

# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

CHENNAI | WEDNESDAY 2 | JUNE 2021

## WEATHER



**Max:** 34°C  
**Min:** 24°C  
**Rainfall:** 3%

## ASTROGUIDE

**Pilava:** Vaikasi 19  
**Tithi:** Saphthami  
**Star:** Sathayam  
**Rahukalam:** 12 pm to 1.30 pm  
**Yamagandam:** 7.30 am to 9 noon

### PRAYERS

**Fajar:** 4.23 am  
**Luhar:** 12.11 pm  
**Asar:** 3.30 pm  
**Maghrib:** 6.31 pm  
**Isha:** 7.49 pm

**SUNSET TODAY** 6.32 PM  
**SUNRISE TOMORROW** 5.42 AM  
**MOONRISE TODAY** 12.17 AM  
**MOONSET TOMORROW** 1.03 PM

## CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+1,21,771)	(+2,990)
2,82,95,606	3,34,900

covid19india.org

### STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+26,513)	490
TN: 21,23,029	24,722

### WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

17,16,13,630

### DEATHS

35,67,937

COUNTRIES  
AREAS WITH  
CASES

219

worldometers.info

### Pak buys Raj Kapoor, Dilip Kumar's bungalows

**Islamabad:** Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provincial government on Tuesday approved the purchase of the ancestral homes of legendary Bollywood actors Dilip Kumar and Raj Kapoor in Peshawar for converting them into museums. Peshawar District Commissioner Capt (ret'd) Khalid Mehmud rejected the objections of the owners of both the houses and announced the award and transferred the ownership of both the houses to the archaeological department.

### Arun Kumar Mishra is NHRC chairman

**New Delhi:** President Ram Nath Kovind has formally appointed Justice Arun Kumar Mishra as the chairman of the National Human Rights Commission

### BRICS foreign ministers exchange 'namaste'

**New Delhi:** In a show of solidarity, foreign ministers of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa opted for a collective 'namaste' during the BRICS foreign ministers' meeting on Tuesday. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar chaired the standalone meeting through video conferencing.

## COUNTER

## POINT



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

# Monsoon will be normal in north, south: IMD

**New Delhi, June 1:** The Southwest monsoon is likely to be normal in north and south India, above-normal in central India and below-normal in east and northeast India, the MeT department said on Tuesday.

Releasing its Second Long Range Forecast for Southwest Monsoon 2021, India Meteorological Department (IMD) director-general Mrutunjay Mohapatra said the

monsoon this year is likely to be normal in the country as a whole.

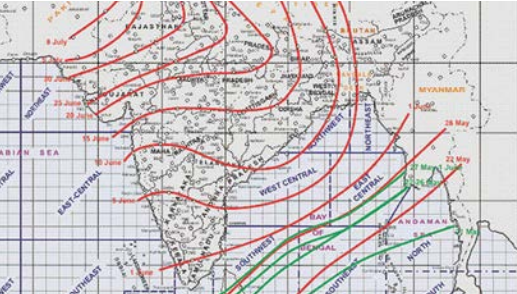
It is likely to be in the range of 96-104 per cent of the Long Period Average (LPA), Dr Mohapatra said.

"Southwest monsoon seasonal (June to September) rainfall over the country as a whole is most likely to be normal (96 to 104 per cent of Long Period Average (LPA)).

"Quantitatively, the monsoon seasonal (June to September) rainfall over the country as a whole is likely to be 101 per cent of the Long Period Average (LPA) with a model error of plus or minus 4 per cent," he said.

The LPA of the season rainfall over the country as a whole for the period 1961-2010 is 88 cm.

— PTI



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## CITY | 2

**Don't insist on Aadhaar card for vaccination: MP**



## WORLD | 5

**Four Pak soldiers killed in terror attacks**

## SPORT | 8

**Badminton star Marin pulls out of Olympics**



# Centre cancels Plus 2 exams; new evaluation criteria soon

■ **Students can take exams for evaluation when Covid situation improves**

VINEETA PANDEY | DC

NEW DELHI, JUNE 1

Putting an end to the suspense on Class 12 Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), the government on Tuesday announced cancellation of the on-line and off-line modes of the examination. The CBSE will now compile Class 12 results as per a "well-defined objective criteria" in a "time-bound manner", the government said following a high-level meeting that was chaired by Prime Minister Mr Narendra Modi.

However, 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 has been taken in the interest of the students as the pandemic has affected the academic calendar and the issue of Board Exams has been causing immense anxiety among students, parents and teachers, "which must be put to an end."

Mr Modi said the Covid-19 situation is a dynamic 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

## TN DECISION ON EXAMS LIKELY TODAY

DC CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI, JUNE 1

The state government is likely to cancel the plus two examinations of the state board in the wake of the Centre doing away with the final examinations for CBSE students.

School education minister Anbil Mahesh Poyamozhi said he would discuss the matter with Chief Minister M.K. Stalin and officials on Wednesday. The minister said on Tuesday he had a rethink on his earlier decision to hold the examinations.

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," Mr Modi said.

Referring to the wide consultative process, the Prime Minister expressed appreciation that a student-friendly decision has been reached after consulting all stakeholders.

The states had urged Centre to either cancel the exams or defer them till the students are vaccinated.

# Half of districts have test positivity rate less than 5, says Centre

DC CORRESPONDENT

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 measures 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 Bhargawa.

He, however, warned states from rushing to open up restrictions.

# Govt says no plan to allow mixing of vax or reducing doses

DC CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI, JUNE 1

The Centre on Tuesday 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, according to Dr Paul.

# SC stays Delhi HC order against IGST on O2 concentrators

**New Delhi, June 1:** The Supreme Court on Tuesday stayed a Delhi High Court order holding as "unconstitutional" the imposition of Integrated Goods and Services Tax (IGST) by the Centre on import of oxygen concentrators by individuals for personal use.

A special bench of Justices D.Y. Chandrachud and M.R. Shah issued notice on the plea and sought response from the petitioner, who filed a PIL before the high court.

"We are staying the operation of the Delhi High Court order till further orders," the bench said. The top court was hearing an appeal filed by Ministry of Finance against the May 21, high court order.

Attorney General K K Venugopal said the GST council will meet on June 8 and deliberate on granting exemption to essential items related to Covid-19, including oxygen concentrators. He said that the high court did not consider that IGST exemption had been already granted to the states and other government agencies on the import of oxygen concentrators.

According to the high court, Article 21 is violated if you impose tax on them, Mr Venugopal said.

# People can break Covid chain: CM

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR, D. SEKAR | DC

CHENNAI, JUNE 1

Chief Minister M.K. Stalin on Tuesday said only the people can break the chain of the Covid infection that spreads from individual to individual as the lockdown could not be imposed always.

Urging the people to adhere to the restrictions and the norms imposed by the government, the Chief Minister, in a video message to the public on Tuesday, said since Coronavirus spreads from person to person, everyone should play safe and also ensure that they did not spread it to others.

Mr Stalin pointed to the drastic reduction in the number of infections after a total lockdown was imposed on May 24 and said that though the government extended the lockdown by another week and the numbers came down further, it cannot be extended forever.

There was an urgent need to come out of the present day tragedies and step into a bright future with renewed hopes, he said, adding that the failure to put a full stop to the pandemic in its first wave had led to the second surge, which was throw-



**Violation of the precautions even by one person can jeopardise the collective efforts to put an end to the spread of the Corona virus.**

**M.K. STALIN**

**Chief Minister**

ing up a challenge to medical infrastructure and the state's finances.

Referring to his visit to the Covid ward at the ESI Hospital in Coimbatore to extend moral support to the patients, the families and the frontline workers of the medical community, he said there were several people who had affectionately warned him not to repeat such an act.

The same alarm raised by the well-wishers should be a common caution guiding the general behavior of the people since a violation of the precautions even by one person can jeopardise the collective efforts to put an end to the spread of virus. ■ **P2**

# Centre trashes Didi claim; targets ex-CS

DC CORRESPONDENTS

KOLKATA/NEW DELHI,

JUNE 1

In a move that may further escalate tensions between the Centre and the Mamata Banerjee-led West Bengal government, the Union home ministry late on Monday evening slapped a showcause notice on 1987-batch IAS officer

Alapan Bandyopadhyay hours before he retired as the state's chief secretary after rejecting a three-month extension.

The notice, under Section 51 of the Disaster Management Act 2005, which is punishable by a prison term of up to two years or a fine, or both, was served to the state's former top bureaucrat as he skipped a review meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on May 28 on the devastation by Cyclone Yaas in the state.

Meanwhile, the Centre claimed that the West Bengal Chief Minister was making "entirely false statements" after she "boycotted" a meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi after



agreeing to attend it.

In a nine-point rejoinder on the events of Friday when she was scheduled to have a review meeting with Mr Modi but left without attending it, the central government sources said the Prime Minister had not given her permission to leave as she claims. The rejoinder pooh-poohed her claim that she was informed of the Prime Minister's schedule lately, saying a meeting to assess cyclone damage could hardly be finalised "before the cyclone comes".

The sources rejected the Chief Minister's claim that she was forced to wait for Mr Modi. "She should have come in advance, as everyone does when the Prime Minister is supposed to land at any airport," it said.

# CAA order: IUML moves SC for stay

PARMOD KUMAR | DC

NEW DELHI, JUNE 2

The Indian Union of Muslim League (IUML) on Tuesday moved the Supreme Court challenging May 28 2021, Union Home Ministry order empowering the collectors of certain districts to grant the Indian citizenship to the Hindu, Sikh, Jain, Buddhist, Christian migrants excluding Muslims from neighbouring countries.

It has contended that the government was going ahead with the grant of citizenship to migrants despite the pendency of its 2019 petition challenging the constitutionality of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act of 2019.

In its petition filed on Tuesday, IUML has described as illegal the Home ministry order to grant citizenship to Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians, but not the Muslims.

IUML urged the top court to call a halt to the grant of citizenship to the migrants till the challenge to the validity of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 is decided by the court.

Seeking the stay of the Home Ministry order, the IUML citing the top court's ruling in a plethora of cases has said that "what cannot be done directly will not be permitted to be done indirectly."

# C'GARH POLICE KILLS 2 NAXALS IN ENCOUNTER

**Raipur, June 1:** Two naxals including a woman were killed in a gun battle with the security forces in Chhattisgarh's Konda-gaon district on Tuesday, a senior police official said. A huge cache of firearms and explosives was also recovered from the site, he said.

The gunfight took place around 12:30 pm in the dense forest near Bhandarpal village when a team of the police's District Reserve Guard was out on an anti-naxal operation, Inspector General of Police (Bastar range) Sundarraaj P said. After the encounter ceased, the bodies of two Maoists, including a woman, clad in uniform, were found at the spot, he said.

— PTI



## OTHER STORIES

## New CGM of BSNL takes charge

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, JUNE 1

G. Muralaitharan, Indian Telecom Service, assumed charge as Chief General Manager, BSNL, Tamil Nadu Circle, Chennai on Tuesday. G. Muralaitharan belongs to the 1986 batch of Indian Telecom Service of the Central Government. Earlier, he served as Principal General Manager, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu Circle from May 2018 to May 2021.

## CM: Infra developed to tackle corona

From P1

Unless the state recovered from the present ravages of the pandemic, the government's plans for the other departments cannot be looked into and executed, he said.

As of now, the three-week old government had developed adequate infrastructure to face the threat of Coronavirus, leading to a situation in which there was no shortage of beds or oxygen, Mr Stalin said.

In fact, beds were empty in hospitals, he said. Besides, three lakh persons were being vaccinated every day and 1.70 lakh RT-PCR tests were being taken daily - both the figures are the highest among all states in the country - he said.

He also elaborated on the relief provided by the government to bring succor to the affected persons mentioning the payment of ₹ 2,000 to each of the families, a move that had won accolades from Nobel laureate Abhijit Banerjee.

## Pondy's daily Covid count below 1,000 for 4th day

**Puducherry, June 1:** Puducherry continued to record less than 1,000 daily cases for the fourth consecutive day with 979 fresh additions on Tuesday, taking the overall tally to 1.05 lakh.

The new cases were identified at the end of examination of 8,540 samples projecting test positivity rate at 11.45 percent.

The fresh infections were spread over Puducherry 746, Karaikal 170, Yanam 29 and Mahe 34.

Director of Health and Family Welfare services S Mohan Kumar said 14 people succumbed to the disease during the last twenty-four hours raising the toll to 1,550.

Five of those who died had no co-morbidities and the age groups of the deceased ranged between 22 and 75 years.

The department has tested 10.58 lakh samples so far and found 9.15 lakh out of them to be negative.

Total active cases so far were 10,709 and 93,173 patients were discharged after recovery.

The Director said the fatality and recovery rates were 1.47 percent and 88.37 percent.

Meanwhile, 34,763 health care workers and 21,296 front line workers have been inoculated so far.

The official said 1.59 lakh people coming under the category of either senior citizens (above sixty years) or those above 45 years with co-morbidities have been vaccinated so far since March 1.

— PTI

## Marriages lost sacrament due to recognition of live-in: HC

J. STALIN | DC  
CHENNAI, JUNE 1

The Madras high court has said, "The present generation must understand that marriage is not a contract, but a sacramental one. Of course, the word 'sacrament' has no meaning after coming into effect of the Domestic Violence Act, 2005, that approves live-in-relationship. Husband and wife must realise that, 'ego' and 'intolerance' are like footwear and should be left out of their house, when they enter the home, else, the child/children will have to face a miserable life".

Justice S.Vaidyanathan made the observation while allowing a petition from a Doctor, challenging an order of the animal husbandry and veterinary services, placing him under suspension on the ground that he is involved

**'Man and wife must realize that ego and intolerance are like footwear and should be left out of their house'**

in a domestic violence issue, on the basis of the complaint lodged by his wife, who is also a doctor.

Setting aside the suspension order, the judge directed the director of animal husbandry and veterinary services, to reinstate the petitioner in service within 15 days.

According to the petitioner, he was placed under suspension on the ground that, he was involved in a domestic violence issue on the basis of the complaint lodged by his wife. The petitioner's wife initiated domestic violence proceedings against the petitioner under the Domestic Violence Act, before the judicial

magistrate, Salem. The petitioner filed a petition before the first additional sub-judge, Salem, seeking divorce on the ground of cruelty and voluntary desertion by his wife, which was accepted by the family court and it has become final. At the time of awaiting verdict, a complaint has been lodged by his wife against him, he added.

The judge said as the family issue has already been dissolved by means of the order dated February 19, 2020, passed by the family court, the question of placing the petitioner under suspension does not arise, more so, when there was a finding of cruelty and voluntary desertion by the wife of the petitioner. It appears that only to harass the petitioner, the present complaint has been lodged by the wife of

the petitioner, based on which, police have initiated action and the animal husbandry and veterinary services department has placed the petitioner under suspension. Whether the petitioner was guilty or not, of the offence, said to have been committed by him, has to be decided by the appropriate forum, as the case has arisen out of domestic issue." In view of the foregoing, this court is of the view that, there is no need to place the petitioner under suspension, which is not warranted. In case, the matter ends in compromise or the petitioner is acquitted of the charges, as the family court has already held that there is cruelty and desertion by the wife, the petitioner will have to be paid by the government, without extracting any work, ", the judge added.

## CSR activities help Covid fight

**ST GOBAIN INDIA** is importing an oxygen generating plant from France to be set up at the Government Medical College Omandur which can take care of 250 patients at a time.

The equipment costing ₹2.5 crore is expected to be functional soon after it is airfreighted from France.

The company is also providing a ₹75 lakh local O2 plant for the IRT Hospital in Perundurai, besides ₹1.25 cr for equipment and gear for district hospitals.

**ASHOK LEYLAND**, leading commercial vehicle manufacturer, committed ₹5 crore towards Covid-19 relief initiatives, handing over ₹3 crore to the CM M.K. Stalin and earmarking ₹2 cr for oxygen generating plant in Hosur Govt Hospital and providing equipment to Stanley College, Chennai.

**M E E N A K S H I MISSION HOSPITAL** has donated oxygen generators worth ₹1.5 crore to the State government, besides ₹25 lakh to the CM Relief Fund, through Dr B. Kannan, Medical Administrator.

A. ARUL PALANI | DC  
CHENNAI, JUNE 1

Demanding the government to blacklist Christy Friedgram group of companies for allegedly involving in irregularities in sale of dal, palm oil and other items to Tamil Nadu Civil Supplies Corporation, a Chennai based NGO demanded the government to initiate criminal action against former minister Kamaraj and officials on charge of colluding with the company.

In a statement on Tuesday, Jayaram Venkatesan, convener, of Arappor Iyakkam, NGO fighting against corruption, said the Christy Friedgram group has been looting the

## Infra boost



HR&CE minister P.K. Sekar Babu and Greater Chennai Commissioner Gagandeep Singh Bedi open around 100 beds with oxygen facility Covid care centre at KMC and hospital on Tuesday.

— DC

## Don't insist on Aadhaar card for vaccination: MP

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, JUNE 1

Rajya Sabha member P. Wilson has urged the Central Government to relax norms for vaccination for Covid-19 as a large number of people do not have Aadhaar card, mandatory for inoculation in the country.

In a letter sent to Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare Dr. Harsh Vardhan, on Tuesday DMK MP P. Wilson said the insistence of Aadhaar card for vaccination by the Central government is proving to be a hurdle for some classes of people.

As of now, the two vaccines namely Covishield and Covaxin are given to the public through the 'CoWIN' portal managed by the Union Ministry of

In a letter sent to Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare Dr. Harsh Vardhan, on Tuesday DMK MP P. Wilson said the insistence of Aadhaar card for vaccination by the Central government is proving to be a hurdle for some classes of people

Health and Family Welfare. The inoculation certificates are issued through this portal. For below 45 years of age, registration on the CoWIN app has been made mandatory, whereas for above 45 years, an Aadhaar card is necessary for vaccinating, as per the vaccine policy of the Central Government.

This has led to an unfortunate situation where a large section of people were able to get vaccinated and the poor have been deprived of access to vaccines. This is contrary to every principle of equality enshrined under our Constitution, besides contrary to public morality.

The senior counsel said the mandatory requirements have been posing obstacles for a section of people, especially those on the other side of the digital divide. People living in rural areas, particularly the lower economic strata, slum and pavement dwellers, homeless persons, beggars etc. are without access to smart phones or internet and therefore have not been able to register themselves for vaccination.



The Muslim Educational Association of Southern India (MEASI), the parent body of The New College, situated on Peters Road, Royapettah, has donated ₹1 crore towards the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister's Public Relief Fund to support the state's efforts in combating the Covid pandemic. President of the MEASI Nawab Mohammed Abdul Ali, Prince of Arcot, along with other members handed over the cheque to Chief Minister M. K. Stalin on Tuesday at the Secretariat.

— DC

## Covid shockwave hits business at VOC port

M. ARULOLI | DC  
THOOTHUKUDI, APRIL 1

The global pandemic created shockwaves have had its negative impact on the cargo handling capacity of the V.O.C.Port in Thoothukudi during the just concluded fiscal year (2020-2021).

In comparison to the previous year, when the V.O.C.Port handled 36.08 million tonnes of cargo and 8.04 lakh TEUs (twenty foot equivalent units) of containerised cargoes, business volume during 2020-2021 was not encouraging, according to a stevedore, as the cargo handling fell by 11.89 percent to 31.79 million tonnes. The handling of container traffic in the port in 2020-2021 too went down by around 5.22 per cent over the 8.04 lakh TEUs of containers handled in 2019-2020. Of the total volume of business handled, imports constituted 70.86

**"In spite of Covid-19 sending shockwaves through the supply chains, shipping networks and ports leading to plummeting cargo volumes during the last fiscal year, V.O.C. port's operational efficiency was not compromised"**

percent and 28.90 percent of export cargoes.

The lowered annual business performance in 2020-2021 too has its impact on the revenue side as the operating income of the port went below by ₹33.39 crore against the previous year's income and the net surplus after tax during the year 2020-2021 was ₹113.72 crore over the previous amount of ₹135.23 crore. V.O.C. port trust chair-

man, T.K.Ramachandran, however, felt that the port's performance in the year 2020-2021 was satisfactory to him as, he said, "In spite of Covid-19 sending shockwaves through the supply chains, shipping networks and ports leading to plummeting cargo volumes during the last fiscal year, V.O.C.port's operational efficiency was not compromised."

Further the port chairman added that V.O.C.port too had created quarantine facilities for Rs 20 lakh and established a 54 bedded Covid ward at the cost of Rs 25 lakh in Thoothukudi for the treatment of corona patients. "These projects were said to have been done by the port in Thoothukudi apart from contributing to covid relief and awareness programmes in collaboration with the Thoothukudi district administration."

## Stop appointing ineligible persons to varsity posts: HC

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, JUNE 1

Condemning the practice of appointing unqualified/ineligible candidates to various posts in the Universities by the authorities in the state, the Madras high court has issued a set of directions to Bharathiar University, which is also applicable to all the universities, in the matter of appointment of persons to various posts.

Justice R.Mahadevan issued the set of directions while disposing of petitions filed by R.Ramesh and two others, challenging the appointment of Gowthaman as Assistant Technical Officer (Library) in Bharathiar University and his subsequent promotion as Technical officer (Library). The judge termed the appointment of Gowthaman without requisite qualification as illegal.

The directions issued by Justice R.Mahadevan included



ed the one directing all the universities that in cases, where any candidate whose appointment is found to be illegal, such appointment is to be revoked at the earliest point of time and the salary paid to such appointee must be recovered from the members of the selection committee of the university and appropriate action under law is also to be taken against them.

"If in case, the candidate has

furnished false information or fake documents to secure employment, after termination, the salary and other benefits have to be recovered from the candidate and not as indicated above, if such production is not within the knowledge of the selection committee", the judge added.

As regards Gowthaman, who attained the age of superannuation subsequently, the judge said the payment of pension shall be computed to the post of Assistant Technical Officer (Library), for which he was actually eligible and pay the same to him. The excess amount paid be recovered from him. He shall not be eligible for any future increments in the post of Technical Officer (Library). He shall not be entitled to his experience as Library Officer to take future appointments as his very appointment itself was found to be illegal and void

ab initio. The Bharthiar University shall proceed against the members in the Selection Committee, who caused the illegal appointment of Gowthaman to the said post against the norms of the university, the judge added.

T. SUDHEESH | DC  
CHENNAI, JUNE 1

The number of deaths caused by Mucormycosis (Black Fungus) in the state since it was declared by the government as a notifiable disease remains uncertain. In the morning, the health minister, talking to reporters at Chengalpattu said that a total of 20 patients succumbed to Mucormycosis.

Meanwhile, by the

evening, opening an exclusive 120-bed ward for Mucormycosis patients at Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital (RGGH) Chennai, said that the death toll was 17.

A total of 518 people across the state have been infected by the fungus. Almost all districts in the state have reported Mucormycosis.

Meanwhile, the patients have been recovering very fast. In order to intensify

the treatment, the health department will start exclusive wards for Mucormycosis patients in all districts. There are a lot of reports on the impact of steroid administration among Covid19 patients as a reason for the spike in Mucormycosis cases, said the minister. Meanwhile, when DC contacted a top official in the health department on the death toll, the official said that the number will be updated

on a daily basis. Around 20 people died. They were infected with Mucormycosis due to the post Covid19 complications, said the official.

Dr T.S. Selvavinayagam, Director, Public Health and Preventive Medicine on Tuesday issued a directive to medical practitioners and health care institutions to follow up all the Covid-19 patients after being discharged from their institutions to identify

Mucormycosis patients. The occurrence of the disease should be reported to local authorities such as district surveillance officer or Deputy Director of Health Service and Health Office, Greater Chennai Corporation. Provide appropriate information regarding the symptoms of Mucormycosis to the patients who are referred for home isolation for the early detection, Dr Selvavinayagam said.



A British period canon unearthed atop Vellore Saidapet hill.

— K. Senthil Nathan

## Criminal action sought against former minister, officials and Christy group

state government and taxpayers money over the last five years in conspiracy and collusion with the public servants resulting in thousands of crores of exchequer money.

He said the opening of tender for purchase of tur dal/ Canadian yellow dal and Palm Oil on Tuesday by TNCSC has proved the allegations that Christy Friedgram group was in collusion with IAS officials, had been looting thousands of crores of taxpayers money.

He noted that on May 5, 2021, tenders for the tur dal/ Canadian yellow dal for procurement of 20000 metric tonnes was cancelled after the NGO had exposed overpricing by

Christy firms, which alone participated directly and indirectly in the tender.

While the wholesale price was less than ₹100 per kg, they had quoted Rs 143 to ₹147 per kg. Only three of companies

including Rasi Nutri Foods, which were related to Christy's group, took part in the tender process. Following NGO's representation, the government cancelled the tender and the government relaxed the tender conditions.

Many companies, Christy group, took part in the fresh tender. On Tuesday, when the same Tur Dal/ Canadian Yellow Dal tenders were opened, the Rasi Nutri foods of Christy group, which quoted ₹

146.5 per kg for tur dal last time, quoted Rs 87 per kg today. For Canadian yellow dal, Rasi Nutri Foods quoted ₹142 per kg in the last cancelled tender, quoted ₹ 78 per kg this time.

Within a gap of 20 days, Rasi Nutri Foods has quoted almost ₹64 less than what they quoted last time for Canadian yellow dal. A lot of ₹128 crore has been stopped for 20000 metric tons. The NGO had exposed in the past how Christy group has been winning tenders at ₹20 more than the market rate per 1 litre pouch of palm oil. He demanded the government to black list Christy group and initiate criminal action against Kamaraj and officials.



## Registrar



## SHORT TAKES

## Odisha: Cyber thieves swindle ₹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.

According to a statement issued by the police on Tuesday, the looters took advantage of the pandemic restrictions which prompted people to prefer on-line transactions for shopping and other financial activities.

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

According to the data shared by the police, the Cyber Help Desk had received 529 calls regarding cyber frauds out of which the cyber cell in Bhubaneswar had received a maximum 256 calls.

As many as 160 calls were related to UPI fraud while 100 other calls related to frauds regarding credit and debit cards.

Based on the data of Bhubaneswar cyber cell, 17 cases had been registered at different police stations.

Similarly, 56 dubious mobile numbers have been blocked by the police during the period.

Police have refunded/blocked Rs 12,05, 306 during the month of May, the statement added.

Earlier, a few cases of some fraudsters hosting portals for online delivery of liquor were reported from Bhubaneswar and some other parts of the state. These fraudsters, after getting huge payments from a large number of buyers, shut down the portals and never delivered any liquor to anyone.

## Madhya Pradesh unlocks partially; C'garh relaxes norms

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY  
BHOPAL, JUNE 1:

Madhya Pradesh was on Tuesday unlocked partially to start 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 coronavirus pandemic, in the wake of 47 out of total 52 districts reporting a positivity rate below five percent.

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 ten pm every Saturday till six am on Monday. There will be night curfew in the state from ten pm till six am.

Grocery shops and other small business establishments have been allowed to open. But, shopping malls, cinema halls, gym, swimming pools, picnic spots, auditorium and community centres will remain closed during the corona curfew in the state.

Similarly, all kinds of religious activities, political and social gatherings will remain prohibited till June 15. Schools, colleges and coaching institutions will also remain closed during the period.

On Monday, MP reported 1205 fresh coronavirus positive cases taking the tally of cases to 7,80,030.

The state has recorded 48 deaths in the last 24 hours taking the death toll to 5023.

The Chhattisgarh government also relaxed some curbs in the state on Tuesday, but decided to extend the lockdown to different periods in different districts considering the gravity of Covid situation in these areas.

Those districts with a positive rate above five percent shall continue with restrictions on opening of shops and other commercial establishments, as was instructed in the earlier instructions on May 24, a press release by the Chhattisgarh government said.

Shops and commercial establishments in all other districts reporting less than five percent positivity rate will be opened. However, restrictions on opening of cinema halls, swimming pools, water parks and other group gathering places will remain in force in these districts.

## RAHUL ATTACKS MODI ON GDP, UNEMPLOYMENT

New Delhi, June 1: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday attacked Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the adverse GDP and unemployment figures and raised the issue of "shortage" of drugs for treating black fungus.

"PM's hall of shame - Minimum GDP, Maximum Unemployment," he said on Twitter and shared a graph showing a rise in unemployment among the youth since 2014.

His remarks came a day after data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO) showed that India's economy contracted by 7.3 percent in the fiscal year ended March 2021 after the growth rate picked up in the fourth quarter, just before the world's worst outbreak of coronavirus infections hit the country.

The gross domestic product (GDP) in Asia's third-largest economy grew by 1.6 percent in the January-March period, up from 0.5 percent in the previous quarter when India began pulling out of a steep pandemic-induced recession in the earlier six months.

—PTI

## Renovated and open for public



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. —PTI

## 'Ego prevailed over public service': Dhankhar on Didi skipping PM meet

TMC swings into damage control mode, supporting Mamata Banerjee, countering Gov

RAJIB CHOWDHURI  
KOLKATA, JUNE 1

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

Stumped by his revelation in a series of explosive tweets post midnight, the ruling TMC swung into damage control mode before countering him.

Mr Dhankhar tweeted, "Constrained by false nar-

● Supporting Mamata, Senior TMC MP Sougata Roy however claimed, "The Governor's comments are irresponsible. The CM did not boycott the meeting of the PM.

rative 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 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 Sougata Roy however claimed, "The Governor's comments are irresponsible. The CM did not boycott the meeting of the PM. She rather met him and submitted the state government's demand to him. As the 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 poli-

## BJP imposing officer on Uttar Pradesh CM: Akhilesh

Lucknow, June 1: Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav on Tuesday accused the BJP of "imposing" an officer on the Uttar Pradesh chief minister, in an apparent reference to retired IAS officer A K Sharma who is overseeing Covid relief in Varanasi.

He also targeted the Centre, saying that it directed a senior officer from West Bengal to

appear in Delhi against the wishes of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

Banerjee on Monday said she was appointing Bengal Chief Secretary Alapan Bandopadhyay as chief advisor for three years effective from Tuesday, after allowing the bureaucrat, who was ordered by the central government to report to Delhi, to retire.

Calling BJP's policy

strange, Yadav tweeted in Hindi, "Imposing on UP chief minister against his will an officer sent from Delhi and recalling an officer from West Bengal against the West Bengal chief minister's will."

"In Uttar Pradesh, tussle continues among those who made false promises of 'double engine' government in the state," he said. —PTI

tics? The constitution does not give the governor any scope to tweet. He should stop it."

Another TMC 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 its meeting?"

## 5 miners trapped after explosion in Meghalaya's rat-hole mine

MANOJ ANAND  
GUWAHATI, JUNE 1

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

● The govt has directed the deputy commissioner of East Jaintia Hills to institute a magisterial inquiry into the mishap and file an FIR against whoever is involved.

that took place on Sunday.

Rescue operations were under way on Tuesday to trace at least five migrant workers from Assam and Tripura who were 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 govern-

ment has directed the deputy commissioner of East Jaintia Hills, E Kharmaki, 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.

Jagpal Singh Dhanoo, 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 that the mine was operating illegally and search operation is on for the five trapped labourers. "There are 6-7 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.

## India and Australia vow to hold their first ministerial-level 2+2 dialogue soon

PAWAN 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 Royal Australian Navy (RAN), to participate in the Naval war game "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 decided that India and Australia will upgrade their 2+2 dia-

logue 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 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.

## DOCTORS | ENRAGED Doctors seek unconditional public apology or action under Epidemic Diseases Act

## Doctors protest on Ramdev's allopathy remarks

New Delhi, June 1: Upset over yoga guru Ramdev's remarks on allopathy, resident doctors at several hospitals in Delhi protested as part of a nationwide stir on Tuesday and sought an unconditional public apology or action under the Epidemic Diseases Act.

Banded under the Federation of Resident Doctors Associations (FORDA), which had called for the protest on May 29 and stressed that healthcare services would not be hampered, the doctors wore black armbands, rib-

bons and held up placards. "Our protest began on Tuesday morning against the remarks made by Ramdev, who is not qualified to even speak on the discipline of allopathy. It had affected the morale of doctors, who are fighting day in and day out in the (COVID-19) pandemic. We demand an unconditional public apology from him or action against him under the Epidemic Diseases Act," a senior FORDA official said.

FORDA India on Tuesday even changed its Twitter

● While some doctors held up placards bearing protest messages, others wearing PPE kits had "Black Day Protest" scribbled on the back of the medical gear.

profile picture to a dark poster that said 'Black Day'. Many RDAs from outside Delhi put up posts on social media in solidarity with FORDA.

The RDAs which have joined the stir are from AIIMS, Safdarjung Hospital, Lady Hardinge Medical College and Hospital, Hindu Rao Hospital, Sanjay Gandhi Memorial Hospital, B R Ambedkar Hospital and

more will join later in the day, he said.

"Many doctors are wearing black armbands or black ribbons to symbolise the protest," the FORDA official said, adding, "Doctors in other cities have also joining the stir."

While some doctors held up placards bearing protest messages, others wearing PPE kits had "Black Day Protest" scribbled on the back of the medical gear.

In a statement issued on Saturday, FORDA India had said even after raising objections to the statements made by Ramdev, "no action has been taken yet. We are hereby declaring a Nationwide #BlackDayProtest on 1st June, 2021 at workplace, without hampering healthcare services".

"We demand an unconditional open public apology from him or action against him under the relevant sections of the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897," the statement had said. —PTI



Doctors during their protest against Baba Ramdev at the entrance gate of AIIMS in New Delhi on Tuesday. —PTI

## IUML moves SC

## 'Halt grant of citizenship to non-Muslims from neighbouring countries'

PARMOD KUMAR  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 1

The Indian Union of Muslim League (IUML) on Tuesday moved the Supreme Court challenging May 28 2021, Union Home Ministry 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 constitutionality of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act of 2019.

In its petition filed today, IUML has described as illegal the Home Ministry 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 Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 is decided by the court, Seeking the stay of the Home Ministry order, the IUML citing the top court's ruling in a plethora of cases has said that "what cannot be done directly will not be permitted to be done indirectly."

The petition says, "If the order is implemented and the citizenship is given to persons on the basis of their religion and thereafter if the Hon'ble Court strikes down the amended Act and rules providing citizenship on the basis of religion as void, then to take back the citizenship of these persons will be a Herculean task and would be near impossible to implement."

Moreover, such an exercise will render the entire batch of petitions challenging the Citizenship (Amendment) Act of 2019, As infructuous, the petition added.

● In its petition filed today, IUML has described as illegal the Home Ministry order to grant citizenship to Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians, but not the Muslims.



## 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" Jadhok and human rights lawyer Anon Numpu 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.

## RESIDENTS' TRAUMA

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.

**CORRIGENDUM NO. 05 AGAINST TENDER NOTICE NO. BY CEE/CON/SC/01/2021/11 DTD: 01-03-2021**

The following changes have been made against E-Tender Notice No.: Dy. CEE/CON/SC/01/2021/11 Dtd: 01-03-2021 and Tender No. EL-COIN-SC/19-2019-JR-RT. Tender Closing date now to be read as: 07-06-2021 instead of 21-05-2021 and Opening of tender on 07-06-2021 instead of 21-05-2021. All other terms and conditions of above tender will remain same.

**NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY Construction Organization**  
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## 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 defence 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.

"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

## FRANCE SUBMITS BEIRUT PORT BLAST REPORT

Beirut, June 1: Lebanon on Monday received a preliminary report from France regarding last year's massive port blast in Beirut that killed and wounded thousands, judicial officials said.

The officials said the French report is useful for the ongoing investigation in Beirut over the August blast, which decimated the country's main port and caused severe damage to surrounding areas. The officials declined to give details about the report.

— 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

## 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

## 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.

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**Tender Enquiry No. 91/CHP/EMC-424/GHTP/2021 Dated 31-05-2021**  
SE-MM-II/GHTP, Lehra Mohabbat invites E-tender for the work of "CHP-GHTP STAGE-I(2x210MW) & STAGE-II (2X250 MW) Breakdown, Shutdown, Preventive & Routine Maintenance of electrical system as per Tender Specifications under Coal Handling Plant/Electrical Maintenance Cell on lump sum basis at GHTP. For detailed NIT & tender specification please refer to <https://leproc.punjab.gov.in> from 01-06-2021 from 17:00 PM onwards.

**Note:** Corrigendum and addendum, if any will be published online at <https://leproc.punjab.gov.in>  
GHTP-27/21 RO No PR-Advt. No :- 76155/12/285/2021/5009

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	6843 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" DIAL 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 CASNU 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](http://www.ireps.gov.in) for details.  
2. No Manual offer will be entertained. 1180/2021

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**CHITTARANJAN LOCOMOTIVE WORKS**

**CORRIGENDUM**

**No. 75213837A & 3878 Dated: 29/05/2021.** The following corrigendum has been carried out in respect of the Tender No. 75213837A, schedule to be open on 07/06/2021 for procurement of Set of Stainless Steel Hardware Items for WAG-9/WAP-7 & T/C No:- 75213878 schedule to be open on 07/06/2021 for procurement of Set of Misc Hardware Items WAG-9/ WAP-7/ WAP-5: **Sl.No.[01]; Particulars :DUE DATE : Tender No.:75213837A; From: 07/06/2021 ; To be read as : 21/06/2021.Sl.No.[02]; Particulars : DUE DATE : Tender No.:75213878; From : 07/06/2021 ; To be read as : 21/06/2021. Sl.No. [03]; Particulars :SPECIAL ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA; Tender No.:75213837A & 75213878; From: CLW reserves right to procure entire or bulk quantity [minimum 80% of Net Procurement Quantity] from the CLW approved vendors for the tendered item. ; To be read as: (01) CLW reserves right to procure entire or bulk quantity from the firms who have supplied at least 10 loco set of the subject item to Railways, 60 days prior to the date of opening of the tender. Firm to enclose the copies of R-Note along with their offer as a proof of supplies. (02) Firms who do not fulfil the above mentioned eligibility criteria for bulk quantity ordering may be considered for only a small quantity up to 20 Percent of Net Procurement Quantity as developmental order subject to successful capacity-cum- capability assessment , if their offers are found technically suitable ; subject to completion of formalities as per the bid condition. Tenderer must enclose required past credential of supply of same / similar tendered item to show that they are capable of supplying the tendered item and to substantiate their capacity to develop tendered item. The firm should enclose details of infrastructure of Plant & Machinery and testing / quality control, QAP, ISO certificate details and other relevant document.**

**Dy. Chief Materials Manager /M-1 CLW /Chittaranjan SIDDH - 054**  
**For and on behalf of the President of India**  
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DECCAN Chronicle

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. 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

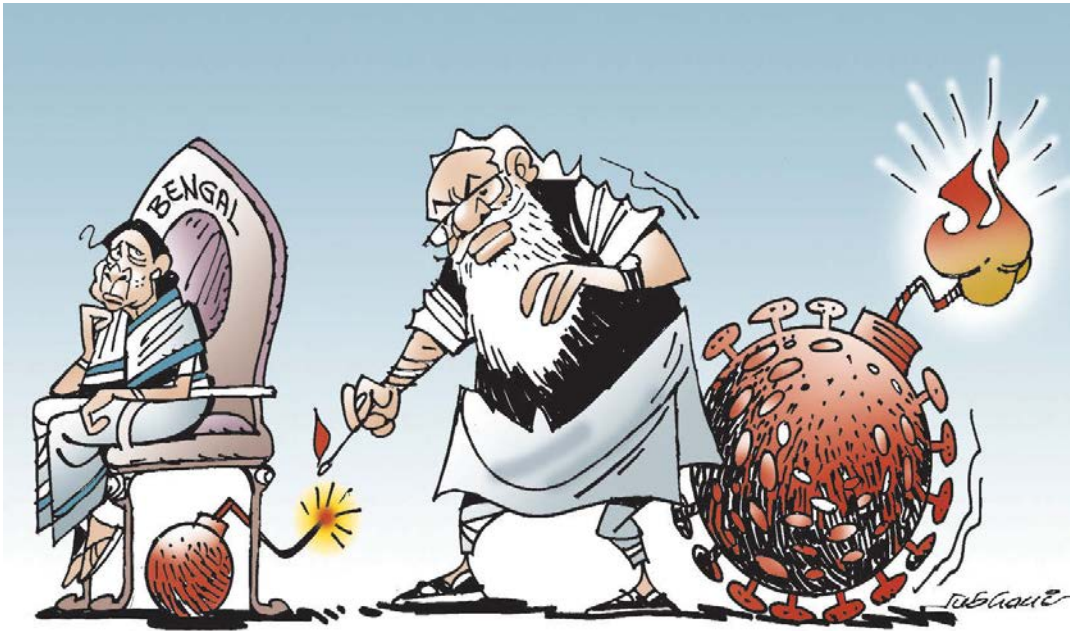
The China Communist Party politburo’s shift to a three-child policy comes amid a falling birthrate that has led to certain demographic challenges like an ageing society which may have 300 millions people in the 60+ category by 2025. The title of the world’s most populated country may not remain much 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

Subhani



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

Sriram Karri



Welcome. We are joined here 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 play 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

VACCINE VARIANCE

The government claimed it will inoculate the entire eligible population by the end of 2021, only to be baragued with questions from the Supreme Court about the efficacy of its policy, which allows the Centre to procure just 50% of the vaccines while leaving the states to fend for themselves. These are questions that the court has raised before and they serve to highlight the lacunae and confusion that is holding back India’s vaccination drive against Covid-19. As we note in our report, the virtual hearing began on a positive note with Solicitor General Tushar Mehta assuring the Bench that with the estimates on supply from domestic manufacturers and the Russian vaccine Sputnik V, the government may even be able to advance its deadline for the immunisation drive. However, on the same day, the Tamil Nadu government informed the Madras high court that its vaccine stocks would last only two more days. There are huge gaps between statement and implementation, spanning issues of supply and logistics that need urgent fixing if a target of end-2021 for immunisation is to be met.

MR. Jayanthi, Coimbatore

MAMATA’S MELODRAMA

Mamata’s melodrama won’t fool anyone. Recently, Bandopadhyay had not been functioning as the Chief Secretary but more as her personal secretary. They did not follow even the basic protocol when receiving the PM. He can now enter politics and join the TMC which he clearly wants to do. The decision of Alapan Bandopadhyay to retire and being posted as Chief Advisor for West Bengal government for a further period of 3 years by Mamata Banerjee has no parallel in Indian political history. There is something called protocol which officers have to follow, as simple as that. Her ego is more important than the thousands of poor Bengalis. If it was so, she should have sat with the PM and wrested cyclone relief fund and help from Centre for the benefit of the state. The decision of Bandopadhyay to tender resignation is not in good taste. Mamata Banerjee’s melodrama is yet another immature way of dealing with higher authorities.

C.K. Subramanian, Chennai

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 Swatantritya 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

talaq 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



## 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 Registration-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 Delhi, 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, Tridhaatu 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.

## 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."

## 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

# Moderate impact of 2nd wave seen

**SANGEETHA G**  
CHENNAI, JUNE1

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

# 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 pre-viual 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.

## THAILAND OKAYS \$4.5-BN STIMULUS THAT INCLUDES CASH HANDOUTS



**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

### 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 Zijderveld, 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



## 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. "The medical team of the Chilean national team emphasizes that at the request of the player Arturo Vidal, it is announced that he has been diagnosed positive for Covid," the national team said on its official website. It said no other players in the squad had tested positive for the virus.

— AFP

## 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

## THE RESULTS

**Men's first round:** James Duckworth (AUS) bt Salvatore Caruso (ITA) 6-4, 3-6, 7-6 (7/4), 6-2; Ricardas Berankis (LTU) bt Ugo Humbert (FRA) x29; 6-4, 6-4, 2-6, 6-4; Alex De Minaur (AUS) x21; Stefano Travaglia (ITA) 6-2, 6-4, 7-6 (7/4); Marco Cecchinato (ITA) bt Yasutaka Uchiyama (JPN) 3-6, 6-1, 6-2, 6-4; Mikael Ymer (SWE) bt Roberto Carballes Baena (ESP) 6-4, 0-6, 4-6, 6-2, 6-2; Gael Monfils (FRA) x14; Albert Ramos Vinolas (ESP) 1-6, 7-6 (8/6), 6-4, 6-4; Aljaz Bedene (SLO) bt Adrian Mannarino (FRA) 7-5, 3-6, 7-5, 6-2; Aslan Karatsev (RUS) x24; Jenson Brooksby (USA) 6-3, 6-4, 6-4; Facundo Bagnis (ARG) bt Benjamin Bonzi (FRA) 7-5, 6-3, 6-4.

**Women's first round:** Ashleigh Barty (AUS) x1; Bernarda Pera (USA) 6-4, 3-6, 6-2; Astra Sharma (AUS) bt Irina Maria Bara (ROM) 7-6 (7/5), 6-2; Ons Jabeur (TUN) x25; Yulia Putintseva (KAZ) 7-5, 6-2; Fiona Ferro (FRA) 7-5, 3-6, 7-5, 6-2; Liang En-shuo (TPE) 6-1, 1-6, 6-4; Jennifer Brady (USA) x13; Anastasia Sevastova (LAT) 6-3, 6-3; Barbora Krejickova (CZE) bt Kristyna Pliskova (CZE) 5-7, 6-4, 6-2; Ann Li (USA) bt Margarita Gasparyan (RUS) 6-0, 6-1; Elina Svitolina (UKR) x5; Oceane Babel (FRA) 6-2, 7-5; Maria Sakkari (GRE) x17; Katarina Zavatska (UKR) 6-4, 6-1; Jasmine Paolini (ITA) bt Stefanie Voegelé (SUI) 7-5, 6-1; Kristina Mladenovic (FRA) bt Anna Karolína Schmiedlová (SVK) 6-4, 6-0.

## 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 Kvitová.

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 Gerogia's Nikoloz Basilashvili and Andre Begemann of Germany.

— Agencies

## 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 NAVRATILOVA  
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

## TNBA to organise vax drive for players

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, JUNE 1

Tamil Nadu Basketball Association has initiated a vaccination programme for its players, coaches and referees.

Players who have represented the state and are above 18 are eligible to register. "Vaccines drive will be organised in two stages. Round one for the players

and round two for coaches and referees," said Aadhav Arjuna, secretary of TNBA.

"The association will bear the cost if we have to do it at private centres," he added.

For registration, contact admin @tnbahub.com, gs@tnbahub.com or +91 86100 54911 (whatsapp). The last date for registration is June 10.

## Sony adds Tamil flavour for Euro

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, JUNE 1

It's the best of both worlds in sport, especially south. Sony Pictures Sports Network has launched an exclusive channel in Telugu and Tamil, Ten 4, on Tuesday.

It began with quite a boom, as regional commentary accompanied the WWE wrestling live action.

The big feast would be 10 days later though, when the biggest international football tournaments of the year, Euro and Copa America, kick off.

Euro will be telecast in six languages — English, Hindi, Bengali, Tamil, Telugu and Malayalam while Copa will drop

Hindi from the list.

"During these difficult times, the festival of football is something to cheer about for the fans. We are very excited," says Rajesh Kaul, Chief Revenue Officer, Distribution and Head — Sports Business, Sony Pictures Networks India.

"We have four months of top class sport lined up — Olympics, India's cricket tours to Sri Lanka and England. We couldn't have asked for more."

The distinguished lineup of English panelists include International former footballers like Louis Saha, Luis Garcia, Don Hutchison, David James, Terry Phelan, Mark Seagraves, Ashley Westwood & Jofre Mateu.

## 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 weeks."

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

## ICC GIVES TIME TILL JUNE 28 ON T20 WC DECISION

**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.

## 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.

— PTI

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