

SHORT TAKES

'Waste to Wonder Park' in Delhi bags award

New Delhi: The South Delhi Municipal Corporation's popular "Waste to Wonder Park" bagged 'Earth Day Network Municipal Leadership' award on Friday. The award was given to SDMC Mayor Mukesh Suryan by Earth Day Network India in an event organised at the Civic Centre here. "Waste to Wonder Park has become the most famous tourist spot of the capital. Earth Day Network India has recognised the efforts of the SDMC and has given an award for developing this beautiful park. This park is an amazing concept of 'waste to wealth', the mayor said. Director of horticulture department, SDMC, Alok Singh and senior official of Earth Day Network India Ramit Basu were also present at the event. Waste to Wonder Park is India's lone park where replicas of seven wonders of the world have been made through waste and scrap materials, according to a statement issued by the SDMC. Spread across seven acres and located at Rajiv Gandhi Smriti Van near Sarai Kale Khan ISBT, the park has replicas of Leaning Tower of Pisa, Eiffel Tower, Pyramids of Giza, Taj Mahal, Statue of Liberty, Colosseum and Christ the Redeemer — all made out of waste. Opened in February 2019, the park has become a popular tourist spot. Till February last year, nearly 1.55 million people had visited the park, earning the municipal corporation ₹8 crore in ticket revenues. The entry fee to the park is ₹50 on weekdays and ₹100 on Sunday. The park is currently closed due to Covid-19 restrictions. — PTI

WCD dept survey to identify Covid orphans in city

New Delhi: The Delhi government's Women and Child Development Department will undertake a survey to identify children who have been orphaned during the coronavirus pandemic. The department said it has appointed 20 welfare officers who will conduct the survey in different childcare homes, institutions and district offices in the city. The officers have been attached with child welfare committees and district child protection units to conduct the survey by July 20, it said. The Delhi government has planned to give a compensation of ₹2,500 per month to children who have lost their parents to Covid-19. Over 2,000 children in the city have lost either one or both their parents to the novel coronavirus infection, with 67 of them losing both their parents, since the pandemic outbreak in March last year, according to a survey conducted by the Delhi Commission For Protection of Child Rights (DCPCR). As many as 651 children have lost their mothers and 1,311 children lost their fathers to the infection, it stated. — PTI

Raids on to nab culprits of Bara Hindu Rao firing: Cops

BHASKAR HARI SHARMA
NEW DELHI, JULY 9

The Delhi police said that raids are being conducted here and in the adjoining states to nab the accused persons in connection with the firing incident which took place at Bara Hindu Rao area where two passersby were killed, officials said on Friday.

Three teams of the Delhi police are conducting raids in the national capital and also in the neighbouring states to identify and arrest the accused persons, they said.

According to the police, a PCR call was received around 9.20 pm on Thursday regarding a firing incident where two men were killed during a shooting incident in North Delhi's Filmistan Road area.

One of the deceased was identified as Sanjay Rajput (30) while the identity of the other is being ascertained. A senior police officer said that an FIR has been registered on the complaint of one Naeem Ahmed and the police is investigating the matter from every angle, including property dispute. CCTV footage of the area is also being checked to identify the accused persons.

Ahmed, who runs Sanjeeda

Long delayed, monsoon may arrive in Delhi today

Light to moderate rainfall in Delhi, nearby regions in next 5 to 6 days: IMD

New Delhi, July 9: Monsoon is likely to reach the national capital on Saturday, 13 days after the usual date of June 27, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Friday.

This will be the most-delayed monsoon in Delhi in the last 15 years, according to officials. "Conditions are favourable for further advance of the southwest monsoon over Delhi; remaining parts of West Uttar Pradesh; some more parts of Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan during next 24 hours," the IMD said in a statement.

As a result, light to moderate rainfall is likely over Delhi and nearby regions in the next five to six days.

According to Kuldeep Srivastava, the head of the IMD's regional forecasting centre, monsoon had reached the capital on July 7 in 2012 and July 9 in 2006. In 2002, Delhi received its first monsoonal showers on July 19. The city had recorded the

► HUMID CONDITIONS prevailed in Delhi on Friday as it recorded a maximum temperature of 38.2 degrees Celsius. The city has experienced four 'heat wave days' this month — on July 1 with a maximum temperature of 43.1 degrees Celsius, July 2 at a high of 41.3 degrees Celsius, July 7 when the mercury soared to 42.6 degrees Celsius and on July 8 with the maximum reaching 41.8 degrees Celsius.

most-delayed monsoon arrival on July 26 in 1987, he said.

After arriving two days late in Kerala, monsoon had raced across the country, covering eastern, central and adjoining north-west India seven to 10 days earlier than normal. But then, with conditions remaining unfavourable for its advance, monsoon weakened and entered a "break" phase.

The meteorological office had earlier predict-

ed that the wind system may reach Delhi by June 15, which would have been 12 days early. Normally, monsoon reaches Delhi by June 27 and covers the entire country by July 8. Last year, the wind system had reached Delhi on June 25 and covered the entire country by June 29.

Delhi has received 44.1mm rainfall against the normal of 104.2mm so far — a deficiency of 58 percent, since the monsoon season started on June 1.

Humid conditions prevailed in Delhi on Friday as it recorded a maximum temperature of 38.2 degrees Celsius. The city has experienced four "heat wave days" this month — on July 1 with a maximum temperature of 43.1 degrees Celsius, July 2 at a high of 41.3 degrees Celsius, July 7 when the mercury soared to 42.6 degrees Celsius and on July 8 with the maximum reaching 41.8 degrees Celsius.

On Friday, the relative

humidity in the national capital oscillated between 89 per cent and 49 per cent.

In neighbouring Gurgaon, the maximum temperature was recorded at 39.7 degrees Celsius while Noida in Uttar Pradesh registered a high of 38.2 degrees Celsius.

Hot weather conditions persisted in Punjab and Haryana on Friday even as a few places received rainfall.

Narnaul in Haryana recorded its maximum at 41.5 degrees Celsius, four notches above the normal. Among other places in the state, Hisar recorded a high of 41.1 degrees Celsius while Karnal, which received 32 mm of rainfall, registered its maximum temperature of 34.8 degrees Celsius.

The maximum temperatures in Punjab's Amritsar, Ludhiana and Patiala settled at 36.7, 35.7 and 35.6 degrees Celsius. Ludhiana and Patiala witnessed rainfall of 0.6 mm and 7.9 mm.

— PTI

Public transport systems being integrated with Google: Gahlot

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JULY 9

The Delhi government is integrating all public transit systems with Google to create a multi-modal transit planner so that people won't have to wait for long for public buses, said the city's transport minister Kailash Gahlot on Friday.

Responding to a tweet by Gahlot in the matter, chief minister Arvind Kejriwal said that his government is working hard to make the national capital's transport system user-friendly.

"Delhites can very soon plan their bus journeys to the minute. We're at the final lap of integrating all our public transit systems into @GoogleIndia platform, which will utilise Open Transit Data of Delhi Govt and live data of buses to create a reliable Multi-Modal Transit planner," Gahlot said in a tweet.

In response, to Kejriwal wrote on the micro-blogging site, "The Delhi government is working hard to make Delhi's transport system user friendly using technology."



Kailash Gahlot

WhatsApp to HC: Won't force new privacy policy on users

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JULY 9

Messaging platform WhatsApp on Friday told the Delhi High Court that it would not force users to accept its new privacy policy and for some time will not limit functionality until the government passes the Data Protection Bill.

WhatsApp further submitted that it has voluntarily agreed to put on hold the update, which triggered the controversy till the Data Protection Bill comes into force. Senior Advocate Harish Salve, appearing for WhatsApp, told the Delhi HC that WhatsApp has responded to a notice by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology seeking a response.

Senior advocate Harish Salve submitted before a Division Bench of Chief Justice DN Patel and Jyoti Singh that WhatsApp will not limit functionality for some time and continue to show users the updates

Delhi govt also orders closure of market in Rohini 2 Karol Bagh markets shut after Covid norms violation

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JULY 9

The Delhi government on Friday ordered the closure of the popular Gaffar Market and Naiwala market in Karol Bagh here for two days over violation of Covid protocols. It also ordered the closure of another market in Rohini for flouting Covid norms.

The closure will come into effect from 10 pm on July 9 and will stay in place till 10 pm on July 11, the order said.

The DDA Market in Rohini's Sector 13 will remain closed till July 12, it said.

"... market shopkeepers, thiyavallahs / Vendors, and general public in Gaffar Market and Naiwala, Karol Bagh are not following the Covid-appropriate behaviour. DueA to large footfall, market association and shopkeepers are not able to ensure Covid protocols in the aforesaid markets in last three days."

"The guidelines / directions of Covid Protocol are being contravened in

81 Covid cases, 3 deaths in city in past 24 hours

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JULY 9

The national capital recorded 81 Covid-19 cases and three deaths due to the disease on Friday, according to data shared by the Delhi health department. The positivity rate slightly dropped to 0.11 percent from 0.12 percent on Thursday when 93 cases and three deaths were recorded. The three new fatalities have pushed the death count in the city to 25,011 according to the department's latest bulletin.

Samiran Panda, head, division of epidemiology and communicable diseases, Indian Council for

the Gaffar Market and Naiwala which may cause super-spreading of the coronavirus," the order said.

The order also stated

Medical Research (ICMR), said on Friday that the Covid-19 virus may reach its endemic stage after a while, just like influenza, and the vulnerable population may have to take the vaccine shot annually.

"Mutation is normal for all viruses when they proliferate. Experts suggest that the Covid-19 virus will reach its endemic stage like influenza after a while and then the vulnerable population may have to take the vaccine shot annually," Panda said.

More than 86 lakh doses of Covid-19 vaccine have been administered in Delhi till date, according to official figures shared by authorities on Friday.

that the Market Welfare Association of Gaffar Market and Naiwala have "failed to ensure the strict compliance of the guidelines of Covid-19".



Congress workers pull a car during a protest against petrol and diesel price hike in New Delhi on Friday. — G. N. JHA

Traffic snarls at Delhi borders due to RFID system glitches

New Delhi, July 9: Delhi's border points witnessed traffic snarls during the peak morning hours Friday as commercial vehicles entering the national capital faced difficulty paying toll fees online at booths for a third consecutive day, taxi and commercial vehicle association said. General public also faced traffic jams.

The South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC) has implemented Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) tags at all 124 entry points to the city. The civic body had already announced that effective July 9 no commercial vehicle was to be allowed in without RFID tags.

This order was implemented from Wednesday

at all 124 toll plazas except for the 11 where farmers are protesting.

"Toll operators have been directed to collect toll fee through RFID only and not to accept cash. Traffic snarls are just initial hiccups which will be addressed as our teams are constantly working to ease the process," an SDMC official said.

Sanjay Samrat, president Delhi Taxi Tourist Transport Association, said that long queues are seen at border toll plazas which is leading to jams and also loss to commercial establishments. "Today too there were jams on border points. It is mainly because SDMC's RFID sensors many times fail to read the tag and hence create

problems," he said. "We have met the SDMC authorities and demanded that the RFID system should be made mandatory only from September 30 instead of July 1," Samrat said.

According to civic officials nearly 5 lakh RFID tags have been sold so far. Commuters also complained of traffic congestion at borders. "It usually takes me 45 minutes to reach my office in Chanakya Puri from Noida but today it took me over one-hour-and-a-half to reach my destination. It is the public which faces hardships due to jam only the reason behind it changes," said Priyansh, who was stuck at DND on his way to office.

— PTI

AAP, BJP spar over cleaning of drains

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JULY 9

AAP on Friday alleged that the BJP ruled MCD had committed corruption in the name of desilting of internal drains. AAP spokesperson Saurabh Bharadwaj said that not even 5 percent of drains in colonies have been cleaned.

However refuting Mr Bharadwaj's claims, city BJP spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor said AAP is in habit of accusing MCDs to politically malign them but today he has raised the drain desilting issue against MCDs to cover up the failure of Jal Board, PWD & Flood Department's failure to desilt major drains & nallahs.

The over flooded situation of major Barapullah, Najafgarh and Shahdara drains is there for all to see, the Delhi Government departments supposed to clean them have not done any work, Mr Kapoor said.

SHORT TAKES

3 Manipur youth held with ₹20 crore heroin

Berhampore: Three youth from Manipur were arrested in a joint operation by the Jangipur police and special task force (STF) of the Kolkata Police in Murshidabad of West Bengal for allegedly smuggling a four-kg heroin consignment worth ₹20 crores in an interstate racket. The drug cartel was busted late on Thursday night after the cops in plain clothes, acting on a tip-off, stopped a Kolkata-bound lorry, which was coming from Manipur, at Talai More on National Highway 34 in Raghunathganj. They launched a marathon search operation that lasted around 12 hours, said superintendent of police (Jangipur police District) Y. Raghubanshi. Initially failing to find anything, they checked the driver's cabin and found the seat cover new. They knived it and recovered four packets, kept hidden inside. The truck driver, Fijam Noubi Singh, and his two aides, Thaiyam Surmangal Moite and Yakham Nautoga Moite from Manipur were arrested. They were remanded by the court on Friday in 10 days' police custody.

Odisha BJD MP's divorce plea rejected

Bhubaneswar: Odisha's Biju Janata Dal Lok Sabha member Anubhav Mohanty and his wife Varsha Priyadarshini on Friday appeared in a family court in Cuttack, 20 km from here. The court heard a plea filed by Anubhav seeking ex parte decree on his divorce petition for dissolution of his marriage with Varsha. The court, however, rejected the plea. "Today, the family court heard a petition filed by Anubhav. In the petition, he had appealed to the court to pass an ex parte decree citing non-appearance of his wife. The court disposed off the prayer as 'not pressed,' meaning that the relief sought by the petitioner is not pressed and the prayer is disposed off. We have also filed a reply in the court," Ramkrushna Rath, Varsha's lawyer said. The couple also appeared in the conciliation centre of the court today.

Rajnath dials Israel deputy PM, DefMin

New Delhi: Defence minister Rajnath Singh on Friday held a telephonic conversation with Deputy Prime Minister and minister of defence of Israel Lt Gen (Res) Benjamin Gantz. In recent years there has been closer defence ties between India and Israel. India has been importing various defence items from Israel including guided missiles. Mr Singh congratulated Lt Gen (Res) Benjamin Gantz on assuming the charge of Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence of Israel. "Look forward to working closely to deepen defence cooperation and advance strategic partnership with Israel," tweeted Mr Singh.

Assam CM remark on MLAs role sparks row

MANOJ ANAND GUWAHATI, JULY 9

Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's remark that the role of an MLA is confined to framing laws, while it is the duty of the ministers only to implement them has created a fresh controversy in the state with opposition Congress and independent MLAs slamming the chief minister, accusing him of violating constitution besides reflecting his "autocratic, intolerant and fascist" mentality.

Mr Sarma while addressing a public meeting in Sarbhog assembly constituency represented by CPI (M) MLA said that government officers will listen to the ministers only as long as he is the chief minister. "MLAs will work in the

assembly and frame the laws. If we do something wrong, they can topple the government," said Mr Sarma adding, "The DCs, the SPs, the SDCs (sub divisional officers civil), who will they listen to? The executive power is with us. As long as I am the chief minister, they will listen to the ministers only. The Speaker will listen to the MLAs."

Pointing out that the very constitution that facilitate swearing in of the chief minister and paved the way for becoming an MLA has also defined all the rules and responsibilities of an elected representative, Assam Congress president Ripun Bora said, "The Constitution clearly mentions not only the Legislative powers of MLAs but also Executive and Financial powers.

NORTHERN RAILWAY				
Invitation of Tenders through E-Procurement System				
Principal Chief Materials Manager, Northern Railway, New Delhi-110055, 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
1	82212287B	Injection Octreotide Acetate LAR 30 mg	100	30.07.2021
Note: 1. Vendors may visit the IREPS website i.e. www.ireps.gov.in for details. 2. No Manual offer will be entertained.				
Tender Notice No.: 04/AMI/2021-22/NRCH Dated 09.07.2021				1526/21
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE				

ADG booked for sedition in C'garh

Top cop accused of conspiracy against government and public representative

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY RAIPUR, JULY 9

Chhattisgarh additional director general of police G.P. Singh whose properties were raided by anti-graft wing of state police last week, has been booked under sedition charges.

He was booked under sections 124-A (sedition) and 153-A (promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion, race, language, etc) of Indian Penal Code (IPC) at City Kotwali police station late on Thursday night, according to Raipur senior superintendent of police (SSP) Ajey Yadav. The action was taken on the basis of the seizure

report filed by the anti-corruption bureau (ACB) and Economic Offence Wing (EOW) of Chhattisgarh police, he said.

According to the police, the documents recovered during the raids on his properties suggested that the police officer was allegedly involved in promoting enmity and hatching a conspiracy against the established government and public representatives.

The ACB conducted raids at ten properties linked to the 1994 batch IPS officer on July one which lasted 68 hours and allegedly recovered properties disproportionate to his known sources of

income and some incriminating documents. Some pieces of papers, recovered from the backyard of his house in Raipur, contained 'serious and sensitive contents', the FIR filed by the police said.

"These papers contained objectionable comments against leaders of reputed

parties along with detailed plans of conspiracy. Besides, secret assessments related to representatives and candidates of different constituencies along with comments on serious issues of the concerned area were also written on it. The papers also contained critical comments on several government schemes, policies, social and religious issues", the FIR added.

The FIR further said that the raid at the house of one Mani Bhusan, an associate of the police officer here, had also yielded a five-page document, in which comments on representatives, officials, government schemes and policies were scribbled.

The seized documents contained provocative contents that can promote hatred and dissatisfaction against the government, the FIR said.

Chief minister Bhupesh Baghel on Friday defended the police action saying that the charges were framed against the police officer as per the documents seized during the raids. Meanwhile, the police officer, who was placed under suspension last week following the raids on his properties, on Friday, moved the Chhattisgarh high court at Bilaspur demanding a probe by an independent agency like CBI into charges framed against him by the police.

Massive search ops in J&K border area

AGE CORRESPONDENT SRINAGAR JULY 9

A massive search operation by security forces is underway in Jatal area close to the International Border (IB) with Pakistan in Jammu and Kashmir's Samba district since Friday morning, reports reaching here said.

The operation was launched following input from a local resident about movement of three to four "suspicious persons" in the area late Thursday night.

"Soon a joint party of the J&K police, the Army and Central armed police forces was mobilized to conduct searches in the area. An alert has been issued for some neighbouring areas too," said a police official.

The members of Village Defence Committees are assisting the police in these areas to track down 'undesirable persons', if there

were any present in this extremely sensitive border belt, the official said.

Further, the security forces are maintaining a close vigil on the airspace as well with clear-cut instructions issued to them to shoot down any unauthorised flying machine or object in the border region in entire Jammu region.

The authorities have declared several sensitive and other important installations such as Jammu's Raj Bhawan and Civil Secretariat as 'no flying zones' in view of the recent bombing of Air Force Station Jammu by drones and increased drone activity over military installations in the region.

On Thursday, two Army soldiers and as many militants were killed and another soldier injured in a gunfight in Sunderbani area close to the Line of Control (LoC) in J&K's Rajouri district

Delimitation, elections in J&K likely to get delayed

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JULY 9

The process of delimitation and subsequent holding of Assembly elections in the newly created Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir is likely to get delayed further with PDP's refusal to assist in the delimitation exercise. Mehbooba Mufti-led PDP had not met the Delimitation Commission, led by Justice (ret'd) Ranjana Prakash Desai during its interaction with local political parties in Srinagar on Tuesday.

The PDP had in a statement said that it decided to stay away from the meeting as the final outcome of the delimitation exercise is already decided. "The process is aimed to take away power from people of J&K and to release political vision of a particular party," the PDP said in a statement.

Top Home Ministry sources said that it will initiate "back channel talks with PDP to bring them on board for the delimitation exercise." Sources said PDP was strongly opposing the roadmap given by

Centre for restoration of democracy in J&K, delimitation-elections-full Statehood. But PDP wants restoration of full statehood for J&K before the election or delimitation process can be initiated.

Even Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his meeting political leaders from J&K on June 24 had reiterated that he was committed to full statehood and restoration of democratic process in J&K. PM Modi had emphasised on removing "Dilli Aur Dil Ki Doori" during the June 24 meeting.

Dead police official's wife accuses Suvendu of murder

RAJIB CHOWDHURI KOLKATA, JULY 9

A deceased police officer's wife has accused the leader of the opposition Suvendu Adhikari of masterminding her husband's murder more than two and half years after his death under mysterious circumstances.

Shubhabrata Chakraborty, the deceased cop, was posted as a personal security officer of the Nandigram BJP MLA when he was in the Trinamul Congress, represented the same Assembly seat and was also a cabinet colleague of chief minister Mamata Banerjee.

Chakraborty, a resident of Mahishadal in East Midnapore which is also the home turf of Mr Adhikari, apparently shot himself from his service revolver on October 13 morning in 2018 at ward no 15 in the police barrack in Contai of the same district.

He was taken to a local



Suvendu Adhikari

SHUBHABRATA CHAKRABORTY, the deceased cop, was posted as a personal security officer of the Nandigram BJP MLA when he was in the Trinamul Congress, represented the same Assembly seat and was also a cabinet colleague of chief minister Mamata Banerjee

hospital and then a private hospital in Kolkata where he succumbed to his injuries the next day. The police initially suspected the death a suicide.

On July 7 this year Chakraborty's wife Suparna, however, lodged a complaint with the Contai police station, alleging Mr Adhikari's role in her husband's death and his "powerful political influence" which forced her to remain silent since she has two children.

Suparna also claimed that Mr Adhikari's aide Rakkhal Bera, who was recently arrested by the police in Kolkata in a fake job racket, was involved in the conspiracy which was

about the delay in rushing Chakraborty to a hospital in absence of an ambulance.

The school teacher also expressed her doubt in her husband's post-mortem report. Acting on her complaint, the police also initiated an FIR under sections 302 (murder) and 120B (criminal conspiracy) of the Indian Penal Code but named the accused as "unknown miscreants" in it. However, Mr Adhikari sarcastically said, "There is no need to scare me. Ms Banerjee is free to ask me to go to jail and spend a few months there since she lost to me in Nandigram. I will abide by her wish as she is senior to me."

Congress needs young leadership to revive in Odisha

New Delhi: Odisha has been distancing perpetually from the party since the election of 2000. Today, the Congress has its all-time low Assembly seats at 9 and the Assembly electoral vote share at 15 per cent in the state. Unless the Congress party puts an impactful young leader as the state unit chief and engineers a structural reform plan with grassroots mobilisation, it shall be an herculean task for the party to maintain its last electoral vote share in the 2022 panchayat and the forthcoming ULB elections.

NORTHERN RAILWAY				
Tender Notice				
Sr.DEN/C/MB acting for and on behalf of The President of India invites E-Tenders against following Tender Notice, closing date & time are mentioned against each column. Bidders will be able to submit their original/revised bids up to closing date and time only. Manual offers are not allowed against this tender, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored. Contractors are allowed to make payments against this tender towards tender document cost and earnest money only through online payment modes available on IREPS portal like net banking, debit card, credit card etc. Manual payments through Demand draft, Banker's cheque, Deposit receipts, FDR etc. are not allowed.				
Tender No.	46-DRM-MB-21-22 Date 07.07.2021	47-DRM-MB-21-22 Date 07.07.2021	48-DRM-MB-21-22 Date 07.07.2021	49-DRM-MB-21-22 Date 07.07.2021
Name of Work	(ZONE No.-3-NBD:-Gajraula to Muzzampur (Excluding Gajraula and Muzzampur), all service buildings and residential buildings for general road and wood work under Asst. Divisional Engineer /Najibabad.	(Zone no. 1 HPU) All Residential and service buildings in between GMS-GZB (Excluding GZB) including wood, steel and road work under ADEN/HPU.	(Zone no. 2 HPU) All Residential and service buildings in between GMS-MB (Excluding GMS and Excluding MB) including wood, steel and road work under ADEN/HPU.	(Zone no. 3 HPU) All Residential and service buildings in between KRJ-MTC (Excluding MTC) including wood steel and road work under ADEN/HPU.
Tender Closing Date	03.08.2021	03.08.2021	03.08.2021	03.08.2021
Tender Closing Time	16:00 hrs	16:00 hrs	16:00 hrs	16:00 hrs
Advised Value (Rs.)	5198621.19	8194862.11	6587159.71	3499838.35
Earnest Money (Rs.)	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Tender Doc. Cost (Rs.)	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Period of Completion	Up to 30.06.2022	Up to 30.06.2022	Up to 30.06.2022	Up to 30.06.2022
Bidding Start Date	20.07.2021	20.07.2021	20.07.2021	20.07.2021
Tender No. 75/W/23/WA/DEN/IV/T. Notice Dated : 08.07.2021				1532/2021
Serving Customers With A Smile				

NORTHERN RAILWAY	
TENDER NOTICE	
Invitation of tender through e-Tendering (e-Procurement Systems)	
NIT No.	116-S/1/Vehicle/Contract/1(2020)/ML-IV
Name of work and its location	Hiring of one multi-utility Road Vehicle i.e. Innova/ Scorpio/Mahindra Bolero, Marazzo (Five Door-Seven Seater) for the period of two years round the clock under Chief Power Controller, DRM's Office, New Delhi
Approx Cost of work	Rs. 13,53,600/- (Thirteen lakh Fifty Three Thousand Six Hundred only) plus GST as applicable
Earnest Money	Rs. 27,100/-
Completion period of work	Two years i.e. 24 months from the date of execution of work
Cost of tender document on cash/by post	Rs. 2,360/- with GST @18%
Date and Time for submission of tender and opening of tender	Upto 11.00 hrs. on 05.08.2021. Opening of Tender at 11.15 hrs.
Website particulars notice board location complete details of tender can be seen	Above tender available on IREPS site i.e. www.ireps.gov.in
No.: 116-S/1/Vehicle/Contract/1(2020)/ML-IV Dated: 09.07.2021 1529/2021	
Serving Customers with a Smile	

INDIRA GANDHI NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY	
Maidan Garhi, New Delhi-110068	
E-TENDER NOTICE	
Online bids (Technical & Financial) are invited for and on behalf of the Vice-Chancellor, IGNOU from the eligible contractors registered in appropriate class and category with CPWD/PWD/DOT/DDAMES & BSNL having similar work experience for the work of "Annual repair and maintenance of window & split type air-conditioners, water coolers and voltage stabilizers installed at IGNOU Campus, Maidan Garhi & AGVC Flats New Delhi".	
*Similar work means:- Maintenance of window & split type air-conditioners, water coolers and voltage stabilizers.	
NIT No: IG/CMD/CPO/NIT/2021-22/01— Estimated cost:-Rs.11,62,260/- (FOR ONE YEAR)	
The online bids complete in all respect along with the scanned copies of the bank draft of Rs.23,245/- towards notified EMD respectively in favour of IGNOU, New Delhi, the original must reach the Office of Chief Project Officer, CMD (Opposite Horticulture-Cell), at IGNOU Campus, Maidan Garhi, New Delhi-110068 on or before last date of submission of bids up to 13:00 hrs. The tender document along with other details may be downloaded from the CPP Portal: http://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app Sd/-	
IG/PIU/CMD-05/2021-22	Engineer-In-Charge

Wonder if 'police raj' was going on in Bihar, says SC

PARMOD KUMAR NEW DELHI, JULY 9

The Supreme Court, on Friday, wondered if police raj was going on in Bihar as it rejected a plea by the state government against the award of ₹5 lakh compensation to a driver by the state high court who was illegally kept in police custody without the registration of an FIR.

Dismissing a plea by the Bihar government challenging the award of ₹5 lakh compensation by the Patna high court to the driver on his detention without the registration of an FIR, a bench comprising Justice D.Y. Chandrachud and Justice M.R. Shah found it difficult to accept the argument by the Bihar government lawyer that the accused did not leave the police station on his own choice.

The police detained the driver in an accident allegedly involving him and had registered the FIR after a couple of days.

Reminding the lawyer appearing for Bihar that liberty is as much sacrosanct to a person from

THE SUPREME Court wondered if police raj was going on in Bihar as it rejected a plea by the state government against the award of '5 lakh compensation to a driver by the state high court who was illegally kept in police custody without the registration of an FIR.

THE POLICE detained the driver in an accident allegedly involving him and had registered the FIR after a couple of days

humble social milieu as it is for those from affluent sections, the court said that if a rich person is illegally deprived of his liberty then he is expected to be entitled to higher compensation, but not the poor.

"The loss of liberty of a person from a humble background (driver in the instant case) should be placed on the same footing as in the case of a rich man," said Justice Chandrachud making it clear that the compensation for illegal loss of liberty will not vary on the basis of the financial stature of the affected person.

MP TEEN GIRL TRIES TO IMMOLATE SELF OVER HARASSMENT BY YOUTHS

Indore, July 9: A 16-year-old girl tried to immolate herself in a police premises in Indore in Madhya Pradesh on Friday alleging that some youths were barging into her home and teasing her at knife-point, an official said. A video of the incident, in which she is seen narrating her ordeal and the alleged refusal of Palasia police station to register a case on her complaint, went viral on social media soon after, leading to the arrest of four people.

The girl reached the office of the DIG here at Regal Cross Road and tried to strike a match after pouring kerosene on herself, but those present prevented her from doing so, the official said. Soon after, Inspector Sanjay Bais of Palasia police station said four people, all relatives of the victim, in the 18-24 age group were arrested under section 354 (criminal force on a woman with intent to outrage her modesty) of the Indian Penal Code. — PTT

SEARCH FOR MISSING	
General Public is hereby informed that a girl namely Kajal D/o Lt. Rajit Ram R/o H.No. 10/1140, Gali No.3, New Chand Mohalla, Gandhi Nagar, Delhi has been missing since 06.06.2021 from her house the area of PS Gandhi Nagar, Delhi. In this regard a FIR No. 239/21, dated 06.06.2021 u/s 363 IPC has been registered at PS, Gandhi Nagar, Delhi. The description of missing girl is as under:	
Name: Kajal, Father's Name : Lt. Rajit Ram, Age : 17 years, Height: 4'5", Complexion : Shallow, Built: Normal, Wearing: White and Pink Colour top, Grey jeans with black sleepers in feet.	
If anyone having any clue/information, kindly inform the undersigned at following phone numbers.	
Website : http://cbi.nic.in e-mail : cic@cbi.gov.in Fax : 011-24368639 Ph : 011-24368638, 24368641 DP/494/SHD/2021	
P.S., Gandhi Nagar, Delhi Ph. : 011-22082235, 22072761	

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION	
General public is hereby informed that one male was found dead at Zero Pusta Main Road Footpath, Shastri Park, Delhi on 06.07.2021. In this regard a DD No. 34-A u/s 174 CrPc, Dated 06.07.2021 has been lodged at P.S. Shastri Park, Delhi. The dead body has been kept preserved in Hospital. The description of the dead body is given as under:	
Name: Unknown, S/o: Unknown, R/o: Unknown, Age: about 30-35 years, Height: 5'5" Feet, Face: Long, Complexion: Shallow, Built: Normal, Wearing: Black Colour T-Shirt, Grey Colour Lower and Bare Footed.	
Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the information about the dead male but no clue has come to light so far. If any one is having any information about this dead male please inform at the following: http://cbi.nic.in , E-mail: cic@cbi.gov.in or Fax No.: 011-24368639, Tel. No. 011-24368638, 24368641, Ext. 2101.	
S.H.O P.S. Shastri Park, Delhi Ph.: 011-22170120, 22170106	
DP/899/NE/2021	

SHORT TAKES

ED to quiz Waze in Deshmukh case

Mumbai: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) obtained National Investigation Agency (NIA) court's permission to record suspended Mumbai police officer Sachin Waze's statement in a money laundering case against former Maharashtra home minister Anil Deshmukh at Talaja prison on Saturday. ED has also summoned former Mumbai police commissioner Param Bir Singh to record his statement. However, Mr Singh has sought time after stating that he is unwell and needs to undergo a surgery. The Central probe agency will record the statement of Waze at Talaja prison in Navi Mumbai tomorrow. A team of ED officers will reach the jail for the same. The NIA had arrested Waze in March in connection with the investigation into the recovery of explosives from a car parked near Mukesh Ambani's residence in south Mumbai.

Hyd police arrests 5 for cyber fraud

Bhubaneswar: The Hyderabad police along with the Bhubaneswar commissionerate police on Friday arrested five persons from Bharatapur area here for allegedly committing cyber fraud to the tune of ₹30 lakh. The five accused are Narayan Mahapatro, Laxmidhar Murmu, Pramod Nayak, Soumyaranjan Patnaik and Debasis Ojha. Three of them are residents of Ghatkia while two others are from Baramunda area in Bhubaneswar. The cops also seized five mobile phones from their possession. "The five accused have committed a cyber fraud of ₹30 lakh in Hyderabad. They have looted ₹15 lakh each from two accounts," said the police. The accused were booked under Section 419, 420 of Indian Penal Code (IPC) and section 66-C of IT Act. The accused will be produced before court today.

SC forces Delhi to withdraw PIL

■ **Continued from Page 1**
issued by the Union environment ministry. The notification said the rules had been amended to allow thermal power plants within 10 km of the National Capital Region (NCR) — and in cities with over 10 lakh population — to comply with new emission norms by the end of 2022. Eleven coal-fired NCR power plants contributed seven per cent to Delhi's PM2.5 pollution on an average between October 2020 and January 2021, according to a study by the Delhi-based Council on Energy, Environment and Water. Quoting the study, the Delhi government said in its petition that some 10 thermal power plants in Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh were causing pollution as they hadn't installed the Flue Gas Desulphurisation (FGD) technology, as they are allowed to install FGD by the end of 2022, making Delhiites suffer for another two years. Colin Gonsalves, the senior lawyer appearing for Delhi, argued before the court that these plants contribute up to 80 per cent of sulphates and other "killer gases" that contribute to pollution in Delhi. He argued that the Centre was not interested in controlling pollution and had failed to honour its commitment to the top court. Mr Gonsalves wanted the PIL to be tagged with other pending cases before the court. The court, however, refused to entertain the PIL, saying: "If the Centre did not honour the commitment, then you move in the same case where the Centre gave the undertaking." It gave an option to Mr Gonsalves to withdraw the PIL, which he did, saying the Delhi government will move an application in the pending case.

Modi reviews O2 plan

■ **Continued from Page 1**
past seven days. India's first case of Covid infection was also reported from Kerala in January 2020. A day after reporting a slight increase in the number of Covid-19 cases, India registered a slight dip in fresh infections in the last 24 hours. As many as 43,393 more people tested positive for the deadly virus, taking the cumulative caseload to 3,07,52,950. The positivity rate now stands at 2.42 per cent. On the other hand, the fatalities went up slightly with 911 more people succumbing to the disease.

U.P. RURAL POLLS SP candidate roughed up, man killed
BJP candidate's supporters try to 'abduct' BDC member

Bahraich/ Lakhimpur Kheri (UP), July 9: A brother-in-law of a block development committee member was killed in Bahraich as he resisted an alleged attempt to abduct his relative by a BJP candidate's husband and supporters ahead of the polls for the block panchayat head.

In another incident in Lakhimpur Kheri, a Samajwadi Party (SP) candidate was allegedly manhandled by BJP workers, after which six policemen were suspended with the administration ordering a magisterial probe.

A woman BDC member's saree was also pulled in front of police officers, alleged the Congress, who sought an apology from the state government.

The Bahraich incident took place on Thursday night at Dinapurwa village when BJP candidate Sarita Yagyasaini's husband Sudhir Yagyasaini, along with her supporters and a gunner, reached block BDC member Yadurai Devi's house. They tried to abduct her to get her vote in the polls

Pawar may be examined by Koregaon probe panel

SONU SHRIVASTAVA
MUMBAI, JULY 9

Maharashtra government-appointed inquiry commission may record the statement of NCP chief Sharad Pawar in the Bhima Koregaon violence case next month. Ashish Satpute, inquiry commission lawyer said that it is tentatively decided to record witnesses' statements in Pune.

It is pertinent note that the NCP chief Sharad Pawar is one of the witnesses in the Bhima Koregaon violence case. Sources said that the inquiry commission may record the statement of NCP chief in August.

Secretary of the commission V.V. Palmnikar said, "We are yet to issue the summons to the witnesses in this case."

Recently, Bhima Koregaon accused Stan Swamy on Monday passed away in Mumbai's Bandra Hospital. He was 84.

On January 2, 2018 violence erupted at an event to mark 100 years of the Bhima-Koregaon battle, leaving one dead and several injured.

349 candidates declared elected unopposed

Lucknow, July 9: As many as 349 candidates for the block panchayat chief polls in Uttar Pradesh were declared elected unopposed on Friday, the last day for the withdrawal of nomination papers.

Now, the elections will be held for 476 posts on Saturday.

In a statement, State Election Commissioner Manoj Kumar said 1,778 nomination papers were received for 825 posts of the block panchayat chief, of which 68 were cancelled and 187 withdrawn.

As a result, now 1,710 candidates will go into the elections on Saturday, he said.

Kumar said the polling will be held from 11 am to 3 pm and the counting will take place after that. — PTI

Punjab lifts weekend curbs, opens malls, colleges, gyms

Chandigarh, July 9: The Punjab government on Friday lifted weekend and night curfews and allowed reopening of colleges, cinema halls, malls, restaurants, bars and gyms to those who have received at least one dose of Covid-19 vaccine.

Also, gathering of 100 people indoors and 200 outdoors have been allowed in the state in view of the improving Covid-19 situation as the case positivity rate dipped to 0.4 per cent.

Schools, however, will continue to remain closed. Chief minister Amarinder Singh directed

National Security Act will be invoked against the accused.

SP's district president Ramharsh Yadav alleged that police are working as an "agent" of the BJP due to which its members are indulging in such acts.

Meanwhile, in Kaushambi's Sirathu block, the police raided the residence of an independent candidate, finding 18 BDC members present there. They were taken to the Saini police station and later released after the intervention of BJP MLA Shitla Prasad Patel.

In Lakhimpur Kheri, Samajwadi Party's district president Ram Pal Yadav and others alleged that their party nominee and her proposer were manhandled by the ruling party leaders and activists. They were not allowed to submit the nomination papers, they claimed, adding video clips of the incident have surfaced on social media.

Later, on the complaint of the SP candidate, an FIR was lodged against some people, two of which has been named in the complaint. One of the accused — Yash Verma — was arrested while teams have been formed to nab the others, the police said. — PTI

the state police to issue challans to political leaders if they are found violating Covid protocols while holding rallies and protests.

According to an official statement, colleges, coaching centres and all institutes of higher learning shall be allowed to open by deputy commissioners subject to submission of a certificate that the teaching, non-teaching staff members and students have got at least one dose of vaccine at least two weeks ago.

Cinema halls, malls, restaurants, bars, spas, swimming pools, sports

complexes, museums and zoos have also been allowed to reopen with a condition that all staff members and eligible visitors have got at least one shot of the anti-Covid vaccine, it said.

Punjab had imposed curfew from 8 pm to 5 am daily and weekend curfew from 8 pm on Saturday up to 5 am on Monday, across the state.

Reviewing the situation, the chief minister said the situation will again be reviewed on July 20. Use of masks must be ensured at all times, he said while announcing the easing of restrictions. — PTI

ED to probe fake vaccination camps in Kolkata

RAJIB CHOWDHURI
KOLKATA, JULY 9

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) lodged an enforcement case information report (ECIR) and launched a probe in the fake Covid-19 vaccine racket in West Bengal by a bogus IAS officer allegedly linked to several Trinamul Congress heavyweights, on a day the Calcutta high court ruled out an immediate Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) probe in the case.

Apart from the vaccine scam, the ED also initiated five more ECIRs on the Prevention of Money Laundering Act charges to investigate the rampant sale of Covid-19 related medical essentials — Remdesivir, oxygen cylinders, pulse oximeters in the black market across Kolkata and beyond amid the pandemic.

The first of the six ECIRs is against Debanjan Deb who posed as joint commissioner of the Kolkata Municipal Corporation in

photos with two TMC ministers Firdah Hakim and Subrata Mukherjee, two MLAs Debasis Kumar and Lovely Maitra and two MPs — Dr Santanu Sen (Rajya Sabha) and actor Mimi Chakraborty (Lok Sabha) — at various state government offices and events.

While Mr Hakim is also the outgoing Kolkata mayor, it was Mimi who fell prey to a false Covidishield jab at a camp organised by Debanjan, the kingpin of the racket,

‘Legitimacy aspect’ of ruling Af shouldn’t be ignored: MEA

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI
NEW DELHI, JULY 9

There is a legitimacy aspect to who governs Afghanistan and the turn of events there has India concerned, external affairs minister (EAM) S. Jaishankar said in Moscow on Friday, in the backdrop of claims by the Taliban that it now controls 85 per cent of Afghan territory. Observers see the statement as India's view that only a democratic government formed by the will of the Afghan people should be seen as the legitimate government of the strife-torn nation and not the Taliban which wants to grab power by use of force and with the backing of Pakistan.

Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov, who held a joint media briefing with the EAM in the Russian capital, also confirmed that a foreign ministers' meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation



S. Jaishankar

(SCO)-member nations would be held in the Tajik capital Dushanbe next week which is expected to discuss the fluid situation in Afghanistan. The meeting is expected to be attended by EAM Jaishankar and also probably by Pakistani foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi. Both nations, along with Russia, China, and most of the Central Asian Republics are members of the SCO.

"Of course we are concerned at the direction of events in Afghanistan," Mr Jaishankar said while responding to a question during a joint press conference with his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov.

At the end of the day, who governs Afghanistan has a legitimacy aspect to it. That is something which cannot and should not be ignored," he said.

In his opening remarks at the media briefing, EAM Jaishankar said, "The situation in Afghanistan occupied a lot of our attention because it has a direct implication for regional security. We believe that the immediate need of the day is really a reduction in violence and if we have to see peace within Afghanistan and around Afghanistan, it's important for India and Russia to work together and ensure that much of the progress that we've seen in economic, social and democratic terms are maintained. We are both committed to an independent, sovereign, united and democratic Afghanistan."

Sarpanch rides donkey in MP village for rain

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY
BHOPAL, JULY 9

People in a Madhya Pradesh village on Friday tried a weird trick to end prolonged dry spell in the area by making the local sarpanch ride a donkey.

Villagers of Ratlam district's Dharad gram panchayat made their sarpanch Manoj Rathod ride a donkey around their village to "appease" the rain god, Indra Dev to open up the sky to save their standing soybean crop, which started withering due to prolonged dry spell.

"The area has not experienced rain since the monsoon broke in the state three weeks ago. The farmers in the village have raised soy-

bean crops in their agriculture lands. But, the crops have started withering due to lack of rain", Mr Rathod said.

According to him, there is a belief among the people in the region that a donkey ride by the village head will appease the rain god and ensure downpour in the area.

"The villagers approached me to ride a donkey around the village for rain. I readily conceded to their plea and rode the donkey," he added.

The donkey ride by the sarpanch which was accompanied by beating of cymbals and drums by the villagers, later ended at the village temple where the people worshipped the deity seeking divine blessings for a good rain.

Covid-hit Kerala now gears up to battle Zika

GILVESTER ASSARY
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, JULY 9

The Union health ministry has sent a six-member expert team to Kerala in the wake of detection of Zika virus cases for the first time in the state.

The Centre has assured all help to Kerala which is already struggling to cope with high number of Covid-19 cases.

In the wake of Zika virus cases, Tamil Nadu health department has decided to step up surveillance at border checkpoints.

The areas bordering Thiruvananthapuram district which has reported Zika virus infection, has been put under close watch. Special teams have been deployed at the checkpoints to examine people coming from outside the state.

With 13 more people tested positive for Zika in Thiruvananthapuram district, the number of total persons infected with the virus has gone up to 14 Of the samples of 19 persons sent to National Institute of Virology in Pune, 13 were found positive.

All are staff members of a private hospital in Thiruvananthapuram. The first case detected was that of a 24-year-old woman who delivered a baby in July 7.

Naga leaders ask rebels to heal rift

■ **Continued from Page 1**
groups has been continuing for over 23 years now. A final solution has been elusive because of the stand of the Naga groups, particularly the Isak-Muivah faction of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN), on a separate Naga flag and a separate Naga constitution.

While the NSCN (I-M), which has been in ceasefire mode since 1997, signed the Framework Agreement in August 2015, a conglomerate of at least six rebel outfits called the Naga National Political Groups (NNPG) had inked the Agreed Position in November 2017.

The members of the core committee, who took the note of long deadlock in the peace process, were of

the view that the Naga political groups' constant antagonism shown against each other through public space and in the media was sending out a wrong message to the people, even as all are pursuing the same aspiration for peace and political solution.

Pointing out the positive example set by the elected members of the Nagaland Legislative Assembly who stood above party affiliations to unite for the Naga political issue, the core committee said that the Naga political groups should make concerted efforts and listen to the voice of the people for unity and oneness.

The core committee also flagged the constant role and contributions of the churches, civil society and NGOs towards facilitating

peace and strengthening the peace process. It also asked all civil society groups and mass-based organisations and tribal hohos to make renewed efforts towards creating a conducive atmosphere for a political solution at the earliest.

The core committee said in its resolution: "All members of the core committee and the Parliamentary Committee on Naga Political Issue, including the two Members of Parliament, have come together under the same banner in line with the election manifestos of all political parties and commit to the people that the elected members are prepared to pave the way as and when an inclusive honourable and acceptable solution is arrived at."

‘Graded plan’ to tackle 3rd wave

■ **Continued from Page 1**
Central and state governments.

"The 'Graded Response Action Plan' was passed in the DDMA meeting today. No doubts will remain about when the lockdown will be imposed or when it will open. A discussion also held about the Delta Plus variant. We have to stop this variant from spreading in Delhi, for which the government is taking all necessary steps," Mr Kejriwal tweeted in Hindi.

"After detailed deliberations and presentations made by the health department and the Indian Council of Medical Research, a decision was taken to notify the Graded Response Action Plan that will objectively and transparently ensure an institutional and automatic

response with regards to enforcement measures, lockdowns and unlock based on criteria such as test positivity rate and quantum of cases," an expert present at the meeting said.

Concerns arising out of new Covid variants like Delta Plus and Lambda were discussed at length and measures like vaccination, genome sequencing, testing, tracking and surveillance were suggested as the most effective steps to mitigate their spread, other experts said. The colour codes based on positivity rate (on two consecutive days), cumulative number of new cases (over a week) and average oxygenated-bed occupancy (for a week) will designate four levels of alerts, officials said. According to the draft

action plan, shops and establishments of essential goods and services will be allowed to open under all four levels.

The "Yellow" (Level-1) alert will be sounded when the positivity rate crosses 0.5 per cent or new cases increase to 1,500 or oxygenated bed occupancy reaches 500.

The corresponding response will involve allowing construction, manufacturing activities and the opening of shops and establishments of essential goods.

However, shops and establishments of non-essential goods and services, and malls will open based on odd-even formula, from 10 am to 8 pm. Only one weekly market per zone with 50 per cent vendors will be allowed to open, the draft plan stated.

The next level of alert coded with the "Amber" colour (L-2) will come into force if the positivity rate rises above one per cent or new cases number 3,500 or oxygenated bed occupancy reaching 700. The "Amber" alert will invoke the same responses as "Yellow", except that malls and shops of non-essential goods and services will be allowed from 10 am to 6 pm.

The "Orange" (L-3) alert will be the next stage, which will kick in if the positivity rate crosses two per cent or new cases number 9,000 or oxygenated bed occupancy becomes 1,000.

The "Red" (L-4) alert will be the highest level and will come into force if the positivity rate crosses five per cent or new cases rise to 16,000 or oxygenated bed occupancy reaches 3,000.

away." The visiting commission members hinted at giving "due representation" to people belonging to Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes in J&K in a future Assembly. Mr Chandra, an ex-officio member of the Delimitation Commission, said: "In the past four days, the commission met 290 groups in Srinagar, Pahalgam, Kishtwar and Jammu. There has been an overwhelming response, and people travelled from long distances to meet us. We listened to every delegation patiently."

THE ASIAN AGE

10 JULY 2021

Shed moral high ground, time to level with Cairn

The Scottish company Cairn Energy's move to seize India's properties in France to recover a part of a \$1.7 billion arbitration award in a tax dispute is a matter of grave concern. A French court is said to have accepted Cairn's arguments and frozen 20 residential apartments owned by India worth about \$24 million. The company had earlier moved on similar legal grounds in New York to try and seize assets of Air India on the premise that the national carrier is as an "alter ego" of the State. The moves against the Government of India, widely publicised abroad, are likely to cause even more damage to the reputation of the country and its image as a reliable investment destination.

Both sides to this drawn out dispute — emanating from a far from principled invoking of a 2012 retrospective amendment to taxation law in 2014 to demand capital gains tax from Cairn which consolidated different assets in India in 2006 — keep averring that they are open to an amicable solution within India's legal framework. The onus to walk the talk on that route falls on the govern-

ment as it has been seen eternally challenging rulings in this case despite having lost in court and then in arbitration at The Hague in December 2020. In this regard, Cairn's reported offer to invest the entire proceeds in India seems an acceptable proposition, more than further allotment of hydrocarbon exploration sites as compensation.

The retrospective amendment of 2012 represents an avaricious tax demand threatening to open up cases stretching back to the decades since India opened up its market and began inviting foreign direct investments from around the world, many of them on the basis of bilateral investment treaties. The amendment was given shape to by UPA-2 in retaliation for losing in the Supreme Court when it had raised a tax demand on Vodafone for indirect acquisition of an Indian telecom company. Having spoken up volubly against 'tax terrorism' when in opposition, the BJP, in power since 2014, has only gone further down that route to make not only tax demands but also act in predatory manner in selling some of Cairn's assets to realise tax. It is easy to see where Cairn's recent actions to freeze Indian assets stems from.

India's obstinacy in challenging verdicts, even if they come from the country's top court, is reflective of a self-centred attitude which must necessarily change if the country wishes to live up to an image of a safe destination for foreign investments and is sincere about facilitating the ease of doing business. The legal jurisdiction in India is to be respected but if scope for arbitration exists, parties must be free to pursue it. Endless challenges to judicial verdicts pertaining to taxation and investment treaties are not conducive to an atmosphere of trust, which is important if owners of capital are to invest in India. This does not mean sovereign rights are to be abandoned, just that they can be abridged in a give-and-take process. A negotiated settlement of the dispute with Cairn is the best indicated course.

Augmenting healthcare

The first meeting of the new-look council of ministers led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has cleared an emergency Covid relief package of ₹23,123 crore. The Union budget for 2021-22 had a substantial hike in the outlay, from ₹93,000 crore in the previous financial year to ₹2.24 lakh crore, and the new package must be part of the government's spending plan for the sector for the year.

The government has indicated that the money will be spent on augmenting healthcare infrastructure in the country. With the third wave of the pandemic round the corner and the challenge of vaccinating all Indians ahead of the December 31, 2021, deadline staring the government in its face, the new minister has his task cut out. The package may look puny placed against the requirements but may offer the minister an auspicious starting point.

The second wave of the pandemic tested the strength of the healthcare infrastructure in the country, which proved to be simply unequal to the challenge. The government will have to ensure adequate number of hospital beds, intensive care units, ventilators, quantity of medicines, oxygen and vaccines before a third wave hits the nation. The minister and his team will have to travel at extra speed if the nation were to be spared the horrible sights that visited it in the past two months.

Another major challenge will be on vaccination. The government is confident that the supply of vaccine doses, which created the major problem soon after India launched its vaccination programme, will improve soon. According to Dr N.K. Arora, head of the National Expert Group on Vaccine Administration, the monthly availability of vaccine will touch 30 crore doses by September and that India will be able to meet the December 31 deadline. This, however, calls for close coordination with state governments as only well-coordinated efforts by the governments and all the stakeholders can keep the marauding micro-organism at bay.

THE ASIAN AGE

KAUSHIK MITTER
Editor

K. SUDHAAKAR
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Farrukh Dhondy
Cabbages & Kings



"The light goes out from the light house
No ships on this lonely shore
Home now to the seagull and creep-
ing mouse
The squawk of the seagulls soar.
The tide they say waits for no one
The waves crash on rocks with a roar
Time was never the slow one
Leaving behind what went before."

— From **Dildo, Dildo: Give Your Heart**, by Bachchoo

In today's world, the 'signalling' of 'virtue' could take many forms

England beat Denmark in the semi-finals of the European Football Cup and will now play Italy in the final on Sunday, July 11. For the last few weeks, the Euro matches have filled the streets, apart from honking cars deep into the night after the victories.

Very many Brexitwallas regard this contest as political metaphor, with England's victories being punishment for the recent stances of the European Union on vaccines, sausages and regulations affecting Northern Ireland.

In British league games and now in

the European tournament the teams, before each game, "take the knee". This ceremonial began after the murder of George Floyd by the Minneapolis police and this kneeling on one foot is a demonstration of support for the Black Lives Matter movement and symbolises a demonstration of opposition to all forms of racism.

Nevertheless, some fans, recently allowed back into the stadiums after the relaxation of Covid regulations, choose to boo the teams as they perform the ritual. There are several explanations for this rude opposition. Some of those who boo must be out and out racists, even opposed to black players in the team. Other may just feel that the importation of a political gesture into their sporting pastime is not necessary.

Commentators in the extreme right-wing British press attempt to excuse the booing protesters by characterising the kneeling teams, all of whom are composed of both black and white players, as "virtue signalers".

Most of the players who "take the knee" will probably be content to give support to the gesture, win or lose their games and go home to their

prosperous existences. The knee is certainly symbolic.

So it was with Tommie Smith and John Carlos, the black American athletes who stood on the winners' podium in the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City and raised their black-gloved fists to demonstrate their solidarity with the US civil rights movement. It is more than likely that those two athletes were not simply signalling their virtue but had through their lives in the United States confronted and battled against the American racist reality.

The only argument against "virtue signalling", which takes myriad forms in today's world, is that it stops at the gesture and does nothing more to put right the wrong that it symbolically attacks.

In some cases, there is nothing more than the signaller can really do. It's difficult to see what the footballers who "take the knee" can do to combat racism outside the football stadium.

Yes, the football clubs have come down hard on the idiots who make monkey noises and even throw banana skins when black footballers come on. This racist nastiness used to be prevalent in very many clubs

and has now, through the insistence of players and the management and fear of expulsion on the part of the racists, not gone away but gone into purdah.

Some who take the knee have gone further. Marcus Rashford, a Manchester United player now in the England squad, has campaigned in the last year for the government to continue to provide free school meals to those children from poorer families who were forced, through the Covid closure of schools, to stay at home. His stature as a football icon compelled Prime Minister Boris Johnson to accede to his demand. Britain's Oliver Twists were fed their free lunches.

Feeding hungry children who would otherwise go without an afternoon meal may have nothing, apparently, to do with Black Lives Matter and taking the knee, but I am sure that Rashford was inspired by his own memories and the large proportion of black children from poor families when he initiated his campaign.

There are other forms of virtue signalling which strike one as hypocritical. Politicians who take to riding bicycles to demonstrate that they are doing their bit for global warming

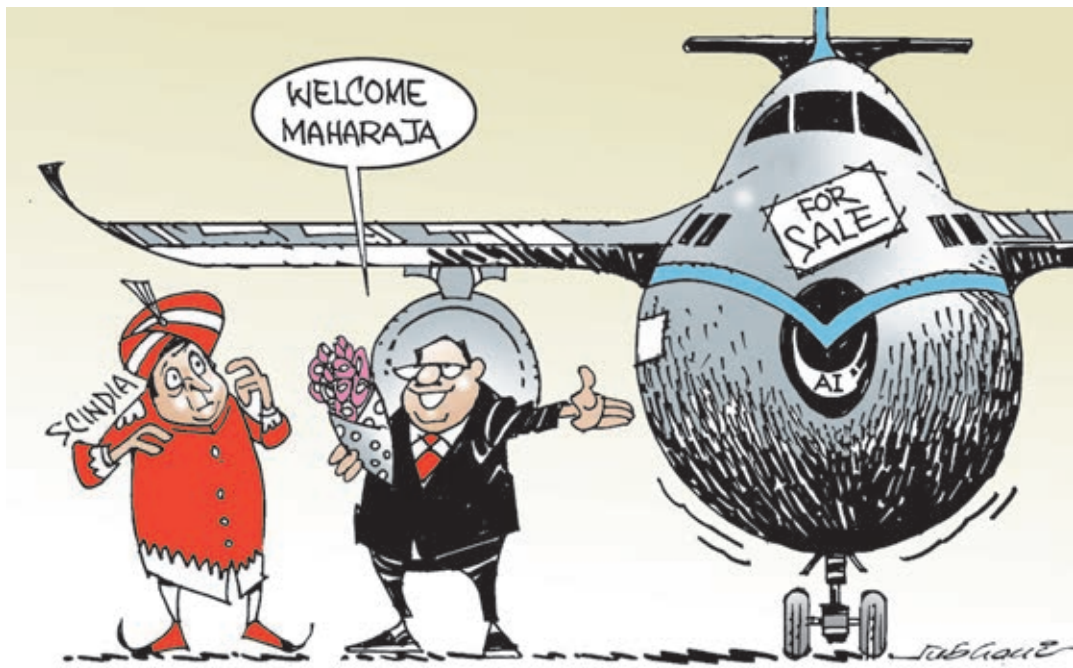
and in their official capacity set their policies against the reduction of harmful atmospheric emissions are part of this hypocritical brigade. Gentle reader, am I thinking of someone whose name is shortened to rhyme with Mojo? Yes, I am!

But perhaps I am being unfair. Boris Johnson may very well be riding a bike around town to sweat off some of his bulk and not to reduce the emission of toxic gases as he might emit some of these in his vigorous, slimming endeavours.

There are harmless forms of virtue signalling such as the demonstration of some of my friends never to drive a car and to travel by bus and to walk where possible. Even if ten billion people in the world resolved to do the same, it wouldn't reduce the percentage of global carbon emissions by more than several zeros after the decimal point.

There is, to my mind, another form of virtue signalling which has the potential to harm civilised life. But, as at the end of an episode of a web-series, I will use that allusion to these forms as what we in the screen-trades call a "cliff-hanger" and tell you what it is in a further column.

Subhani



Of a 'strategic' reshuffle & Fr Stan's death in custody



Shobhaa's Take

Stan Swamy was a universal "father" much beyond his religious calling as a highly respected Jesuit priest. He was also everybody's "grandpa", a beloved brother and uncle, who died an ignominious death last week. A death that could have been prevented had the authorities showed basic decency, kindness and some humanity towards a seriously ill, extremely frail 84-year-old charged with a crime never conclusively established by the State. Stan Swamy was the oldest person accused of terrorism in India! Whether or not he was "guilty", he was fully entitled to care and medical help at Taloja Jail and then in hospital, where he passed away of Covid-related complications before his bail plea could be heard. Not just Stan Swamy, but every single prisoner in India should be able to take human rights for granted as citizens of a democracy. Of course, that doesn't happen, has never happened. Most prisoners in are summarily stripped off all rights the moment they are put inside. Thousands rot in filthy, unhygienic jails for years, with no access to a fair trial... no justice, for God's sake! There are horror stories galore about the rampant abuse in Indian jails — abuse that goes undocumented and unpunished. Stan Swamy was one more victim of the system.

So far, there has not been even a murmur of an apology or any expression of regret at what took place with the man who was allegedly denied even a sipper to quench his thirst (he was a Parkinson's patient and couldn't hold a glass because his hand trembled). Instead, Swamy's sympathisers are being labelled as anti-nationals and trotted for supporting a "traitor". This is such a moronic and predictable pattern it doesn't warrant a

comment. Anybody who supports a Christian or Muslim activist is suspect. Why? Because Christian and Muslims have just one agenda — conversion. And Hindus? Never! Hindus convince, not convert. In the case of the Roman Catholic Stan Swamy, the State wanted to send out a strong signal — and the State succeeded. Extending public support to marked people like Stan Swamy is asking for trouble. Who wants that? End of the story. Protesters can conduct countless candlelight vigils and start online campaigns; the State really doesn't care a fig. Stan Swamy has been made an "example": this is what a despotic State can do to anybody seen as a disruptor. The reasoning is cold-blooded and cruel: how long can Father Stan's death be kept alive as an issue worth fighting for. Who will pursue it? At some stage, it will peter out — as these things invariably do. At the moment, the topic is "hot" — and there's competition of a perverse kind in the media. Television channels have promptly switched content.

What's more eyeballs-worthy: the death of a revered activist, or the death of a legendary actor? Whose ambulance is worth chasing — the late Dilip Kumar's or Stan Swamy's? Where are the "celebs" expressing sad thoughts for Stan Swamy? Wait a minute: how many celebs have even heard of Stan Swamy or the monumental tragedy over his death?

No, of course, it isn't fair to compare the passing at 98 of India's greatest actor who won the hearts of millions with the demise of an 84-year-old who spent decades in Jharkhand working with and for one of India's most marginalised communities, our tribals. But it's also a strong comment on media priorities that shape

India's public narratives. Non-stop and highly insensitive coverage with cameras shoved inside an ambulance, as a superstar's widow accompanied her life partner's body on its last journey, is SICKING! It's not "news", folks! Capturing the arrival of Bollywood stars at the *kabarasthan* is also not news. The near total blacking out of the tragedy of Stan Swamy's heartbreaking death: well, the blacking out itself constitutes "news". The obvious and sad truth is that most media outlets meekly surrendered to the administration's unstated but perfectly clear mandate ("no criticism allowed") and are happy to play ball. Boss, we have no choice left, they moan. It's that or facing heaven knows what in terms of retribution. This is India's reality. Freedom of expression is a "nice concept", but barely exists. Across the board and at every level, media and entertainment are being brought to heel, via various clever and cunning modes of absolute control. Newbies in the media business have happily gone along — they don't know any better! Their professional lives as journoes are being shaped by the current repressive environment, where all and any "opinion" that goes against unwritten but clearly understood diktats is instantly and harshly dealt with. The predominant feeling in the media is: Who wants to mess with these guys. We aren't here to change the world. It's just another job, *yaar*. No, it isn't!

The Cabinet shuffle seems well-timed and strategic. Hiring and firing is never easy; especially the firing. But if it's gotta be done, it's gotta be done!

For us, in Maharashtra, we are still open-mouthed about Narayan Rane's unexpected elevation. Mr Rane's sudden jump up the political ladder is a case of showing the Sena its place.

Our newly minted health minister — ummmm, okay! All eyes on the man: Gujarat MP Mansukh Mandaviya, a "padyatra" specialist, now expected to be on top of the third Covid-19 wave, not botch it all up, like his predecessor, Harsh Vardhan, of "end-game" infamy, did with the second. For starters, let's hope and pray the third wave will skip India, or at least won't be as lethal. Mr Mandaviya has been given the toughest portfolio. He will jolly well have to man up and deliver, as he did earlier with a few good initiatives in Gujarat, like the menstrual health hygiene programme, which was recognised by Unicef.

For us, in Maharashtra, we are still open-mouthed about Narayan Rane's unexpected elevation. Come on! Rane??? I am no fan of the Shiv Sena, so Mr Rane's sudden jump up the political ladder seems a case of showing the Sena its place. Of course, Devendra Fadnis is a master of that game and is responsible for Mr Rane's new job. For a man who was chief minister not all that long ago (Rane, not Fadnis), Sanjay Raut's taunt that Mr Rane was given a "micro" portfolio by Prime Minister Narendra Modi is not without basis.

The saga of Stan Swamy is already stale news. He is off the front page. And the nationwide outrage is rapidly shrinking. Given the ADS citizens suffer from, the only people mourning the octogenarian's death are the families of tribals he dedicated his life to. And of course Jesuits, who will honour his memory in their own unique way: by stepping up their service to humanity. What better recognition can there be for the wonderful man's whose immeasurable contribution to recognising the value of human dignity and extending help to the most marginalised of our land is best summed up when he shared these poignant lines: "A caged bird can still sing..." RIP!

Instagram handle: @ShobhaaDe; Twitter: @DeShobhaa

LETTERS

BAD OPTICS

The image of the "party with a difference" and the government it heads at the Centre certainly takes a severe beating when someone as notorious as Narayan Tatu Rane is inducted as a Cabinet minister (MSME). Mr Rane, his wife and two sons have been accused at different times of wrongdoing, including crime ranging from money laundering, unauthorised landgrab, assault of public servants and extortion. None of these charges have been allowed to reach legal conclusion. The excuse adduced for his elevation is checkmating the Shiv Sena in the Konkan belt. It's simply bad optics.

Bhaskar Roy
New Delhi

END VERBOSITY

THE SUPREME COURT'S comments on the need to end lengthy arguments by litigants must be welcomed. The mention of the Wren & Martin brings to mind the times when English language was taken seriously. It has been reported that chargesheets sometimes run into thousands of pages. This is a terrible waste of time and resource. Reading it would take days. There is a case for brevity everywhere in the nation. Verbosity should be discouraged.

Anthony Henriques
Mumbai

LET NADAL RETURN

RAFAEL NADAL'S decision to return to the competition by making his debut at the Citi Open in Washington must cheer his fans and admirers. The Spaniard, a 20-time Grand Slam winner, hasn't played since his French Open semifinal loss to Novak Djokovic last month. He also skipped Wimbledon and the Tokyo Olympics, saying his body needed time to rest and recover after the clay-court season. Nadal's return could bring back the much-needed sheen to men's tennis.

N.J. Ravi Chander
Bengaluru

Every Monday the best letter of the week wins ₹500. Email: asianage.letters@gmail.com.



SHORT TAKES

SKYDIVING PLANE
CRASHES IN
SWEDEN, 9 DEAD

Copenhagen: A small plane carrying skydivers crashed outside the Swedish city of Orebro, killing all nine people on board, police said on Friday. The dead included the pilot and eight passengers, police said. The victims were members of a local skydiving club, according to Orebro County Governor Maria Larsson.

Spokesperson Carl-Johan Linde of the Swedish Maritime Administration, which oversees air traffic, crash must have occurred "in connection" with the plane's takeoff.

The plane burst into flames upon impact on what appeared to be an open field.

U.S., COLOMBIAN
SUSPECTS HELD
IN MOISE KILLING

Port-au-Prince, Haiti: At least 28 people carried out the assassination of President Jovenel Moise, Haitian police said on Thursday, adding that 26 of them were Colombian and two were Americans of Haitian origin.

"We have arrested 15 Colombians and the two Americans of Haitian origin. Three Colombians have been killed while eight others are on the loose," national police director general Leon Charles said at a news conference.

On Wednesday police said four of the suspects had been killed. Charles did not explain the discrepancy.

He also said the "weapons and materials used by the assailants have been recovered."

PAKISTAN OPENS
SCHOOL FOR
TRANSGENDERS

Multan: Pakistan opened its first government-run school for transgender students in the central city of Multan, a provincial education minister said, promising to set up more such schools in the future.

The school, established by the educational department in Punjab province, where Multan is located, opened its doors on the first day of school with 18 students enrolled.

"We have provided them everything that is required" for their schooling, tweeted Murad Rass, Punjab's education minister. He added hopes that the school will help transgender youth get better job opportunities later on in life.

More trans students were still expected to enroll in time at the school in Multan, where classes are offered from grade 1-12. Human rights activists welcomed the school's opening.

BRITISH POLICE
OFFICER ADMITS TO
KILLING WOMAN

London: A British police officer pleaded guilty Friday to murdering a 33-year-old woman who was abducted as she walked home from a friend's house in south London.

Wayne Couzens previously admitted kidnapping and raping Sarah Everard, a marketing executive who went missing on March 3. Couzens entered a guilty plea to murder during a hearing at London's Central Criminal Court, appearing by video link from Belmarsh high-security prison.

A major police investigation was launched after Everhard's disappearance. Her body was found a week later in woodland more than 50 miles (80 kilometers) southeast of London.

The search for Everard and news of her killing caused a nationwide outcry.

EVERY MINUTE,
11 PEOPLE DIE OF
HUNGER: OXFAM

Cairo: The anti-poverty organization Oxfam says 11 people die of hunger each minute and that the number facing famine-like conditions around the globe has increased six times over the last year. In a report titled "The Hunger Virus Multiplies," Oxfam said on Thursday that the death toll from famine outpaces that of Covid-19, which kills around seven people per minute.

"The statistics are staggering, but we must remember that these figures are made up of individual people facing unimaginable suffering. Even one person is too many," said Oxfam America's President and CEO Abby Maxman.

The humanitarian group also said that 155 million people around the world now live at crisis levels of food insecurity or worse — some 20 million more than last year. Around two-thirds of them face hunger because their country is in military conflict.

US to end Afghan
ops on August 31

Status quo is not an option, says Prez Biden

Taliban: We control
85% of Afghanistan

Washington, July 9: The US military mission in Afghanistan will end on August 31, President Joe Biden announced on Thursday, as Afghan commandos battled the Taliban for control of a provincial capital in the most brazen assault by the militants since Washington stepped up its troop withdrawal.

Nearly 20 years after it invaded in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, the US military has "achieved" its goals in the country, killing Osama bin Laden, degrading Al-Qaeda and preventing more attacks on the United States, Biden said in a White House speech. "We are ending America's longest war," he said.

"The status quo is not an option," Biden said of staying in the country. "I will not send another generation of Americans to war in Afghanistan." "The United States cannot afford to remain tethered to policies created to respond to a world as it was 20 years ago," he said. "We need to meet the threats where they are today." Biden said the United States "did not go to Afghanistan to nation-build" and that the Afghan people alone should determine their future. But he acknowledged the uncertainty about what that future would look like.

Asked if a Taliban takeover was "inevitable," the president said: "No, it is not." But, he admitted, "the likelihood there is going to be one unified government in Afghanistan controlling the whole country is highly unlikely." "The Afghan government... has to come together," the president said. "They clearly have the capacity to sustain the government in place. The question is, will they generate the kind of cohesion to do it?" He expressed faith in Afghan forces, who for years have been trained by and received equipment from the United States, against the resurgent Taliban. — *AFP*

Kabul, July 9: The Taliban claimed on Friday to be in control of 85 percent of Afghanistan, including a key border crossing with Iran, following a sweeping offensive launched as US troops pull out of the war-torn nation.

Hours after President Joe Biden issued a staunch defence of the US withdrawal, the Taliban said fighters had seized the border town of Islam Qala — completing an arc of territory from the Iranian border to the frontier with China.

In Moscow, a visiting delegation of Taliban officials said they controlled about 250 of Afghanistan's 398 districts — a claim impossible to independently verify and disputed by the government.

Separately, Taliban spokesman Zabihullah

Mujahid said the Islam Qala border crossing was "under our full control", while government officials in Kabul said a fight-back was under way.

"All Afghan security forces including the border units are present in the area, and efforts are under way to recapture the site," interior ministry spokesman Tareq Arian said.

Hours earlier, Biden said the US military mission would end on August 31 — nearly 20 years after it began — having "achieved" its goals.

But he admitted it was "highly unlikely" Kabul would be able to control the entire country. "The status quo is not an option," Biden said of staying in the country. "I will not send another generation of Americans to war in Afghanistan." — *AFP*

W.H.O WORRIES
ABOUT AFGHAN
HEALTHCARE

Geneva, July 9: The World Health Organisation voiced deep concern Friday over healthcare access in Afghanistan amid a sweeping Taliban offensive as US troops pull out of the war-torn country.

"It's a terribly concerning situation, and it's very fluid right now," said Rick Brennan, the WHO emergencies director in the Eastern Mediterranean region.

"We are clearly concerned about the decline in the access to healthcare," he added, speaking to journalists in Geneva via video-link from Cairo. — *AFP*

CHINA MOVES ITS
CITIZENS FROM
AFGHANISTAN

Beijing, July 9: China sent a flight to bring home 210 of its nationals from Afghanistan, state media reported on Friday, as the US military prepares to leave the country and the security situation grows increasingly fraught.

The *Global Times* newspaper published by the ruling Communist Party said the Xiamen Airlines flight departed July 2 from the capital Kabul and landed in the central province of Hubei.

The airline confirmed the report in a post on its Twitter-like Weibo account but offered no additional details. — *AP*

Pfizer to seek OK
for third vax dose

Washington, July 9: Pfizer is about to seek US authorisation for a third dose of its Covid-19 vaccine, saying that another shot within 12 months could dramatically boost immunity and maybe help ward off the latest worrisome

mutant. Research from multiple countries shows the Pfizer shot and other widely used Covid-19 vaccines offer strong protection against the highly contagious delta variant, which is spreading rapidly around the world and now accounts for most new US infections.

Two doses of most vaccines are critical to develop high levels of virus-fighting antibodies against all versions of the coronavirus, not just the delta variant — and most of the world still is desperate to get those initial protective doses as the pandemic continues to rage. But antibodies naturally wane over time, so studies also are underway to tell if and when boosters might be needed.

Pfizer's Dr. Mikael Dolsten said that early data from the company's booster study suggests people's antibody levels jump five- to 10-fold after a third dose,

RISKS OF ILLNESS,
DEATH IN KIDS
VERY LOW: STUDY

London, July 9: The risk of severe illness and death from SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes Covid-19, is extremely low in children and teenagers, according to a comprehensive analyses of public health data in the UK.

However, the research found that catching Covid-19 increases the likelihood of serious illness in the most vulnerable young people, those with pre-existing medical conditions and severe disabilities.

The findings, led by researchers at University College London (UCL), University of Bristol, University of York and the University of Liverpool, inform vaccine and shielding policy for the under-18s. — *PTI*

compared to their second dose months earlier. In August, Pfizer plans to ask the Food and Drug Administration for emergency authorisation of a third dose, he said. — *AP*

Zaila wins \$50,000 for 'murraya'; Indian-Americans, dominating for years, come 2nd and 3rd

First African American wins US spelling bee

Washington, July 9: Zaila avant-garde, a 14-year-old basketball prodigy, has won the 2021 Scripps National Spelling Bee, becoming the first African American contestant to win in 93 editions of the prestigious competition.

Indian-Americans, who have been dominating the National Spelling Bee for years, had to be satisfied with the 2nd and 3rd positions. Chaitra Thummala,

a 12-year-old from San Francisco and Bhavana Madini, 13, from New York won the second and third place at the keenly-fought competition, which was attended by US First Lady Jill Biden. avant-garde correctly spelt "Murraya" — a genus of tropical Asiatic and Australian trees having pinnate leaves and flowers to win the competition and \$50,000 prize money on Thursday.

"It was the smile and twirls for us! After tying for 370th place in 2019, #Speller133 Zaila avant-garde wins the 2021 Scripps National Spelling Bee. Congrats to all of our spellers. We're proud of everyone's poise and courage in facing the dictionary. #SpellingBee #TheBeesBack," Scripps National Spelling Bee tweeted after the competition, which was not held

UNFORGOTTEN
TRAGEDIESTHE 22-STORY FR
TOWER FIRE IN
DHAKA

On March 28, 2019, at least 25 people died after a fire broke out in the 22-storey FR Tower in Dhaka, trapping hundreds of office workers.

CHAWKBAZAR
BUILDING FIRE IN
DHAKA

On February 21, 2019, at least 70 people died after a massive fire raced through several apartment buildings also used as chemical warehouses in a centuries-old part of Bangladesh's capital, Dhaka.

RANA PLAZA
COLLAPSE

At least 1,130 people died when Dhaka's Rana Plaza nine-storey factory complex collapsed in April 2013 - one of the world's worst industrial tragedies.

DHAKA
CHEMICAL FIRE

Bangladesh's deadliest industrial blaze was in June 2010, when 117 people died in a fire that ripped through one of Dhaka's most densely populated areas.

PACKAGING
FACTORY FIRE

A fire triggered by a boiler explosion tore through a packaging factory north of the capital in September 2016, killing 24 people.

Rupganj, July 9: A massive blaze tore through a Bangladesh factory killing at least 52 people trapped by flames that forced many workers to leap for their lives from upper floors, police said on Friday.

About 30 people were injured and hundreds of distraught relatives and other workers waited anxiously outside the food factory as the fire continued to rage.

The inferno was the latest to tarnish Bangladesh's safety record marred by a series of disasters in industrial complexes and apartment buildings.

In February 2019 at least 70 people died when an inferno ripped through Dhaka apartments where chemicals were illegally stored.

The latest fire broke out at Hashem Food and Beverage factory in Rupganj, an industrial town outside Dhaka, on Thursday afternoon and was still raging almost 24 hours later.

Police initially gave a toll of three dead but it rose dramatically as firefighters reached the upper floors and started bringing out dozens of bodies of trapped workers.

The charred victims

I AND 13 other workers ran to the roof after the fire broke out on the ground floor and black smoke quickly choked the whole factory. Firefighters brought us down by using rope.

MOHAMMAD SAIFU, a factory worker

were piled in a fleet of ambulances to take them to mortuaries amid anguished shouts and tears from people watching in the streets.

Police dispersed hundreds of people who blocked nearby roads and clashed with officers.

Some of the more than 30 people injured jumped from the upper floors as flames quickly engulfed the six-storey building, police inspector Sheikh Kabirul Islam said.

Emergency services were battling to put out the fire on the fifth and sixth floors. Firefighters rescued 25 people from the roof of the factory that made noodles fruit juices and candy were made.

"Once the fire is under control, we will conduct a search and rescue operation inside. Then we can confirm any further casualties, if any," Debashish Bardhan, fire service spokesman, said.

Dinu Moni Sharma, head of the Dhaka fire department, said the fire took off because highly flammable chemicals and plastics had been stockpiled inside.

Mohammad Saiful, a factory worker who escaped, said dozens of people were inside when the blaze erupted.

"On the third floor, gates on both stairwells were closed. Other colleagues are saying there were 48 people inside. I don't know what happened to them," he said.

Mamun, another worker, said he and 13 other workers ran to the roof after the fire broke out on the ground floor and black smoke quickly choked the whole factory.

"Firefighters brought us down by using rope," he told reporters.

As clouds of smoke billowed from the factory building, many of the waiting relatives said they feared the worst.

Nazrul Islam said: "We came here because my niece was not receiving our phone calls for a while. And now the phone is not ringing at all. We are worried."

— *AFP*

France to pull over 2,000
troops from Africa's Sahel

Paris, July 9: France will withdraw more than 2,000 troops from an anti-extremism force in Africa's Sahel region and pivot its military presence to specialised regional forces instead, President Emmanuel Macron said on Friday.

Macron announced last month a future reduction of France's military presence, arguing it's no longer adapted to the need in the area. The French Barkhane force, operating in Mali, Chad, Niger, Burkina Faso and Mauritania, had also met opposition from some Africans.

After discussions Friday with leaders of the African countries involved, Macron announced that France would reduce its force to 2,500 to 3,000 troops over the long term. The country currently has 5,000 troops in the region. "We will do it in stages,"



French President Emmanuel Macron (Right) and Nigers President Mohamed Bazoum (Left) deliver a speech during a press conference at the Elysee presidential Palace, in Paris on Friday. — *AFP*

Macron said, with the next six months focused on dismantling the Barkhane operation and reorganising the troops. French troops have been present in Mali since 2013, when they intervened to force Islamic extremist rebels from power in towns across the country's north. Operation

Serval was later replaced by Barkhane and was expanded to include other countries in an effort to help stabilize the broader Sahel region. Islamic militants, though, have continued to launch devastating attacks against the militaries fighting them as well as increasingly against civilians. — *AP*

ISRAEL TARGETS
HAMAS' CRYPTO
ACCOUNTS

Jerusalem, July 9: Israel said Thursday it will begin seizing cryptocurrency accounts used by the Palestinian Hamas group to raise money for its armed wing.

Israeli Defense Minister Benny Gantz ordered security forces to seize the accounts after a joint operation "uncovered a web of electronic wallets" used by Hamas to raise funds using bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies, the ministry said.

It said Hamas has been waging an online campaign to raise donations for its military wing, efforts that accelerated after the 11-day Gaza war in May. Cryptocurrencies such as bitcoin are favored for illicit transactions because they are perceived as hard to trace. — *AP*

— *PTI*



quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	52386.19	-0.35
Nifty 50	15689.80	-0.24
\$&P 500*	4,364.60	1.01
Dollar (₹)	74.63	0.12
Pound Sterling (₹)	102.98	0.01
Euro (₹)	88.47	-0.07
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	46,844*451	0.96
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	75.56	1.94
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.186	1.01
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.343	0.055

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Forex reserves rise by \$1 bn to record \$610 bn

India's foreign exchange reserves swelled by \$1.013 billion to touch a lifetime high of \$610.012 billion in the week ended July 2, RBI data showed. In the previous week ended June 25, the reserves had jumped by \$5.066 billion to reach \$608.999 billion. Foreign currency assets, a major component of the overall reserves, surged by \$748 million to \$566.988 billion. Gold reserves climbed \$76 million to \$36.372 billion.

Gold bond tranche priced at ₹4,807/gm



The issue price for Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme 2021-22, which will open for subscription for five days from July 12, has been fixed at Rs 4,807 per gram of gold, the RBI said. For the SGB Scheme 2021-22-Series IV, or the fourth tranche, "the nominal value of the bond works out to Rs 4,807 per gram of gold," the RBI said. The government provides a discount of Rs 50 per gram to investors applying online.

MSN Labs in pact with DRDE for Covid drug 2-DG

MSN Laboratories said it has entered into a licence agreement with the Defence Research & Development Establishment (DRDE) for the manufacturing, distribution and marketing of 2-Deoxy-D-Glucose (2-DG), used for the treatment of Covid-19. Developed by the DRDO, 2-DG has been granted permission by the Drug Controller General of India for emergency use as adjunct therapy in moderate to severe patients.

Volvo Car India posts 52% growth in H1

Swedish luxury carmaker Volvo Car India said it had posted 52 per cent growth in its retail sales for January-June 2021. Volvo sold 713 cars in H1 2021 against 469 units in H1 2020. The growth was led by SUV XC60. "A 52 per cent growth in the high-end luxury mobility during a highly depressed consumer sentiment phase...shows the confidence the Indian consumer has in Brand Volvo," said Jyoti Malhotra, MD, Volvo Car India.

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■ Anti-fraud rule applies to RRBs, co-ops too
Forced leave must for key bank staff

FALAK NAAZ SYED
MUMBAI, JULY 9

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has asked banks to compulsorily send employees posted in sensitive positions or areas of operation on 'mandatory leave' for a few days, but not less than 10 working days, in a single spell every year without giving any prior intimation to them. The norms are an attempt to prevent frauds. Sensitive areas are namely treasury, currency chests, risk modelling and model validation.

The 'no prior intimation' clause in the updated instructions on 'mandatory leave' is aimed at maintaining an element of surprise and is part of prudent operational risk management measures. In a communication to lenders, including rural development banks and cooperative banks, the RBI instructed them to ensure "that the employees, while on 'mandatory leave, do not have access to any physical or virtual resources related to their work responsibilities, with the exception of internal/corporate email which is usually available to all employees for general purposes."

"As a prudent operational risk management measure, the banks shall put in place a 'mandatory leave' policy wherein the employees posted in sensitive positions or areas of operation shall be compulsorily sent on leave for a few days (not less than 10



FEDERAL BANK CHIEF GETS 3-YR EXTENSION

Mumbai, July 9: The RBI has approved the reappointment of Shyam Srinivasan as the MD & CEO of the Federal Bank for a period of three years, w.e.f. September 23, 2021 till September 22, 2024. Srinivasan joined the bank as its MD & CEO on September 23, 2010 and has become its longest serving MD & CEO after founder late K. P. Hormis.

working days) in a single spell every year, without giving any prior intimation to these employees, thereby maintaining an element of surprise," said the central bank in a notification.

The RBI said that banks should, as per their board-approved policy, prepare a list of sensitive positions to be covered under 'mandatory leave' requirements and the list shall be reviewed periodically. Implementation of this policy shall be

reviewed under the supervisory process.

The apex bank said that its revised instructions on mandatory leave for employees will be applicable to all banks and have to be complied with within six months.

The central bank's earlier instructions dated April 23, 2015 on 'Mandatory Leave' policy for employees posted in sensitive positions or areas of operation did not have the 'element of surprise' part in it. That means employees could decide when they want to go on the annual mandatory leave.

The bank should also identify such highly sensitive positions where the bank will, without any prior intimation, advise the employee to be away from his desk for a specified number of working days each year.

As per a circular of 2011 on 'Findings of Forensic Scrutiny-Guidelines for prevention of frauds', banks were advised to immediately put in place 'staff rotation' policy and policy for 'mandatory leave'.

PHARMEASY IN FUNDS TALKS WITH SOFTBANK

BAIJU KALESH
JULY 9

SoftBank Group Corp is in discussions to invest in API Holdings Pvt Ltd, which owns India's largest online pharmacy chain Pharmeasy, according to people familiar with the matter.

API is seeking a valuation of at least \$5.6 billion in a new funding round, said one of the people, who asked not to be identified as the information is private. SoftBank could invest \$150 million to \$200 million into the online pharmacy owner, the people said.

API plans to reach out to other potential investors for the funding round, one of the people said. The company is targeting a listing in the next 12 to 18 months, the person said.

A new round would mean API Holdings is tapping the market shortly after it finished a fundraising exercise. The company completed a series F round that raised \$500 million and valued the firm at nearly \$4 billion, its co-founder and chief executive officer Siddharth Shah said on Bloomberg TV on Friday.

—Bloomberg

Ola to get \$500 mn from Temasek, Plumwood

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, JULY 9

ANI Technologies, parent of Ola, will receive a funding of \$500 million from Temasek, Plumwood Investment and Fort Canning.

The cab aggregator, which reportedly is aiming for an initial public offering, is keen to capitalise on people's aversion to public transport in the pandemic phase.

The investors have filed notices with Competition Commission of India as certain affiliates or PE funds managed have investments in companies that are in related businesses.

As per the funding proposal, Plum Wood, which is managed by Warburg Pincus, will acquire a minority shareholding in ANI. In a separate notice, MacRitchie, which is an indirect wholly owned subsidiary of Temasek Holdings, and Fort Canning have sought the CCI's approval.

Ola founder Bhavish Aggarwal too will acquire additional rights in ANI.

"Over the last 12 months, we have made our ride hailing business more robust, resilient and efficient," Aggarwal said.

The fresh investment would take the overall funding received by Ola from various investors to more than \$4 billion.

RP's have to update bourses of NCLT orders in 30 mins

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, JULY 9

In the light of delays observed in dissemination of oral NCLT orders to the market, stock exchanges will issue a detailed guideline to CIRP companies and the resolution professional (RP) on compliance and disclosure requirements as per Sebi regulation, NSE and BSE said in separate releases.

The RP now has to inform, through the stock exchanges, the impact of approved resolution plan on the existing shareholders and investors about the status of listing, the value of holding of existing holders, write off/ cancellation/ extinguishment of existing equity shares, preference shares, debentures, etc.

Exchanges in coordination with each other will suspend the trading in a particular company on immediate basis in instances where the resolution plan provides that the value of the listed securities is considered zero and company to be delisted or where the entire equity capital is reduced/ cancelled/ extinguished without any payment to the existing equity shareholders, the NSE said.

The Sebi Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements (LODR) Regulation, amended in 2018, mandates disclosures at various stages by companies undergoing corporate insolvency resolution process (CIRP).

"In the recent past, we have come across instances where the approved resolution plan provides for delisting of



the company or write off/ cancellation/ extinguishment of existing equity shares without any pay-out/consideration to the existing shareholders. However, it is observed that there is a considerable time lag between the pronouncement of oral order by NCLT and the final written order by NCLT," the NSE said.

"Companies generally hold on to the information and do not make any/ timely disclosure to the stock exchanges until receipt of a written copy of the order. By this time, the information may be available to a select group of people and may create information asymmetry and confusion in the market," it added.

"The exchange shall issue a detailed guidance note to CIRP companies and the resolution professional (RP) on compliance and disclosure requirements as per Sebi LODR Regulations, which will be uploaded on the exchange website, an email shall be sent to all the companies which are under CIRP informing them about the guidance note," it said.

The RP in compliance with Sebi LODR Regulations shall disclose the fact of approval of resolution plan on oral pronouncement or otherwise of the order on immediate

basis and not later than 30 minutes, the NSE said.

"Further, the companies/ the RP shall be guided by the provisions of the SEBI LODR Regulations and shall maintain the confidentiality of the resolution plan until details are not submitted on the exchange platform," the NSE said.

As soon as a company is admitted into CIRP, the stock exchange will identify and tag the security in a manner that will be easy for the members and market participants to know that the security is currently into IBC proceedings. The list of securities will also be available on the exchange website. The exchange will continue to provide an alert at the time of order entry informing the market participants that the scrip is undergoing CIRP. Members shall also be advised to incorporate this alert promptly in their front-end systems.

"Since this alert will be available from the day of admission into CIRP till the day of suspension of the company/ exit from CIRP proceedings pursuant to NCLT order, the market participants shall be clearly aware of the status of the company and shall exercise necessary due diligence while trading in the security," NSE said.

Gadkari plans townships along highways

New Delhi, July 9: The Road Transport and Highways Ministry (MoRTH) will seek the Cabinet's approval for allowing construction of smart cities, townships, logistic parks and industrial clusters along the national highways, Union minister Nitin Gadkari said on Friday.

Addressing a virtual event, Gadkari said his aim is to construct world-class highway networks and the road transport and highways ministry has chalked out a plan for monetising existing highways projects for infra capital generation.

"And now we have prepared a Cabinet note for approval...for making roadside townships, smart cities, logistic parks, indus-



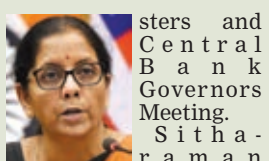
Nitin Gadkari

trial clusters," he said. "We are making 400 roadside amenities," Gadkari added. He said the ministry is now submitting a scheme for the second phase of Bharatmala Pariyojana that is more than 65,000 km to 70,000 km, and resolution of claims worth Rs 41,500 crore.

TECH CRITICAL TO CLIMATE FIGHT: FM

New Delhi, July 9: Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday emphasised on the role of technology in fighting climate change and called for international cooperation to increase supply of alternative sources of energy and technologies.

The minister participated virtually in the G20 High-Level Tax Symposium on Tax Policy and climate change, organised by Italy ahead of the 3rd G20 Finance Mini-



sters and Central Bank Governors Meeting. Sitharaman highlighted that in India, fiscal policy options are used for better environmental outcomes and concessional tax rates are in place to promote use of renewables, the finance ministry said in a series of tweets.

"We are making parking plazas, logistic parks...we are now planning to make tunnels worth Rs 2.5 lakh crore," Gadkari said.

—PTI

Maruti rolls out digital car finance facility across India

MICHAEL GONSALVES
PUNE, JULY 9

Maruti Suzuki, India's biggest car maker, on Friday rolled-out its digital platform to provide customers end-to-end online car financing solutions across the country.

The maker of popular car models Baleno and Ciaz

had introduced Maruti Suzuki Smart Finance in limited cities in December 2020.

It has now been made available across India for customers of both Arena (mass market car retail chain) and Nexa (premium cars outlet).

To facilitate this, it has on-board 14 financiers,

including HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, Axis Bank, SBI, IndusInd Bank, Bank of Baroda, Mahindra Finance and Sundaram Finance.

With these financiers, buyers can choose the right finance partner, selecting the best-suited loan product, completing all the finance related formalities

and disbursal of the loan, online.

In fact, even before walking into a car dealership, most potential buyers already start their shopping process online—browsing cars and finance options, the company said.

The company has also integrated the feature for exchange of old cars.

90-MINUTE | RIDE

It'll be the first fully crewed test flight to the edge of space
Branson flies to space aboard his rocket plane tomorrow

STEVE GORMAN
JULY 9

Decades after burnishing his reputation as a wealthy daredevil mogul in a series of boating and hot-air balloon expeditions, Richard Branson is poised to promote his burgeoning astro-tourism venture by launching himself to the final frontier.

Branson's Virgin Galactic Holding Inc is due on Sunday to send the company's passenger rocket plane, the VSS Unity, on its first fully crewed test flight to the edge of space, with the British billionaire founder among the six individuals strapping in for the ride.

The gleaming white spaceplane will be borne by a twin-fuselage carrier jet dubbed VMS Eve (named for Branson's mother) to an altitude of 50,000 feet, where Unity will be released and soar by rocket power in an almost vertical climb through the outer fringe of Earth's atmosphere.

At the apex of its flight some 55 miles (89 km) above the New Mexico desert, the crew will experience a few minutes of weightlessness before making a gliding descent back to Earth.

If all goes according to plan, the flight will last about 90 minutes and end where it began—on a runway at Spaceport America near the aptly



Richard Branson

named town of Truth or Consequences.

Virgin's Unity 22 mission marks the 22nd test flight of the spacecraft, and the company's fourth crewed mission beyond Earth's atmosphere.

But it will be the first to carry a full complement of space travellers—two pilots and four "mission

specialists," Branson among them.

Although the mission is seen as a potential milestone in helping transform citizen rocket travel into a mainstream commercial venture, spaceflight remains an inherently hazardous endeavour.

An earlier prototype of the Virgin Galactic rocket plane crashed during a test flight over California's Mojave Desert in 2014, killing one pilot and seriously injuring another.

If successful, Sunday's flight will also give Branson bragging rights to besting rival Jeff Bezos and his space company, Blue Origin, in what has been popularised as a

"billionaire space race." Bezos, founder of online retail giant Amazon.com, is slated to fly aboard Blue Origin's suborbital rocketship, the New Shepard, later this month.

Branson's official job on his flight is to "evaluate the private astronaut experience," and his observations will be used to "enhance the journey for all future astronaut customers," according to Virgin's press materials.

But Marco Caerres, a senior space analyst for the Virginia-based consulting firm Teal Group, said the Branson and Bezos ride-alongs were each "a bit of a publicity stunt."

—Reuters

SHORT TAKES

De Silva refutes Arjuna's remark

Mumbai: The legendary Aravinda De Silva says the Indian cricket has so much depth that the team selected for the Sri Lanka tour can not be termed a "second-string" side, as claimed by his former teammate Arjuna Ranatunga. An Indian team packed with youngsters under the leadership of Shikhar Dhawan is in Sri Lanka for a white-ball tour, starting with a three-match ODI series from July 13. World Cup-winning former captain Ranatunga had slammed the country's cricket board for agreeing to host a second string Indian team, saying that it is nothing short of an "insult." "India has got (an) enormous amount of talent going around at the moment and there is no way you call any side a second string," De Silva said. — *PTI*

England blow out Pakistan in 1st ODI

Cardiff: Less than 24 hours after training together for the first time, an emergency England side made light of chaotic circumstances to thrash Pakistan in the first one-day international by nine wickets on Thursday. With 16 first-choice players in isolation following a Covid-19 outbreak, and a handful of others out injured, a shadow squad was scrambled to contest the three-match series and responded with a magnificent effort. Five debuts were handed out before the toss, with Crawley, Phil Salt, John Simpson, Lewis Gregory and Brydon Carse inducted, as England fielded a side boasting just 128 ODI caps. — *AFP*
Brief scores: Pakistan 141 (Fakhar Zaman 47, Shadab Khan 30; Saqib Mahmood 4/42) lost to England 142/1 (Dawid Malan 68 (not out), Zak Crawley 58 (not out); Shaheen Shah Afridi 1/22).

Anand in second spot after draw

Zagreb: Indian Grandmaster Viswanathan Anand drew both his seventh and eighth round games on Friday in the Rapid event of Croatia Grand Chess Tour and was in joint second spot. The former world champion, playing black pieces, was held to a draw by Croatian GM Ivan Saric in 48 moves in a Sicilian Four Knights variation game. Earlier, in the seventh round, Anand shared the honours with Polish GM Jan-Krzysztof Duda in a 74-move Ruy Lopez game. Anand has so far won two games, drawn five and lost one to Maxime Vachier-Lagrave. Interestingly, all games in rounds seven and eight were draws. Top-seed Ian Nepomniachtchi of Russia continued to lead the standings with 10 points with Anand. — *PTI*

Kaitano sparkles, but Zimbabwe trail

Harare: Opening batsman Takudzwanashe Kaitano top scored with a gritty 87 as Zimbabwe saved the follow-on against Bangladesh before being bowled for 276 on Friday in their first innings of a one-off Test at Harare Sports Club. The home side still conceded a first innings lead of 192 after Bangladesh posted 468 in their first innings. A brave, patient 311-ball innings by Kaitano ended when he was caught down the legside by wicketkeeper Liton Das, trying to flick Mehidy Hasan Miraz away through midwicket. Off-spinner Mehidy took 5-82. **Brief scores:** Bangladesh 468 (Mahmudullah 150 n.o., Liton 95, Muzarabani 4/94) vs Zimbabwe 275 (Kaitano 87, Taylor 81, Miraz 5/82, Shakib 4/82).

Suns beat Bucks to seize 2-0 lead

Phoenix: Devin Booker scored 31 points and Chris Paul added 23 on Thursday to spark Phoenix over Milwaukee 118-108 and give the Suns a commanding lead in the NBA Finals. Phoenix's Mikal Bridges scored a playoff career-high 27 points for the Suns, who seized a 2-0 edge in the best-of-seven series, which shifts to Milwaukee for games three and four on Sunday and Wednesday. — *AFP*

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LAST TANGO

It's Messi vs Neymar in Copa America showdown

Rio de Janeiro, July 9: Former Barcelona teammates Lionel Messi and Neymar will line up opposite each other in Saturday's Copa America final looking to end a hoodoo that has also affected some of their countries' greatest players.

Like Brazil's Pele and Diego Maradona of Argentina before them, neither Messi nor Neymar has ever won the Copa. That statistic will change for one of them in the dream final at Rio de Janeiro's iconic Maracana stadium.

For six-time Ballon d'Or winner Messi, this will be his fourth Copa final and perhaps his last chance to finish on the winning side.

He's been his team's standout performer, as ever, scoring four goals and creating five more — the tournament leader in both categories.

But at 34, this may well be his last Copa and next year's World Cup could be his last major international tournament altogether.

So far, finals have led only to disappointment for Messi having lost in 2007, 2015 and 2016 at the Copa, and seen his side beaten 1-0 by Germany at the 2014 World Cup.

Some people believe winning something with Argentina is Messi's only remaining professional goal.

"We'll try to stop him achieving this objective," said Brazil centre-back Marquinhos.

"As much as Messi, we also have players that deserve this title ... like our own 'Ney' who wasn't there for the last Copa," he added.

At 29, Neymar has a bit more time on his side but he was injured and absent two years ago when Brazil won their ninth title on home soil, beating Peru 3-1 in the final.

But as well as the two superstars lining up on



Argentina's Lionel Messi (right) and Brazil's Neymar will clash in the Copa America final in Rio de Janeiro. — *Twitter*



opposite sides on Saturday, this is a classic match between two world heavyweights.

"We're going to play a final against our eternal rivals, the lifelong ones, the two most powerful national teams in South America and we hope ... it will be a great match," said Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni.

"Brazil versus Argentina is much more than a simple game of football ... these jerseys make the world stand still to watch their games.

That represents the history of Brazil-Argentina,"

Live on TV

COPA AMERICA
Final: Brazil vs Argentina from 5.30 am (Sunday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

added Marquinhos.

Incredibly, these two sides are not even the two most successful ones in Copa history, with Uruguay having won 15 titles to Argentina's 14 and Brazil's nine.

In what is the 47th edition of the Copa, this is also just the fourth time these two have met in the

final, with Argentina triumphing the first time in 1937 and Brazil coming out on top in 2004 and 2007.

And that is despite having faced each other more than 100 times in their history.

They have been by far the strongest two sides in the competition, even if Argentina rode their luck a touch in their semi-final penalty shoot-out win over Colombia.

The two squads are impressive for their strength in depth.

In their semi-final victory over Peru — and

despite Manchester City forward Gabriel Jesus being suspended — Brazil left the likes of Liverpool's Roberto Firmino, Flamengo hot-shot Gabriel Barbosa and Real Madrid starlet Vinicius Junior on the bench.

"Argentina are not just Lautaro and Messi, we cannot only concentrate on those two," said Brazil midfielder Casemiro.

"They're great players, world class players, but if Argentina have reached the final it's because of the (whole) group, we have to respect this." — *AFP*

Berrettini 1st Italian in Wimbledon final

London, July 9: Matteo Berrettini became the first Italian to reach a Wimbledon singles final on Friday with a four-sets victory against Hubert Hurkacz.

Berrettini claimed a 6-3, 6-0, 6-7 (3/7), 6-4 win over his Polish opponent who had knocked out eight-time champion Roger Federer in the quarter-finals.

World number nine Berrettini will face either Djokovic or Denis Shapovalov in Sunday's final where he will attempt to become Italy's first men's Grand Slam champion since Adriano Panatta at the 1976 French Open.

"I think I never dreamed about this because it was too much for a dream," said

Berrettini.

"I am trying to be the best at everything but after the third set I was feeling I deserved to win it but lost it.

"I said 'it doesn't matter', I was feeling the stronger player and that's what I said to myself and eventually it paid off."

Should he win on Sunday, Berrettini may be able to celebrate a national double with Italy facing England in the Euro 2020 final in London later that day.

"So far it is the best tennis day of my life but hopefully Sunday will be even better. I feel kind of chills but I am doing it, so I have to believe it."

Berrettini, having wasted three break points earlier in the first

set, eventually broke through in the seventh game, backing it up in the ninth, converting set point courtesy of an ugly forehand shank from the Pole.

The 25-year-old then raced through the second set in just 23 minutes, a Hurkacz double fault and a wrong-footing forehand allowing Berrettini to seal a 10th successive game.

That became 11 games in a row at the start of the third set before 18th-ranked Hurkacz, bidding to be the first Polish man to make a Slam final, stopped the rot. — *AFP*

RESULTS
Men: Semifinal: Matteo Berrettini (ITA x7) bt Hubert Hurkacz (POL x14) 6-3, 6-0, 6-7 (3/7), 6-4.

COVID | SCARE

Lanka series rescheduled

New Delhi/Colombo, July 9: The Indian cricket team's six-match limited-overs series against Sri Lanka was on Friday rescheduled owing to a Covid-19 outbreak in the home team camp, with the first ODI now starting on July 17 instead of July 13.

Sri Lanka's batting coach Grant Flower and data analyst G.T Niroshan have tested positive for the dreaded virus on return from the United Kingdom, which has forced Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) to extend the hard quarantine period from the stipulated three days.

"Yes, the series will now start from 17th of July instead of 13th. The decision was taken in consultation with SLC keeping the safety and security of players in mind," a senior BCCI official said.

After talking to sources in SLC, it has been learnt that new dates are still being chalked out in consultation with the BCCI. The tentative dates could be July 17, 19 and 21 for the 50-over games, while the three-match T20I rubber is likely to start from July 24.

"We are discussing a few options on the fresh itinerary," a source in SLC said.

As per the original schedule, the series was to start with the ODI leg on July 13,

followed by matches on July 16 and July 18. The T20I games were scheduled for July 21, July 23 and July 25.

The second-string Indian team, being led by Shikhar Dhawan with Rahul Dravid as chief coach, has completed its hard quarantine and has been training in Colombo.

The SLC source informed that all the Sri Lankan players who came back from UK have tested negative.

"Once the contingent returned from the UK, Grant tested positive on arrival in RT PCR on the first day. All other players were then in their respective room (hard) quarantine. We removed Grant immediately in separate isolation zone. He is asymptomatic," the source added.

"We tested the others once again and G.T Niroshan's report came positive and he was also isolated. Since we didn't receive any other positive reports as of now, it means that the players who returned from UK have tested negative in their second test."

The series is now being pushed back by four days despite the SLC keeping two groups of players in separate bubbles. — *PTI*

Olympic briefs

Modi to interact with athletes

Prime Minister Narendra Modi took stock of India's Olympic preparations on Friday and also announced an interaction with the country's Tokyo-bound sportspeople on July 13, three days before the first batch departs for the Japanese capital. The interaction with the athletes will be held virtually. "Reviewed preparations for facilitation of India's contingent at @Tokyo2020. Discussed the logistical details, their vaccination status, the multi-disciplinary support being given," Modi tweeted.

Not going to be easy: Sindhu

A strong medal contender at the Tokyo Games, ace Indian shuttler PV Sindhu on Friday admitted that she has got a favourable draw but insisted that she has to be on top of her game since no match will be easy at the Olympic level. Reigning world champion and Rio Games silver medallist, Sindhu has been drawn with Hong Kong's Cheung Ngan Yi (ranked 34th) and Israel's Ksenia Polikarpova (ranked 58th) in Group J of the women's singles event. "It's a good draw in the group stage. Hong Kong girl plays well and it'll going to be a good match. Everybody is going to be in top form, I hope I do well," Sindhu, who is world number seven, said.

Kyrgios confirms withdrawal

Australian Nick Kyrgios pulled out of Australia's tennis team for the Olympics hours after Tokyo's governor confirmed a ban on fans in the city's stadiums during the games. Kyrgios posted a statement on social media to announce his withdrawal. "It's been my dream to represent Australia at the Olympics and I know I may never get that opportunity again. But I also know myself. The thought of playing in front of empty stadiums just doesn't sit right with me. It never has." Kyrgios posted.

Manu is sweating it out

Top Indian medal contender at the Tokyo Games, ace pistol shooter Manu Bhaker on Friday said she has been "working really hard" for the past five years to win an Olympic gold. Bhaker recently decided to switch off from social media till the end of Tokyo Olympics to focus on her preparation and performance in the Games, starting July 23. "To win the Olympic gold medal, I have been really working really hard for the past five years now, and it has always been my dream," added the 19-year-old Bhaker.

Should cis-women compete with women?

SUCHETA DASGUPTA

Inside the world of sports, where careers are built on split-second wins and governed by rules that measure testosterone by the nanomole, the selection of New Zealand weightlifter Laurel Hubbard as the first openly transgender athlete ever to participate in the Olympic Games is a pyrrhic win.

It inevitably brings home the conversation about whether it is fair to let transwomen compete with women (or ciswomen, as they are termed in queer theory) to Indian media and policy circles.

Already, in the United States, transgirls competing with biological ones is commonplace in high school sports, albeit challenged in 29 of its 50 states through various bills and proposals moved or passed during the last year. This

is even while transmen like boxer Pat Manuel and wrestler Mack Beggs have played and won in the female players' category. In India, women, by and large, still face cultural resistance when it comes to practising sports, an activity that is also sometimes considered "unfeminine".

Women's sport has its intrinsic value of cultivating health, excellence, competence and character.

Significantly, freedom of thought needs must entertain the observation that classical feminism which opposes the customary sex stereotypes and gender roles does not agree with queer theory which is based on them (per which a male person drawn to "female" activities is queer, and vice-versa).

World over, women have fought hard to gain limited opportunities in a very



unequal playing field and many complain that the goalposts are now being moved.

Few question the right of transgender people to identify themselves as members of a particular gender, choose with whom

they associate and not be discriminated against. However, the biological fact of puberty vesting in male bodies higher metabolism, more lungpower, bigger bone structure and greater proportional muscle mass is equally sacro-

sanct (an advantage which hormone therapy to reduce androgen levels to less than five nanomoles per litre of serum cannot roll back). Hence Martina Navratilova and the Women's Sports Policy Working Group's appeal in February to US President Joe Biden to find a "middle ground" (which got her opprobrium for being "trans-exclusionary") and the "unfairness" of Hubbard competing with female adversaries at the Games for a weightlifting medal.

But how fair has it been to keep track and field athletes like the South African Caster Semenya (who refused hormone therapy in order to meet the qualifying standards) and the Ugandan Annet Negesa out of the Games? Neither of them is transgender (who are queer biological males or females

"transitioning" or wishing to "transition" into the opposite sex).

The Court of Arbitration for Sport ruling that specified that Semenya is 46XY with DSD (disorders of sex development, like hypospadias and ovotestes) was carefully kept secret by the mainstream media, allegedly under pressure from the transgender and the third wave "intersectional feminist" lobbies, until it was published in May 2019 by the international running website, let-srun.com.

This abdication from the duty of reporting might raise eyebrows but the debate around the fluidity of sex identity is commonly deemed to be the razor's edge of libertarianism and the compulsion of individuals and institutions alike to appear progressive or face cancellation trumps reason and fair play.

Negesa had surgery to "fix" her intersex condition, but her performances never recovered. In 2014, Indian sprinter Dutee Chand was barred from competition for her elevated testosterone (she successfully appealed the decision); but last week, Namibian sprinters Christine Mboma and Beatrice Masilingi were both disqualified for the same reason.

Could it be, therefore, held that including transwomen in women's races is not only anti-women but also against the interests of intersex people?

Also, since the differences are crucial, should the IOC perhaps rethink the relevance of its hyper-androgenism policy and bring back the dignified Barr test for sex chromosomes to better serve the latter individuals?