 persons.

Under the new guidelines, which will remain in effect till 25 June when they will be again reviewed, daily night curfew in the state will be in

place from 8 p.m. to 5 a.m., with weekend curfew from 8 p.m. on Saturday upto 5 a.m. on Monday, across the state. However, all essential activities, including those covered under existing 'exemptions', will remain unaffected, unhindered and exempted from curfew restrictions.

Chairing a high-level virtual Covid review meeting, the CM ordered opening of all restaurants (including in hotels), cafes, coffee shops, fast food outlets, dhabas etc. and cinemas and gyms at maximum 50 per cent of capacity and subject to all their employees having received at least one dose of vaccination. AC buses can also ply with 50 per cent occupancy in the state.

Bars and pubs will, however, continue to remain



closed. All educational institutions such as schools and colleges will also continue to be closed.

District authorities have been asked to determine opening timings of non-essential shops, including on Sun-

day, on the basis of the local situation, while ensuring that crowds are avoided.

District authorities will also continue to ensure strict implementation of all the extant directives on Covid appropriate behaviour, including social distancing, wearing of face masks etc., directed Capt Amarinder.

The announcements came as chief secretary Vini Mahajan, citing a University of Cambridge Judge Business School report of 14 June on 'Growth of Infection' in Punjab, told the meeting that based on its findings, all districts are on downward trajectories for new cases.

"The estimated trend value of the daily growth rate was 9.2 per cent as of 14 June 2021. This implies that report-

ed new cases will halve in seven days, under the assumption that the growth rate remains constant. As of 14 June 2021, the estimated reproduction number for Punjab stood at 0.69, significantly below one. Newly reported Covid-19 cases are likely to decline to about 210 per day by 28 June 2021," she added.

Further, said Mahajan, while numbers of cases are low, there are indications that the growth rates of cases, while negative, have recently reversed direction from their downward paths in Fazilka, Jalandhar, and Shaheed Bhagat Singh Nagar. The projected number of deaths by 28 June stand at 21.

The state had hit its second wave peak on May 8, with 9100 cases, which had come down to a low of 629 on 14 June.

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
CHANDIGARH, 15 JUNE

patrolling had got a tip off that a person engaged in selling drugs to youth had a big consignment at his house in village Mahmoodpur. After getting the input, police immediately conducted a raid and recovered 21 kg opium worth Rs 30 lakh from a plastic bag after digging the raw land near the house.

In another case, 145 grams of heroin was recovered from three accused identified as Vikram alias Pahadi, Vikram alias Bikar and Sewak in Fatehabad district.

In a separate case, sleuths in Panipat arrested Sanjeev, a native of Manuwars, Haridwar in Uttarakhand after 1.30 kg of charas was recovered from his possession, the spokesperson added.

All accused have been booked under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act and further investigation is underway.

## 'Power Grid helping in creating smart city infra'

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
SHIMLA, 15 JUNE

Himachal Pradesh chief minister Jai Ram Thakur on Tuesday said Power Grid by providing smart cleaning machines to Municipal Corporation, Shimla, will help in creating a smart city infrastructure.

After flagging off a truck mounted sewer jetting and a litter picking machine provided to MC Shimla by Power Grid Corporation of India as part of its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initia-

tive, Thakur said these machines will help in maintaining cleanliness and hygiene of the city.

Thakur stated that Power Grid had sanctioned funds amounting to Rs 1.98 crore for providing four Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs) in Himachal Pradesh.

One truck mounted sweeping machine with vacuum cleaner and one truck mounted compactor have already been handed over to Municipal Corporation, Shimla in the month of December, 2020, he added.



Amit Shah takes stock of measures to tackle floods

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
SHIMLA, 15 JUNE

lightning strikes to the public at the earliest through TV, FM Radio, SMS and other media, the statement said.

He directed for giving maximum publicity to various mobile apps related to weather forecasting like 'Umang', 'Rain Alarm' and 'Damini', developed by the IMD, so that their benefits reach the targeted population.

The Damini app triggers warning about lightning strikes three hours in advance which can help reduce losses to life and property.

The home minister advised that studies should be conducted through satellite application on the increasing strains on our river systems.

He underlined that while being sensitive to rivers, everyone should also take care about water flow of the rivers.

He directed the CWC, the IMD and the NDRF to continuously monitor the water level and flood situation in rivers and send regular reports to the home ministry.

He also directed the DG NDRF to immediately hold meetings with the heads of the SDRF in flood-prone states.

Complying with the directions given by Shah during the flood review meeting held on July 3, 2020, the CWC has started to issue five-day advance inflow forecast for all the reservoirs in the country.

Shah also directed the Jal Shakti Ministry and the CWC to further set up an empowered group of experts for providing practical guidance to dam authorities for taking timely and advance action for release of water and in order to further reduce flooding and minimise loss to property and lives.



HP ropes in e-commerce sites for handicraft products sale

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
CHANDIGARH, 15 JUNE

Famous e-commerce shopping websites of the country and abroad such as Amazon and Flipkart will soon start selling the products of HP handicrafts and handloom corporations in national and international markets.

HP industries minister Bikram Singh gave details about this decision on Tuesday after 186th meeting of the board of directors of HP handicrafts and handloom corporation.

Singh stated that necessary process in this regard was being completed with e-commerce shopping websites Amazon and Flipkart.

"Both the e-commerce companies have shown their keen interest in handloom and handicraft products of the state as these products are of high quality.

The two e-commerce companies are very enthusiastic to sell them in the global market and make them available at the doorstep of the consumers," he added.

Bikram Singh further stat-

ed that this would benefit the entrepreneurs, artisans and weavers of the state through online business.

The corporation had provided training to 3,375 persons in the last three years and the turnover of the corporation for this year had been around Rs 30 crore.

The corporation vice chairman Sanjeev Katwal said that efforts were being made to ensure quality in various products and a special emphasis was being laid on providing self-employment opportunities to artisans and



Haryana announces relief to real estate industry amid pandemic

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
CHANDIGARH, 15 JUNE

The Haryana Cabinet, which met under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar on Tuesday, granted relief to the real estate industry as well as change of land-use permission (CLU) holders in view of the disruptions caused by the second wave of Covid-19 for two months.

As per it, the period of 1 April 2021 to 31 May, 2021 will be considered as "zero peri-

od" for the purposes of interest on payment of renewal fee or licence on delayed period, submission of fresh bank guarantee on account of grant of license and interest on payment of installment of external development works (EDC), state infrastructure development charges (SIDC) during this period, letter of intent, permissions, building plan approval, extension of CLU permission and licences and renewal of licences and related compli-

ances.

This is in line with the various relief measures granted by the Union government for various sectors of economy, an official spokesperson said. The colonisers have been granted relief of interest on the pending dues and for time-bound compliances. The colonisers or developers should pass on the corresponding benefits to their allottees to ensure that the hardships faced by the end-users also get mitigated to that extent, the spokesperson said.

Meanwhile, in view of the emergent situation arising on account of the unprecedented spread of Covid-19 pandemic, the Haryana government has also decided to notify the scheme for reimbursement of Goods and Services Tax (GST) on Covid-related items. This scheme will remain in force up to and inclusive of 30 June, 2021. The excise and taxation department being a nodal depart-

ment for implementation of the GST, will administer the scheme.

The Haryana Cabinet today

gave ex-post facto approval for the same. The state government's move taken in the public interest would encourage the efforts and further facilitate the donation of such items by way of reimbursement of GST if already paid on such Covid-related items. In view of the surge in numbers of cases of Covid-19, Haryana confronted an acute shortage of liquid medical oxygen and other health equipment such as ventilators, medicines etc.

The reimbursement of GST will be subject to conditions that such Covid-related material will be donated free of cost to the government of Haryana, hospitals run by state government, or any hospital permitted by state government to receive such material through health and family welfare department of the Haryana government.



## 1 held with 21 kg opium in Kaithal

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
CHANDIGARH, 15 JUNE

Haryana Police has arrested an inter-state drug peddler and seized 21 kilogram (kg) opium worth Rs 30 lakh from his possession in Kaithal district.

Giving this information on Tuesday, a Haryana Police spokesperson informed that a police team, acting on credible information, raided a house and seized the contraband. Arrested accused was identified as Gurpreet Singh alias Preet, a resident of Mahmoodpur.

A preliminary probe revealed the arrested accused used to source the opium from Bihar and supply it in small quantities at high price in the Guhla-Cheeka area and Punjab. Two of his cousins were also behind bars in Fatehpurjail, Uttar Pradesh, in a case of drug smuggling.

A police team during

the video, Samad has said he was abducted from Gokulpuri area when he took an auto for Loni in Ghaziabad.

The autorickshaw already had two people in it when he hired it while two more boarded it a little distance ahead, said Samad in the video, adding the four suddenly pounced upon him inside the auto, covered his head with a piece of cloth and began beating him up.

"They eventually drove me to a secluded house in a field in Behta Hazipur village of Loni where they further beat me up while asking me to chant Jai Shri Ram," alleged Samad in the video.

"Every time I cried in pain and uttered Allah they beat me up again asking me to chant Jai Shri Ram instead," said Samad.

"They even chopped my beard, calling me a Pakistani spy," he said.

## 2 more held for assaulting elderly Muslim man, chopping his beard in Ghaziabad

PTI  
GHAZIABAD, 15 JUNE

Two more men were arrested for thrashing and chopping the beard of an elderly Muslim man who also claimed that they asked him to chant "Jai Shri Ram".

Police however ruled out any communal angle saying Sufi Abdul Samad was attacked by six men - Hindus and Muslims - who were unhappy over the amulets he had sold them.

The arrested youth have been identified as Kalloo and Adil. Apart from them, Polly, Arif, Musahid and Parvez Gurjar were also involved in the incident, Senior Superintendent of Police Amit Pathak said.

The Ghaziabad police had earlier arrested Gurjar, who owns the house where the alleged incident took place. An FIR was lodged two

days after the incident which took place on June 5 under IPC section 342, section 323, section 504, section 506.

In his complaint, Samad did not mention that his beard was cut and he was compelled to chant "Jai Shri Ram".

Police is raiding the possible hideouts of other accused and they will be nabbed soon, Superintendent of Police rural Irraj Raja said.

Samad also practised occultism and had sold some amulet to Gurjar, purportedly to free one of his family members from some "evil effect" but a dispute arose between the two as there was no desired result of the amulet, he said.

The purported video which went viral on social media shows four men beating Samad up, chopping his beard and asking him to chant Jai Shri Ram in the Loni area of Ghaziabad. Showing his injuries in

er, the night curfew will be imposed from 10.30 p.m. to 5 a.m.

The decision came after the Covid review meeting chaired by UT Administrator VP Singh Badnore. The shop owners were asked to ensure Covid

protocols. Restaurants and bars will be allowed to operate with 50 per cent capacity till 10 p.m.

The decision regarding the Sunday closure would be taken subsequently, an official statement said.

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
CHANDIGARH, 15 JUNE

The Chandigarh Administration on Tuesday allowed all shops to open daily from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m., but restaurants and bars till 10 p.m. Howev-

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STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
CHANDIGARH, 15 JUNE



*Such cruelty is far removed from humanity and is shameful for both society and religion*

CONGRESS LEADER RAHUL GANDHI



# AIADMK expels 15 cadres

Members were in touch with Sasikala, Pugazhendi has been critical of Ramadoss

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

CHENNAI, 15 JUNE

The AIADMK leadership under Opposition leader Edappady K Palaniswami and party coordinator O Panneerselvam started taking firm actions against anti-party activities by expelling 15 cadres for speaking to VK Sasikala over phone and senior leader V Pugazhendi for speaking publicly against PMK youth wing leader Anbumani Ramadoss.

The 15 AIADMK members were expelled from the party on Monday for allegedly tarnishing the party's integrity. The party also expelled its spokesperson V Pugazhendi along with former minister M Anandan of Kallakurichi, AKM Alagarswami of Theni and 12 others for various reasons.

In a statement released, the party said Sasikala has been playing tricks and creating drama by holding talks with AIADMK members. Despite opting out of politics before the last Assembly elections she has been in connection with AIADMK members solely to cause harm and find ways to reclaim her position in the party, the statement said. It referred to these calls made by Sasikala 'nothing short of drama'.

In the past few days, Sasikala's office has been releasing audio clips of her conversation with party members. In most of these calls, Sasikala is



heard promising a comeback to the party and rescue it.

The AIADMK statement said that by involving in these conversations few of the party members were indulging in ways that would cause harm to the party's reputation.

The party leadership said the expulsion of the carders is a warning that no hesitation will be shown in expelling any member of the AIADMK if going against party values. AIADMK will never reunite with Sasikala and destroy the party in the process, the statement said.

Senior leaders have warned the other party cadres to not

have any connections with the expelled members whatsoever.

Although there were speculations earlier that Panner selvam is against taking the post of deputy leader of the party, both the AIADMK coordinator and joint coordinator Edappady K Palaniswami in a statement said all the appointments were made fairly.

Meanwhile, reacting to the party's decision, Pugazhendi blamed Palaniswami for his expulsion and accused that EPS has become a dictator.

"I see an Idu Amin in Palaniswami who is treating

everyone as a slave. It is better for him to kneel down before Anbumani Ramadoss. I will reveal more things in due course," said Pugazhendi.

The AIADMK expelled its spokesperson Pugazhendi for anti-party activities and the immediate provocation seems to be his criticism against PMK youth wing president Ramadoss.

Talking to reporters at Chennai airport, Pugazhendi said Anbumani's statement on Panneerselvam, and his contention that the AIADMK would have won only 20 to 25 seats in the Assembly elections if it had not been in alliance with the PMK, cannot be accepted. He asked Anbumani to have a self assessment over why PMK was defeated in 18 seats.

Though on Monday Pugazhendi called on Panneerselvam and Palaniswami during the legislature party meeting and held discussions for sometime he has been expelled from the party hours after he left party headquarters.

#### Covid-related deaths

Tamil Nadu recorded 11,805 new Covid-19 cases on Wednesday, pushing the caseload to 23,78,298 while 267 deaths, including that of an eight-month old girl child, took the toll to 30,068.

The fresh coronavirus cases in the state included two returns from Andhra Pradesh and Bihar, respectively.

Indian Army conducts rail trials on DFC

NEW DELHI, 15 JUNE

The Indian Army yesterday conducted successful trials of Indian Railways' Dedicated Freight Corridor (DFC) by moving

**The intricate and synchronised coordination by the Army with DFC-CIL and Indian Railways will significantly enhance the mobilisation capability of the armed forces'**

ing a military train loaded with vehicles and equipment from New Rewari to New Phulera, thus validating the efficacy of the DFC.

The intricate and synchronised coordination by the Army with Dedicated Freight Corridor Corporation of India Ltd (DFCCIL) and Indian Railways will significantly enhance the mobilisation capability of the armed forces, the Defence Ministry said.

The DFC has been developed by the Indian Railways primarily for faster movement of freight across the Country. Interactions by the Army with all stakeholders, including DFCCIL and Indian Railways, will assist in leveraging the DFC and allied infrastructure into the mobilisation matrix of armed forces. These trials herald the first step in this process to pave the way for enhancing the operational readiness of the armed forces.

BSP defectors to Cong seek Rajasthan Cab expansion

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
JAIPUR, 15 JUNE

Rajasthan MLAs who had defected from the BSP to the ruling Congress objected to any move by the party high command to pacify dissident legislators led by Sachin Pilot, saying it was because of them that the government was in crisis last year.

The MLAs said they should be rewarded as the government was saved by them and other Independents. Former state deputy chief minister Sachin Pilot and 18 MLAs supporting him had last year rebelled against CM Ashok Gehlot.

All BSP MLAs in the state - Lakhman Singh, Rajendra Gudha, Sandeep Yadav, Wajib Ali, Deepchand Kheria, Jogendra Awana - had defected to the ruling Congress in September 2019.

The statement by the four of the six BSP defectors

have come at a time when the Pilot camp has again started pressing the party leadership for the resolution of the issues raised by them last year. Reaffirming their confidence in the leadership of Gehlot, Tijara MLA Sandeep Kumar Yadav said that the Pilot camp was not right in demanding anything as they had tried to topple the state government. "The government was saved only because we six and other independents stood by it, he said.

"The Congress high command should not listen to them. Those who saved the government should get reward and honour," he said.

MLAs Jogendra Awana, Rajendra Gudha and Lakhman Singh also said the Gehlot government was about to fall because of Pilot and the MLAs loyal to him. They asserted that the Congress leadership should not ignore the fact that the government was saved by them and 10 Independents. When

**Pilot loyalist MLA praises Gehlot's leadership**

JAIPUR, 15 JUNE

Congress MLA Bhanwarlal Sharma, who was with dissident leader Sachin Pilot during his rebellion against Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot last year, on Tuesday expressed faith in the CM's leadership.

He also said that Pilot would not move to the BJP and the issue of resentment in Congress was being "exaggerated".

I consider Sachin Pilot as my leader. Ashok Gehlot is above him. He is the chief minister so he will have to be considered as the leader, even Sachin will also have to consider him as the leader, he told reporters at his residence in Jaipur when asked whether he considers Pilot as his leader.

The remarks come amid rumblings in the Pilot camp over the "delay" in meeting the demands made by the faction last year. Sharma is the third Pilot loyalist MLA after Virat Nagar MLA Indrajit Gurjar and Karauli MLA P R Meena who have praised Gehlot for work done in their constituencies in recent days.

PTI

asked about the Cabinet expansion, Rajendra Gudha said it was the prerogative of the chief minister. "We merged with the Congress unconditionally but we did not know that 19 MLAs would desert the government. We MLAs were standing by the government. Now, it is the time to recognise who was with the government and against it," Gudha said.

The CTUs which include INTUC, AITUC, CITU, Hind Mazdoor Sabha (HMS) and AIUTUC have also demanded 10 kg free food grains per person per month to all needy and Rs 7500 per month to every non-income tax paying family every month and insurance cover for frontline workers in ASHA and Anganwadi schemes.

Trade Unions to support farmers' 26 June stir

NEW DELHI, 15 JUNE

Central Trade Unions (CTUs) will observe 26 June as a "Save Agriculture-Save Democracy" Day across the nation, in solidarity with the Samyukt Kisan Morcha, which is leading the farmers' agitation against farm laws.

In a statement, the CTUs today said the farmers' agitation yesterday completed 200 days of protest on a main highway near Delhi for their demands to repeal the three farm laws; withdrawal of the Electricity (Amendment) Ordinance, 2021, and a legal guarantee for the MSP.

June 26th marks the completion of seven month long struggle. There are several struggles, including this farmers' agitation, against the undeclared emergency and authoritarian BJP regime that the country is experiencing today," the CTUs said.

"Even those inhabiting the small island of Lakshadweep are up against these authoritarian ways of the BJP, what to talk of the complete mess they have made in countering the devastating second wave of the pandemic," the CTUs said.

The protests on 26th June will include sit-ins at Raj Bhavans in various states in addition to district/tehsil level protests all over India. The day is also the death anniversary of legendary farmer leader Swami Sahajanand Saraswati.

The CTUs which include INTUC, AITUC, CITU, Hind Mazdoor Sabha (HMS) and AIUTUC have also demanded 10 kg free food grains per person per month to all needy and Rs 7500 per month to every non-income tax paying family every month and insurance cover for frontline workers in ASHA and Anganwadi schemes.

Retired IAS officer: Kerala BJP report submitted to 'competent authority'

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, 15 JUNE

A day after the BJP Central leadership officially denied reports stating the party has appointed a three-men committee to investigate the party's debacle in the recent Assembly polls, election fund utilisation and other affairs in the party, retired IAS officer CV Ananda Bose, one of the members of the committee, said he submitted the report on Kerala BJP issues and the party's performance in the Assembly polls to the 'competent authority' held Kerela Assembly elections

"We have observed certain news reports and statements by individuals about a team deployed by the Central party to review party's performance in recently held state Assembly polls. We would like to state that the BJP Central leadership has not deployed any such teams. We have our in-built robust feedback mechanisms for review and reports," Singh said in a statement on Monday.

BJP Kerala president K Surendran maintained that the appointment of a panel to study BJP affairs in Kerala is a media creation and no such report existed.

There have been reports in the media stating Prime Minister Modi had asked three former bureaucrats - CV Ananda Bose, Jacob Thomas and E Sreedharan - to submit a report after talking to leaders and candidates on funds sent from the Central BJP to the state unit ahead of the elections.

## Ram temple trust members should resign: Akhilesh

PTI  
LUCKNOW, 15 JUNE

Amid allegations that the Ram Temple trust in Ayodhya paid an inflated price for a plot of land, Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav on Tuesday sought the resignation of members of the body and a fair probe into the issue.

The opposition parties have alleged that the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust purchased a 12,000-square-metre plot for over Rs 18 crore from people who purchased it for just Rs 2 crore - just minutes before.

The matter should be investigated fairly. All members of the trust must resign, said Yadav in a statement.

The SP chief also alleged that people have lost faith in the ruling BJP and claimed that his party will win over 350 seats in the Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections next year.

The BJP government has lost credibility in the eyes of the public due to discrimination in society and vendetta against the Opposition parties. People's hopes of good days have been shattered,

Akhilesh Yadav said.

Only a few days are left for the BJP to bid farewell and for the Samajwadi Party to form its government. After the 2022 Assembly elections, a government with the strength of more than 350 MLAs will be formed," Yadav claimed.

Thanking voters for ensuring the victory of Samajwadi Party in the recent Panchayat elections despite the coronavirus crisis and administrative pressure, he said people have also worked to save democracy by voting for the Samajwadi Party in a big way.

Yadav said farmers are suffering due to the collapse

of the mandi system. Neither are farmers getting a good remunerative price for the crop nor their income doubled.

The truth is that BJP did not fulfil even a single promise. The youth were deceived in the name of providing employment. Advertisements of recruitment were published but the recruitment did not happen anywhere. The Purvanchal Express has not been completed even in four years. Not a single unit of electricity was produced in the state. On the contrary, its rates were increased, the SP chief added.

The CTUs which include INTUC, AITUC, CITU, Hind Mazdoor Sabha (HMS) and AIUTUC have also demanded 10 kg free food grains per person per month to all needy and Rs 7500 per month to every non-income tax paying family every month and insurance cover for frontline workers in ASHA and Anganwadi schemes.

Complete details relating to eligibility criteria, broad scope of work, procedure for submission and terms and conditions and other information are available on the official website: <http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in> and <http://sppr.rajasthan.gov.in>

Applications duly completed in all respect must be uploaded on website:

<http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in> as prescribed latest by 5:00 p.m. on 28-06-2021.

UBN No. AMD 212255030001

DIPR/C/5356/2021

## TENDER

DEPARTMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND MUSEUMS RAJASTHAN

(Albert Hall Campus, Ramnivas Garden, Jaipur)

Phone: +91 141 2820360, E-mail: [dirarch@rediffmail.com](mailto:dirarch@rediffmail.com)

Dated: 03-06-2021

No. A&M/EE/2021/4982  
Notice Inviting 'Expression of Interest' (EOI) for Empanelment of Civil works Consultants in Archaeology and Museums Department, Jaipur  
On behalf of Hon'ble Governor, Rajasthan Archaeology and Museums Department, Jaipur, invites proposals from reputed consultancy firms / individuals / companies / joint venture companies / consortium of allied professionals or firms / autonomous government owned enterprises etc. for empanelment of Civil works Consultant.

Estimated Cost of Project	This EOI is for empanelment only.
EOI document fee	Rs. 1,000.
Processing fees	Rs. 1,000.
Bid Security	Not required at EOI Stage.
Date of downloading of EOI documents on website	From 08-06-2021 to 28-06-2021 up to 5:00 p.m.
Last date for upload proposals	28-06-2021 up to 5:00 p.m.
Date of opening of Technical Proposal	On 30-06-2021 at 11:00 a.m.

Complete details relating to eligibility criteria, broad scope of work, procedure for submission and terms and conditions and other information are available on the official website: <http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in> and <http://sppr.rajasthan.gov.in>

Applications duly completed in all respect must be uploaded on website: <http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in> as prescribed latest by 5:00 p.m. on 28-06-2021.

EXECUTIVE ENGINEER

## NORTH DELHI MUNICIPAL CORPORATION

Office of the Executive Engineer (Project) City - S.P. Zone  
Room No. 300, 3rd Floor, Old Hindu College Bldg.  
Kashmere Gate, Delhi - 110006  
Tel. No. 011-46170235 E-mail: [eeprcspz@gmail.com](mailto:eeprcspz@gmail.com)

ALLOTMENT OF TOWN HALL PREMISES ON MONTHLY LICENSE FEE BASIS FOR 33 YEARS

NIT No.EE(PROYECT)CSPZ/T/2021-22/03 dated 14.06.2021

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Request of Tender document 17.06.2021 18:00 PM to 04.08



*The government must ensure stringent punishment to the guilty by carrying out a swift, impartial and credible probe*

BAHUJAN SAMAJ PARTY CHIEF MAYAWATI  
ON DEATH OF PRATAPGARH JOURNALIST

NEW DELHI, WEDNESDAY 16 JUNE 2021

05

## THUMBNAILS



A worker disinfects the premises of Qutub Minar complex ahead of its reopening in the Capital on Tuesday. AMARJEET SINGH

Taj Mahal to reopen today: At the Taj Mahal, which will reopen for visitors from Wednesday, only 650 people will be allowed to enter the premises at a time, officials said on Tuesday. All the centrally protected monuments and museums closed will reopen on 16 June, Archaeological Survey of India issued order. PTI

Raj Vedic education board: The Rajasthan government will soon set up a Vedic Education and Sanskar Board to revive the knowledge of Sanskrit scriptures and Vedas, officials said on Tuesday. The board is likely to be formed in next four to five months. PTI

Smog tower deadline: The Central Pollution Control Board has sought three more months to complete the construction of a smog tower at Anand Vihar, officials said. Though the agencies had sought special permission to continue the construction work during the lockdown, the restriction on the movement of manpower and material led to some delay. PTI

## FELICITATION



People felicitate Chief Justice of India NV Ramana during his visit to Yadadri shrine, at Balalayam Yadadri-Bhongir, Telangana, on Tuesday. IANS

## Custodial death: SC dismisses plea for restoration of HP ex-IGP's bail

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 15 JUNE

The Supreme Court Tuesday refused to entertain a plea for restoration of bail to former Himachal Pradesh Inspector General of Police (IGP) Zahur Haider Zaidi in a custodial death case, saying that attempting to influence a witness, who is a senior IPS officer, is a very important charge.

Zaidi, one of the accused in the case related to the custodial death of a man who was among those arrested on charge of gang-raping a minor girl in Kotkhai in 2017, was granted bail on April 6, 2019 by the top court which later transferred the case from Shimla to Chandigarh.

The special trial court at Chandigarh, in January 2020, cancelled Zaidi's bail after a prosecution witness and IPS officer Soumya Sambasivan alleged that she was being pressured by him to influence the trial. The Punjab and Haryana High Court later refused to tin-



## Cop uses water cannons to disperse SAD-BSP workers



SAD & BSP workers hit by a police water cannon during their protest near Capt. Amarinder Singh's farmhouse in Mohali.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MOHALI, 15 JUNE

Police on Tuesday used water cannons to disperse Shromani Akali Dal and BSP leaders and workers when they were forcing their way to 'gherao' the residence of Punjab chief minister Amarinder Singh here.

Protesters led by SAD president Sukhbir Singh Badal were shouting slogans against the Congress-led government over several issues including irregularities in the purchase of Fateh kits and alleged diversion of vaccine doses to private hospitals.

BSP state president Jasbir Singh Garhi was also present at the protest. Several Akali leaders, including Badal and Bikram Singh Majithia, were detained by police. Police personnel were deployed in strength and multi-layered barricades were put up on the road

sis, he added. All decisions were taken in the interest of the peo-

said, terming media reports on alleged scams as nothing but sensationalism.

Amarinder said he was with his officials 100 percent on these issues, adding that all the right steps were taken and no amount of Opposition hullabaloo can undermine the true intent of his government, which was focused on protecting the lives of the people.

The state's doctors and bureaucrats had been doing an excellent job in fighting the war with their backs against the wall, he said, declaring that the Punjab would beat the virus. The CM took serious note of the large-scale gatherings being organised by Shromani Akali Dal (SAD) against the state government in brazen violation of the Covid safety protocols and the curbs in place. In their desperation for power, Sukhbir Badal and his party colleagues were endangering the lives of the people through such gatherings, he added.

The 40000-odd doses made available to some private hospitals was a one-time measure as a step to provide some vaccination options to non-priority groups in 18-45 category, said Amarinder.

The hospitals were provided the vaccines at the price at which they were to buy from the manufacturers, he pointed out, adding that the decision was taken as there were initially only two private hospitals in Punjab that had managed to procure the vaccine from the 25 per cent quota reserved by the Central government.

However, since the decision of the government was not being taken in the right spirit, it was withdrawn, but there was no question of any irregularity, he added.

ple of the state, and all due procedures were followed, he

## 2 more held in Ambani bomb scare row

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MUMBAI, 15 JUNE

Two more persons have been arrested by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) in the case of explosives-laden SUV found near the residence of industrialist Mukesh Ambani and the subsequent murder of businessman Mansukh Hirani, an official said on Tuesday. A special court here remanded Santosh Shelar and Anand Jadhav, the two accused, in the NIA's custody till June 21, he

added.

"Shelar and Jadhav were nabbed from Malad area here on June 11. On the face of it, both were involved in the conspiracy to plant the SUV with explosives near Ambani's south Mumbai residence," the NIA official said. The Central agency also suspects that they played a role in the murder of Hirani, who had claimed that the SUV found near Ambani's residence 'Antilia' on February 25 had been stolen from his possession.

## EXTENSION OF PERIODICITY OF SPECIAL TRAIN

This is notified for the information of rail passengers that Railways have decided to extend the periodicity of the run of following Special Train as under:-

Train No. & Name	Frequency	Additional Dates of run
06077 Coimbatore - Hazrat Nizamuddin Special Express	Sunday	04.07.2021 to 07.11.2021
06078 Hazrat Nizamuddin - Coimbatore Special Express	Wednesday	07.07.2021 to 10.11.2021

This Special Train will be having Fully Reserved Service.

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

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

RailMadad Helpline No. 139  
Visit RailMadad website : [www.railmadad.indianrailways.gov.in](http://www.railmadad.indianrailways.gov.in) & download RailMadad app.

Please join us on   
**NORTHERN RAILWAY**  
Visit us at : [www.nr.indianrailways.gov.in](http://www.nr.indianrailways.gov.in)

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

## REDUCTION IN THE FREQUENCY OF SUPERFAST HUMSAFAR SPECIAL EXPRESS TRAIN

It is notified for the information of rail passengers that due to operational reasons Railways have decided to reduce the frequency of Train No. 02275/02276 Prayagraj Jn. - New Delhi - Prayagraj Jn. Superfast Humsafar special express train, as per the details given below:-

Train No. & Name	Existing Frequency	Revised Frequency	Existing Date	Revised Frequency (with effect from)
02275 Prayagraj Jn. - New Delhi Superfast Humsafar Special Exp.	Daily	4 days in a week (Tue, Thu, Fri & Sun)	Upto 21.06.2021	till further advice
02276 New Delhi - Prayagraj Jn. Superfast Humsafar Special Exp.	Daily	4 days in a week (Wed, Fri, Sat & Mon)	Upto 22.06.2021	till further advice

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

For any kind of information such as arrival/departure timings and stoppages enroute etc., the passengers are requested to contact RailMadad Helpline No. 139 or may visit Indian Railways website <https://enquiry.indianrail.gov.in> or NTES App.

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## APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION

General public is hereby informed that one male was found in unconscious condition at B-Block, Infront of Woodland Showroom, Inner Circle, Connaught Place, New Delhi on 11.06.2021 and was admitted to LHM & SSK Hospital, New Delhi vide MLC No. 1040/202168178. During treatment he died on 12.06.2021. In this regard a DD No. 9A, Dated 12.06.2021 has been lodged at P.S. Connaught Place, New Delhi. Dead body has been preserved in Mortuary of LHM & SSK Hospital, New Delhi for 72 hrs. for identification. The description of the dead body is as under:-

Name: Unknown, S/o: Unknown R/o: Unknown, Age: about 45 years, Height: 5'7" Face: Long, Complexion: Wheatish, Built: Thin, Wearing: Nil (had put Mahroon Blanket over his body).

Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the information about the dead male but no clue has come to light so far. If any one is having any information about this dead male please inform the undersigned.

S.H.O

P.S. Connaught Place, New Delhi

DP/279/NDD/2021 Ph: 011-23364139, 23747100, 8750870525

## SEARCH FOR MISSING

General public is hereby informed that a female (depicted in the photo), Namely : Bharti @ Mamta D/o Girdhar Lal R/o H. No. 85, Dheerup, Delhi has been missing since 31.05.2021 from her house. In this regard a case vide DD No. 44A dated 06.06.2021 has been lodged at Police Station Mukherjee Nagar, Delhi. Her physical description is as under:-

Age : 32 Years, Height: 4'5", Complexion : Shallow, Face: Round, Built: Heavy body, Wearing : Violet colour suit & salwar and shoes in feet.

Any person having any information/Clue about this missing female, may inform SHO, Mukherjee Nagar, Delhi at E-mail Id [cic@cbi.gov.in](mailto:cic@cbi.gov.in) or Website: <http://cbi.nic.in>

Phone: 011-24368638, 24368641 Fax No. 011-24368639 DP/831/NW/2021 Ph. No. 011-27654668, 8750870231

## IMPORTANT NOTICE

This is notified for the information of rail passengers that Railways have decided to change the timings of the following Trains as per the details given below:-

### REVISED TIMINGS OF TRAINS

Train No. & Name	Dates w.e.f.
02626 New Delhi-Thiruvananthapuram Superfast Exp. Special	16.06.2021
06787 Tirunelveli-Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra Exp. Spl.	21.06.2021
02521 Barauni Jn.-Ernakulam Jn. Express Special	21.06.2021
02511 Gorakhpur-Kochuveli Express Special	17.06.2021
09415 Ahmedabad-Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra Exp. Spl.	27.06.2021

Passengers are advised to please check the detailed Time-Table of above trains through RailMadad Helpline No. 139 or visit Indian Railways website <https://enquiry.indianrail.gov.in> or NTES App.

All norms of the State and Central Government regarding COVID-19 including Social distancing, sanitization etc., may be followed in the trains and at the Railway stations.

All other precautions associated with COVID-19 should also be ensured.

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## SUMMER SPECIAL TRAINS

For the convenience of rail passengers, Railways have decided to run the following Summer Special Trains as per the schedule given below:-

03435/03436 Malda Town - Anand Vihar T. - Malda Town	12 Trips
STATIONS	TRAIN NO. 03436
ARR. DEP.	ARR. DEP.
— 09:05	Malda Town
13:45 —	Anand Vihar T.
23:40 —	— 17:10

Days of Run : 03435 Ex Malda Town on every Monday from 21.06.2021 to 26.07.2021 and 03436 Ex Anand Vihar T. on every Tuesday from 22.06.2021 to 27.07.2021.

Accommodation: AC 2 Tier, AC 3 Tier, Sleeper & Second Seating (Reserved).

Stoppages: New Farakka Jn., Barharpur Jn., Sahibganj Jn., Kahalganj, Bhagpalpur Jn., Sultanpur, Jamalpur Jn., Abhaipur, Kiul Jn., Patna Jn., Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Jn., Varanasi, Sultapur, Lucknow, & Moradabad stations.

03437/03438 Bhagalpur Jn. -

## Road from Cornwall

The G7 summit in Cornwall was seemingly riveted to the sphere of public policy, pre-eminently health and education of girls. If the upshot is any indication, there may be hope yet for the poorer nations of the world. Going by the wrap-up presentation of Boris Johnson, the rich nations will donate one billion doses of Covid vaccines to poorer countries. Abjuring hi-falutin platitudes on global economic cooperation, the league of the wealthy, so to speak, has promised to boost the manufacture of global vaccines and shorten the time it takes to develop new jabs, tests and treatment. Unicef has welcomed the move, but has called for faster timelines, while some critics have said the initiative does not go far enough. Given that environmental degradation is the second major damaging issue that confronts the world, the summit has pledged to raise \$100 billion to help the developing world cut its carbon emissions, indeed a signal of intent that has consistently been skirted at the periodic climate change conferences, whether in Cancun, Copenhagen or Paris. The underlying discord has been overwhelming at the high table. In refreshing contrast, there has been a measure of forward movement at Cornwall in the spheres of public health and environment. The supply and use of Covid vaccines will of course hinge on the follow-through.

In what appears to be a bow in the direction of female education, the G7 said it would try and get 40 million more girls into school around the world. The forbidding challenge must be the Islamist militants' opposition to women's education in places where the ISIS and Taliban are potent forces, as on the Af-Pak frontier. The grievous injuries suffered by Malala Yousufzai must still rankle. The Prime Minister of Britain denied that the summit was dominated by rows over Brexit, saying the issue was a "vanishingly small" part of the meeting. His comments followed a row over checks on goods going from Britain to Northern Ireland, indeed a confrontation that has put the United Kingdom and the European Union at loggerheads. The emphasis on a joint endeavour to address the pandemic was clear when Mr Johnson urged participating nations not to let the pandemic leave a lasting scar of inequality. Recovery from the pandemic dominated the discussions with President Biden pledging to share 500 million doses and a promise from Prime Minister Johnson for another 100 million shots. Particularly relevant at this juncture was Mr Johnson's caveat, specifically that world leaders must not repeat errors made over the past 18 months – or "those made in the recovery from the 2008 global financial crisis". Inequalities, he feared, may be entrenched. That indeed was the dominant worry at the three-day jaw-jaw at Cornwall.

## Change in Israel

An era has ended and another just begun in Israel, the historically volatile swathe of the Middle East. Benjamin Netanyahu's record 12-year run as the country's Prime Minister ended on Sunday with the Knesset (parliament) approving a new "government of change", helmed by the nationalist Naftali Bennett. It is, even at the mildest estimation, an improbable scenario, of a kind that few Israelis could have imagined. The fragility of the new arrangement is underscored by the wafer-thin 60-59 vote of confidence that the new coalition in Tel Aviv – of left-wing, centrist, right-wing and Arab parties – secured. The parties have little in common save the singular objective to remove Netanyahu who has contested as many as four elections in the span of a little more than a year and is currently fighting corruption charges in court. In Tel Aviv, thousands turned out to welcome the result. A seemingly confident Netanyahu said he would be back sooner than expected. "If we are destined to go into the opposition, we will do so with our heads held high until we can topple it," he told parliament before Bennett was sworn in. The new government largely plans to avoid sweeping moves on international issues, pre-eminently the policy towards the Palestinians, and to focus instead on domestic reforms. Palestinians were by and large unmoved by the change of administration, predicting that Bennett, a former defence chief who advocates annexing parts of the occupied West Bank, would pursue the same right-wing agenda as Netanyahu. Going by the terms of the coalition deal, Bennett, a 49-year-old Orthodox Jew and high-tech millionaire, will be replaced as Prime Minister in 2023 by centrist Yair Lapid, a popular former television host. With his far-right Yamina party winning only six of parliament's 120 seats in the last election, Bennett's ascension to the premiership has been described as a political jaw-dropper. He had once served as Netanyahu's chief of staff and had a rocky relationship with him as defence minister. Although they are both right-wingers, Bennett spurned Netanyahu's call after the March 23 election to join him. The response of the United States of America to the rather quirky change of guard is critical in the overall construct. In the immediate aftermath of Sunday's change, President Biden has congratulated Bennett and Lapid, saying he looked forward to strengthening the "close and enduring" relationship between the two countries. Netanyahu – widely known as 'Bibi' – was Israel's longest-serving leader, and was Prime Minister since 2009. The dominant Israeli politician of his generation, he had become the face of Israel on the international stage, with his polished English and booming baritone voice. He used his global stature to resist calls for Palestinian statehood, describing it as a danger to Israel's security. Instead, he sought to bypass the Palestinian issue by forging diplomatic deals with regional Arab states, on the back of shared fears of Iran. For all that, he was a divisive figure at home and abroad, weakened by repeated failure to clinch a decisive election victory.

# China and Bhutan

China and Bhutan do not maintain diplomatic relations, but there are periodical political talks, and wisely Bhutanese authorities have always tried to avoid a confrontational attitude towards their mammoth neighbour. They may choose to look the other way even when China occupies 495 square kilometers of Bhutanese territory



The Kingdom of Bhutan and the People's Republic of China (PRC) do not maintain official diplomatic relations, and ties have been historically tense. China shares a border of 470 kilometers with Bhutan and Beijing's territorial disputes with Thimphu have been a source of potential conflict. Since the 1980s, the two governments have conducted regular talks on border and security issues aimed at reducing tensions.

As part of a major construction drive by Chinese President Xi Jinping, Beijing has been taking up multilevel construction in the territory internationally and historically understood as Bhutanese since 2015. China announced that a new village, called Gyalaphug in Tibetan or Jieluo in Chinese, had been established in the south of the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), says Robert Barnett, the author of the investigative Foreign Policy report.

It was revealed from the Foreign Policy report on May 7 that China is building three villages (including Gyalaphug), "66 miles of new roads, a small hydropower station, two Communist Party administrative centers, a communications base, a disaster relief warehouse, five military or police outposts, and what are believed to be major signals tower, a satellite receiving station, a military base, and up to six security sites and outposts" all in Bhutanese territory.

China does not need the land it is settling in Bhutan – its aim is to force the Bhutanese government to cede territory that China wants elsewhere in Bhutan to give Beijing a military advantage in its struggle with New Delhi as per the Foreign Policy report. Reportedly, Gyalaphug is now one of three new villages; two already occupied and one under construction. China's unilateral construction of roads, set-

tlements and buildings within Bhutan's territory contradicts the 1998 peace agreement signed by the two countries. That agreement promised to "maintain peace and tranquillity on the Bhutan-China border areas." The agreement was groundbreaking because of China's explicit acknowledgement of Bhutan as a sovereign country. The agreement further stated, "China fully respects the territorial integrity and independence of Bhutan."

What makes matters more complicated for Bhutan is that in the area in which Gyalaphug lies is not just ordinary territory. Rather, it is in an area of extraordinary religious significance to the people of Bhutan.

In 2017, Beijing's attempt to build a road in the Doklam plateau, a trijunction between India, China and Bhutan, was met with a 73-day face-off between Chinese and Indian troops. Foreign Policy said that it contacted the spokesperson for the Indian Ministry of External Affairs, the Bhutanese mission to the United Nations and the prime minister's office, and both the Chinese embassy in Washington and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Beijing for a response to its story. It received no response from the Chinese government, which rarely comments on stories before publication. The Indian government said it had no comment. The Bhutanese government did not respond to multiple inquiries.

In early May, China announced that the construction of a new village Gyalaphug had been completed in the southern part of Tibet Autonomous Region. There is only one problem with this; Gyalaphug is situated in

Bhutan, not in China. What China is doing within the territory of a sovereign state is unprecedented, and the name of the area, "Beyul," immediately evokes a deep religious meaning. In Tibetan Buddhism, beyuls are hidden valleys that the "second Buddha" Padmasambhava designated in the 8th century CE as spiritual refuges. Beyuls are where the spiritual and the material world touch each other. They are also, Padmasambhava taught, where Buddhists will be able to retreat when the rest of the world will become too corrupt for their practice.

The exact number of beyuls designated by Padmasambhava is disputed, but Beyul Khenpajong, the area now occupied by the Chinese, is certainly one of them. By occupying another beyul, in addition to those in the so-called Tibet Autonomous Region, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) gives a powerful signal of its wish to keep Tibetan Buddhism under the Party's control.

China and Bhutan do not maintain diplomatic relations, but there are periodical political talks, and wisely Bhutanese authorities have always tried to avoid a confrontational attitude towards their mammoth neighbour. They may choose to look the other way even when China occupies 495 square kilometers of Bhutanese territory in the Beyul Khenpajong and Menchum Valley area, although Foreign Policy commented that, "Given its incomparable importance for the Bhutanese and for Tibetan Buddhists in general, no Bhutanese official would ever formally relinquish this area to China, any more than Britain

would yield Stonehenge or Italy Venice." It has never been a Chinese area, and China's claims are groundless.

Reportedly, in the political talks China has said it is willing to give back the part of Beyul Khenpajong it has occupied to Bhutan in exchange for another 269 square kilometers of disputed areas – Doklam, Charihang, Sinchulingpa, Dramana, and Shakhatoe – in western Bhutan. Those areas are far away from Beyul Khenpajong, but close to the China-Bhutan-India border, and their control would offer to Beijing a decisive military advantage to threaten India.

Meanwhile, in China, hate campaigns against India do not subside. Bitter Winter reported about bad taste social media posts by official CCP institutions showing images of the cremation of India's Covid-19 victims accompanied by comments on India's supposed religion-based backwardness. While the posts were deleted, and criticised by many, Professor Shen Yi of Fudan University, who has become a social media hero in China for his ultra-nationalist comments, stated that the comparison of India's "backward" funeral pyres and China's "progressive" rocket launch was "very good," adding that "the temper caused by the flirtatious whore that is India is also necessary. As for the holier-than-thou bitches [referring to those who criticized the bad taste of the posts], if you want to express your feelings, please go to India and burn coffins."

The situation on China-Bhutan border remains in a stalemate but China is likely get Doklam heights from Bhutan through coercion in exchange for Gyalaphug being a Bhutanese religious place that will not be in the interest of India. India has strategised its future course of action by posing an aggressive posture in support of Bhutan, even if it is against its wishes.

A MEMBER OF THE **ANN**  
ASIAN VOICES

## Covid strategy

A Pakistan reaches the milestone of 10m coronavirus vaccine jabs – with over 2m people fully vaccinated – there are fresh challenges for the government. Earlier this year, as the world and the region raced to procure vaccines, Pakistan lagged behind. Despite initial delays, the government has now ramped up procurement and said it will receive over 18m donated or purchased doses from China and Covax. Now that vaccines are being made available and supply issues are being addressed, there are new tests for the government in the shape of vaccine hesitancy and efficient distribution. How does the government plan to pursue its ambitious target of vaccinating 70m citizens, and what measures is it taking to ensure large numbers of people are safely vaccinated without glitches?

A recent news report highlighted one part of this dual challenge, revealing that 300,000 citizens failed to return for a second dose. An official from the Ministry of National Health Services suggested that some died before getting the second dose, or that they contracted Covid-19 between the doses and thus were hesitant.

One reason was that the negative propaganda about the vaccine was keeping citizens from getting their second jab. NCOC chair Asad Umar said that a call centre would be set up to contact hesitant citizens and persuade them. But more must be done to combat this hesitancy. It is no mean feat, considering how rampant the dangerous anti-polio vaccine propaganda

**DAWN**  
has been despite decades of investment and awareness-building. For this reason, all-out efforts must be made by both federal and provincial officials to engage citizens. Coercive measures, such as blocking SIM cards, are not only ill-advised, they are also counterproductive as it would cut off citizens' communication channels altogether. It is critical for the government to demonstrate to members of the public how badly health, business and education have suffered during the pandemic.

To do this, engaging citizens from each of these sectors to act as role models for others could have positive results. The public must also know that with developing countries successfully vaccinating a majority of their population, travel curbs on Pakistan could remain in place for fear of variants.

Aside from the challenge of communicating the consequences of vaccine refusals to the public, the government also has the gargantuan logistical task of administering the vaccine safely and efficiently at centres across the country. Not only must authorities ensure the vaccine is stored and maintained according to scientific guidelines, they should also devise a strategy that prioritises efficient service. Though the vaccination drives in major cities are managed well, the challenge will come when the government expands centres into smaller cities and rural districts. Across the world, a successful vaccine roll-out is imperative to protect against the virus



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

editor@thestatesman.com

## G-7 commitments depend on US

SIR, The G-7 commitment to donate one billion coronavirus vaccines to poorer countries and to invest \$12 trillion in their joint pandemic recovery plan depends on U.S. commitments for a large part. The special communiqué on the G-7 outreach, and the invitation to India, Australia, South Korea and South Africa are also an extension of its stated commitment to convening a Democracy Summit this year.

The second message was the consensus amongst the seven member countries on countering China including criticising Beijing for its rights record in Xinjiang and democratic freedoms in Hong Kong, its "non-market policies and practices..." concerns over its actions in the China Seas, and a demand for a transparent investi-

gation into the origins of the Covid-19 virus. India, a special guest to the G-7/G-8 since 2003, has also maintained its independent course, especially on political issues. It is significant that the G-7 outreach communiqués that included the guest countries, did not make the same references to China as the main document. India voiced concerns about some clauses in the joint communiqué on Open Societies which condemned rising authoritarianism, net shutdowns, manipulation of information, and rights violations – areas where the Modi government has itself been oftentimes criticised.

In the present, the Government will be expected to walk the talk on its commitments at the G-7 outreach, especially in the areas of information clampdowns, given

that India had the largest number of Internet shutdowns in 2020.

Yours, etc., Sanjay Chopra,

Mohali, 15 June.

### NO COMPLACENCY

SIR, Please refer to your today's news report, 'New Covid cases at 80k toll dips'. When India's daily Covid caseload fell below 10,000 in the first half of February, weeks after the vaccination programme was rolled out, it was assumed that the country's war against the pandemic was practically over. The general mood was celebratory as well as self-congratulatory. The havoc wreaked by the second wave in April-May was both a rude shock and a wake-up call. Now, with the second wave subsiding and the unlocking process underway in several states, it's imperative to

quickly learn lessons from the recent nightmarish experience. Not for a moment should we be tempted into believing that the worst is behind us. The role of Covid-appropriate behaviour in warding off future waves is vital – the basics are still as relevant as they were last year, if not more: wear a mask properly, maintain social distancing and avoid crowds.

Superspreaders such as political and religious congregations, which allowed the virus to run riot earlier this year, should be a strict no-no at least for the next few months. The reopening of malls, which draw big crowds, must be closely monitored. Above all, it should dawn on us that there might be no return to the pre-Covid world of reckless abandon in the near future. The new normal ought to become a way of life.

Yours, etc., N Sadhasiva Reddy,

Bengaluru, 14 June.

### WINNABILITY

SIR, A glamorous actress from West Bengal who also doubles as the people's representative in our Parliament has been in the news lately; not for commendable public services rendered but her sordid personal adventures. It's not that cine artistes who switch over to politics necessarily neglect their parliamentary role, but this particular Member of Parliament has had a dismal performance in the Lok Sabha, both in terms of physical attendance and participation in the proceedings, not to speak of her indifferent role in helping her constituents.

Similar is the case of a popular Bollywood actor who has not been seen in his constituency in Punjab since as long as one can remember. There are many such examples, past and present. This reinforces the fact that electoral 'winnability' by any means and not personal capability is the only compelling reason behind selection of candidates by political parties. And platitudes like 'service to the nation', proudly mouthed by them during election time, be damned.

Yours, etc., Bhaskar Roy,  
New Delhi, June 15.



# Olympics shorn of glory

ATANU BISWAS

"No shouting, no cheering. Please cheer by clapping your hands, and maintain an appropriate distance in case there is overcrowding," that was the advice given by Yukihiko Nunomura, the vice director general of the organising committee of the Tokyo Olympic Games to spectators turning out to catch a glimpse of the Olympic torch during its journey through Japan. And it certainly portrays a grim picture of the pandemic-driven world.

However, are the Japanese people ready to cheer at all? How are the Olympics actually being greeted by the people? Not in a very positive way, for sure. Some recent surveys depicted that nearly 70-80 per cent of respondents wanted a cancellation or further postponement of the Tokyo Olympics. The Government extending the state of emergency measures in a number of prefectures in Japan, including those where Olympic events will take place, might also have intensified the public's concern about the risks of hosting the games in July. One of the largest Japanese newspapers, *Asahi Shimbun*, recently published an editorial urging Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga to cancel Tokyo 2020 due to mounting public opposition in Japan against holding the Olympics. Not to ignore the scenario that Japan's vaccination rate is one of the lowest in the developed world. Less than five per cent people have got at least one jab so far, with around half of them being fully inoculated.

The scheduled 1940 Tokyo Olympics went up in smoke due to World War II. Eight decades later, a more devastating war against an invisible enemy is shedding a dark cloud on another Tokyo Olympics. There is widespread speculation that a gigantic event like the summer games may very well act as a super-spreader amid the ongoing pandemic. In an open letter to Prime Minister Suga, the Tokyo Medical Practitioners Association recently wrote: "We strongly request that the authorities convince the IOC (International Olympic Committee) that holding the Olympics is difficult and obtain its decision to cancel the Games." And the fear-factor might have reached a new dimension when Naoto Ueyama, the head of the Japan Doctors Union, even suggested the Games might prompt the mutation of a new Covid variant!

According to *Kyodo News*, an organization called the *Nomura Research Institute* estimated that Japan will lose ¥1.81 trillion (\$16.57 billion) should the Games be cancelled. But the same study warned about the possible impact of the Olympics on the Covid situation: "Even if the Games are cancelled, the economic loss will be smaller than [the damage done by] a state of emer-



gency."

And the IOC, certainly, is in no mood to cancel or to postpone further the Tokyo Olympics, which is scheduled to begin on July 23, and the Paralympic Games, scheduled to begin on August 24. Prime Minister Suga has said the decision to cancel the games lies ultimately and unilaterally with the IOC. Yes, this is certainly as per the agreement of the IOC with the host. The IOC vice-president, John Coates, is eager to go ahead with the Games even if Tokyo remains under a state of emergency due to Covid. Dick Pound, the longest-serving IOC official, insists "barring an Armageddon" this year's Tokyo 2020 Olympics will go ahead. The IOC may be hoping that once the Games achieve their own momentum, this would pacify the sharp opposition they are facing at the moment.

An Olympic certainly is deeply associated with glory – a legacy of the Olympic movement. And the concept of Olympic glory might have evolved quite a bit from the period of Baron Pierre de Coubertin. In the backdrop of the 1996 Atlanta Olympic, Frank Zarnowski, one of the world's foremost experts on decathlon history, wrote a book titled '*Olympic Glory*'

*Denied, And a Final Opportunity for Glory Restored*'. In his book, Zarnowski outlined biological profiles of eleven world-record holding decathletes, ten of whom – the likes of J. Austin Menaul, Charles Hoff, Fait Elkins, Heino Lipp – never reached the Olympic starting line. They missed out on Olympic glory either from injury, politics, or some weird twist of fate – reasons beyond their control.

For example, in the mid-1920s, Fait Elkins, of Native American background, was considered a possible gold medal winner in the 1928 Olympics in Amsterdam. A leg injury at the US Olympic trials, however, knocked him out of contention for such immortality. Through these stories of forgotten ghosts of yesteryear, Zarnowski vividly demonstrated that there is thin line that separates Olympic immortality from abject obscurity. The eleventh athlete, on whom the opening chapter of the book was written, was Dan O'Brien. O'Brien failed to make the US Olympic team for Barcelona in 1992. As this book was written prior to the 1996 Games, Zarnowski kept on speculating about O'Brien, who got another opportunity in 1996. In fact, O'Brien did indeed "redeem" himself

from his 1992 failure in the Olympic Trials to win the title in Atlanta.

If the Tokyo Olympics get cancelled, a generation of athletes would be deprived of Olympic glory, for sure. What else? The insurance industry would face a 'mind-blowingly' large loss – about \$2-3 billion, for the largest ever claim for a global event cancellation in history. And Tokyo would still stand to be out of millions of dollars in capital costs for infrastructure built for the games. A huge loss, indeed!

However, the IOC might have a larger stake. The ongoing pandemic, the induced new normal, the uncertain dynamics in the future sports arena, and the prospect of a diplomatic boycott of the Beijing 2022 Winter Games due to rising concerns about human rights in China might redefine the future of the Olympic Games, and hence very well redefine IOC's relevance.

What is humanity's stake? Even if it is a spectator-less event with a restricted number of foreign delegates, with about 50,000-60,000 coronavirus tests to be carried out daily, attendees will only be allowed limited movement and social interaction in Tokyo, with sightseeing and use of public transportation strictly forbid-

den. A spectator-less Olympics would not only result in a \$23.1 billion loss for Japan, it would certainly be detrimental for the Olympic spirit. Jack Anderson, in his recent article in '*The Conversation*', commented: "An unwanted games is no games at all." I disagree. No game is certainly a better option than an unwanted game.

Back to the discussion on Olympic glory. When the Tokyo Games was postponed by a year, it was certainly with a hope of more favourable conditions to host such a global event. Will Olympic glory be restored in Tokyo as in the case of Dan O'Brien? One year on, despite the availability of vaccines, the global situation is not better – it's certainly not conducive for such a global feast. An Olympics in Tokyo during the worst pandemic in a century could certainly be a symbolic statement.

For it could mark the victory of the human spirit amid the global war against an invisible enemy. However, the event set in a bio-bubble would fail to claim that victory. The Olympic, if it finally takes place, will fail to achieve the glory which the Olympic movement thrives for.

The writer is Professor of Statistics, Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata.

## Vaccine passports and travel rules

ARIF AZAD

**S**cenes of Pakistani labourers demonstrating outside a government office in Multan demanding to be inoculated with AstraZeneca, one of the approved vaccines for travel purposes to Saudi Arabia, shows how proposed travel-specific vaccine passports can furnish entry tickets to the West and other rich countries. Such a move can have a disproportionate impact on travellers from the Global South where, alongside poor rates of vaccination, largely non-Western vaccines (Chinese and Russian), seen as travel-unworthy, are being administered.

This spotlights the serious issue surrounding the use and abuse of vaccine passports to bar people from travelling to the West for the simple reason that they have not been vaccinated with Western vaccines considered travel-worthy and currently not available in the Global South. Yet vaccine passports for travel purposes are

one thing; vaccine-immunity passport for accessing reopened social and commercial space in the Western hemisphere another. Both, though often bearing the same name, have been assigned different purposes locally and internationally.

Ever since Covid-19 struck, discussion has been underway on how to ensure that public, social and business spaces are kept free of infected individuals. The idea mooted since early this year has been that of immunity certificates — sometimes called vaccine passport — containing details of a Covid-free, Covid-negative test or recent vaccination. This immunity certificate allows you to enter restaurants and other spaces.

Covid-immunity certificates can take the shape of either a digital app or paper-based document issued by the relevant department. New York has been trying out a version of the immunity certificate called Excelsior Pass, which lets vaccinated people attend music concerts and other social events. The UK first floated the

idea of immunity passport as a means of getting entry into public spaces in a rushed bid to restart the economy. However, the proposal has been shot down by MPs for its civil liberties implications.

Other use of vaccine passport is for travel purposes. The final shape of the vaccine passport is far from settled. However, there is speculation that it is likely to contain a combination of vaccination status and negative Covid test status. While these details are being hashed out, vaccine passports are already being rolled out by different countries as trial balloons. Further, concerns centring on vaccine passports' disproportionate effects are being debated, too. Covid-19 has put an end to foreign travel as we know it. In recent months, restricted travel has been allowed but mostly for returning citizens or residents trapped abroad. Another wave further tightened entry requirements with many countries such as Pakistan finding themselves on a red list

introduced by the UK. Being on the red list means that returning citizens and residents are required to spend time in self-financed and considerably policed hotel quarantine.

Pakistan raised a hue and cry over India's exclusion from the red list while Kenya accused the UK government of displaying discrimination in parachuting Kenya onto the list. From the public health viewpoint, though, the vaccine passport represents a raft of additional measures to insulate local populations from the ingress of the mutated virus such as the Indian variant found to be more lethal and transmissible than the original virus.

The EU is also opening up to foreign tourists provided they present the vaccine passport. It has rolled out its own green digital passport to facilitate freedom of movement within the EU. Britain's NHS has also launched a digital application meant to serve as a vaccine passport. However, objections are being aired, too. They cover a spectrum of personal

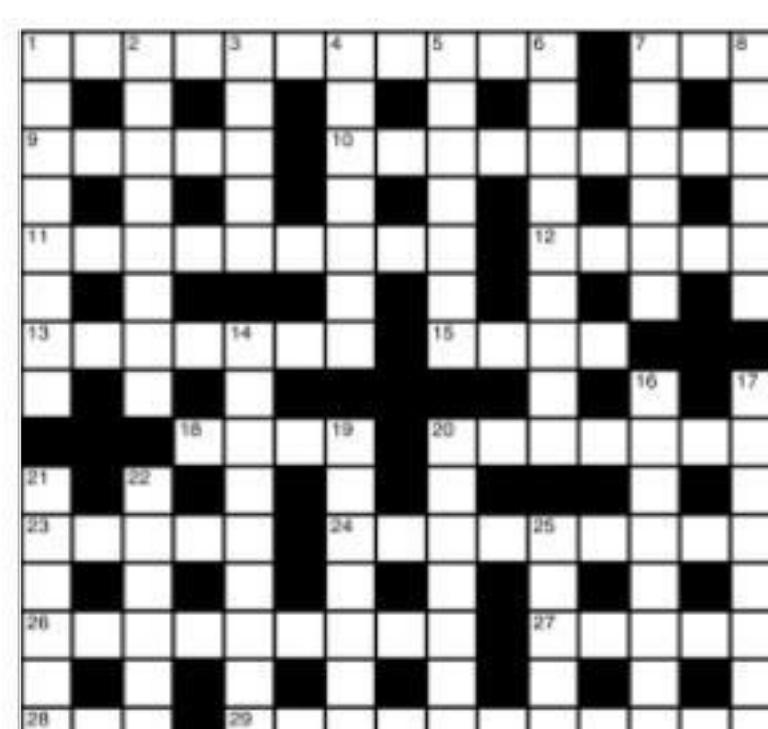
data and privacy concerns, the potential of vaccine passport to accentuate existing vaccine and health inequalities and its perceived use to restrict travel, access to knowledge and movement of people from the South to the West.

Unless vaccine equality is established and all WHO-approved vaccines find favour with the West, the introduction and roll-out of travel-specific vaccine passports will continue to sow doubts about the intentions of Western countries, further reinforced by vaccine hoarding and vaccine nationalism. That is why the roll-out of the vaccine passport, a sensible idea in the given circumstances, must be harmonised with the perspective of the Global South under the aegis of WHO to ensure that safe and equitable travel remains the overarching aim. Handled insensitively with the already existing vaccine inequality between the jab-have and the jab-haven'ts, the vaccine passport can have a serious a political and reputational fallout for Western countries advocating it.

Dawn/ANN

NO 28944

### CROSSWORD



#### YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

FLASH	MEATCUBE
IN AID	AIR
ENCOURAGED	PLAN
DWG	ET
BALD	UNDERPANTS
OMA	AIR
PRINCE	ROMANIAN
HNL	AIR
LIBRETTI	REGENT
NANT	AIR
BEACHBUGGY	RICK
WKL	RBU
GINS	APPLECARTS
NACUDGE	HEART
REAWAKEN	

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

#### ACROSS

- 1 No other movie leaves one cracking up and delighted (4,3,4)
- 2 Very variable, casual apology (5)
- 3 Moor that is covered in sheep ... (3,2)
- 10 ... sheep circling about in pursuit of a drink (9)
- 11 Bird and small horse lying around in pool next to river (9)
- 12 Singer's album downloads exceed low expectations at launch (5)
- 13 Comic routines consisting of extremely slapdash moments (7)
- 15 Cope with basic accommodation, but not at first (4)
- 18 Politicians north of the border taking a break (4)
- 20 He's a rubbish worker and must get reassigned (7)
- 23 Language of south India (5)
- 24 Moderate old gallery contains space for all to see (9)
- 26 A serious drunk devouring five sausage rolls? (9)
- 27 Jack returned to deck of cards (5)
- 28 Everybody said it's a boring thing (3)
- 29 Oppressed, unhappy staff hiding in back of secret lair (11)
- DOWN
- 1 Hope the majority of time in work isn't so manic initially (8)
- 2 Damn, this is what a senior manager charges?! (8)
- 3 One way you could begin to characterise 'aggressive'? (4,1)
- 4 Passes English, with minor mistakes? (7)
- 5 Without exception, skill is seen in a

#### Certain hospital (2,5)

6 Bothersome individuals – ones going into the finer details (9)

7 Bald-faced liars finally take note (6)

8 Online chat with journalist went by quickly (6)

14 Carried on working unnoticed (9)

16 Spolt, naughty child shown on TV (8)

17 Fancy bun scoffed and not licked! (8)

19 Sample survey given to people up front (7)

20 Lots of information somewhat rejected by Firm (4,3)

21 Some hash is handy for a pipe (6)

22 Before I have left at the end, he's certain to cry (6)

25 Explosive start sees the two leaders switching places (5)

The Statesman

NEW DELHI, WEDNESDAY 16 JUNE 2021

07

100 YEARS AGO

#### OCCASIONAL NOTE

From the fact that Reuter, amidst his other preoccupations, has seen fit to cable the news that cycling has been totally prohibited in Cork, it would appear that the prohibition is regarded by the authorities as an important development in the anti-Sinn Fein campaign. Presumably the interdict applies to the country as well as the city of Cork, and it suggests that the Crown forces have come to the conclusion that the bicycle has played an important part in the Sinn Fein campaign, or possibly is coming to play an important part therein. In view of the frequency with which outrages have been perpetrated by means of motor-cars, it may be assumed that the authorities have already created a scarcity of these conveyances in Sinn Fein circles, and hence there will doubtless be an increasing tendency on the part of the rebels to fall back upon the meteoric qualities of the motor-bicycle, and not to despise even the ordinary wheel. It is easy to imagine that a number of desperadoes might arrive comfortably at their rendezvous in harmless looking groups of cyclists in twos and threes. In future such groups will be suspect, and even if they should be fortunate enough to bestow their cycles elsewhere before encountering the forces of the Crown, the necessity for hiding them is likely to interfere with mobility.

#### NEWS ITEMS

#### ATTACK ON EMPLOYMENT OF EUROPEANS

Karachi, June 15

At last evening's annual general meeting of the Karachi Electric Supply Corporation an attempt was made to extract information regarding the individual and total salaries paid to Indians as compared with those paid to Anglo-Indians and Europeans. The Chairman, Sir Montagu Webb, replied: - we keep no such information ready tabulated in this office and I do not propose to commence drawing up such information. Want to point out most emphatically that this business is not carried on for the benefit of Europeans, or Anglo-Indians, or Indians as such. The capital has been subscribed by all classes and our energy is distributed to all classes without thought of colour, race or religion. Our staff is appointed entirely on merit and no other consideration.

#### ANTICIPATORY INTEREST ON NEW LOAN

Simla, June 15

With reference to their notification, the Finance Department, in the course of a communiqué, announce that the anticipatory interest on bonds in the new loan in respect of subscriptions received at the London Office of the Imperial Bank of India, Princes Street, will be paid by the Bank at the time of application by means of rupee drafts on India, which will be negotiated by them if the recipient so desires at the current market rate for telegraphic transfers on Calcutta on the date of payment of subscriptions. The Imperial Bank of India will send weekly advices to the Public Debt Office, Calcutta, of all applications received by them, and the latter will forward the script direct to the applicant.

#### TEMPORARY REFORMS IN THE ANDAMANS

It is stated that Mr. C.W. Gwynne, Deputy Secretary, Home Department of the Government of India, will shortly proceed to the Andamans with a view to inquiring into the question of carrying out in the administration of that settlement, such temporary reforms as may be advisable during the next few years. As has already been announced the Government of India has accepted the proposal of the Secretary of State to abandon the use of the Andaman Islands as a penal settlement, and Mr. Gwynne's inquiry will therefore be limited to the institution of such reforms as can be conveniently carried into effect during the process of removing the convicts from the Islands, a process which will, of course, occupy some time.

#### COMMITTEES TO DISCUSS GOVERNMENT SECURITIES

During the debate on a resolution moved by Sir Maneckji Dadabhai in the Council of State, the Government undertook to consult financial experts as to the best means of rehabilitating Government Securities, with due regard to obligations. It is understood that the best way of consulting financial experts will be to set up two small committees of non-officials in Calcutta and Bombay. It is reported that a committee of well known non-officials of financial experience has been formed in Calcutta. The Hon. Mr. Hailey, the Finance Member, and the Hon. Mr. Cook, the Financial Secretary, will proceed to Bombay for a short visit, returning to Simla about the middle of the month.



The initiatives being undertaken aim to help the bank optimise costs and unlock growth potential by creating value for all stakeholders.

SANJIV CHADHA

MANAGING DIRECTOR AND CEO, BANK OF BARODA

## THUMBNAILS

**EV scooter:** EV maker HOP Electric Mobility on Tuesday launched two new scooter models and said it plans to roll out five vehicles, including an e-bike, by the end of this fiscal year. The company said it is also looking to set up charging stations, starting from Jaipur and further expanding them to other parts of the country. PTI

**TVS Motor cuts price:** TVS Motor Company on Tuesday said it has reduced the price of iQube Electric scooter by Rs 11,250 in line with revision in subsidy under the FAME II Scheme. The electric scooter is now priced at Rs 1,00,777 in Delhi from Rs 1,12,027 earlier. The new pricing is in line with the recently announced revision in subsidy under the FAME II scheme by the government. PTI

**JLR developing prototype:** Tata Motors-owned Jaguar Land Rover (JLR) on Tuesday said it is developing a prototype hydrogen fuel cell electric vehicle (FCEV) based on the new version of its premium SUV, Land Rover Defender. PTI

**Accenture to acquire German firm:** Global IT and professional services firm Accenture on Tuesday said it will acquire German firm Umlaut to scale its deep engineering capabilities in digital technologies like cloud, artificial intelligence and 5G. No financial details of the deal were disclosed. The completion of the acquisition is subject to customary closing conditions. PTI

**Sebi bans:** Sebi has barred Prowise Consultancy, Prowise Capital, and its partners from the securities markets for two years and asked them to refund the money collected from providing unauthorised investment tips to investors. Sebi noted that they have carried out investment advisory activities without obtaining a certificate of registration from the regulator. PTI

# Sensex, Nifty scale new peaks; banking shares drive rally

In the broader market, smallcap and midcap indices outperformed the benchmark

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MUMBAI, 15 JUNE

**E**quity benchmarks Sensex and Nifty rose for the fourth straight session to settle at fresh life-time highs on Tuesday as investors shrugged off concerns over rising inflation to focus on positive cues coming from global markets.

At the closing bell, the BSE Sensex quoted higher by 221.52 points or 0.42 per cent at a new peak of 52,773.05. The index also hit its all-time intraday high of 52,869.51 during the session.

Likewise, the broader NSE Nifty rose 57.40 points or 0.36 per cent to settle at a fresh high of 15,869.25. The NSE gauge too marked its life-time intraday high of 15,901.60.

On the Sensex chart, Asian Paints was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, rising over 3 per cent, followed by Axis Bank, ICICI Bank, Hindustan Unilever, IndusInd Bank, Infosys and HDFC Bank.

On the other hand, Bajaj Finance, Dr Reddy's, Titan, Sun Pharma, Bajaj Finance and PowerGrid were among the lag-



gards. Of the 30 shares in the Sensex, 15 closed in the green. Sectorally, BSE realty index rose the most with 1.55 per cent gains. It was followed by consumer discretionary goods, bank and FMCG indices. In the broader market, smallcap and midcap indices outperformed the benchmark. Largecap index rose 0.35 per cent.

"Indian bourses continued its gaining streak tracking optimism from global peers, which is despite the rising inflation concerns. The global market is eagerly awaiting the two-day Fed policy meeting's decision to see if the central bank would signal any change in policy," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

He further said that domestic retail inflation jumped to 6.3 per cent in May breaching the RBI's comfort zone on account of higher food and energy prices, which is expected to ease due to the opening of the economy.

Elsewhere in Asia, bourses in Tokyo and Seoul ended on a positive note, while Shanghai and Hong Kong were in the red. Equities in Europe were trading with gains in mid-session deals. International oil benchmark Brent crude was trading 0.32 per cent higher at

73.09 per barrel.

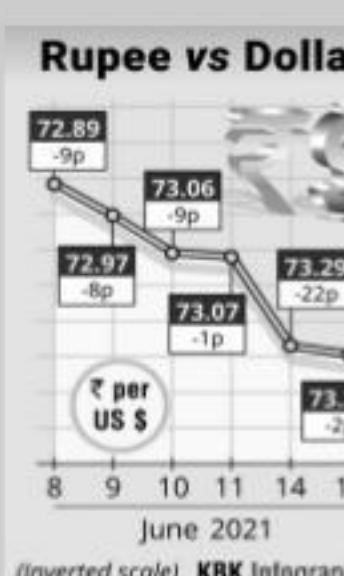
Meanwhile, the rupee slipped 2 paise to close at

## Rupee falls for sixth straight session, settles 2 paise down at ₹73.31/\$

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MUMBAI, 15 JUNE

Falling for the sixth day in a row, the rupee closed lower by 2 paise at 73.31 (provisional) against the US currency on Tuesday amid rising crude oil prices and dollar demand from oil importers.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened higher at 73.20 per dollar as against its previous close of 73.29. It hovered in the range of 73.16 to 73.33 per dollar during the day. The domestic currency has lost 51 paise in the six trading sessions to Tuesday. "Rupee depreciated for the sixth day in row, earlier such moves have



been seen in April where it depreciated Rs 2.07 per dollar while this time the momentum is relatively slower," said Dilip Parmar, Research Analyst, HDFC Securities.

73.31 against the US dollar.

## Exports jump 69.35% to \$32.27 bn in May; trade deficit at \$6.28 billion



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 15 JUNE

Exports during April-May this year jumped to \$62.89 billion, as against \$29.41 billion in the same period last year. Imports during April-May 2021 were recorded at \$42.27 billion, an increase from \$39.32 billion in the same two months of 2020. The trade deficit widened to \$6.28 billion, according to government data released on Tuesday.

Oil imports during May 2021 rose to \$9.45 billion, as compared to \$3.49 billion in the same month of 2020. Gold imports increased to \$679 million during the month under review from \$76.31 million in May 2020. Exports of engineering, petroleum products and gems & jewellery in May stood at \$9.91 billion in April-May 2020.

In May 2019, imports stood at \$46.88 billion. Trade deficit in May 2020

stood at \$3.15 billion. Exports during April-May this year jumped to \$62.89 billion, as against \$29.41 billion in the same period last year. Imports during April-May 2021 were recorded at \$42.27 billion, an increase from \$39.32 billion in the same two months of 2020. The trade deficit widened to \$6.28 billion, according to government data released on Tuesday.

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## Retail sales decline 79 pc in May over pre-Covid levels in 2019: Report

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 15 JUNE



Retail sales in India slipped 79 per cent in May compared to pre-Covid sales in the same month of 2019, as businesses across states were closed due to the second wave of the pandemic, as per a survey by Retailers Association of India (RAI). The decline in sales was the steepest in West and North India, which witnessed an 83 per cent dip last month as compared to May 2019, RAI said in a statement.

Eastern region saw a decline of 75 per cent, while South was relatively better with a growth of 73 per cent as compared to the same month in 2019.

On a sequential basis, the decline in May was much steeper compared to the previous month, when overall

sales across India were down 49 per cent as compared to April 2019, according to the RAI survey. In terms of retail categories, beauty, wellness and personal care saw the steepest decline at 87 per cent, followed by footwear with a dip of 86 per cent last month as against May 2019.

Food and grocery, however, was the best among the categories with a decline of 34 per cent as compared to May 2019, while the quick service restaurants witnessed a dip of 70 per cent.

"Retailers are looking forward to some improvement in the month of June with gradual unlocking. However, the retail industry needs the collective support of various government bodies to tide over the present situation," RAI CEO Kumar Rajagopalan said.

The retailers' body is optimistic as many of the states have now slowly begun to open all forms of retail in a calibrated manner.

It, however, said retail businesses continue to face financial pressures on various fronts such as salaries, rentals, electricity charges and various taxes and license fees, among others, due to the pandemic-induced restrictions.

## Retail inflation spike in May might cause RBI to revisit focus on growth risks: Oxford Economics

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 15 JUNE



Retail inflation spike in May might cause the RBI to "revisit its focus on growth risks", global forecasting firm Oxford Economics said on Tuesday adding that a rate hike is still unlikely this year.

It added that the underlying dynamics of the May inflation print augur caution and the recovery remains on uncertain ground and with fiscal support in retreat, the RBI will likely be hesitant to remove policy accommodation anytime soon.

"Consumer inflation spiked in May... This may cause the RBI to revisit its focus on growth risks. Still, we think a rate hike is unlikely this year," Oxford Economics said.

The forecasting firm said that given the evidence from

last year, when supply side disruptions had led to an unexpected spike in inflation, such developments may partly be attributed for the inflation pick-up in May.

"However, as we have highlighted, the 2021 lockdowns are not as stringent and have allowed for greater movement of people, goods and vehicles."

"This suggests that other factors, such as the pass-through from WPI (Wholesale Price Index) to CPI (Consumer Price Index) and demand-side pressures, are at play as well," it said.

According to Oxford Economics, indeed, the April industrial production growth print surprised to the upside.

"Positive base effects

notwithstanding, industrial production grew 1.1 per cent month-on-month seasonally adjusted in April after rising 2.2 per cent in March. This was led by continued expansion of manufacturing output," it said.

Rising prices of edible oils and protein-rich items pushed the retail inflation to a six-month high of 6.3 per cent in May, breaching the comfort level of the Reserve Bank and, thus, rendering reduction in interest rates a difficult proposition in the near term.

The government has asked the RBI to keep the retail inflation at 4 per cent with a margin of 2 per cent on either side.

Headline inflation surged to 6.3 per cent year-on-year in May, from 4.2 per cent in April as inflation rose across the board.

## Spencer's Retail sees net loss narrowing

NEW DELHI, 15 JUNE

RP-Sanjiv Goenka Group firm Spencer's Retail Ltd on Tuesday reported narrowing of its consolidated net loss to Rs 34.53 crore for the fourth quarter ended on March 2021.

Its revenue from operations was down 7.57 per cent to Rs 592.36 crore during the quarter under review, as against Rs 640.88 crore in the year-ago period. The total expenses of the company fell 7.46 per cent to Rs 650.72 crore in Q4/FY 2020-21, as against Rs 703.18 crore a year ago.

Spencer's Retail said Nature's Basket has reported a standalone turnover of Rs 77 crore.

Shares of Spencer's Retail Ltd on Tuesday settled at Rs 79.80 on BSE, down to 1.48 per cent from its previous close.

## Fixed line internet service providers form new association

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 15 JUNE

Fixed line internet service providers have joined hands to form a new industry association.

The founding members of the new association, 'All India Fixed Internet Service Providers Association', include players like ACT Fibernet, Shyam Spectra, Yoti Broadband, Microsense, D-VoIP, Vizag Broadcasting Company, Pioneer Elabs, Mithril Telecommunications, Bell Tele Services and BBNL.

"All the leading fixed line Internet Service Providers of India have come together to form a new industry body 'All India Fixed Internet Service Providers Association (AIFISPA)' to represent the interests of the fixed line internet service providers industry effectively," a release said on Tuesday.

Broadband data consumption has surged amid the coronavirus pandemic. The association also said the industry is geared up to play a critical role in building a 'Digital India' and support initiatives to enhance fiber optic infrastructure.

## Hiring demand improves in May sequentially by 1 per cent: Report

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MUMBAI, 15 JUNE

Hiring demand grew sequentially in May witnessed a growth of 1 per cent compared to the previous month driven by opportunities sectors including in retail, home appliances and telecom despite the second wave and lockdowns, according to a report.

While April 2021, witnessed a dip in job postings given the onset of the second wave of the pandemic, May showed green shoots of recovery, according to the Monster Employment Index. Compared to April 2021, May showed a growth of 1 per cent, whereas May 2021 grew 4 per cent as compared to May 2020, it added.

The Monster Employment Index is a broad and comprehensive month-on-month analysis of online job posting activity conducted by Monster India.

Other industries that are doing well compared to the previous month include IT hardware, software, banking/financial services, insurance, office equipment/automation and healthcare, biotechnology, life sciences and pharmaceuticals, it stated.

Indicating a downward trend, travel and tourism with a dip of 13 per cent, import/export with 11 per cent and printing/ packaging 8 per cent continue to face the challenges of the pandemic with a decline in job postings.

A sequential comparison also showed growth in job postings at Kolkata, Bengaluru Kochi and Pune. It indicates that companies and employers are now better equipped to face the pandemic, despite the effect of the second wave, it added.

## Jubilant FoodWorks net profit jumps to ₹105.30 crore

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 15 JUNE

Jubilant FoodWorks Ltd, which operates fast-food chains Domino's Pizza and Dunkin' Donuts, on Tuesday reported over three fold jump in its consolidated net profit at Rs 105.30 crore for the fourth quarter ended March 2021.

The company had posted a net profit of Rs 32.53 crore in the January-March quarter a year ago, Jubilant FoodWorks Ltd (JFL) said in a regulatory filing.

Its revenue from operations was at Rs 1,037.85 crore, up 14.21 per cent, during the quarter under review, as against Rs 908.75 crore in the corresponding quarter of fiscal year 2019-20.

"This was driven by Domino's Like-for-Like (LFL) sales growth (adjusted for temporary restaurant closures)

of 15.1 per cent and same store growth (SSG) of 11.8 per cent. Domino's witnessed continued momentum in Delivery and Takeaway channels which grew by 28.7 per cent and 76.9 per cent respectively, it said.

During the quarter, JFL opened 50 new restaurants for Domino's Pizza adding 8 cities in its network and closed 4 stores of Domino's Pizza. It was operating a total of 1,360 restaurants across 293 cities as of March 31, 2021.

Meanwhile, the company opened one restaurant for Dunkin' Donuts and closed 4 restaurants, bringing the number down to 24 from 27 at the beginning of the period.

JFL also opened one restaurant each of its new QR Brands Hong's Kitchen and Ekdum!, taking the total count to 12 by the end of the quarter.

## Financial wealth jumps 11 pc in pandemic year

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MUMBAI, 15 JUNE



Financial wealth in India grew 11 per cent to USD 3.4 trillion in 2020 despite the coronavirus pandemic, a global consultancy estimated on Tuesday.

The 11 per cent growth in financial wealth was at par with the compounded annual growth rate for the five years to 2020, the report by BCG said.

Financial wealth is defined as the total wealth excluding real assets and liabilities held by adult individuals.

It can be noted that after a sharp correction in the early days of the pandemic, there has been a continuing rally in stocks since April last year, which has led to concerns being expressed across quarters. Concerns are also being

expressed about a greater disparity in incomes and the pandemic widening the divide.

The report noted that the next few years will also



With full vaccination, Hong Kong would be better protected and we can actually let go of some quarantine measures.

SECRETARY FOR COMMERCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF HONG KONG EDWARD YAU TANG  
AT A PRESS CONFERENCE

NEW DELHI, WEDNESDAY 16 JUNE 2021

# Israel's new fragile govt vows change, omitting Palestinians

Jewish ultranationalists are already staging provocations aimed at splitting the coalition

ASSOCIATED PRESS

BEITA, 15 JUNE

**I**srael's fragile new government has shown little interest in addressing the decades-old conflict with the Palestinians, but it may not have a choice.

Jewish ultranationalists are already staging provocations aimed at splitting the coalition and bringing about a return to right-wing rule. In doing so, they risk escalating tensions with the Palestinians weeks after an 11-day Gaza war was halted by an informal cease-fire.

Prime Minister Naftali Bennett's best hope for maintaining his ruling coalition which consists of eight parties from across the political spectrum will be to manage the conflict, the same approach favored by his predecessor, Benjamin Netanyahu, for most of his 12-year rule. But



that method failed to prevent three Gaza wars and countless smaller eruptions.

That's because the status quo for Palestinians involves expanding settlements in the occupied West Bank, looming evictions in Jerusalem, home demolitions, deadly shootings and an array of discriminatory measures that two well-known human rights groups say amount to apartheid. In Gaza, which has been under a crippling blockade since the Hamas militant group seized power

in 2007, it's even worse.

"They talk about it being a government of change, but it's just going to entrench the status quo," said Waleed Assaf, a Palestinian official who coordinates protests against West Bank settlements. Bennett is a copy of Netanyahu, and he might even be more radical.

Bennett said little about the Palestinians in a speech before being sworn in on Sunday. Violence will be met with a firm response, he warned, adding that security calm will lead to

economic moves, which will lead to reducing friction and the conflict. Environment Minister Tamar Zandberg, a member of the dovish Meretz party, told Israeli television's Channel 12 that she believes the peace process is important, but that the new government has agreed, "at least at this stage, not to deal with it."

The government faces an early challenge on Jabal Sabeh, a hilltop in the northern West Bank where dozens of Jewish settlers rapidly established an outpost last month, paving roads and setting up living quarters that they say are now home to dozens of families.

The settlement, named Evitar after an Israeli who was killed in an attack in 2013, was built without the permission of Israeli authorities on land the Palestinians say is privately owned.

## Israel braces for unrest

JERUSALEM, 15 JUNE

Israelis prepared for possible unrest ahead of a planned march by Jewish ultranationalists through east Jerusalem on Tuesday that could ignite Palestinian protests and clashes with police just weeks after an 11-day Gaza war.

The march poses an early test for Israel's fragile new government, which was sworn in on Sunday and includes parties from across the political spectrum, including a small Arab party.

Cancelling the march would have opened Bennett and other right-wing members of the coalition to intense criticism.

AP

## UAE-backed Yemen leader says his troops at island air base



ASSOCIATED PRESS  
DUBAI, 15 JUNE

A militia leader and nephew of Yemen's late strongman president has acknowledged that his Emirati-backed troops are stationed on an island in a crucial maritime choke-point where a mysterious air base is now under construction.

The comments by Tariq Saleh come as ship-tracking data show that at least two Emirati-owned vessels have travelled to Mayun Island since an Associated Press story in May highlighted the base's construction.

The United Arab Emirates has not responded to repeated requests for comment about the base. However, a Saudi-led coalition fighting in Yemen against the Houthi rebels who hold its capital, Sanaa, later acknowledged having equipment on the island in the Bab el-Mandeb Strait.

While no country has claimed the airbase, shipping traffic associated with a prior

attempt to build a massive runway across the 5.6-kilometer (3.5-mile)-long island years ago links back to the UAE as well. Officials associated with Yemen's internationally recognised government have demanded a formal investigation into the base.

Speaking in an interview published Monday by the Arabic service of Russia's state-owned Sputnik news agency, Saleh acknowledged the presence of troops from his National Resistance Forces militia on Mayun Island.

We have forces affiliated with the Yemeni Coast Guard ... present on the island of Mayun, and there is also a small force of the Arab coalition forces present on the island represented by the Saudi forces, Saleh said, according to Sputnik.

The runway was built to provide future logistical support for the joint forces on the western coast, or for any other parties. He added that Mayun Island is a Yemeni island and will remain in Yemen."

A prominent contender in Iran's presidential election appealed Tuesday for better economic and political relations with the West, his most extensive attempt yet to attract reformist voters just days ahead of the poll.

Former Iranian Central Bank chief Abdolnasser Hemmati, among the seven candidates allowed on the ballot for Friday's vote, has no official ties to any political faction but is positioning himself as the likely candidate for moderate and reform-minded voters.

Why should there be a

## Iran presidential candidate urges better ties with West

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
TEHRAN, 15 JUNE

securing sanctions relief would definitely be one of my priorities." In an interview with The Associated Press last week, he said he'd even be willing to possibly meet with US President Joe Biden if he wins.

Polling and analysts indicate that Hemmati lags in the race behind the country's hard-line judiciary chief, Ebrahim Raisi, the clear frontrunner cultivated by Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Nearly 600 challengers hoped to replace relatively moderate President Hassan Rouhani, who is term-limited from running again.

He repeated calls for a return to Tehran's shattered 2015 nuclear deal with world powers, saying that if he were to become president, resurrecting the agreement and

barrier for peaceful co-existence?

Asked Hemmati, while emphasising that an "improvement in global and regional peace hinged on American good will and "trust-building" with the Islamic Republic.

He repeated calls for a return to Tehran's shattered 2015 nuclear deal with world powers, saying that if he were to become president, resurrecting the agreement and

securing sanctions relief would definitely be one of my priorities." In an interview with The Associated Press last week, he said he'd even be willing to possibly meet with US President Joe Biden if he wins.

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The son of Mehdi Karroubi announced earlier this week that his father would throw his support behind Hemmati.

lower-profile contenders, mostly hard-liners, to run.

Hemmati on Tuesday described those challengers as proxy candidates" that he expected would soon drop out of the race.

Within Iran, candidates exist on a political spectrum that broadly includes hard-liners who want to expand Iran's nuclear program and confront the world, moderates who hold onto the status quo and reformists who want to change the theocracy from within.

The son of Mehdi Karroubi announced earlier this week that his father would throw his support behind Hemmati.

## Attacks target polio teams in east Afghanistan, five killed

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
KABUL, 15 JUNE

Gunmen on Tuesday targeted an anti-polio drive in eastern Afghanistan, killing at least five members of two vaccination teams in separate attacks, officials said.

No militant group immediately claimed responsibility for the attacks that took place in the city of Jalalabad, as well as in the nearby districts of Khogyani and Surkhurd, according to Attaullah Khogyani, spokesman for the governor in Nangarhar province. Jalalabad is the provincial capital.

Along with the five killed, at least four members of the polio vaccination teams were wounded, said Dr. Jan Mohammad, who coordinates the anti-polio drive for the country's east. Khogyani called the attacks cowardly, adding that two of the wounded were in critical condition.

Afghanistan and neighbouring Pakistan are the only two remaining countries in the world where polio is endemic, after Nigeria was last year declared free of the virus. In March, the Islamic State group said it shot and killed three women who were part of a polio vaccination team.

## China says radiation level normal at Taishan nuclear plant

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
BEIJING, 15 JUNE



China on Tuesday played down the reports of a leak at one of its nuclear power plants, asserting that there is no abnormal environmental radioactive level in the surrounding areas and the public safety is guaranteed.

China's response came

after reports on Monday that US government was assessing

a report of a leak at a Chi-

nese nuclear power plant,

after a French company that

partly owns and helps to op-

erate it warned of an "immin-

ent radiological threat."

The warning included an

accusation that the Chinese

safety authority was raising the

acceptable limits for radia-

tion detection outside the

Taishan Nuclear Power

Plant in Guangdong province in order to avoid having to shut it down

I want stress that based on

the information we got from

competent authorities to date, the Taishan Nuclear Power Plant meets the requirements of the technical specifications and there is no abnormal environmental radioac-

tive level in areas surround-

ing the power plant, so safe-

ty is guaranteed, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian told a media briefing here.

He parried questions on whether the Chinese authori-

ties have raised the accept-

able limits of radiation around

the plant.

Zhao said China attaches high importance to nuclear safety.

We put our nuclear safety regulatory system consistent with our national conditions and up to international standards.

Also, the nuclear safety administration working in close cooperation with relevant nuclear safety regulatory institutions and engaged in communication with IAEA and the convention on nuclear safety and other multilateral mechanisms, he said.

Zhao said to date Chinese nuclear power stations have maintained a good operational record.

He said there has been no incident of environmental and public health impact.

The Taishan Nuclear Power

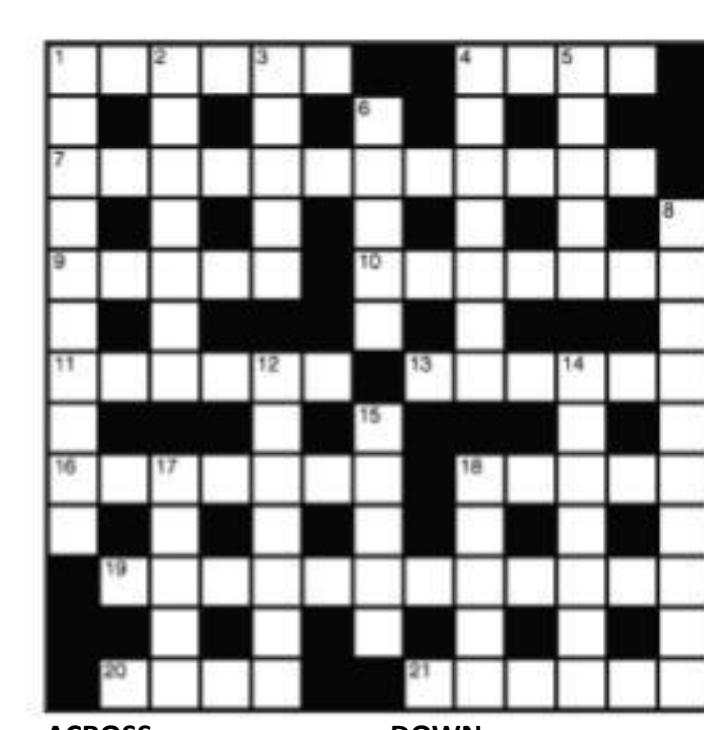
Plant is jointly owned by China Guangdong Nuclear Power Group and French multinational electric utility Electricite de France, the main owner of Framatome, which helps operate the plant.

The two reactors entered commercial operation in December 2018 and September 2019, the local city government said on its website.

China has dozens of nuclear plants, the world's third highest after the United States and France, and has invested billions of dollars to develop its nuclear energy sector.

## LEISURE

### 10 MINUTE CROSSWORD



**SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD**

ACROSS	13 Parrot, 15 Diddle, 17 Embarrassed, (Night school), 9 Toga, 10 Nonsense, 11 Dilapidated,	1 Type of thief (10) 2 Liken (7) 3 Elicit (5) 4 Wool fat (7) 5 Aggressive (Informal) (5) 6 Dirty mark (5) 8 Slight alteration (10) 12 African grasslands (7) 13 Appropriately positioned (2,4) 16 Animate (7) 18 Year to possess (5) 19 Equilibrium (12) 20 Greek cheese (4)	14 Torrid, 16 Die-cast, 18 Adept, 19 Steer, 20 Pecs.
DOWN	7 Of sound mind (Latin) (6,6)	1 Neon (7) 2 Glazier, 4 Tonga, 6 Hyena, 7 Unseemly, 8 Unwind, 12 Badmouth,	14 Thicket (5)

By arrangement with The Independent  
Figures in parentheses denote  
the number of letters in the words required

### BEETLE BAILEY/Mort Walker



### NEED TO KNOW

#### HOSPITALS

- AIIMS 26588500, 26588900
- Moolchand Medcity (formerly Hospital) 42000000 & 24-hour Chemist Shop 42000447
- Vidyasagar Institute for Mental and Neuro-Sciences 26924300, 26924304
- Batra Hospital & Medical Research Centre 29051280, 29958747
- Deen Dayal Upadhyay 25496320, 25494403
- Guru Tegh Bahadur 23717473, 23325320

#### RAILWAY INQUIRY

- General Inquiry 139
- Toll Free Nos. 18001251579, 54959, 5676747

#### ROADWAYS INQUIRY

- ISBT (General Inquiry): 23868836, 23865181
- SMS Inquiry Nos. 57886, 54959, 5676747
- AIR INDIA Flight Inquiry and Reservation 18001838383, 09910383838, 18001803838, 43513186, 23717473, 23325320
- INDIGO AIRLINES New Delhi City Office 43513185, Call Centre 09910383838, 18001803838, 43513186; Indigo Airlines Airline 09910383838

#### FLIGHT INQUIRY

- AIR INDIA Flight Inquiry and Reservation 18001838383, 09910383838, 18001803838, 43513186; Indigo Airlines Airline 09910383838
- JET AIRWAYS Flight Inquiry and Reservation 18001803838, 09910383838, 18001803838, 43513186; Jet Airways Airline 09910383838
- EMIRATES Flight Inquiry and Reservation 18001803838, 09910383838, 18001803838, 43513186; Emirates Airline 09910383838
- U.P. Roadways 23868709

#### RACK TOTAL

FIVE RACK TOTAL



We agreed to work together to challenge and counter China's non-market practices in specific ways that reflect our standards for fair competition

US TRADE REPRESENTATIVE KATHERINE TAI

STRESSING THE FOCUS ON CHINA'S ECONOMIC ASSERTIVENESS WHILE EASING TRADE FRICTION WITH EU

## WEATHER

CITY	MAX(°C)	MIN(°C)
SINGAPORE	31	26 R
HONG KONG	31	28 H
TOKYO	28	19 CL
LONDON	28	14 S
DUBAI	38	30 S
SAN FRANCISCO	19	12 H
NEW YORK	22	18 R
MOSCOW	26	16 R

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

## THUMBNAILS



Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan fist bumps with US President Joe Biden as he stands up to greet him during NATO summit in Brussels on Monday.

**4 dead in Chicago shooting:** An argument in a residence on Chicago's South Side early Tuesday erupted into gunfire, leaving four women dead and four other people injured, police said. The shooting happened at 5:42 a.m., police said, and no arrests were immediately made. The four injured included a two men who was shot in the back of the head. AP

**California reopens:** California, the first state in America to put in place a coronavirus lockdown, is now turning a page on the pandemic. Starting Tuesday, there will be no more state rules on social distancing, and no more limits on capacity at restaurants, bars or anywhere else. And masks will no longer be mandated for vaccinated people. AP

**1 killed, 5 hurt in Texas plane crash:** One person was killed and five others injured when a small airplane crashed at a municipal airport in Texas. The crash happened at about 1 a.m. on Monday near Madisonville. AP

## UK, Australia agree historic free trade agreement

LONDON, 15 JUNE

British PM Boris Johnson and his Australian counterpart Scott Morrison have agreed on a historic free trade agreement that will make it cheaper for UK to sell its cars and Scotch whisky Down Under and remove barriers for business, Downing Street said on Tuesday.

The main elements of the deal were agreed by the two leaders at a meeting in Downing Street on Monday night, with a final Agreement in Principle to be published in the coming days.

Downing Street said that the FTA eliminates tariffs on UK goods and boosts jobs and businesses, in the first major trade deal negotiated from scratch by the Johnson-led government since Britain left the EU last year and was free to negotiate its own agreements.

An FTA with Australia is also dubbed as a gateway into the fast-growing Indo-Pacific region, which covers India.

Today marks a new dawn in the UK's relationship with Australia, underpinned by our shared history and common values, said Johnson.

Our new free-trade agreement opens fantastic opportunities for British businesses and consumers, as well as young people wanting the chance to work and live on the other side of the world. This is global Britain at its best looking outwards and striking deals that deepen our alliances and help ensure every part of the country builds back better from the pandemic, he said.

According to UK trade officials, the new FTA means iconic British products like cars, Scotch whisky, biscuits and ceramics will be cheaper to sell into Australia, boosting UK industries. AP

# Biden eases trade friction with EU

Pact over Boeing-Airbus subsidies; US-EU summit expected to include communique addressing concerns about China's provocative behaviour

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
BRUSSELS, 15 JUNE

President Joe Biden on Tuesday moved to end a long-running dispute with the European Union over subsidies for aircraft manufacturers, a major breakthrough in the US-EU trade relationship that comes on the eve of his highly anticipated meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

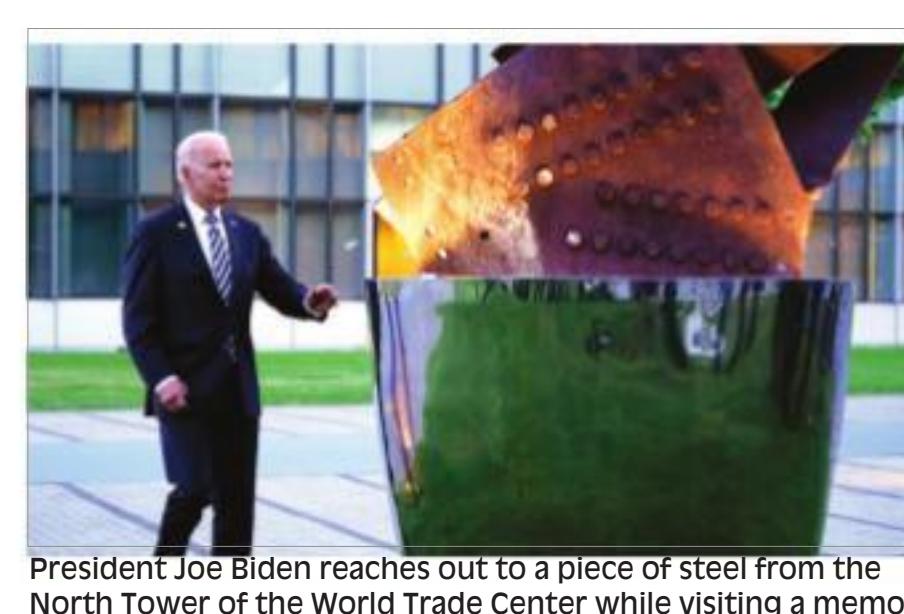
The announcement that the two sides reached resolution in a 17-year dispute over how much of a government subsidy each can provide for its aircraft manufacturing giant -Boeing in the United States and Airbus in the EU-came as Biden met with European Council President Charles Michel and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. With the move, Biden eases a major point of tension in the trans-Atlantic relationship at a moment he's seeking to marshal widespread European support for his efforts to counter Russia prior to his Wednesday meeting in Geneva with Putin.

US Trade Representative Katherine Tai told reporters that the agreement calls for a five-year suspension of the aircraft tariffs, and stressed that it was time to put aside the fight and focus on China's economic assertiveness.

"Today's announcement resolves a longstanding trade irritant in the US-EU relationship. Instead of fighting with one of our closest allies, we are finally coming together against a common threat," Tai said. "We agreed to work together to challenge and counter China's non-market practices in this sector in specific ways that reflect our standards for fair competition."

She added that the tariffs could be reimplemented if the US determines US companies are not able to "compete fairly" with the EU's. The tariffs had been temporarily suspended on 11 March, and the new agreement will officially go into effect on 11 July.

To be certain, the US-EU relationship faces other trade-related friction. The continent's leaders are becoming impatient that Biden has not yet addressed Donald Trump's 2018 decision to impose import taxes on foreign steel and aluminum. Even without resolving all trade disputes, White House officials expressed confidence that they can build more goodwill with Europe. The White House on Tuesday announced the creation of a



President Joe Biden reaches out to a piece of steel from the North Tower of the World Trade Center while visiting a memorial to the terrorist attacks at NATO headquarters in Brussels. AP

joint US-EU trade and technology council.

The council will work on coordinating standards for artificial intelligence, quantum computing and bio-technologies, as well as coordinating efforts on bolstering supply chain resilience. Biden is appointing Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo and Tai to co-chair the US side of the effort.

The US-EU summit is also expected to include a communique that will address concerns about China's provocative behavior.

That statement would follow a NATO summit communique on Monday that declared China a constant security challenge and said the Chinese are working to undermine the global rules-based order.

On Sunday, the Group of Seven nations called out what it said were China's forced labour practices and other human rights violations against Uighur Muslims.

Since taking office in January, Biden has repeatedly pressed Putin to take action to stop Russian-originated cyberattacks on companies and governments in the U.S. and around the globe and decry the imprisonment of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny. Biden also has publicly aired intelligence that suggests -albeit with low

to moderate confidence -that Moscow offered bounties to the Taliban to target US troops stationed in Afghanistan. Both Biden and Putin have described the US-Russia relationship as being at an all-time low.

The Europeans are keen to set up a "high-level dialogue" on Russia with the US to counter what they say is Moscow's drift into deeper authoritarianism and anti-Western sentiment.

At the same time, the 27-nation bloc is deeply divided in its approach to Moscow. Russia is the EU's biggest natural gas supplier, and plays a key role in international conflicts and key issues, including the Iran nuclear deal and conflicts

killed a half-million people, displaced half of the population, drawn in foreign armies and extremist groups and left the economy in ruins.

Shutting down the international aid corridor and putting Assad's government in charge of any humanitarian distribution would help position Assad as the winner in the war and Syria's rightful ruler in the aftermath, and deepen the regional influence of Assad's ally, Russia, in any rebuilding of Syria.

Assistance should be given through the central government, Putin told NBC News ahead of meeting with Biden.

## Syria's last aid crossing in balance as Biden to meet Putin

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
WASHINGTON, 15 JUNE

President Joe Biden will seek to stave off another surge of civilian suffering in the devastating war in Syria when he meets President Vladimir Putin this week, appealing to Putin to drop a threat to close the last aid crossing into that country.

Russian forces have helped Syrian President Bashar Assad's regime survive the more than 10-year conflict and Putin hopes to be a broker for Assad in any international reconstruction effort for that country.

Since taking office in January, Biden has repeatedly pressed Putin to take action to stop Russian-originated cyberattacks on companies and governments in the U.S. and around the globe and decry the imprisonment of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny. Biden also has publicly aired intelligence that suggests -albeit with low

to moderate confidence -that Moscow offered bounties to the Taliban to target US troops stationed in Afghanistan. Both Biden and Putin have described the US-Russia relationship as being at an all-time low.

The Europeans are keen to set up a "high-level dialogue" on Russia with the US to counter what they say is

in Syria and Libya.

NATO leaders in their communique on Monday said, "Russia has ramped up 'hybrid' actions against NATO countries by attempting to interfere in elections, political and economic intimidation, disinformation campaigns and 'malicious cyber activities.'

## UK fends off demands to give workers more virus support help

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
LONDON, 15 JUNE

The British government fended off calls Tuesday to provide more financial support to businesses and workers who will suffer from its decision to delay lifting coronavirus restrictions in England by four weeks until 19 July.

Although many restrictions have been eased in recent weeks, allowing large parts of the UK economy to reopen, a number of businesses, particularly in the hospitality and entertainment sectors, have remained shuttered because it was not financially viable.

After months of planning, those businesses had been preparing to reopen on 21 June, the date the government had earmarked for the possible lifting of restrictions on social contact. But a recent spike in new infections as a result of the more contagious delta variant upended that plan and fueled concerns that the restrictions may persist beyond 19 July.

Scientists advising the government reckon that the delta variant, which was first found in India, is between 40 per cent to 80 per cent more transmissible than the previous dominant strain in the UK. The alpha variant first found in Britain was largely behind a winter surge of the virus that left the country with Europe's highest virus-related death toll at nearly 1,28,000.

"Now is the time to ease off the accelerator, because by being cautious now we have the chance in the next four weeks to save many thousands of lives by vaccinating millions more people," PM Boris Johnson said on Monday when announcing the delay.

Following the announcement, unions joined business leaders to urge the Conservative government to compensate those affected by the delay.

"Two vaccine doses effective in reducing Delta variant hospitalisation"

LONDON, 15 JUNE

New analysis by Britain's health experts concludes for the first time this week that two doses of Covid-19 vaccines are "highly effective" against hospitalisation from the Delta variant the B1.617.2 extremely transmissible variant first identified in India.

Public Health England which has been conducting regular analysis of Covid variants of concern, said that the latest analysis shows that the Pfizer vaccine is 96 percent effective against hospitalisation after two doses and the AstraZeneca vaccine is 92 percent effective against hospitalisation after two doses. "This evidence of the effectiveness of two doses against variants shows just how crucial it is to get your second jab," said UK Health Secretary Matt Hancock.

The latest PHE analysis included 14,019 cases of the Delta variant 166 of whom were hospitalised. AP

## Biden admin pushes plan to combat domestic terror

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
WASHINGTON, 15 JUNE

anti-government militias posing the highest risk, officials said.

The new strategy includes enhancing the government's analysis of threats from domestic terrorists, including the sharing of intelligence within law enforcement agencies, and will work with tech companies to eliminate terrorist content online as part of a nationwide strategy to combat domestic terrorism nationwide within the FBI.

The Justice Department was also evaluating whether the administration should recommend Congress pass a specific domestic terrorism law, which does not currently exist. In the absence of domestic terrorism laws, the Justice Department relies on other statutes to prosecute ideologically motivated violence by people with no international ties.

But that has made it harder to track how often extremists driven by religious, racial or anti-government bias commit violence in the US and complicates efforts to develop a universally accepted domestic terror definition.

The government's new plan also includes an effort to identify government employees who may pose a domestic terrorism threat. A senior administration official said the Office of Personnel Management was considering updating forms to assist in improving screening of government employees to make sure people who could pose a threat are identified.

The Justice Department's proposed budget for next year includes \$100 million in additional resources related to domestic terrorism.

## Justice Dept to tighten rules on seizing Congress data

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
WASHINGTON, 15 JUNE

The Justice Department will tighten its rules around obtaining records from members of Congress, Attorney General Merrick Garland said, amid revelations the department under former President Donald Trump had secretly seized records from Democrats and members of the media.

Consistent with our commitment to the rule of law, Garland said on Monday, we must ensure that full weight is accorded to separation-of-powers concerns moving forward.

Garland's statement came as a Justice Department official said the top national security official, John Demers, planned to leave by the end of next week.

The Justice Department is struggling to contain the fallout over revelations that it had confiscated phone data from House Democrats and reporters as part of an aggressive investigation into leaks.

The disclosure is also forcing Biden administration officials to wade back into a fight with their predecessors something they wished to avoid.



Anna Gilder, right with Yuan Li pose for photographers wearing their ornate hats on the first day of the Royal Ascot horse race meeting at Ascot, England on Tuesday. AP

## Antivirus software creator fights extradition

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
MADRID, 15 JUNE

Detained antivirus software entrepreneur John McAfee testified in a Spanish court Tuesday as part of his fight against extradition to the United States, where he is wanted on tax-related criminal charges that carry a prison sentence of up to 30 years.

We are pleased that the CJEU has upheld the value and principles of the one-stop-shop mechanism, and highlighted its importance in ensuring the efficient and consistent application of GDPR across the EU," Jack Gilbert, the company's associate general counsel, said.

The company had argued that the Belgian watchdog no longer had jurisdiction after GDPR took effect in 2018.

Facebook painted it as a victory, noting that under the ruling the Irish regulator would remain in the lead except in limited circumstances.

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McAfee, 75, appeared from prison via videolink at a hearing in Spain's National Court. He argued that the charges against him are politically motivated and said he would spend the rest of his life in prison if he was returned to the United States, according to a report by private Spanish news agency Europa Press.

A Spanish judge is set to

rule in coming days on whether he should be extradited. McAfee was arrested last October at Barcelona's international airport on a warrant issued by Tennessee. A judge ordered at that time that McAfee should be held awaiting the outcome of a hearing on extradition. Tennessee prosecutors have charged McAfee with evading taxes.

Another former CEO of McAfee France was acquitted for lack of evidence.

Ikea France's lawyer, Emmanuel Daoud, said the company hadn't decided whether to appeal.

He said the case was marked by a lack of hard evidence and holes, and noted that the fines were well below the maximum possible.

Paris was fined 10,000 euros (USD 12,125) and given an 18-month suspended sentence.

Lawyers for Ikea France denied that the company had any strategy of generalized espionage.

A lawyer for the unions, Soleine Debarre, expressed hope that the verdict would make some companies tremble.

One million euros isn't much for Ikea, but it's a symbol, Debarre said.

The company, which said it cooperated in the investigation, had faced a potential financial penalty of up to 3.75 million euros (USD 4.5 million). Prosecutor Pamela Tabardel

Paris was fined 10,000 euros (USD 12,125) and given an 18-month suspended sentence.

The court took into account the action plan that Ikea put in place after the revelation of the facts, in 2012. That's very satisfying, Daoud said.

The company fired four executives and changed internal policy after French prosecutors opened a criminal probe in 2012.

Trade unions alleged that Ikea France paid to gain access to police files that had information about targeted individuals, particularly union activists and customers who were in disputes with the company.

# Our link with furry friends

**Are dogs genetically programmed to be sensitive?**

S ANANTHANARAYANAN

Dogs have a special place in relating to humans. They collaborate in several activities – herding sheep, leading the blind, fetching game in the hunt, as trackers, watchdogs and companions. Trainability apart, they anticipate human need, are empathetic and many dog lovers are convinced that the furry friend understands their very speech.

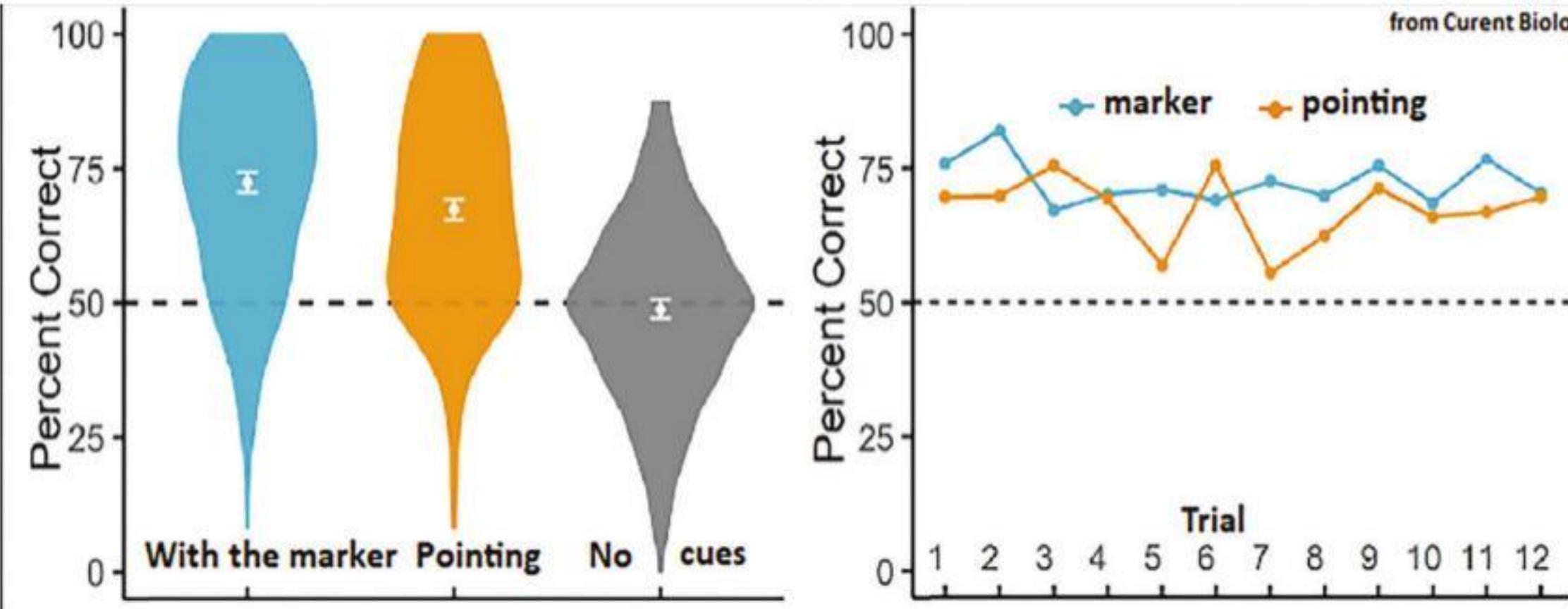
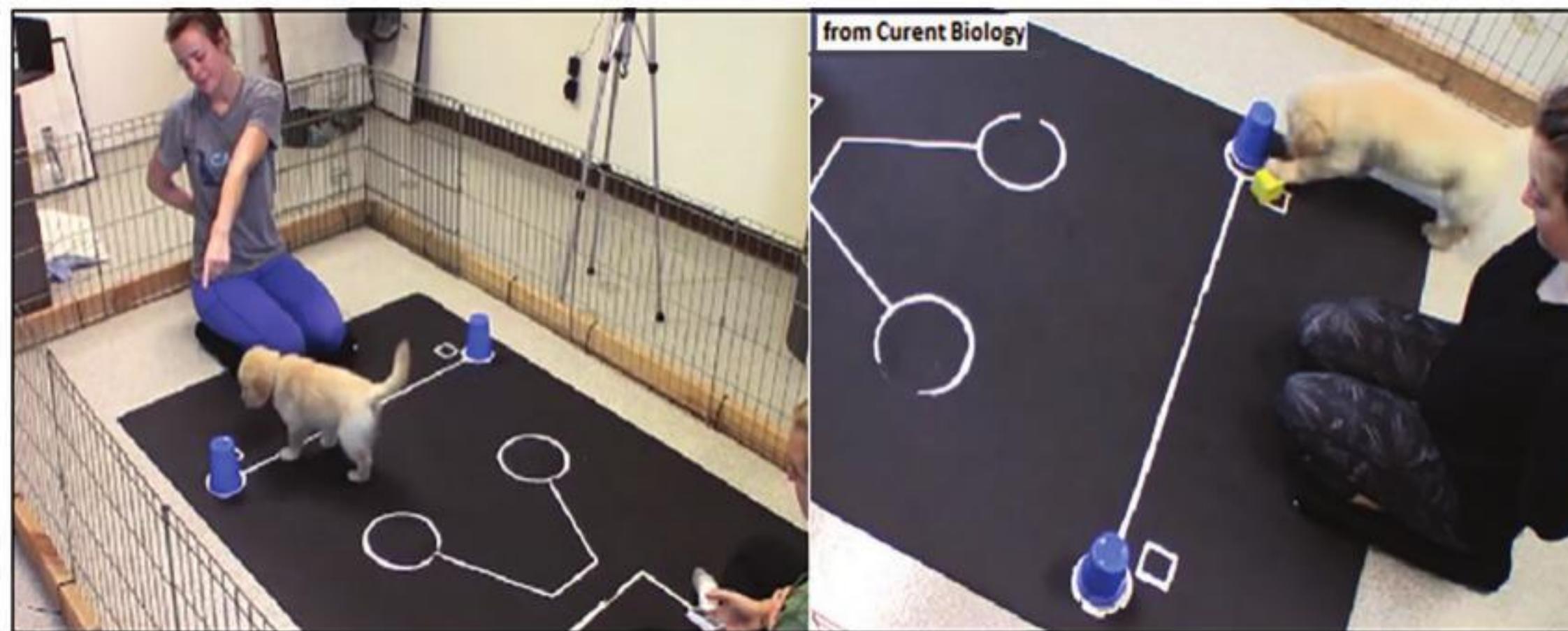
While this belief amuses friends and critics of dog lovers, Emily E Bray, Gitanjali E Gnanadesikan, Daniel J Horschler, Kerinne M Levy, Brenda S Kennedy, Thomas R Farmula, and Evan L MacLean, from the University of Arizona at Tucson, University of California at Davis and “Canine Companions for Independence”, a United States-based non-profit organisation that trains and provides assistance dogs, write in the journal, *Current Biology*, of their enquiry into whether the affinity of the dog to humans has a genetic basis.

That humans are so good at using their minds, the paper says, is in part because humans develop, very early, the ability to communicate and respond to each other. By the time a human child is two-and-a-half years old, the paper says, she is as good as the great apes in manipulating her physical surroundings. And as for reasoning and communication, she is miles ahead. The paper cites studies that show that even very young puppies, with negligible experience of human contact, can make sense of human gestures or other signs to locate hidden food – a trait that does not exist in wolves raised by humans, one paper emphasises. And other studies that show that dogs can “follow the handler’s gaze” in a way human babies do, once the intent has been indicated.

The origin of this capacity to read signals, whether it arose genetically, has not been adequately researched, the *Current Biology* paper says. The authors hence carried out trials with a substantial sample, 375 puppies, just over eight weeks old, on a battery of socio-cognitive experiments. The thinking, they say, was that if the skills of dogs in cooperating with humans are something they have because of biology, then, the traits should be clearly apparent even in very young dogs, and without calling for contact with humans or any training. And, there should be evidence of the ability being inherited.

The evolution of traits takes place due to selection. When some individuals in a group have a feature that confers a survival advantage, those individuals would thrive, doing better than the others, and if the trait were one that is inherited, their progeny would carry it on. Has social cognition in dogs arisen in this way? Well, it is true that some dogs are more socially adjusted with humans than others. Has this been a survival advantage? As dogs have been bred for ease of handling and being tamed, we could say the trait has been selected. And the third, whether the trait passes on to progeny – this is the question that is to be examined.

The trials consisted of three stages. The first, the “warm-up”, was for the subjects to get the



idea that there were treats to have in this exercise, hidden in goblets with lids. This done, a handler held the puppy a little away and equidistant from where two goblets were to be placed. The experimenter then concealed the treat in one goblet and placed the two goblets, some two metres apart, as shown in the picture. Now was the operative part. The puppy was released, and the experimenter drew the puppy’s attention, made eye contact, and indicated the goblet that had the treat, by pointing, and by turning her gaze to the goblet. And the puppy was left to find the goblet and the treat.

The second version of this trial was the same as the first, except that this time, the experimenter indicated the goblet not by pointing or her gaze, but by placing a marker, a bright yellow cube, next to the goblet. In order to eliminate the possibility of the puppy finding the treat by scent, there was a control test of seeing how well the puppy did when it received no cues, of pointing, gaze or the marker.

The second trial was of the human interest, of finding what time a puppy spent looking into the experimenter’s face, or staying within a short distance of her. For this, the experimenter stood outside the experiment area and recited a script to attract the puppy’s attention. The time for which the puppy looked at her was recorded. She then stepped into the experi-

ment area and the time the puppy spent in proximity to her was recorded.

In the third trial, the puppy was set an “impossible” task – the lid on the goblet was fixed, so that the puppy could not get to the treat. The idea was to see if and for how long the puppy gazed at the experimenter’s face when this happened.

The results were that the puppies did benefit from the pointing, gaze and the marker – they did positively better at finding the treat than when there were no cues. The picture displays the large areas that correspond to discovery of the treats when assisted by the cues, and the random distribution when there were no cues – which shows that it was the cues that helped in the first two cases. The same result is displayed as a graph, showing better performance when assisted by the cues. As for the second trial, the puppies did gaze at the human when spoken to spend time with her. And with the “impossible” task, the social gaze was much shorter. Communicative behaviour is hence not there in early development.

Next, were the traits inheritable? This was looked at by drawing up a relatedness matrix of the 375 puppies, to work out what proportion of differences in traits could arise from heredity. In the case of human twins, the paper says, 47 per cent of the variance in cognitive ability

can be attributed to genetics. Among the puppies, 43 per cent of the variation in the pointing trial was found to arise from genetics. Attention to the experimenter’s face was similarly heritable, but sensitivity to the marker cue was less so, and the ability to communicate, the “impossible” task, was the least.

The paper notes that the studies are valid, as puppies at eight weeks have spent time mainly with other puppies, with little possibility of learnt, human communication. As regards learning with practice, in the tasks, the paper notes that with 375 cases on hand, it was established that performance was the same from the very first trial and did not improve with experience. The mechanism by which the puppies get this sensitivity is not clear, but this much is – that “dog social skills emerge robustly in early development and differences in these traits are strongly influenced by genetics.”

The paper also notes that there are other species that show sensitivity in reading human gestures and communication. It would be instructive to see how far genetics contributes in these cases. The study could provide a model for biological bases of cooperative-communicative skills of humans too.

The writer can be contacted at response@simplescience.in

## THE DREADED FUNGUS

**Mucormycosis is not contagious but can cause severe clinical symptoms**

TAPAN KUMAR MAITRA

**M**ucor is a very common harmless fungus generally called “bread mould”, while mycosis is a disease occurring due to the growth of a fungus.

Mucor grows on damp and favourable substratum, especially during rainy seasons, as a white cottony mould. As the fungus grows, the aerial hyphae develops and its tip swells, looking like a pin. Then, it is called a “pin mould”. In the early stages of growth, the plant body is white but with the development of sporangia, the colour of the mycelium changes to yellow, then yellowish brown and finally, black.

The tips of the aerial hyphae bear the sporangia, which become black when mature and then, the whole mycelium appears so. For that reason, the fungus, mucor, is called “black mould”. It is then that the innocent and harmless mucor infects humans and leads to a fatal situation. The fungus has become known by its new name, black fungus. Therefore, mucor is the black fungus and the fungal disease is called mucormycosis. Many of the human fungal infections are opportunistic or in other words, they occur in conditions with impaired host immune mechanisms. Such conditions include defective neutrophil function, administration of corticosteroids, immune-suppressive therapy, and immune-deficiency states (congenital and acquired). Common fungal infections are mycoses, candidiasis and very rarely, mucormycosis.

### Mucormycosis or black fungus disease

It usually affects people whose immune systems have been compromised. These clinical features are noticed during mucormycosis – nasal blockage, bleeding and discharge from the nose are initial features. On endoscopic visualisation of the nasal cavity, unmistakable black “eschar” (slough or dead tissue)-coated masses will be present, which gives away the diagnosis.

As the disease progresses, the palate is destroyed as a large, black necrotic mass may be seen on opening the mouth. When the orbit is involved, there will be proptosis (protrusion of eyeball), loss of movements of the eyeball and consequent double vision. Eye pain and redness with blindness can follow.

If the brain is invaded due to blood vessel blockage, there will be strokes, haemorrhages and even death. Patients can also have headache, drowsiness, limb weakness and seizures. If the fungus goes in through a cut or burn, it can cause local infections. But if it goes in through the sinus, it can affect the eyes and eventually the brain, leading to a fatal condition. This disease is not contagious – it doesn’t spread from one person to another.

### Prevention and treatment

As black fungus infections are on the rise; the knowledge of prevention and treatment is very important. Wearing masks is compulsory as fungal spores found in air can easily enter the body through the nose. People who work at or visit construction sites should especially pay attention to this.

Once a clinical and radiological diagnosis is made, endoscopic evaluation of the nasal cavity can confirm a fungal lesion. Immediate surgical debulking is a must. The entire nasal cavity needs to be scoured and all fungal, necrotic tissue needs to be removed. If the orbit is involved, surgeries as drastic as exenteration of the eye socket contents may be required. If the infection has spread to the brain, surgical intervention should be undertaken a couple of hours after diagnosis.

In tandem, medical management with anti-fungal drugs, namely the injection liposomal amphotericin B, needs to be initiated. Older form amphotericin deoxycholate is significantly nephrotoxic. The liposomal cousin, however, is safe and effective. Posaconazole tablets/suspension and intravenous forms are available



and are used in lieu of amphotericin, if the latter is not tolerated by the patient.

Following several weeks of intravenous medication, depending on response, the patient is put on oral posaconazole sustained release tablets for several months. Isavuconazole is also an alternative drug that can be used. Drugs are stopped after clinical and radiological clearance of the disease. During treatment, judicious use of steroids (keeping blood sugar levels under control), antibiotics, and other antifungal drugs need to be continued.

Broad-spectrum antibiotics not only wipe out the potentially pathogenic bacteria but also the protective symbionts and commensals. Anti-fungals like voriconazole inhibit Aspergillosis but mucor remains unscathed and thrives due to lack of competition.

**Relationship between mucormycosis and Covid-19**

Doctors believe mucormycosis, which has

an overall mortality rate of 50 per cent, may be triggered by using steroids, a life-saving treatment for severe and critically ill Covid-19 patients. Steroids reduce inflammation in the lungs during Covid-19 and appear to help stop some of the damage that can happen when the body’s immune system goes into overdrive to fight off the novel coronavirus. But they also reduce immunity and push up blood sugar levels in both diabetic and non-diabetic Covid-19 patients. It is thought that a drop in immunity could be triggering the cases of mucormycosis.

Mucormycosis can occur any time after Covid-19 infection, either during hospital stay, or several days to a couple of weeks after discharge. Covid-19 damages the airway mucosa and blood vessels. It also causes an increase in serum iron, which is extremely important for the fungus to grow.

The writer is associate professor and head, department of botany, Ananda Mohan College, Kolkata

**PLUS POINTS**

**Mimics silk**



A lab-created, plant-based material that mimics spider silk could replace single-use plastics in several consumer products, researchers say.

The material, which was developed in a University of Cambridge study, uses a new, energy-efficient approach to assemble plant proteins into materials that mimic silk on a molecular level. It is done by replicating the structures found in spider silk – one of the strongest materials in nature – using soy protein isolate, a protein with a completely different composition.

“Because all proteins are made of polypeptide chains, under the right conditions we can cause plant proteins to self-assemble just like spider silk,” said professor Tuomas Knowles. He said that when spiders weave their webs, the silk proteins are dissolved in an aqueous solution, which assembles into a strong fibre through the spinning process requiring minimal energy.

Like the spider, researchers had to find a way to dissolve plant proteins so that they could be reassembled to mimic the properties of spider silk. Unfortunately, plant proteins are poorly soluble in water, but researchers developed an environmentally friendly and energy efficient method to dissolve the soy protein isolate in a mixture of water and acetic acid. Once the process is complete, and the solvent removed, the soy protein isolate is reassembled in the form of a water-insoluble, plastic-like film.

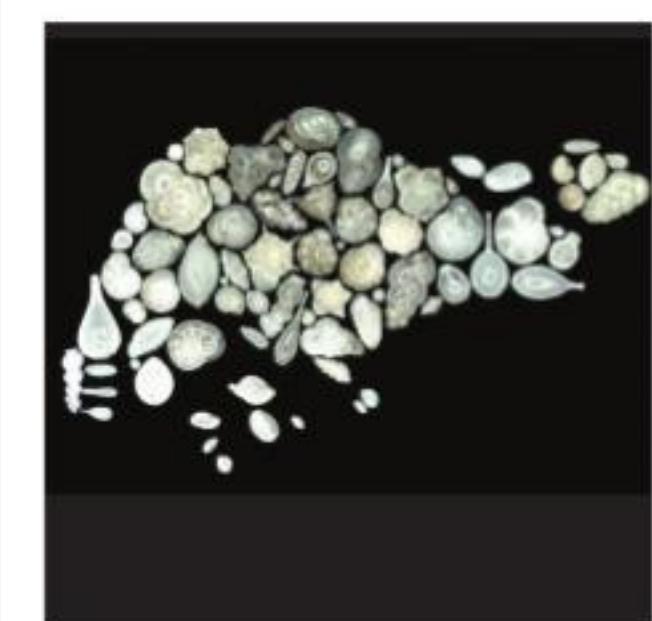
Ayaka Kamada, PhD candidate and first author on the paper said, “Very little is known about the self-assembly of proteins, and it’s exciting to know that by filling this knowledge gap we can find alternatives to single-use plastics.”

The study showed that the material had the strength equivalent to high performance engineering plastics, like low-density polyethylene. But unlike most plastic films, the new material can be composed at home, as no chemical modifications were made to its natural building blocks, and no toxic elements were added.

The new product will be marketed by Xampla, a University of Cambridge spin-out that focuses on developing replacements for single-use plastics and microplastics. Marc Rodrigues Garcia, postdoctoral researcher, study co-author and head of research and development at Xampla said, “Other researchers have been working directly with silk materials as a plastic replacement, but they’re still an animal product. In a way we’ve come up with ‘vegan spider silk’ – we’ve created the same material without the spider.”

–The independent

## Beautiful science



When it comes to foraminifera – forams, for short – there is more than meets the eye.

These single-cell organisms form their shells using carbon and oxygen from their watery surroundings. In so doing, they also keep a record of the environmental conditions around them, such as water temperature and salinity. After they die, they sink into the seafloor and their shells are preserved in the sediment.

The shells in this image measure between 50 microns and 200 microns, about the width of one to two strands of human hair. The researcher who arranged them is Yan Yu Ting, a PhD candidate with the Coastal Lab at Nanyang Technological University’s Earth Observatory of Singapore.

Yan said she arranged the forams in the shape of Singapore since they were found in a sediment core taken from the Kallang River basin in downtown Singapore. “These forams were deposited approximately 6,000 to 9,000 years ago,” she said. Her image clinched the merit award at the 2020 Art Competition organised by NTU’s College of Science.

–The straits times/ann



## SACHIN PRAISES SHAFALI

Shafali Verma's (photo, left) sheer talent and audacious stroke-play can keep fans engaged till she's at the crease, said the legendary Sachin Tendulkar, wishing the teenage sensation all the luck ahead of her much-anticipated Test debut against England on Wednesday.

For more updates

www.thestatesman.com

## THUMBNAILS

**Wimbledon crowd:** Wimbledon will be allowed to have a full crowd of 15,000 at Centre Court for the men's and women's finals next month, a year after the tournament was canceled entirely because of the coronavirus pandemic, the British government said.



**Robinson to return:** Suspended England pacer Ollie Robinson, who had taken a short break last week from international cricket, will return to action with Sussex's second team on Tuesday. Robinson was suspended by the ECB for his offensive racist and sexist tweets, dating back to 2012-13 when he was 18 and 19.

## Pujara has done more than those who criticise his batting, says Tendulkar

## PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, 15 JUNE

Cheteshwar Pujara's style of batsmanship is integral to Team India's success and critics who haven't achieved anything close to what he has for the country should just take it a bit easy, feels former captain and batting legend Sachin Tendulkar.

Pujara, despite his lion-hearted effort in Australia, has often faced the criticism about not showing enough intent to keep the scoreboard ticking. Tendulkar said this perspective is faulty and also spoke on a host of issues ahead of India's World Test Championship final against New Zealand starting June 18 in Southampton.

"I think we should appreciate what Cheteshwar Pujara has been able to achieve for India. It's not always going about and maintaining a strike-rate and in Test cricket, you need different kind of planning and different kind of players to fit into your team," Tendulkar said.

"It's like five fingers in your hands. Each finger has a different role and Pujara is an integral part of our team. I really like what Pujara has done for India. Rather than scrutinising his each innings, we should be appreciative of what he has done for India."



"Guys who are digging deep into his technique and rotation, I don't think those guys have played as much top level cricket as Pujara," the legendary right-hander took Pujara's sceptics to the cleaners.

Tendulkar feels that people's perspective has changed because both (Ashwin and Jadeja) can bat. Eventually how

Tests, Tendulkar feels that India have a lot of players with attacking instincts.

"For strike-rate, we have players like Rishabh Pant and Ravindra Jadeja. They can always increase the strike rate. But when it comes to hitting the opposition and where you require planning and vision to execute whatever your strategies are, for that you need a Cheteshwar."

Talk about the team combination for the World Test Championship final and the holder of 100 international tons feels that both Ravichandran Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja

can be effective even if there isn't much help off the surface at the Hampshire Bowl in Southampton.

"The possibility, according to me, is to play three fast bowlers and two spinners because both (Ashwin and Jadeja) can bat. Eventually how

the team management feels after looking at the wicket matters," Tendulkar said.

"So what if the fourth and fifth day wicket doesn't offer much help for spinners? "Shane Warne used to get a number of wickets with the flipper which is a straight ball for leg-spinners and doesn't require help from surface. Similarly, Muttiah Muralitharan got a lot of wickets with his top spinners which didn't turn. So straight ball is also a variation."

"So it's not always that an off-spinner has to turn the ball and get the batter out at short leg," Tendulkar replied when asked if Ashwin could be as effective in case the pitch remains on the flatter side.

The straighter deliveries create an illusion and batsmen always are in a dilemma while trying to play for the turn, Tendulkar said.

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## Indian women return to Test cricket with clash against England

## PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

BRISTOL, 15 JUNE

A favourable record in England and "positive mindset" despite inadequate preparation time will spur the Indian women's cricket team when it takes on the seasoned hosts in its first Test engagement in nearly seven years here from Wednesday.

After multiple quarantines in India and UK, the Mithali Raj-led (in photo) squad got little over a week to prepare for its first red ball game since November 2014.

Mithali was among the seven current players, who were a part of that victorious eleven against South Africa in Mysuru.

While experienced players like the skipper, her deputy Harmanpreet Kaur, Smriti Mandhana and Jhulan Goswami have not played red ball cricket at all in recent times, it will be an even tougher test for the younger lot who don't get to play first-class matches in domestic cricket.

Unlike the men's squad, which played intra-squad games in Southampton ahead of the WTC final, the women prepared only in the nets which might hurt them in the four-day game.

"The players are in good shape and have been train-



ing well but there is no substitute to match practice. Whether it is a one day game or a four-day game, you bat or bowl for the same time in the nets," a BCCI source said.

"Since it is a four day game, only time will tell if they are ready to stand in the field for longer periods or bowl multiple long spells. If you play a practice match, there is pressure. That same pressure is not there in the nets," he added.

Harmanpreet has already conceded they got limited time to get ready for the one-off Test but said India go into the game "mentally prepared", having got some valuable advice from men's team vice-captain Ajinkya Rahane.

There is a good chance that 17-year-old batting sensa-

tions Shafali Verma opens in the game alongside Mandhana.

She goes into the game with no baggage and could well make a big impact at the top of the order.

The experienced trio of Mithali, Harmanpreet and Punam Raut will be expected to do the job in what will be challenging conditions for them also.

There could be some respite in store for the batters with England choosing Kookaburra over Dukes ball, which does more, for the game as the home team builds up to the Ashes Test against Australia later in the year.

It also remains to be seen if veteran pacers Jhulan Goswami and Shikha Pandey would be able to bowl long

spells, having not done so for a long time.

The spinners, who had a forgettable time at home in the limited overs series against South Africa, would be itching to make amends.

The visitors can surely take heart from their past record in England where they have not lost in eight games, having won two out of them.

England's star all-rounder and newly-appointed vice captain Nat Sciver is among the six squad members who played in their last Test match against India back in August 2014.

The tourists had won that game in Wormsley by six wickets.

England remain the favourites to win the upcoming contest but Sciver expects India to play fearlessly.

"They're an ever-growing side. There's always a new, young talent on the team who isn't afraid to go out there and show what they've got. They seem to be more fearless than I've seen before," Sciver said.

"Couple that with a lot of experience in their team - with Mithali Raj, Jhulan Goswami - they can be a very difficult side to beat. Hopefully, in England, in our conditions, we can hone our skills and make sure that we're doing the right things."

## Umesh pips Shardul as India announce 15-member squad for WTC

## AGENCIES

SOUTHAMPTON, 15 JUNE



Veteran speedster Umesh Yadav (in photo) pipped Brisbane Test hero Shardul Thakur as the 15th member of the Indian squad that will take on New Zealand in the World Test Championship final starting here on 18 June.

Umesh, along with Mohammed Shami, and Hanum Vihari all of whom got injured during the Australia tour, were back in the 15 that needed to be announced as per ICC squad protocol.

Apart from Shardul, the notable names to miss out were Mayank Agarwal, and Washington Sundar, who were in the

playing XI for the Test match against Australia.

England series hero Axar Patel also missed out.

The other big player to have missed out in the final squad is senior batsman KL Rahul, who was in fact Virat Kohli's opposition captain in the team's intra-squad practice game.

Rahul seemed in good touch during the game but a

Rahul and Mayank Agarwal are also currently not in the mix and would be considered only once the team management has given enough chances to both Rohit Sharma and Shubman Gill.

In case of Wriddhiman Saha, the ICC rule of being able to replace a wicketkeeper with an substitute keeper was reason for a look-in.

**India:** Virat Kohli (captain) Shubman Gill, Rohit Sharma, Cheteshwar Pujara, Ajinkya Rahane, Rishabh Pant (wk), Ravichandran Ashwin, Ravindra Jadeja, Md Shami, Jasprit Bumrah, Ishant Sharma, Mohammed Siraj, Wriddhiman Saha (wk), Umesh Yadav, Hanuma Vihari.

## Williamson available to lead New Zealand in WTC final'

SOUTHAMPTON, 15 JUNE

Kane Williamson will be available to lead New Zealand against India in the World Test Championship final, head coach Gary Stead announced on Tuesday as he unveiled a 15-man squad for the marquee clash starting June 18.

Williamson was forced to miss the second Test against England due to an elbow injury and Tom Latham had led New Zealand to a comfortable eight-wicket win, which had sealed a series triumph for the visitors.

Stead said their victory over England notwithstanding, it is going to be a tough challenge facing India.

"India are a world class outfit who possess match winners all through their line-up, so we're under no illusion about how tough they will be to beat," he said.

New Zealand will go into the clash with one specialist spinner in spinner Ajaz Patel and Colin de Grandhomme. IANS

and we expect them to be fit and available for the final," Stead said at a press conference after the team's arrival here for the WTC final starting 18 June.

"Playing in a World Cup Final is a really special occasion and I know the guys are looking forward to getting into their work here in Southampton," he added.

Stead said their victory over England notwithstanding, it is going to be a tough challenge facing India.

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New Zealand will go into the clash with one specialist spinner in spinner Ajaz Patel and Colin de Grandhomme. IANS

## India's WTC triumph can do to Test cricket what T20 WC did in 2007'

SOUTHAMPTON, 15 JUNE

Mahendra Singh Dhoni's men in South Africa back in 2007.

"If India goes on to win the inaugural World Test Championship title, it could prove to be the watershed moment for the revival of the longest format just like the 2007 World T20 triumph did for the popularity of the shortest format, feels Cheteshwar Pujara.

One of the shining products of traditional format, Pujara made no bones in admitting that playing the WTC final against New Zealand is a "big deal" for him even though he would try to treat it as another game of cricket.

"Yes of course, I think Test cricket needs to survive and with this WTC Final, it will definitely help," Pujara said during the virtual media conference on Tuesday when asked about the epic World T20 victory of

## Spain misfires, held to 0-0 draw by Sweden

## AGENCIES

SEVILLE, 15 JUNE



The chances came and went but neither Spain nor Sweden managed to put any of them in the net.

Spain dominated possession and kept the pressure on the opposing area for most of the match but the Swedes held on for a 0-0 draw Monday at the European Championship.

Sweden managed only a few chances at La Cartuja Stadium, but they were some of the most dangerous ones.

Alexander Isak, who plays for Spanish club Real Sociedad, had a shot from inside the area hit the post after deflecting off Spain's defender Marcos Llorente in front of the goal line.

Early in the second half, Marcus Berg was inside the area with the ball coming his way, but he mishit his shot.

Ivano Morata had Spain's best chance just a few minutes before Isak but his shot missed wide with goalkeeper Robin Olsen the only opponent to beat.

Everyone can make mistakes, we all make them, Spain midfielder Pedri González said about Morata, who was booed by part of the Spanish fans. He works hard for the team and that always shows on the field.

We played against a rival that decided to defend and tried to create some danger with long balls, and it actually had the chance to win the match, Spain coach Luis Enrique said.

It's a disappointing draw for us.

Spain had failed to score in only one of its last 14 group matches at European Championships.

Sweden hadn't drawn any of its last 17 international matches, since a tie against Spain in qualifying for Euro 2020.

If you come here and play Spain in 32 degree heat (90 degree F) and think you're going to outplay them, you're totally naive, Sweden coach Janne Andersson said. I'm not at all ashamed of this point. If we want to take points from these types of teams, we have to play this way.

In the other group match, Slovakia defeated Poland 2-1 in St. Petersburg.

Spain's matches at Euro 2020 are being played in Seville instead of Bilbao the original host city for the continent-wide tournament because the high contagion rate of the virus in the northern city wouldn't allow for many fans to attend games.

A limited crowd of 12,517 attended the match at La Cartuja, where Spain will also play Poland on Saturday and Slovakia on 23 June. A quarter-final match will also be played at the stadium.

Sweden, which hasn't advanced past the group stage at the European Championship since 2004, next faces Slovakia on Friday in St. Petersburg. The Swedes will also play in Russia against Poland.

Both teams were without players because of the coronavirus. Spain lost captain Sergio Busquets and Sweden was without Mattias Svahnberg and Dejan Kulusevski. They were all still in isolation after testing positive for COVID-19 last week.

The entire Spanish team was vaccinated just days before its opening match.

Luis Enrique started with Rodri Hernández in Busquets' position, with youngster Pedri and Koke Resurrección alongside him in the midfield. The 18-year-old Pedri became Spain's youngest ever player at the tournament.

## Messi's Argentina draws 1-1 with Chile at Copa America

## AGENCIES

RIO DE JANEIRO, 15 JUNE



Lionel Messi (in photo, right) scored a stunning free kick, repeatedly dribbled through the Chilean defense and created opportunities regularly for his Argentina teammates.

Despite Messi's intense performance, Argentina was held 1-1 by Chile in its Copa America opener. The game at the Nilton Santos stadium in Rio de Janeiro was also marked by a tribute to Argentine football great Diego Maradona, who died in November at age 60.

Messi, who turns 34 this month, might have one of his final chances of winning a title with Argentina at the Copa America.

He said ahead of opening game that winning with his national team is the biggest dream of his decorated career, despite all the individual success and club titles with Barcelona.

Argentina appeared to be ready to start giving Messi what he craves. Coach Lionel Scaloni's lineup wasted three clear opportunities between the 16th and 18th minutes, one from Lautaro Martínez and two for Nicolás González.

And then Messi opened the scoring in the 33rd after a free kick that Chilean goal-

keeper Claudio Bravo couldn't stop despite getting a touch on the ball to his left. Argentina continued to pressure Chile, which was missing injured striker Alexis Sanchez.

The superstar also complained about the apparently