

THE ASIAN AGE

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An script is in progress on Maratha warrior Ahilyabai Holkar with PeeCee in mind

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Spain's Rafael Nadal plays a return to Australia's Alexei Popyrin during their first round match on day three of the French Open tennis tournament at Roland Garros in Paris on Tuesday. Nadal won 6-2, 6-3, 7-6 (7/3). — AP

India's economy to rebound, grow 9.3% in FY22: Moody's

New Delhi: Indian economy would rebound in the current fiscal ending March 2022 and clock a growth of 9.3 per cent, but a severe second Covid wave has increased risks to India's credit profile and rated entities, Moody's Investors Service said on Tuesday. Moody's, which has a 'Baa3' rating on India with a negative outlook, said it expects a decline in economic activity in the June quarter due to reimposition of lockdown.

1st human bird flu case found in China

Beijing: China has reported the first case of human infection with the H10N3 strain of bird flu from the country's eastern Jiangsu province, China's National Health Commission said on Tuesday. The patient, a 41-year-old man from Zhenjiang city, is currently stable.

Petrol, diesel prices rise, touch new high

New Delhi: Petrol and diesel prices on June 1 scaled new highs across the country after they were hiked for the 17th time in a month. Petrol price was increased by 26 paise per litre and diesel by 23 paise a litre, according to a price notification of fuel retailers. In Delhi, petrol hit an all-time high of ₹94.49 a litre, while diesel is priced at ₹85.38 per litre.

COUNTERPOINT



He recovered from Covid, but got a heart attack after seeing the hospital bill!

WEATHER

Max: 36°C
Min: 26°C
RH: 42%
Rain: 20%

Forecast: Sunny

ASTROGUIDE

Plava: Uttarayana
Tithi: Vaishakha Bahula Ashtami till 1.15 am (Thursday)
Star: Satabhisham till 5.30 pm
Varjyam: 11.52 pm to 1.35 am (Thursday)
Durmuhurtam: 11.48 am to 12.39 pm
Rahukalam: 12 noon to 1.30 pm
SUNSET TODAY 5.23 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 7.15 AM

CBSE, ISC Class 12 exams are off

Those who want to can sit for exams later Can't put students at risk: PM

VINEETA PANDEY
NEW DELHI, JUNE 1

Putting an end to the suspense on holding of the CBSE Class 12 exams, the Centre on Tuesday announced its cancellation, in both online and offline modes. The CBSE will now compile Class 12 results as per a "well defined objective criteria" in a "time-bound manner", the government said after

Meghalaya: 5 miners trapped after blast in rat-hole mine

MANOJ ANAND
GUWAHATI, JUNE 1

Despite complete the ban of the National Green Tribunal on unscientific rat-hole mining of coal in Meghalaya, at least five workers are feared trapped in a 500-feet-deep abandoned coal mine in the Umpleng area of East Jaintia Hills district of the state.

The accident came to light when one Karimul Bari of Assam's Cachar district reported to the Assam Police that one of his neighbours was among the miners feared trapped in the coal mine accident that took place on Sunday. Rescue operations were underway on Tuesday to trace the five migrant workers from Assam and Tripura trapped inside a rat-hole coal mine, officials said. The incident took place when water gushed in and inundated the mine after a dynamite explosion.

The Meghalaya government has directed the deputy commissioner of East Jaintia Hills, E. Kharmklaki, to institute a magisterial inquiry into the mishap and file an FIR against whoever is involved.

Police have already registered a case under IPC sections and the Mines and Mineral (Development and Regulation) Act and Disaster Management Act.

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high-level meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Those students who still want to take the exams for evaluation will have that option when the Covid-19 situation improves. The Prime Minister said the decision on the CBSE Class 12 was taken in the interest of the students as the pandemic had affected the academic calendar and the board exams issue was

causing immense anxiety among students, their parents and teachers, "which must be put to an end".

Soon after the Centre announced this decision, the Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE) said its Indian School Certificate (ISC) Class 12 board examination would also be cancelled in view of the Covid-19 situation. "The exams have been cancelled. The alternative assessment criteria will be announced soon," CISCE secretary Gerry Arathoon said. In an official order issued on Tuesday night, the Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations said: "In view of the present situation of the Covid-19 pandemic in the country, the CISCE has decided to CANCEL the ISC (Class 12)

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A group of Covid-19 infected Jewish people from Manipur offers prayers while undergoing treatment at the Guru Tegh Bahadur Covid Care Centre at Gurdwara Rakab Ganj Sahib in New Delhi on Tuesday. 38 new patients, all of whom are from Manipur and were staying at a hotel in Karol Bagh, were admitted to this Covid care centre on Monday. They were supposed to leave for Israel but couldn't catch the flight after they were detected Covid positive.

'No mixing of vaccines, no change in 2-dose schedule'

By mid-July, more than 1cr persons to be vaccinated daily: Govt

VINEETA PANDEY
NEW DELHI, JUNE 1

The count of daily Covid-19 cases came down to nearly 1.28 lakh and fatalities to 2,795 on Tuesday while over 2.55 lakh people recovered from the virus in a single day, taking the country's recovery rate to over 92 per cent.

The daily positivity rate dipped to 6.62 per cent and it has been less than 10 per cent for eight consecutive days. The Centre has said that the "ferocious" second wave is abating now as more than half of the country's total districts have less than five per

cent positivity at present. "In the first week of April less than 200 districts had more than 10 per cent positivity, but by the end of April there were 600 districts with more than 10 per cent positivity rate. Due to intensive containment mea-

sures and high testing and tracking only 239 districts have more than 10 per cent positivity rate while in 145 districts it is 5-10 per cent and in 350 districts it is less than 5 per cent," said ICMR director general Dr Balram Bhargava. He, however, warned states and Union Territories from rushing to open up restrictions saying unlocking has to be gradual and very slow so that the advantage of the receding wave is not lost. "We have managed to suppress the virus for some time. Hence, we

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CEC confident of holding UP, Punjab polls on time next yr

New Delhi, June 1: The Election Commission is confident of holding the five Assembly polls due early next year, including in Uttar Pradesh and Punjab, on time as the poll panel has gained a lot of experience from the electoral exercise in Bihar, West Bengal and four other assemblies amid the coronavirus pandemic, Chief Election Commissioner Sushil Chandra has asserted.

The terms of the legislative assemblies of Goa, Manipur, Punjab and Uttarakhand are coming to an end in March 2022, while the term of the Uttar Pradesh legislative assembly is scheduled to end in May.

"That is the foremost duty of the Election Commission that we should hold the elections and submit the list of the winning candidates (to the governor) before the term of the assembly expires," Mr Chandra said.

He was asked whether the poll panel will be able to hold the Assembly polls due in five states on time due to Covid-19. — PTI



Northern Army Commander Lt. Gen. Y.K. Joshi, seen here with other officers in a forward area, said on Tuesday that the ceasefire understanding between India and Pakistan was being followed in "letter and spirit" by both sides, but the Indian Army would not let its guard down "even for one bit" along the border in Jammu and Kashmir.

PTI

Heathrow opens new terminal for flights from India, red list nations

London, June 1: London's busy Heathrow Airport opened a dedicated new terminal on Tuesday for arrivals from countries designated as "red list", such as India, for a higher risk of Covid-19 transmission. Travellers on direct flights from such destinations will now go through Terminal 3 and then move directly to a government-approved quarantine facility booked at the passengers' own expense. It comes after the London airport's staff had raised

fears for their safety because of overcrowding, amid concerns that travellers arriving from red list countries from where travel is effectively banned except for British and Irish nationals or limited exceptions were mixing with those from green and amber. "Red list routes will likely be a feature of UK travel for the foreseeable future as countries vaccinate their populations at different rates, a Heathrow Airport spokesperson said. "We're adapting

Heathrow to this longer-term reality by initially opening a dedicated arrivals facility in Terminal 3 from 1 June for red list passengers arriving on direct flights. While opening this facility will be logistically very challenging, our hope is that it will enable Border Force to carry out its duties more efficiently as passenger volumes increase in line with the green list. Until then, the current red list system will remain in place, the spokesperson said. — PTI



Mamata Banerjee



Alapan Bandyopadhyaya

Didi planned PM boycott, driven by ego: Dhankhar

RAJIB CHOWDHURI
KOLKATA, JUNE 1

In a startling revelation, West Bengal governor Jagdeep Dhankhar claimed early on Tuesday that chief minister Mamata Banerjee had hinted beforehand during an "urgent" talk between them at the "boycott" by her along with her government's officials of the review meeting by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the devastation by Cyclone Yaas on May 28 over the presence of Leader of the Opposition Suvendu Adhikari. He further alleged that the Trinamul Congress supremo had given priority to her "ego" over public service.

Stumped by his revelation in a series of explosive tweets after midnight Monday, the ruling TMC swung into damage control mode before it

tried to counter him. Mr Dhankhar tweeted: "Constrained by false narrative to put record straight: On May 27 at 2316 hrs CM @MamataOfficial messaged 'may i talk? Urgent'. Thereafter on phone indicated boycott by her & officials of PM Review Meet #CycloneYaas if LOP @SuvenduWB attends it. Ego prevailed over public service. With unparalleled trampling of constitutional values & affront to the office of PM, May 28 will go down as 'a dark day' in India's long-standing ethos of cooperative federalism." He added: "At PM Review Meet #CycloneYaas democracy was shredded @MamataOfficial and Chief Secy @IASassociation. All constitutional principles

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the chief minister and chief secretary of West Bengal, the Prime Minister and other members of his entourage waited for nearly 15 minutes for the officers of the state government to arrive."

"In view of the absence, the chief secretary was called by an official as to whether they wanted to participate in the review meeting or not. Thereafter, the chief sec-

retary arrived, along with the chief minister, inside the meeting room and left thereafter immediately," the notice further added.

On May 28, the department of personnel and training (DoPT), which is under the ministry of personnel, public grievances and pensions headed by the PM, had directed Mr Bandyopadhyaya to report to its office at North Block

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Delhi govt allows home delivery of liquor via app

SANJAY KAW
NEW DELHI, JUNE 1

The Delhi government on Tuesday paved the way for home delivery of Indian and foreign brands of liquor in the national capital allowing people to place their order through a mobile application or online web portal but with certain conditions.

In a related development that will bring cheer to the restaurant industry, the new rules now allow independent restaurants, clubs and bars attached with hotels to serve liquor in open spaces such as terraces, balconies or courtyards. It will be the sole responsibility of such establishments to ensure that no customer takes the served bottles out of the licensed premises.

According to the Delhi Excise (Amendment) Rules, 2021, holders of L-13 license will be allowed to deliver liquor at the doorstep of people. This, however, does not mean liquor stores across the city will be authorised to carry out home delivery of liquor immediately.

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SHORT TAKES

Cleric held for raping minor girl inside mosque

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 1

A 47-year-old cleric has been arrested on the charge of sexually molesting a 10-year-old girl inside a mosque in Delhi, police said on Tuesday. The incident took place on Sunday. An FIR has been registered against the accused, and a Delhi court has sent him to 14-day judicial custody. "We registered an FIR after receiving a complaint and arrested the accused. Further investigation is in progress and we aim to file a chargesheet soon for speedy justice," a senior police official said. He said the girl has alleged in her complaint that the incident took place when she went inside the mosque to fetch water around 10 pm on Sunday. "She alleges she was stopped by the accused, who raped her. She informed her parents once she returned home, and they approached local police," he said. Police said the girl has undergone a medical examination. Police said personnel had to be deployed outside the mosque as agitated locals gathered outside following the alleged incident on Sunday. "Using technical surveillance, police arrested the accused from Ghaziabad," said an officer.

Man denied pre-arrest bail in dowry death case

New Delhi: A Delhi court has refused to grant pre-arrest bail to a man in connection with an alleged dowry death case, noting that the allegations against him are "prima facie serious in nature". Additional Sessions Judge Sanjeev Kumar Singh said it was not a fit case for grant of anticipatory bail as the investigating officer has placed documents to suggest that the victim was subjected to cruelty by husband and in-laws. Prima facie, the allegations against the accused are serious in nature and as such I am of the considered opinion that it is not a fit case to grant anticipatory bail, the judge said in an order passed on May 31. The judge also considered the reply of the investigating officer of the case, who stated that parents of the deceased have recordings and diary entries written by her explaining that she was subjected to cruelty by her husband and in-laws. During the hearing, the counsel of the accused claimed that he was being framed in the case but the prosecutor said there was a demand for dowry and circumstances compelled her to commit suicide. According to the Delhi Police, the deceased woman got married with Abhishek Kumar in 2019 but after the marriage, her husband and in-laws allegedly tortured her for dowry, following which she committed suicide on May 4, 2021. A case was registered Tigri Police station in Sangam Vihar against the accused the next day under Section 498-A (husband or relative of husband of a woman subjecting her to cruelty), 306 (abetment of suicide) and 34 (common intention) under the Indian Penal Code. The prosecutor apprised the court about the relationship between the couple and said they were slated to get married in 2018 but the groom-side demanded dowry, pursuant to which they cancelled the wedding. — PTI

'Big relief' that Class 12 exams have been cancelled: Kejriwal

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 1

Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal on Tuesday said it is a "big relief" that the Class 12 board exams have been cancelled. His remark came after the Centre decided to cancel the CBSE Class 12 board exams amid the continuing Covid-19 pandemic across the country.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi asserted that the decision has been taken in the interest of students and the anxiety among students, parents and teachers must be put to an end.

Earlier in the day, Kejriwal had said that the exams should be cancelled in view of the Covid situation and students be evaluated on the basis of past performance.

"I am glad 12th exams have been cancelled. All of us were very worried about the health of our children. A big relief," Kejriwal tweeted.

His deputy Manish Sisodia, who has been against the idea of con-



I am glad 12th exams have been cancelled. All of us were very worried about the health of our children. A big relief

— Arvind Kejriwal, Delhi CM

ducting the exams in the given circumstances, also said: "I am happy that the never-ending class 12 for 1.5 crore students of the country will finally end."

The decision to cancel the exam was taken at a high-level meeting chaired by Modi in which it was decided that the

CBSE will take steps to compile the results of Class 12 students as per a well-defined objective criteria in a time-bound manner.

Kejriwal had earlier tweeted in Hindi: "Students and parents are really worried about Class 12 board exams. They want that the exams should not be conducted without vaccination. I appeal to the Centre that the exams be cancelled and the evaluation be done on basis of the past performance."

The CBSE had on April 14 announced cancellation of Class 10 exams and postponement of Class 12 exams in view of surge in coronavirus cases.

The Ministry of Education had recently sought detailed suggestions from states and union territories on proposals discussed in a high-level meeting on the issue.

The government had informed the Supreme Court, which is hearing a plea seeking the exam's cancellation, that it will take a final decision by June 3.



A municipal worker sanitises a market area at Karol Bagh in New Delhi on Tuesday. — PTI

Arms licences of Sushil & bizman Kalra suspended

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 1

The Delhi Police has suspended the arms licenses of wrestler Sushil Kumar and businessman Navneet Kalra after they were found involved in criminal cases, officials said on Tuesday. The licenses of the arms suspended on Monday, they said.

Joint commissioner of police (licensing) O.P. Mishra said: "We have suspended the arms licenses of Kumar and Kalra with immediate effect. The process of cancellation of their licenses has been initiated. They were served notices to explain why their licenses should not be cancelled."

"We have done it on the basis of reports of the concerned investigating agencies and local police in the criminal cases recently registered against them," Mishra said.

Two-time Olympic medalist Sushil Kumar, along with his associates, was arrested in connection with the murder of a wrestler at the Chhatrasal



Navneet Kalra

Stadium here. Kumar and his associates allegedly assaulted wrestler Sagar Dhankar and two of his friends Sonu and Amit Kumar on the intervening night of May 4 and 5. Sagar succumbed to the injuries later.

Police said a total of nine people, including Kumar, have been arrested so far in connection with the incident.

The Delhi Police arrested Kalra for alleged black marketing and hoarding of oxygen concentrators.

Police recovered 524 oxygen concentrators were recovered from



Sushil Kumar

Khan Chacha, Town Hall and Nege & Ju restaurants owned by Kalra in the national capital.

A Delhi court on Saturday granted bail to Kalra.

The businessman was nabbed from Gurugram on May 16. He had been on the run ever since the police raided his restaurants and seized the medical devices.

The police claimed that the concentrators were imported from China and were being sold at an exorbitant price of ₹50,000 to 70,000 a piece as against its cost of ₹16,000 to ₹22,000.

■ Govt sets up a task force to suggest measures to protect children

Delhi hospitals ramping up infra for possible 3rd wave

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 1

Hospitals across Delhi have started ramping up their infrastructure to ensure availability of essential equipment, drugs, and ICU beds for children as part of their plan to tackle a possible third wave of the coronavirus.

The Delhi government has set up a task force to suggest measures to protect children from the third wave. Most of the hospitals are focussing on ramping up their ICU beds and facilities for children amid fears that the third wave might be fatal for them.

Dr P.K. Bhardwaj, the chief executive director of Saroj Super Specialty Hospital in Rohini, said the plan is to improve the infrastructure in the paediatric ICU and neonatal ICU. The hospital has been preparing infrastructure keeping in mind that an attendant will have to be kept with a Covid-positive child, he said.

"So, there will be two partitions in a room for the parent and the kid," Dr Bhardwaj said.

The number of beds in the neonatal unit will be increased from 10 at present to around 20. The capacity of the paediatric ICU and high-dependency unit will be tripled, he added. The hospital has already started procuring oxygen masks, high-flow nasal cannulas, special ventilators, and BIPAP machines for children, he said.

"The facility will also hire more neonatologists and paediatric intensivists. We have one intensivist at present; we have to have minimum three," Dr Bhardwaj said.

Dr Chandrashekhar, the head of the paediatric

intensive care at Madhukar Rainbow Children's Hospital in Malviya Nagar, said the number of paediatric ICU beds at the facility can be increased to 30 from 25 at present, if need arises.

In case a child aged below one month gets infected, s/he can be accommodated in the 40-bed neonatal ICU at the hospital.

However, there has hardly been any case of a child of that age getting infected. "We expect more cases of multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children and are ramping up our technical and manpower support and taking steps to ensure enough quantity of essential drugs and oxygen," he said.

The hospital is likely to create oxygen storage capacity on its premises and can also tie up with neighbouring hospitals having oxygen plants, he said.

Sources from Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals said that the hospital has existing arrangements with two vendors who would meet any increased requirement for liquid medical oxygen in the future.

Moreover, the hospital has installed an oxygen generator plant to meet its requirements of cylinders through the support of the French government. The hospital is also exploring the creation of an LMO generation plant in keeping with the directions of the Delhi high court and the Delhi government, sources told a news agency.

The Delhi government-run Lok Nayak Jai Prakash Narayan (LNJP) Hospital had recorded around 40 cases of "severe" coronavirus infection among children during the second wave and around 15 of them were aged below one year.

Hospitals record lowest Covid admissions in nearly 2 months

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 1

Delhi recorded less than 200 hospital admissions of Covid-19 patients on Monday, the lowest in nearly two months, according to government data. The number of people discharged from hospitals on a daily basis after recovering from Covid-19 has outnumbered the number of those getting admitted since May 14, the data showed.

The decline in hospital admissions can be attributed to the drop in the number of positive cases, officials said. According to the government data, Delhi witnessed 182 hospital admissions as against 333 discharges on Monday. On Saturday and Sunday, the hospital admission figures stood

at 228 and 237 respectively. Meanwhile with 623 fresh Covid cases in the last 24 hours, Delhi recorded the lowest single-day count since March 18, while the positivity rate further dropped to 0.88 per cent.

According to the Delhi government's health bulletin on Tuesday, as many as 1,423 people recovered from the disease in the 24-hour period, while 62 people succumbed to the disease, which is the lowest since April 11 when 48 deaths were recorded.

As per the government data, 70,813 tests were conducted during the last 24 hours and 1,93,73,093 tests were conducted so far. The cumulative caseload of Delhi has now reached 14,26,863 including 10,178 active cases, 13,92,386 recoveries and 24,299 deaths.

Antibody cocktail treatment begins at Ganga Ram Hospital

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 1

The Sir Ganga Ram Hospital on Tuesday started administering monoclonal antibody cocktail (MAC) to coronavirus patients, the medical facility said in a statement. The hospital is administering a combination of casirivimab and imdevimab to consenting patients with mild and moderate Covid-19 symptoms at high risk of developing serious illness, it added.

The MRP of one MAC dose for a patient is

₹59,750, the statement said. According to the Drug Controller General of India (DCGI), selection of patients will entail that they have Covid positive test report, mild to moderate Covid disease, are in the age group of 12 and above and weighing at least 40 kg, and are at high risk of Covid-19.

Dr D.S. Rana, chairman (BOM), Sir Ganga Ram Hospital said: "As per the claims of the company Roche/Cipla, we hope MAC will be a major factor in the fight against Covid-19 to prevent disease from progressing to further severity."

Don't force citizens to move courts again and again: HC

New Delhi, June 1: Citizens should not be compelled by the authorities to resort to litigations again and again on the same issue once it has been decided by a court or tribunal as the National Litigation Policy was floated to avoid such situations, the Delhi high court, on Tuesday, said to the Centre.

"In view of the National Litigation Policy (NLP) of the Union of India, authorities ought to keep in mind that if facts are similar and decisions have already been rendered by a competent court or tribunal, it should be followed by them in the subsequent similar matters."

"The authorities should not relegate or compel citizens to go to the courts time and again (for the same issue)," a bench of Chief Justice D.N. Patel and Justice Jyoti Singh said and added that "multiplicity of litigation has to be avoided."

It also said that the NLP was floated to "curtail" the filing of cases before the courts or tribunals again and again on the same issue.

— PTI



A beneficiary waits at a Covid-19 vaccination centre at Indrapuram in Ghaziabad on Tuesday. — PTI

'Younger generation should have been vaccinated first'

New Delhi, June 1: The younger generation which has lost so many lives to Covid-19 should have been vaccinated first as it is the nation's future but the jobs were prioritised for the elderly who have lived their lives, the Delhi High Court observed on Tuesday.

Justice Sanghi said that in the second wave of Covid-19, it was the younger generation which was more affected and they are not getting

vaccines. "You have announced the vaccination policy for 18 to 44 years old persons now but you don't have vaccines. Then why you have to announce and make a declaration when you don't have the vaccines? We have to invest in the future and we are sidelining them," Justice Sanghi said.

"We have to secure our future for that we need to vaccinate our younger generation." — PTI

Fake call centre busted, 3 arrested

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 1

The police has busted a fake call centre operating at Deoli in south Delhi and arrested three men for allegedly duping several job aspirants on the pretext of providing them jobs in private airlines, officials said on Tuesday.

Accused Ayush Singh (27) and Ramiz Raja (34) opened a call centre at Deoli in the name of a consultancy firm for assisting job aspirants to get placed in domestic airlines and also roped in Sitaram (38) in their plan, they said.

DCP (Northwest) Usha Ranganani said the accused Ayush Singh (27) and Ramiz Raja created a fake ID on monster.com and got data of job aspirants. Then they used fake names and called up their potential targets by posing as HR executives of various consultancies with jobs offers as cabin crews, ground staff, and ticketing staff in different domestic airlines.

The officer said that on the pretext of registration, uniform and document verification, the accused took money from job aspirants and took interview of candidates telephonically and also gave them fake appointment letters. The received cheated amount was further distributed equally among them in different accounts and wallets, police said. The matter came to notice after one of the victims who was also duped by the accused men using the similar modus operandi reported at Mautra Enclave police station.

Police said they conducted raid at a building in Delhi's Deoli and on the instance of arrested persons, a fake call centre being operated by them before the lockdown was busted and several articles were also recovered from a place in Noida.



AIIMS resident doctors association takes part in the nationwide black day protest and full-day strike against Baba Ramdev in New Delhi on Tuesday. — G.N. Jha

Home delivery of liquor begins in Delhi

SANJAY KAW
NEW DELHI, JUNE 1

The Delhi government on Tuesday paved the way for home delivery of Indian and foreign brands of liquor in the national capital allowing people to place their order through a mobile application or online web portal but with certain conditions.

In a related development that will bring cheer to the restaurant industry, the new rules will now allow independent restaurants, clubs and bars attached with hotels to serve liquor in open spaces such as terraces, balcony or courtyards. It will be the sole responsibility of such establishments to ensure that no customer takes the served bottles out of the licensed premises.

According to the Delhi Excise (Amendment) Rules,

City BJP, traders' body slam Kejriwal's decision

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 1

The Delhi BJP slammed chief minister Arvind Kejriwal for allowing doorstep delivery of liquor. The Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) too criticised the decision and said it shows that "liquor is more important for him" rather than opening shops and markets on priority.

City BJP chief Adesh Gupta said that Mr Kejriwal couldn't give free medicine

and ration but serving liquor at doorstep. Kejriwal government's decision to have liquor delivered at doorstep is against our culture and criticised it. When the govt should have tried to improve health and medical services the CM was busy finalising with liquor mafia how to have it delivered at door step. Praveen Khandelwal, general secretary of CAIT, alleged in a statement that despite several requests, Kejriwal did not allow them to reopen shops.

2021, published in a gazette notification, holders of L-13 license will be allowed to

deliver liquor at the doorstep of people. The notification said: "Licence in

Form L-13 for home delivery of Indian liquor and Foreign Liquor by ordering through mobile app or online web portal...The licensee shall make delivery of liquor at the residences only if order is received through mobile app or online web portal and no delivery shall be made to any hostel, office, and institution."

This, however, does not mean liquor stores across the city will be authorised to carry out home delivery of liquor immediately. Only those traders in possession of the L-13 license will be allowed to carry out home delivery.

The AAP government's decision to amend excise rules for home delivery of liquor has come at a time when the national capital has started the unlocking process after a month of lockdown.

SHORT TAKES

SC retains IGST on O2 concentrators

New Delhi: The levy of 12% Integrated Goods and Services Tax (IGST) on Oxygen concentrators imported/gifted for personal use is back, for now, as Supreme Court on Tuesday stayed Delhi HC order that had held that May 1, 2021, finance ministry notification imposing 12% IGST was unconstitutional. The top court bench comprising Justice D.Y. Chandrachud and Justice M.R. Shah stayed May 21, 2021, HC order by which High Court had held that during Covid pandemic, the Oxygen concentrators constitute a life-saving device and therefore, should be treated on par with life-saving drugs. "We are staying the operation of HC order till further orders," the court said in its order. The top court put on hold the May 21, 2021, HC order as attorney general K.K. Venugopal told the court that the GST council is meeting on June 8 to deliberate on granting exemption to the essential commodities related to Covid-19, including Oxygen concentrators.

Sidda in hospital, Covid test negative

Bengaluru: Senior Congress leader and Leader of Opposition in Karnataka Legislative Assembly Siddaramaiah has been admitted to a private hospital as he has developed fever, his office said on Tuesday. Doctors have said that his condition is stable, his office said in a statement. Stating that the former chief minister underwent Covid test after developing fever last night, it said, his reports have come negative. On the advice of the Doctor, Mr Siddaramaiah has undergone complete check at the hospital and the results of his second coronavirus test too has come negative, it further said, adding he will remain in the hospital for two days, as per doctors' advice. — PTI

New 270-bed Covid care unit in Odisha

Angul/Bhubaneswar: Odisha on Tuesday got one more dedicated 270-bed state-of-the-art Covid care centre (CCC), thus adding further strength to its healthcare infrastructure in the state to fight the coronavirus pandemic. The CCC built by leading steel producer Jindal Steel and Power Limited (JSPL) was launched by Union steel, petroleum and natural gas minister Dharmendra Pradhan at Angul in presence of state health minister N.K. Das and JSPL chairman Navjen Jindal. The centre is equipped with 270 oxygen supported beds, which includes 10 non-invasive ventilation beds and five intensive care units (ICU) beds with ventilators. With the launching of the new Covid care centre, the number of Covid care centres (CCCs) rose to 121. Apart from 121 CCCs, the state has built 83 dedicated Covid hospitals spread over 30 districts.

C'GARH RELAXES LOCKDOWN; MP UNLOCKS SLOWLY

Bhopal: Madhya Pradesh was, on Tuesday, unlocked partially to start the economic and business activities in the state. The state government has, however, extended the 'corona curfew' in MP till June 15. Chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan announced relaxation in curbs, imposed on April 24 in the state to contain the Covid, in the wake of 47 out of the total 52 districts reporting a positivity rate below five per cent. In a series of tweets, the chief minister's office has issued detailed guidelines regarding the relaxations that will be provided during the period of 'corona curfew' in the state. According to the guidelines, the 'corona curfew' will remain in force from 10.00 pm every Saturday till 6.00 am on Monday. There will be night curfew in the state from 10.00 pm till 6.00 am. Grocery shops and other small business establishments have been allowed to open. But shopping malls, cinema halls, gyms, swimming pools, picnic spots, auditorium, and community centres will remain closed during the corona curfew in the state. Similarly, all kinds of religious activities and political and social gatherings will remain prohibited till June 15. Schools, colleges, and coaching institutions will also remain closed during the period.

WHO names variants 1st found in India as 'Kappa, Delta'

WHO's move comes 3 weeks after India objected to B.1.617 mutant termed an 'Indian Variant'

United Nations/Geneva, June 1: The B.1.617.1 and B.1.617.2 variants of the Covid, first identified in India, have been named as 'Kappa' and 'Delta' respectively by the WHO as it named various variants of the coronavirus using Greek alphabets to simplify public discussions and also help remove stigma from the names.

The World Health Organisation's move on Monday came nearly three weeks after India objected to the B.1.617 mutant of the novel coronavirus being termed an "Indian Variant" in media reports with the Union health ministry pointing out that the UN's top health organ has not used the word "Indian" for this strain in its document.

The UN health agency named the B.1.617.1 variant of the Covid as 'Kappa' while the B.1.617.2 variant was dubbed 'Delta'. Both the variants were first found in India.

Taking to Twitter, Dr Maria Van Kerkhove, WHO's technical COVID-19 lead, on Monday said: "Today, @WHO announces new, easy-to-say labels for #SARSCoV2 Variants of Concern (VOCs) & Interest (VOIs). They will not replace existing scientific names, but are aimed to help in public discussion of VOI/VOI."

The WHO, while announcing the new naming system making them simple, easy to say and remember, said that it is

► **THE LABELS** do not replace existing scientific names, which convey important scientific information & will continue to be used in research. The naming system aims to prevent calling Covid variants by the places where they are detected, which is stigmatizing & discriminatory

stigmatising and discriminatory to call the variants by names of the nations they are first detected in.

The labels do not replace existing scientific names, which convey important scientific information & will continue to be used in research. The naming system aims to prevent calling Covid variants by the places where they are detected, which is stigmatizing & discriminatory, the WHO said in a tweet on Monday.

The Geneva-based global health agency encouraged countries and others to adopt these names as they will ease public discussions about the global Covid Variants of Concern and Interest.

The B.1.1.7 strain first detected in the UK will be known as Alpha, while the B.1.351 variant detected in South Africa is now Beta, P.1 variant first found in Brazil is Gamma and the P.2 variant is Zeta. The strains found in the US are Epsilon and Iota.

— PTI



People in large number arrive to receive a dose of Covid vaccine at the Chota Imambara mega vaccination centre in Lucknow on Tuesday. — PTI

Do not discharge Hany Babu till June 3, HC directs hospital

Mumbai, June 1: The Bombay High Court on Tuesday directed a private hospital here not to discharge Hany Babu, a Delhi University associate professor arrested in the Elgar Parishad-Maoist links case, till June 3.

A vacation bench of Justices S.S. Shinde and Abhay Ahuja said if the Breach Candy hospital where he is admitted wishes to send him back to prison before June 3, it must seek the court's permission.

The court had passed



similar orders last week which were extended till Thursday as it could not conduct further hearing on the plea filed by Babu's wife due to lack of time.

Babu, lodged in Talaja prison in neighbouring Navi Mumbai, tested positive for Covid in May this year, after which he was admitted to J.J. Hospital and later to G T Hospital here, both run by the state government. Babu's wife Jenny Rowena filed a petition

seeking interim bail for him on health grounds and also seeking medical aid. His lawyer Yug Chaudhry told the HC last week that Babu had developed a severe eye infection and could lose vision in his left eye.

On May 19, the HC allowed him to be shifted to Breach Candy Hospital in south Mumbai for treatment at his own expense.

On Tuesday, Chaudhry stated that Babu's eye infection was "getting better" but he still needed medical care. — PTI

Congress panel submits report to Sonia on losses in Assembly polls

New Delhi, June 1: A five-member Congress panel on Tuesday submitted its assessment on the party's losses in the just concluded Assembly elections to party chief Sonia Gandhi, and put forward several recommendations and suggestions to strengthen the organisation.

Former Maharashtra chief minister Ashok Chavan who heads the group said he had submitted the report on the party's performance in Kerala, Assam and Puducherry and that the assessment for West Bengal was underway.

"We have submitted our report on poll losses in Assam, Puducherry and Kerala and have given our suggestions and recommendations," Mr Chavan told PTI.



He added that the report on West Bengal is being prepared and discussions with party leaders are still going on.

Besides Chavan, the group has Salman Khurshid, Manish Tewari, Vincent H. Pala and Jothi Mani.

The Congress had set up the five-member group to evaluate the party's performance in assembly polls in Kerala, Assam, West Bengal and Puducherry. Sonia Gandhi had said at the Congress Working Committee (CWC) meeting last month that the group would look at every aspect of recent electoral reverses and come back with its findings. — PTI

State's democratic right must return to people

Punjab Cong crisis: Sidhu appears before AICC panel

New Delhi, June 1: Truth can be suppressed but never defeated, Congress leader Navjot Singh Sidhu said Tuesday after he appeared before a three-member committee set up by the party to address factionalism in the Punjab unit, and asserted his stand remains unchanged.

Mr Sidhu has been at loggerheads with chief minister Amarinder Singh and has publicly attacked him over an SIT report on the sacrilege issue in the state.

"I came here on the call of the high command and appraised them about the state of affairs in the party. I have brought the



Navjot Singh Sidhu

voice of the people of Punjab from the grassroots level to the party high command," he said.

Emerging after the over 1.5-hour meeting, he told reporters, "My stand is and will remain the same and unchanged. Punjab's democratic right that goes to the government must return to the people in any form."

The three-member panel formed to end factionalism within the party ahead of the Punjab assembly election is headed by Leader of

Opposition in Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge and comprises All India Congress Committee general secretary in-charge of Punjab affairs Harish Rawat and former MP J.P. Aggarwal.

"I have also the truth before the committee. The truth can be suppressed but can never be defeated. The voice of Punjab's truth and its rights have been conveyed to the high command...We have to defeat all anti-Punjab forces," Mr Sidhu said. He said his aim is that the power of people of Punjab and the taxes they pay, should return to them in whichever way. — PTI

Kid's video on 'less homework' goes viral

J&K L-G responds to minor's appeal, directs for lightening of homework burden

YUSUF JAMEEL SRINAGAR, JUNE 1

The Jammu and Kashmir authorities, on Tuesday, issued guidelines for virtual classes for school-children at various levels, restricting their duration to enable them to spare more time to play and interact with parents, which it said would be the biggest learning experience a child can have.

This comes days after a video, in which a 6-year-old Kashmiri girl can be seen complaining directly to Prime Minister

Narendra Modi about the avoidable burden of Zoom classes on tiny tots, went viral.

After seeing the video, J&K lieutenant governor Manoj Sinha had tweeted, "Very adorable complaint. Have directed the school education department to come out with a policy within 48 hours to lighten the burden of homework on school kids. Childhood innocence is a gift of God and their days should be lively, full of joy and bliss."

In the video, the six-year-old asked the Prime Minister, "Assalamu

Alaikum (peace be upon you) Modi Sahab, chote bachon ko itna kaam kyon rakhtay hain (why do you assign so much work to small children?)"

She said that her Zoom classes start at 10.00 am and continue till 2.00 pm, the period during which she is taught English, Math, Urdu, EVS, and computer. On Tuesday, Mr Sinha, while announcing the new guidelines for the virtual classes for schoolchildren, wrote on micro-blogging site Twitter, "The school education department has decided to limit

daily online classes for a maximum of one-and-half hours for Classes 1 to 8, spread across two sessions. For Classes 9 to 12, online synchronous learning will not be more than three hours."

In another tweet, he said, "Pre-primary on a given day for interacting with parents shall be only 30 minutes. Concerned authorities to ensure the strict implementation. Homework up to Class 5 should be avoided. Authorities and schools plan joyful learning experiences engaging parents as well."

Gritty 8-yr-old girl foils rape bid by jawan in train, helps cops nab him

Pune, June 1: Showing extraordinary courage, a eight-year-old daughter of an ex-serviceman not only fought back a 33-year-old Army jawan who tried to sexually assault her in a toilet of a moving train in Maharashtra in the early hours of Tuesday and threw her on tracks but also helped the police nab him by providing his description.

The alleged incident occurred on the Goa-Nizamuddin Express between Lonand and Salpa railway stations in Satara district in western Maharashtra, a senior officer said. "The girl, a daughter of

an ex-serviceman, was travelling to Delhi with her mother, father, sister and brother," said Sadanand Wayse Patil, Superintendent of Police (Pune division), government railway police (GRP).

The accused, later identified as Prabhu Malappa Uphar, allegedly picked up the girl while she was fast asleep on her berth and took her to the toilet, he said.

While the accused tried to sexually assault her, the girl woke up and resisted his advances and started shouting, the SP said. The accused then told the girl that he was

taking her back to her parents, but after coming out of the toilet, he pushed her down the moving train.

"Fortunately, the train was moving slowly due to the ghat section due to which the girl sustained less grievous injuries. On Tuesday morning, some locals spotted her lying on the railway tracks and took her to a hospital," said Wayse Patil.

The girl, who sustained injuries on her legs and under the chin, was later reunited with her family.

Uphar is a jawan of Naik rank and posted at Jhansi in Uttar Pradesh. — PTI

Cybercrooks dupe people of 1.49 crore

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO BHUBANESWAR, JUNE 1

Incidents of cyber looting have increased manifold during the lockdown-shutdown period in Odisha in the last one month.

The police said that fraudsters duped unsuspecting people to the tune of ₹1.49 crore during the lockdown period out of which ₹70,78,714 were looted in the state capital Bhubaneswar alone during the period.

HC tells Maha to ensure security of Poonawalla

SHAHAB ANSARI MUMBAI, JUNE 1

The Bombay High Court on Tuesday said that the Maharashtra government must assure Adar Poonawalla, the CEO of Serum Institute of India, of adequate security in the wake of alleged threats to him over the supply of the 'Covishield' vaccine manufactured by his company.

A vacation bench of Justices S.S. Shinde and Abhay Ahuja was hearing a petition filed by city based lawyer Datta Mane seeking Z+ security for Mr Poonawalla, claiming that the news reports showed that he left the country due



to fear. Even though the Union government has already granted 'Y' category security to the Pune-based industrialist, the petitioner through his lawyer Pradip Havnur, told the court that as per news reports, Mr Poonawalla had been living in fear due to constant pressure from politicians and some others demanding that he provide more supply of the Covishield vaccine to their states. Mr Mane in his petition further said that Mr Poonawalla had left for London due to such threats.

| PSPCL Punjab State Power Corporation Limited | |
|--|---|
| Regd. Office: PSEB, Head Office, The Mall, Patiala-147001 | |
| Corporate Identity Number: U40109PB2010SGC033813 Website: www.pspcl.in (Contact no. 96461-17731) | |
| Tender Enquiry no. 1296/O&M/PC-2204 | Dated: 31-05-2021 |
| Chief Engineer / O&M (P&P Cell-II), GHTP, LehraMohabbat, invites E-tender for the Sulphuric Acid, Quantity:300MT. For detailed NIT & Tender Specification please refer to https://eproc.punjab.gov.in from 31-05-2021 from 17:00 hrs. onwards. | |
| Note: Corrigendum and addendum, if any will be published online at https://eproc.punjab.gov.in | |
| GHTP-28/21 | RO No PR-Advt. No.: 76155/12/28/2021/5011 |

| NORTHERN RAILWAY | |
|--|--|
| TENDER NOTICE (Through e-tendering) | |
| Name of work with its location | Provision of new Private siding at Mohana Station of Delhi Division. |
| App. Cost of the work (₹) | ₹ 40,36,750/- only |
| Address of the office | Senior Divisional Signal & Telecom Engineer-C, Northern Railway, 3rd Floor, Annexe-1, DRM office, New Delhi-110055. |
| Date & Time for upload the tender / closing of tender | Tender uploading/closing date & time: 23.06.2021 up to 15.00 hrs. |
| Website particular & notice board location where complete details of the tender can be seen etc. | See the Northern Railway website www.ireps.gov.in & Notice board at S&T branch, 3rd Floor, DRM office, State Entry Road, New Delhi-110055. |
| Tender No. 558-Sig-16-M-Tender-1362 | Dated: 31.05.2021 1184/2021 |
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NORTHERN RAILWAY

Tender Notice No. 15 / 2021-2022 Dated: 01.06.2021

Invitation of Tenders through E-Procurement system

Principal Chief Materials Manager, Northern Railway, New Delhi-110001, for and on behalf of the President of India, invites e-tenders through e-procurement system for supply of the following items:-

| S. No. | Tender No. | Brief Description | Qty. | Closing Date |
|--------|------------|--|------------|--------------|
| 01 | 07200101 | CUSHION FOR BACK REST TRANSVERSE SIDE FOR GS COACH | 6643 NOS | 24.06.21 |
| 02 | 09212047 | MODIFIED ELASTOMERIC PAD | 217950 NOS | 25.06.21 |
| 03 | 19201436 | SET OF SUSPENSION BEARING FOR HITACHI/ TAO | 381 SET | 28.06.21 |
| 04 | 09212065 | FOOT STEP COMPLETE FOR BVZC WAGON | 1400 NOS | 28.06.21 |
| 05 | 09212114 | LOCK, DRAWING NO.SK-62724 | 3744 NOS | 28.06.21 |
| 06 | 09212134 | SHANK WEAR PLATE, DRAWING NO.SK-62724 | 28397 NOS | 29.06.21 |
| 07 | 09212040 | SPRING PLANK DRAWING NO.SK-69594 | 630 NOS | 30.06.21 |
| 08 | 09212056 | BOLSTER BOTTOM GUSSET | 1354 NOS | 30.06.21 |
| 09 | 09212577 | 7/8" DIA LOCK BOLT | 33070 SET | 30.06.21 |
| 10 | 09213054 | READY MIXED PAINT, BRUSHING, BITUMINOUS, BLACK | 130336 LTR | 30.06.21 |
| 11 | 09212121 | STRIKER CASTING WEAR PLATE | 39296 NOS | 30.06.21 |
| 12 | 09212536 | SPRING PLANK FOR CASNUB 22 HS BOGIE | 479 NOS | 30.06.21 |
| 13 | 09212285 | SLIDING DOOR ARRANGEMENT | 104 NOS | 02.07.21 |
| 14 | 09212321 | POH KIT FOR C3W TYPE DISTRIBUTOR VALVE | 4649 SET | 02.07.21 |
| 15 | 09212573 | DRAFT GEAR ARRANGEMENT | 602 NOS | 02.07.21 |

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

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1180/2021

Kind Attention Rail Passengers

IMPORTANT NOTICE

This is notified for the information of Rail Passengers that North Western Railway has revised the timings of the following special trains with immediate effect as indicated below :

Train No. 02715 Hazur Sahib Nanded - Amritsar Jn. Sachkhand Express

| Station | Existing Timings | | Revised Timings | |
|-----------------------------|------------------|-----------|-----------------|-----------|
| | ARRIVAL | DEPARTURE | ARRIVAL | DEPARTURE |
| Palwal | Pass | 10:00 | Pass | 10:15 |
| Faridabad | 10:15 | 10:17 | 10:30 | 10:32 |
| Hazrat Nizamuddin | 10:35 | 10:37 | 10:50 | 10:52 |
| New Delhi | 11:00 | 11:15 | 11:25 | 11:40 |
| Panipat Jn. | 12:18 | 12:20 | 12:43 | 12:45 |
| Karnal | 12:42 | 12:44 | 13:07 | 13:09 |
| Kurukshetra Jn. | 13:07 | 13:09 | 13:32 | 13:34 |
| Ambala Cantt. Jn. | 14:55 | 15:05 | 14:45 | 14:55 |
| Chandigarh | 15:45 | 15:50 | 15:35 | 15:45 |
| Sahibzada Ajeet Singh Nagar | --- | --- | 15:57 | 15:59 |
| Ludhiana Jn. | 18:05 | 18:15 | 17:55 | 18:05 |
| Phagwara Jn. | 18:44 | 18:46 | 18:34 | 18:36 |
| Jalandhar City | 19:15 | 19:20 | 19:07 | 19:12 |
| Beas | 19:51 | 19:53 | 19:43 | 19:45 |
| Amritsar Jn. | 20:35 | --- | 20:35 | --- |

Train No. 02285 Secunderabad Jn. - Hazrat Nizamuddin Durgam Cheruvu Express

| Station | Existing Timings | | Revised Timings | |
|-------------------|------------------|-----------|-----------------|-----------|
| | ARRIVAL | DEPARTURE | ARRIVAL | DEPARTURE |
| Palwal | Pass | 10:10 | Pass | 10:00 |
| Hazrat Nizamuddin | 10:50 | --- | 10:40 | --- |

Rest of information notified will hold good.

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

All norms of the State and Central Government regarding COVID-19 including Social distancing, sanitization etc., 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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"SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE"

11/90/2021

SHORT TAKES

Hooch tragedy: 13 more held in raids

Aligarh: Thirteen more people, including the owner of a chemical factory, were arrested for their alleged involvement in illicit liquor trade as police continued raids in connection with the Aligarh hooch tragedy, which has claimed at least 36 lives so far, officials said on Tuesday. With this, the number of people arrested for their alleged involvement in illicit liquor trade has risen to 33, they said. In a major breakthrough, the owner of a chemical factory was arrested from his plant at the Talanagri industrial estate and a large amount of methyl alcohol seized from the premises on Monday night, Aligarh senior superintendent of police Kalanidhi Naithani told reporters. This methyl alcohol was being supplied to manufacturers of illicit liquor, he said. — PTI

Pak sets free Indian techie after jail term

Hyderabad: A city-based IT professional, who was arrested by Pakistani authorities for illegally entering their country four years ago, was released by the neighbouring country and brought back, Cyberabad police commissioner V.C. Sajjanar said on Tuesday. The 32-year-old Waindam Prashant along with another person was arrested by Bahawalpur police in April 2017 for crossing the border without any papers and authorised documents. Later a video of him purportedly saying that he was in Pakistani prison while trying to go to Switzerland to meet his girl friend, was found in social media sites. When he did not return home, his father Babu Rao lodged a complaint with the Madhapur police. — PTI

Coach booked for raping teen in Raj

Jaipur: A lawn tennis coach at a sports training centre in Jaipur allegedly raped a 17-year-old player on the pretext of selecting her for a domestic tournament, the police said on Tuesday. According to a complaint filed by the girl, coach Gaurang Nalwaya would call her to the Sawai Man Singh (SMS) Stadium in the Rajasthan capital for training and sexually assault her. On the latest instance, the coach allegedly raped her on the pretext of selecting her for a tournament in Udaipur, the police said. "A case has been lodged against the coach. Investigation into the complaint has been initiated and a search is on for the accused," Jyoti Nagar police station SHO Saroj Dhayal said. — PTI

Class 12 exams off

Continued from Page 1
Year 2021 examination. The safety, health and well-being of our students, teaching faculty and all stakeholders is our top-most priority and of paramount interest." It added: "The results will be processed on a mechanism which will also include the internal examinations conducted by the schools. The schools will be informed in due course of time, of this mechanism."
The CISCE said that after the declaration of the Class 12 results, if some candidates are not satisfied with the marks awarded to them, it will give an option to such candidates to write the exams at a later date, when the situation is more conducive. The CISCE had last week asked its affiliated schools to submit data, including average of marks obtained by Class 12 students in Class 11 and during this session.
At the review meeting on Tuesday evening, the PM said the Covid-19 situation was a dynamic one across the country and though the numbers are coming down and some states are managing the situation through effective micro-containment, some states have still opted for a lockdown.
"Students, parents and teachers are naturally worried about the health of the students in such a situation. Students should not be forced to appear for exams in such a stressful situation. Health and safety of our students is of utmost importance and there would be no compromise on this aspect. In today's time, such exams cannot be the reason to put our youth at risk... All stakeholders need to show sensitivity for students," the PM said.
Referring to the wide consul-

Rajnath, Aussie minister Dutton review defence ties during telephonic interaction
India, Oz vow to hold 2+2 talks soonPAWAN BALI
NEW DELHI, JUNE 1

India and Australia on Tuesday vowed to hold their first-ever ministerial-level 2+2 dialogue "at the earliest opportunity".
Defence minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday had a telephonic conversation with his Australian counterpart Peter Dutton.
The 2+2 dialogue will involve defence and foreign ministers from both India and Australia.
The move is significant as in recent days Australia's relation with China has seen a sharp deterioration. India too is facing Chinese aggression at the Line of Actual

Control (LAC) from last one year.
Both India and Australia along with US and Japan are part of the Quad Alliance, which Beijing sees as an anti-China alliance.
India already has 2+2 foreign and defence ministerial level meeting with other Quad countries US and Japan.
Last year India had invited the Royal Australian Navy (RAN), to participate in naval wargame "Malabar 2020" along with US and Japan.
Last year in June, during the virtual meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Australian counterpart Scott Morrison it was



THE MOVE is significant as in recent days Australia's relation with China has seen a sharp deterioration. India too is facing Chinese aggression at the LAC from last one year.

decided that India and Australia will upgrade their "2+2" dialogue from level of secretaries to that of ministers. Foreign and

defence ministers of the two countries will meet in the format at least every two years to pursue the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.
During their telephonic interaction on Tuesday, both Mr Singh and Mr Dutton reviewed the defence cooperation between the two countries in the backdrop of the current regional situation. Both ministers acknowledged the momentum that defence cooperation between India and Australia has achieved following the upgradation of the partnership to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in Jun 2020.
"The participation of

Australia in Exercise MALABAR has been an important milestone in this enhanced partnership," said defence ministry in a statement.
Both ministers expressed satisfaction at the growing defence ties between the two countries. Both sides reviewed the progress on various bilateral defence cooperation initiatives and expressed commitment to further elevate engagements between the armed forces.
"During the dialogue, both Ministers expressed their intent to convene the 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue at the earliest," said the defence ministry statement.



A view the Shiv Mandir, repaired and renovated by the Army with the help of locals, during its re-opening for the public in Gurmarg on Tuesday. This temple was constructed in 1915 by Maharani Mohini Bai Sisodia, wife of Maharaja Hari Singh of J&K. — PTI

Sena trying is to manipulate civic polls: BJP

SONU SHRIVASTAVA
MUMBAI, JUNE 1

The BJP on Tuesday alleged that Shiv Sena, which has been ruling Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) for over two decades, was trying to manipulate the corporation elections scheduled to take place next year. BJP leader Ashish Shelar claimed that the Shiv Sena first tried to reorganise municipal wards. After realising that it cannot be done, the party is now trying to postpone next year's elections by two years citing Covid situation.
Mr Shelar alleged that ever since the Shiv Sena formed the government in the state, it has tried several tricks to ensure that the BMC remains in its control.

Nations back India, SA proposal to temporarily waive patents on vaccines

Brics ministers discuss terror, Covid

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI
NEW DELHI, JUNE 1

In a huge endorsement of India's position on various global issues, foreign ministers of the five-nation Brics (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) grouping met in virtual format at a meeting on Tuesday chaired by external affairs minister S. Jaishankar and took a tough stand against all forms of terrorism, including cross-border terror. It also issued a joint statement on reforming the multi-lateral system that covers all key institutions, including the UN and its principal organs like the UN Security Council and its sanctions committees, to "ensure their effectiveness, responsiveness and transparency".
The Brics meeting also

At the meeting chaired by Mr Jaishankar, Brics members echoed India's stand on Afghanistan endorsing the need to preserve the gains made over the last 20 years in the nation, including protection of women, children & minorities



supported the initiative of two of its members — India and South Africa — at the WTO for a relaxation in the norms of the agreement on the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights in order to ensure quick and affordable access to Covid vaccines and medicines for developing countries.
Echoing India's stand on Afghanistan, the Brics endorsed the need to preserve the gains made over the last 20 years in Afghanistan, including

protection of women, children and minorities and also "strongly condemned the continuing violence in Afghanistan, especially deliberate targeting of civilians by terrorist groups" while stressing the "urgent necessity of the elimination of the threat of UNSC proscribed terrorist groups to lasting peace in Afghanistan".
Sources said that due to India's proactive and sustained efforts, it has "been able to move" the other four Brics countries towards the Indian posi-

Muslim body moves SC, seeks halt on govt order

PARMOD KUMAR
NEW DELHI, JUNE 2

CITIZENSHIP

The Indian Union of Muslim League (IUML) on Tuesday moved the Supreme Court challenging the Union home ministry's May 28 order empowering the collectors of certain districts to grant the Indian citizenship to the Hindu, Sikh, Jain, Buddhist, Christians migrants, excluding Muslims, from neighbouring countries.
It has contended that the government was going ahead with the grant of citizenship to migrants belonging to Hindu, Sikh, Jain, Buddhist, Christians despite the pendency of its 2019 petition challenging the constitution-

ality of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act of 2019.
In its petition filed on Tuesday, IUML has described as illegal the MHA order to grant citizenship to Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians, but not the Muslims.
IUML has urged the top court to call a halt to the grant of citizenship to the migrants, except Muslims, till the challenge to the validity of the CAA is decided by the court.
The IUML citing SC's ruling in a plethora of cases has said that "what cannot be done directly will not be permitted to be done indirectly".

MP honeytrap row: Nath in a fix over pen drive remark

Ex-CM may disown statement before SIT

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY
BHOPAL, JUNE 1

Congress veteran and former chief minister Kamal Nath has landed him in an awkward situation following his recent claim that he has in his possession a pen drive containing the honeytrap videos with the special investigation team (SIT), probing the matter, set to grill him on it on Wednesday.
The SIT issued him a notice last week asking him to be present before it on Wednesday to substantiate his claim on honeytrap videos in which some bureaucrats and politicians of MP were caught in compromising positions with some women members of a racket that allegedly trapped and blackmailed them for money.
Sources said Mr Nath has consulted some legal experts on the issue to assess the legal implications of his purported claim that he possessed "original" honeytrap videos in a pen drive.
Mr Nath has already announced that he would depose before the SIT on the issue.
Sources, however, said he may disown his statement and may explain to the SIT that he was briefed on the matter by the investigation team since he was the CM when the racket in MP was busted in 2019.

Didi planned PM boycott, driven by her ego: Dhankhar

Continued from Page 1
were torn asunder by CM @MamataOfficial and functionaries @IASassociation at PM Review Meet #CycloneYaas. Democracy imperilled by such unconstitutional stance. Time #Media to introspectively check fear quotient in WB that threatens rule of law."
Senior TMC MP Saugata Roy, however, claimed: "The governor's comments are irresponsible. The chief minister did not boycott the meeting of the Prime Minister. She rather met him and submitted the state government's demands to him. As CM she, however, has the liberty to question Mr Adhikari's presence at the meeting. Since he is not a government official, why would he attend it? And why would a CM, whose party has come to power, tolerate their politics? The Constitution does not give the governor any scope to tweet. He should stop it."
Another Trinamul Congress MP, Kalyan Banerjee, wondered: "The PM had destroyed the federal structure in democracy. In that sense, May 28 will be seen as a 'Dark Day'. Since when has the leader of the opposition been a member of the state government that he would attend it's meeting?"

Showcouse to WB's ex-top babu

Continued from Page 1
in New Delhi on Monday morning for his Central deputation. When he skipped it, a second notice on Monday evening asked him to report on Tuesday morning. This time too, Mr Bandyopadhyay stayed away.
While the DoPT is the cadre-controlling authority of IAS officers, the showcase notice was served under provisions of the DM Act, which is under the direct purview of the Union home ministry. The National Disaster Management Authority is headed by the PM.
Sources at Nabanna, the state secretariat, claimed on Tuesday evening that Mr Bandyopadhyay would reply to the MHA's notice,

citing proper grounds.
Attacking the CM and Mr Bandyopadhyay, BJP MLA and Leader of the Opposition Suwendu Adhikari tweeted: "Theatre of the absurd is playing out in West Bengal. For the sake of her own ego, to destroy India's federal structure and protect the chief secretary for his indiscipline, (non-MLA) CM @MamataOfficial Didi is bringing disrepute to the CM office and the Constitution of India. What secrets does the outgoing CS know that (non-MLA) CM @MamataOfficial is moving heaven and earth to protect him? Is it really becoming of a CS to skip the Prime Minister's meet organised to help the people in

duress due to Cyclone Yaas? No. It is not."
He claimed: "I demand strictest action be taken against the outgoing CS for indiscipline, violating service rules at a time of a natural disaster and a global pandemic, irregularities, and not helping others just because of sinister political games. TMC has failed the people of West Bengal. Looting taxpayer money is TMC's favourite hobby. Outgoing CS and now 'advisor' to (non-MLA) CM @MamataOfficial will enjoy a comfortable salary of ₹2.5 lakhs per month and cushy perks. Surely, there are better ways to spend the hard-earned money of the taxpayers."

5 trapped after blast in rat-hole mine

Continued from Page 1
Jagpal Singh Dhanoa, SP of the district, said, "The main culprit, according to the eyewitnesses, is the 'sardar' Nizam Ali who did nothing to rescue the trapped labourers. Rather, Ali threatened the survivors with dire consequences and chased them away from the mining site."
He told reporters that it appears the mine was operating illegally.
"There are six-seven survivors. According to them, at least five workers got trapped inside. It has been raining incessantly for the last two days. Therefore, pumping water out of the mine to rescue the workers is

proving to be difficult. Police have been trying hard to arrest the sardar of the mine," he added.
Meanwhile, leader of Opposition Mukul Sangma held the state government responsible for the incident and alleged that illegal coal mining was operating with impunity across Meghalaya.
"Never in the history of Meghalaya and NE India has such a cartel operated with complete impunity engaging in illegal coal mining and illegal transportation and illegal transaction of such coal across the states — robbing the states. Na khaunga, na khane dunga... kab hoga?" he

said on his Twitter handle. The Congress leader has in the past raised the issue of illegal and unscientific mining and transportation of coal across the state.
Congress leader Ampareen Lyngdoh also demanded to know "who profits from this system?"
In January this year, six labourers were killed in an "accident" involving a crane near an abandoned coal mine in the same district, leading to investigations into whether there was an attempt to mine coal illegally.
The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has banned unsafe and unscientific coal mining and transportation since 2014.

No change in 2-dose schedule, says govt

Continued from Page 1
have to be very cautious. The opening up can be done in areas where the test positivity rate is less than 5 per cent and more than 70 per cent of the population in the vulnerable group of 60-plus and 45-plus with co-morbidities is vaccinated. The community ownership should be taken up in a big way to contain the emergence of another wave," Dr Bhargava added.
The Centre has said that the vaccination drive is being ramped up in a big way and by December the government plans to vaccinate the entire country. He said by mid-July and August more than one crore persons can be vaccinated per day. Dr Bhargava clarified that there is no shortage of vaccines at present "but if you want to vaccinate the entire population in one month then that cannot be done."
The Centre has clarified that there is no plan to allow mixing of doses with two different vaccines nor is there any plan to allow a single dose regime for any vaccine. "There is no such plan of mixing vaccines or allowing single doses only. Everyone has to take two doses of the same vaccine as per schedule," said Dr V.K. Paul, member-health NitiAayog.
He said the government is now ramping up its facilities to deal with a possible third wave that

may impact children.
In this regard he mentioned some children with a history of Covid infection are landing up in hospitals nearly two-four weeks later with either pneumonia or multi-system inflammatory syndrome (MSIS). However, the number of such children is not very high at present and the government is keeping a watch on this.
A sero survey will soon be conducted to monitor the spread of Covid-19 this month with 28,000 blood samples, out of which half samples will be of children over the age of six.
Meanwhile, the World Health Organisation (WHO) has termed the B.1.617.1 and B.1.617.2 variants of Covid-19 first identified in India, as "Kappa" and "Delta" respectively to also help remove association of countries with the virus.
This comes after India raised an objection to terming B.1.617 variant as the "Indian variant". The WHO has also said that virus variants should not be identified with countries they are detected in. "The labels do not replace existing scientific names, which convey important scientific information and will continue to be used in research. No country should be stigmatised for detecting and reporting Covid variants," Dr Maria Van Kerkhove, technical lead on Covid-19 at WHO, said.

THE ASIAN AGE

2 JUNE 2021

Stop misuse of sedition, all other laws to stifle dissent

The Supreme Court's observation that Section 124A of the IPC which deals with sedition will need interpretation, especially on its application with regard to freedom of the press, is welcome. It is all the more refreshing that it came along with a directive restraining the police from taking coercive action against two TV channels in Andhra Pradesh for airing news, and a query, albeit sarcastic, by a bench of the court as to whether sedition cases were being filed against TV channels which aired visuals of a body of a suspected Covid-19 victims being thrown into a river.

This is not the first time that the Supreme Court has taken a close look at the sedition law vis a vis Article 19 (1) (a) of the Constitution which guarantees freedom of speech and expression. A Constitution bench of the Supreme Court had in 1962 upheld the constitutionality of the law but held that its use must be limited to "acts involving intention or tendency to create disorder, or disturbance of law and order, or incitement to violence". The court had gone on to say that a citizen has "a right to say or write whatever he likes about the government, or its measures, by way of criticism or comment, so long as he does not incite people to violence against the government established by law or with the intention of creating public disorder". A month ago, the Supreme Court had, in fact, decided that it will review the constitutional validity of the law.

There are reports that 96 per cent of sedition cases in the last 10 years were registered after 2014... of the 405 such cases, 149 were booked against persons who spoke against the Prime Minister

There are reports that 96 per cent of sedition cases in the last 10 years were registered after 2014. According to one report, of the 405 such cases, 149 were booked against persons who spoke against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and 144 against Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath. It is curious that the NDA dispensation, which scrapped about 1,500 redundant laws, chose to retain this relic of the Raj.

Given the propensity of the governments at the Centre and in the states to invoke this law, it is appropriate that the apex court get on to the exercise of its review at the earliest. It is, however, a bit baffling that the court talked of a review with regard to the press, though the Constitution makes no mention of freedom of the press and assures every citizen of the right to speech and expression. It is expected that the review would ultimately benefit every citizen of this country.

It is not just the sedition law that the governments now find handy to muzzle dissent or criticism. The Uttar Pradesh government had recently warned that those who publicly flag shortage of healthcare facilities Covid patients face will be booked under the National Security Act. It took a stern warning by the apex court that it will brook no violation of the right to free speech of a citizen when the country is going through a humanitarian crisis for the state government to halt its draconian moves. Another forceful and timely intervention by the Supreme Court is imperative if free speech were to survive and succeed in this country.

3 kids in China: It's demographics

The China Communist Party politburo's shift to a three-child policy comes amid a falling birthrate that has led to certain demographic challenges like an ageing society which may have 300 millions people in the 60+ category by 2025. The title of the world's most populated country may not remain much longer with China as estimates have it that India is behind by a mere five crore people and is being tipped to take the title in this decade itself. The question arises, then, whether a nation can over time cope with a rising population when the economic and social indicators are far from promising as they may have been in the past.

Can society support an ageing section of people even as it faces the challenge of providing jobs for millions of young people in an environment in which industry and to an extent services too are bound to get more automated and the traditional job and livelihood prospects are fast declining in the modern age? China's problem right now seems to be to sustain what was once a demographic advantage of a vast number of younger people in the working category driving an economy that steadily rose over the last four decades into one of the most powerful in the world.

More recently, India was thought to have the advantage in which those aged above 64 represent only about 6.38 per cent of the population while 26.62 per cent are younger than 14.

As education reached all, more and more couples adopted the one or two child norm in India where family planning is only voluntary and not State policy-driven as it is in China where resentment is rife over government's invasive control over women's bodies and where unwed or single mothers with children are not only frowned upon but also made ineligible for State benefits. There are far too many factors like economic pressures and social trends among women that govern birthrates. While policy planners may fret over demographic profiles, individual choice is more likely to govern population trends. Ultimately, it will be the economy and the environment that will dictate trends than fancy ideas of social engineering.

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T. VENKATRAM REDDY
Editor in Chief

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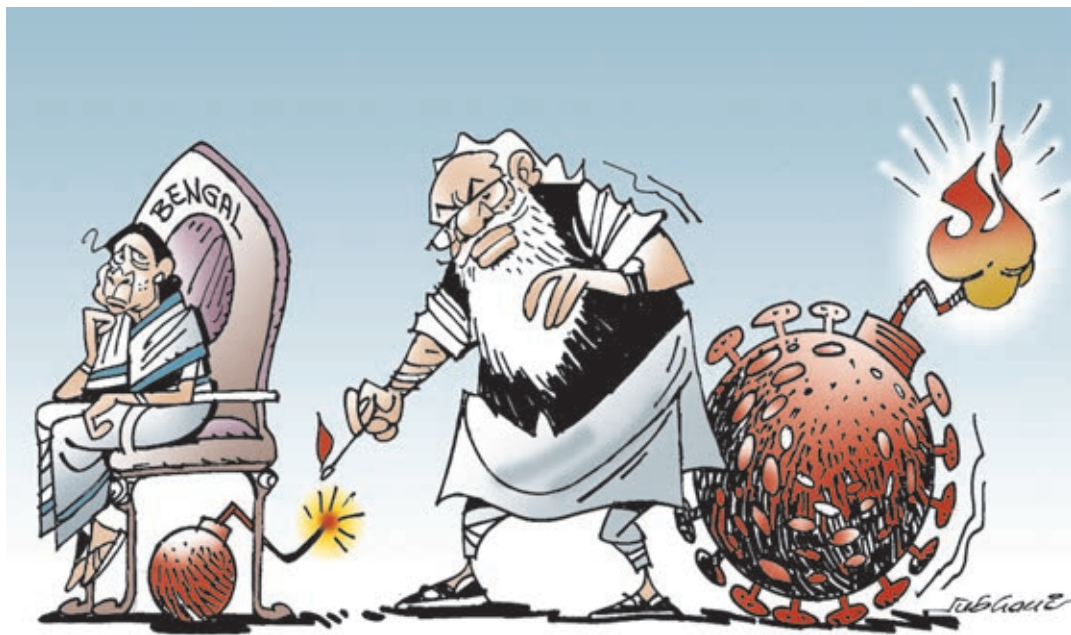
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Subhani



Game score at halftime: China — 1, Mankind — 0

Sriram Karri



Welcome. We are joined live by nearly billions of people across the world, but the telecast of this soccer game is not being broadcast live only in China. We are just a few minutes away from kick-off of the game to decide the winner of the ultimate trophy — world domination.

China, under its new coach, manager and captain, Xi, has prepared hard and meticulously for this match. Xi's strategy is unclear. The rival team, "All of Mankind", is unsure how to deal with Xi, even experts are divided. The excitement and tension among spectators is unbelievable, and it feels like a game of life and death.

Xi wins the toss against his rival captain, Donald T, who is shaking his head angrily, and claiming that the referee, Mr Who, is resorting to unfair play. Xi will kick off the ball. Against all rules, Xi has unveiled a new ball for the match. The sphere, green in colour, has tentacles on its surface. China has not revealed how or where the ball was made. Some experts feel that it was created in a lab, but a few say it was a natural mutation.

The jury is still out. But clearly China has an unfair advantage as they know a lot more about this ball, now dubbed Corona. By refusing to share information, clearly Xi is complicit as guilty as per the lab-leak theory. The game picks pace. Trump and his team mates are running around in confusion as Xi and his team are showing excellent coordination, dribbling the ball with practiced finesse, deflecting all attacks with nonchalance.

Trump is complaining about Who, the referee, who, however, is not entertaining any issues against China. "W" does not stand for Wuhan though, but World. There has been huge controversy over the selection of Trump for this match. Could he be changed midway, especially if he continues to fail in handling Corona? We will have to wait and watch.

Meanwhile, another feeble attempt at having a go into China's half has been thwarted. China is back on the attack again.

Meanwhile, the Chinese ball, Corona, is causing discomfort to many players, as if the entire ball-game has been changed. The US, UK, Italy, Spain, Hong Kong and India are all struggling. Each player is trying to figure a way to deal with the Corona ball but in a rapidly moving game, there is hardly time for them to regroup or share their learning on the go. China is meanwhile getting aggressive with certain players — Taiwan to begin with. Taiwan has been pushed but the referee ignores the Chinese foul. China has protested against the presence of Taiwan in Mankind's team before the game.

Now China is trying to elbow India hard but gets one back. The Mankind team protests but the referee, Who, does not stop the game or admonish China. The Corona ball game continues. Suddenly as China moves forward, Trump tries to stop Xi but fails. Xi trips Trump and the referee blows the whistle. Wait? What?

Unbelievable. Incredible. Xi fouls and Who hands him an extra. China gets a penalty kick. Mankind protests but China get a chance to take a lead. Xi prepares to kick

Mankind and he does it with ease. China takes the lead, 1-0.

The coach of Mankind is looking on carefully as Trump puts up a little fight back here, taking the ball into the Chinese side. It is the Quad strategy. The US, India, Japan and Australia are moving forward with some skill. But China is not giving it up.

It is using reverse aggression tactics and is targeting India again. The India-China scuffle momentarily distracts everyone. But India refuses to budge. China now kicks in other directions. China's selective aggression against the Philippines, Vietnam, Australia and Japan leads to anger in Mankind.

Meanwhile, the coach decides to substitute a player. No, not just any player, but the captain. Trump is out. Biden steps onto the ground but the exiting captain refuses to hand over the band. Some internal scuffle here... but matters seem to have finally settled nicely.

Can Biden change Mankind's strategy? He has experience and great understanding about China, having been a crucial player in Obama's Club before. Biden is pushing hard on the investigation flank. The ball is being held by Mankind for a tad bit longer as Wuhan keeps coming into the picture... Lab or natural mutation? The tactics are simple but are working. But will China wilt and relinquish its advantage? Traditionally, China believes in the Middle Kingdom domination

Can Biden change Mankind's strategy? He... is pushing hard on the investigation flank. The ball is being held by Mankind for a tad bit longer as Wuhan keeps coming into the picture. Lab or natural mutation?

strategy.

Biden is under great pressure, having taken charge after China took a lead. Will he go down in history as the captain who surrendered American global leadership, a trophy held since World War II? Or can he inflict enough high costs on Xi for his misadventures? Biden is getting his players to focus on the economy flank and pushing vaccine tactics. China is imitating the vaccine ploy but does not seem to have too many takers. Except Pakistan.

Meanwhile, the ball goes back to investigations into the origins of Covid. China is protesting. We are nearing the end of the play for the first half, with Xi's China holding on to the 1-0 lead. Mankind has not even reached China's half convincingly even once in this match, no mismatch. Europe has been disappointing in the game so far. Biden has another brief distraction on the field — it is Israel and Palestine having a go at each other.

Most Mankind players are looking on in disbelief while China is enjoying the distraction to catch its breath. We have just a few minutes left. It looks unlikely with the pace at which Covid is moving around the global field if there can be an equaliser. Clearly, the second half is when the fate of the match will be decided.

Will Mankind adopt a more aggressive challenge to China in response to their bio-warfare tactics? Will Mankind get together strongly to remove China from the UN Security Council? Or impose a fine of \$10,000 for each Covid death worldwide? Biden's response — military, diplomatic, economic, or a combination? We will find out when the game resumes after a break if he can make a strong comeback.

The referee blows the whistle. Halftime. The scoreline reads Mankind — 0, China — 1. All the players are walking out of the ground. We will take a short commercial break. Be right back...

LETTERS

WELL-PLAYED, DIDI

At a time when the country's GDP has officially contracted by 7.3 per cent, the Covid situation is still out of control and the vaccination policy is in a shambles, the Centre's unprecedented haste in gunning after the senior-most bureaucrat of a state smacks not only of misplaced priorities but more importantly its vindictiveness and meanspiritedness towards a state government where a particular political party received an overwhelming majority at the hustings against a more aggressive national player. But as the sordid drama played out to its logical conclusion, there is nothing but embarrassment for the party in power at the Centre. An exercise that could have well been avoided.

Bhaskar Roy
New Delhi

GDP DILEMMAS

IN YET ANOTHER low, India's GDP contracted by 7.3 per cent in FY21. Though this marks the bleakest performance on record for the country's economy since 1951, the fourth quarter of 2020-21 helped moderate the damage, with a higher-than-expected growth of 1.6 per cent in GDP. The manufacturing sector mainly drove economic growth in the three months, followed by agriculture. In fact, agriculture put up a stellar show registering growth in all the four quarters of the financial year 2020-21. Curbing new pandemic waves, besides stepping up vaccination, hold the key to recovery.

N.J. Ravi Chander
Bengaluru

MARRIAGE OF THE YEAR

BRITISH PRIME MINISTER Boris Johnson marries Carrie Symonds on May 29, 2021, at Westminster Cathedral in a ceremony so secret that even top aides, including tourists visiting the mother church on the same day, were blissfully unaware it was about to host the wedding of the year. He is the first PM in 199 years to wed while in office. Their year-old son Wilfred was there to see the happy occasion, along with two official witnesses. This is his third marriage.

Sankar Paul
Chakdaha, West Bengal

Aakar Patel



How Jaishankar put on mat in US over Hindutva and other issues

India's external affairs minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar was till Saturday on a visit to the United States. The first half of his trip was apparently not very productive as the person he had come to meet, US secretary of state Antony J. Blinken, had to go to the Middle East on an urgent visit. Mr Jaishankar met him only several days after reaching the US. In the meantime, the minister met the Indian teams at the United Nations and had sundry other meetings. He also had an interview with former President Donald Trump's national security adviser Lt Gen. H.R. McMaster. The general, who is familiar with India and has visited it, spoke about radicalism in the region and how extremism had hurt Pakistan. He then asked Mr Jaishankar: "I wanted to ask you about how you see political developments in your own country. You are not a partisan person. You have served with great distinction across many administrations. There is concern in the midst of the pandemic about some of these Hindutva policies that could be undermining the secular nature of Indian democracy... Are India's friends right to be concerned about some of these recent trends?"

Mr Jaishankar first corrected Gen.

McMaster to say that he was actually partisan: "Let me clarify something. I served multiple administrations when I was a civil servant. I am today an elected member of Parliament. Do I have a political viewpoint and political interest? Of course, I do. Hopefully I will be able to articulate the interest that I represent." He then says he will give two replies: a "straight political answer" and a "slightly more nuanced societal answer". His straight political answer is that in the past India had "votebank politics", but no longer does because democracy had deepened under the BJP. This had happened through "broader representation in politics and in leadership positions and in civil society of people... who are much more confident about their culture, about their language about their beliefs. These are people who are less from the English-speaking world, less connected to other global centres". Mr Jaishankar says there's nothing to be concerned about as there is no problem, and this set of people he is referring to are "judged politically harshly and it is often used to create a certain narrative".

His nuanced societal answer is that the BJP government doesn't discriminate, Mr Jaishankar says, as they gave extra rations to people in the pandem-

ic and put money in people's Jan Dhan accounts without separating them by religion.

We should perhaps be thankful to Mr Jaishankar that India so far hasn't decided to give entitlements to the poor based on religion. But while we are thankful, we should also note Mr Jaishankar didn't actually answer what was asked. Gen. McMaster's question was framed around the word Hindutva and its policies. What are they? They are the introduction of religion into citizenship. The United Nations and the European Union and members of the US Congress expressed disappointment and alarm over India's Citizenship Amendment Act.

The US International Commission on Religious Freedom report for 2021 identified laws in India that criminalise conversion, especially of women to Islam. These laws are the BJP's Uttarakhand Freedom of Religion Act 2018, Himachal Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act 2019, Madhya Pradesh Dharma Swatantrya Adhyadesh 2020, Uttar Pradesh Vidhi Viruddh Dharma Samparivartan Pratishedh Adhyadesh 2020 and Gujarat Freedom of Religion (Amendment) Act 2021. The USCIRF report (which recommends sanctions

against India) says while these laws 'target inter-faith marriage in particular, several other states prohibit conversion based on vague criteria, including force, inducement, allurement, coercion, fraud, or misrepresentation. These anti-conversion laws are often the basis for false accusations, harassment, and violence against non-Hindus that occur with impunity. In 2020, for example, mobs — fuelled by false accusations of forced conversions — attacked Christians, destroyed churches, and disrupted religious worship services'.

India under Narendra Modi has spent a lot of energy in drafting laws that go after minorities. The Gujarat Animal Preservation (Amendment) Bill 2017 punishes cow slaughter, that is ostensibly an economic crime, with life in jail. No other economic crime carries a life sentence. More than half of all arrests under the National Security Act in Uttar Pradesh in 2020 were for cow slaughter. This is a law that allows preventive detention, meaning the government locks up people without any crime. Muslim men are the only community for whom divorce is not a civil wrong but a criminal one. This is the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act 2019. It criminalises a non-act. Triple

tafaq in one sitting is not lawful in India. If I say talaq to my wife three times, our marriage doesn't end, and it is not a crime. If a Muslim man says it to his wife, their marriage doesn't end, but it is a crime.

India uses a 12-gauge shotgun firing birdshot into protesters in only one state. In no other state in India except Kashmir is the so-called pellet gun used on crowds. It has blinded and wounded thousands, including infants nowhere near the protest.

I could go on, but you get the picture. These are the things that India's friends are concerned about. They are new laws that are the gift to us of Hindutva, which is why Gen. McMaster used that term.

Mr Jaishankar replied to Gen. McMaster without once using the word "Hindutva", and without referring to any of the laws India was getting pulled up for around the world. The reason he ran away from the debate, of course, was that there is no defence. Obfuscation and avoiding the issue was the only way to respond to the accusation, which is a correct one, that India was harming itself and its own people through Hindutva.

The writer is a columnist and a senior journalist

SHORT TAKES

NEW VATICAN LAW CRIMINALISES ABUSE OF ADULTS

Vatican City: Pope Francis has changed church law to explicitly criminalise the sexual abuse of adults by priests who abuse their authority and to say that laypeople who hold church office can be sanctioned for similar sex crimes.

The new provisions, released Tuesday after 14 years of study, were contained in the revised criminal law section of the Vatican's Code of Canon Law, the in-house legal system that covers the 1.3-billion strong Catholic Church.

The most significant changes are contained in two articles, 1395 and 1398, which aim to address major problems and shortcomings in the church's handling of sexual abuse.

TECH PROBLEM ON IRAN FIGHTER JET KILLS TWO PILOTS

Tehran: An Iranian fighter jet on Tuesday developed a technical problem that killed both of the aircraft's pilots, state TV reported.

The report said the incident happened in the country's southwest, in the city of Dezful, 444 kilometres (270 miles) from the capital, Tehran and near the border with Iraq.

The report said an investigation was underway as to what had caused the malfunction of the Iranian air force's F-5 fighter jet. The TV said it happened before takeoff. It did not elaborate. The report, citing an informed source, identified the pilots as Kianoush Basati and Hossein Nami, without providing their rank. Authorities were investigating, it said.

MYANMAR SCRIBE TO SEEK ASYLUM IN SPAIN

Madrid: Myanmar correspondent Mratt Kyaw Thu will arrive in Madrid on Tuesday to ask for asylum after fleeing the military junta in Yangon, said the Spanish news agency EFE, which he worked for.

The 30-year-old correspondent, who will travel to Spain after failing to obtain asylum in Germany, won Kate Webb award in 2017 for his outstanding coverage of the ethnic and religious conflicts in Myanmar.

"Tomorrow he will fly from Frankfurt to Madrid to ask for asylum in Spain," EFE southeast Asia director Ramon Abarca said. "He has spent four weeks in a detention centre," he said. A spokesman for Spain's interior ministry said Mratt's arrival had not been officially registered but would be treated according to international law.

2 THAI PROTEST LEADERS GRANTED BAIL

Bangkok: Two prominent Thai pro-democracy protest leaders were granted bail on Tuesday, weeks after contracting Coronavirus in the kingdom's overcrowded prison system. Activist Panupong "Mike" Jadnok and human rights lawyer Anon Numpa are both facing multiple charges under royal defamation laws.

A Thai criminal court on Tuesday granted them bail, Thai Lawyers for Human Rights said.

They had to post a 2,00,000 baht (\$6,500) bail bond each and are banned from leaving Thailand or becoming involved with further activities that defame the monarchy.

Anon has been in custody for more than 100 days and Panupong for 85.

They are expected to be released from Thammasat University Hospital later on Tuesday.

FLOOD RECEDES IN NEW ZEALAND, LEAVING DEBRIS

Wellington: Floodwaters in New Zealand receded on Tuesday, leaving behind a big mess on many farms in the Canterbury region and damage to a major bridge.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern told reporters the top priority was getting transport links working again, although it was unclear how long it would take to fix the bridge that connects the town of Ashburton to the main highway south. Crews hoped to have an alternate route to the town ready by the end of the day.

Ardern said farmers had been particularly hard hit with lost feed, broken fences and debris spread across their fields. She said that seeing the damage from the air had shown her the scale of what had happened.

Four Pak soldiers killed in terror attacks

In the exchange of fire, four to five terrorists were killed while around eight ultras were also injured

Ugandan minister injured in assassination bid: Govt

Kampala, June 1: Uganda's transport minister, who used to lead the armed forces, was shot Tuesday in an attack which left his daughter and bodyguard dead, a government spokesman said.

The minister, General Edward Katumba Wamala, who was chief of the defece forces between 2013 and 2017, came under fire while driving in Kampala, said government spokesman Chris Baryomunsi.

"There was an attempt on his (Wamala's) life this morning ... His daughter and bodyguard were shot and they died at the scene," Baryomunsi said.

● **TERRORISTS HAD** earlier launched twin attacks on soldiers on May 9, killing three of them and five others wounded in two separate terrorist assaults in Quetta and Turbat.

launched twin attacks on soldiers on May 9, killing three of them and five others wounded in two separate terrorist assaults in Quetta and Turbat, according to an ISPR statement.

— PTI

"General Katumba has been rushed to hospital with bullet wounds and he is receiving treatment, the crime scene has been taken over by the investigators," he added.

"This could be a case of assassination by criminal elements but the investigations will establish the motive and those behind" the attack.

Witnesses to the attack told local television stations that four masked men riding two motorbikes fired scores of bullets at Wamala's vehicle.

Images from the scene showed Wamala's car — an official army vehicle

easily identified by its distinctive military green number plates — riddled with about a dozen bullet holes in the rear and driver side of the vehicle.

Tuesday's shooting is the latest in a series of attempted killings of high-profile targets by motorcycle-riding assassins in Uganda's capital.

In June 2018 Ibrahim Abiriga, a leading politician from the ruling National Resistance Movement party, led by President Yoweri Museveni, was gunned down alongside his bodyguard in similar circumstances.

— AFP

Manhunt in Miami for three shooters

Miami, June 1: A manhunt continued into Memorial Day for three masked suspects who opened fire early Sunday morning outside a Miami banquet hall, killing two men and wounding 21 others, in a shooting authorities said had spread terror and grief through their communities.

That anguish was reinforced Monday by a grieving father who interrupted a news conference just as the Miami-Dade Police Department's director, Alfredo "Freddy" Ramirez III, was decrying the weekend's gun violence and appealing for the community's help in tracking down the shooters. — AP

Gala time for kids



Children play with soap bubbles in the centre of the Ukrainian capital of Kiev during a festive event organised by the police to mark International Children's Day on Tuesday. — AFP

Russian authorities increase pressure on Oppn, arrest one

Moscow, June 1: Russian authorities have ramped up their pressure on dissent ahead of a parliamentary election, arresting one opposition activist and raiding several others' homes. Andrei Pivovarov, the head of the Open Russia movement that dissolved itself last week, was pulled off a plane at St. Petersburg's airport late Monday and was to be taken to Krasnodar in southern Russia Tuesday as part of a criminal probe against him.

Also on Tuesday, police raided a country home of

opposition politician Dmitry Gudkov, a former lawmaker who has aspired to run for parliament in September. At least two of his associates also had their homes searched.

The moves are part of a multi-pronged crackdown on the opposition that is widely seen as part of the authorities' efforts to prevent any opposition groups from mounting a challenge to the main Kremlin-backed United Russia party in September's parliamentary election.

United Russia's popularity has waned amid the

country's economic slowdown. Last week, Pivovarov announced that Open Russia was shutting down to protect its members from prosecution after the authorities had designated it as "undesirable."

The government already has outlawed more than 30 groups using a 2015 law that made membership in "undesirable" organisations a criminal offence.

Another bill now making its way through parliament tightens punishment for their members. Open Russia was financed by tycoon Mikhail Khodorko-

vsky, who moved to London after spending 10 years in prison in Russia on charges widely seen as political revenge for challenging President Vladimir Putin's rule.

In March, police briefly detained about 200 participants of a forum of members of municipal councils that Open Russia helped organise. Putin's most determined political foe, Alexei Navalny, was arrested in January upon his return from Germany, where he had spent five months recovering from a nerve agent poisoning. — AP

11 suspected ultras nabbed in Indonesia

Jakarta, June 1: Indonesian police said Monday they have arrested 11 suspected Islamic militants accused of plotting attacks at several Christian churches in easternmost Papua province.

On Friday, the elite counterterrorism squad arrested 10 suspects in several raids in Papua's Merauke district after receiving information about planned attacks in the province, a predominantly Christian region in Muslim-majority Indonesia, Merauke police chief Untung Sangaji said.

The arrests led police to another suspect who was

detained Sunday, and led them to seize items from various locations including chemicals for explosives, modified air guns able to fire real bullets, jihadist books and documents on planned attacks, he said.

Sangaji said those arrested are suspected of being members of Jemaah Anshorut Daulah, which has pledged allegiance to the Islamic State group and carried out a series of suicide bombings in Indonesia. "They allegedly planned to attack churches in several places in Merauke," Sangaji said.

— AP

8 jihadists ‘neutralised’ in Burkina army operation

Ouagadougou, June 1: Burkinabe soldiers have "neutralised" eight jihadists and captured three in an ongoing operation in the north and east of the poor West African state, the army said Tuesday.

Five were "neutralised" — the usual term for killed — by national soldiers and troops of the Burkinabe battalion of the G5 Sahel force on Friday near the

northern town of Tasmaka, the army chief of staff said in a statement, describing the operation as an "offensive reconnaissance mission".

"Three suspects were apprehended and taken to the gendarmerie for questioning," the statement said, adding that weapons and materiel were seized.

On Thursday, following an attack on civilians in

eastern Tialbonga, two assailants were killed during a search and sweep operation, it said. The unit killed another jihadist following an attack on army reservists in northern Gashole, the statement said.

The Burkina Faso army launched an operation in the north on May 5 named Houne which is expected to last more than a month.

— AFP

FRENCH TROOPS MAY LEAVE MALI: MACRON

Paris, June 1: French President Emmanuel Macron on Monday suggested France will pull troops from Mali if the country's institutional instability persists and inhibits the fight against Islamic extremists.

Macron told a news conference that "our priority in Mali is the fight against terrorism and the presence of our forces on the ground is not enough in this fight. It also requires the strengthening of stable and legitimate institutions."

France has more than 5,000 troops in Africa's Sahel region. Macron's comments come a day after West African leaders suspended Mali from their regional bloc, the Economic Community of West African States, or ECOWAS, over what they said amounted to a coup last week.

ECOWAS called for a new civilian prime minister to be nominated immediately, a new inclusive government to be formed and the 18-month transition of power leading to February 2022 elections to be carried out, saying a monitoring mechanism will be put in place to assure this.

"Neither France nor its partners are committed to getting involved (in Mali) if the ECOWAS demands are not respected," Macron said.

Germany, which has several hundred soldiers taking part in the UN stabilisation and European Union training missions in Mali, sees the need to continue those deployments, Chancellor Angela Merkel said in the joint news conference with Macron via videoconference.

She added, however, that there were "red lines" including the need to hold elections and for there to be no contact with Islamist forces, including by Mali's current president. She and Macron had agreed to have a "very, very close exchange" about developments in Mali and "if there is a situation (...) in which we see red lines are crossed, then we will coordinate our actions closely." A power vacuum amid a 2012 coup d'etat unleashed years of chaos in Mali and allowed Islamic extremists to seize control of northern towns.

Ultimately, a French-led military operation ousted the jihadists from strongholds in 2013, but they have regrouped and since expanded their reach.

— AP

RESIDENTS' TRAUMA

Owners flock to vet Qaddoura's clinic since May 21 ceasefire with Israel

In Gaza, Palestinians tend to shell-shocked pets

Gaza City, Palestinian Territories, June 1: A smashed goldfish bowl, panicked birds in a cage, scores of animals needing treatment. The loss or injury of treasured pets has added to the grief and trauma of Gaza residents after last month's deadly conflict.

Neriman, a nine-year-old Palestinian girl, clutched a glass jar holding her goldfish Hoor, delighted it had survived after her other one, Hooriya, died in an Israeli air strike in Gaza

City. In the latest war, Israeli strikes on Gaza killed 254 Palestinians, including 66 children, as well as some fighters, authorities there say.

Fire by Palestinian militants claimed 12 lives in Israel, including one child, a teenager and an Israeli soldier.

Pets also suffered, as well as the children who owned them.

"I was so sad that Hooriya died and I cried when I buried her in the field," said Neriman, of

her first fish, whose name meant "Mermaid" in Arabic.

"But I was so happy that Hoor had survived," she added of her second fish.

At an animal clinic in Gaza City, Amani Abu Shaaban held a fluffy cat to her chest as they waited to see a vet.

"My cat has been very scared since the war. She refuses to eat, and her hair is falling out," she said.

"Even the sound of a mobile phone ringing freaks her out."

Nearby, vet Mutasem Qaddoura examined two cats, one after the other.

One needed an operation for a broken leg, the other was dehydrated and malnourished.

Dozens of pets owners have flocked to his clinic since Gaza's May 21 ceasefire though supplies to treat them are scarce.

"The state of veterinary medicine is disastrous in Gaza," Qaddoura said.

"We use X-ray machines intended for humans and platinum screws meant to

fix children's bones to treat the animals."

Neriman and her family had been forced to flee their home on May 13, after an Israeli officer warned neighbours of an imminent strike on a nearby bank.

In the panic she left behind her fish, as well as two parakeets, Alloosh and Malloosh, given to her by her father for her sixth birthday.

But soon after, she started worrying.

"I just had to go home

with my father to get them," she said.

When they returned, she found a special outfit she had laid out on her bed for the Eid holidays covered in rubble, the bed collapsed and the windows blown in. "I heard Alloosh and Malloosh chirping under the rubble, and I found the fish bowl broken," she said.

Hooriya had died, but they saved Hoor, a scene shown in a video which has since gone viral on social media.

— AFP



quick BITES

| INDICATORS | | % |
|------------------------|------------|-------|
| Sensex | 51,934.88 | 0.00 |
| Nifty 50 | 15,574.90 | -0.05 |
| S&P 500* | 4,203.77 | -0.01 |
| Dollar (₹) | 72.90 | 0.38 |
| Pound Sterling (₹) | 103.37 | 0.42 |
| Euro (₹) | 89.18 | 0.77 |
| Gold (10gm)* (₹) | 48,892.285 | 0.58 |
| Brent crude (\$/bbl)* | 70.18 | 1.24 |
| IN 10-Yr bond yield | 6.025 | 0.05 |
| US 10-Yr T-bill yield* | 1.632 | 0.039 |

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Move to exempt electric vehicles from RC fees

The ministry of road transport and highways has issued a draft notification proposing to exempt battery-operated vehicles (BOV) from payment of fee for issue or renewal of registration certificate (RC). The ministry said comments from the public have been sought within 30 days. "The ministry...proposing to exempt BOV from payment of fees for the purpose of issue or renewal of RC and assignment of new registration mark," it said.

Curbs on export of amphotericin-B injections



The government imposed curbs on export of amphotericin-B injections that are used for treatment of mucormycosis or black fungus infections. By a notification issued by the Directorate General of Foreign Trade, export of the injections have been put in the restricted category. This means that an exporter would need permission or licence from the directorate for its outbound shipments.

Renault Triber gets 4-star adult safety rating

Renault India's seven-seater model Triber has received a four-star safety rating for adult occupants, vehicle safety group Global NCAP said. The model has achieved a four-star rating for adult occupants and three stars for child occupants as per the Global NCAP's latest round of crash tests. Vehicles are rated from zero to five based on their safety features and automobiles with a higher rating are considered safer for occupants.

Eli Lilly India gets nod for antibody combination

Eli Lilly and Company India said it has received permission for emergency use of its antibody drugs combination in the country. The company has received permission for restricted emergency use of its monoclonal antibody drugs, bamlanivimab 700 mg and etesevimab 1400 mg, used together for the treatment of patients with mild to moderate Covid-19, Eli Lilly said in a statement.

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■ Reversal of stamp duty relief affect sales Mumbai property deals take bad hit

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, JUNE 1

The Metropolitan Region (MMR) recorded a sharp drop in property sale transactions in April-May 2021 over the Covid-19 second wave and the Maharashtra government's decision to discontinue the stamp duty waiver on property registrations from April 2021.

Sale transactions in April and May came down to Rs 10,979 crore and Rs 22,507 crore, respectively, against Rs 44,167 crore in March 2021.

The property sale transactions registered in MMR in February and January 2021 were Rs 21,696 crore and Rs 21,484 crore, respectively.

As per data from the Inspector General of Registrations-Department of Registrations & Stamps Maharashtra, as on May 30, 2021, the stamp duty collection in MMR for the month was Rs 417 crore, as compared to Rs 725 crore in April 2021.

The stamp duty collection in MMR for the months of March, February and January 2021 were Rs 1,365 crore, Rs 648 crore and Rs 570 crore, respectively.

"We have started witnessing a 50 per cent dip in property sales after the Maharashtra government restored stamp duty back to 5 per cent in Mumbai and 6 per cent in the rest of Maharashtra from April 2021. The sales regis-

CONSTRUCTION TO RESUME BY MID-JUNE: ASSOCHAM

New Delhi, June 1: With several states started easing Covid-related restrictions, the employment-intensive construction industry should witness resumption in operations by the middle of June, though at a curtailed level, industry chamber Assocham said on Tuesday. The chamber said it would take about two weeks for the contractors to put together again



the material and manpower at the sites after the disruptions of about 40 days in major states like Maharashtra, UP, Rajasthan, Bihar and Haryana, among others.

The major challenge is bringing back the construction workers, Assochan said, adding, fFast vaccination of the labour force would be a big morale booster for them and their families. —PTI

tered in the month of April & May are due to the overflow of registrations from the previous quarter where many homebuyers took advantage of the stamp duty benefit before the March deadline and registered their properties later," said Ashok Mohanani, president, Naredco Maharashtra.

"Due to the impact of the second wave of Covid-19 and the Maharashtra government's decision to discontinue the stamp duty waiver on property registrations from April 2021, there has been a decline in the property sales in the months of April and May 2021," real estate experts said.

"The second wave which has been more deadly than the first wave made the homebuyers more cautious to save money for emergencies rather than

investing in properties. Amid the sudden surge in Covid cases and the various curbs due to the lockdown in the state, the sector faced a gradual slowdown, which made it extremely difficult to sustain the momentum...the homebuyers took advantage of the stamp duty benefit before the March deadline," said Pritam Chivukula, co-founder & director, Tridhaa Realty.

"For the second consecutive month in a row, the real estate sector faced a dip in sales due to the second wave of the pandemic. Even the festive occasions of Gudi Padwa and Akshaya Tritiya saw buyers shying away from auspicious purchases due to the surge in Covid-19 cases," Ram Naik, executive director, The Guardians Real Estate Advisory.

Guidelines for pharma PLI issued

New Delhi, June 1: The government on Tuesday issued operational guidelines for the production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme for the pharmaceutical industry.

The Department of Pharmaceuticals has notified the 'Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme for Pharmaceuticals, for which the approved outlay is Rs 15,000 crore, the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilisers said in a statement.

"The scheme envisages to create global champions out of India who has the potential to grow in size and scale using cutting edge technology and thereby penetrate the global value chains."

The scheme is now open to applications from the industry, the ministry said.

The applications are invited in the three groups, based on the global manufacturing revenue of FY20 of the applicants. A special carve-out for MSMEs has been kept under the scheme. The application window is for 60 days starting from June 2 to July 31, 2021.

"The products covered under the scheme are formulations, biopharmaceuticals, active pharmaceutical ingredients, key starting material, drug intermediates, in-vitro diagnostic medical devices, etc," it added.

A maximum of 55 applicants will be selected. An applicant, via a single application, can apply for more than one product. —PTI

Nestle working to update nutrition, health strategy

New Delhi, June 1: Swiss FMCG major Nestle SA said it is looking across its entire portfolio to increase the nutrient profile of its products, following international media reports that 60 per cent of the company's mainstream food and drinks portfolio failed to meet a "recognised definition of health" and nutrition.

Nestle is working on a company-wide project to update its nutrition and health strategy. It is looking at its entire portfolio to ensure that its products are helping meet their nutritional needs and supporting a balanced diet, a Nestle SA spokesperson said.

On Monday, *Financial Times* reported that the majority of Nestle's mainstream food and drinks portfolio failed to meet recognised standards of health and nutrition. "The world's largest food company, Nestle, has



acknowledged that more than 60 per cent of its mainstream food and drinks products do not meet a "recognised definition of health and that some of our categories and products will never be healthy' no matter how much we renovate", the *Financial Times* report said quoting a Nestle document.

A presentation circulated among top executives this year, seen by the *Financial Times*, said that only 37 per cent of Nestle's food and beverages by revenues, excluding products such as pet

food and specialised medical nutrition, achieve a rating above 3.5 under Australia's health star rating system.

"Within its overall food and drink portfolio, about 70 per cent of Nestle's food products failed to meet that threshold, the presentation said, along with 96 per cent of beverages—excluding pure coffee—and 99 per cent of Nestle's confectionery and ice cream portfolio," the media report noted.

While issuing a global statement, Nestle—maker of KitKat, Maggi and Nescafe—said it is working on a company-wide project to update its nutrition and health strategy.

"We are looking at our entire portfolio across the different phases of people's lives to ensure our products are helping meet their nutritional needs and supporting a balanced diet," he said. —PTI

Lending to MSMEs up 3% in FY21

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, JUNE 1

Credit offtake by micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) increased by 3 per cent in the last fiscal year (FY21) against a marginal de-growth in FY20. However, the second Covid wave has hit incremental credit growth in April this year.

At Rs 12.43 lakh crore at the end of FY21, the total bank credit outstanding to MSMEs grew 3.19 per cent. At the end of the previous

fiscal, the outstanding had degrown 0.21 per cent.

While micro and small enterprises (MSEs) registered a growth of 4.22 per cent in credit offtake in FY21, outstanding by medium enterprises grew 5.14 per cent. The manufacturing sector recorded a growth of 3.07 per cent in FY21 against a degrowth of 6.15 per cent in the previous year. Services bettered growth from 3.89 per cent in FY20 to 4.83 per cent in FY21.

Some of the key policy

measures provided by the government during the pandemic led to the growth in bank credit. This includes the Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme.

However, since the second wave of the pandemic started hitting industries, there has been a decline of bank credit.

In April 2021, incremental bank credit to the MSME sector fell by 3.2 per cent compared with a negative growth of 0.2 per cent in April 2020.

MANUFACTURING PMI SLIPS IN MAY

MADHUSUDAN SAHOO NEW DELHI, JUNE 1

With the Covid second wave and subsequent restrictions across many states, India's manufacturing activity slipped in May, India witnessed the loss of growth momentum last month due to the pandemic's negative impact on demand, slowest rise of new work orders and job losses, a private sector survey showed on Tuesday.

According to the monthly IHS Markit India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index survey, manufacturing PMI stood at a ten-month low of 50.8 in May, down from 55.5 in the previous month of April. "Although the health of the Indian manufacturing sector continued to improve in May, the latest results showed a significant loss of growth momentum," the survey showed.

Pollyanna De Lima, economics associate director at IHS Markit, said, "The Indian manufacturing sector is showing increasing signs of strain as the Covid-19 crisis intensifies. Key gauges of current sales, production and input buying weakened noticeably in May."

Moderate impact of 2nd wave seen

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, JUNE 1

The impact of the second wave of pandemic on different sectors will be largely moderate compared to the first wave last year, says Brickwork Ratings.

Engineering goods, automobiles and ancillaries, BFSI and media and entertainment, which were in the "high impact" category in the first wave are now in the "moderate" category.

Partial opening of economic activities, declining

interest rates and a pick-up in execution are helping engineering goods. As for automobiles, demand revival over the low base of last year, robust delivery channels and pent-up demand might be supportive. Revival in the collection cycle will support BFSI. Localised and less stringent restrictions allow a slight scope of growth for media.

However, hotels and tourism, gems & jewellery and transportation will remain highly impacted

due to restricted mobility and lower disposable incomes.

Textile and accessories, metal & metal products, real estate, infrastructure, construction & construction materials, chemicals & chemical products, power and consumer durables continue to be moderately impacted as last year.

IT and ITes will have a low impact compared to a moderate impact in the first wave due to higher demand and better economic prospects in the US.

MICHAEL GONSALVES PUNE, JUNE 1

The second Covid-19 wave has brought back pain for India's automakers as their sales slumped over the preceding month on fresh lockdowns in several states and companies suspending manufacturing.

Comparisons between last month and May 2020 are not comparable as both months saw disruptions in production. The national lockdown last year had only begun being eased in a phased manner in May,

therefore, sales comparison is made to April 21 to gauge the market trend.

Vehicle sales at Maruti Suzuki, Hyundai, Tata Motors, Kia, Mahindra and Mahindra, Honda Cars, Toyota Kirloskar Motor, and MG Motor fell sharply in May amid the pandemic, which hit the rural market hard this time round.

Maruti Suzuki on Tuesday reported a 71 per cent decline in total sales to 46,555 units in May as compared to 1,59,691 units in April. The auto major had also shut production from

May 1 through May 16 so as to divert oxygen from industrial use for medical purposes.

Sales at Hyundai dipped to 49 per cent at 25,001 units last month against 49,002 units in April.

The passenger vehicle sales at Tata Motors declined 40 per cent to 15,181 units in May, down from 25,095 units in April this year.

Sales at Kia India clocked 11,050 units, making it the 4th most sold car brand last month. It had sold 16,111 units in April 2021.

Investors cheer after RBI clarifies crypto trading isn't banned

SUVASHREE GHOSH JUNE 1

The Reserve Bank of India's clarification that cryptocurrency trading isn't banned in the country is a welcome relief for a community facing push-back from traditional lenders needed to help settle these deals.

The regulator late on Monday told banks not to cite a 2018 central bank circular as a reason to hinder crypto trades, given the Supreme Court has since squashed the order. Banks must continue with other routine due diligence measures on the deals, the central bank said.

The RBI order follows local media reports that financial firms, including SBI Cards & Payment Services Ltd, one of India's biggest credit card issuers, and the nation's largest private-sector bank, HDFC Bank, had cautioned cus-

tomers against dealing in virtual currencies. Indian authorities have repeatedly expressed concern that crypto assets could be used for criminal activity such as money laundering and funding terrorism.

"Investing in crypto has always been 100 per cent legal in India and the new RBI circular clearly confirms the right to do business with crypto firms," said Avinash Shekhar, co-chief executive officer at ZebPay, India's oldest crypto exchange. He added that the clarification would attract more investors to the virtual currencies.

The RBI's broader concerns and banks' worries around money laundering should help to spur regulations and make the industry safer and stronger, said Sumit Gupta, CEO and co-founder of crypto exchange CoinDCX.

—Bloomberg

TACKLING | EMISSIONS

Dairy firms are under pressure to clean up their supply chains

Now, a cow mask that traps methane burps

AGNIESZKA DE SOUSA JUNE 1

Agriculture giant Cargill Inc will start selling methane-absorbing wearable devices for cows, putting its support behind an experimental technology that could help the industry cut greenhouse gas emissions.

The mask-like accessory was developed by UK startup Zelp Ltd, which claims it can reduce methane emissions by more than half. Cargill said on Tuesday it expects to start offering the devices to European dairy farmers in 2022. The companies haven't set a price yet, but Zelp says an annual subscription fee may start at about \$80 a cow.

Tackling methane emissions from livestock is one of the most critical-and most difficult-climate issues for meat and dairy companies that are under increasing



pressure to clean up their supply chains. Having access to Cargill's vast customer network could help Zelp secure demand as it prepares to roll out a product that's still under development.

"Cargill has an impressive reach across dairy farms in Europe," said Zelp chief executive officer Francisco Norris. "They are uniquely positioned to distribute our technology to a large number

of clients, both farmers and dairy companies, maximising the roll-out from the very first year we hit the market."

Some 95 per cent of methane released by cows comes out as burps and through the nose. The gas traps 80 times more heat than carbon dioxide in its first 25 years in the atmosphere. Zelp's wearables, placed above cows' mouths, act a bit like the catalytic converter on a car. A set of fans powered by solar-charged batteries sucks up the burps and traps them in a chamber with a methane-absorbing filter. Once the filter is saturated, a chemical reaction turns the methane into CO2, which is then released.

Zelp is working on miniaturising the technology and optimising the energy inside the device, Norris said. It's in talks with a number of potential manufacturing partners and aims to be ready

for mass production at the end of the year. It aims to produce 50,000 units in the first year and as many as 200,000 units the next. The company is close to completing its next financing round, according to Norris.

Cargill was attracted to the masks because they can be used in combination with other solutions, said Sander van Zijderderveld, the company's ruminant strategic marketing and technology lead for West Europe. Several food suppliers are testing or have begun using feed additives which inhibit microbes in cows' stomachs to help them produce less methane.

"The nice thing about Zelp is that it could complement a cow that is already receiving feed additives to reduce methane emissions," he said. "It could still capture the methane that is coming out. We could reduce it even more." —Bloomberg



SUTTINEE YUVEJWATTANA JUNE 1

Thailand's government approved a set of economic stimulus measures worth 140 billion baht (\$4.5 billion) to counter the impact from the nation's biggest coronavirus outbreak yet.

The measures—which include cash handouts to welfare-card holders and special groups, co-payments and cash rebates—are expected to be implemented from July, Anucha Burapachaisri, a government spokesman, said on Tuesday.

Thailand's economy is facing strong headwinds from the country's latest Covid outbreak, which has totalled more than 130,000 cases since it began in Bangkok nightlife venues in April.

The latest aid is on top of an 85.5-billion baht package last month that extended two cash handout programmes implemented. The two latest packages will be financed by borrowing under a 1 trillion baht programme approved in April 2020, Anucha said.

The package announced Tuesday includes: 93 billion baht in co-payments for consumer purchases, targeted at 31 million people; 16.4 billion baht in cash handouts to 13.65 million holders of welfare cards; 3 billion baht cash handout to 2.5 million people considered members of special groups, such as the disabled; A 28 billion baht cash-back measure aimed at 4 million high-income people.

The new outbreak has weakened prospects for an economic recovery, with Thailand's central bank and the economic-planning agency warning of risks to their growth forecasts. —Bloomberg

SHORT TAKES

Coach booked for raping teen

Jaipur: A lawn tennis coach at a sports training centre in Jaipur allegedly raped a 17-year-old player on the pretext of selecting her for a domestic tournament, police said on Tuesday. According to a complaint filed by the girl, coach Gaurang Nalwaya would call her to the Sawai Man Singh Stadium for training and sexually assault her. On the latest instance, the coach allegedly raped her on the pretext of selecting her for a tournament in Udaipur, the police said.

"A case has been lodged against the coach. Investigation into the complaint has been initiated and a search is on for the accused," Jyoti Nagar police station SHO Saroj Dhayal said. — *PTI*

Shafali maintains top spot in T20s

Dubai: Indian teen sensation Shafali Verma maintained her pole position among T20 batters while Kathryn Bryce became the first woman from Scotland to make it into the top-10 in the latest ICC rankings published on Tuesday. Shafali is holding onto her top rank with 776 ranking points well ahead of Australians Beth Mooney (744) and Meg Lanning (709). India's T20 vice-captain Smriti Mandhana is ranked fourth while Jimimah Rodrigues is the third Indian batter at ninth position. India also has two bowlers in the top-10 list with off-spinner Deepti Sharma at sixth and left-arm spinner Radha Yadav just a notch below at seventh. — *PTI*

Kahn to take over Bayern top chair

Berlin: After 30 years in charge of Bayern Munich, Karl-Heinz Rummenigge will step down as chairman at the end of the month and be replaced by former Germany captain Oliver Kahn, the Bundesliga giants confirmed Tuesday. Rummenigge had been due to see out his contract which expires at the end of 2021, but is leaving six months early to meet the end of the financial year on June 30. Rummenigge's departure represents the start of a new era at Bayern with Julian Nagelsmann, 33, also replacing Hansi Flick as head coach going into next season. "It is strategically the most sensible and logical point in time," said Rummenigge, 65, with Kahn, 51, to be Bayern's chairman when the new season starts in August. — *AFP*

Scotland player +ve ahead of Euro

Glasgow: The Scotland team reported their first player testing positive for Covid-19 on Tuesday at a training camp in Spain ahead of the European Championship. The national federation said midfielder John Fleck is self-isolating and will not travel to Portugal for a warm-up game on Wednesday against the Netherlands. "The rest of the squad was retested for Covid-19 and returned negative results," the federation said. UEFA allowed the 24 national teams at Euro 2020 to have three extra players in a 26-man squad to help cover for Covid-19 cases and mandatory isolation or quarantine. — *AP*

Covid positive Vidal in hospital

Santiago: Inter Milan's Chilean midfielder Arturo Vidal is receiving hospital treatment after testing positive for coronavirus, his national team said Monday. The diagnosis means the 34-year-old will miss Thursday's World Cup qualifier between Chile and Argentina. — *AFP*

Live on TV

CRICKET

England vs New Zealand: First Test, Day 1 from 3.30 pm on Sony Six

FOOTBALL

Euro Pre-Tournament Friendlies: England vs Austria on Sony Ten 2; Germany vs Denmark on Sony Six; France vs Wales on Sony Ten 1 from 12.30 am (Thursday)

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OH!SAKA

Osaka reveals 'bouts of depression' after Paris pullout

Paris, June 1: Naomi Osaka withdrew from the French Open on Monday following the bitter fallout from her decision to boycott all media activity at the Grand Slam event, revealing she has "suffered long bouts of depression" and will "take some time away from the court".

"The best thing for the tournament, the other players and my well-being is that I withdraw so that everyone can get back to focusing on the tennis going on in Paris," the world number two wrote on Twitter.

The 23-year-old Japanese star was fined \$15,000 on Sunday and threatened with disqualification after she refused to carry out a mandatory news conference following her first round win.

She claimed on the eve of Roland Garros that such post-match inquests were akin to "kicking people when they are down" and that they had a detrimental effect on her mental health.

"I never wanted to be a distraction and I accept that my timing was not ideal and my message could have been clearer," the four-time Grand Slam title winner said in her statement.

"The truth is I have suffered bouts of depression since the US Open in 2018 and I have had a really hard time coping with that."

She added: "In Paris, I was already feeling vulnerable and anxious so I thought it was better to exercise self-care and skip the press conferences."

"I announced it preempt-



Japan's Naomi Osaka celebrates after defeating Romania's Patricia Maria Tig in the French Open first round match in Paris on Monday. — *AFP*

tively because I do feel like the rules are quite out-dated in parts and I wanted to highlight that.

"I am going to take some time away from the court now."

Osaka said she has also apologised to organisers over the affair.

French Tennis Federation president Gilles Moretton had described her vow of silence as "a phenomenal error".

On Monday, he said in a statement: "We are sorry and sad for Naomi Osaka."

The outcome of Naomi withdrawing from Roland Garros is unfortunate."

HIGHEST EARNING FEMALE ATHLETE

Osaka is the world's highest earning female athlete, making \$37.4 million in 2020.

She burst onto the scene in 2018 with a maiden Slam win at the US Open. She has gone on to win another title in New York as well as two Australian Opens.

Mari Osaka, a former player herself, said her

sister had been struggling to cope in the run-up to Paris. "Naomi mentioned to me before the tournament that a family member had come up to her and remarked that she's bad on clay," Mari wrote on Reddit.

"At every press conference she's told she has a bad record on clay."

"When she lost in Rome, she was not OK mentally. She was completely shattered and I think everyone's remarks and opinions have gotten to her head." — *AFP*

WHAT THEY SAID

The only thing I feel is that I feel for Naomi. I feel like I wish I could give her a hug because I know what it's like.

— SERENA WILLIAMS
Former world No.1

I am so sad about Naomi Osaka. I truly hope she will be ok. As athletes we are taught to take care of our body, and perhaps the mental & emotional aspect gets short shrift. This is about more than doing or not doing a press conference. Good luck Naomi-we are all pulling for you!

— MARTINA NAVRATILLOVA
Tennis legend

We are sorry and sad for Naomi Osaka that she has withdrawn from the tournament.

— GILLES MORETTON
French tennis federation president

Stay strong (love heart emoji). I admire your vulnerability.

— COCO GAUFF
American teen sensation

You shouldn't ever have to make a decision like this-but so damn impressive taking the high road when the powers that be don't protect their own. major respect @naomiosaka.

— STEPHEN CURRY
NBA star

Everyone talks about mental health after someone commits suicide but ridicules everyone who tries to protect their mental health. You are strong for standing up and speaking out and even giving up the game you love to protect your mental health. I salute you young queen.

— CARLOS BRATHWAITE
West Indies cricketer

The challenge today is to convince people of the value of truth, honesty, compassion and a concern for others.

— VICTORIA AZARENKA
Two-time Grand Slam champion

Mental Health is nothing to criticize. Nothing to joke about. Pls take your mental health seriously. Without my support system, I truly believe I would not be here today. Here for you @naomiosaka.

— MARDY FISH
Former top-10 ATP player

I respect her decision. I respect what she does. I can't really comment on that. I feel like everyone's dealing with their own stuff."

— SOFIA KENIN
American fourth seed

Marin pulls out of Tokyo Olympics

Madrid, June 1: Spain's Carolina Marin, the women's Olympic badminton singles champion, will miss the Tokyo Games after tearing the anterior cruciate ligament and meniscus in her left knee.

The 27-year-old will undergo surgery in the coming days after suffering the injury during a training session last week.

"This is another blow that I have to deal with, but I will certainly be back," she wrote on social media.

The three-time world champion also ruptured the ACL in her right knee in 2019 and missed that year's world championships.

Marin was crowned European champion for the fifth consecutive time last month and was viewed as one of Spain's leading medal candidates in Japan. She beat India's PV Sindhu in the 2016 Olympic final in Rio.

JAPANESE OLYMPIC ATHLETES GET SHOTS

Japan started vaccinating Tokyo Games-bound athletes on Tuesday, the Japanese Olympic Committee said.

The vaccination of healthy athletes comes as only 2-3% of the general population in Japan has been fully vaccinated.

Japanese Olympic Committee officials said about 200 athletes were vaccinated at a training center on the first day of the rollout.

Japanese Olympic Committee officials did not name any of the athletes. They also restricted coverage of the event, possibly fearing a public backlash.

Japanese Olympic Committee official Mitsugi Ogata said the vaccination of young athletes would



Carolina Marin

not affect distribution to the general population, including the elderly and medical workers.

"Vaccination operations for athletes are conducted in a different organization from those for the nation," Ogata said.

The Tokyo Olympics are to open on July 23. The International Olympic Committee has said being vaccinated is not required for participating in the Olympics. However, the IOC has encouraged all athletes to be vaccinated.

IOC President Thomas Bach has said he believes more than 80% of the residents of the Olympic Village in Tokyo will be vaccinated.

Olympic officials say having athletes vaccinated will make the Japanese public feel increased safety in regard to holding the Olympics.

More than 15,000 Olympic and Paralympic athletes from more than 200 nations and territories are expected to enter Japan, in addition to tens of thousands of judges, officials, media and broadcasters.

— *Agencies*

LAKRA DESPERATE TO BE IN INDIAN TEAM FOR GAMES

Bengaluru, June 1: He is still unsure about his place in the Indian hockey team but defender Birendra Lakra is determined to make the cut for the Tokyo Games and make it count.

Lakra, who has played 196 matches for the Indian team, missed out on the Rio Olympics due to a knee injury.

"It was really hard time for me in 2016 when I missed out on the chance of representing India in the Rio Olympics. After my recovery, my sole goal has been to ensure that I am fit and absolutely ready for the Tokyo Olympics," Lakra was quoted as saying in a media release.

"I have worked very hard on my game in the last five years, and I am very determined to make it to the Indian squad for the Tokyo Olympics. I am ensuring that I am playing at my absolute best during practice and giving my 100 percent in every training session," Lakra added.

The defender asserted that Indian team's bench strength is now such that no player can take his place for granted in the side. — *PTI*

India gets time to decide on T20WC

New Delhi, June 1: The International Cricket Council has given BCCI time till June 28 to take a call on whether it would host the marquee T20 World Cup in India amid the threat posed by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The ICC Board met virtually on Tuesday with India being represented by BCCI president Sourav Ganguly and secretary Jay Shah. The T20 World Cup is due in October-November this year.

"Yes, the ICC board has agreed to BCCI's request and they will have time till June 28 to decide on hosting the T20 World Cup in India. They will come back to the board next month with a concrete plan," a source close to the ICC Board said on Tuesday.

If the BCCI is unable to host the event in India given the looming threat of a third wave of the pandemic, the tournament will shift to the UAE after it gets done with hosting the IPL, which finishes likely on October 10.

BCCI may retain the hosting rights in that scenario. The BCCI is also mulling a couple of more windows in 2022 in case October-November is not feasible in India.

The World Test Championship will continue during the next eight-year cycle between 2023-2031 despite apprehensions raised by ICC chairman

● If the BCCI is unable to host the event in India given the looming threat of a third wave of the pandemic, the tournament will shift to the UAE after it gets done with hosting the IPL.

Greg Barclay during an earlier media interaction with newswire services.

"Yes, there will be four more editions of World Test Championship in the next eight year cycle between 2023-2031. The board believes that World Test Championship has given a context to Test cricket and will help in popularising the traditional format among younger generation," the ICC board member said.

ICC TO EXPAND 50 OVER WORLD CUP

The T20 World Cup will be held every two years during the next eight-year Futures Tours & Programme (FTP) cycle while the 50-over event will be a 14-team affair from the 2027 edition, the game's governing body ICC said on Tuesday.

Also as per earlier report, the World Test Championship will have four editions in the next cycle apart from two Champions Trophy. — *PTI*

Barty survives scare

Paris, June 1: World number one Ashleigh Barty survived a French Open opening round scare on Tuesday.

Top seed Barty marked her return to Paris for the first time since her 2019 title triumph by beating American left-hander Bernarda Pera 6-4, 3-6, 6-2.

Barty, 25, skipped the defence of her title in 2020 due to the pandemic but this year has won trophies at the Yarra Valley Classic, Miami and on clay in Stuttgart in the run-up to the year's second Grand Slam at Roland Garros.

Ironically, another Roland Garros press conference led Tuesday to the injury-enforced withdrawal of two-time

Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova.

The Czech 11th seed, a Roland Garros semi-finalist in 2012 and 2020, had saved a match point in her first-round win over Belgian qualifier Greet Minnen on Sunday. Fifth seed Elina Svitolina recovered from a 2-5 second set deficit to beat French teenager Oceane Babel 6-2, 7-5.

BOPANNA ADVANCES

India's Rohan Bopanna and Franko Skugor of Croatia sailed into the men's doubles second round with a 6-4 6-2 win over Georgia's Nikoloz Basilashvili and Andre Begemann of Germany.

— *Agencies*

Boult wants NZ to 'create history'

Mount Maunganui (New Zealand), June 1: The qualification process for the World Test Championship final is still a bit of enigma for Trent Boult but the New Zealand pace spearhead is confident that his team is capable of creating history when it clashes with India for the inaugural title.

The WTC final is scheduled to be held in Southampton from June 18-22.

"The way the group has travelled and performed around New Zealand and the world, the boys are in a great place to hopefully create a bit of history," Boult said at the Bay Oval.

"Everything is feeling good with what lies ahead, a big stage for the World Test Championship final, and hopefully I can get over there and be part of that second Test (against England) as well," he added.

"I've taken a while to understand the process with qualifying, how everything works with the points, still think no one knows how that actually works, but to get into that final the excitement is ramping up now," Boult said.

Talking about the Dukes ball, which will be used for the WTC final, the 31-year-old said: "I haven't had too much experience with it, played a handful of Tests over in England. It reacts a lot differently, then you have to weigh in



all these different venues."

"I'm sure the boys are very excited to get it in their hands and see it move around. Hopefully we can entertain you a little bit over the next few while."

Boult, who has snared 281 wickets in 71 Test, will be unavailable for the first Test as he has opted to spend time with his family after the suspension of the IPL mid-season. However, the seamer, who will leave for the UK on Thursday, is hoping to be a part of the second fixture.

"Once I step foot in the UK, get that chance to smell the English fresh air and see the ball move around a little bit I'll definitely be excited," he added. — *PTI*

FAMILIES CAN ACCOMPANY PLAYERS ON ENGLISH TOUR

New Delhi, June 1: The families of players and support staff of both the Indian men's and women's cricket teams will be allowed to accompany them during their lengthy tour of England this month, a senior BCCI source revealed on Tuesday.

The BCCI had put in a request that the players be allowed the company of their loved ones given that they have to spend a considerable amount of time in a bio-secure bubble because of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, it is learnt that none of the BCCI office-bearers, including president Sourav Ganguly and secretary Jay Shah will be present for the World Test Championship final against New Zealand in Southampton from June 18 to 22, due to the strict quarantine rules of the country.

"Yes, it's good news that players will have their families during the tour of UK. Ditto for the women's team who can also have their families around. These are times when mental well-being of players is paramount," the source said. — *PTI*

ENGLAND, NZ FACE SELECTION DILEMMA AHEAD OF OPENER

London, June 1: England and New Zealand head into Wednesday's first Test at Lord's with both sides face some potentially awkward selection decisions.

The hosts, in a match that marks the return of spectators to international cricket in England after their home games were played behind closed doors last year because of the coronavirus pandemic, will field an attack missing injured World Cup winners Ben Stokes (finger) and Jofra Archer (elbow).

England, amid the strains of 'bubble' cricket and a congested schedule that continues after the two New Zealand Tests with a series at home to India and an Ashes tour of Australia later this year, have been reluctant recently to deploy James Anderson and Stuart Broad, their most successful all-time Test bowlers, in the same XI. They've also rested several players following their stints in the Indian Premier League, including wicketkeepers Jos Buttler and Jonny Bairstow.

New Zealand can be sure about the majority of an XI led by outstanding batsman Kane Williamson.

But they must decide whether Devon Conway, Tom Blundell or Will Young, in good form for English county side Durham, opens alongside Tom Latham in New Zealand's first match at Lord's since the 2019 World Cup final. — *AFP*